

Edited by Vijay K. Bhatia, John Flowerdew  
and Rodney H. Jones



Advances in

*DISCOURSE  
STUDIES*

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# Advances in Discourse Studies

*Advances in Discourse Studies* brings together contributions from top scholars in the field, investigating the historical and theoretical relationships between new advances in discourse studies and pointing towards new directions for the future of the discipline. Covering areas such as conversation analysis, corpus-based discourse analysis and genre analysis, this book provides a unique survey of the most recent advances in methodology and approach to discourse analysis.

Featuring clear section introductions, discussion questions, classroom projects and recommended readings at the end of each section, as well as case studies illustrating each approach discussed, this will be an invaluable resource for students of interdisciplinary discourse analysis as well as to academics in a wider range of disciplines including linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, communication studies and cultural studies.

**Vijay K. Bhatia** and **Rodney H. Jones** are Professors in the Department of English and Communication at the City University of Hong Kong. **John Flowerdew** is Professor at the School of Education, University of Leeds.



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First published 2008  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa  
business*

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s  
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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*  
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-89229-1 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 10: 0-415-39809-6 (hbk)

ISBN 10: 0-415-39810-X (pbk)

ISBN 13: 978-0-415-39809-1 (hbk)

ISBN 13: 978-0-415-39810-7 (pbk)

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# Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<b>1 Approaches to discourse analysis</b>	<b>1</b>
VIJAY K. BHATIA, JOHN FLOWERDEW AND RODNEY H. JONES	
<b>PART I</b>	
<b>Conversation analysis</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2 Conversation analysis: overview and new directions</b>	<b>22</b>
PAUL DREW AND TRACI CURL	
<b>3 Being out of order: overlapping talk as evidence of trouble in airline pilots' work</b>	<b>36</b>
MAURICE NEVILE	
Suggestions for further work	51
<b>PART II</b>	
<b>Ethnographic-based discourse analysis</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>4 Ethnographic-based discourse analysis: uses, issues and prospects</b>	<b>56</b>
GRAHAM SMART	
<b>5 Using ethnography in the analysis of pedagogical practice: perspectives from activity theory</b>	<b>67</b>
ANGEL LIN	
Suggestions for further work	81

**PART III**

<b>Corpus-based discourse analysis</b>	<b>83</b>
6 Corpora and discourse analysis: new ways of doing old things DAVID Y.W. LEE	86
7 Corpus-based analyses of discourse: dimensions of variation in conversation DOUGLAS BIBER	100
8 Corpora and context in professional writing LYNNE FLOWERDEW	115
Suggestions for further work	128

**PART IV**

<b>Multimodal discourse analysis</b>	<b>129</b>
9 Some thoughts on personal identity construction: a multimodal perspective SIGRID NORRIS	132
10 Multimodal discourse analysis: the case of 'ability' in UK secondary school English CAREY JEWITT AND KEN JONES	149
Suggestions for further work	161

**PART V**

<b>Genre analysis</b>	<b>163</b>
11 Towards critical genre analysis VIJAY K. BHATIA	166
12 Genre evolution? The case for a diachronic perspective CAROL BERKENKOTTER	178
Suggestions for further work	192

<b>PART VI</b>	
<b>Critical discourse analysis</b>	<b>193</b>
13 Critical discourse analysis and strategies of resistance	195
JOHN FLOWERDEW	
14 Mediation, text and action	211
LILIE CHOULIARAKI	
Suggestions for further work	228
<b>PART VII</b>	
<b>Mediated discourse analysis</b>	<b>229</b>
15 Discourse itineraries: nine processes of resemiotization	233
RON SCOLLON	
16 Good sex and bad karma: discourse and the historical body	245
RODNEY H. JONES	
Suggestions for further work	258
<i>Index</i>	259

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# Contributors

**Carol Berkenkotter**, Professor, Department of Rhetoric, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA. Email: cberken@umn.edu

**Vijay K. Bhatia**, Professor, Department of English and Communication, City University of Hong Kong, China. Email: enbhatia@cityu.edu.hk

**Douglas Biber**, Regents' Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ, USA. Email: Douglas.biber@nau.edu

**Lilie Chouliaraki**, Professor and Chair of Media and Communication, Department of Media and Communication, London School of Economics and Politics. Email: L.Chouliaraki@lse.ac.uk

**Traci Curl**, RCKU Fellow, Department of Language and Linguistic Science, University of York, UK. Email: tsc3@york.ac.uk

**Paul Drew**, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of York, UK. Email: wpd1@york.ac.uk .

**John Flowerdew**, Professor of Applied Linguistics, University of Leeds, UK. Email: enjohnf@cityu.edu.hk

**Lynne Flowerdew**, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, University of Leeds, UK. Email: L.J.Flowerdew@education.leeds.ac.uk

**Carey Jewitt**, Reader in Education and Technology, University of London, UK. Email: c.jewitt@ioe.ac.uk

**Ken Jones**, Professor, Department of Education, Keele University, UK.

**Rodney H. Jones**, Associate Professor, Department of English and Communication, City University of Hong Kong, China. Email: enrodney@cityu.edu.hk

**David Y.W. Lee**, Assistant Professor, Department of English and Communication, City University of Hong Kong, China. Email: davidlee@cityu.edu.hk

**Angel Lin**, Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Chinese University of Hong Kong, China. Email: AngelLin@cuhk.edu.hk

**Maurice Nevile**, Research Fellow Division of Communication and Education, University of Canberra, Australia. Email: Maurice.nevile@canberra.edu.au

**Sigrid Norris**, Associate Head of School (Research), Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. Email: sigrid.norris@aut.ac.nz

**Ron Scollon**, Retired. Email: scollon@aptalaska.net

**Graham Smart**, Associate Professor. School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. Email: gsmart@connect.carleton.ca

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# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Department of English and Communication of City University of Hong Kong for financial and administrative assistance in preparing this volume. In particular we would like to express our gratitude to Ms Kitty Leung, for her efficient and enthusiastic administrative support, and to Ms Annabel Knibb and Mr Richard Forest for helping to edit and proofread the manuscript.

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# 1 Approaches to discourse analysis

*Vijay K. Bhatia, John Flowerdew and  
Rodney H. Jones*

In recent decades the social sciences have undergone a ‘discursive turn’ and become increasingly interested in the part played by language in the creation of the reality that surrounds us. This interest has been accompanied by the development of new theories and methods for the study of language use and its role in human society. Discourse analysis, though often seen as located within the discipline of linguistics, is in fact an interdisciplinary field of inquiry. With a history of less than 50 years it has acquired the status, stability, significance and integrity of a well-established discipline, extending the conventional boundaries of linguistics. Dating back to the 1960s, it has been defined as the analysis of linguistic behaviour, written and spoken, beyond the limits of individual sentences, focusing primarily on the meaning constructed and interpreted as language is used in particular social contexts.

This definition really contains two main ingredients: the idea that language can be analysed not just on the level of the phoneme/morpheme, the word, the clause or the sentence, but also on the level of the text, and the idea that language ought to be analysed not as an abstract set of rules, but as a tool for social action. Although early conceptualizations of discourse analysis were seen as an offshoot of linguistic analysis, focusing more on the ‘language as text’ side of the equation and drawing on the work of early text analysts like Propp (1958) and Jakobson (1937), in its present form it has moved to more of a focus on ‘language in use’, drawing on insights from sociology, psychology, semiotics, communication studies, rhetoric, as well as disciplines such as business and marketing, accountancy, organizational studies, law and information technology, to name only a few. In this regard, it has evolved as a fruitful way of understanding the use of language in a variety of institutional, academic, workplace and professional settings.

Another interesting aspect of the development of discourse analysis has been that it has attracted the attention not only of linguists and applied linguists, but also socio-political theorists, sociologists, anthropologists, computer experts, business and legal specialists, communication experts and organizational theorists. In this context, it is hardly surprising that discourse analysis has, in the last four decades developed into a variety of schools

using different approaches, frameworks, procedures and methodologies and focusing on different kinds of semiotic data, with the aim of deriving insights for a variety of purposes.

The focus of most contemporary approaches to discourse on 'language in use' has its roots in a number of larger developments in the twentieth century in the fields of philosophy, anthropology, sociology and linguistics itself. The roots of this view of language are perhaps best traced to the work of Wittgenstein (1951/1972), who saw language as a series of 'games' through which people construct what he calls 'forms of life', particular ways of being in relation to others and their surroundings. Less than two decades later, with the publication of Austin's 1962 classic *How to Do Things with Words*, the notion that the study of language should involve more than just its structure but also the way it is used and the way social standards and practices shape and give rise to it became more prominent, at least in philosophical circles. Later, thinkers like Foucault and Derrida, though diverging considerably from the tradition of Austin, also made language, and in particular 'discourse', central to their understanding of social practice.

Just as the notion of language as social practice began to take hold among philosophers of language, social scientific disciplines particularly concerned with social practice began to recognize the centrality of language in much of what they were studying. Anthropologist Gregory Bateson and psychiatrist Jürgen Ruesch (Ruesch and Bateson 1951) argued that social and psychological phenomena cannot be separated from the 'matrix of communication' in which they occur. They were followed by a host of social and behavioural scientists, among them Goffman (1959) and Garfinkel (1967), who focused on the role of language in social behaviour and social formations. By the 1970s psychology, sociology, and anthropology had all taken a decidedly 'discursive turn', influenced not just by the structuralist linguistics of de Saussure, but also by a new breed of linguists who at around the same time were becoming more and more concerned with the relationship of language to social actions and to the socio-cultural worlds of those who use it.

In America this concern had given rise to the work in the early part of the twentieth century of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf as well as others in the Boasian tradition of anthropological linguistics. In Europe this new concern for language in use was later exemplified by the work of Michael Halliday. Departing from structuralist and cognitive paradigms in grammar which saw language systems as autonomous and independent of language use, Halliday insisted that 'language is as it is because of its function in the social structure' (1973: 65) and called for the development of a 'sociological linguistics', a discipline which will allow us to see language on two levels, a macro-sociological level in which language 'serves to transmit the social structure, the values, the systems of knowledge, all the deepest and most pervasive patterns of the culture' (1973: 45), and a micro-sociological level in which meanings are seen as specific to particular contexts and situations. Halliday's systemic functional grammar (SFG) has had a profound influence

on many contemporary schools of discourse analysis, including critical discourse analysis, mediated discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis. Although they were primarily developed at the level of the clause, the analytical tools of Halliday's grammar have been found to be well adapted to tracking participants, logical relations, processes, qualities, and evaluations of these by speakers and writers as they develop throughout a given text or across a group of texts (see e.g. Martin and Rose 2003).

The discourse analytical approaches that have grown out of these interdisciplinary developments are many, including register and genre analyses, critical discourse analysis, discursive psychology, conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, stylistics, mediated discourse analysis, corpus-based analysis, narrative analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, rhetorical-grammatical analysis, argumentation analysis, and many others, and no book on discourse could hope to cover all of them. Our intention in this volume is to explore seven major approaches to the study of discourse that we believe represent a range of directions which the intellectual traditions we described above have taken. Although all of them, to varying degrees, represent a concern for language use in the social world, they focus on widely varying aspects of its use and often define the social world in widely varying ways, from the immediate conversational context to the larger political, social or economic context. They are corpus-based approaches to discourse, genre analysis, conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, mediated discourse analysis and ethnographic approaches to discourse. Some of them, like genre analysis and conversation analysis, are decades old, while others, like mediated discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis, are more recent to the scene.

As the title of this book suggests, we are not as interested in describing the type of work that has been done using these various approaches as we are in showing how those working in these areas are charting new courses, which often involve borrowing from other fields and other schools of discourse analysis. In doing this we hope to understand not just what is unique about each of these approaches, but also where future possibilities for convergence and interdisciplinarity are opening up.

In order to do this, however, it is first necessary to understand the main questions upon which these approaches diverge and the different roads they have taken from common intellectual roots. As will become clear in our discussion, despite a common commitment to the study of texts and their use in social contexts, those working in the different approaches diverge on two of the most basic issues in this formulation: the question of what a text is, and the question of what counts as the social context in which that text is used. In a sense these differences can be seen as the result of the influence of multiple disciplines on the development of discourse analysis. Sociology and anthropology have encouraged analysts to view the use of language as a function of the context in which language is used, whereas linguistics has

constrained discourse analysts to focus primarily on text, with context in the background. In recent years another factor has entered the equation, that is, the role of semiotic modes, other than written or spoken text, which has opened up the possibilities of looking at nonlinear extra-linguistic forms of communication such as pictures, diagrams, gestures, colours, differing fonts and their sizes, to name only a few. Finally, discourse analysts are faced with a variety of new media of communication including computer-mediated communication, SMS messaging and other new communication technologies.

In what follows, we would like to look briefly at where these different approaches 'have been' in terms of their historical and intellectual development in relation to the other approaches. We will also examine where these approaches stand on these fundamental questions of text and context, in preparation for, in the remainder of this volume, considering where they might be going and how their trajectories might converge.

### Conversation analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson (Sacks 1974; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; Schegloff and Sacks 1973). It has its roots in *ethnomethodology*, a branch of sociology developed by Harold Garfinkel (1967) which, like the 'ethnography of communication' of Gumperz and Hymes, chiefly concerns itself with the basic competences and interpretative processes members of a culture use to interact and interpret their experience. The central goal of conversational analysis, as Atkinson and Heritage (1984:1) emphasize, is 'the description and explication of the competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, socially organized interaction'.

In contrast to earlier social scientific traditions, sociologists like Goffman (1981) and Garfinkel (1967) were adamant that people's lives should be studied only on their own terms without reference to theoretical preconceptions. Rather than starting with a theory and analysing people's behaviour *through* it, those in this tradition advocate intentionally setting aside theory to try to get at what's actually going on based on close analysis of people's (often mundane) speech and actions.

By analysing the properties of conversation, conversation analysts attempt to understand the patterns in social life. The assumption is that such patterns can be used to develop procedural rules governing talk-in-interaction. Echoing Austin and Steele, conversation analysts regard discourse as a kind of social action – we are always 'doing things with our words'. What is unique about their approach is their concern with the sequential organization of actions, and, in particular the mechanics of *turn-taking*. CA's guiding analytical principle, as Nevile reminds us in his chapter, is asking of each utterance in a conversation the question, 'Why that now?' Utterances are seen as 'paired

actions' (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974), always dependent on what has come before and what will come after. The most basic expression of this fundamental idea is the concept of the *adjacency pair*, a pair of utterances that are not just linguistically related but 'socially' related because they accomplish particular social actions. The ways utterances (and the actions they accomplish) are put together sequentially follow rules of *conditional relevance*, each utterance displaying a particular understanding of the previous utterance and creating the conditions for subsequent utterances.

In contrast with the ethnographer's data, which consists of interviews, field notes, lived experiences or narratives of participants, conversational analysts work on naturally occurring and closely transcribed conversational data. They regard observational data as prone to manipulation by researchers or the subjects themselves. As Atkinson and Heritage (1984) point out, observational data is often based on preconceived notions of what is probable or important. Although like ethnographers, conversation analysts also work on a selection of data, their data is conversational and not observational, consisting of very detailed transcriptions of natural talk.

The most dramatic difference between linguistic ethnographers and conversation analysis is on the issue of context. Whereas, for ethnographers, the wider social context is used to inform their understanding of why language is used the way it is, conversation analysts view context as constructed moment by moment through conversational moves, and argue that those aspects of context not conversationally attended to by participants should not be part of the analysis. That is not to say that conversation analysts do not concern themselves with larger issues of social identity and power (such as gender and institutional communication). Rather, they believe that the way to understand these issues is through a close analysis of the mechanics of interaction rather than with reference to larger social structures or ideologies.

### **Ethnographic approaches to discourse analysis**

Although there are several ethnographic approaches to discourse analysis, most of them draw their inspirations from anthropology and social psychology and regard social context as the central aspect of communication. Present ethnographic approaches to discourse owe much to an American anthropological linguistic tradition that gave rise to the work of scholars like Gumperz and Hymes (1986), whose 'ethnography of communication' aims to provide a description of how members of a particular community are expected to perform linguistically in order to be considered 'competent' members. Communicative competence involves not just mastery of the linguistic system, but the ability to use language in conjunction with social practices and social identities in ways which others in the community will recognize to perform a myriad of social activities such as engaging in small talk, making transactions, joking, arguing, teasing, and warning. It is learnt

within communities through participating in communication, anticipating others' responses, and incorporating generalities into our own repertoire of actions and meanings (Mead 1934).

Most traditions in ethnography from anthropology and linguistics aim to understand the social world in terms of the 'lived experience' of those who inhabit it. In this regard, they take what Pike (1967) calls an *emic* approach to language, seeking to discover patterns in language use based on the observation of natural social events of native participants. The participants themselves have learnt these patterns by participating in their communities and themselves observing by other members of the community. Despite this commitment to 'native' ways of understanding communication, ethnographic approaches to language invariably involve a process of selection based on the analyst's practical concerns and theoretical preoccupations. Data gathering typically involves documenting, describing and interpreting social practices through observation and analysis of a selection of socio-linguistic behaviours. This selection invariably takes place in the fieldwork, and often consists of what researchers finds interesting, and of course, depends on what the subjects allow them to observe. So there is a process of selection at both ends, by the observers and the ones being observed. In addition to these processes of selection, there is also another area of decision-making: when the observer prepares a record of their fieldwork, which consists of evidence for the identification, description and interpretation of social practices, they invariably make use of a specific theory or framework within which they select and interpret their observations. These observations are seen as the most important tool for ethnographic analysis of communication.

However, more recently several other instruments have also been added to the armoury of the ethnographer, which include structured or semi-structured interviews with participants in social interactions, focus group interviews, accounts of experienced participants, or what is often referred to as 'lived narratives of experience', to name a few. Using a combination of these tools, ethnographers interpret social behaviour of people in a specific society or culture to reach conclusions and make generalizations.

Smart (1998 and this volume) distinguishes several kinds of ethnographies, such as analytical, reflexive, naturalistic, institutional and interpretative. Following the Geertzian tradition of the *interpretation of cultures* (Geertz 1973), he uses 'interpretive ethnography' to 'explore a particular social group's discourse practices – as these are instantiated in writing, speaking, or other symbolic actions – in order to learn how members of the group view and operate within their mutually constructed conceptual world' (Smart).

From the point of view of a conventional understanding of discourse (textual) analysis, ethnographic analysis relies relatively less on actual analysis of linguistic data and more on text-external social and contextual factors. Ethnographers view purely linguistic analysis of data as less than satisfactory for understanding language as it is used in social and cultural contexts. At the same time, ethnographic approaches to discourse analysis

have had an important influence on other approaches to discourse such as critical discourse analysis, genre analysis, mediated discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis, and they have also made important contributions to the fields of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Widdowson 1978; Swales 1981, 1990; Bhatia 1993) and what have come to be known as the 'new literacy studies' (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Gee 1996; Street 1984). Lynne Flowerdew (this volume) also makes a case for introducing an ethnographic element into corpus linguistics.

### Corpus-based discourse analysis

Corpus-based analysis, which works with large amounts of machine-readable text, was initially used primarily in the fields of lexicography and grammar. It is only relatively recently that there have been extensive applications of corpus approaches to discourse analysis (Baker 2006). The earliest initiatives in corpus-based analysis of language use began with the creation of large (by the standards of those days) general corpora representing language use in a variety of contexts, both written as well as spoken, to draw insights from observations about how people use language, both in terms of lexico-grammar features and their functional variations. However, corpus development over the years has changed in several important ways. First the size of corpora has become much greater. The 'Bank of English' corpus contains about 450 million words, whereas the British National Corpus has about 100 million words. These large-scale general corpora are effective and reliable in providing insightful information about the preferred use of specific lexico-grammatical patterns in everyday language use. The most important aspect of this approach is that it makes it possible for linguists and discourse analysts to go beyond the analysis of sentences and short texts to the analysis of huge amounts of text. It is thereby possible to corroborate intuitions about individual instantiations concerning the functional value of particular language patterns by recourse to very large numbers of instances.

Work with large corpora has demonstrated that language follows to a large extent very regular patterns consisting of pre-constructed phrases. This is referred to as the 'idiom principle' by Sinclair (1991), in contrast to the 'open choice' principle, which refers to word-by-word 'slot and filler' combinations. According to Sinclair (1991) speakers primarily adhere to the idiom principle and only switch to the open choice principle when some constraint occurs which makes the idiom principle fail to function.

One implication of the idiom principle view of language is that these pre-constructed phrases may become the unit of analysis rather than individual words. In analysing such units it has become clear that certain words and phrases may take on particular 'semantic preferences' (typical areas of semantic meaning). Thus the word *glass* typically occurs with a lexical set of words to do with drinks, e.g. *sherry, lemonade, water, champagne, milk*, etc. (Baker 2006: 86). At the same time words and phrases may carry 'semantic

prosodies' (typical areas of pragmatic meaning, or connotations). Thus, a word like *cause* typically collocates with negatively loaded words – e.g. *accident, concern, damage, death, trouble* – and thereby takes on a negative semantic prosody; *provide*, on the other hand, is typically used with positive collocates – e.g. *aid, care, food, opportunities, relief, support* – and thus takes on a positive semantic prosody (Stubbs 1996). It is only through isolating many examples of use derived from large amounts of text that observations such as these regarding semantic preference and prosody can be made.

More recently corpus-based analysis has also become useful in the study of language variations in specific academic and professional genres. These corpora are usually much smaller. Connor and Upton (1996) make a strong case for this kind of study of specialized corpora.

While general corpora are important and provide a critical foundation for the study of language structure and use, they are less conducive for analysing language use in specific academic and professional situations. Consequently, there is now a strong and growing interest in compiling specialized corpora that focus on specific types of genres within specific contexts. Instead of being compiled for representativeness of language across a large number of communicative purposes, specialized corpora often focus on one particular genre ... or specific situation ... .

(Connor and Upton 1996: 2)

One important advantage of working with smaller corpora is that corpus-specific semantic prosodies may be thrown up. For example, Flowerdew (1997) showed how, in a corpus of the discourse of the last British governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, words such as *economy, individual, and wealth*, all carried a positive semantic prosody.

One of the reasons for the popularity of corpus-based discourse analysis is the facility that it provides to handle and analyse large quantities of data with minimal effort. Discourse and register analyses in their early days were constrained by the fact that any manual processing and analysis of data was seen as an impossible task, but with the availability of computers and a variety of analytical software, these tasks have become not only less cumbersome, but the results have also become more reliable and convincing.

Biber (this volume), one of the well-known specialists in this field, proposes what he calls multidimensional studies of register variation, by identifying not simply the 'salient linguistic co-occurrence patterns in a language', but also by 'comparing spoken and written registers in the linguistic space defined by those co-occurrence patterns'. By doing so, it is possible, he claims, not simply to construct distinctive grammars of individual registers, but also co-variant lexico-grammatical patterns across registers.

## **Multimodal discourse analysis**

Multimodal discourse analytical approaches regard text as just one of the many modes of communication available for social interaction. Although the three approaches we have seen so far vary significantly in terms of their focus on text and context, one factor that is still restrictive in all of them is the fact that they all take textual (linguistic) data to be the primary resource for social interactions. There is a widespread belief now that textual data is not necessarily the most important mode used for the construction and interpretations of social meaning. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 34) rightly point out:

The new realities of the semiotic landscape are ... primarily brought about by social and cultural factors: the intensification of linguistic and cultural diversity within the boundaries of nation-states, and by the weakening of these boundaries, due to multiculturalism, electronic media of communication, technologies of transport and global economic developments. Global flows of capital dissolve not only cultural and political boundaries but also semiotic boundaries.

Semiotic modes other than text can include gestures, posture, proxemics, visual images, document layout, music and architectural design, to name a few. Multimodality is especially important when one considers media such as film and TV, not to mention the increasing dynamics of electronic media. Idema (2003: 33) sums up the difference in traditional text- or language-based approaches to discourse analysis and the new multimodal approach to discourse analysis as follows:

In general terms, the trend towards a multimodal appreciation of meaning making centres around two issues: first, the de-centring of language as favoured meaning making; and second, the re-visiting and blurring of the traditional boundaries between and roles allocated to language, image, page layout, document design, and so on .... This blurring of boundaries among the different semiotic dimensions of representation has been linked, on the one hand, to changes in our 'semiotic landscape', and, on the other hand, to analysts' realization that our human predisposition towards multimodal meaning making, and our own multi-semiotic development or ontogenesis, requires attention to more than one semiotic than just language-in-use.

Another interesting perspective on multimodal discourse analysis is that it not merely attempts to integrate all the possible semiotic modes of expressions, but can also integrate various other approaches to discourse analysis. Some working in multimodality have been influenced by conversational analysis, most notably Goodwin (1981). Others, like Kress and van Leeuwen (2001)

and O'Toole (1994) borrow heavily from the systemic functional grammar of Halliday and the work of Australian 'social semioticians' like Kress and Hodge (1979) whom he inspired. Still others like Kendon (1990) owe a considerable debt to anthropologists like Birdwhistell (1970) and Schefflen (1974).

Finally, more recent approaches, like that of Norris (2004), owe a great deal to interactional sociolinguists like Tannen (1984) and mediated discourse analysts like Scollon (2001). The two chapters represented in this volume come from two of these broad traditions, Jewitt working in the tradition of social semiotics, and Norris claiming her debt to interactional sociolinguistics and mediated discourse analysis.

### Genre analysis

In its earlier form, genre analysis was seen as an extension of linguistic analysis to study functional variation in the use of English in academic contexts. Swales' earliest work (1981) on research article introductions marked the beginning of the genre analytical model for a grounded description of academic research genres. The motivation was to use the findings for the teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes. Unlike registers, which were identified on the basis of a specific configuration of three main contextual categories of field, mode and tenor of discourse, Swales identified genre on the basis of its communicative purpose. There are two other versions of genre analysis that emerged more or less the same time, one in Australia within systemic functional linguistic theory, and the other in the United States within the field of rhetoric. Although these three frameworks draw their inspirations from different sources, they seem to have considerable overlapping concerns and perspectives.

Genre analysis, whether defined in terms of *typification of rhetorical action*, as in Miller (1984), Bazerman (1994) and Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), *regularities of staged, goal oriented social processes*, as in Martin *et al.* (1987) and Martin (1993), or *consistency of communicative purposes*, as in Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), can be viewed as the study of situated linguistic behaviour in institutionalized academic or professional settings. These are attempts to offer increasingly more complex ('thicker') descriptions of language use, incorporating, and often going beyond, the immediate context of situation, taking analyses beyond mere linguistic descriptions to offer explanation for specific uses of language in conventionalized and institutionalized settings. As we can see, the most important feature of this approach in all three manifestations of genre theory is the emphasis on conventions.

In more recent years, genre analysis has developed in the direction of a more comprehensive exploration of what Bhatia (2004) specifies as 'social space' to raise a number of other interesting issues, including some about the integrity of generic descriptions. He proposes a multi-perspective and

multidimensional three-space model for the analysis of discourse as genre integrating social professional space, social space and textual space. One of the interesting aspects of this multi-perspective is the way it attempts to integrate a number of other approaches to discourse analysis into a single framework, some of which include ethnographic discourse analysis (Swales 1998), critical discourse analysis, corpus-based discourse analysis, and multimodal discourse analysis.

### **Critical discourse analysis**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) focuses on socio-political domination, which includes issues of social change, power abuse, ideological imposition, and social injustice by critically analysing language as social action. It is thus based on the assumption that the analysis of discourse provides insightful information on such social issues as they are largely constituted in language.

CDA regards discourse as an essential component of the constitution of society and culture and is viewed (along with material action) as a major form of social action. By studying discourse and society, CDA aims to challenge inequality, injustice, unfairness and lack of democracy in society by investigating social practices through a critical analysis of discourses and social actions. Van Dijk, one of the founders of CDA, typically characterizes its focus as the study of relationship between discourse, power, dominance and social inequality (van Dijk 1993, 1998).

In line with this view, Fairclough (1989: 20) views language as a form of social practice. He also regards CDA as exploring relationship between discourse and social actors. For him discourse has potential for the expression of particular ideologies and identities. This view of discourse is also in line with social psychological theories of discourse (cf. Potter and Wetherall 1987), which regard discourse as a primary vehicle for the construction of social and individual identities.

There are several approaches to critical discourse analysis. Fairclough (1995: 2) offers a multi-dimensional framework for studying discourse by mapping three separate forms of analysis onto one another: 'analysis of discourse, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice'. Van Dijk (1998) regards ideology as the basis for the representation of social groups and hence he finds a useful link between social structures and discourse structures. In general, van Dijk adopts a more socio-cognitive approach to analysis. Wodak (1996), on the other hand, uses CDA to study the issues of racism and anti-semitism by looking critically at the historical dimension of discourse.

CDA is not without its critics. Probably most notably Widdowson (2004 for the latest version) has criticized CDA for bias. The starting point for CDA, Widdowson claims, is a particular ideological commitment, which is

then supported by the selection of texts that are suitable for presenting the desired analysis. There is a total lack of objectivity, according to Widdowson. There are a number of answers to this critique. Meyer (2001) provides some, namely that the analyst is necessarily subject to a certain bias, given that all human beings are socially positioned, that CDA is at least open about its commitment, and that, in the tradition of Kant, 'pure' cognition is unattainable. Meyer (2001) also provides a list of criteria for assessing the quality of CDA. This includes representiveness, reliability, validity, completeness, accessibility and triangulation (see also J. Flowerdew 1999).

### **Mediated discourse analysis**

Mediated discourse analysis (MDA) shares the goals of CDA, but focuses on social action rather than on discourse. Like CDA, mediated discourse analysis takes the analysis, interpretation and explanation of social problems as its central concern; however, as Scollon (1998, 2001) points out, it does not regard that these social issues are constituted primarily in discourse. Instead it views discursive practice as just *one form of social practice*, not necessarily the main form of practice out of which society creates its institutions and power relations. Along with discourse, MDA argues, society and culture are constituted in the material products and a myriad of non-discursive practices.

Drawing heavily from Vygotskian psychology and sociocultural approaches to the mind (see, for example, Wertsch 1991), MDA aims to understand how discourse is used to take concrete social actions, and how, in those social actions social structures and ideologies are created and re-created. Like conversation analysis, it is concerned with the fundamental mechanics of human action and its sequential organization in 'chains of action'. At the same time, it also borrows from the other end of the disciplinary spectrum of discourse analysis, sharing with CDA and ethnographers of language a commitment to understanding the relationships between these concrete, situated social actions and social practice that reproduce larger patterns of social relations and ideology within the 'historical body' of the social actor. On the question of 'text or context', mediated discourse analysis claims neither, choosing to focus instead on where text and context come together in mediated actions.

The main concerns of mediated discourse analysis, as laid out by Jones and Norris (2005) are: first, mediated actions themselves, the concrete things we do when we interact in the world; second, mediational means, the 'cultural tools' (which may or may not be texts) with which we take actions, and which enable or constrain these actions; third, the 'practices' that develop through these actions as they become part of the 'historical body' of the social actor; fourth, the 'sites of engagement' in which multiple social practices converge, opening a window for a mediated action to occur

(Scollon 2001); and finally, the way ‘agency’ in social actions is distributed over individual social actors and cultural tools.

In terms of methodology, mediated discourse analysis uses resources from different frameworks, which include critical discourse analysis, ethnography and interactional sociolinguistics, and multimodal discourse analysis (Scollon 2001; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001). According to Scollon (2001), MDA is itself a *nexus of practice* at which the perspectives of mediated action theory, anthropological linguistics and the ethnography of communication, conversational analysis and ethnomethodology, critical discourse analysis and the social practice theory of Bourdieu (1977) meet. He writes:

... mediated discourse as a theoretical framework mirrors the social world that it hopes to analyse... it has taken on an identity through the linkages overall that are made through concrete actions and projects over time ... we should not see this nexus of practice as a set of objectivized or structural relationships among different schools. On the contrary, these relationships exist only in and through concrete intersections of these practices in specific research projects.

(Scollon 2001)

### **Interrelationships across discourse analytical approaches**

At the beginning of the chapter we pointed out that these seven approaches were quite distinct and were the result of very different motivations and that they drew inspirations from different sources. However, as we moved along each one of these approaches, we discovered that in spite of these differences, some of these approaches were either influenced by others, or developed as reactions to some of them. Conversation analysis, for instance, was a reaction to an overwhelming concern with broad social structures and theory in then current approaches to sociology. Similarly, the multimodal approach to discourse analysis was a reaction to an equally overwhelming concern with text in other forms of discourse analysis such as conversation analysis and corpus-based discourse analysis. The corpus-based approach in itself was a reaction to a number of approaches that confined themselves to the detailed analysis of rather small sets of data. Genre analysis, in a similar manner, was a reaction to analyses of de-contextualized lexico-grammatical features of language, providing a way to make the analysis of texts more functional and grounded in professional contexts. Critical discourse analysis was an attempt to combine discourse analysis with social analysis, with implications for the understanding of socio-cultural practices. Finally, mediated discourse analysis was a reaction to what was seen as an overemphasis on the analysis of discourse without a sufficient understanding of the concrete social actions people use discourse to carry out.

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