

Introducing Practical Discourse Analysis

This introduction to discourse analysis provides students with an accessible, yet comprehensive, overview of the subject and all the skills and knowledge needed to become capable discourse analysts. Through practical coverage and advice, this book introduces discourse analysis as a set of analytical tools and perspectives that can be applied to an assignment, project, or thesis. Across seven chapters the book is divided according to practical themes and topics, allowing students to establish a deeper understanding of discourse analysis. Students will be taught how to identify and categorize established theories and methodologies, including conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, and more. Through figures, examples, chapter summaries, and more than thirty learning activities, this volume teaches students the foundational skills to approach the analytical process with more confidence and background knowledge, making it suitable for undergraduate and graduate students studying discourse analysis.

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Preface

This book is written according to the needs of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in an introductory course on discourse analysis. Readers are not expected to have any background knowledge in discourse analysis, though possessing some formal training in linguistics or communications may be helpful but certainly not obligatory.

The book is the result of my many years of teaching discourse analysis and supervising research students using discourse analytic approaches. In both situations, students need a no-nonsense introduction that presents discourse analysis as a research tool rather than an activity that is bound to disciplinary rules. My teaching and supervision experience tells me that students benefit the most when discourse analysis is introduced without long-winded theoretical discussions of key themes and topics. Similarly, students learning how to do discourse analysis thrive in the beginning stages of their research when they are presented with analytic principles that are not bound to deeply nuanced theoretical and methodological ideas. The current book is written to reflect these principles: practice is privileged over theory and analysis is given more weight than discourse.

The practical coverage and advice that are included in this book also reflect a commitment to training readers to view discourse analysis as a collection of theories and methodologies that represents a smaller set of generic principles. That is to say, after reading this book, readers will be able to identify and categorize established theories and methodologies, such as conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis, according to these generic principles. In this sense, this book offers a comprehensive overview of discourse analysis without asking readers to do the heavy theoretical and methodological lifting

that is required in many introductory and advanced books on the topic.

Readers who are considering how to use discourse analysis should understand this: discourse analysis is an approach to human communication and semiotics that cuts across numerous disciplines and fields of study. Furthermore, discourse analysis is foundational to the advancement of the humanities and social sciences. For instance, social scientists and humanists rely extensively on discourse as a lens through which to understand human encounters and experiences, as demonstrated in the plethora of publications that make use of discourse analysis. Indeed, discourse analysis is a cornerstone of any rigorous language and communication program. The demand for learning how to do discourse analysis remains high, as most, if not all, important societal issues of our time are bound to discourse in general, and language and communication in particular.

Instructors teaching discourse analysis are obliged to use introductory books on the subject, as a single text allows them to create a learning plan for students that is easy to follow. While there have been many introductory books on discourse analysis published over the past forty years, few publications are devoted to the practicalities of doing good analytic work. The current book addresses this pedagogical challenge by introducing different analytic tools and perspectives that students can apply to their projects.

Book Structure

Introducing discourse analysis is ostensibly simple in concept. The endeavor requires explaining what discourse is and how it can be analyzed. This task is accomplished in this

book across seven chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to defining discourse analysis and introducing examples of discourse. The second chapter offers a transition between discourse and analysis by discussing the planning that is involved in conducting a good analysis. The third chapter is dedicated to providing different perspectives and levels of analysis. The next three chapters address specific analytic issues: the role of context, the researcher, and theory in conducting an analysis. The final chapter offers a model for doing discourse analysis which summarizes the key themes and topics covered in the book. This final chapter also reviews how research questions can be incorporated into projects that use discourse analysis. The book is ideally read sequentially, beginning with Chapter 1, though more advanced readers should be able to navigate the chapters in any order.

Instead of organizing chapters according to different methodological traditions, which is a common approach in other introductions, the current book is divided according to practical themes and topics. For example, rather than organize one chapter on conversation analysis and another chapter on critical discourse analysis, the book is divided into themes and topics that are central to understanding the discourse in discourse analysis, as well as the analysis in discourse analysis. This defining feature of the book will help readers establish a deeper understanding of discourse analysis.

Unique Features

Each chapter begins with a set of learning outcomes that establishes the knowledge that readers will acquire. Sections within chapters end with summaries of the main points covered. Learning activities are included in each chapter and throughout the book. Each chapter ends with a section on learning accomplishments, which are descriptions of how

the learning outcomes have been achieved. Chapters also end with key themes and reading lists.

These unique features are identified and unpacked below to help readers appreciate the pedagogical features of this book.

1. Learning outcomes

It is standard practice to establish learning outcomes in class, but for some reason, introductory books do not often include them. Learning outcomes help readers better understand how they should interpret the contents of each chapter and instructors can use them to evaluate their teaching at the end of each session better. Learning outcomes offer direction for readers while contextualizing the learning material.

2. Section-ending summaries

Concise summaries are provided in bullet form at the end of each main chapter section, which help readers account for what has been covered and the key points that should be remembered.

3. Learning activities

These activities offer practical guidance on the key point of a chapter section. All learning activities include easily followed instructions and commentaries to help readers understand how their answers tie into the key point of a chapter section. Learning activities help readers establish the procedural knowledge needed to do or practice discourse analysis.

4. Learning accomplishments

In this end-of-chapter section, readers are told how each learning outcome has been addressed. The main points in the chapter are used to establish these learning accomplishment statements.

5. Key themes

Key themes identify the main points of each chapter. Here the main themes are identified in list form, allowing readers to easily scan for, locate, and remember important

information when reflecting on the main points of the chapter.

6. Reading list

A short, annotated bibliography is included at the end of chapters. Reading lists help instructors incorporate additional texts where necessary. They are especially useful for readers engaging in self-directed learning and provide a more diverse set of perspectives to the chapter.