DISCOURSE ANALYSIS:
A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE

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Introduction

The aim of this brief guide is to introduce the methodological literature on discourse analysis. The term 'discourse analysis' is interpreted here as referring to detailed analysis of language-in-use, whether this takes the form of speech or text. (In practice, it is almost always text which is analysed, since speech is usually transcribed from audio- or video-recordings for analysis.)

Even as defined here, rather narrowly, 'discourse analysis' covers a multitude of rather different approaches. These vary in several important ways: in their focus, in what sorts of knowledge claim they aim to make, and in the kinds of technique they deploy.

In terms of focus, we can distinguish, to some extent, between analysis which is restricted to conclusions about discourse itself, and that which is directed towards drawing conclusions about social or societal processes or structures. For example, discourse analysis based on systemic linguistics falls into the first category: it usually draws a sharp line between language and society, and focuses primarily on the first. By contrast, much discourse analysis in social psychology and sociology has a broader focus, often rejecting any discursive/social distinction - on the grounds that all discourse is action and all action is discursive.

Equally significant are differences in aim. As with other kinds of social research, discourse analysis varies in terms of whether the exclusive immediate goal is to produce knowledge or extends beyond this to include practical or political purposes. There is a very sharp contrast in this respect, for instance, between Conversation Analysis (CA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The latter rejects the very idea that research can avoid serving political purposes. The former usually adopts a relatively strict value-neutral approach, though there have been attempts to change this (for references, see the section of the bibliography on CA below).

There can be variation in aim on the part of discourse analysts in another respect too. Sometimes, discourse analysis is applied to some set of texts in order to draw substantive conclusions about the way in which the production and effects of those texts are related to the particular social contexts in which they are located. Alternatively, discourse analysis may be used to develop theoretical understanding of various general types of discursive mechanism, rather than particular instances of them. Different approaches to discourse analysis are not always clear about their aims in this sense. Indeed, often it seems that the purpose is to address both these tasks simultaneously. Once again, though, we can take CA and CDA as offering a contrast. CDA is usually concerned with documenting the use of particular discursive devices for ideological purposes in contemporary societies. By contrast, despite its emphasis on contextual dependence and rejection of 'theory', much CA work seems to be aimed at providing a theoretical understanding of abstract types of discursive strategy: question-answer sequences, stories, insertion sequences, announcements, etc. (This has, in fact, been one focus for criticism of CA from within the ethnomethodological tradition out of which it emerged: see M. Lynch *Scientific*

Practice and Ordinary Action, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, chapter 6.)

Another area of disagreement concerns what can reasonably be inferred from texts, however produced; and this is closely related to the question of how context can and should be used to inform the analysis. Thus, as developed by Sacks and (especially) Schegloff, CA limits inferences to what can be validated by reference to what is observable in the discourse being analysed. The argument is that there has to be some analytically rigorous means of determining what is to count as context; since this will shape any interpretation of the text, and there are always alternative possible interpretations of context. Conversation analysts argue that the only legitimate means of determining context is provided by the fact that people signal their attention to contextual factors in the course of conversation. Thus, CA claims that context is constituted in and through the talk itself: it is not something that exists independently, to which researchers can claim access by other means. So, only those aspects of context which participants demonstrably orient to are allowed into the analysis; other background data about who they are, the locale in which the conversation took place, the wider society, etc are officially ruled out. Once again, CDA is at the other end of this spectrum. Advocates of that approach argue that one cannot properly understand what goes on in any particular interactional episode unless one knows its place in the relevant macro societal context; and to a large extent this has to be specified by the analyst rather than by participants, given the role of ideology in capitalist society. It is this context, the argument goes, which largely determines what happens in the discourse. An example is Fairclough's analyses of newspaper reports in terms of the functions they serve in reproducing capitalism (see N. Fairclough *Critical Discourse Analysis*, London, Longman, 1995). Most discourse analysts probably occupy positions somewhere between these two extremes; focusing more on local contexts and/or treating contextual knowledge as a fallible resource to be used in a tentative fashion. Nevertheless, the question of how to relate text to context remains a difficult one.

Versions of discourse analysis also vary in the features of discourse on which they concentrate, and the techniques they use. One obvious dimension of difference here is the degree to which the resources of linguistics are employed. There are two aspects to this. One concerns the focus of the analysis: does it operate at the level of the word and the sentence, or at higher levels of organisation, for example interactional turns, paragraphs, or the structure of whole conversations or written texts? The other issue concerns the particular form of analysis employed. Even where the focus is above the level of the sentence, the kind of analysis used may be modeled on some version of linguistic analysis. An example of this is Sinclair and Coulthard's work on classroom discourse, where a systemic linguistics approach is applied to 'linguistic organisation above the level of the sentence'. And this is presented very much as a matter of extending the range of linguistic analysis (J. McH Sinclair and R. M. Coulthard 1975 *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: the English used by teachers and pupils*, Oxford, Oxford University Press). By contrast, even when CA work focuses on the use of a particular word, it does not draw significantly on linguistics. One aspect of the difference is that CA is

concerned with the way in which language is used in context, rather than on its structure; whereas a great deal of linguistic analysis in the twentieth century has drawn a distinction between the structure of language and its actual use (between language and speech, or between linguistic competence and performance); though some linguistic approaches, including systemic linguistics, seek to relate structure to function.

A concern with the pragmatics of language-use is also central to a form of discourse analysis which differs significantly from those mentioned up to now: that exemplified, for example, in the work of Wetherell and Potter. This approach is shaped by the influence of other approaches, notably CA, but also by philosophical and sociological ideas that are often labelled as constructionist, relativist, or postmodernist. One of the early influences on this kind of discourse analysis, as on others, was a shift within Anglo-American analytic philosophy to what is sometimes referred to as conceptual analysis, an approach associated with the names of Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Austin. A key element of the work of these philosophers was rejection of the idea that the primary function of language is to represent the world, and of the notion that linguistic representation can be perfected through the development of logic. Instead, they emphasised the subtlety and rigour of natural language use, seeing it as based on a set of 'language games' or 'conceptual grammars' whose explication could help us to avoid the philosophical error and overambition which, it was claimed, are often produced by conceptual confusion. Perhaps the most influential example of this work was Austin's analysis of the performative character of language: his argument that much language use is not concerned with describing the world but actually constitutes the performance of particular kinds of social act, such as promising, inviting, etc. While this kind of 'speech act theory' did not rely on epistemological scepticism, it later came to be linked with this by some discourse analysts. The performative character of language began to be applied back to referential forms of language use, which were taken to amount to the discursive construction of the phenomena to which they referred.

Another influence on Potter and Wetherell's discourse analysis was the reflexive turn which occurred in the sociology of science during the second half of the twentieth century. This stemmed in part from the fact that previous confidence in science as the pre-eminent model of rational understanding had been widely challenged. Many historians, sociologists, and philosophers of science began to think of science as a socially constituted activity rather than as an activity that gives access to transcendent truths (see the discussion in Woolgar, S. (1988) *Science: the very idea*, London, Routledge). As a result of this, science came to be treated as a discursive activity (see, for example, G. N. Gilbert and M. Mulkay (1984) *Opening Pandora's Box: a sociologiscal analysis of scientists' discourse*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press); and the idea that discourse constructs the world rather than representing it was extended to science itself.

Discourse analysis of this constructionist kind has come into conflict with those kinds of social research which are committed to some form of realism,

and this includes CA and ethnomethodology (see Button, G. and Sharrock W. (1993) 'A disagreement over agreement and consensus in constructionist sociology', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 23, 1, pp 1-25). However, it has also generated problems for those who see research as properly partisan in character, for example as offering a critical challenge to the socio-political status quo. For one thing, constructionism may be taken to imply that the world can be changed simply by writing it differently; and this is rejected as patently false by many who are committed to political radicalism. Another problem is that the relativism with which constructionism is associated seems to undermine the status of radical as much as conservative values. In the context of feminism, for example, it seems to undermine the coherence of the very concept of woman on which that political project is based (see, for example, Alcoff, L. (1988) 'Cultural feminism vs post-structuralism: the identity crisis in feminism', *Signs*, 13, 3, pp405-36.). However, much depends on how constructionism is interpreted.

Discourse analysis has now been applied to the study of a wide range of aspects of social life. Indeed, in some areas, such as education, one can find different forms of discourse analysis deployed, and other approaches as well (see N. Mercer "The analysis of talk as data in educational settings', in *Masters Programme in Education: Research Methods in Education Handbook*, Milton Keynes, The Open University, 2001). What exactly the 'application' of discourse analysis means can vary considerably. Some forms, notably conversation analysis, involve a radical 'respecification' of topic in terms of the study of local forms of interactional order; others direct attention to the discursive construction of the various social phenomena being studied; yet others tie this discursive construction into the operation of wider social processes that they take to be exploitative or in other ways oppressive.

Related literatures

There are at least four bodies of literature not covered in the following bibliography that may also be relevant for those with an interest in discourse analysis. The first concerns what has been called content analysis. That term usually refers to a set of quantitative techniques for analysing texts, though some qualitative forms of content analysis have also been developed: see Holsti, O. R. (1969) *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*, Reading MA, Addison-Wesley; Krippendorff, K. (1980) *Content Analysis: an introduction to its methodology*, Beverly Hills, Sage; Altheide, D. (1987) Ethnographic content analysis', *Qualitative Sociology*, 10, pp65-77 and Altheide, D. (1996) *Qualitative Media Analysis*, Thousand Oaks CA, Sage. Titscher, S., Meyer, M., Wodak, R., and Vetter, E. *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis*, Sage, 2000 includes discussion of content analysis as part of a very catholic interpretation of discourse analysis that also includes grounded theory, ethnography, and hermeneutics.

The second excluded body of literature is that dealing with rhetoric, with the techniques used in persuasive talk (and, later, persuasive writing). This has a long history, and remains an important source for the analysis of discourse: see Vickers B. (1988) *In Defence of Rhetoric*, Oxford, Oxford University Press. For

an application of rhetoric to the study of social life, see M. Billig (1996) *Arguing and Thinking: a rhetorical approach to social psychology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, second edition.

The third related literature is concerned with textual strategies in qualitative research writing. See, for example, P. Atkinson *The Ethnographic Imagination: textual constructions of reality*, London, Routledge, 1990. For a bibliography, see Hammersley, M. (1994) *Writing ethnography*, Social Research Update, Guildford, Department of Sociology, University of Guildford.

The final body of literature I have excluded employs the term 'discourse analysis' in a rather different way. This presents a particular form of cultural analysis that is strongly influenced by French structuralism and post-structuralism, but not usually involved in detailed analysis of language-in-use. For discussions of this tradition, see Macdonell, D. (1986) *Theories of Discourse: an introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell, and D. Howarth *Discourse*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 2000.

An outline bibliography of discourse analysis methodology

The following bibliography is organised in terms of the main kinds of discourse analysis, and lists key methodological resources for each.

Linguistic approaches to discourse analysis

Brown, G. and Yule, G. (1983) *Discourse Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Coulthard, M. (1985) *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, London, Longman (Second edition).

Jaworski, A. and Coupland, N. (1999) *The Discourse Reader*, London, Routledge.

Hoey, M. (1983) *On the Surface of Discourse*, London, Allen and Unwin.

Levinson, S. (1983) *Pragmatics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Schiffrin, D. (1994) *Approaches to Discourse*, Oxford, Blackwell.

Stubbs, M. (1983) *Discourse Analysis: the sociolinguistic analysis of natural language*, Oxford, Blackwell.

van Dijk, T. A. (ed) *Discourse as Structure and Process*, London, Sage.

Introductions to discourse analysis in the context of social psychology, sociology, and cultural studies

Antaki, C. (1994) *Explaining and Arguing: the social organization of accounts*, London, Sage.

Barker, C. and Galasinski, D. (2001) *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis: A dialogue on language and identity*, London, Sage.

Billig, M. (1996) *Arguing and Thinking: a rhetorical approach to social psychology*, Second edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Burman, E. and Parker, I. (1993) *Discourse Analytic Research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action*, London, Routledge.

Gee, J. P. (1999) *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: theory and method*, London, Routledge.

Gill, R. (1996) 'Discourse analysis: practical implementation', in Richardson, J. (ed) *A Handbook of Qualitative Methods for Social Psychologists and other Social Scientists*, Leicester, British Psychological Society.

Jorgenson, M. W. and Phillips, L. J. (forthcoming 2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Lee, A. and Poynton, C. (eds) *Culture and Text: Discourse and methodology in social research and cultural studies*, St Leonards NSW Australia, Allen and Unwin.

Phillips, N. and Hardy, C. (2002 forthcoming) *Discourse Analysis: Investigating processes of social construction*, London, Sage.

Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology*, London, Sage.

Potter J. and Wetherell, M. (1994) 'Analyzing discourse', in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. G. (eds) *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, London, Routledge.

Potter, J. (1996) 'Discourse analysis and constructionist approaches: theoretical background' in Richardson, J. (ed) *A Handbook of Qualitative Methods for Social Psychologists and other Social Scientists*, Leicester, British Psychological Society.

Potter, J. (1997) 'Discourse analysis as a way of analysing naturally occurring talk', in D. Silverman (ed) *Qualitative Research*, London, Sage.

van Dijk, T. A. (ed) (1985) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 4 volumes, London, Academic Press.

van Dijk, T. A. (ed) (1997) *Discourse Analysis as Social Interaction*, London, Sage.

Tonkiss, F. (1998) 'Analysing discourse', in C. Seale (ed) *Researching Society and Culture*, London, Sage.

Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., and Yates, S. (eds) (2001) *Discourse Theory as Practice*, London, Sage.

Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., and Yates, S. (eds) (2001) *Discourse as Data*, London, Sage.

Wilkinson, S. and Kitzinger, C. (eds) (1995) *Feminism and Discourse*, London, Sage.

Conversation Analysis

Have, P. ten (1999) *Doing Conversation Analysis: a practical guide*, London, Sage.

Heritage, J. (1997) 'Conversation analysis and institutional talk: analysing data', in D. Silverman (ed) *Qualitative Research*, London, Sage.

Hutchby, I and Woofit, R. (1998) *Conversation Analysis: Principles, practices and applications*, Cambridge, Polity.

Psathas, G. (1995) *Conversation Analysis: the study of talk-in-interaction*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Sacks, H. (1992) *Lectures on Conversation*, 2 volumes, Oxford, Blackwell. Republished as one volume, 1995. See especially Schegloff's introduction to these lectures.

Silverman, D. (1998) *Harvey Sacks: Social science and conversation analysis*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Silverman, D. (1996) 'Analysing conversation', in C. Seale (ed) *Researching Society and Culture*, London, Sage.

Speier, M. (1973) *How to Observe Face-to-Face Communication: a sociological introduction*, Pacific Palisades CA, Goodyear.

There have been some debates about the character of CA. Some of these concern its relationship to ethnomethodology and its philosophical orientation: see Lynch, M. and Bogen, D. 'Harvey Sacks' primitive natural science' *Theory, Culture and Society*, 11, 4, pp65-104; Livingston, E. *Making Sense of Ethnomethodology*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul; M. Lynch *Scientific Practice and ordinary Action*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993; S. Clayman and D. W. Maynard 'Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis', in Have, P. ten and Psathas, G. (eds.) *Studies in Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis*, Lanham, Maryland, University Press of America, 1995;

and Bogen, D. *Order Without Rules: critical theory and the logic of conversation*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1999.

Other debates concern the relationship between CA and other approaches to the study of language use: see, for example, Watson, R. (1992) 'The understanding of language use in everyday life: Is there common ground?', in Watson, G. and Seiler, R. M. (eds) *Text in Context*, Beverly Hills, Sage. Watson examines, in particular, the relationship between CA and Goffman's work on communicative conduct, concluding that they are quite different in their logic and procedure.

There has also been considerable discussion about the possibility of a feminist form of conversation analysis, on which see:

Frith, H. (1998) 'Constructing the "other" through talk', *Feminism and Psychology*, 8, 4, pp530-6.

Garcia, A. (1998) 'The relevance of interactional and institutional contexts for the study of gender differences: a demonstrative case study', *Symbolic Interaction*, 21, 1, pp35-58.

Frith, H. and Kitzinger, C. (1998) '"Emotion work" as a participant resource: a feminist analysis of young women's talk-in-interaction', *Sociology*, 32, 2, pp299-320.

Kitzinger, C. and Frith, H. (1999) 'Just say no? The use of conversation analysis in developing a feminist perspective on sexual refusal', *Discourse and Society*, 10, 3, pp293-316.

Speer, S. (1999) 'Feminism and conversation analysis: an oxymoron?', *Feminism and Psychology,* 9, 4, pp471-8.

Kitzinger, C. (2000) 'Doing feminist conversation analysis', *Feminism and Psychology*, 10, 2, pp163-93.

Stokoe, E. H. and Smithson, J. (2001) 'Making gender relevant: conversation analysis and gender categories in interaction', *Discourse and Society*, 12, 2, pp217-44.

Speer, S. (2001a) 'Reconsidering the concept of hegemonic masculinity: discursive psychology, conversation analysis and participants' orientations', *Feminism and Psychology*, 11, 1, pp107-35.

Edley, N. (2001) 'Conversation analysis, discursive psychology and the study of ideology: a response to Susan Speer', *Feminism and Psychology* 11, 1, pp136-40.

Speer, S. (2001b) 'Participants' orientations, ideology and the ontological status of hegemonic masculinity: a rejoinder to Nigel Edley', *Feminism and Psychology*, 11, 1, pp141-4.

Another area of debate has been about whether CA can, and should, adopt a 'critical' approach:

McHoul, A. (1988) 'Language and the sociology of mind: a critical introduction to the work of Jeff Coulter', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 12, 339-86.

Bogen, D. and Lynch, M. (1990) 'Social critique and the logic of description: a response to McHoul', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14, 3, pp505-21.

McHoul, A. (1990) 'Critique and description: an analysis of Bogen and Lynch', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14, pp523-32.

McHoul, A. (1994) 'Towards a critical ethnomethodology', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 11, pp105-26.

See also Forrester, M. (1999) 'Conversation analysis: a reflexive methodology for critical psychology', *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 1, pp34-49.

Finally, there has been some discussion of the relationship between CA and other kinds of discourse analysis, including that influenced by critical theory, feminism, and post-structuralism, see:

Schegloff, E. A. (1997) 'Whose text? Whose context?', *Discourse and Society*, 8, 2, pp165-87.

Wetherell, M. (1998) 'Positioning and interpretative repertoires: conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue', *Discourse and Society*, 9, 3, pp387-412

Schegloff, E. A. (1998) 'Reply to Wetherell', *Discourse and Society*, 9, 3, pp413-6.

Billig, M. (1999) 'Whose terms? Whose ordinariness? Rhetoric and ideology in Conversation Analysis', *Discourse and Society*, 10, 4, pp543-558.

Schegloff, E. A. (1999) '"Schegloff's texts" as "Billig's data": a critical reply', *Discourse and Society*, 10, 4, pp558-72.

Billig, M. (1999) 'Conversation Analysis and the claims of naivety', *Discourse and Society*, 10, 4, pp572-6.

Schegloff, E. A. (1999) 'Naivete vs sophistication or discipline vs self-indulgence: a rejoinder to Billig', *Discourse and Society*, 10, 4, pp577-82

Kitzinger, C. (2000) 'Doing feminist conversation analysis', *Feminism and Psychology*, 10, 2, pp163-93.

Critical Discourse analysis

Some texts listed in the section above on 'Introductions to discourse analysis in the context of social psychology, sociology, and cultural studies' would also be relevant under this heading, notably Burman and Parker (1993) and Gee (1999).

Caldas-Coulthard, C. R. and Coulthard, M (eds) (1996) *Text and Practice: readings in critical discourse analysis*, London, Routledge.

Cameron, D., Frazer, E., Harvey, P., Rampton, M.B.H., and Richardson, K. (1992) *Researching Language: issues of power and method*, London, Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (1985) 'Critical and descriptive goals in discourse analysis', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 9, pp739-63.

Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and Power*, London, Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge, Polity.

Fairclough, N. (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis: the critical study of language*, London, Longman.

Chouliaraki, L. and Fairclough, N. (1999) *Discourse in Late Modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

Kress, G. (1990) 'Critical discourse analysis', *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 11, pp84-99.

van Dijk, T. (1993a) 'Editor's foreword', *Discourse and Society*, 4, 2, pp131-2.

van Dijk, T. (1993b) 'Principles of CDA', *Discourse and Society*, 4, 2, pp249-83.

Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (eds) (2002) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, London, Sage.

For assessments of critical discourse analysis, see:

Hammersley, M. (1997) 'On the foundations of critical discourse analysis', *Language and Communication*, 17, 3, pp237-48.

Pateman, T. (1981) 'Linguistics as a branch of critical theory', *University of East Anglia Papers in Linguistics*, 14/15, pp1-29.

Stubbs, M. (1997) 'Whorf's children: critical comments on critical discourse analysis', in A. Ryan and A. Wray (eds) *Evolving Models of Language*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

Widdowson, H. (1995a) 'Review of N. Fairclough "Discourse and Social Change"', *Applied Linguistics*, 16, 4, pp510-16.

Widdowson, H. (1995b) 'Discourse analysis: a critical view', *Language and Literature*, 4, 3, pp157-72.

See also Fairclough, N. (1996) 'A reply to Henry Widdowson's "Discourse analysis: a critical view"', *Language and Literature*, 5, 1, pp49-56.