The Handbook of Discourse Analysis

Edited by

Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton

The Handbook of Discourse Analysis

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For our parents,

Marlye and Leonard Schiffrin
Dorothy and Eli Tannen
Claire and Gerald Ehernberger

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construction of Austrian and European identity in European Union policy making. Her recent books include *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (with M. Meyer; Sage, forthcoming); *Racism at the Top* (with Teun A. van Dijk; Drava, 2000); *Discourse and Discrimination* (with Martin Reisigl; Routledge, in press); *The Semiotics of Racism* (with M. Reisigl; Passagen Verlag, in press); *Loss of Communication in the Information Age* (with R. de Cillia and H. J. Krumm; Austrian Academy of Sciences, forthcoming); and *Debating Europe: Globalisation Rhetoric and European Union Employment Policies* (with P. Muntigl and G. Weiss; Benjamins, forthcoming). ruth.wodak@univie.ac.at

Introduction

DEBORAH SCHIFFRIN, DEBORAH TANNEN, AND HEIDI E. HAMILTON

What Is Discourse Analysis?

Discourse analysis is a rapidly growing and evolving field. Current research in this field now flows from numerous academic disciplines that are very different from one another. Included, of course, are the disciplines in which models for understanding, and methods for analyzing, discourse first developed, such as linguistics, anthropology, and philosophy. But also included are disciplines that have applied – and thus often extended – such models and methods to problems within their own academic domains, such as communication, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and artificial intelligence.

Given this disciplinary diversity, it is no surprise that the terms "discourse" and "discourse analysis" have different meanings to scholars in different fields. For many, particularly linguists, "discourse" has generally been defined as anything "beyond the sentence." For others (for example Fasold 1990: 65), the study of discourse is the study of language use. These definitions have in common a focus on specific instances or spates of language. But critical theorists and those influenced by them can speak, for example, of "discourse of power" and "discourses of racism," where the term "discourses" not only becomes a count noun, but further refers to a broad conglomeration of linguistic and nonlinguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that together construct power or racism.

So abundant are definitions of discourse that many linguistics books on the subject now open with a survey of definitions. In their collection of classic papers in discourse analysis, for example, Jaworski and Coupland (1999: 1–3) include ten definitions from a wide range of sources. They all, however, fall into the three main categories noted above: (1) anything beyond the sentence, (2) language use, and (3) a broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language.

The definitional issues associated with discourse and discourse analysis are by no means unique. In his two-volume reference book on semantics, for example, Lyons (1997) illustrates ten different uses of the word *mean*, and thus an equal number of possible domains of the field of semantics. In his introductory chapter on pragmatics,

Levinson (1983) discusses twelve definitions of the field of pragmatics (including some which could easily cover either discourse analysis or sociolinguistics). Since semantics, pragmatics, and discourse all concern language, communication, meaning, and context it is perhaps not surprising that these three fields of linguistics are those whose definitions seem to be most variable.

The variety of papers in this *Handbook* reflects the full range of variation in definitions of – and approaches to – discourse analysis. The different understandings of discourse represented in this volume reflect the rising popularity of the field. Although it is not our intent to explain how or why discourse has gained so powerful an appeal for so wide a range of analytical imaginations (see Jaworski and Coupland 1999: 3–5; van Dijk 1997), our own intellectual/academic histories – all in linguistics – reveal some of the different paths that have led us to an interest in discourse. Since each of our paths is different, we here speak in our own voices – in the order in which we arrived at Georgetown University, where we all now teach.

Deborah Tannen

When I decided to pursue a PhD in linguistics, I held a BA and MA in English literature and had for several years been teaching remedial writing and freshman composition at Lehman College, the City University of New York. Restless to do something new, I attended the 1973 Linguistic Institute sponsored by the Linguistic Society of America at the University of Michigan. That summer I fell in love with linguistics, unaware that "language in context," the topic of that Institute, did not typify the field. Inspired by A. L. Becker's introductory course and by Robin Lakoff's course on politeness theory and communicative strategies, as well as by Emanuel Schegloff's public lecture on the closings of telephone conversations, I headed for the University of California, Berkeley, to pursue a PhD. There I discovered, along with Robin Lakoff, Charles Fillmore (then interested in frame semantics), Wallace Chafe (then interested in scripts theory and the comparison of speaking and writing), and John Gumperz (then developing his theory of conversational inference). Not for a moment did I think I was doing anything but linguistics. The word "discourse" was not a major category with which I identified. There were no journals with the word "discourse" in their titles. The only journal that specialized in language in context was *Language in Society*, which had a strongly anthropological orientation. I vividly recall the sense of excitement and possibility I felt when a fellow graduate student mentioned, as we stood in the halls outside the linguistics department, that another journal was about to be launched: *Discourse Processes*, edited by psychologist Roy Freedle at Educational Testing Service in Princeton.

When I joined the faculty of the sociolinguistics program at Georgetown University in 1979, I briefly redefined myself as a sociolinguist. That year I submitted an abstract to the annual LSA meeting and checked the box "sociolinguistics" to aid the committee in placing my paper on the program. But when I delivered the paper, I found myself odd man out as the lone presenter analyzing transcripts of conversation among a panel of Labovians displaying charts and graphs of phonological variation. I promptly redefined what I was doing as discourse analysis – the name I also gave to courses I

developed in Georgetown. When invited to organize a Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics in 1981, I titled the meeting (and the book that resulted) "Analyzing Discourse," and invited as speakers linguists, anthropologists, and psychologists, all of whom were examining language in context.

During these early years, a number of journals appeared that reflected and contributed to the development of the field: *Text*, the first of several journals founded and edited by Teun van Dijk in Amsterdam, and *Journal of Pragmatics*, co-edited by Jacob Mey and Hartmut Haberland in Denmark. As the years passed, many other journals were added – too many to name them all, but including *Pragmatics, Research on Language and Social Interaction, Discourse and Society, Multilingua, Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, Narrative Inquiry, Journal of Sociolinguistics*, and *Discourse Studies*. The proliferation of journals in itself testifies to the upsurge of interest in discourse analysis, and its many incarnations.

The changes I have seen in the two decades since I first began defining myself as a discourse analyst reflect the tremendous growth in this area. Work in discourse analysis is now so diverse that "discourse" is almost a synonym for "language" – coming full circle to where I saw such work at the start.

Deborah Schiffrin

I discovered linguistics and discourse analysis in a very roundabout way. In my senior year of college at Temple University, I read Erving Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* during a course in sociological theory (the last requirement of my major). I was so excited by his work that I went on to read everything else he had written and then decided to continue studying face-to-face interaction in a PhD program in sociology at Temple. There my studies included an eclectic blend of sociological and social theory, semiotics (which included initial forays into structural and transformational linguistics), statistics, and urban studies. While still at Temple, I wrote an article on the semiotics of the handshake, which I boldly sent to Goffman. What followed was an invitation to a personal meeting and then his permission to audit a course with him. (The course prerequisite was to read all his work before the first class!) When my advisor at Temple decided to leave for another position, I had already decided to try to work with Goffman. Ironically, it was Goffman himself who first turned my thoughts toward a PhD in linguistics: during our first meeting, he proclaimed his belief that linguistics could add rigor and respectability to the analysis of face-to-face interaction.

Once I was enrolled in the PhD Program in linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania, I quickly learned that although linguists knew that understanding social interaction was important, the *study* of social interaction itself had a somewhat peripheral role in the linguistics curriculum. What I found instead was Labov's sociolinguistics: an energizing mix of fieldwork, urban ethnography, variation analysis, and narrative analysis. I gladly immersed myself in the life and work of the faculty and students in the sociolinguistics community: we interviewed people, measured vowels, coded narratives, and wondered (and worried) about how to measure different "styles." Although many of my teachers published articles about discourse (Bill Labov

on narrative and ritual insults, Ellen Prince on syntax, presupposition, and information status, Gillian Sankoff on grammaticalization in Tok Pisin), there was little sense of collective interest or of a community of discourse analysts.

As it became time for me to write my dissertation, I decided that I wanted to use what I had learned as a linguist to study social interaction. I remember my sense of confusion, though, when I tried to use what I had learned about the systematicity of language, as well as to follow the advice of both Labov and Goffman. Labov presented me with one mission: solve an old problem with a new method. But Goffman presented me with another: describe something that had not yet been described. After spending some time trying to apply these directives to the study of everyday arguments, I ended up focusing on discourse markers.

When I joined the faculty of Georgetown in 1982, I was immersed in the study of discourse, even though I was hired as a sociolinguist who could teach pragmatics and speech acts. Discourse analysis gradually filtered into those courses, as did face-to-face interaction, variation analysis, fieldwork, and even my old friend sociological theory. These various interests further jelled when I organized a Georgetown University Round Table on languages and linguistics in 1984, with the title "Meaning, Form and Use in Context: Linguistic Applications." Thanks to the interest in discourse created by Deborah Tannen, and the receptiveness of my sociolinguistics colleagues Roger Shuy and Ralph Fasold, I found – and continue to find – a community of faculty and students eager to pursue a collection of interests similar to my own under the rubric of "discourse analysis."

Heidi E. Hamilton

My motivation to study discourse came from my real-life experiences with what Gumperz has called "crosstalk." After receiving my bachelor's degree in German language/literature and cross-cultural studies, I worked in the field of international education for four years. Day after day I witnessed misunderstandings related to (what I would later learn were called) contextualization cues, framing, and complementary schismogenesis. I decided it was time to search for a graduate program to study the linguistic underpinnings of these misunderstandings. After culling through numerous graduate catalogues, I discovered that the courses that I had identified as the ones that seemed most intriguing and relevant led to a degree in linguistics at Georgetown University with a concentration on sociolinguistics. So off I went.

I was fortunate to begin my studies in 1981. The Georgetown University Round Table focusing on discourse had just been organized by Deborah Tannen. The entire department – students and faculty alike – was infused with a sense of excitement and open-ended possibility regarding the future of discourse studies. It was within this context that I worked as Deborah's research assistant and took her eye-opening courses on the analysis of conversation. In my second year of graduate study Deborah Schiffrin arrived at Georgetown as a new assistant professor, bringing with her a deep understanding of sociology and an approach to the analysis of discourse that was greatly influenced by Labov's work on variation. We graduate students were in the enviable position of working with two of the most innovative young discourse

scholars at the time – a situation which became even more apparent to us a couple of years later.

In the summer of 1985, Georgetown University hosted 600 students and faculty who came from around the world to participate in the LSA Linguistic Institute organized by Deborah Tannen. Through the whirlwind of courses, lectures, and discussions, the interactional sociolinguistic approach to discourse analysis that we had been steeped in for several years was taking shape and gaining in prominence. Those of us educated at Georgetown kept hearing how very lucky we were to have the opportunity to study "this kind" of linguistics year-round. In retrospect, these comments seem to foreshadow the movement of the study of discourse from the fringes to a more mainstream position within linguistics.

Though my initial interest in crosstalk within international contexts never diminished (I came close to writing my dissertation on directness in German conversational style while living in Berlin for several years), I ended up shifting gears to another type of problematic talk – that of Alzheimer's disease. Little did I know that, with that choice of dissertation topic, I was jumping headfirst into a paradigmatic maelstrom. Being trained as an interactional discourse analyst, I was attempting to study a population that was firmly entrenched in the territory of neuro- and psycholinguistics. Time after time I found myself having to justify (to linguists and to gerontologists/neurologists alike) my attempt to marry the odd couple of interactional sociolinguistics and Alzheimer's disease. In the process, I learned quite a bit about how to talk across disciplinary boundaries, an enterprise that can be both frustrating and invigorating.

In 1990, when I joined the Georgetown Linguistics Department faculty, the program in discourse analysis was already very well established. Graduate students were entering our program better prepared than ever before and were ready to take their study of discourse to a new level. The field was mature enough to be expanded to include the study of "exceptional" discourse, which in turn can illuminate the often invisible workings of more ordinary, everyday discourse.

Purpose of the *Handbook*

Our own experiences in the field have led us to the conviction that the vastness and diversity of discourse analysis is a great strength rather than a weakness. Far from its being a liability to be lamented because of the lack of a single coherent theory, we find the theoretical and methodological diversity of discourse analysis to be an asset. We thus envision this volume as fostering the cooperative use – by linguists and others interested in empirically grounded studies of language – of the many theoretical and analytical resources currently proliferating in the study of discourse.

Our collection of forty-one articles suggests that the future cooperation which we hope will emerge will respect the many differences that distinguish the approaches reflected here. There are differences in the type of data drawn upon, ranging from political speeches to everyday conversation to literary texts. There are also differences in the types of context considered, including, for example, community, institutional, and ideological contexts. Finally, there is a varied range of theoretical paradigms, such as relevance theory and systemic-functional linguistics, and of methodology, including

interpretive, statistical, and formal methods. As a result, the articles collected here suggest a foundational paradigm for "discourse analysis" that should be broad enough to support a wide range of assumptions, approaches, methods, analyses, and even definitions, of discourse.

What are the strengths and advantages of representing so wide a variety of discourse studies? Why have we collected so broad a set of articles and assumed so wide a scope for discourse analysis?

First, the scope of chapters reveals the range of problems that discourse analysis has addressed and can continue to address. These problems range from linguistic phenomena, such as preposing (Ward and Birner) and word meaning (Norrick, Schiffrin), to interdisciplinary phenomena, such as discourse flow (Chafe) and literary pragmatics (Mey), to social problems such as discrimination against minorities (Wodak and Reisigl) and patient compliance with doctors' instructions (Ainsworth-Vaughn). The problems addressed by the chapters also vary in focus, from historical discourse analysis (Brinton) to discourse and conflict (Kakavá); in analytical scope, from intonation (Couper-Kuhlen) to narrative (Johnstone); and in methodology, from case studies (Linde) to statistical surveys (Biber and Conrad).

Second, the inclusion of a range of chapters will immediately highlight analytical parallels among perspectives that are already substantively and methodologically aligned, such as the links among critical discourse analysis (van Dijk), the analysis of discourse and racism (Wodak and Reisigl), and political discourse (Wilson). However, we also hope that readers will discover parallels among areas whose similarities have been overlooked. Included here might be methodological parallels, such as the adoption of ethnographic methods across different institutional domains, as noted in Adger's on discourse in educational settings and Ainsworth-Vaughn's on the discourse of medical encounters. Readers may also find that they can apply empirical findings from one area to other areas: for example, insights into information structure (Ward and Birner) may be relevant to doctor–patient communication (Ainsworth-Vaughn) as well as discourse and conflict (Kakavá) or the discursive construction of the self (Harré). Similarly, the analysis of information flow (Chafe) may inform the formal demarcation of discourse units (Polanyi).

In a similar spirit, we hope that readers will find thematic parallels among chapters that approach similar domains of discourse in different ways. For example, "the computer" – so pervasive a force in linguistic and social dynamics – enters the *Handbook* in numerous sections and chapters. It is seen as a method in Edwards's chapter on transcription, and as both method and resource for data in Biber and Conrad's quantitative analyses of register variation and in Stubbs's discussion of corpus analysis. The computer provides a source of both data and genre in Herring's chapter on computer-mediated discourse, and as an algorithm in Webber's discussion of computational models of discourse.

It is with such patterns in mind, then, that we hope that the range of chapters – and perceived connections among them, many of which we have not described here or even foreseen – will enhance the ability of discourse analysts to deal with a variety of problems and phenomena in ways that are not only internally coherent, but also enriched by multiple connections with one another.

A third benefit to the wide scope of chapters is the reinforcement of the synergy between theory and data analysis that is reflected in the pervasive understanding of

discourse analysis as the examination of actual (not hypothetical) text and/or talk. Although authors have pursued a range of formats within the general topic assigned to them, we have encouraged them – in keeping with the term "discourse analysis," as well as the strong empirical bent noted above – to illustrate and substantiate general points by drawing upon concrete analyses of real discourse data. This springs from our conviction that theory and data are inseparable and mutually enriching: theoretical insights are needed to move the analysis of discourse beyond instance-specific insights, at the same time as analysis must be grounded in actual instances of language in order to provide both realistic constraints and empirical bases for theory-building.

Fourth, though we have not asked contributors to address the need for – or even the desirability of – a single discourse theory, what contributors chose to include and emphasize, the themes and problems they address from the perspective of their specific areas, and the analyses and findings that they report all reveal the richness that needs to be respected and encompassed in discourse theories.

We hope that the breadth of articles collected here will provide a comprehensive view of the central issues in contemporary discourse analysis that is both accessible to students and informative to scholars. To this end, we have included articles by leading scholars in the field that provide an overview of their previous work, as well as chapters that survey the history of an area and summarize recent developments. In other articles, firmly established domains are assessed in order to link past approaches and findings with future challenges; in still others, authors develop relatively new fields of inquiry. Thus, we hope that the *Handbook* will serve not only as an authoritative guide to the major developments of discourse analysis, but also as a significant contribution to current research.

Organizational Structure

The organization of the *Handbook* reflects and builds upon the diversity of discourse analysis. Part I, "Discourse Analysis and Linguistics," locates the field in relation to the different aspects of, and perspectives on, language that typically constitute the field of linguistics. Of particular note is the growing interest in the influence of discourse from the traditional subfields of linguistics: phonology (Couper-Kuhlen), semantics (Martin, Norrick), syntax (Ward and Birner), and historical linguistics (Brinton). In all these chapters, we see scholars looking to naturally occurring discourse as the site within which to analyze sound, sense, and structure, as well as to understand diachronic processes such as language change. The chapters in this part thus demonstrate how examining utterances in discourse contributes to areas of linguistics traditionally limited to levels of analysis lower than that of discourse.

The part begins with sound (Couper-Kuhlen's discussion of intonation) and moves on to different views and levels of meaning (Martin, Schiffrin, Norrick), utterance interpretation (Blakemore), and sentence form (Ward and Birner). It concludes with an historical perspective on discourse (Brinton), as well as two comparative perspectives (Myhill on typology, Biber and Conrad on register variation). Not surprisingly, some of the chapters comfortably cross the borders not only between sentence and

discourse, and between form and function, but also between traditionally conceived boundaries within linguistics itself: semantics and pragmatics (Norrick, Schiffrin), syntax and pragmatics (Ward and Birner), phonology and pragmatics (Couper-Kuhlen), and syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Martin, Myhill, Brinton).

In general, then, chapters in part I provide an overview of specific linguistic issues that can be addressed through discourse analysis – how these issues (and their study) can not only reveal something about discourse, but also have an impact on the traditional subfields of linguistics. Such interest reflects not just a methodological shift to empirical data, but also a philosophical shift toward a humanistic linguistics in which language, theory, and practice inform and enrich one another.

The interdependence of theory and practice is the theme taken up in the next two parts, part II, "The Linking of Theory and Practice in Discourse Analysis," and part III, "Discourse: Language, Context, and Interaction." Our understanding of the term "practice" is slightly different in each of these two parts, roughly divided by whose practices are the focus of attention.

The focus in part II is upon analysts' practices, that is, the methodology of discourse analysis, and its relationship to theory. Collectively, the chapters address such questions as the following: how do the methodological practices through which we collect, represent, and analyze discourse reflect our theoretical assumptions and constructs? How might the kind of data we analyze not only reflect our theories, but also alter them? What tools should we use to analyze specific problems and issues? Just as it is possible to find interesting questions in any discourse that comes one's way (Chafe 1994: 12), it also behooves us to make use of any methods and theoretical insights that shed light on the discourse we have undertaken to analyze (cf. Chafe 1994: 18).

In this sense, the chapter by Lakoff sets the tone for the section, as she shows how a variety of theoretical and methodological constructs can be brought to bear on a single social/linguistic action, apologies. The part ends with Edwards's examination of an issue that must be addressed, tacitly or directly, by every discourse analyst: the development of a transcription system that is both theoretically motivated and methodologically justified. Included in the section are chapters that present retrospective overviews by two of the field's pioneers (Gumperz, Schegloff), a survey of varying methods and theoretical paradigms found in the analysis of discourse in interaction (Heller), and examples of approaches as varied as Polanyi's use of formal algorithms to represent discourse structures, Dubois and Sankoff's use of quantitative methods to analyze discourse, and Stubbs's examination of computer-based corpus analysis.

Although we do not use the term "practice" in the title of part III, "Language, Context, and Interaction," our focus here is on the interactive contexts in which (and through which) language is used. As a result, our attention shifts to examine the wide variety of ways that interlocutors draw upon the symbolic resources of language to accomplish the many different tasks of social life, including the presentation of self and other in a variety of institutional and interpersonal capacities.

This part is further divided into two sections. First comes "Political, Social, and Institutional Domains." Here we find a range of empirical studies and approaches showing how discourse is situated in different realms of social life and how these contextualized uses help to define interlocutors as members of specific discourse communities. The first set of chapters focuses on relatively public discourse: van Dijk on critical discourse analysis, Wodak and Reisigl on racism, Wilson on political