

ANALYZING DISCOURSE

“Discourse analysis provides a tool for sociolinguists to identify the norms of talk among different social and cultural groups in different conversational and institutional contexts, and to describe the discursive resources people use in constructing different social identities in interaction”. (p. 364)

Analyze the Exercise #1 on p. 363.

Five approaches (among several more) to the analysis of discourse will be identified:

- (i) Pragmatics and politeness theory
- (ii) Ethnography of speaking
- (iii) Interactional sociolinguistics
- (iv) Conversation Analysis (CA)
- (v) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

1. Pragmatics and politeness theory

1.1 Pragmatics: The study of how *context* affects linguistic interaction.

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relationship between participants background knowledge	}	the analysis goes beyond grammar and word meaning.
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Interpret the Examples #2 and #3 on p.364.

1.2 Conversational maxims and implicatures

Assumption with regard to conversations: the speakers conform to the *cooperative principle* in accordance to four maxims (Grice, 1975):

<i>Quantity:</i>	say as much as but no more than is necessary
<i>Quality:</i>	do not say what you believe to be false, or that for which you lack evidence
<i>Relation:</i>	be relevant
<i>Manner:</i>	be clear, unambiguous, brief and orderly

(p. 365)

Do speakers always follow these maxim?

Study the Examples #6 and #7 on p. 366.
Which maxim is *not* being followed? Possible reasons?

These maxims are not universals – comment on the practice in the Malagasy Republic (p. 366).

1.3 Conversational maxims and politeness

One of the reasons people don't follow conversational maxims is their attempt to be polite.

Lakoff's three rules of politeness:

p.367.

Rules #1 and #2 express *negative* politeness;
Rule #3 expresses *positive* politeness.

Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that there are three social factors that universally relevant to polite conversational practices:

- (i) how well you know someone;
- (ii) what is their status relevant to yours;
- (iii) ranking of the imposition.

Analyze the Example #8 (p. 367) relating to these factors!

1.4 Sociolinguistics and politeness

Politeness strategies are *not* universal – they are social and culture specific!

Examples: Igbo practices – p. 368.

Asian values: sincerity, respect, consideration, negative politeness strategies -- as opposed to focusing on the social distance and solidarity dimensions.

Study the Example #11 on p. 369. Comment!

2. Ethnography of speaking

In different societies there are different ways of using language.

There is a need for a *framework* to conduct systematic studies on how people of different cultural backgrounds use language, how they carry out conversations.

The ethnography of speaking (ES) studies language use as displayed in the daily life of particular speech communities.
 (“*ethnography of speaking*” is often referred to by the term “*ethnography of communication*”).

ES obtains and interprets information by learning the ways of communicating appropriately in a community.

Its theoretical contributions are centred around the study of
“SITUATED DISCOURSE”



linguistic performance as the locus of relationship between *language* and *socio-cultural order*.

ES studies what is accomplished through speaking and how speech is related to and is constructed by particular aspects of social organization.

HYMES (1972): “communicative competence” -- see Lecture #1!

He developed a framework with several components for analyzing communicative events: p. 372.

Study the analysis based on this framework (Example #16, pp. 373-374).

ES *does* contribute to research on communicative competence: its focus of investigation is on the *predictable structure of verbal performance* in the conduct of social life.

What is the difference between *ES approach* and *pragmatic analysis*?

ES approach:

- stronger concern for the socio-cultural context of the use of language;
- stronger interest in clarifying the relationship between *language* and *local systems of knowledge and social order*.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF SPEAKING: Analysis of *all* factors that are relevant to understanding how a communicative event achieves its objective.

3. Interactional sociolinguistics

This approach to communication has developed from the ethnography of speaking framework, but it includes analysis of *clues* speakers employ in order to analyze conversations within its ethnographic context.

In addition to observing turn-taking practices, hesitations, paralinguistic behaviour, interactional sociolinguists acknowledge the importance of socio-cultural contexts.

3.1 Contextualization cues

Gumperz (1982) identifies contextualization cues as features “by which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, how the semantic content is to be understood and *how* each sentence relates to what precedes or follows”.

Study the Example #20 on p. 380.

4. Conversational Analysis (CA)

Talk is action: conversation is an activity, such as dancing, etc.

Focus: structure of conversation at *micro-level*.

Adjacency pairs: greetings, questions/answers, acceptances/refusals, farewells, invitation/acceptance, etc.

...”related utterances by produced by two successive speakers in such a way that the second utterance is identified as a follow up to the first.” (p. 384)

Study the Example #27, p. 384.
Identify adjacency pairs in Exercise #14, p. 384.

4.1 Preferred and dispreferred second pair parts

Linguistic and paralinguistic clues function in identifying preferred or dispreferred responses: for example, *OK*, *well* in Exercise #14; hesitations, initial pauses, falling intonation, etc. (Example 29, p. 385).

4.2 Conversational feedback

Verbal (*mm*, *uh-huh*, *right*, etc.) or non-verbal (*nodding*, *gaze*, etc.) signals attention to the speech of the conversation partner.

Verbal feedback on the phone – important!!

4.3 Keeping just to the text

CA claims that ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ speakers encounter in conversations can be described without referring to socio-cultural contexts.

This implies moving towards a more “autonomous” approach, one that is shared by formal linguists – important methodological point!

The difference between Conversation Analysis and the Ethnography of speaking approaches is that for CA the *interaction* is the only legitimate source for analysis (= what occurs in the interaction is important).

5. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Pragmatics and politeness theory
Ethnography of speaking
Interactional sociolinguistics
Conversation Analysis (CA)

} *descriptive* approaches!

Critical Discourse Analysis ...”by contrast is explicitly concerned with investigating how language is used to construct and maintain power relationships in society”. (p. 393)

Comment on the Example #38, p. 393.

5.1 Power and CDA

The participants in the conversation are *unequal!*

Analyze the Example #39 on p. 394.

Democratic interactions: more subtle ways of exercising power.

Study the Example #40, p. 395.

5.2 Ideology and CDA

Researchers employing the CDA methodology aim at discovering hidden messages and assumptions in the discourse.

Most obvious areas of using CDA: advertisements, news items – researchers identify ways of manipulating readers and/or listeners: vocabulary choices, pronoun uses, etc.

Study the Examples 44, a and b (p. 398) and the Example #46, p. 399.
Comment!