

Editor's Introduction: The Study of Discourse: An Introduction

The Emergence of a New Cross-Discipline

In the mid-1960s, the humanities and the social sciences witnessed a remarkably synchronous paradigm shift with the birth of several new but mutually related 'interdisciplines' such as semiotics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics as well as the study of discourse.

The articles collected in the volumes of this book are prominent contributions to the latter field of study, traditionally called *Discourse Analysis*, but more appropriately labeled *Discourse Studies*, because it is not limited to a method of analysis, as is the case for *Content Analysis* in the social sciences, but also has important theoretical objectives. And because the study of discourse manifests itself in virtually all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, it is appropriate to speak of a new 'cross-discipline' or even a 'trans-discipline'. The story of this new field of study has been told many times, and is as exciting as the contributions it has made to our insights into language use, communication and social interaction. For some of the mother and sister disciplines, this story of the emergence of the study of discourse may be summarized as follows.

Anthropology

Already in the early 1960s, among the first to recognize the relevance of the study of discourse anthropologists such as Dell Hymes (1972) became interested in the ethnographic study of communicative events (beyond the traditional study of myths and folklore), a direction of research followed by many other anthropologists under the label of the 'ethnography of speaking' (or the 'ethnography of communication'; Bauman & Sherzer, 1974; Saville-Troike, 1982) and then more broadly within linguistic anthropology (Duranti, 2001).¹

Linguistics

Linguists were not lagging far behind during the late 1960s, when some of them realized that the use of language obviously was not reduced to the structures of isolated, abstract, invented sentences – as was the case in structural and generative grammars – but needed analyses of structures 'beyond the sentence' and of whole 'texts', for instance to account for anaphora and coherence. Whereas initially still largely within the formal paradigm of 'text grammars', also this linguistic approach soon merged with the other approaches to a more empirical analysis of actual language use. The names associated with these early attempts at text and discourse grammars are János Petöfi (1971), Wolfgang Dressler (1972), and Teun A. van Dijk (1972, 1977), in Europe, and Joseph Grimes (1975), Tom Givón (1979), Sandra Thompson and Bill Mann in the USA, the latter two under the label of *Rhetorical Structure Theory* (Mann & Thompson, 1988). The roots of the European text grammars, apart from the obvious influence of Noam Chomsky's generative grammar, are however diverse and range from literary theory and semiotics to Russian formalism and Czech and French structuralism. Although not under the label of 'text grammar', also early studies in Functional Systemic Grammar, founded by Michael Halliday in the UK (and then Australia), paid much attention to discourse, for instance in the account of 'cohesion', the grammatical expression of semantic coherence (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). This work was later followed by a large number of other studies on the grammatical and semiotic aspects of discourse in the same SF-paradigm (among many other studies, see, e.g., Martin, 1992).

Formal Grammar

On the other hand, increasingly formal and explicit studies of language use for discourse participants, coreference, deictic expressions and tenses, continued to be engaged in, from the 1970s both by logicians and philosophers, such as Hans Kamp (1981) and his *Discourse Representation Theory* and others influenced by the mathematician and formal philosopher Richard Montague. This approach states that discourse semantics is dynamic and depends on context.

Pragmatics

Within the tradition of British analytical philosophy, the 1960s also saw the very successful birth of another new interdiscipline, namely pragmatics. Based on the work of Austin (1962) on *How to Do Things with Words*, it is especially the study of John Searle (1969) on speech acts and an influential essay of H. P. Grice (1975) on conversational maxims that sparked a flow of studies on language use extending the traditional focus on syntax and semantics with a pragmatic component, accounting for the illocutive functions of language in terms of speech acts, implicatures and other aspects of contextually based language use. More generally, Pragmatics has become the discipline that houses many of the studies of language use beyond grammar, such as the influential work on politeness by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Semiotics

Within the study of literature and the arts, the mid-1960s also witnessed the emergence of semiotics, the general study of signs and symbol systems. Originally based on the work of philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, and structural linguists such as Louis Hjelmslev and André Martinet, this new discipline became popular especially due to the work of Umberto Eco (1976) in Italy, and Roland Barthes (1964) and many others in France. Semiotics was not limited to language, stories and other forms of discourse, but was also studied in other semiotic codes, such as images, film, dance and architecture. Within discourse studies, semiotics has especially been propagated, in a rather different paradigm, by the work of Gunther Kress, and Theo van Leeuwen (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1990; van Leeuwen, 2005).

Conversation Analysis

In sociology, the interest in discourse emerged within the broader framework of 'ethnomethodology', a direction in microsociology focusing on the ways people understand and manage their everyday life. Under the influence of Harold Garfinkel (1967), on the one hand, and of Erving Goffman (1959, 1961), on the other hand, this interest in mundane interaction became very popular with the study of conversation, pioneered by Harvey Sacks, Manny Schegloff, Gail Jefferson in a very influential article in *Language* (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), followed by many other studies in several disciplines. Whereas discourse grammars studied sequences of sentences, Conversation Analysis (CA) closely analyzed interactional sequences and phenomena such as turn taking, interruptions, pauses, laughter, opening and closing conversations, and many other properties and strategic moves of spontaneous talk now being accessible due to meticulous transcriptions of audio and video recordings (the influential collections by Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; and Drew & Heritage, 1992).

Sociolinguistics

At the end of the 1960s, appeared another new discipline at the boundaries of linguistics and the social sciences, *Sociolinguistics*. Although initially studying variation of grammar, especially pronunciation, due to variables as class, age or gender, some of these studies, also by the founders of sociolinguistics, Bill Labov (1972a, 1972b) and Susan Ervin Tripp (1972), focused on naturally occurring discourse, such as child discourse, storytelling about everyday experiences or the verbal play by African-American adolescents (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972). From a different perspective, later work in 'interactional sociolinguistics' provided more insight into details of interaction and their relation to the social context (Gumperz, 1982a, 1982b).

The Psychology of Text Processing and Artificial Intelligence

A few years later, at the beginning of the 1970s, also cognitive psychology (such as the work of Walter Kintsch, 1974) went beyond the self-imposed limitations of the study of the mental processing of words and isolated sentences, and began to study the production, comprehension and memory of discourse in general, and of stories in particular. Thus, it could be shown that the notion of macrostructure, first developed in text grammar (van Dijk, 1972, 1977, 1980), also had a cognitive basis, for instance in the production and comprehension of discourse topics (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). This direction of research soon became very popular in cognitive psychology, also because of its many obvious applications, for instance in education and the mass media. One of the many influential notions introduced in this research is that of a *mental model* – a representation of events and situations in 'episodic memory' (the record of all our personal experiences) – as the basis of all discourse production and understanding (Johnson-Laird, 1983; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Another important contribution came from the closely related field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), namely the fundamental role of *knowledge* in discourse processing, for instance in the form of mental 'scripts' of prototypical episodes (Schank & Abelson, 1977). Although much of this work was (and is) carried out in the various domains of cognitive science, it also has had much influence in linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and the study of literature, such as studies on the comprehension of radio messages (Lutz & Wodak, 1987).

Methodological Common Ground

We see that more or less at the same time, namely between the mid-1960s and the early-1970s, we witness closely related new disciplines emerging in the humanities and the social sciences. Despite their backgrounds in different mother disciplines, and despite a large diversity of methods and objects of study, these new disciplines of semiotics, pragmatics, psycho- and sociolinguistics, ethnography of speaking as well as conversation analysis and discourse studies had several things in common. We may summarize this methodological common ground as follows:

- Interest in properties of ‘naturally occurring’ language use by real language users, instead of a study of abstract language systems and invented examples.
- A study of larger units than isolated words and sentences, and new basic units of analysis: texts, discourses, conversations or communicative events.
- Extension of linguistics beyond grammar towards a study of action and interaction.
- Extension to non-verbal (semiotic) aspects of interaction and communication: gestures, images, film and multimedia.
- Focus on dynamic cognitive or interactional moves and strategies.
- Study of the role of the social, cultural and cognitive contexts of language use.
- Analysis of a vast number of hitherto largely ignored phenomena of language use: coherence, anaphora, topics, macrostructures, speech acts, interactions, turn-taking, signs, politeness, mental models, and many other aspects of discourse.

Historical and Social Backgrounds

It might be speculative to relate this renewal in the humanities and social sciences to the more general revolutionary spirit of the end of the 1960s, as we also know it from the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, the feminist movement worldwide, as well as the student movements both in the USA and Europe. Yet, it is probably no coincidence that against the broader background of African-Americans rebelling against racism, of women opposing patriarchy, and students protesting against traditional university hierarchies, the end of the 1960s also saw the emergence of new scholarly paradigms. Not seldom, these were also defined by young scholars rejecting the theories and methods of their teachers and of the traditional orientations in literature, linguistics, sociology, anthropology and psychology. Note though, that the social and political nature of the changes in society did not (yet) lead to similar changes in the disciplines. Indeed, initially many of the changes of the new disciplines were formal and only defined by a broader object of study, rather than inspired by a revolutionary spirit aiming to change society. There are (generally European) exceptions to this general ‘apolitical’ beginning of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, especially in Germany and Austria, such as the work by Dittmar (1976) on sociolinguistics, by Leodolter (=Wodak) (1975) on language in the courtroom, Wodak (1986) on therapy groups and Wodak & Schulz (1986), on the *Language of love and guilt* – discourses between mothers and daughters. Although in the social sciences especially frequent reference was made to the ‘Critical Theory’ of the Frankfurt School, the new studies of signs, speech acts, language variation, stories, communicative events, conversation, film, text processing or discourse structures seldom took place within a broader socio-political movement of dissidence and opposition against social inequality.

References to Adorno and Benjamin, for instance, initially were found in literature or in the philosophy of the social sciences, rather than in the new disciplines of language use and discourse. More frequent references to the work of Habermas had to wait until Habermas himself had discovered pragmatic theory (Habermas, 1981). In that respect, at least in these disciplines, academic theory and social movement remained two distinct areas of social practice. It is only with such later developments as critical discourse studies that these two different forms of dissent merged.

Integration and Further Developments

Although most of the new (inter- or cross) disciplines mentioned above had different backgrounds, objects, methods and sometimes inconsistent philosophies, the last decades have witnessed increasing integration in the broad field of the study of language use. In the following decades, much work in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, conversation analysis and the ethnography of speaking often overlapped, especially because of their shared interest in the study of conversational interaction in social contexts.

Discursive Psychology

These interdisciplines were soon joined by other directions of research and new paradigms in the 1980s, such as *Discursive Psychology* within social psychology, interested especially in the way ‘psychological’ notions (such as ‘memory’) are enacted in discourse in general, and conversation in particular (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Rejecting individual cognitive psychology, laboratory experiments and traditional social psychological notions such as attitudes, *Discursive Psychology*, as pioneered by Michael Billig

(1987, 1988), Jonathan Potter (1996), and Derek Edwards (1997), thus sought alignment with ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, on the one hand, and the work of (the later) Wittgenstein, and the social constructivism of Rom Harré and Kenneth Gergen, on the other hand.

Interaction and Cognition

Whereas earlier studies in literature, semiotics and text grammar largely focused on the analysis of written texts, nearly all work in the interdisciplines just mentioned focused on spoken language in general, and on 'talk in interaction' in particular.

Only in cognitive science and some directions of discourse grammar, pragmatics, sociology and anthropology do we find a more cognitive orientation towards the study of language use and discourse – an orientation on the 'mind' generally rejected or ignored by interactional approaches to discourse (see the contribution in van Dijk, 2006). These developments have their counterpart in cognitive linguistics, for instance in the work on meaning and metaphor by George Lakoff (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) – work that also has found application in (critical) discourse studies.

There should be little doubt that before long also this broad gap between interaction and cognition will be bridged, especially since discourse obviously is both a form of social interaction, as well as a form of cognition of communication, and because there are many 'mental' notions that are crucial in any kind of discourse study, such as meaning, coherence, topics, inference, presupposition, knowledge, belief, opinion, and so on. Indeed, the very notions of action and interaction cannot properly be defined without 'cognitive' notions such as plan, aim, goal, purpose, coordination, monitoring, and so on. It is within the study of discourse that such an integration of cognitive and interactional approaches is most fruitful. The last decades have seen extraordinary advances in both the study of interaction and that of cognition, and the time has come to integrate these results. Insight into the detailed mental strategies (and their neurological basis) of discourse production and comprehension may thus be combined with what we now know on the details of interactional moves and strategies.

Critical Discourse Studies

At the end of the 1970s, another direction of research emerged in the study of discourse: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), originally introduced in a seminal book by Roger Fowler, Gunther Kress, Bob Hodge and Tony Trew, *Language and Control* (1979), and later developed by Norman Fairclough (1989) in the UK, Ruth Wodak (1989) in Austria and Teun A. van Dijk (1993) in the Netherlands (for introduction, see, e.g., Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Although some isolated scholars earlier showed some interest in a more critical approach (e.g., Mey, 1985), we have seen that most of the new studies of language use emerging in the 1960s were at first quite apolitical. Rather late when considered against the revolutionary background of the end of the 1960s referred to above, Critical Discourse Analysis finally began to focus on issues of power, domination, and social inequality, and on the relevance of gender, race and class in the study of text and talk.

Much of this critical work was paralleled by similar work done mostly by feminist women on the relations between language, discourse and gender, and on the ways male domination is reproduced in text and talk (for an early study, see Kramarae, 1980; for the vast number of later studies, see the references in Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003). Although at first not explicitly carried out within a CDA-framework, much work on gender and discourse is in fact an excellent example of a CDA approach (for an explicit CDA approach to gender studies see, e.g., Lazar, 2005; Wodak, 1997).

Other studies, such as by Wodak and van Dijk, especially focused on the reproduction of racism and anti-Semitism in discourse, for instance in political discourse, the press, and textbooks (among many studies, see, e.g., van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, et al., 1990; Wodak & van Dijk, 2000).

In the same way as the study of discourse spread in most of the humanities and social sciences, also the more critical approaches to language, discourse and interaction can now be found in many disciplines. The awareness has grown that with the increasingly powerful methods of the explicit and systematic description of talk and text, and the more sophisticated theories of cognition and interaction in their social and institutional contexts, discourse and conversation analysts are well prepared to tackle more complex and socially relevant issues. Though, still reluctantly by the more formally inclined scholars interested in more 'autonomous' approaches to structures of text and interaction, it has become more widely accepted that discourse is profoundly embedded in society and culture, and hence, closely related also to all forms of power, power abuse and social inequality. It has been shown how ethnic prejudices and ideologies are daily produced and reproduced by political and media discourse of the elites, and thus contribute to the reproduction of racism. The same is true for everyday sexism in many kinds of discourse – from conversation to advertising – and the reproduction of the system of male domination.

Obviously, such a critical focus on the discursive reproduction of social inequality cannot be limited to a narrow discourse or conversation analytical approach, and requires further integration with the social sciences. Such an integration will also need to go beyond the gaps that still influence much of scholarly practice, such as between micro and macro approaches in sociology, or between cognitive and interactional approaches throughout the social sciences. This will also require further integration of the discipline that so far as remained rather distant from the developments in discourse studies, namely political science – a strange phenomenon when we realize that policies and politics are ‘done’ virtually only in text and talk.

Finally, besides such a critical perspective in the study of discourse, we face the challenge of a vast number of urgently required applied studies. These fields of applications are many, and fortunately much work is already under way. Perhaps most relevant here are the many application in the field of education, from first and second language learning and literacy, to the development of curricula, textbook, classroom interaction, and teaching and learning in general – most of which is discursive (in the broad semiotic sense: text, talk, sound and image). Similar observations hold for the applied studies of the mass media, of journalism education and of course the field of psychological intervention. Indeed, there are few applied fields of study and intervention that do not have an important discursive dimension, and besides its critical perspective, discourse studies need to increasingly also focus on concrete practical issues of contemporary societies.

Dimensions of Discourse and Fields of Discourse Studies

The historical sketch – given above – of the emergence of discourse studies in the various disciplines of the humanities of the social sciences, and its increasing integration with its sister disciplines, such as semiotics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics, already provides first insights into the various dimensions of discourse and the fields of the new cross-discipline. Let us now examine this configuration of the new discipline and its object of study more closely. Thus, for instance, we on the one hand have *cognitive* studies of the mental processes involved in the production or comprehension of discourse, and *interactional* studies of everyday conversation or institutional talk, on the other hand.

The same is true for more *cultural* approaches in the ethnography of speaking, and – in a quite different, more critical, perspective (focusing on e.g., popular culture or youth culture) – in the ‘Cultural Studies’ developed by Stuart Hall and others in the UK (Hall, et al., 1978). Strangely, following the same general division of the mother disciplines, the *historical* approach to discourse – outside of the theory of historiography and oral history – so far has been quite marginal in discourse studies, with the exception of, for instance, the work on anti-Semitism by Ruth Wodak (Wodak, et al., 1990).

Besides these interdisciplinary approaches in discourse studies, the ‘core’ of the new discipline remains *the systematic and explicit analysis of the various structures and strategies of different levels of text and talk*. Let us briefly review these, also in order to show how the vast field of discourse studies is organized in various subdisciplines that also have become more or less independent, as also was the case for, say, lexicology, phonology, syntax and semantics within linguistics.

Discourse Grammar

The strong influence of linguistics on discourse studies and its development still shows in the prominent position of grammatical analysis in many discourse studies. We have seen above that this influence of linguistics also played a central role in the development of discourse studies, namely in the first ‘text grammars’. We also saw that various directions in formal grammar (as well as in logic and formal philosophy) continue to be one of the productive areas of formal discourse analysis. Unfortunately, this formal direction of research is virtually unknown in other domains of discourse studies. Within less formal ‘discourse grammars’, we continue to have studies of the *sound structures* of discourse (Bolinger, 1989; Brazil, 1975), for instance in studies of intonation, as well as studies of *discourse syntax* (Givón, 1979) continuing for instance the early work on anaphora, which also has links to formal discourse studies.

Strangely, *discourse semantics* has remained an underdeveloped area of discourse grammar. Yet, if there is one level of discourse that contributes to the specific discursive nature of text and talk, it is the study of meaning, as we also know from the first studies of coherence in the 1960s and 1970s. Part of discourse semantics, and shared with work in cognitive linguistics, is of course the research on metaphor, already mentioned above. Also very relevant is the study of semantic implication (entailment) and presupposition, for instance as one of the basic dimensions of coherence: In order to establish coherence relations between the propositions of a discourse, we often need to spell out the ‘missing links’ of the propositions implied or presupposed by the propositions explicitly expressed in discourse.

There are many more aspects of discourse meaning that need systematic analysis and that cannot simply be reduced to the semantics of words and sentences. For instance, discourse may describe (prescribe, account for, etc.) events, actions and actors and may do so in many ways: more or less explicitly or

implicitly, more or less generally or specifically, more or less precisely or vaguely, with many or few details, as background or as foreground, and so on. There are many constraints on sequences of descriptions, such as an increasing focus from broader to narrower objects of description (e.g., from a house to a room in the house, from a room in the house to furniture in the room, and from furniture to an object on such furniture, and so on – and in general not vice versa). The same is true for descriptions of time and tense sequences and, the way persons and social actors are described, and so on.

One new line of research, carried out within the general framework of Functional-Systemic grammar, is that of Appraisal Theory, which examines the way opinions are expressed in discourse (Martin & White, 2005). Discourse meanings may be characterized in terms of sequences of propositions, but we know that meanings are not limited to local or sequential structures, but also may characterize whole discourses. The classical example are the ‘topics’ of discourse, traditionally described in terms of ‘semantic macrostructures’, and typically expressed in headlines, leads, introductions, conclusions, initial ‘thematic’ sentences, and so on (van Dijk, 1980). In linguistic terms, topics are global meanings that dominate the local meanings of sequences of sentences or turns of talk. In cognitive terms, topics represent the most important information of a discourse, as it is being assigned by speakers/writers or recipients. Topics also represent the kind of information that is best recalled when understanding discourse, and it is the kind of meaning we usually plan ahead before starting (or continuing) to speak or write. Despite the fundamental relevance of such global meanings in the organization and processing of discourse, it is strange that many directions of discourse and conversation analysis ignore or do not make explicit such global semantic structures. Indeed, much more semantic research will be necessary to examine in much more detail the relations between such ‘macrostructures’ and the ‘microstructure’ of local meanings of words and sentences. At the same time, these studies of local and global meanings of discourse of course need to be related to the *cognitive analysis* of discourse, also because they require an explicit account of the fundamental role of knowledge in the local and global coherence of text and talk. We see that both at the local and the global level of discourse meaning, there is a vast area of discourse analysis that remains virtually unexplored, but that should form an important element of future research on discourse grammar.

Stylistics

Better explored, especially also in sociolinguistics and literary studies, has been the dimension of language and discourse ‘style’, for instance in what has come to be known as the subdiscipline of *stylistics* (Eckert & Rickford, 2001; Scherer & Giles, 1979). Notoriously difficult to define exactly, also because it has so many non-linguistic meanings (such as the style of clothes, houses, people, etc.), style may briefly be defined in terms of the variable expression of discourse as it is conditioned by aspects of context. The most obvious manifestations of style may be found, as we also know from sociolinguistics, in the various way people may pronounce *sounds*, thus producing more or less formal, more or less casual, more or less higher or lower class ‘styles’ of speech. Contrary to involuntary ‘accents’, such sound variation is called part of the ‘style’ of a discourse if the speaker is able to control such variation of pronunciation, for instance to accommodate to the way the recipients speak, or to signal familiarity or a more formal relationship. Similarly, also lexical variation has traditionally been seen as one of the basic characteristics of discourse style, usually under the condition that the underlying meanings remain (more or less) the same. In other words, ‘saying the same thing in other words’ has often been the rather informal definition of style.

Again, such variation is stylistic if it has contextual conditions or consequences, as when politicians or newspapers of different political ideologies use the lexical item ‘freedom fighter’ or ‘rebel’, rather than ‘terrorist’, or vice versa, or want to keep a balanced expression when talking about ‘insurgents’. That is, word choice is one of the ways people betray their underlying opinions, social attitudes and ideologies, also because the use of lexical items is associated with underlying norms and values.

Apart from such ‘ideological’ variation of lexical style, there is also a more social one, for instance in order to express or establish more or less formal positions or relationships. Thus, politicians in the UK will rather speak about ‘expelling economic immigrants’ than about ‘throwing scroungers out of the country’ as some racist tabloids (and politicians) may do, in which case popular styles may combine with racist (ideological) style. Lexical styles typically come in levels, such as high (very formal, official), medium (everyday public), and low (colloquial, popular) or even very low (vulgar) levels of expression. More in general, thus, lexical style signals important aspects of the context, such as the formality of the event, the social power, position and status of speakers or recipients, the relations between the participants, the opinions and ideologies of the speakers, and so on. Such is not only the case for lexical style (or pronunciation) in talk, but also shows at other levels of discourse, as we know from the stylistic difference between an English broadsheet, quality newspaper (now also often in smaller format) such as the *Guardian*, on the one hand, and the popular style of the tabloid *The Sun*, on the other hand, which also shows in size, type and color of headline, pictures, lay-out and many other forms of multimodal

expression. The same is true for the difference between the syntax of a *Guardian* editorial and than of a *Sun* editorial. Although usually limited to a study of context-dependent grammatical variation of expressions (sounds, lay-out, words, sentences), we might extend stylistic analysis also to other levels of discourse, as long as we maintain one (lower) level constant. For instance, elite and popular newspapers may write very different stories about the ‘same event’ (that is, with the same underlying topic or semantic macrostructure), adding or omitting different details, and we might also call this a difference of ‘style’ between the newspapers.

Rhetoric

Discourse studies is often defined as the contemporary discipline of what used to be called *rhetoric* since antiquity, that is, the practice and study of ‘good’ public speaking and writing, for instance in parliament, in court or in literature.

Also today, and especially in the USA, the ‘new’ rhetoric is sometimes defined as a special (sub) discipline in the humanities that overlaps with discourse studies. As is the case for stylistics, rhetoric is often associated with the study of literature, rather than with the study of discourse more generally (among a vast amount of studies of rhetoric, Sloane, 2001).

In order to avoid collapsing rhetoric with discourse studies in general, we (narrowly) define rhetoric as the subdiscipline of discourse studies focusing on the use of special ‘rhetorical’ structures of text and talk, such as metaphors, comparisons, irony, hyperboles, euphemisms, etc., that is, the kind of structures that were traditionally called ‘figures of style’ in classical rhetoric. Unlike other structures of text and talk, these ‘rhetorical’ structures are optional, and used especially to convey or produce specific effects, for instance as part of strategies of persuasion. These ‘figures’ emphasize or de-emphasize meaning and thus, draw special attention of recipients, which may lead to less/better memory of the meanings thus, [de]emphasized. For instance, if politicians or newspapers want to diminish the negative associations of the word ‘racism’, they may use the less harsh term ‘popular discontent’ instead. And vice versa, if they want to emphasize the negative aspect of the arrival of many new immigrants, they might typically use the expressions ‘wave’ or ‘invasion’, which are at the same time metaphors and hyperboles (van Dijk, 1993). Given these examples, it is not surprising that rhetoric is especially popular in the humanities – for instance in the study of literature – and in the social sciences, for instance in studies of political rhetoric or advertising, although strictly speaking such studies should not be limited to figures of speech, but also deal with the cognitive effects of such language use on the recipients and the whole communicative context. Also, it should be emphasized that discourse has many other ‘persuasive’ dimensions apart from these special rhetoric structures, such as argumentation, the use of emotion words, and so on.

Superstructures: Discourse Schemas

Whereas stylistics and rhetoric were traditionally closely related to literature and grammar, there are other structures of text and talk that go far beyond the grammatical characterization of discourse, and which may be called ‘superstructures’, because they are abstract *form-schemas* that globally organize discourse across sentence boundaries.

A well-known example is the form-schema of argumentation, including such conventional categories as premises and conclusions. These have been further detailed in contemporary argumentation studies, a major subfield of discourse studies (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Henkemans, 1996). Similarly, stories are often analyzed in terms of abstract narrative schemas, featuring such categories as Summary, Orientation, Complication, Resolution and Coda, more or less in this order, as we know from much narrative studies, another large field of discourse studies (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Ochs & Capps, 2001). In the same way, many other discourse genres have ‘canonical’ structures that have become conventional and more or less fixed ‘forms’ or ‘formats’ of a genre.

A scholarly article typically consist of such categories as Title, Abstract, Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Data/Subjects, Analysis, Conclusions, depending on the discipline and the subject matter. News reports in the press similarly have one or more Headlines, a Lead, Main Event Description, Context, Backgrounds, History and Comments, as formal categories for the organization of specific kinds of information — typically obtained by different news production strategies, sources or professionals (van Dijk, 1988). Many professional and institutional discourse types may have such conventional formats. Even informal conversations have such fixed formal categories, such as greetings and leave taking, and so on. Much work on professional genres deals with such ‘schematic’ structures of text and talk (Bhatia, 1993; Gunnarsson, 1997; Swales, 2004; Ventola & Mauranen, 1996).

Note that all these structures are *global*, and not local: Just like topics or semantic macrostructures, they characterize discourse as a whole, or apply to larger fragments of discourse. Also, even when originally they might have had specific meaning functions, they are *formal* categories defining abstract schemas.

Thus, the headline of a news report is a fixed, obligatory category that applies to any news report, whatever its meaning or content. Yet the *function* of such a headline is semantic and cognitive: It expresses the main topic of the text, which in turn organizes its local meanings, and signals the most important information about an event.

Whereas most other structures of sentences and discourse correspond to various subdisciplines, there is no subdiscipline that specifically deals with these schematic structures in general. Rather, different text types or genres may be associated with such schemas, as we have seen for the conventional schema of an argumentation.

Discourse Pragmatics

We have seen that pragmatics is one of the overlapping sister-disciplines of discourse studies: Many studies of discourse are also called 'pragmatic' because they somehow have to do with the study of 'language use', rather than with grammar. Here such a general use of the term 'pragmatics' will be avoided, because obviously the study of 'language use' also takes place in socio- and psycholinguistics and other disciplines, and we prefer to use the notion in a more restricted, technical way than as some kind as 'wastepaper basket' of linguistics (as the philosopher Yehoshua Bar-Hillel used to say). Part of such a broader study of language use, as we also have seen above, are for instance the ways language users express or signal politeness and deference, and in general manage 'face'. Thus, whereas the study of grammar and style specifically focuses on *form*, and semantics focuses on *meaning*, these pragmatic aspects rather are specific properties of *interaction*, such as the social relations between participants.

Incidentally, although nearly all internationally influential studies referred to in this chapter are written in English, we should not forget that vast amounts of discourse studies have been published in French, German, Spanish, Russian and other major languages. Thus, the study of discourse pragmatics was carried out in Germany already since the early 1970s, for instance in the work of Wunderlich, Ehlich, and Rehbein (see the papers in Wunderlich, 1972), scholars who later contributed many other studies in the field of discourse analysis. The same is true, for instance, for the work on pragmatic discourse markers and argumentation by Ducrot (1972, 1980, 1984), in France. It is not feasible here to review all relevant work in other languages than English. More specifically, pragmatics will here be understood as the subdiscipline of discourse studies focusing on speech acts or illocution, that is, the specific social acts accomplished by language users and that typically are (only) accomplished by text or talk, such as assertions, promises, questions, congratulations, and so on. Like sentences and their meanings (propositions), also speech acts usually come in sequences, as is the case in conversations, parliamentary debates, and other types of discourse. And as we do for sequences of propositions, also sequences of speech acts can be said to be locally or globally coherent, for instance when one speech acts provides reasons for the next one (such as in the sequence Assertion-Request 'It's stuffy in here. Could you please open the window?'). Similarly, the global speech act performed by this chapter is one of an assertion, whereas the global speech act of an editorial in the press may be an accusation or a recommendation and the weather forecast a prediction (van Dijk, 1981).

Conversation Analysis

Last but not least, the vast field of research commonly labeled 'Conversation Analysis' (CA) specifically focuses on the *interactional* nature of language use and discourse. Although early work in CA specifically dealt with informal, spontaneous everyday conversation, later studies also more generally deal with 'talk in interaction', that is, also with institutional dialogues of many kinds. Emerging from microsociology and ethnomethodology, these studies are specifically interested in the 'local order' of social structure, and how also institutions and organizations are daily produced and reproduced by talk (Boden & Zimmerman, 1991; Drew & Heritage, 1992).

Although often presented as a separate subdiscipline, the study of talk-in-interaction obviously belongs to the broader study of discourse. Many of the interactional aspects of talk are closely related to grammar, semantics, pragmatics and other dimensions of discourse: Turn taking is based on clues from intonation, syntactic structure or meaning units. Openings and closings of talk are schematic categories that have similar functions as Introductions, Headlines, on the one hand, or with Conclusions, on the other hand, prominent in many spoken or written types of discourse. Moves and strategies of interaction are organized also in terms of meaning, as is the case for agreements and disagreements. Selfpresentation strategies have both interactional as well as semantic and formal characteristics, as we also know from such well-known disclaimers as "*I am not a racist, but...*". Indeed, most of the conditions of local and global coherence, of style and rhetoric, characterize both spoken and written discourse, and it does not make sense, therefore, to distinguish two disciplines of discourse studies. On the other hand, studies of written discourse (for instance in argumentation), should not neglect the interactional dimension of such discourse. And in many forms of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) today, such as chatting,

talk-in-interaction is written or multimodal rather than spoken. In sum, the complex and subtle structures and strategies of interaction are multiply related to all other levels and dimensions of discourse, and may be studied in a unified framework. Studies on the formal or meaning aspects of discourse may be complemented by a study of their interactional dimensions, and vice versa, as we have seen above, the analysis of talk in interaction is inextricably related to other local, sequential and global dimensions of discourse, from intonation and syntax, local and global meanings, to schematic organization and speech acts.

Genre Analysis

From the brief summary given, we see that the study of discourse is a vast field, consisting of many subdisciplines, and at the same time overlapping with other new interdisciplines, such as sociolinguistics, and with sister disciplines such as pragmatics and semiotics. It either is a part or overlaps with virtually all mother disciplines of the humanities and social sciences.

This overlap with other disciplines also produces the kinds of studies that focus on different *genres*, such as the study of many types and subtypes of text and talk in politics, the media, education, science, law, business, the bureaucracy and also parliamentary speeches, news reports, editorials, textbooks, classroom lessons, laws, business letters, phone calls, annual reports, meetings, bureaucratic forms along with a host of other genres (Bhatia, 1993; Lemke, 1990). Note though that genres are not merely described in terms of their structures at any of the dimensions mentioned above, but especially also in terms of their *contexts* (van Dijk, 2007). Thus, a parliamentary debate has very few exclusive structures – its topics, its forms of rhetoric, its argumentation, and so on may be part of any discourse about the same subject – and hence needs to be defined in terms of specific context categories, such as MPs, political parties, government and opposition, constituents and voters, as well as in terms of political goals and processes, knowledge and ideologies. Some of these contextual elements may be accompanied by specific discourse forms, as when members of the same party in British parliament are traditionally addressed as ‘my honourable friend’. Such contextual approaches may be combined with the more traditional descriptions of discourse genres in terms of their structural characteristics, for instance stories in terms of narrative schemas, style, topics or the perspective of the narrator, or news reports in terms of its canonical schema, featuring headlines and leads, and other categories – besides some special lexical items preferred in news discourse (e.g., the short formal word ‘bid’ in English headlines, rather than the longer noun ‘attempt’). Note that genre analysis is merely a collective label for what in many respects have become more or less autonomous subdisciplines of discourse studies, such as conversation analysis, narrative analysis, argumentation analysis, the study of classroom interaction, political discourse analysis, media discourse analysis, and so on.

With the usual increasing specialization we know from other disciplines, it is likely that in the future we’ll have discourse analysts specialized in the study of news in the press, high school textbooks, schizophrenic talk, parliamentary debates, life stories, soaps (telenovelas), and so on for many hundreds of other discourse genres defined as discursive social practices.

Applied Discourse Studies

Although we may thus expand the field of discourse studies as far as the study of the human activity of text, talk and communication may bring us, we now have summarized at least some of its major subdisciplines. Each of these subdisciplines has its own background, theories, terms, objects of analysis, methods, aims, introductions, handbooks, journals, conferences, and even associations of scholars. Each of these subdisciplines have a more *applied* dimension, when no longer mere theory or description is relevant, but concrete applications, interventions and the use of science in the solution of social problems are required. *In linguistics*, we are familiar with the use of grammar in the study of first or second language learning, translation, and other aspects of language use. In discourse studies, the number of possible applications is so vast that they cannot even be summarized here, because they pertain to any aspect of language use, interaction and communication, from literacy to the formation of journalists, peace negotiation and the critique of advertising and political manipulation. Pervasive and probably most relevant are all applications in education, such as curricula, the production of adequate (and non-racist, non-sexist, etc..) textbooks, programs of classroom intervention, testing and so on.

Now we have some more insight into the structures of talk and text, as well as their cognitive basis and social and cultural contexts, we in principle are also in a better position to engage in the treatment of the many social issues that have a discursive dimension. People may not first think of text and talk when dealing with racism, for instance, until it is shown that racist prejudices and ideologies that are the basis of racist discrimination are largely acquired by discourse, especially the public discourses of the elites, e.g., in politics, the mass media and textbooks. Much critical and practical studies on discourse combine theoretical, descriptive and ‘applied’ dimensions, and indeed hardly differentiate between such dimensions of scholarly activity. Critical discourse analysis focuses on social problems and not on

scholarly paradigms, and tries to understand and solve such problems with any kind of method, theory or description that may be relevant – taking into account the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

Looking Ahead: The Future of Discourse Studies

In the previous pages we have occasionally formulated speculations and wishes about the future developments of the study of discourse. If the ‘logic’ of the historical development of the language sciences is followed, in which the nature and size of the object of study was gradually extended from sounds, words, syntax, meanings, speech acts, and interaction, to the contexts of society, culture and cognition, we may expect that research in the coming years will consolidate this further expansion as well as explore new extensions. *More – and More Explicit – ‘Traditional’ Descriptions*

Firstly, there are ‘traditional’ areas that need (much) more attention, such as the study of the many dimensions of discourse semantics, and the further integration of micro- and macro-semantics. Secondly, we need a much more explicit integration of rhetoric into the study of discourse, instead of the separate, more traditional formulation of ‘figures of speech’. Thirdly, the complex notions of style and register need to be made more explicit than has been done so far, thus also integrating linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse analytical studies of language use in its social context. And finally, we need more general insight into the structures of conventional discourse formats, beyond the well-known ones of narrative and argumentation. Many discourse types have such canonical schemas, related also to their interactional and institutional functions, and much more classical descriptive work will be necessary within a more general, typological approach of discourse. This is finally also the case for a more general theory of genre and specific genre descriptions. In that respect, discourse analysis is still a young discipline. The number of discourse types hardly ever studied is probably much bigger than the discourse types that have been studied.

Semiotic Extensions and Computer Mediated Communication

It has already been emphasized that discourse studies overlaps with its sister discipline of semiotics with which ideally it should merge in the future – both being involved in the study of communicative events. Thus, even when limiting the study to discourse in a more traditional sense, we need to realize that such discourse has many ‘non-verbal’ dimensions, such as intonation, gestures, applause, music and other aspects of oral performance, as well lay-out, printing types, color, pictures, drawings, film, and so on for written discourse (van Leeuwen, 2005). In sum, also under the influence of the tremendous variety of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) discourse and communication events have become truly ‘multimedia’ events, in which sounds, music, movement and images combine, in which spoken and written modes of discourse are closely integrated, for instance in ‘chats’, and in which ‘interaction’ (e.g., between humans and machines) has acquired new meanings (Danet, 2001; Herring, 1996). Most of these forms of discourse still need to be studied, and in that respect also discourse studies is still a young discipline.

Other Disciplines

We have seen how discourse studies emerged from several disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, especially literary studies, linguistics, psychology, sociology and anthropology, later joined by communication studies. There are many more disciplines in which discourse is a valid and important object of study. We have mentioned political science and history, both disciplines that have regrettably played a less prominent role so far in discourse studies (and vice versa). There is no doubt that also these disciplines will have a strong discourse analytical dimension in the future. Even in such disciplines as geography and economics, discourses are objects of analysis, and discourse analysis may hence also play a more prominent role in those disciplines.

The Cognition-Interaction Gap

We hardly need to repeat what has already been said about the regrettable gap between social and psychological studies, focusing on interaction and cognition, respectively. Interaction and cognition mutually presuppose each other, and any integrated study of discourse in the future will need to deal with both these aspects of language use. Cognition will need to be studied also in a social paradigm because knowledge and beliefs are shared by other members of collectivities and acquired in forms of social interaction we call ‘learning’. And vice versa, there are many aspects of interaction that are in fact cognitive dimensions of action, such as the very meaning or interpretation of social conduct, as well as notions such as intention, plan, goals, motivation, purpose, coordination, and so on. Modern cognitive science has a lot to offer to contemporary interaction studies, whatever the relevance of more autonomous approaches for the initial advancement of a new field. We not only need more cognitive and neurological

studies of words and meanings, but also of the organization of more complex interactional and discursive structures, such as text schemata or topics, as well as the understanding and management of context.

Context

Indeed, while focusing on text and talk, we tend to forget the many dimensions of a theory of context that is still in the making and that needs to be further developed in the future, and in several (sub) disciplines. It is crucial in any account of the structures of text and talk to describe and explain how they may vary with different structures of the communicative event as these are subjectively represented in context models by the participants. Contexts and their impact on discourse are very complex and future studies need to disentangle these different dimensions of contextual control and consequences. Most studied have been gender, region and class as 'variables'. However, there are a vast number of other aspects of the social and communicative situation that need to be further studied in the future, such as time and space/place settings, the social and institutional roles and relations of participants, and the nature of intentions, plans and purposes as well as the fundamental role of knowledge in discourse production and comprehension. We need to know how local (micro) situations may thus combine with more global (meso and macro) levels of context interpretation and influence, for instance how daily practices of members of institutions are controlled both by specific interaction types (e.g., interviews or meetings) as well as more global (knowledge about the) structure of institutions or organizations.

Methods and Theories

Compared to formal grammar, most discourse studies are quite informal. This is as such no problem (also because informal studies are more accessible to more students and non-academic readers), but that does not mean that discourse analysis should be less explicit and systematic. The description of structures and strategies at all levels earlier mentioned should take place in terms of explicit theories, and analyses of specific discourse types should be systematic and relevant, and not merely a personally-subjective interpretation, paraphrase or comment on text or talk, as is still often the case in many studies that purport to do 'discourse analysis'.

It should be stressed though that unlike content analysis discourse analysis is *not* a method but a discipline. There is no such thing as psychological or sociological analysis either. Even when studying the 'same' object, such as a news item or a parliamentary debate, we may have recourse to many 'methods', also depending on the kinds or structures we want to focus on, and especially also depending on our aims of study.

Conclusion

If we measure the success of a discipline by its propagation in other disciplines, the study of discourse has been very successful indeed. There are only a few disciplines and areas in the humanities and social sciences that have not engaged in some form of discourse studies. This is not only true for the mother disciplines of discourse studies, such as linguistics, cognitive psychology, sociology and anthropology, but now also for social psychology, communication studies, political science, history, and even for such less discursive disciplines as economics and geography. There is nothing surprising about that, because humanity, society and culture are primarily characterized by their social interaction in general and language use or discourse in particular. In fact, instead of wondering about the vast field and potential of discourse studies, one may ask why discourse studies as a general cross-discipline was not 'invented' before – although in a sense rhetoric had some of these functions since antiquity.

In this introduction we have briefly sketched the history and the organization of the new field of discourse studies, as well as formulated some suggestions for future developments. It may have become clear that the study of discourse has made considerable progress in a few decades since its early studies of narrative, conversation and grammar in the 1960s and 1970s. It is now a vast cross-discipline with equally vast sub-disciplines, each with its own handbooks, journals and congresses, as is the case for argumentation, narrative, media discourse and scientific discourse analysis. Within the original mother disciplines also many studies are associated with discourse analysis, as is obviously the case in literary studies, linguistics and anthropology. This is even more evident in sister-disciplines such as sociolinguistics, semiotics, ethnography, and especially pragmatics. All these new subdisciplines or sister disciplines of discourse studies also have entered the stage of useful applications in the study of social problems and implementation of many social practices.

In sum, discourse studies has come of age, and has become a major crossdiscipline within and related to other major disciplines in the humanities and social sciences – and as one of the major disciplines accounting for the most human of all phenomena: language use.

Acknowledgement

For comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this chapter, I am indebted to Ruth Wodak.

Notes

1. To limit a potentially vast bibliography, this introductory chapter only will cite some influential books on discourse in English. For detailed further references, see the articles collected in this book.

Further Reading

Besides the basic books referred to above, here are some suggestions for further (especially also introductory) reading in various areas of discourse studies and its sisterdisciplines: General introductions to discourse studies: Georgakopoulou & Goutsos (1997); Johnstone (2002); Renkema (2004); Schiffrin (1993); Van Dijk (1997); Wooffitt (2005). Readers of discourse studies: Jaworski & Coupland (1999); Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates (2001). Handbooks of discourse studies: Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton (2001); Van Dijk (1985). Conversation Analysis: Lerner (2004); Ten Have (1999); Ochs, Schegloff & Thompson (1996); Wooffitt (2005). Pragmatics: Mey (2001); Verschueren (1999). Sociolinguistics: Blommaert (2005); Bratt Poulston & Tucker (2003), Coulmas (2003); Holmes (1992); Sarangi & Coulthard (2000); Trudgill (1995); Wardhaugh (1998). Stylistics: Eckert & Rickford (2001); Toolan (1997). Rhetoric: Lucaites, Condit & Caudill (1999). Critical Discourse Studies: Caldas Coulthard & Coulthard (1995); Fairclough (1995); Lazar (2005); Toolan (2002); Wodak & Meyer (2001).

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