**Module:** Linguistics

**Level:** L2

**Teacher's Name:** Dr. ADDER Fatima Zohra & Dr. HAKEM Hadia

**Lecture Two: Discourse Analysis**

1. **Discourse**

Discourse is considered as:

1. Language above the sentence or above the clause. It is a continuous stretch of spoken language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit.
2. Language in use. It is a stretch of language perceived to be meaningful, unified, and purposive .
3. It is viewed as social practice determined by social structures.
4. **Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis studies the ways sentences and utterances *(spoken or written)* go together to make texts and interactions and how those texts and interactions fit into our social world. It should be noticed also that discourse analysis is *not just the study of language*, but a way *of looking at language* as well. This way of looking at language is based on **four main assumptions**:

1. ***Language is ambiguous.*** What things mean is never absolutely clear.
2. ***Language is always ‘in the world’.*** That is, what language means is always a matter of where and when it is used.
3. ***The way we use language is inseparable*** *from who we are and the different social groups to which we belong.*
4. ***Language is never used all by itself.*** It is always combined with other things such as our tone of voice, facial expressions and gestures when we speak, and the fonts, layout and graphics we use in written texts.
5. **Merits of Discourse Analysis**

What is good in discourse analysis is understanding how discourse works and this makes us able to understand people better and communicate more effectively.

Discourse analysts analyze both written ‘texts’ and verbal ‘conversations’. So, when we talk about written discourse, we should talk about text and texture.

**1. Text**:  a text is anything that conveys a set of meanings to the person who examines it. It is anything that is meaningful in a particular situation; and the basis for meaning is choice.

**2. Texture**: is the quality that makes a particular set of words or sentences a text rather than a random collection of linguistic items. So, it is the relationship between one set of choice and another.

**3. What are the two important things that make a text a text?** 3.1) Features inherent / intrinsic in the language itself (e.g. grammatical ‘rules’)

(e.g. Use of future or present continuous (I will come vs. I am coming ) provides a couple of meanings to the listener)

3.2) These features help you figure out the relationship between the various sets of choices. (‘coming later’ or ‘soon’)

**4. Texts and their Social Function**

Dealing with discourse, texts have social functions and to these functions they have genres. So, *what is meant by a genre?*

A genre is “a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs”. (Bhatia, 1993, p.13)

***What is meant by genre analysis?***

Genre analysis is a means of examining the context of both spoken and written language. It is also precisely defined as the study of the social functions of different kinds of texts.

1. **Genre Characterizations:**
   1. **Genres are communicative events:** most texts are not just trying to get only one thing done. The communicative purposes of texts are often multiple and complex. (e.g. The president’s speech can entail many different aims)
   2. **Conventions and constraints:** these constraints govern not just what can be included, but also how it should be included.
   3. **Creativity:** job application letters or other genres like newspaper articles and recipes are not always the same. The authors of the most successful texts are those which break the rules, defy conventions and push the boundaries of constraints. (e.g. Many literary works gained much interest among readers for they defy conventions, such as novels in which dialects or aspects of taboo are mixed with the writer’s standard language…)
   4. **Discourse communities:** genres are always associated with certain groups of people that have certain common goals and common ways of reaching these goals. (Politicians, lawyers, literary men, economists…)
2. **Discourse and Ideology**
   1. **Ideology**

It is a specific set of beliefs and assumptions that people have about things like what is good and bad, what is right and wrong, and what is normal and abnormal.

***How do texts promote ideology?***

Texts do exert a certain influence on ideology, on people’s ideas, beliefs and assumptions. In what follows we will see how they can do so. We will focus on four things:

1. The ways authors create ‘versions of reality’ based on their choice of words and how they combine words together.
2. The ways authors construct certain kinds of relationships between themselves and their readers.
3. The ways authors appropriate the words of other people and how they represent those words.
4. The ways authors of texts draw upon and reinforce the larger systems of belief and knowledge that govern what counts as right or wrong, good or bad, and normal or abnormal in a particular society.
   1. **Who? Doing What?**

The linguist Michael Halliday (1994) pointed out that whenever we use language, we are always doing three things at once:

1. We are in some way representing the world, called *ideational function* of language.
2. We are creating, ratifying or negotiating our relationships with the people with whom we are communicating, called the *interpersonal function* of language.
3. We are joining sentences and ideas together in particular ways to form cohesive and coherent texts, called the *textual function* of language.

All of these functions play a role in the way a text promotes a particular ideology or worldview**.**

***Ideational function***

***Interpersonal function***

***Textual function***

**Relationships**

We construct relationships through words we choose to express things like *certainty* and *obligation* (known as the system of modality in language). The traditional priest, for example, typically says “you may now kiss the bride,” rather than “kiss the bride”.

**Intertextuality**

- It is a literary device that creates an 'interrelationship between texts' and generates related understanding in separate works. (Intertextual figures include allusion, quotation, calque, plagiarism, translation, and parody).

- It is the relationship texts create with other texts.

- It is the shaping of a text's meaning by another text.

- Intertextuality is another important way where ideologies are promoted in discourse. All texts involve some degree of intertextuality. We cannot speak or write (Halliday, 1994) without borrowing the words and ideas of other people.

**Cultural Models**

Cultural models are sets of expectations that we have about how different kinds of people should behave and communicate in different situations. They serve an important role in helping us make sense of the texts and the situations that we encounter in our lives.

“You may now kiss the bride,” then, does not just enforce a theory about how brides and grooms are supposed to act during a marriage ceremony, but also invokes broader theories about marriage gender relations, love, morality and economics. All of these theories are part of a system of discourse which we might call the ‘Discourse of marriage’.

1. **Types of Discourses**

Discourses can exert a tremendous power over us by creating constraints regarding how certain things can be talked about and what counts as ‘knowledge’ in particular contexts.

**Spoken Discourse vs. Written Discourse**

In many ways, speech is **not** so different from writing:

**1-** When people speak, they also produce different kinds of genres.

**2-** They may use different kinds of social languages.

**3-** They also promote particular versions of reality or ideologies

But, there are some ways in which speech **is very different** from writing:

**1-** Speech is more interactive.

**2-** Speech tends to be more transient and spontaneous than writing.

**3-** While some genres like formal speeches and lectures are planned, most casual conversation are just made up as we go along.

**4-** Speech tends to be less explicit than writing.

**5-** Speech also usually takes place in some kind of physical context.

**Kinds of spoken discourse that has distinguished features:**

**1.** Telephone conversations.

**2.** Television and cinema.

**3.** Instant messaging and text-based computer chats.

**8. Conversation Analysis**

This one comes out of a tradition in sociology called Ethnomethodology which focuses on the ‘methods’ ordinary members of a society use to interact with one another and interpret their experience.

**Conversation:** Conversations happen when multiple actions are put together to form activities: we chat, we debate, we counsel, we gossip, we commiserate, and we do many other things in our conversations.

**Conversational strategies:** The methods we use to engage in the former negotiations (debating, commiserating, counseling, etc).

***Two basic kinds of conversational strategies:***

* **Face Strategies**: have to do primarily with showing who we are and what kind of relationship we have with the people with whom we are talking.
* **Framing Strategies**: have more to do with showing what we are doing in the conversation, whether we are, for example, arguing, teasing, or gossiping.

1. **Face Strategies**

We define face strategy as the negotiated public image mutually granted to each other by participants in a communicative event. There are three important aspects to this definition:

1. One's face is one's public image rather than one's true self.
2. The result of a kind of *give and take* with the person or people with whom we are interacting.
3. Successfully presenting a certain face in interaction which depends on the people with whom we are in interaction, cooperation …

There are **two kinds** of face strategies:

1. ***Involvement strategies:*** strategies we use to establish or maintain ‘**closeness’** with people to show them that we consider them our friends, e.g.: calling people by their first names or using nicknames.
2. ***Independence strategies:*** strategies we use to establish or maintain ***distance*** from the people with whom we are interacting either because we are not their friends or we wish to show them respect, e.g.: using more formal language and terms of address with directors, bosses, ...etc.’

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| **Involvement** | **Independence** |
| * Using first names or nicknames (“Hi , Cathy” instead of “Mrs. Catherine”, for instance) * Using informal language (Gotta, minute) * Being direct (Let’s go to cinema) * Talking about (us) * Being voluble (talking a lot) | * Using titles ( Mr. , Professor, good morning) * Using formal language (Excuse me, can you help me?) * Being indirect (I wonder if I can borrow your pen.) * Talking about things other than (us) * Being taciturn (not talking a lot.) |

1. **Framing strategies**

Faming strategies are sets of expectations about what kinds of things will be said and how those things ought to be interpreted for different kinds of activities.

**Primary framework:**

It is a set of expectations about the overall activity in which we will be engaged.

**E.g.:** when we are a patient in a medical examination, we do expect that the doctor will touch you, and we interpret this behaviour as a method for diagnosing our particular medical problem.

***However,*** it hardly ever involves just one activity. We often engage in a variety of different activities within the primary framework.

**E.g.:** while lecturing, a lecturer might give explanation, tell jokes or even rebuke members of the audience if they are not paying attention.

**The Relationship between Context and Competence**

Knowledge or mastery of the linguistic system alone is not sufficient for successful communication. People also need to know and master various rules, norms and conventions regarding what to say, to whom, when, where, and how - which is called *communicative competence*.

e.g. There may be persons whose English I can grammatically identify, but whose messages escape me.

**9. Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis**

In fact, the focus of most discourse analyses is on looking very closely at one or a small number of texts or conversations of a particular type, trying to uncover things like how the text or conversation is structured.

**Corpus**

It is a collection of texts in digital format that it is possible to search through and manipulate using a computer program.

*There are a number of* ***large corpora:***

1- British National Corpus, which is a very general collection of written and spoken texts in English.

2- Specialized corpora available, that is, collections of texts of one particular genre.

3- Multimodal corpora in which not only verbal data, but also visual data are collected and tagged.

**Further Reading:**

* George Yule (2006/2010). Discourse Analysis.*The Study of Language.* 3th or 4th edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.