



What is Discourse Analysis? (Part I)

ENG 429 – Discourse Analysis & Stylistics

Discourse analysis (DA) is an approach to the analysis of language which ...

1) Focuses on

- Knowledge about language **beyond** the word, clause, phrase, and sentence that is needed for successful communication.



2) Looks at

- Patterns of language **across** texts and considers the relationship between language and the **social** and **cultural** contexts in which it is used.



DA is an approach to the analysis of language which ...

3) Considers

- The ways the use of language presents different **views of the world** and different understandings.

4) Examines

- How the use of language is influenced by **relationships** between participants as well as the effects the use of language has upon **social identities** and relations.



DA is an approach to the analysis of language which ...

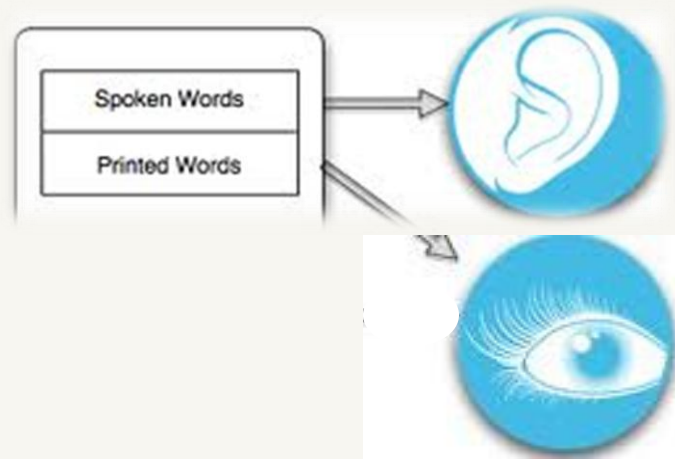
5) Considers

- How views of the world and identities are **constructed** through the use of discourse .



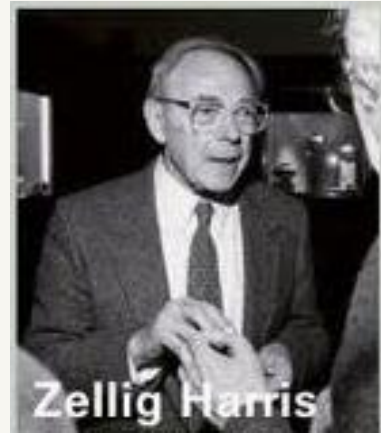
6) Examines

- Both **spoken** and **written** texts.



The term *discourse analysis*

- First introduced by Zellig Harris in 1952 as a way of analyzing **connected speech & writing**
- Harris had two main interests
 - Language **beyond** the level of the sentence
 - Relationship between **linguistic & non-linguistic** behavior



“Language beyond the level of the sentence”

- Harris observed that there are **typical ways** of using language in **particular situations**.
- He argued that these *discourses* shared particular **meanings** and characteristic **linguistic features**.

“Relationship between linguistic & non-linguistic behavior”

- Harris refers to how people know, from the **situation** they are in, how to **interpret** what someone says.
- Expressions have a **particular meaning** in a **particular situation** and may mean something different in another situation. d

“The runway is full at the moment.”

Speaker:
Pilot

Instruction
not to
land the
plane

Speaker:
Person waiting
to pick someone
up at the airport

Explanation
of why the
plane is late

Discourse analysis & pragmatics

- Discourse analysis is **closely related** to pragmatics.
 - Both analyze stretches of spoken and written language in particular (authentic) situations
- Pragmatics
 - How the **interpretation** of language depends on knowledge of the **real world**.
 - What people **mean** by what they say (aside from the literal meaning of their words)

Notion of *context*

- Who
 - Speaker/writer
 - Hearer/reader
- Topic
- Purpose
- Where
- When
- How
 - Above features impact speech or writing

Thus ...

- Discourse analysis considers the relationship between **language** and the **contexts** in which it is used.
- Chimombo & Roseberry (1998):
 - Primary purpose of DA is to provide a deeper **understanding** and **appreciation** of texts and how they become **meaningful** to their users.