

DISCOURSE STUDIES



A MULTIDISCIPLINARY
INTRODUCTION



2ND EDITION

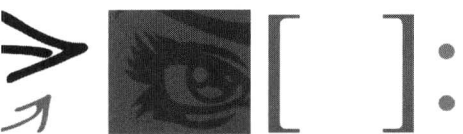


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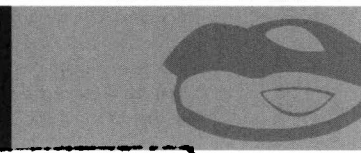
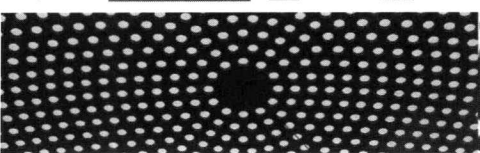
TEUN A. VAN DIJK



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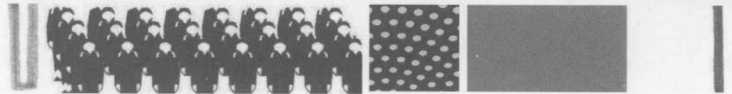
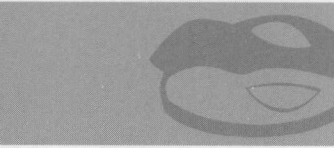
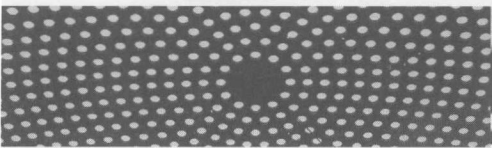
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Contributor Biographies

Shoshana Blum-Kulka is Professor Emerita in the Department of Communication and School of Education at the Hebrew University. Her research focuses on media discourse, political discourse, cross-cultural pragmatics, pragmatic development in first and second language and family discourse. She has served on the editorial board of *Narrative Inquiry*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *Research on Language and Social Interaction* and *Discourse Studies*. Her books include *Dinner Talk* (1997) and *Talking to Adults* (2002), (with Catherine Snow). She is currently involved in research on the pragmatic development of Hebrew speaking Israeli children as a first and as a second language. Address: Department of Communication, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel. E-mail: mskcusb@mscc.huji.ac.il

Paul Chilton is a cognitive linguist and discourse analyst working in an inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural context. He obtained his first degree and doctorate at Oxford University. He has held posts at Nottingham, Warwick, Aston and the University of East Anglia. Currently, he is a professor of linguistics in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University. In the field of cognitive linguistics he has published books and articles on metaphor and spatial conceptualisation and has developed a model of discourse on geometrical principles. In discourse analysis he has investigated numerous aspects of political discourse and critically examined the methods of CDA. He is also principal coordinator of the Leverhulme-funded project New Discourses in Contemporary China. Amongst his publications are *Security Metaphors*, which uses a cognitive-linguistic approach to the metaphor in international discourse, and *Analysing Political Discourse*, which combines a variety of approaches from CDA and from cognitive linguistics. His earlier work included the study of Catholic poetry in the cultural and political context of early modern France. E-mail: p.chilton@lancaster.ac.uk

Susanna Cumming is a linguist specializing in discourse and grammar and related issues, including syntactic change, the lexicon in discourse, and computer text generation. Her primary language area is Malay/Indonesian; she has written a book on constituent order change (*Functional Change: the Case of Malay Constituent Order*, 1991). She has been a faculty member at the University of Colorado, Boulder and the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Anna De Fina is Associate Professor of Italian Language and Linguistics in the Italian Department at Georgetown University. Her interests and publications focus on discourse and migration, code-switching, identity and narrative. Her books include *Identity in Narrative: A Study of Immigrant Discourse* (2003, John Benjamins) and the co-edited volumes *Italiano e italiani fuori d' Italia* (2003, Guerra, with F. Bizzoni), *Dislocations, Relocations, Narratives of Migration* (2005, St. Jerome Publishing, with M. Baynham), *Discourse and Identity* (2006, Cambridge University Press, with Deborah Schiffrin and Michael Bamberg), *Selves and Identities in Narrative and Discourse* (2007, John Benjamins, with Michael Bamberg and Deborah Schiffrin). E-mail: definaa@georgetown.edu

Paul Drew teaches in the Sociology Department at the University of York, and is also Director of the newly-established Centre for Advanced Studies in Language & Communication. He has researched extensively on some of the basic practices and processes of ordinary social interaction, as well as those in institutional interactions – especially in legal and medical settings. His most recent and current research focuses on the construction of social actions in talk (e.g. requests, offers, complaints), which represents something of a return to ‘speech acts’ and how they are conducted in interaction. He has also done applied research, most recently for the (UK) Department of Work and Pensions, on interviews between advisers and benefits claimants (unemployed people) in Job Centres. E-mail: wpdl@york.ac.uk

Alessandro Duranti is Professor of Anthropology and Dean of Social Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles. He has carried out fieldwork in (Western) Samoa and in the United States, where he studied political discourse, verbal performance, and everyday routine interactions (e.g., greetings). He has written on intentionality, agency, linguistic relativity, and, more recently, the role of improvisation in musical and verbal interactions. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and past President of the Society for Linguistic Anthropology. E-mail: aduranti@anthro.ucla.edu

Norman Fairclough was formerly Professor of Language in Social Life at Lancaster University, and is now Emeritus Professor. He has published widely on critical discourse analysis, including the books *Language and Power* (1989), *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), *Discourse in Late Modernity* (1999, with Lilie Chouliaraki), *New Labour, New Language?* (2000), *Analyzing Discourse* (2003), *Language and Globalization* (2003) and *Critical Discourse Analysis* (2nd edition 2010). He is now working with Isabela Ietcu-Fairclough on a book for Routledge on political discourse. E-mail: eianlf@exchange.lancs.ac.uk

B.J. Fehr is a visiting assistant professor in the Communication Department at the University at Albany, SUNY, USA. Her research is focused on the social organization of everyday human interaction from the perspective of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. E-mail: bfehr@albany.edu

Arthur Graesser is a full professor in the Department of Psychology, an adjunct professor in Computer Science, and co-director of the Institute for Intelligent Systems at the University of Memphis. He is the editor of *Journal of Educational Psychology* and has published over 400 articles in journals, books, and conference proceedings, written two books and edited nine books (one being the *Handbook of Discourse Processes*). He has designed, developed, and tested cutting-edge software in learning, language, and discourse technologies, including AutoTutor, Coh-Metrix, HURA Advisor, SEEK Web Tutor, MetaTutor, Operation ARIES, Question Understanding Aid (QUAID), QUEST, and Point&Query. E-mail: a-graesser@memphis.edu

Michal Hamo (PhD, Department of Communication and Journalism, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2005) is a lecturer at Netanya Academic College, Israel. Her research interests include discourse analysis, media and broadcast talk analysis, and the relations between popular television and its cultural, social and institutional contexts. Email: michal.hamo@gmail.com

Sally Jackson is Professor of Communication at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She is currently on leave from the faculty, serving as Chief Information Officer and Associate Provost, overseeing the university's computing and communications infrastructure. Her work in argumentation has received awards from the National Communication Association (USA), the International Society for the Study of Argumentation, and other scholarly associations. E-mail: sallyj@illinois.edu

Scott Jacobs (Ph.D., University of Illinois, 1982) is Professor of Communication at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Previous appointments include the University of Nebraska, Michigan State University, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Arizona. He has published on argumentation, discourse pragmatics, and research methods in *Argumentation*, *Argumentation & Advocacy*, *Communication Monographs*, *Communication Yearbook*, *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, *Human Communication Research*, *Informal Logic*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, and *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. He is a co-author of *Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse*, a co-editor of *Argumentation*, former editor of *Communication Theory*, and recent director of the bi-annual NCA/AFA Summer Conference on Argumentation. E-mail: curtisscottjacobs@gmail.com

Yasmin Jiwani is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University, Montreal. Her publications include *Discourses of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender and Violence*, as well as a co-edited collection titled *Girlhood, Redefining the Limits*. Yasmin is also a co-founder of RACE, Researchers and Academics of Colour for Equity, a Canadian based organization. Her work has appeared in various journals and anthologies. Her research interests include mediations of race, gender and violence in the context of war stories, femicide reporting in the press and representations of women of

colour in popular television. Email: yasmin.jiwani@gmail.com. Webpage: <http://coms.concordia.ca/faculty/jiwani.html>

Elizabeth Keating is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests include social impacts of new communication technologies, the role of language in social stratification, language and space (including computer gaming space), multimodality, sign language, and cross-cultural engineering design collaborations. She has conducted fieldwork in Micronesia, the U.S., Romania, India, Brazil, and Germany. She is the author of *Power Sharing: Language, Gender, Rank and Social Space in Pohnpei, Micronesia* (Oxford University Press), as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters. She is a past editor of the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. E-mail: ekeating@mail.utexas.edu

Myung-Hee Kim is Professor of English Language and Culture at Hanyang University, ERICA Campus, Korea. Her research interests include discourse analysis, conversation analysis, corpus linguistics, language teaching, and the relationship between language and culture.

Cheris Kramarae is a research associate at the Center for the Study of Women in Society, University of Oregon, USA, where she also served as director. She was a director of women's studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA, and an international dean at the International Women's University, in Germany. Her research areas include gender and new media, technology, education, and communication. She and Dale Spender are the editors of the 4 vol. *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. E-mail: cheris@uoregon.edu

Gunther Kress is Professor of Semiotics and Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. His interests are in meaning-making and communication in contemporary environments; with an interest in developing a social semiotic theory of multimodal communication. Among his (more recent) books are *Social Semiotics* (1988, with R Hodge); *Before Writing: Rethinking the Paths to Literacy* (1996); *Reading Images: The Grammar of Graphic Design* (1996/2006); *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (2002) both with Theo van Leeuwen; *Literacy in the New Media Age* (2003); *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication* (2010). E-mail: G.Kress@ioe.ac.uk

Ritva Laury is Professor of Finnish at the University of Helsinki. She received her Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1995. Most of her research has focused on the emergence of grammar from patterns of language use. She is the author of *Demonstratives in Interaction: The Emergence of a Definite Article in Finnish* (Benjamins, 1997) and the editor of *Minimal Reference: The Use of Pronouns in Finnish and Estonian* (Finnish Literature Society, 2005) and *Crosslinguistic Studies of Clause Combining: The Multifunctionality of Conjunctions* (Benjamins, 2008). E-mail: ritva.laury@helsinki.fi

Michelle M. Lazar is Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the National University of Singapore. She is Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Academic Convenor of the Gender Studies Minor Programme at the university. Her research interests are in critical discourse analysis, feminist and gender studies, media and political discourse, and multimodal discourse analysis. She is an elected member of the International Gender and Language Advisory Council and is the founding editor of the Routledge Critical Studies in Discourse monograph series. E-mail: ellmml@nus.edu.sg

Jennifer J. Mease (Ph.D. University of North Carolina) is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at Texas A&M University. Her research addresses how social bias is built into organizational processes and how people organize to interrupt those processes. Her work with diversity consultants focuses on how organizational actors who are motivated by social justice develop strategies to pursue social change when working with capital based organizations . E-mail: jmease@tamu.edu

Keith Millis is a full professor in the Psychology Department at Northern Illinois University. He completed a post-doc at Carnegie Mellon University after receiving his Ph.D. in 1989. He has authored several articles and book chapters on discourse comprehension and inference generation. He is the project director of Operation ARIES!, a serious game designed to teach aspects of scientific inquiry. E-mail: kmillis@niu.edu

Jane Mulderrig (PhD, Lancaster University) is a lecturer in Applied Linguistics at Sheffield University. She is on the editorial boards of *Glossa*, *Discourse*, and *Journal of Critical Education Policy Studies*. Her main research interests are in applying corpus-based critical discourse analysis to investigate questions of identity, power and personality in a range of discourse contexts. Her publications use this approach to investigate New Labour 'spin', discourses of the knowledge economy in UK education policy, and most recently to develop a linguistic approach to the analysis of 'soft power' in contemporary governance. Jane has also published in the area of disability and gender policies, and equality and human rights. She is currently investigating public discourses of ageing. For details of other activities and to download publications see: <http://sheffield.academia.edu/JaneMulderrig>; <http://www.shef.ac.uk/english/staff/mulderrig.html>. E-mail: j.mulderrig@sheffield.ac.uk

Dennis K. Mumby (Ph.D., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale) is Professor and Chair in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research examines the relationships among discourse, power, and identity in work settings. He has published several books, including *Communication and Power in Organizations* (Ablex, 1988), *Reworking Gender* (Sage, 2004, with Karen Ashcraft), *Engaging Organizational Communication Theory and Research* (Sage, 2005, with Steve May), and *Reframing Difference in Organizational Communication Studies* (Sage, 2010). He is past

chair of the Organizational Communication Division of the International Communication Association. E-mail: mumby@email.unc.edu

Elinor Ochs is UCLA Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Applied Linguistics. Drawing upon fieldwork in Madagascar, Samoa, and the U.S., Ochs co-pioneered the field of language socialization, which analyzes how novices are apprenticed through and into socio-culturally organized communicative practices. Ochs analyzes how family co-narration involves children in problem-solving about life experiences and promote or hinder typical and neurodevelopmentally impaired children's development. Selected books include Capps, L. and Ochs, E. (1995) *Constructing Panic*; Ochs, E. and Capps, L. (2001) *Living Narrative*, and Ochs, E. (2006) *Linguaggio e Cultura: Lo Sviluppo delle Competenze Comunicative*. Honors include: MacArthur Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences Fellow; Guggenheim Fellow; Distinguished Lewis Henry Morgan Lecturer; Honorary Doctorate (Linköping University). E-mail: eochs@anthro.ucla.edu

Tsuyoshi Ono is an associate professor at the University of Alberta, Canada, where he directs the Spoken Discourse Research Studio. His main area of research lies in the study of grammatical structure based on the examination of conversation data in which he and his collaborators have published widely. He is currently engaged in two large-scale projects with researchers both in Japan and the U.S.: a corpus of everyday spoken Japanese and a documentation of the Ikema dialect of Miyako, an endangered language spoken on remote Japanese islands near Taiwan. E-mail: tsuyoshi.ono@ualberta.ca

Anita Pomerantz is O'Leary Professor in the Department of Communication at the University at Albany, SUNY. Using audio and videotapes of interaction, she analyzes preference rules and practices for agreeing and disagreeing, seeking information, and negotiating responsibility for blameworthy and praiseworthy deeds. She studies provider-patient roles, patients' methods for actualizing their agendas, and the work of supervising physicians in ambulatory clinics. She has served as Chair of the Language and Social Interaction Division of the National Communication Association and the International Communication Association and currently serves on a number of editorial boards of language-oriented journals. E-mail: apom@albany.edu

Ming-Ming Pu is Professor of Linguistics at University of Maine, Farmington, obtained her Ph.D in psycholinguistics from University of Alberta, Canada. Her research interests include cognitive linguistics, discourse studies, and comparative studies of structure and function between Chinese and English. E-mail: mingpu@maine.edu

John E. Richardson is a senior lecturer in the School of Arts and Culture, Newcastle University. He is on the editorial boards of *Discourse and Society*, *Social Semiotics* and the *Journal of Language and Politics*, and is Special Issues Editor for *Critical Discourse*

Studies. His research interests include structured social inequalities, British fascism, racism in journalism, critical discourse studies and argumentation. His recent books include *Language and Journalism* (2009) and *Analysing Journalism: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (2007), and he is currently writing a book, contextualising and analysing the multimedia discourses of the British National Party (Bloomsbury Academic, 2012).

Christina Schäffner is Professor of Translation Studies at Aston University, Birmingham. She received her PhD in English philology from Leipzig University, Germany. Her main research interests are translation and politics, political discourse analysis, metaphor research (especially metaphors in political texts and from a translational perspective), and translation didactics. She has published widely in these fields. She is a past Secretary General of the European Society for Translation Studies (EST, 1998-2004). E-mail: c.schaeffner@aston.ac.uk

Marja-Leena Sorjonen is Professor of Finnish language at the University of Helsinki. She specializes in the interplay between interaction and grammar, and in linguistic variation. She has worked widely on different types of institutional interactions. Her publications in English include *Responding in Conversation. A Study of Response Particles in Finnish*, chapters in edited volumes and articles in journals such as *Discourse Studies*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Language in Society* and *Research on Language and Social Interaction*. E-mail: marja-leena.sorjonen@helsinki.fi

Russell S. Tomlin is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Oregon. He works in the area of language and cognition with an emphasis in the roles of attention and memory in language production. E-mail: tomlin@uoregon.edu

Teun A. van Dijk retired as professor of discourse studies of the University of Amsterdam in 2004. Since 1999 he is visiting professor at Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona. After earlier work in literary theory, text grammar, discourse pragmatics and the psychology of text processing, his research since the early 1980s has mainly focused on the critical study of racism and discourse, news in the press, ideology and context. His current research is about discourse and knowledge. He published extensively on these topics, and has lectured widely, especially in Latin America. He was founding Editor of *Poetics*, and of *Text* (now *Text & Talk*) and at present he is founding Editor of the international journals *Discourse & Society*, *Discourse Studies*, *Discourse and Communication* and the on-line journal *Discurso & Sociedad* (www.dissoc.org). His last books are *Discourse and Context* and *Society and Discourse* (published by Cambridge University Press, in 2008 and 2009) and (Ed.) *Racism and Discourse in Latin America* (Lexington Books, 2009). E-mail: vandijk@discourses.org. Internet: www.discourses.org

Frans H. van Eemeren is Professor of Argumentation Theory at the University of Amsterdam, President of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation, Editor

of the journal *Argumentation* and the book series *Argumentation Library* and *Argumentation in Context*. Besides Distinguished Scholar of the American National Communication Association he is Doctor honoris causa of the University of Lugano. Among his book publications are *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions*, *Argumentation, Communication, and Fallacies*, *Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse*, *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory*, *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation*, *Argumentative Indicators in Discourse*, *Fallacies and Judgments of Reasonableness*, and *Strategic Maneuvering in Argumentative Discourse*. E-mail: F.H.vanEemeren@uva.nl

Theo van Leeuwen is Professor of Media and Communication and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology, Sydney. He has published widely in the areas of social semiotics, critical discourse analysis and multimodality. His books include *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (with Gunther Kress); *Speech, Music, Sound*; *Introducing Social Semiotics*; *Global Media Discourse* (with David Machin); *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*; and *The Language of Colour*. He is a founding editor of the international journal *Visual Communication*. Email: Theo.vanleeuwen@uts.edu.au

Ruth Wodak is Distinguished Professor of Discourse Studies at Lancaster University since 2004 and has remained affiliated to the University of Vienna where she became full professor of Applied Linguistics in 1991. Besides various other prizes, she was awarded the Wittgenstein Prize for Elite Researchers in 1996. She is currently President elect of the *Societas Linguistica Europea*. Recently, she was also awarded an honorary doctorate by Örebro University, Sweden. Her research interests focus on discourse studies; gender studies; language and/in politics; prejudice and discrimination; and on ethnographic methods of linguistic field work. She is member of the editorial board of a range of linguistic journals and co-editor of the journals *Discourse and Society*, *Critical Discourse Studies*, and *Language and Politics*, and co-editor of the book series *Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture* (DAPSAC). She has held visiting professorships in Uppsala, Stanford University, University Minnesota, University of East Anglia, and Georgetown University, and is corresponding member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. 2008/09, she held the Kerstin Hesselgren Chair of the Swedish Parliament (at University Örebro). Recent book publications include *Ist Österreich ein 'deutsches' Land?* (with R. de Cillia, 2006); *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences* (with M. Krzyżanowski, 2008); *Migration, Identity and Belonging* (with G. Delanty, P. Jones, 2008); *The Discursive Construction of History: Remembering the Wehrmacht's War of Annihilation* (with H. Heer, W. Manoschek, A. Pollak, 2008); *The Politics of Exclusion* (with M. Krzyżanowski, 2009); *Gedenken im Gedankenjahr* (with R. de Cillia, 2009); and *The Discourse of Politics in Action: 'Politics as Usual'* (2009). E-mail: r.wodak@lancaster.ac.uk. Internet: <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/profiles/265>

Preface

After more than a decade the time has come to issue the second edition of *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, which was first published in 1997. For obvious practical reasons this time the book appears as one volume, with the regrettable but unavoidable consequence of a slight reduction of size.

The new cross-discipline of Discourse Studies has developed just as impressively since the end of the 1990s as it already had in the three decades since its beginnings in the mid-1960s in Anthropology, Linguistics, Literary Studies, Sociology, Cognitive and Social Psychology, Communication Studies and Political Science, respectively, and roughly in this order. Several universities now have special Master's programmes in the subject and there are now more than half a dozen specialized journals in the field. Congresses and symposia of discourse and conversation analysis have become as regular as those in the original mother disciplines in the humanities, social sciences and cognitive sciences that feature sections specialized in discourse, text or conversation. In the summer of 2010, the ISI Web of Knowledge featured 43,379 articles with the term 'discourse' in their topic or title, and explicitly 'discourse analysis' as the topic of 3210 articles. As of today (1 August 2010) the Library of Congress lists 5319 books on discourse analysis in its catalogue. In other words, what was a fledgling but contemporary movement in the social sciences and linguistics around the 1970s, has grown four decades later to have become a discipline of its own, despite the fact that the conservative nature of academic institutionalization does not yet acknowledge independent departments of Discourse Studies.

This spectacular growth in the study of text and talk is not limited to this formal organization of the field. New theories, methods, descriptive, ethnographic, experimental, automated and formal studies, and hitherto unexplored areas and sub-disciplines have proliferated both within the original disciplines as well as autonomously as new directions in the field of Discourse Studies. The updated chapters of this book bear witness to these developments, as do several new chapters.

Of these new trends in the field, we may first mention the now generally recognized multimodal nature of discourse, reflected in at least a dozen monographs and hundreds of articles on this broader 'semiotic' approach to text and talk, so obviously necessary owing to the ubiquitous presence of discourse on the internet and other new media. This interest in the multimodal nature of discourse now also extends to the much more broadly conceived 'embodied' nature of language and communication.

Secondly, also spurred by the presence of computers in virtually every academic context, the number of corpus-based studies has provided a quantitative precision where earlier impressionistic assessment of frequencies were rife.

Thirdly, and for the same reason, Artificial Intelligence now routinely presents formal simulations of text production and comprehension within the growing field of Natural Language Processing, which more adequately might be called the field of Discourse Processing, because these studies are seldom limited to the simulation of isolated sentences.

Within the cross-discipline of Cognitive Science, also hugely successful in the last decades, these more formal approaches are being joined by a steadily growing number of experimental studies on the production and comprehension of discourse, which today increasingly possess a neuroscientific grounding in the complex, multimodal structures of the brain. Even more profoundly such a development touches upon the biological make-up and genetic heritage of humans as the only species that have developed not only natural languages, but also and especially the ability to interact and communicate by complex discourse – that is, beyond simple bodily signs and signals.

Obviously, most of this new sub-discipline still needs to be explored. As yet we have no idea how the many genres of human communication and discourse have accompanied the phylogenetic development of language and as an adaptation to the environments of everyday life in various cultures. Whereas conversation and storytelling about past experiences are no doubt universal and hence deeply programmed into our language and communication faculties (and their multimodal extensions), obviously news reports in the press, scholarly articles, and formal indictments in court or websites are professional and institutional developments of a much more recent nature.

These new developments, partly giving rise to new cross-disciplines and sub-disciplines, also show up in the increasing variation of topics studied in the field – which originally started with the analysis of such classic topics as the organization of communicative events, cohesion and coherence, turn taking, the functional moves of different genres, scripts in memory for stories, narrative and argumentation structures, among others.

Today such a list is vastly more varied and ambitious, showing how discourse and its structural and functional properties are fundamentally involved in the everyday lives of language users as communicators and members of organizations, social groups and cultural communities. Conversation analysis has gone far beyond the study of everyday talk, and now as a matter of course examines professional interaction and talk in institutional settings, for instance news and political interviews, among many other genres. The notions of *identity*, *ideology* and *power* are now common in hundreds of discourse studies in the social and political sciences, as are studies of the discursive manifestations of gender and ethnicity. Beyond these largely descriptive analyses of text and talk in their social contexts, the applied studies of discourse have also gone beyond the obvious fields of first and second language learning, literacy and education, and in addition currently deal with the discourse of autistic children or people with Alzheimer's disease, thus providing diagnostic instruments that hitherto were limited to the lexicon or simple sentence grammar.

We can thus witness that the cross-discipline of Discourse Studies has gained a breadth and theoretical and methodological depth during the last decade. It is indeed now formally established as a field with its many book publications, introductions and handbooks, as well as its own journals and university programmes and congresses. The multiple methods of discourse and conversation analysis are becoming increasingly common in all the humanities, social and cognitive sciences. The variety of topics studied is as great as the variety of functions of text and talk in everyday informal, organizational and institutional life and interaction, with numerous applications now also extending into the clinical field. The very definition of discourse has also extended to multimodal and embodied communication, and explorations of the cognitive aspects of discourse processing are increasingly being grounded in neuropsychological studies of the brain.

Discourse is no longer just conceived of as verbal text and talk, but also encompasses the nature of contexts as models of communicative events pragmatically controlling such discourse, and its appropriateness is now being investigated, obviously in a multidisciplinary paradigm. The success of Critical Discourse Studies shows the fundamental importance of the role of text and talk in the reproduction of power and domination in society, as well as in the discursive challenge of dissent.

Despite these successes in new fields, theories, methods and topics of Discourse Studies, this fledgling cross-discipline and its history of barely half a century is still young when compared with its mother disciplines – if, that is, we ignore the rich tradition of two millennia of classical rhetoric. There are still vast areas and a myriad of topics to be explored. We have just entered the field of the neuroscientific study of discourse and its important applications, and as yet we can barely grasp the fundamental role of knowledge in the production, management and understanding of discourse, and, vice versa, the role of discourse in the sociocultural reproduction of knowledge. We know that the talk and text of group members may be ideologically framed, but as yet we have no standard method to analyse ideological discourse in general, or sexist and racist discourse in particular. The topic of the important links between discourse and social class is still waiting to be explored in sophisticated detail – no doubt also because most discourse analysts don't have the daily experience of grinding poverty. Computers have been programmed to produce and understand discourse, but as yet are unable either to conduct a natural conversation with human language users, or produce a news report on the basis of course texts, interviews or eyewitness testimonies, as well as most other genres of text or talk. Indeed, dozens of genres have been systematically analysed for their overall organization, their moves, style, lexicon and social functions, but there are many hundreds if not thousands of genres, in many different cultures, still waiting for such systematic description. In sum, most linguistic, semiotic, cognitive, neurological, social, political and cultural aspects of discourse will remain on the agenda for decades to come.

This multidisciplinary introduction to the fascinating cross-discipline of Discourse Studies offers the theories, methods and data that represent the state of the art in the field and the first steps of these future developments. Besides offering a first, pedagogically

warranted introduction, its main function is to stimulate interest and further research by all those students and scholars who are entering this fascinating cross-discipline for the first time.

Teun A. van Dijk

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