

Cognitive Discourse Analysis

Analysing language data systematically and looking closely at how people formulate their thoughts can reveal astonishing insights about the human mind. Without presupposing specific subject knowledge, this book gently introduces its readers to theoretical insights as well as practical principles for systematic linguistic analysis from a cognitive perspective. Drawing on Thora Tenbrink's twenty years' experience in both linguistics and cognitive science, this book offers theoretical guidance and practical advice for doing Cognitive Discourse Analysis. It covers areas of analysis as diverse as attention, perspective, granularity, certainty, inference, transformation, communication, and cognitive strategies, using inspiring examples from many different projects. Simple techniques and tools are used to allow readers new to the subject easy ways to apply the methods, without the need for complex technologies, whilst the cross-disciplinary approach can be applied to a diverse range of research purposes and contexts in which language and thought play a role.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42266-6 — Cognitive Discourse Analysis
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Cognitive Discourse Analysis

An Introduction

Thora Tenbrink

Bangor University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108422666

DOI: 10.1017/9781108525176

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First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Tenbrink, Thora, 1969– author.

Title: Cognitive discourse analysis : an introduction / Thora Tenbrink, Bangor University.

Description: Cambridge, UK ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019030553 (print) | LCCN 2019030554 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108422666 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108525176 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Discourse analysis – Psychological aspects. | Cognition.

Classification: LCC P302.8 .T4856 2020 (print) | LCC P302.8 (ebook) | DDC 401/.41–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019030553>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019030554>

ISBN 978-1-108-42266-6 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-43684-7 Paperback

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Preface

This book is the result of twenty years of engagement with a seemingly simple idea: we use language to express our thoughts. At first glance, you might find this rather trivial: isn't this what language is for, what we do all the time? But then you might wonder how much research is really out there that examines discourse in order to identify people's thoughts. There is some, but there could be more – after all, what could be more fascinating than the human mind? This train of thought is what motivated me to look more closely into methodology and develop Cognitive Discourse Analysis (CODA).

Initially inspired by a few fascinating studies that used language to access central human concepts, I started experimenting with this approach myself. Over the years, I benefited tremendously from collaborating with experts across various disciplines, who shared the desire to learn something specific about the human mind – and trusted me enough to believe my suggestion that language provides a unique way of accessing it. Each of my collaborators has contributed in their own way to the refinement of CODA as it is presented here. I am grateful to all of them, as well as to the generations of students who have done linguistic analysis in my classes and tutorials, creating ever-new perspectives on how language represents thought. Based on this personal experience and the host of relevant literature now available, I strongly believe that CODA is useful for gaining insights about the human mind across disciplines. I hope this book will help to spread the method and develop it further.

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to my colleagues, friends, and collaborators for their continuous support as this book took shape. Several people have read and commented on every single chapter; others provided critical feedback on individual parts. Many, many thanks go to Holly Taylor, whose inspiration, collaboration, and friendship have been absolutely invaluable, right from the very early stages of using the method. My heartfelt thanks further extend to Jago (Anwen Williams) for her reliable constructive criticism and support throughout, and likewise to Josie (Sarah J. Ryan), Harry (Yu Hui), Saskia Kuliga, Katja Egorova, Sharon Miller, Colin Burns, Asterios Chardalias, Charlotte Danino, Davood Gozli, Rick Moore, Katharina Stoltmann, and Phillip Wadley. I am sure the book wouldn't be the same without their feedback and inspiring comments. I also thank Bangor University for granting me a teaching-free semester to finish this book, and I am grateful for support by the publisher, Cambridge University Press, particularly Andrew Winnard and Stephanie Taylor.