The Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies

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Discourse analysis

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Discourse analysis
Studying and critiquing language in use

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Introduction

'Discourse' is one of the most contested terms in linguistics and the social sciences. Consequently, 'discourse analysis' has come to cover a range of different techniques and approaches for the study of language in interaction and how this sheds light on larger issues of social structure. Discourse analysis focuses on how language is used and for what purposes. As an umbrella term, it describes a variety of analytic approaches with different understandings of what 'language above the sentence' means (Cameron 2001). While linguists might be able to talk about individual elements of language and linguistic features apart from the context in which they are used, discourse analysis is always tied to context. Context can include a range of factors that influence how discourse is produced, including the identity of speakers, their physical location, whether the interaction is synchronous, and so on. Historically, grammar and structure have been the key focus for linguists in understanding language as a system. However, with the ability to inexpensively record naturally occurring conversation, researchers were increasingly able to focus on interaction as it unfolded in real time. To understand how and why discourse develops as it does, analysts have created tools to analyse both empirical elements (like particular words belonging to a particular register) and non-empirical elements (like goals or intentions) of interaction. While studies of syntax, lexis, and phonology might focus on empirical investigations of structure and arrangement of phonemes and morphemes, i.e. elements of language that are observable, the focus in discourse analysis can be much more varied and depend on the goals of particular analysts. This chapter will look at the ways in which discourse analysis has been employed from a variety of different perspectives, starting with a description of several influential methods and theories and the important role each approach plays in the field of English Language Studies more generally.

Theories and methods

Discourse analysis focuses on interaction among people and looks beyond individual words, sentences, or utterances to describe the development of interaction and how it ultimately creates and sustains the social world. Conversation analysis (CA), as pioneered by

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Sacks et al. (1974) remains, in many ways, the most systematic, recognised form of discourse analysis in this regard. CA is grounded in the field of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), which focused on the production of social order in everyday interaction in English-speaking contexts. Garfinkel argued that seemingly mundane, everyday interaction actually offered an important window into how norms and values in society were maintained. Growing out of this approach to understanding interaction, conversation analysts attend to regularities in both everyday and institutional talk, illuminating how social order is enacted in day-to-day interaction. CA employs detailed transcripts and close analysis of turn-taking and moment-to-moment interaction, allowing the analyst to see where small pauses or hesitations are meaningful in the development of a particular interaction. Sacks (1992), for example, analysed talk from calls to a suicide prevention line and showed that structures could be observed in interaction between the caller and the hotline worker. While Sacks' own work looked at regularities in conversation and how speakers accounted for their actions, CA was then developed for the description of regularities in conversations more generally. This includes different elements of interaction including turn-taking, repair, and how overlapping talk is resolved. By focusing on regularities and patterns, CA has shown that interaction is ordered and that the order in conversation is emergent.

CA is particularly useful in describing and analysing 'sequence' in interaction, showing that individual utterances follow directly from what has preceded the utterance in the conversation. This analysis can show not only how everyday discourse is ordered in terms of its structure, but how this order can offer insights into how speakers account for particular actions and create 'common sense' understandings of the world. The relationship between English language production and 'common sense' is particularly important for showing the role interaction plays in social life. Stokoe's (2010) analysis of talk in police interrogations about violence towards women provides an exemplar case of how CA can produce larger descriptions of how speakers make moral judgments. Stokoe shows that denial of specific crimes of violence by men often included some categorical denial of violence towards women. Rather than simply denying the act of violence, they would deny that violence towards women is the sort of thing that men do. The denial of violence was more than a rejection of a specific accusation of violence, and instead included an appeal to 'their character, disposition and identity memberships' (79). In her analysis, Stokoe shows larger 'common sense' understandings of how men should and should not act. The focus on the minutia of interaction and the moment-by-moment reasoning of speakers provides a window into deeper understandings of social contexts. In this case, *what* an individual says is as important as *how* they say it.

An emphasis on regularities and patterns can also be seen in narrative analysis, which developed around the same time as CA. Labov's (1972) work on storytelling and English language variation in the inner city of New York looked at structures above turns in conversations and provided descriptions of patterns of storytelling. This analysis also focused on the role stories played within the presentation of self and the development of community, with speakers using stories to establish their own experience of the world and accomplish 'sense-making' in interaction (Labov and Waletzky 1997: 335). Bamberg (1997) and Harré and van Langenhove (1998) and others (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Deppermann 2013) have developed notions of 'positioning' within interaction to further describe the social action that takes place in both storytelling and interaction. How individuals position themselves and others can reveal larger 'story-lines' (Harré and van Langenhove's term) that give meaning to actions as well as provide reasoning for moral judgements. The positioning of self and others is also important for the allocation of rights and responsibilities, and in the structuring of

hierarchical relationships where speakers exercise power and control. Sabat (2003) has shown how talk by caregivers about people with Alzheimer's disease can include 'malignant positioning'. This positioning deletes the rights of the person or people being spoken about, including the right to be heard. By describing someone with Alzheimer's disease as 'not knowing anything anymore' (p. 87), the caregivers position the person as being unable to speak for themselves. Others were then encouraged to discount and ignore what was being said by the patient. The ways patients were spoken about and how they and their actions were positioned also reveals beliefs about them and had the consequence of reducing the individual patient's rights by limiting their agency. The telling of a narrative or the positioning of another person creates a social world in which the person who is positioned is come to be seen in a particular way. Stories and narratives are then important ways for speakers to construct social contexts in which their own and others' actions are understandable. They show how a person views the social world while they are acting in it.

The connection between English language and culture is central to many methods of discourse analysis from a sociolinguistic perspective. Interactional sociolinguistics has its roots in linguistic anthropology and the work of Gumperz and Hymes (1972). Together, they developed forms of data analysis both from naturally occurring conversation and from interviews of speakers about their own communication practices. This model of analysis, like CA, focuses not only on what speakers are saying, but how meaning emerges in interaction. From an interactional sociolinguistic perspective, the analyst is looking at how speakers come to understand the meaning of others, and the connection between larger cultural phenomena and each individual's own identity (see Asprey and Lawson, this volume). While CA attends more exclusively to the regularities and patterns within conversation, interactional sociolinguists analyse larger societal contexts from a more recursive approach, one that does not limit the analysis to the discourse event. They can therefore begin to make larger claims about the role of different relevant issues in English Language Studies like multilingualism (see Garcia and Lim, this volume), as both linguistic and cultural phenomena.

Situated discourse analysis that foregrounds social and cultural production is also a feature of linguistic ethnography (Creese 2008; Rampton et al. 2004). Following a recursive methodology in the same way as ethnography from an anthropological perspective, linguistic ethnographers are open to research questions and methods developing as their investigation progresses. Linguistic ethnography highlights the role of the researcher as participant-observer and recognises the importance of taking into account their assumptions and biases (Tusting and Maybin 2007). Research questions and contexts are negotiated in the analyst's lived experience, allowing for a broad picture of language in context to emerge. Rampton (1995), for example, traced the relationships between ethnicity and English language use through close longitudinal observation in school settings (see also Madsen, this volume). These methods are particularly useful in projects where the researcher is initially unsure about the focus of analysis, allowing for adaptation.

Ethnography and ethnomethodology contrast with more structured approaches to English language analysis. Motivated by Halliday's (1973) functional grammar, different models of discourse analysis of clause structures to understand how speakers *do* things with language. Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model, for example, labels individual turns in conversation building on categories like 'transaction', 'exchange', 'move', and 'act'. They then analyse the ways in which utterances are organised around specific functions in discourse. Looking at discourse 'moves' in a classroom, analysts can then categorise interaction using further categories like 'opening', 'answering', and 'follow-up' and can describe how students and teachers interact with one another. This approach is particularly useful when describing

discourse where there is a clear cultural expectation for how speakers should interact. For example, classroom roles of teachers and pupils are comparatively fixed and the potential for deviation from fixed ways of speaking, asking questions, and responding is minimal. The models, however, begin with relatively fixed concepts of what discourse constitutes and can be less useful in complex contexts with more fluid roles in interaction.

In English Language Studies, inductive, empirical analysis of naturally occurring data is the norm, but Foucauldian notions of discourse as larger social systems of ordering knowledge and power (Foucault 1981) do influence some forms of analysis. This can be seen most explicitly in critical discourse analysis (CDA), which investigates the ways in which ideology (see Spencer-Bennett, this volume) is replicated in interaction and discourse practices. In the contemporary context where English-speaking countries remain in dominant positions, studying the role of English in maintaining power relationships in language is particularly relevant. CDA, first conceived by Fairclough (1995), works at uncovering the ways in which ideology and dominant thinking in society affect the production of discourse, arguing that one cannot understand what is happening in interaction without understanding the larger power structures behind it. CDA focuses on connecting analysis of language in use to ideology, looking specifically at how power is maintained and perpetuated through particular language structures. CDA accepts that any form of discourse analysis starts from a particular value position, and holds that power structures in society perpetuate themselves, resulting in inequality. Finally, it addresses social and political problems (Wodak and Meyer 2002). CDA is also explicitly 'political', and concentrates on power structures that are in some way considered unbalanced or unjust. Because of this, CDA has been used most notably in analysis of political discourse, with the goal of highlighting the ways in which political structures favour powerful people and institutions. While Fairclough's (1995) original description of CDA was based on Halliday's functional grammar, CDA has come to encompass a much broader range of methods, analysing a variety of different linguistic features and structures, and makes an explicit link between the use of language and the influence of ideology. Musolff (2010), for example, has shown how metaphors of the 'body politic' were used in anti-Semitic discourse around the Holocaust to describe the German nation as a body that had been 'infected' by a foreign poison. Musolff shows how ideologies were developed through metaphoric language and had practical implications for how people thought and acted when conceiving of and talking about Jews as a disease to be eradicated.

Discourse analysis methods often work within a tension among different scales of language use, be they single utterances or conversations or long stretches of interaction. To look at much larger datasets, analysts can employ tools such as corpus linguistics (McEnery and Wilson 2001). While corpus linguistics has historically been used to look at patterns of lexis and grammar in the English language, in discourse analysis it can be used to connect different scales of language use. Baker (2006) has shown how corpus linguistics methods can be applied to smaller datasets, by investigating how patterns in specialised corpora differ from language use more generally. Key word analysis, for example, might show what topics and themes are particularly salient in smaller datasets compared to a reference corpus. By identifying patterns in relatively short stretches of discourse, analysts can also investigate the extent to which the trends they have observed emerge as discourse practices in a larger body of similar texts (see Philip, this volume). For example, Hardaker and McGlashan's (2016) analysis of Twitter looked at rape threats made towards feminist campaigner Caroline Criado-Perez. The analysis used a corpus of tweets to investigate frequency, collocation, and key words and built macro-descriptions of how sexual aggression was enacted, before looking at how particular hashtags fit into larger patterns. The mix of analysis from more than one scale offered an in-depth understanding of specific tweets as well as broader descriptions of aggression towards women on Twitter.

The approaches we have so far reviewed foreground interaction between speakers without looking specifically at individual cognitive contexts. By contrast, a discursive psychological perspective (Potter and Wetherell 1987) includes an increased focus on psychological states and the motives and intentions of the individual. It then uses this information to help describe and analyse interaction. Other methods for discourse analysis may, of course, take these issues into consideration. However, approaches to conversation from, for example, a CA perspective are less likely to discuss how speakers' utterances are motivated by their own feelings and thoughts. A discursive psychological approach, by contrast, makes use of psychological theory as part of the explanatory work of analysis. By considering what people want to accomplish in interactions, this approach examines the consequences of particular utterances on how users think and act. Edwards (2000), for example, has shown how talk in relationship counselling is 'action-oriented' and the way problems are formulated has the effect of constructing particular ways of both talking and thinking about the social world, and what each individual speaker wants to accomplish in that world.

Multimodal discourse analysis frameworks (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001; Jewitt 2009) have also grown as technology for video recording of interaction has developed in recent years. Although paralinguistic and other non-audio factors have long been understood to affect interaction, ability to capture the needed data to do analysis of these factors was limited. Cheap and readily available means of video recording has offered analysts the ability to consider another set of modes when analysing interaction. Like the insights afforded by the first close analyses of audio tape recordings, video recordings of naturally occurring conversations and interaction have provided new insights into the role of different modes in interaction. This can be seen in the development of gesture studies (Cienki and Müller 2008), which draws a connection among speech, thought, and gesture. New models for analysis have begun to stretch what is considered discourse, suggesting that researchers need to consider not only what speakers are saying, but what their bodies are doing when they are interacting with others (see Ravelli, this volume).

The Internet and the use of computers and mobile technologies has required adaptation of traditional ways of understanding the English language, particularly as digital communication can include creative use of code-switching and language choice (Androutsopoulos 2014). Differences in how language is produced in computer-mediated and online contexts has also required adaptation of analysis methods. Traditionally, spoken and written interaction have been clearly demarcated. However, the Internet has allowed for a variety of different modes of interaction on a variety of different scales, making previous categories difficult to apply. Analysts have taken different approaches to discourse in online contexts, from applying methods for offline interaction like CA (Paulus et al. 2016) to creating new methods, like Herring's computer-mediated discourse analysis (Herring 2004a). Herring argues that different tools need to be adapted to look at the 'four domains' of language online: structure, meaning, interaction, and social behaviour. By focusing on these different domains, discourse analysts can describe how online contexts produced particular ways of interacting and adapt discourse analytic tools to cope with the unique features.

Androutsopoulos' (2008) 'discourse-centred online ethnography' also adapts methods for analysis developed in offline spaces. In this model, discourse analysis occurs within the context of longitudinal observation and contact with users in online environments. To understand interaction within a massively multiplayer online game like World of Warcraft, for example, the researcher must be able to understand both the interaction within the game and the offline context where users play the game. Like ethnographic perspectives in offline contexts, discourse-centred online ethnography highlights that discourse practices which are

salient in a specific context are not always obvious to an observer. By placing themselves 'in the field', the analyst can collect data that engages discourse data in a comprehensive way. Without the prerequisite background, understanding interaction on the site is likely to miss key features and come to conclusions that are limited. For analysts, it is not simply a question of keeping up with these technologies, but being able to place technologies in larger social contexts and doing reliable, valid discourse analysis that engages the both the physical environment of the user and the mediated context.

Technology continues to have consequences for the ways in which social interaction, cultural practices, and the English language develop, particularly as mobile technology and the Internet have grown ubiquitous. Language use in the presentation of oneself online has long been a key area of research for discourse analysts (Seargeant and Tagg 2014). While the conflation of different audiences and friend groups in social media spaces was initially described as 'context collapse' (Marwick and Boyd 2011), researchers have been increasingly interested in 'context design' (Tagg et al. 2017b) and the ways user language choice can be a resource for presentation of self to different audiences in the same online spaces (Androutsopoulos 2014). In these online contexts, understanding how and why discourse develops in the way that it does, particularly when the object of analysis like how users understand offensive behaviour (Tagg et al. 2017b), requires understanding a broader context for online social and discourse practices.

The interconnected nature of discourse is not a new concept. English language is a complex phenomenon (see Introduction of this volume) and its analysis requires taking into account the factors that influence it and its development. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) argue that the interconnected nature of discourse and the importance of a myriad of different factors in interaction can be described using principles of complex systems theory. As a complex dynamic system, one in which different elements and agents interact, discourse has some features of regularity and predictability, and the potential for dynamic changes at the same time. Complex dynamic systems are, importantly, non-linear, meaning that there is not always a clear cause-effect relationship and no clear beginnings and endings (Cameron 2015). The discourse dynamics approach looks at five levels of interaction:

– [Point Zero] is the initial conditions of an interaction, the state of the system immediately before the event being modelled or investigated . . .
– Level 1 represents activity on a timescale of milliseconds, such as automatic responses to another person or experience . . .
– Level 2 represents the level of minute-by-minute engagement and more controlled responses, for example, in conversation or language learning activity.
– Level 3 is the level of a single discourse event [be it a conversation, a novel, a YouTube video, etc] . . .
– Level 4 encompasses accumulated level 3 patterns that stabilise as attractors in the system, for example as learnt vocabulary items, empathic understandings, idioms, discourse genres, or ethical codes. These operate on a longer timescale beyond an immediate event, and may, as social change, spread across communities, groups or nations, as with the signing of a peace agreement.

(Cameron 2015: 44–45)

Cameron's research shows the way in which the different scales of discourse interact, and consideration of all levels is necessary to understand, describe, and analyse interaction among speakers. For example, Cameron (2012) has shown how the dynamic use of metaphor works

in reconciliation discourse between a former member of the Irish Republican Army and the daughter of a British Member of Parliament who was killed by a bomb he placed. Metaphorical language like 'building a bridge' and 'going on a journey' emerge at specific points, but become important patterns for describing the experience of reconciliation more broadly among the speakers. The speakers repeat and expand the metaphor, both within particular and subsequent conversations, as the metaphorical language become salient and useful. By connecting discourse across levels, the researcher can use different tools at different moments to see how specific utterances come about from previous interaction and pre-existing conditions, as well as looking forward, to see how salient patterns develop.

While the forms of discourse analysis covered above represent a range of different approaches, they share several important similarities that are key for analysis in English Language Studies. First, they treat discourse as language in use and employ analysis of discourse to understand how meaning and social life are ordered. The approaches also see society as produced and developed in the everyday, day-to-day interaction of people. While institutional, governmental, religious, and media discourse are frequently the object of analysis, they are constituent parts of social interaction, not determinative. Understanding social life requires explicit attention to 'ordinary' interaction. Second, they all employ empirical data. Discourse analysis presupposes that 'discourse' is the object of study, and not reports of experiences or model sentences and discourses. Reports of experiences and model language use can be the object of analysis, but they are treated as situated discourse themselves, subject to the same analytic frameworks as everyday talk. Third, they are largely inductive, rather than deductive. The use of empirical data to drive theory is fundamentally different from approaches to discourse analysis which understand discourses as ways of framing knowledge (Foucault 1981). In the approaches, the role of the analyst is to identify patterns of language use as they occur, with the goal of showing how the patterns can be used to understand and describe the social world more broadly.

Key debates

Because of the variety of approaches to discourse analysis in English Language Studies, positions about what elements of interaction should be the object of study does create friction among scholars. Moreover, because discourse as a social phenomenon occurs in a vast variety of different contexts, with diverse speakers with diverse goals, any individual analytic framework or method is unlikely to account for every potential discourse event. Given the different scales of interaction, scholars have to make choices about where to begin analysis and what to focus on. This consequently leads to debates around what should be the object of analysis and the methods used to collect data. This section will focus on two debates around these issues.

What should or should not be considered as 'data' when doing discourse analysis is illustrated well in criticism of analysis of language using 'culture' to frame research. Ethnomethodological enquiry has long appreciated the need to consider the influence of cultural and physical contexts on interaction when doing discourse analysis. More recently, a similar attendance to language in cultural contexts has appeared as linguistic ethnography (Creese 2008). At the same time, this approach focuses less on the individual psychology of each speaker. By contrast, proponents of discursive social psychological approaches that argue individual psychological states must be taken into account in analysis are again the object of focus (Wetherell 2007). Wetherall writes: 'The study of language and culture are not sufficient in themselves. Psychological assumptions and presuppositions are unavoidable

when language production is studied in its contexts of use.' (p. 661) The question of 'sufficiency' is a key one and applies to every form of discourse analysis, as researchers must be confident that the tools they have chosen to do their analysis will actually account for the phenomenon they are investigating. While proponents of particular forms of analysis might strongly argue for their own supremacy, 'sufficiency' of methods must always include analysts considering the aims, focus, and research questions of their particular projects and the form and quality of data they intend to analyse.

The identity of the analyst has also remained an important debate in discourse analysis, particularly their role in collecting data. Analysis of open-ended interviews highlights these issues, particularly their use in attempts to deduce 'intention' and 'motives' behind individual actions and the intended meanings of their utterances. While there has long been scepticism of interviews in the analysis of interaction, interviews have persisted as an important object of research in discourse analysis, particularly in methods that attempt to provide a participant perspective. Potter and Hepburn (2005) argue that the researcher must view interviews as interactional settings, where the interviewer plays an influential role in the production of discourse activity. The interview context is always oriented towards the questions chosen by the interviewer. Even in so-called 'open-ended' interviews, the interviewer plays the key role driving the topic of conversation. The context can, of course, become the object of research, as is the case in Stokoe's (2010) work on police interviews about domestic violence. How and why interviewees respond in the way they do in that particular context becomes part of the analysis. Regardless of the focus and aim, researchers make decisions about the discourse they choose to collect and analyse, and the decision-making processes determine the possible outcomes of any given project.

Decisions about how to proceed with analysis are, of course, not without biases and preexisting beliefs that shape what should be analysed and why. In CDA, the 'critical' aim of the research is explicit at the outset, with researchers explicitly and unapologetically engaging 'political' analysis (Van Dijk 1997). This is not, however, without its own problems, particularly when attempting to develop empirical, inductive descriptions of discourse and the power structures embedded in English language use. With CDA's Foucauldian influence and a focus on exposing 'hidden' messages within discourse, CDA has been criticised for serving a particular, homogenous ideology itself, while lacking systematicity and rigour (Widdowson 2005). If the starting point is an attempt to affect positive change, than the validity of the research might be affected by these attempts. The same criticism might be used against linguistic ethnography, which also places importance on the individual analyst above concerns about systematicity. There is a need to both recognise subjective elements of discourse analysis and work within frameworks to understand and address this subjectivity, with the goal of producing analyses that are both reliable and replicable.

While there is a multitude of different ways of looking at discourse and doing discourse analysis from an English Language Studies perspective, scholars must recognise where common ground exists and benefit from areas where methods and approaches to discourse can be mixed. This is particularly important when considering how to approach new forms of data and contexts for analysis. While significant theoretical differences result in incompatibility between approaches, there is an increasing willingness to talk across methodological and theoretical differences to address research questions in creative and novel ways. This can be seen particularly in the development of corpus analysis throughout the 2000s, with the expansion of corpus linguistics tools into discourse analysis (Baker 2006; Partington et al. 2013). By adopting corpus linguistic approaches and adapting them for use in discourse analysis, researchers have increasingly been able to develop methods for answering complex

questions about how and why particular patterns emerge in discourse, and make meaningful links between micro and macro levels.

Future directions

The Internet and mobile technologies emerging around its proliferation are likely to continue to create new spaces for discourse analysis, and will require serious considerations around the ways written and spoken communication are being done in new spaces, and the extent to which genuinely new ways of communicating are developing. While face-to-face interaction with others who are physically present remains a large part of most individuals' experience, increasingly interaction occurs on digital platforms or through digital devices. As we have seen, analysts have applied methods developed for offline contexts including both CA (Rendle-Short 2015) and narrative analysis (Page 2013). Because of the novelty and the relative impermanence of these technologies, particularly when compared with more stable technologies like the telephone, what technologies and platforms will remain most stable over time is difficult to know and what methods will prove to have the most staying power over time has yet to be seen. That said, interaction through mobile devices will continue to feature heavily in analysis, be it texting (Tagg 2012), the creation and consumption of online video (Pihlaja 2018), or story-telling (Page 2013). For researchers looking at interaction, technology offers two distinct affordances for research: first, in creating novel forms of discourse through communication technology, and second, in creating new and better representations of interaction being analysed as data. Herring (2004b) pointed out early in the history of research in computer-mediated communication that the extent to which 'new' technologies created 'new' practices and whether practices around these technologies continue when the technologies move on was an open question. This remains in many ways an open question, particularly as technologies improve quickly and genres are picked up and then dropped. Interest, for example, in 'blogging' as a genre type was a significant area of research in the 2000s, but has diminished as the popularity of blogging has decreased. The challenge for researchers is how to understand 'new' practices on popular platforms in light of technologies that have come before. For example, while MySpace is no longer a popular site for interaction with friends online, understanding how practices on that site developed is important for understanding Facebook or whatever social sites that follow. Because technologies do not emerge in vacuums, discourse analysts must work to understand the preconditions of discourse on both a local and global level.

The extent to which discourse analysis will continue to focus on spoken and written English language (and indeed, what will count as 'English') rather than visual representation will be a significant debate going forward. Multimodality as an object of research is unlikely to disappear as an issue, particularly considering interaction in online contexts among speakers from a variety of different contexts using English. In online discourse, there is now a spread of different text types and multimodal elements that cannot be easily categorised or analysed using traditional approaches to written and spoken texts. 'Memes' provide a good example of the difficulties of separating analysis of texts from their multimodal elements (for example, Gal et al. 2015; Ross and Rivers 2017). In a 'meme', an iconic image is overlaid with text that often has certain fixed lexico-grammatical elements, and elements that are determined by the creator of the meme to meet the needs of a particular context. The meme contains both the content of the message and the words that the creator has produced, but also a shared knowledge about the discourse practices when using specific images. This knowledge is much more difficult to substantiate and describe empirically than the lexico-grammatical features of a given meme. With the ability to publish images in the comments

sections of Facebook pages, for example, discourse analysts looking at the comments cannot simply ignore images, particularly when they play an important role in the communicative practices of people online. The same issues apply to emojis, photos, stickers, and gifs, which have developed into key resources for online engagement (Zappavigna and Zhao 2017; Lim 2015; Sakai 2013). Where boundaries of English Language Studies can and should be drawn will continue to be of significant debate among discourse analysts, particularly as it relates to the earlier question of sufficiency in models of analysis.

With the spread of mobile technology, drawing clear lines between 'online' and 'offline' interaction has been and will continue to be more difficult. Researchers will increasingly need to collect data that engage a variety of discourse contexts, and use a variety of tools to bring together analysis of the discourse from disparate contexts in a meaningful way. Work by Rørbeck Nørreby and Spindler Møller (2015) shows the ways, for example, that Facebook interaction requires understanding of how social media pervades the lives of young people, without clear distinctions between what happens online and offline. Similarly, projects like the 'Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities' (Tagg et al. 2017a) have looked at the ways in which mobile technology is used in interaction among in superdiverse communities, developing important links between digital and traditional ethnography. This analysis shows that technological 'presence' through mobile technology means that interaction occurs in real time with people all across the world. For Chinese immigrants in Birmingham in the United Kingdom, connection to family in China is now possible in real time, with effects on English language, code-switching, and understanding of 'context' more generally. The issues addressed in the Translation and Translanguaging project are only likely to grow as digital communication expands and global mobility provides increasing affordances for interaction among superdiverse communities.

Finally, artificial intelligence (AI) will offer new opportunities for discourse analysts to contribute to building and researching technology that attempts to create 'natural' human interaction. Computer software has played a key role in corpus linguistics (see Philip, this volume), particularly as computers have improved their search capacity and ability to, for example, add semantic tags to words (Rayson 2008). Technology is likely to lead to new paths of research analysing how machines understand and produce language, for example, in relation to improved speech recognition (Xiong et al. 2016) and the effect of machine translation in interaction (Patil and Davies 2014). Neurologists are also likely to further understand language in the brain, with potential implications for how we understand the development of interaction and how the factors involved in communication interact to produce discourse. The ability of computer systems to identify patterns in speech and interaction has the potential to produce new tools for researchers by automating processes, such as transcription and semantic analysis. The better AI becomes at recognising speech, the more potential researchers will have to compare spoken language with large databases of spoken discourse and develop corpus linguistic tools that move beyond the written word to spoken discourse, gesture, and thought.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a sample of a range of different approaches to discourse analysis, showing how scholars have used close, empirical analysis of interaction to describe how people make meaning in social contexts. In making decisions about the appropriateness of any given method for a specific project, researchers must consider the aims, focus, and

research questions, before making a judgment about which method to choose. Ultimately, there must be a clear match between the goals of the research, data, and methods that have been chosen, allowing the researcher to make valid and reliable claims about the social world they are investigating. This includes awareness of the ways in which the researcher's own context and biases shape decisions about research. Regardless of the methodological approach, analysts must consider their own position in data collection and analysis, and how the choices they have made affect the results and their presentation.

Further reading

Cameron, D. (2001) *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London: Sage. Focusing on spoken discourse, this book provides a good starting point for research into analysis of a variety of perspectives, but looking at approaches to discourse analysis from a conversation analytic perspective.

Wetherell, M., S. Taylor and S. J. Yates (2001) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. London: Sage. This text provides a very good description of the practice of discourse analysis, from collecting data to various methods.

Wetherell, M., S. Taylor and S. J. Yates (2001) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London: Sage. A companion text to *Discourse as Data,* this text provides a comprehensive background for different theories of discourse analysis from a variety of different scholars.

Gee, J. P. and M. Handford (2013) *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge. An extended and comprehensive handbook covering many forms of discourse analysis in depth.

Jones, R. H., A. Chik and C. A. Hafner (2015) *Discourse and Digital Practices: Doing Discourse Analysis in the Digital Age*. London: Routledge. This collection provides case studies for doing analysis of online texts, discussing key issues and challenges.

Related topics

- English and social identity
- The language of social media
- Corpus linguistics: studying language as part of the digital humanities
- Multimodal English.

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