

Discourse Analysis

Class 1

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Sabina Tabacaru is the boss of this course and so I still need her feedback

but for now

evaluation:

1 mid term and 1 end term

reading: will be put on line

Van Dijk 2005 - Racism and the Elite in Spain

Baker 2008 - Immigration and Parliamentary Debates in UK

Martin & White - Stance Taking and Judgment

Bednarek - "Wicked" Women in Contemporary Pop Culture

Bednarek - Don't say crap. Don't use swear words

Proposed Overall Structure

1. Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis
2. Systemic Functional Grammar and Appraisal Theory
3. Stance Taking and Political Discourse
3. Representation of Women in Women's Magazines
4. Multimodal Corpora and the analysis of Gesture
5. Taking the Mickey - The expression of irony in Sitcoms

Remember Semantics?

If semantics was how language structures meaning

Discourse is how we use language to mean

Discourse?

Discourse is an inherently “fuzzy phenomenon” that is not easily amenable to definition (van Dijk 1998: 1)

Folk understanding of discourse

“written or spoken communication or debate”, (New Oxford Dictionary of English)

“formal and orderly and usually extended expression of thought on a subject” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

E.g., *the language of political discourse* (NODE)

Discourse

Specialist understanding of discourse as:

* “a general mode of semiosis, i.e., meaningful **symbolic behavior**”
(Blommaert 2005: 2)

* “**language-in-action**”, whose investigation necessitates “attention both to language and to action” (Hanks 1996, cited in *ibid.*)

* “a form of **language use**” – more specifically a “**communicative event**” or “a verbal *interaction*” (van Dijk 1998: 2)

Some important interdependent *elements* of discourse

- (1) Interactive – **Verbal** and **Non-Verbal** semiotic behavior
- (2) Cognitive –
 - a) Specific mental states: ideas, opinions, beliefs
 - b) Abstract mental models/frames/domains and processes
- (3) Socio-cultural – No discourse is ever isolated

(van Dijk 1998: 2)

Some important aspects of discourse analysis

- * Discourse **participants** and their social or interactive roles (the who)
- * Discursive **mode of communication** and its verbal and non-verbal semiotic dimensions (the how)
- * Participants' purposes/**intentions** (the why)
- * The **immediate discursive context**: place and time of the interactive event, the situational setting (where/when)
- * The **extended discursive context**: the socio-cultural setting, general system of assumptions, expectations, norms and conventions
- * **Cognitive processing** behind discourse production and interpretation

(van Dijk 1998: 2, 2008: xxvf.)

What is investigated in discourse analysis then?

Regardless of their methodology, all discourse analysts investigate:

- * Contextualized **language use**, with the context being quite broad
- * Socio-cultural, cognitive, situational **contexts**, not just linguistic co-text
- * **Interactive** aspects of language use (e.g., politeness, turn-taking, gestures, physical posture, intonation), not just grammatical or semantic aspects
- * “Dynamic cognitive and interactional ... **strategies**”

Most discourse analysts will also be interested in:

- * **Non-verbal** (embodied, visual, prosodic etc.) communication, not just verbal communication

(van Dijk 2008: xxii)

Why is discourse important?

Discourse is **socially** and **culturally** determined, which links it directly to the issue of **power**, its abuse, social inequities, the role of gender, race, class, etc.

(van Dijk 2008: xxv)

“**Institutions** are shaped by discourse and ...they, in turn, have the capacity to create and impose discourses. In this way, they have considerable **control** over the shaping of our routine experiences of the world and the way we classify that world. They, therefore, have **power to foster** particular kinds of **identities** to suit their own purposes.”

(Mayr 2008: 1)

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis can be described as the investigation of:

“power effects, of the outcome of power, of what power does to people, groups, and societies, and of how this impact comes about. The deepest effect of power everywhere is inequality, as power differentiates and selects, includes and excludes. An analysis of such effects is also an analysis of the conditions for power - of what it takes to organize power regimes in societies.”

(Blommaert 2005: 1f.)

More specifically, it is the analysis of “the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.”

(van Dijk 2001: 352)

Critical Discourse Analysis

1. CDA addresses **social problems**
2. **Power relations** are discursive
3. Discourse **constitutes** society and culture
4. Discourse does **ideological** work
5. Discourse is **historical**
6. The link between text and society is **mediated**
7. Discourse analysis is **interpretative** and **explanatory**
8. Discourse is a form of **social action**.

(taken from van Dijk 2001: 353, after Fairclough & Wodak 1997: 271ff.)

Immigration



(Banksy)

Clacton-on-Sea



(From *The Economist*, Feb.17th, 2011, “The unstoppable flow”)

Campaign billboards of Swiss political party UDC



**Pour plus
de sécurité**

Ma maison – notre Suisse
GCP 30-4828-6



UDC
Pour une Suisse forte



Ouvrir la porte aux abus?

Non!



8 février



Stopper l'immigration massive!

