Introduction

PERSPECTIVES ON DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Discourse: an interdisciplinary movement

DEBORAH SCHIFFRIN'S (1994) BOOK, *Approaches to Discourse*, compiles and discusses various definitions of 'discourse'. Here are three of them (Schiffrin 1994: 23–43):

> Discourse is: 'language above the sentence or above the clause'.
>
> (Stubbs 1983: 1)

> The study of discourse is the study of *any* aspect of language use.
>
> (Fasold 1990: 65)

> [T]he analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs.
>
> (Brown and Yule 1983: 1)

Here are some others:

> [W]ith the sentence we leave the domain of language as a system of signs and enter into another universe, that of language as an instrument of communication, whose expression is discourse.
>
> (Benveniste 1971: 110, cited in Mills 1997: 4–5)

> Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it

> sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements.
>
> (Foucault 1972: 80, cited in Mills 1997: 6)

Roger Fowler says that his programme for literary studies has the aim

> to change or even deconstruct the notion of literature so that a very wide range of discourses is actively used by individuals in their conscious engagements with ideology, experience and social organization.
>
> (Fowler 1981: 199)

> 'Discourse' is for me more than *just* language use: it is language use, whether speech or writing, seen as a type of social practice.
>
> (Fairclough 1992: 28)

> Discourse *constitutes* the social. Three dimensions of the social are distinguished – knowledge, social relations, and social identity – and these correspond respectively to three major functions of language . . . Discourse is shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies.
>
> (Fairclough 1992: 8)

According to David Lee, it is an

> uncomfortable fact that the term 'discourse' is used to cover a wide range of phenomena . . . to cover a wide range of practices from such well documented phenomena as sexist discourse to ways of speaking that are easy to recognise in particular texts but difficult to describe in general terms (competitive discourse, discourse of solidarity, etc.).
>
> (Lee 1992: 97)

> 'Discourse' . . . refers to language in use, as a process which is socially situated. However . . . we may go on to discuss the constructive and dynamic role of either spoken or written discourse in structuring areas of knowledge and the social and institutional practices which are associated with them. In this sense, discourse is a means of talking and writing about and acting upon worlds, a means which both constructs and is constructed by a set of social practices within these worlds, and in so doing both reproduces and constructs afresh particular social-discursive practices, constrained or encouraged by more macro movements in the overarching social formation
>
> (Candlin 1997: iix)

Other definitions of discourse will appear in the chapters to follow. Taken together, they clearly span a considerable range, although a core set of concerns also emerges.

It is this core, and the best-established deviations from it, that we intend to unpack in the pages of the *Reader*. The quotations above consistently emphasize 'language in use'. But there is a large body of opinion (see the later quotations) that stresses what discourse is *beyond* language in use. Discourse is language use relative to social, political and cultural formations – it is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order, and shaping individuals' interaction with society. This is the key factor explaining why so many academic disciplines entertain the notion of discourse with such commitment. Discourse falls squarely within the interests not only of linguists, literary critics, critical theorists and communication scientists, but also of geographers, philosophers, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists and many others. Despite important differences of emphasis, discourse is an inescapably important concept for understanding society and human responses to it, as well as for understanding language itself.

Part of the explanation for the upsurge of interest in discourse lies in a fundamental realignment that has taken place, over the past four decades or so, in how academic knowledge, and perhaps all knowledge, is assumed to be constituted. To put the negative side of this change, we might describe it as a weakening of confidence in traditional ways of explaining phenomena and processes, a radical questioning of how people, including academics, come to appreciate and interpret their social and cultural environments. The rise in importance of discourse has coincided with a falling off of intellectual security in what we know and what it means to know – that is, a shift in epistemology, in the theorizing of knowledge (see Cameron et al, Chapter 7; Gee, Chapter 8). The question of *how* we build knowledge has come more to the fore, and this is where issues to do with language and linguistic representation come into focus.

Academic study, but in fact all aspects of experience, are based on acts of classification, and the building of knowledge and of interpretations is very largely a process of defining boundaries between conceptual classes, and of labelling those classes and the relationships between them. This is one central reason why all intellectual endeavour, and all routine social living, needs to examine language, because it is through language that classification becomes possible (Lee 1992). Seen this way, language ceases to be a neutral medium for the transmission and reception of pre-existing knowledge. It is the key ingredient in the very constitution of knowledge. Many disciplines, more or less simultaneously, have come to see the need for an awareness of language, and discourse more broadly, and of the structuring potential of language, as part of their own investigations. This is the shift often referred to as the 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences, but it has been experienced in academic study more generally.

All the same, it is not as if linguistics, 'the scientific study of language', has always provided the most appropriate means of studying knowledge-making processes and their social implications. Linguistics has tended to be an inward-looking discipline. It has not always appreciated the relevance of language and discourse to people other than linguists. The dominant traditions in linguistics, one could say until at least the 1970s, were particularly narrow, focusing on providing good descriptions of the grammar and pronunciation of utterances at the level of the sentence. Considerations of meaning in general, and particularly of how language, meaning and society interrelate, are still quite recent concerns. Discourse analysis is therefore a relatively new area of importance to linguistics too, which is moving beyond its earliest ambition. That was, to put it simplistically, to describe sentences and to gain autonomy for itself as a 'scientific' area of academic study. Under the heading of discourse, studies of language have come to be concerned with far wider issues. Discourse linguists analyse, for example, the structure of conversations, stories and various forms of written text, the subtleties of implied meanings, and how language in the form of speech interacts with non-linguistic (e.g., visual or spatial) communication. Under the headings of cohesion and coherence (see Chapter 9 by Wolfram Bublitz) they study how one communicative act depends on previous acts, and how people creatively interact in the task of making and inferring meaning. We consider some of these main developments, in linguistics and in other disciplines, in more detail in Parts One and Two of the *Reader*.

So discourse has gained importance through at least two different, concurrent developments – a shift in the general theorizing of knowledge and a broadening of perspective in linguistics. The *Reader* includes extracts from many of the most influential original writings on discourse, both theoretical and applied, which have brought about and benefited from this confluence of ideas. As individual chapters show, language studied as discourse opens up countless new areas for the critical investigation of social and cultural life – the composition of cultural groups, the management of social relations, the constitution of social institutions, the perpetuation of social prejudices, and so on.

Other general trends too have promoted interest in discourse. One is the growing recognition that contemporary life, at least in the world's most affluent and 'developed' societies, has qualities that distinguish it quite markedly from the 'modern' industrial, pre-World War Two period. One of the most obvious manifestations of what Anthony Giddens and many others have called 'Late Modernity' or 'High Modernity' (Giddens 1991), and what is more generally referred to as *postmodernity*, is the shift in advanced capitalist economies from manufacturing to service industries. Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995) refers to one part of this phenomenon as the *technologization* of discourse in post-Fordist societies (since the beginning of mass production of motor cars and similar industrial developments). Manufacturing and assembly workers working on production lines, isolated from consumers of the items they are producing, have been largely replaced by teams of workers, networked together, involved in communication tasks of different sorts or representing their companies in different kinds of service encounters with clients. Language takes on greater significance in the worlds of knowledge and service economies such as marketing, education, banking, insurance, telesales, tourism, and so on.

Rapid growth in communications media, such as cable, satellite and digital television and radio, desktop publishing, telecommunications (mobile phone networks, video-conferencing), email, online social and content sharing networks, internet-mediated sales and services, information provision and entertainment, has created new markets for language use. It is not surprising that language is being more and more closely scrutinized, for example within school curricula and by self-styled experts and guardians of so-called 'linguistic standards' (Cameron 1995; Milroy and Milroy 1999; Thurlow, Chapter 31). At the same time language is being shaped and honed, for example by advertisers, journalists and broadcasters, in a drive to generate ever-more attention and persuasive impact. Under these circumstances, language itself becomes marketable and a sort of commodity (Cameron 2000; Heller 2003, 2011), and its purveyors can market themselves through their skills of linguistic and textual manipulation (see Bourdieu, Chapter 26). Discourse ceases to be 'merely' a function of work. It *becomes* work, just as it defines various forms of leisure and, for that matter, academic study. The analysis of discourse becomes correspondingly more important – in the first instance for those with direct commercial involvement in the language economies, and secondly for those who need to deconstruct these new trends, to understand their force and even to oppose them (Cameron 2000).

This *critical* or socially engaged perspective on analysing discourse is apparent in several of the quotations above – most obviously those from Christopher Candlin, Norman Fairclough and Roger Fowler. (Part Six of the *Reader* contains several texts that are critically oriented in this sense, but see also Chapters 6, 7, 11 and 25.) If we ask what is the purpose of doing discourse analysis, the answer from critical discourse analysts would go well beyond the description of language in use. Discourse analysis offers a means of exposing or deconstructing the social practices that constitute 'social structure' and what we might call the conventional meaning structures of social life. It is a sort of forensic activity, with a libertarian political slant. The motivation for doing discourse analysis is very often a concern about social inequality and the perpetuation of power relationships, either between individuals or between social groups, difficult though it is to pre-judge moral correctness in many cases.

As this implies, the focus for a particular analysis can be either very local – analysing a particular conversation between two people or a single diary entry – or very global and abstract. In this latter tradition, the theoretical work of Michel Foucault (1980) and that of Michel Pêcheux (1982) has been very influential in introducing the link between discourse and ideology. Foucault prefers the term 'regimes of truth' rather than 'ideology', by which he means different types of discourses that are accepted and made to function as true. Pêcheux stresses how any one particular discourse or 'discursive formation' stands, at the level of social organization, in conflict with other discourses. He gives us a theory of how societies are organized through their ideological struggles, and how particular groups (e.g., social class groups or gender groups) will be either more or less privileged in their access to particular discourse networks. Local and global perspectives come together when some type of discourse analysis can show how the pressure of broad social or institutional norms are brought to bear on the identity and classification of individuals (see, for example, Mehan's analysis of a psychiatric interview in Chapter 29; Baker and McEnery's analysis of the construction of the category 'foreign doctor' by the British press in Chapter 30; and Thurlow's analysis of the print media positioning of young people as semi-illiterate and obsessed by text messaging in Chapter 31).

Let us recap briefly. At the most basic level, discourse is definable as language in use, but many definitions incorporate significantly more than this. Discourse is implicated in expressing people's points of view and value systems, many of which are 'pre-structured' in terms of what is 'normal' or 'appropriate' in particular social and institutional settings. Discourse practices can therefore be seen as the deployment of, and indeed sometimes as acts of resistance to, dominant ideologies. The focus of discourse analysis will usually be the study of particular texts (e.g., conversations, interviews, speeches, etc., or various written documents), although discourses are sometimes held to be abstract value systems which will never surface directly as texts (see Gee's distinction in Chapter 8 between the small 'd' and big 'D' discourses, respectively). Texts are specific products, or 'sediments' of meaning, which, to varying degrees, will reflect global as well as local discourse practices relevant to their production and reception. Discourse analysis can range from the description and interpretation of meaning-making and meaning-understanding in specific situations through to the critical analysis of ideology and access to meaning-systems and discourse networks. Language and discourse seem to have a particular salience in contemporary, *late-modern* social arrangements.

From this preliminary overview it is already apparent why the study of discourse is an interdisciplinary project. Most disciplines, and certainly all of the human and social sciences, need to deal with the interrelations between discourse and concepts such as social structure, social relations, conflict, ideology, selfhood, postmodernity and social change.

Multi-modal and multi-voiced discourses

It is worth emphasizing that discourse reaches out further than language itself in the forms as well as the meanings that can be the focus of analysis. When we think of discourse in the wider context of communication, we can extend its analysis to include non-linguistic *semiotic systems* (systems for signalling meaning), those of non-verbal and non-vocal communication which accompany or replace speech or writing (see Hodge and Kress 1991 for an overview of social semiotics, and Van Leeuwen 2005 for a wide-ranging introduction). Discourse practices include the 'embodied' or more obviously physical systems of representation, for example performance art, sign language or, more generally, what Pierre Bourdieu has called the 'bodily hexis'; see Chapter 26. Other non-verbal discourse modes (although often incorporating aspects of speech or writing) include painting, sculpture, photography, dance, music and film. In this sense, all texts are multi-modal (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996, 2001; Scollon, Chapter 6); speech involves not only words but also intonation, stress and voice quality (prosodic and paralinguistic features), and is normally accompanied by gestures, facial expressions and so on (non-verbal features). Considerations of written words increasingly involve typography, page layout, the materiality of signs, colour, relation to accompanying images, and so on (see Machin and Van Leeuwen, Chapter 11; Mautner, Chapter 25).

The idea that discourse is multiply structured has been a dominant one since the earliest days of discourse analysis and its predecessor in functional linguistics (see our Introduction to Part One). Roman Jakobson (Chapter 1), Michael Halliday (1978) and others stressed that language-in-use realizes many functions simultaneously, for example an informational function alongside relational/interpersonal and aesthetic functions. The focus on multi-modal discourse is in one sense a continuation of this traditional view, especially when it can be shown that different semiotic resources or dimensions (e.g., visual images and linguistic text in a school textbook or in a newspaper) fulfil different communicative functions. But texts can be multiply structured in other ways, if they show *multiple voicing* or *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Chapter 4). Texts often reflect and recycle different voices, which may be realized through different modalities or indeed a single modality, and addressing one or many audiences. For example, Ron Scollon's (Chapter 6) study of texts from the domain of public discourse illustrates how different *modes* (e.g., textual or visual) produce different effects with regards to the texts' truth claims (*modality*). He also draws our attention to how texts can be constructed and interpreted against background awareness of other texts – the phenomenon of *intertextuality*. A text whose meaning is achieved relative to other texts may include, blend or erase other salient points of view or voices.

Take another example, a hypothetical TV advertisement promoting a new car, which may embody a number of 'real' or 'implied' voices, addressing viewers in a multitude of roles – as drivers, passengers, car experts, status-seekers, parents concerned over their children's safety, overseers of family budgets, etc. Some of the different voices in this context may be ones we actually hear, realized via spoken language – perhaps a matter-of-fact commentary on the merits of the car, such as its safety, its comfort or its favourable price. But alternatively, they may be 'heard' in a less direct sense, through written/visual signs, e.g., the company's logo or the advertisement's on-screen small print. Cinematic and musical elements will also be present, perhaps photographs representing selected features of the car's design or its appearance and performance on the road, or a well-known tune with 'fitting' lyrics and so on.

Some of these voices may be competing with each other, representing conflicting interests or ideologies (e.g., safety vs. speeding). For Mikhail Bakhtin all discourse is multi-voiced, as all words and utterances echo other words and utterances derived from the historical, cultural and genetic heritage of a community and from the ways these words and utterances have been previously interpreted. In a broader sense then, 'voices' can be interpreted as discourses – positions, ideologies or stances that speakers and listeners take in particular instances of co-constructed interaction. Following Dell Hymes (1996), Jan Blommaert (2005) defines 'voice' as one's capacity to be heard and understood, or not. The concept of voice becomes particularly salient under globalization, where social actors with increasingly *non*-overlapping systems of knowledge, divergent goals and competing interests face the task of negotiating meaning (see Blommaert, Chapter 32). Since many and even *most* texts do not represent 'pure' discourses, genres and styles, analysis will have to incorporate a significant element of text-to-text comparison, tracing the influence of one sort or genre of text upon another. The forensic task of the discourse analysis will be to track how various forms of discourse, and their associated values and assumptions, are incorporated into a particular text, why and with what effects.

The layering of social meaning in discourse

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary project for many reasons. Most obviously, as we suggested above, many disciplines are fundamentally engaged with discourse as social and cultural practice. But let us accept, for the moment, the least ambitious definition of discourse analysis from the set at the head of this chapter, 'the analysis of language in use'. Even at this level, it is easy enough to demonstrate that discourse is, for example, a thoroughly linguistic *and* social *and* cognitive affair. Consider the following simple instance, reconstructed from a real social event, but with the names of the participants changed. The person called 'Mother' is the mother of the eight-year-old child, called 'Rebecca'. The person called 'Mrs Thomson' is employed as a domestic cleaner by the family in which 'Mother' is the mother; Mrs Thomson's first name is Margaret. Mrs Thomson has just come in through the front door, having rung the doorbell first, and Mother speaks first, calling downstairs to her daughter. (These brief notes are of course a remarkably sparse account of 'the context' for the talk exchange below, but they will allow us to make some first-level observations on the discourse construction of meanings of various sorts in this episode.)

Extract 1

(*The front door bell rings.*)

Mother:	Open the door, darling. Who is it?
Rebecca:	It's only Maggie.
Mother:	(*looking sheepish*) Oh hello, Mrs Thomson.
Mrs Thomson:	(*smiles*) Hello.

Even this short sequence alerts us to the complexities of meaning-making and the range of resources that both we, as observers or analysts, but also the participants themselves, have to draw on to 'make sense' of what is happening in the sequence as a piece of situated social interaction. It seems obvious that there is a measure of discomfort in the conversational exchanges here, signalled in our representation of Mother's facial expression as 'sheepish'. 'Sheepish' is, of course, already an interpretation (ours). It is based on a linguistic classification of a possibly complex emotional state. In glossing Mother's expression as 'sheepish', we are appealing to a type of emotional state that we assume is both recognizable to others (in this case, you, the readers of this text), and reasonably applicable to the facial and perhaps postural configurations that we remember as being adopted by Mother. A video-taped recording would in fact be important in justifying our use of the term 'sheepish', if we needed to. But even then, our interpretation that these face and body features properly represent the category 'sheepishness' would depend on others (such as you) making the same or a similar inference.

So far, we have pointed to one small aspect of the linguistic work of classification that is built into the written record of Extract 1. But of course there are very many other classification processes at work here, for us and for the participants themselves. As readers, you may be asking *why* Mother is uncomfortable, and how the discourse – the totality of meaning-making and meaning-inferring generated through this interaction – produces an impression that this is the probable emotional effect. A likely explanation (and the one that led us to choose this bit of talk as an example) is that Mother is embarrassed by her daughter referring to Mrs Thomson as 'Maggie'. She is probably embarrassed further by the expression *only Maggie*, especially (or maybe *only*?) because Mrs Thompson has overheard Rebecca's utterance referring to her.

A linguistic analysis of the usual circumstances under which we use the word 'only' will get us some distance here, when we realize that 'only' often projects an event as being unimportant or unexceptional. Mother may well be embarrassed that Rebecca considers Mrs Thomson's arrival as an event of the sort that might be called an 'only' event. She may also be uncomfortable that her daughter, a child, is referring to an adult by an overly familiar expression – using her first name, all of that being witnessed by Mrs Thompson. In any event, precisely how the different participants are positioned and involved in the discourse is clearly a relevant concern.

On the whole, we have few problems making these or similar inferences. But it is interesting to consider just *how* we are able to make them. For example, they seem to rely, in part, on there being a social consensus about how children usually do talk, or ought to talk, to adults. But is this universally true or just a convention in one particular cultural situation? More particularly, some of the social sensitivity in the exchange hinges on the child using a first name not only to an adult, but to an adult employed as a cleaner. There are particularly strong reverberations of social class and economic power behind this exchange, and they certainly make up an element of its 'meaning'. However, bringing these underlying political and economic assumptions to the surface is a social taboo, and it is Rebecca's unwitting breaking of this taboo that probably also causes her mother's embarrassment.

In the other direction, there is an element of 'understanding' suggested in Mrs Thomson's smile, perhaps implying she appreciates that Rebecca is not fully able to judge the social conventions or rules for addressing adults. The smile may be an attempt to mitigate the discomfort Mother is feeling. On the other hand, Mrs Thompson's smile could also be an accommodating reaction to Rebecca's remark. For her to react in a different way and signal indignation would mean breaking another taboo. In any case, note how 'child' and 'cleaner', not to mention 'mother' and 'daughter', are linguistic labels for social categories with culturally meaningful and somewhat predictable social qualities and expectations attached to them. Note that our access to 'the meaning' of the interaction depends on how we hang these labels on individuals, and on particular people's labelling of other people. Note how we have to make inferences about people's intentions, and about how those intentions are perceived and evaluated by others (see Sacks, Chapter 14 on some cognitive processes of categorical work in organizing social actors into groups, or 'teams', and attributing specific actions to them).

Another part of what is achieved as meaning in the interaction depends on rather precise timing and placement, which are not at all captured in the written transcript of what was said. As we suggested, Mother's embarrassment may be exacerbated by the fact that, in our reconstruction of it, the *It's only Maggie* utterance is said when all three participants are present together, face-to-face. *Maggie* might well be the usual way the family has of referring to Mrs Thomson when she is not present. Changing the composition of the group by Mrs Thompson's joining the *participation framework* (the structure of who is participating in a given event) as an unratified recipient, or 'overhearer' (Goffman 1981: 132), of Rebecca's utterance certainly shifts expectations of what are the 'appropriate' forms of expression. In this regard, we might read a particular significance into Mother's *oh*, perhaps as a conventional way of expressing a 'change of state' in the discourse (Heritage 1984a; Schiffrin, Chapter 17). Mother's expectation that she was speaking with her daughter, and only her, is broken when she sees that Mrs Thomson has already entered the house, and Mother signals this in her talk when she uses the particle *oh*.

There are other, seemingly more mundane, observations to be made about how this interaction is structured, although they are still important from some perspectives. For example, we take it for granted that Mrs Thomson's *hello* is structurally linked to Mother's *hello* in the previous turn at talk. That is, it is not coincidental that both speakers do greeting, and do it through the use of the same greeting word. As conversation analysis has established (see Schegloff and Sacks, Chapter 15; Raymond and Sidnell, Chapter 16; Zimmerman, Chapter 23; Hutchby, Chapter 28, and our Introduction to Part Three), the second *hello* not only follows the first *hello*, but is 'occasioned by' it; it is the second part of a pair of utterances. Its absence would be a noticeable absence. In more cognitive terms, it is probable that Mrs Thomson feels something of an obligation, however subconsciously, to match Mother's *hello* which had been offered to her. This is part of what it means to call an exchange of greetings a cultural convention, or a *mini-ritual* of social interaction. Exchanging paired greetings is the predictable or 'unmarked' way of opening social encounters, between either strangers or (as here) people already familiar with each other (see our Introduction to Part Four).

The general point is that, in social interaction, speakers are achieving meaning at many levels. They are exchanging information between them (although very little of the extract under discussion is concerned with transmitting 'information' in the usual sense of 'facts' or 'data'), and negotiating particular relationships between them as individuals. But at the same time their talk is filling out and confirming wider patterns of social organization, for example in running through predictable patterns of turn-taking, and pairing of utterances. We can say that the structured nature of everyday talk (see Erving Goffman's 1983 concept of *the interaction order*) generates and confirms broader patterns of social organization (*the social order*). One important facet of discourse analysis is therefore, as we saw earlier, to show how micro-level social actions realize and give local form to macro-level social structures (see Fairclough, Chapter 5; Scollon, Chapter 6; Gee, Chapter 8; Machin and Van Leeuwen, Chapter 11).

Rather than pursue this particular example any further, we can at least summarize those dimensions of discourse that we need to attend to if we want to (begin to) understand how it functions as a discourse event. We have, directly or indirectly, already identified the following aspects:

1 The meaning of an event or of a single utterance is only partly accounted for by its formal features (that is, by the 'direct meaning' of the words used). The social significance of discourse, if we define it simply as language-in-use, lies in the relationship between linguistic meanings and the wider context (i.e., the social, cultural, economic, demographic and other characteristics of the communicative event) in which interaction takes place (see the notion of 'activity types' discussed by Jenny Thomas in Chapter 10).

2 Our interpretation of discourse therefore relates far more to what is done by participants than what is said (or written, or drawn, or pointed at) by them. That is, a functional analysis of language and other semiotic systems lies at the heart of analysing discourse.

3 It is important to distinguish between meanings (including goals and intentions) that are inferred by observers and, on the other hand, meanings (including goals and intentions) that are inferred by participants. Analysing discourse is often making inferences about inferences.

4 All aspects of meaning-making are acts of construction. Attributing meaning to discursive acts is never a neutral or value-free process.

5 Social categorization is central to these acts of construction. Our language presents us with many categories that seem 'natural' or 'obvious', although they are very probably so only at a given time and place: they may well be culture-specific or idiosyncratic (favoured by an individual).

6 We can only access discourse through the textual data that we collect by observation, audio or video recording. This means that the texts we analyse are always 'filtered' or 'mediated'; they are in themselves a form of social (re)construction. (This particular aspect of discourse is of central importance in the burgeoning new area of mediated discourse analysis, see Scollon and Scollon 2004; Jones and Norris 2005.)

7 Linguistic expression itself (as speech or writing) often needs to be interrelated with other physical, temporal and behavioural aspects of the social situation, such as body movement and the synchronization or sequencing of actions. Discourse is more than (verbal/vocal) language itself.

8 Paying close attention to and critical reading of particular instances of language-in-use, linked to other aspects of the social context, is a useful way of discovering the normal and often unwritten assumptions behind communication. Although interpretation will always have elements of subjectivity within it, communication is based on linked, subjective interaction (*inter-subjectivity*). A more formal approach is likely to miss the creative inter-subjectivity of social interaction. (In saying this we do not deny that language is a structured phenomenon, or deny the importance of this fact. Language and other semiotic systems have recognizable structures and the study of these structures as formal systems constitutes an entirely viable, but different, research programme.)

9 Discourse analysis provides a way of linking up the analysis of local characteristics of communication to the analysis of broader social characteristics. It can let us see how macro-structures are carried through micro-structures.

Traditions of discourse analysis

The *Reader* offers a broad and inclusive perspective on the concept of discourse, which is appropriate in view of how many academic disciplines (as we have explained) now see discourse as an important theoretical and empirical focus for them. At the same time, discourse, however we define it, has focally to do with language-use. Some approaches remain quite close to the central goals of linguistics, offering detailed linguistic descriptions of texts, spoken and written. At the other extreme, as we have seen, there are approaches to discourse that assume that the most significant sorts of linguistic organization are highly abstract, and not directly amenable to textual analysis.

We can use this approximate scale of directness–indirectness as a way to organize a discussion of several different traditions of discourse analysis. All of them are represented in the *Reader*, although the following sub-sections (as many taxonomic or listing frameworks do) probably overstate the degree of difference between approaches. In practice, discourse analysts and the analyses they produce do not fall quite so neatly into these types. It is also true that many researchers have taken an inclusive view of discourse studies, to the extent that their work spans most or all of the traditions we survey below. One clear instance is the work of Teun Van Dijk, who has been more responsible than any other person for integrating the field of discourse analysis (see, for example, Van Dijk 1977, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1997, 2008, 2009; also Chapter 27).

Despite these limitations, it should be helpful to approach the various Parts of the *Reader* armed with a mental map of the principal traditions of discourse studies and their main defining qualities. These general overviews should also be helpful in identifying sources for further reading for students new to any of these fields. We have included at the end of this chapter a list of the main academic journals that print new research in discourse and related fields.

Speech act theory and pragmatics

The study of meaning is at the heart of the discipline referred to as pragmatics. Closely related to semantics, which is primarily concerned with the study of word and sentence meaning, pragmatics concerns itself with the meaning of utterances in specific contexts of use. It is one thing to understand a phrase as far as the individual meanings of its words and its referential meaning is concerned, and quite another to know what its intended and achieved meanings may be in context. Charles Fillmore illustrates the pitfalls of relying on sentence meaning in interpreting talk and disregarding pragmatic meaning of an utterance by recounting two anecdotes concerning the fixed phrase *I thought you'd never ask*:

> It's a fairly innocent teasing expression in American English, but it could easily be taken as insulting by people who did not know its special status as a routine formula. In one case a European man asked an American woman to join him in the dance, and she, being playful, said, 'I thought you'd never ask'. Her potential dancing partner withdrew his invitation in irritation. In another case a European hostess offered an American guest something to drink, when he, unilaterally assuming a teasing relationship, said, 'I thought you'd never ask'. He was asked to leave the party for having insulted his host.
>
> (Fillmore 1984: 129–30)

Jenny Thomas (1995) distinguishes three types of meaning (illustrated here with our own examples):

- *abstract* meaning (the meaning of words and sentences in isolation, e.g., the various meanings of the word *grass*, or the ambiguity of the sentence *I saw her duck*);
- *contextual* or *utterance* meaning (e.g., when two intimate persons hold their faces very near each other and one whispers to the other *I hate you* while smiling, the utterance might *really* mean 'I love you'); and
- utterance *force* (i.e., how the speaker intends his/her utterance to be understood; e.g., when X says to Y *are you hungry?*, X might intend the question as a request for Y to make X a sandwich).

Thomas focuses on utterance meaning and force, which are central to pragmatics, which she defines as the study of 'meaning in interaction' (1995: 22) with the special emphasis on the interrelationship between the speaker, hearer, utterance and context.

The notion of *force* is borrowed directly from J.L. Austin's work on speech act theory (Chapter 2), and his threefold distinction into the *locution* of a speech act (the actual words used in an utterance), its *illocution* (the force or the intention of the speaker behind the utterance), and its *perlocution* (the effect of the utterance on the listener). Studying the effects of the speaker's utterances on the listener derived from Austin's view of language as a form of *action*. Austin observed that by saying something, we not only communicate ideas, but may also bring about a change in the social environment – a transformation, however small, of social reality. Speech acts that effect such a change through the action of being spoken are called *performative speech acts* (or *performatives*). For example, the act of joining two people in marriage is principally a (performative) speech act involving the formula: *I now pronounce you husband and wife*. Of course, in order for a performative to realize its perlocutionary force, it has to meet certain social and cultural criteria, or fulfil *felicity conditions*. It is clear, for example, that unauthorized individuals cannot pronounce anyone 'husband and wife'. Austin's work gained renewed significance with recent interest in the notions of 'performance' and 'performativity' in cultural criticism and discourse analysis (see Cameron, Chapter 22; our Introduction to Parts Five and Six).

Much of speech act theory has been concerned with taxonomizing speech acts and defining felicity conditions for different types of speech acts. For example, John Searle (1969, 1979) suggested the following typology of speech acts based on different types of conditions that need to be fulfilled for an act to 'work' or succeed: 'representatives (e.g., asserting), directives (e.g., requesting), commissives (e.g., promising), expressives (e.g., thanking), and declarations (e.g., appointing)' (quoted from Schiffrin 1994: 57). This taxonomy was one of many, and it soon became clear in speech act theory that a full and detailed classification would be unwieldy given the multitude of illocutionary verbs in English. Stipulating the felicity conditions for all of them appeared to be not only a complex procedure but also an 'essentializing' one – relying too heavily on factors assumed to be essential in each case, when reality shows us that they are variably determined by the precise social context.

An elaboration of speech act theory was offered by Labov and Fanshel (1977) in their examination of a psychiatric interview. Although their prime concern was with the identification of speech acts and specifying the rules governing their successful realization, they broadened the view that an utterance may only perform one type of speech act at a time. For example, the following utterance by a client in their data, reported to have been said to her mother, *well, when d'you plan to come home?*, may be a request for information, a challenge, or an expression of obligation (see also Taylor and Cameron 1987).

Like Austin and Searle, Labov and Fanshel explain communication in terms of hearers accurately identifying the intended meaning of the speaker's utterance and responding to it accordingly. However, given the multi-functionality of utterances, we cannot be sure that the hearers always pick up the 'right' interpretation of an utterance, i.e., the one that was intended by the speaker. At the same time, we might doubt whether speakers always have a clear and singular intention behind many of their own utterances. In general, the problem of intentionality and variability in people's discourse rules precluded developing a coherent framework for explaining communication, beyond producing an inventory of such rules and speech act types. A different way of explaining communication was proposed by H.P. Grice (Chapter 3), whose work was central in the development of inferential pragmatics and interactional sociolinguistics.

Grice, like Austin and Searle, was a philosopher, whose interest in language stemmed from the investigations of sense, reference, truth, falsity and logic. However, Grice argued that the logic of language (or conversation, as the title of his classic paper has it) is not based on the same principles as formal (mathematical) logic. Instead, he proposed a model of communication based on the notion of the Cooperative Principle, i.e., the collaborative efforts of rational participants in directing conversation towards attaining a broadly common goal. In following the Cooperative Principle the participants follow a number of specific maxims (called conversational maxims), such as be informative, be truthful, be relevant and be clear. When the maxims are adhered to, meaning is produced in an unambiguous, direct way. However, most meaning is implied, through two kinds of implicatures: 'conventional implicatures', which follow from the conventional meanings of words used in utterances, and 'conversational implicatures', which result from the non-observance of one (or more) of the conversational maxims. When participants assume that the Cooperative Principle is being observed but one of the maxims is violated, they seek an indirect interpretation via conversational implicature. To use a well-known example from Grice (see p. 69), if a letter of recommendation appears to be under-informative (violating the maxim be informative) and concentrates wholly on, say, the candidate's punctuality and good manners (violating the maxim be relevant), then, assuming that the author is being in a general sense cooperative, the addressee may infer that the candidate is not suitable for the job.

Grice's impact on pragmatics and discourse analysis in general cannot be overestimated. Although he has been criticized for formulating his Cooperative Principle to suit the conversational conventions of middle-class English speakers, and for not attending to the idea of strategic *non*-cooperation, the guiding principle of inference as the principal means for generating meaning in interaction remains central in most current approaches to discourse. Two areas in which Grice's influence has been felt most strongly are in the theories of linguistic politeness (see Brown and Levinson, Chapter 20) and of relevance. We will introduce relevance theory in some detail because it is a significant independent model of discourse processing which we have been unable to incorporate as a discrete chapter.

The cognitively oriented approach to communication proposed by Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson (1986, 1995) makes Grice's maxim of relevance central to explaining how information is processed in discourse. In sharp opposition to the code models of language, relevance theory assumes that linguistic communication is based on *ostension* and *inference*, which can be said to be the same process viewed from two different perspectives. The former belongs to the communicator, who is involved in a form of 'showing' (ostension), and the latter to the audience, who is/are involved in the process of interpretation (inference). Inferential comprehension of the communicator's ostensive behaviour relies on deductive processing of any new information presented in the context of old or already-known information. This derivation of new information is spontaneous, automatic and unconscious, and it gives rise to certain contextual effects in the cognitive environment of the audience. The occurrence of contextual effects, such as contextual implications, contradictions and strengthening, is a necessary condition for relevance. The relation between contextual effects and relevance is that, other things being equal, 'the greater the contextual effects, the greater the relevance' (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 119). In other words, an assumption which has no contextual effects at some particular moment of talk is irrelevant, because processing this assumption does not change the old context.

A second factor in assessing the degree of relevance of an assumption is the processing effort necessary for the achievement of contextual effects. It is a negative factor, which means that, other things being equal, 'the greater the processing effort, the lower the relevance' (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 124). The theory holds that, in communication, speaking partners first assume the relevance of an assumption behind an utterance and then select a context in which its relevance will be maximized (it is not the case that context is determined first and then the relevance of a stimulus assessed). Sperber and Wilson also say that, of all the assumptions that a phenomenon can make manifest to an individual, only some will actually catch his/her attention. Others will be filtered out at a sub-attentive level. These phenomena, which have some bearing on central thought processes, draw the attention of an individual and make assumptions and inferences appear at a conceptual level. Thus, they define the relevance of a phenomenon as follows:

> [A] phenomenon is relevant to an individual to the extent that the contextual effects achieved when it is optimally processed are large. . .
>
> [A] phenomenon is relevant to an individual to the extent that the effort required to process it optimally is small.
>
> (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 153)

Owing to its cognitive orientation and its initial interest in information processing, relevance theory has been largely concerned with the referential function of language. Due to this methodological and programmatic bias, it has been criticized for being inadequate to account for the socially relevant aspects of discourse, and for insufficient involvement with the interactional aspects of language use. Relevance theory has dismissed such criticisms as misguided, because its primary interest has explicitly *not* been social. Still, in more recent revisions, its authors have begun to explain the potential of relevance theory in accounting for social aspects of communication (see Sperber and Wilson 1997).

Conversation analysis

The origins and much of current practice in conversation analysis (commonly abbreviated to CA) reside in the sociological approach to language and communication known as *ethnomethodology* (Cicourel 1973; Garfinkel 1974). Ethnomethodology means studying the link between what social actors 'do' in interaction and what they 'know' about interaction. Social structure is a form of order, and that order is partly achieved through talk, which is itself structured and orderly. Social actors have common-sense knowledge about what it is they are doing interactionally in performing specific activities and in jointly achieving communicative coherence. Making this knowledge about ordinary, everyday affairs explicit, and in this way finding an understanding of how society is organized and how it functions, is ethnomethodology's main concern (Garfinkel 1967; Turner 1974; Heritage 1984b).

Following this line of inquiry, CA views language as a form of social action and aims, in particular, to discover and describe how the organization of social interaction makes manifest and reinforces the structures of social organization and social institutions (see, e.g., papers in Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Drew and Heritage 1992a; Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998; Chapters 14, 15, 17, 23, 28). Hutchby and Wooffitt, who point out that 'talk in interaction' is now commonly preferred to the designation 'conversation', define CA as follows:

> CA is the study of *recorded, naturally occurring talk-in-interaction* . . . Principally it is to discover how participants understand and respond to one another in their turns at talk, with a central focus being on how sequences of interaction are generated. To put it another way, the objective of CA is to uncover the tacit reasoning procedures and sociolinguistic competencies underlying the production and interpretation of talk in organized sequences of interaction.
>
> (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 14)

As this statement implies, the emphasis in CA, in contrast to earlier ethnomethodological concerns, has shifted away from the patterns of 'knowing' *per se* towards discovering the *structures of talk* that produce and reproduce patterns of social order. At least, structures of talk are studied as the best evidence of social actors' practical knowledge about them. (Schegloff et al 1996 give an informative account of the early history of CA.) Key conversational features that CA has focused on include:

- openings and closings of conversations (see Schegloff and Sacks, Chapter 15);
- adjacency pairs (i.e., paired utterances of the type summons–answer, greeting–greeting, compliment–compliment response, etc.);
- topic management and topic shift;
- preference (favouring of certain types of responses over others, e.g., the socially preferred response to an invitation is acceptance, not rejection);
- conversational repairs;
- showing agreement and disagreement;
- introducing bad news and processes of troubles-telling;
- (probably most centrally) mechanisms of turn-taking.

Most of these concerns of CA are discussed in some detail by Raymond and Sidnell's Chapter 16. What we want to emphasize here is that CA's insights are valuable to understand patterns of individual relations between interactants, individuals' positions within larger institutional structures (e.g., Zimmerman, Chapter 23; Mehan, Chapter 29), and overall societal organization. Also and importantly, CA has taken the study of discourse firmly into a more dynamic and interactional realm of interaction away from the speaker-centredness of speech act theory (see above).

This is not to say that CA is without its critics. The most contested notion in relation to CA is that of 'context'. Indeed, what CA programmatically assumes to be the sole (and sufficient) source for analysing context is, as John Heritage points out, the organization of talk itself:

> The initial and most fundamental assumption of CA is that all aspects of social action and interaction can be examined in terms of the conventionalized or institutionalized structural organizations which analyzably inform their production. These organizations are to be treated as structures in their own right which, like other social institutions and conventions, stand independently of the psychological or other characteristic of particular participants.
>
> (Heritage 1984b: 1–2)

The ethnographic critique of CA's disregard for the cultural and historical context of interactions is summarized by Alessandro Duranti (1997). Although he does not dismiss CA's methods and goals *a priori*, he also argues that some of the insights and observations about interaction cannot be accessed without attending to the fine detail of ethnographic analyses. (See Moerman 1988; Ochs 1988; Besnier 1989 for examples of studies that combine CA with attention to the cultural detail characteristic of the ethnographic approach. We return to aspects of this critique in our Introduction to Part Three.)

Discursive psychology

An interdisciplinary movement such as discourse analysis is likely to spawn new areas of specialist research, at first on the fringes of established disciplines. Discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter 1992 is an integrative overview) has established itself as a coherent, critical approach to some traditional research themes in psychology, such as the study of attitudes, strongly opposing the statistical and experimental methods that have come to dominate research in psychology (including social psychology). Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell's (1987) book, *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*, was a groundbreaking critique of established methods and assumptions in social psychology.

Discourse analysts' hostility to the notion of linguistic 'behaviour' (referred to in the book title above) should already be clear from what we have said so far. No approach that treats language as behaviour can come to terms with the strategic complexity and the local and emergent contextualization of talk, with how talk is co-constructed by social actors, or with how meanings are generated by inference as much as by overt signalling. Potter and Wetherell's position on attitude research is similar. They stress the need to examine contextualized accounts of beliefs, rather than surveying (usually by questionnaire methods) large numbers of people's decontextualized and self-reported attitudes, as social psychologists have tended to do:

> Contextual information gives the researcher a much fuller understanding of the detailed and delicate organization of accounts. In addition, an understanding of this organization clarifies the action orientation of talk and its involvement in acts such as blaming and disclaiming.
>
> (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 54)

Accounts, they go on to argue, can and should focus on variability and even inconsistency, rather than trying to disguise variation in the hope of producing clear and stable patterns. Rather antagonistically, they suggest that variability in discursive accounts of beliefs amounts to 'a considerable embarrassment to traditional attitude theories' (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 54). They also argue that attitude research tends to reify the assumption that attitudes are held about 'an existing out-there-in-the-world group of people' (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 54) when most naturally occurring accounts are directed at specific cases rather than idealized 'objects'. A discursive approach to the psychology of attitudes will bring research back to investigating local and specific discourse representations, which are how we produce and experience 'attitudes' in everyday life.

These are powerful arguments, but we should also bear in mind the corresponding limitation of a discursive approach to social beliefs, attitudes and all subjective phenomena, especially regarding its inability to deal with social trends and distributions. It seems necessary to recognize the inherent weaknesses of *all* general approaches, and the most persuasive line of argument is that discourse analysis is able to complement other approaches (such as quantitative surveys) rather than take their place.

Discursive psychology is, however, more than the application of concepts and methods from discourse analysis and CA in the traditional realm of social psychology, even though this was its origin. Much of the most articulate and insistent theorizing of *social constructionism* has emerged from social psychology, for example in John Shotter's (1993) book, *Conversational Realities* (see also Billig 1991; Gergen 1982, 1991). Psychology, which studies the interface between individuals, cognition and society, needs to theorize 'reality' – arguably more urgently than other disciplines. Shotter's argument, like that of Potter and Wetherell, is that psychology and most social science has tended to seek out invariance, and ignore the processes (the 'ethnomethodological' processes) through which we come to see the world as stable:

> In our reflective thought, upon the nature of the world in which we live, we can either take what is invariant as its primary subject matter and treat change as problematic, or, activity and flux as primary and treat the achievement of stability as problematic. While almost all previous approaches to psychology and the other social sciences have taken the first of these stances, social constructionism takes the second.
>
> (Shotter 1993: 178)

Shotter and his colleagues are therefore keen to reintroduce a *relativist* perspective into social science (see Cameron et al, Chapter 7) and to take very seriously Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf's early research on linguistic relativity – the so-called Sapir/Whorf hypothesis (e.g., Whorf 1956; Lucy 1992).

The principle of relativism followed from an early American anthropological tradition (developed mainly by Franz Boas at the beginning of the twentieth century), which argued that languages classify experience and that each language does so differently. The classification of experience through language was held to be automatic and beyond speakers' awareness. Sapir's and Whorf's comments on social reality are well worth pondering, many decades after publication:

> Language is a guide to 'social reality' . . . Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular

> language which has become the medium of expression for their society . . . [T]he 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached . . . We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation . . . From this standpoint we may think of language as the *symbolic guide to culture.*
>
> (Sapir, originally published in 1929, quoted in
> Lucy 1992: 22)

That portion of the whole investigation here to be reported may be summed up in two questions: (1) Are our own concepts of 'time', 'space', and 'matter' given in substantially the same form by experience to all men, or are they in part conditioned by the structure of particular languages? (2) Are there traceable affinities between (a) cultural and behavioral norms and (b) large-scale linguistic patterns? (Whorf 1956: 138; see also Coupland and Jaworski 1997: 446). One of Whorf's key observations, which transfers directly into the domain of discourse analysis, is that a language or a particular form of utterance can unite demonstrably different aspects of reality by giving them similar linguistic treatment, what Whorf calls the process of *linguistic analogy*. Linguistic analogy allows or encourages us to treat diverse experience as 'the same'. A famous example in the area of vocabulary is the word 'empty' in the expression *empty gasoline drums*. As Whorf pointed out, the word 'empty' commonly implies a void or absence, and conjures up associations of 'absence of threat' and therefore 'safety'. It is as if this expression steers us into treating 'empty gasoline drums' as lacking danger, when they are in fact *unusually dangerous*. Language used to shape cognitive structures can therefore be referred to as *the cognitive appropriation of linguistic analogies*.

As Shotter (1993: 115) concludes: 'Whorf forces us to see that the basic "being" of our world is not as basic as we had thought; it can be thought of and talked of in other ways.' More recent studies in discursive psychology have elaborated on this central point and supported Sapir's, Whorf's, Shotter's and other people's theorizing with textual analysis. Potter (1996), for example, analyses how 'out-there-ness' is discursively constructed in the writing styles of empiricist (experimental, quantitative) scientific researchers (cf. Gilbert and Mulkay 1984). Derek Edwards's book is a radical reworking of cognitive themes in psychology, for example research on 'ape language' and child language acquisition, and on the psychology of emotions (Edwards 1997; see also Chapter 13). He attends to the language in which psychologists represent and objectify cognition. It is perhaps the ultimate challenge for a psychologist (even of the discursive kind) to undermine cognitivism, but Edwards writes that 'one of the reasons for pursuing discursive psychology is the requirement to re-conceptualize relations between language and mind, and to find alternative ways of dealing empirically with that "constitutive" relationship' (Edwards 1997: 44).

The ethnography of communication

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Chomsky-inspired formalism in linguistics triggered a concerted reaction from function-oriented and action-oriented researchers of language. Most notably, Noam Chomsky (1965) contrasted the notion of *linguistic competence*, i.e., internalized knowledge of the rules of a language and the defined object of linguistic inquiry, with what he called *linguistic performance*, i.e., the realization of competence in actual speech. Dell Hymes (1972a) also viewed language as 'knowledge', but extended the object of (socio)linguistic inquiry, or what he called the ethnography of communication, to *communicative competence*. Hymes's definition of the term consisted of four elements:

- whether and to what degree something is grammatical (linguistic competence);
- whether and to what degree something is appropriate (social appropriateness);
- whether and to what degree something is feasible (psycholinguistic limitations);
- whether and to what degree something is done (observing actual language use).

This far broader conceptualization of competence in language, and indeed of the purpose of language study, imposed a radically different methodology from Chomsky's linguistics, which was based on introspection (thinking about one's own uses of language) and intuition. The object of inquiry for Hymes was no longer the structure of isolated sentences, but *rules of speaking* within a community. Consequently, the sentence was replaced as a basic unit of analysis with a threefold classification of speech communication (Hymes 1972b):

- **speech situations**, such as ceremonies, evenings out, sports events, plane trips, and so on; they are not purely communicative (i.e., not only governed by rules of speaking) but provide a wider context for speaking;
- **speech events** are activities that are *par excellence* communicative and governed by rules of speaking, e.g., conversations, lectures, political debates, ritual insults, and so on. As Duranti (1997: 289) comments, these are activities in which 'speech plays a crucial role in the definition of what is going on – that is, if we eliminate speech, the activity cannot take place';
- **speech acts** are the smallest units of the set, e.g., orders, jokes, greetings, summonses, compliments, etc.; a speech act may involve more than one turn from only one person, e.g., greetings usually involve a sequence of two turns.

Hymes's model was based on a set of *components of speech events*, which provided a descriptive framework for ethnography of communication. These components were arranged into an eight-part mnemonic based on the word *SPEAKING*:

situation (physical, temporal psychological setting defining the speech event);
participants (e.g., speaker, addressee, audience);
ends (outcomes and goals);
act sequence (form and content);

key (manner or spirit of speaking, e.g., mock, serious, perfunctory, painstaking);
instrumentalities (channels of communication, e.g., spoken, written, signed; forms of speech, e.g., dialects, codes, varieties, registers);
norms of interaction (e.g., organization of turn-taking and norms of interpretation, i.e., conventionalized ways of drawing inferences);
genres (e.g., casual speech, commercial messages, poems, myths, proverbs).

Although the *Reader* does not explicitly address the ethnographic tradition (we deal with it in greater detail in Coupland and Jaworski 2009, especially Chapters 10 and 39; see also Bauman and Scherzer 1974; Saville-Troike 1989), the impact of the ethnography of communication, its methodology and attendance to contextual, historical and cultural detail of interaction is felt across most discourse analytic traditions, especially in interactional sociolinguistics (e.g., Rampton 1995, 2005; and see the following section). In Chapter 10 of this book Jenny Thomas offers a critique of the SPEAKING acronym as a heuristic for the study of context in social interaction in favour of Stephen Levinson's concept of 'activity types'.

Interactional sociolinguistics

This approach to discourse is inextricably linked with the names of the sociologist Erving Goffman (e.g., 1959, 1967, 1974, 1981; Chapter 19) and Dell Hymes's close associate, the anthropological linguist John Gumperz (e.g., 1982a, 1982b). Gumperz aimed 'to develop interpretive sociolinguistic approaches to the analysis of real time processes in face to face encounters' (1982a: vii), and this aim has been taken up by various sociolinguists and discourse analysts in a wide range of approaches to social interaction, some of which are represented in this volume (see Schiffrin, Chapter 17; Zimmerman, Chapter 23).

Goffman summarizes his research programme in one of his later papers as being

> to promote acceptance of the . . . face-to-face domain as an analytically viable one – a domain which might be titled, for want of any happy name, the interaction order – a domain whose preferred method of study is microanalysis.
>
> (Goffman 1983: 2)

Although it is hard to find any contemporary approach to discourse that does *not* more or less explicitly refer to Goffman's work, we have included in the *Reader* several papers in which the affinity to Goffman's work is especially clear. (Apart from the chapters mentioned above, see Brown and Levinson, Chapter 20; Tannen and Wallat, Chapter 21; Cameron, Chapter 22.)

Much of Gumperz's research has concentrated on the mechanisms of *miscommunication*. He demonstrates how miscommunication can be associated with seemingly trivial signalling details, such as falling rather than rising intonation on a single word, that can trigger complex patterns of interpretation and misinterpretation between individuals. These patterns of (mis)interpretation, which he labels *conversational inferencing*, depend not only on the 'actual' contents of talk, but to a great extent on the processes of perception and evaluation of signalling mechanisms, once again based on details of intonation, tempo of speech, rhythm, pausing, phonetic shape, lexical and syntactic choices, non-verbal signals, and so on. Gumperz (2009) calls such features *contextualization cues*, and he showed that they

> relate what is said to the contextual knowledge (including knowledge of particular activity types: cf. frames; Goffman 1974) that contributes to the presuppositions necessary to the accurate inferencing of what is meant (including, but not limited to, the illocutionary force).
>
> (Schiffrin 1994: 99–100)

Gumperz adapts and extends Hymes's ethnographic framework by examining how interactants from different cultural groups apply different rules of speaking in face-to-face interaction. In his work, he draws heavily on the pragmatic notion of inferential meaning and the ethnomethodological understanding of conversation as joint action (see above).

We have already mentioned the link between Gumperz's contextualization cues and their role as markers signalling types of speech event, or in Goffman's terms *frames*, which participants engage in. Frames are part of the interpretive means by which participants understand or disambiguate utterances and other forms of communicative behaviour. For example, a person waving his or her arm may be stopping a car, greeting a friend, flicking flies or increasing blood circulation (Goffman 1974). There is a constant interplay between contextualization cues and what is being said. Framing devices usually form a part of the communicated message, but they are used to label or categorize the communicative process itself. Therefore, they also constitute the utterance's *metamessage* (Watzlawick et al 1967; Tannen 1986; Jaworski et al 2004), or its 'message about its own status as a message'. When we look for ways in which frames are constructed and changed or shifted, we try to identify how participants convey their metamessages through various verbal and non-verbal cues. Another concept that links Goffman's work with that of Gumperz is *footing*, 'the alignments we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance' (Goffman 1981: 128). As Goffman notes, changes in footing depend in part on the use of specific contextualization cues, for example, switching between language codes or speech styles.

One of the most significant developments in interactional sociolinguistics was the formulation of politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987; Chapter 20). Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson believe that the phenomenon of politeness is responsible for how people deviate from the maximally efficient modes of communication as these were outlined by Grice. In other words, politeness is the reason why people do not always 'say what they mean'. Politeness theory, which aims to provide a universal descriptive and explanatory framework of social relations, is built around Goffman's notion of *face* (Chapter 19), referring to a person's self-image and the image that we project onto other individuals. The theory also integrates Grice's model of inferential communication and the assumption that people communicating are rational when they do *facework* in social interaction. Brown and Levinson stress the strategic nature of human communication, which is a radical departure from earlier, rule-oriented approaches (e.g., Lakoff 1973).

The *Reader* carries Goffman's chapter on face (Chapter 19) and Brown and Levinson's chapter on politeness (Chapter 20), so we will not present an overview of these interconnected theories here. But it is worth pointing out that, apart from Lakoff's approach to politeness mentioned above, there have been several other alternative attempts to theorize politeness. The best-known example is Leech's (1983) approach, based on Grice's notion of the 'Politeness Principle' (analogous to the Cooperative Principle but never fully developed by Grice himself) and a set of corresponding politeness maxims, such as *tact, generosity, approbation, modesty* and so on. For another discussion and reformulation of politeness theory from a postmodern perspective, see Watts (2003).

Narrative analysis

Telling stories is a human universal of discourse. Stories or narratives are discursive accounts of factual or fictitious events that are taking place, have taken place or will take place at a particular time. We construct narratives as structured representations of events in a particular temporal order. Sometimes, the ordering of events is chronological (as it tends to be in most fairy stories) although some plays, novels or news stories (e.g., Bell 1998) may move backwards and forwards in time, for particular reasons and effects.

Narratives can be verbal (spoken or written), musical, mimed or pictorial, e.g., in children's picture books. Sometimes a story can be narrated in a single visual image, a painting or a photograph, implying a temporal succession of events (e.g., something has happened or is about to happen). Of course, narratives often combine different modalities and many voices in a single storytelling event. For example, recounting a family holiday may involve several family members presenting their versions of events, to which the participating audience may add questions and comments. It may involve showing souvenirs, photographs or a video, or even sampling foods brought home from the trip. This can turn the narrative into a multi-modal, multi-voiced text, including the gustatory (taste) and olfactory (smell) channels. Sometimes, different voices are introduced into a story by a single narrator, for example by introducing quotations as direct speech, perhaps marked by changes in pitch or body posture.

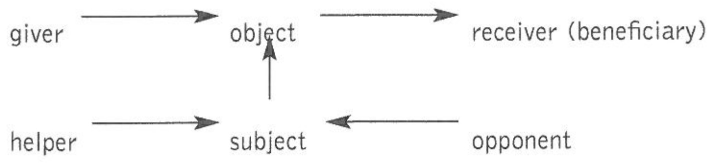
The functions of storytelling are quite varied. Some stories are primarily informative, others are mainly used for self-presentation, for entertainment, for strengthening in-group ties (e.g., gossip), in therapy or problem-solving (e.g., life-stories told in counselling sessions or in problem-sharing among friends), and so on. Although narratives vary greatly in their form (including their length) and function, all verbal narratives share a basic structure (Labov, Chapter 12). William Labov's study of oral narratives was based on data he collected in New York City, in response to the interview question 'Were you ever in a situation where you were in a serious danger of being killed?' (Labov 1972: 363; Chapter 12). He formulated the following structural features of narratives (as summarized by Ochs 1997: 195), although it is clear that some narratives do not display all of the following elements:

1. abstract (a summary of what is to be said, for example, 'My brother put a knife in my head');
2. orientation ('This was just a few days after my father died');
3. complicating action ('I twisted his arm up behind him. . .');
4. evaluation ('Ain't that a bitch?');
5. result or resolution ('After all a that I gave the dude the cigarette, after all that');
6. coda (a concluding element, such as 'And that was that').

One feature that is common to all narratives is of course the plot-line, or what the story 'is about'. Plot is most commonly associated with narratives found in various literary genres (e.g., novels, ballads, fairy tales) and its structure has indeed been extensively studied within literary stylistics (e.g., Propp 1968; Toolan 1988). One example of how this type of analysis may be applied to the study of non-literary texts is given by Vestergaard and Schroeder (1985) in their study of the language of advertising. Following Greimas's (1966) taxonomy of participants (or as Greimas called them 'actants') in narratives, Vestergaard and Schroeder distinguished the following six, paired roles:

subject – object
helper – opponent
giver – receiver.

The relationships between those roles can be presented diagramatically in the following way:



A realization of this model can be found in many fairy tales. Consider Michael Toolan's generic summary, where he explains how the classical roles interconnect with each other:

> The subject or hero, perhaps a young man of lowly origin, seeks marriage to a beautiful princess (object), in which case the man will also be beneficiary (possibly the princess and the country will too). In his quest he is helped generously but with limited success by a friend or relative (helper), but their combined efforts count for little in the struggle against some opponents (wicked uncle of the princess, some other eligible but

> ignoble suitor), until a sender (better, a superhelper), such as the king or God, or some individual with magical powers for good, intervenes.
>
> (Toolan 1988: 93–4)

Narratives are not inherently objective or impartial ways of representing events, even though they might be *objectifying devices* (ways of claiming or constructing an air of factuality). This is immediately clear with regard to narratives which are works of fiction (fairy tales, detective stories, etc.). But even 'factual' narratives are intimately tied to the narrator's point of view, and the events recounted in a narrative are his/her (re)constructions rather than some kind of objective mirror-image of reality. The first instance of the narrator's subjectivity is present in what s/he chooses to narrate, what s/he finds 'tellable' or 'reportable'. Furthermore, as Goffman explains, the meaning of the narrative is jointly constructed by the actions of both speaker and listener and how they selectively filter the account:

> A tale or anecdote, that is, a replaying, is not merely any reporting of a past event. In the fullest sense, it is such a statement couched from the personal perspective of an actual or potential participant who is located so that some temporal, dramatic development of the reported event proceeds from that starting point. A replaying will therefore incidentally be something that listeners can empathetically insert themselves into, vicariously re-experiencing what took place. A replaying, in brief, recounts a personal experience, not merely reports on an event.
>
> (Goffman 1974: 504; quoted in Ochs 1997: 193)

In sum, narrative analysis is an important tradition within discourse analysis. It deals with a pervasive genre of communication through which we enact important aspects of our identities and relations with others. It is partly through narrative discourse that we comprehend the world and present our understanding of it to others.

Critical discourse analysis

In all but its blandest forms, such as when it remains at the level of language description, discourse analysis adopts a 'critical' perspective on language in use. Roger Fowler (1981) is explicit about what 'critical' means for his own research, much of it related to literary texts. He says it does *not* mean 'the flood of writings about texts and authors which calls itself literary criticism', nor the sense of 'intolerant fault-finding' (1981: 25):

> I mean a careful analytic interrogation of the ideological categories, and the roles and institutions and so on, through which a society constitutes and maintains itself and the consciousness of its members . . . All knowledge, all objects, are constructs: criticism analyses the processes of construction and, acknowledging the artificial quality of the categories concerned, offers the possibility that we might profitably conceive the world in some alternative way.
>
> (Fowler 1981: 25)

Many elements in Fowler's definition of critical analysis have already come up as hallmarks of discourse analysis in our review – notably its questioning of objectivity and its interest in the practices that produce apparent objectivity, normality and factuality. What we called the forensic goals of discourse analysis resurface in Fowler's definition, probing texts and discourse practices in order to discover hidden meaning and value-structures. His view of society as a set of groups and institutions structured through discourse is closely reminiscent of Foucault's and Pêcheux's theoretical writings (see above).

There is a wealth of critical-theoretic writing behind these general perspectives, which we have decided not to represent directly in the *Reader*. Our thinking is that *critical theory*, while exerting considerable influence on discourse analysis, remains 'theory'. It is a diverse set of abstract and philosophical writing (for example by Louis Althusser, Emile Benveniste, Jacques Derrida, Umberto Eco and Jacques Lacan), which does not always impinge directly on the empirical analysis of discourse, but is definitely part of the same intellectual climate. (Belsey 1980 provides a useful overview of critical theory approaches; Cobley 1996 is an excellent collection of original writings by several of these theorists.) The 'theoretical' chapters (to use a more conventional sense of the word) that we have included – Bakhtin (Chapter 4), Fairclough (Chapter 5), Scollon (Chapter 6), Bourdieu (Chapter 26), Blommaert (Chapter 32) – are ones where theoretical concepts lead more naturally to forms of linguistic/textual/discourse analysis.

But if Fowler's *critical* perspective is established in all or most discourse analysis, why does critical discourse analysis (commonly referred to as CDA) need to be distinguished as a separate tradition? One reason is historical. Several early approaches to discourse, such as the work of the Birmingham school linguists who developed analyses of classroom discourse (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975), had mainly descriptive aims. They introduced an elaborate hierarchical framework for coding teachers' and pupils' discourse 'acts', 'moves' and 'transactions' in classroom talk. The intention was to provide an exhaustive structural model of discourse organization, from the (highest) category, 'the lesson', down to the (lowest) category of the individual speech act. CDA distances itself from descriptivism of this sort. It foregrounds its concern with social constructionism and with the construction of *ideology* in particular. As Theo Van Leeuwen (1993: 193) says: 'Critical discourse analysis is, or should be, concerned with . . . discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality.' Ideological structures are necessarily concerned with the analysis of power relations and social discrimination, for example through demonstrating differential access to discourse networks (see above; Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard 1996; Fairclough, Chapter 5).

Norman Fairclough gives the clearest account of critical discourse analysis as ideological analysis:

> I view social institutions as containing diverse 'ideological-discursive formations' (IDFs) associated with different groups within the institution. There is usually one IDF which is clearly dominant . . . Institutional subjects are constructed, in accordance with the norms of an IDF, in subject positions whose ideological underpinnings they may be unaware of. A characteristic of a dominant IDF is the capacity to 'naturalise' ideologies, i.e., to win acceptance for them as non-ideological 'common sense'. It is argued that the orderliness of interactions depends in part upon such naturalised ideologies. To 'denaturalise' them is the objective of a discourse analysis which adopts 'critical' goals. I suggest that denaturalisation involves showing how social structures determine properties of discourse, and how discourse in turn determines social structures.
>
> (Fairclough 1995: 27)

The important point about concepts such as 'naturalization' and 'denaturalization' is that they are dynamic processes. They imply a continuing struggle over social arrangements and acts of imposition and resistance. In fact, the critical perspective of CDA is directly oriented to social change, in two different senses. First, and particularly in Fairclough's work, CDA sets out to understand social changes in the ideological use of language. We have briefly mentioned Fairclough's arguments about 'technologization'. Under this heading he identifies an ongoing cultural 'process of redesigning existing discursive practices and training institutional personnel in the redesigned practices' (Fairclough 1995: 102), brought about partly through so-called 'social skills training'. Fairclough suggests that social skills training is marked by the emergence of 'discourse technologists', the policing of discourse practices, designing context-free discourse techniques and attempts to standardize them (1995: 103). He finds examples in the instituting of 'staff development' and 'staff appraisal' schemes in British universities (and of course elsewhere). New forms of discourse (e.g., learning terminology that will impress supervisors or assessors, or learning how to appear efficient, friendly or resourceful) are normalized (made to appear unexceptional) and policed or monitored, with a system of status-related and financial rewards and penalties following on from them. Other discursive shifts that Fairclough has investigated are the conversationalization of public discourse and the marketization of public institutions (again, in particular, universities).

The second aspect of change is the critic's own attempt to resist social changes held to curtail liberty. Ideological critique is often characterized by some form of intervention. Notice how Fowler (in the quotation above) mentions 'profitably conceiv[ing] the world in some alternative way'. A critical orientation is not merely 'deconstructive'; it may aim to be 'reconstructive', reconstructing social arrangements. Fowler's use of the term 'profitable' is perhaps unfortunate, although he seems to mean 'more justifiable' or 'more fair'. Fairclough also writes that

> the problematic of language and power is fundamentally a question of democracy. Those affected need to take it on board as a political issue, as feminists have around the issue of language and gender . . . Critical linguists and discourse analysts have an important auxiliary role to play here [i.e., secondary to the role of people directly affected] in providing analyses and, importantly, in providing critical educators with resources of what I and my colleagues have called 'critical language awareness'.
>
> (Fairclough 1995: 221)

Critical discourse analysis in this view is a democratic resource to be made available through the education system. Critical discourse analysts need to see themselves as politically engaged, working alongside disenfranchised social groups. This point returns us to issues of method and ethics, of the sort debated by Cameron et al in Chapter 7.

Overview: what discourse analysis can and cannot do

It may be useful to end this overview chapter with a brief consideration of the limitations inherent in the discourse perspective – what discourse analysis *cannot* do. Understandably enough, the readings in this book actively construct the discipline of discourse studies as a vibrant one, alert to social divisions and, in some cases, seeking to resist them. Discourse promotes itself as being aware, liberated and liberating, and to us this stance seems generally justified.

Yet there are some basic issues of research methods and interpretation that do not and should not get overlooked in the rush to discourse. Discourse analysis is a committedly *qualitative* orientation to linguistic and social understanding. As hinted earlier, it inherits both the strengths and the weaknesses associated with qualitative research. As weaknesses, there will always be problems in justifying the selection of materials as research data. It is often difficult to say why a particular stretch of conversation or a particular piece of written text has come under the spotlight of discourse analysis, and why certain of its characteristics are attended to and not others. If discourse analysis is able to generalize, it can normally only generalize about process and not about distribution. This is a significant problem for research projects that assert that there are broad social changes in discourse formations within a community, e.g., Fairclough's claims about increasing technologization. A claim about change over time – and Fairclough's claims are intuitively very convincing – needs, where possible, to be substantiated with time-sequenced data, linked to some principled method for analysing it, able to demonstrate significant differences. The point is that qualitative, interpretive studies of particular fragments of discourse are not self-sufficient. They need support from other traditions of research, even quantitative surveying. Discourse analysis is therefore not a panacea, and is suited to some types of research question and not others.

Discourse data tend not to lend themselves to distributional surveying. If we emphasize the local contexting of language and the shared construction of meaning, then it follows that we cannot confidently identify recurring instances of 'the same' discourse phenomenon (such as a conversational interruption, a racist reference or an intimate form of address). It is certainly true that a lot of quantitative research has been done – and sometimes inappropriately – on discourse data, through gross coding of language forms and expressions that hide significant functional/contextual/inferential differences. But it is also true that discourse analysts often feel the *need* to make distributional claims (e.g., that men interrupt others in conversation more than women do, that racist discourse is rife in contemporary Britain or that some forms of signalled intimacy redress threats to a person's face) that their data, analysed qualitatively, may not directly support. One common weakness of discourse analysis is therefore that there is a potential mismatch between the analytic method and the interpretation of data in distributional terms. In-depth single-case analyses (e.g., of a particular conversation or written report) are entirely appropriate in discourse analytic research, and have full validity, relative to their aims and objectives (usually to demonstrate meaning-making processes and to build rich interpretations of local discourse events). But they cannot stand as straightforward alternatives to larger-scale projects based on sampled instances, designed to answer questions about social differences or social change. Such studies have their own limitations and (as we suggested above) they risk essentializing and glossing complex local processes. But research is inherently imperfect, and we would support the line of argument that multiple perspectives and methods increase the likelihood of reaching good explanations.

Several strands of discourse analysis, as we have seen, find their vigour in opposing other research trends and assumptions. This is evident in, for example, discursive psychology's antagonism to quantitative social psychology, and in ethnomethodology and CA's resistance to the 'conventional' sociology of social structure. In both these cases, discourse theorists argue for more tentativeness, more context-relatedness, more contingency and more tolerance of ambiguity. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the discourse perspective requires us to scale back our ambition in some ways, again particularly in relation to generalizing, when it comes to linguistic and social explanation. The nature of research itself as a discourse practice needs to be questioned (see Cameron et al, Chapter 7; Gilbert and Mulkay 1984), but when we question we lose some of the security as well as the hegemony of the research institutions.

The corresponding power of the discourse analysis perspective is its explanatory and critical depth. Discourse studies offer the possibility of a greater clarity of vision, specifically of how language permeates human affairs, offering us opportunities but also constraints. Alessandro Duranti, as a linguistic anthropologist, has written lucidly about this:

> Having a language is like having access to a very large canvas and to hundreds or even thousands of colors. But the canvas and the colors come from the past. They are hand-me-downs. As we learn to use them, we find out that those around us have strong ideas about what can be drawn, in which proportions, in what combinations, and for what purposes. As any artist knows, there is an ethics of drawing and coloring as well as a market that will react sometimes capriciously, but many times quite predictably to any individual attempts to place a mark in the history or representation or simply readjust the proportions of certain spaces at the margins . . . Just like art-works, our linguistic products are constantly evaluated, recycled or discarded.
>
> (Duranti 1997: 334)

Duranti's metaphor captures many of the insights that we have anticipated in this Introduction, to be filled out and illustrated in the following chapters. But it also follows that if we can become more aware of the ethics of using language, and of the linguistic market and its practices, we should be better prepared to use language for the purposes we deem valuable. As the 'information revolution' continues to gain new ground, demands will increase on us to acquire new literacies and discourse competences. These competences will include 'technical' literacies, such as the ability to produce and read new media-generated texts (Snyder 1998; Thurlow et al 2004; Thurlow, Chapter 31). But they will also include being able to produce reasoned accounts and interpretations of complex discourse events and situations. The ability to reflect critically on and analyse discourse will increasingly become a basic skill for negotiating social life and for imposing a form of interpretive, critical order on the new discursive universe.

Journals

The following is a list of journals publishing discourse research.

Applied Linguistics (Oxford University Press)
American Anthropologist (American Anthropological Association)
Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines
Discourse, Context and Media (Elsevier)
Critical Discourse Studies (Routledge)
Discourse & Society (Sage)
Discourse Processes (Routledge)
Discourse & Communication (Sage)
Discourse Analysis Online (Sheffield Hallam University)
Discourse Studies (Sage)
International Journal of Applied Linguistics (Wiley-Blackwell)
Journal of Communication (Oxford University Press for International Communication Association)
Journal of Language and Social Psychology (Sage)
Journal of Language and Politics (John Benjamins)
Journal of Linguistic Anthropology (American Anthropological Association)
Journal of Multicultural Discourses (Routledge)
Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development (Routledge)
Journal of Politeness Research (Mouton de Gruyter)
Journal of Pragmatics (Elsevier)
Journal of Sociolinguistics (Wiley-Blackwell)
Language Awareness (Routledge)
Language and Communication (Elsevier)
Language in Society (Cambridge University Press)

Multilingua (Mouton de Gruyter)
Narrative Inquiry (John Benjamins)
Pragmatics (International Pragmatics Association)
Pragmatics and Society (John Benjamins)
Research on Language and Social Interaction (Routledge)
Semiotica (Mouton de Gruyter)
Social Semiotics (Routledge)
Text & Talk (Mouton de Gruyter)
Visual Communication (Sage)
Written Communication (Sage)

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