Discourse: Methods and Approaches in Research Analysis

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Abstract

This paper explores *discourse* as both a concept and a methodological tool across various academic disciplines. It explores the theoretical underpinnings and evolving definitions of discourse, highlighting its interdisciplinary nature and post-structuralist roots. The study distinguishes discourse from other linguistic units such as sentence, text, and utterance, emphasizing its focus on language in use rather than language as an abstract system. It further outlines the two major approaches to discourse—formal and functional—highlighting the centrality of context in discourse analysis. Drawing on definitions from linguists and dictionaries, the paper shows how the term discourse has acquired diverse meanings across disciplines like linguistics, sociology, philosophy, feminism, and post-colonial studies. The paper argues that despite this diversity, discourse analysis is unified by its commitment to investigating real, naturally occurring language beyond the sentence level. The paper concludes that discourse analysis enhances our understanding of language by integrating linguistic and extra-linguistic elements, offering practical insights into how language operates in social, cultural, and ideological contexts.

1. Introduction

Since the landmark publication of *Discourse Analysis* by Zellig Harris (1952), the concept of discourse has garnered sustained and increasing academic interest across linguistic and interdisciplinary research domains. Harris initially defined discourse as the "analysis of connected speech (or writing)," thereby positioning it as a field that extends beyond the isolated analysis of a single sentence or clause. Unlike traditional descriptive linguistics, which focuses primarily on the internal structure of language — examining sound systems, morphological patterns, and syntactic constructions — discourse analysis turns its attention outward, toward the actual use of language in social and communicative contexts.

Descriptive linguistics, no doubt, offers foundational insights into the formal properties of language, yet its scope remains confined to rules and patterns at the level of phonology, morphology, and syntax. This approach typically seeks to map the systematic regularities within a language, offering models for how sounds combine into words and words into grammatically coherent sentences. However, this descriptive focus does not fully address the functional and contextual aspects of language use — the ways in which people deploy language to perform actions, establish relationships, and shape their worlds through communication. As Harris (1952) implied, language is more than the sum of its structural parts; its true complexity emerges only when examined within the flow of human interaction.

Discourse, in this broader sense, is primarily concerned with language as it operates in real-life situations rather than as an abstract system. It draws attention to the fact that an individual's ability to use language

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appropriately in context often holds greater social and communicative value than merely knowing its formal grammatical rules. Language, in this light, is an active social practice rather than a static system. Through discourse, individuals negotiate identity, construct social roles, and maintain or resist systems of power and ideology.

Discourse Analysis, as it has developed over time, is neither a singular method nor confined to a single discipline. Instead, it is a field enriched by the perspectives of linguistics, sociology, anthropology, media studies, psychology, education, and political science, among others. The flexibility of the term "discourse" and its methodological openness allow for diverse interpretations and applications, but what unites all approaches under this umbrella is a shared commitment to understanding language in its situated, real-world usage.

A key contribution of discourse analysis is its role in bridging the gap between language structure and language use. While traditional linguistic models tend to isolate sentences for grammatical scrutiny, discourse analysis shifts focus to the study of extended language phenomena — such as conversations, interviews, speeches, written texts, or even multi-modal interactions — to observe how meaning is co-constructed between participants. This broader scope is particularly relevant in the modern era, where digital technology, globalized media, and social platforms continuously reshape communication patterns.

The significance of discourse analysis in contemporary research lies in its practical application to pressing social questions. In political science, for instance, the study of political rhetoric and persuasive strategies has illuminated how public figures strategically deploy language to construct authority, gain popular legitimacy, and influence public sentiment. In the digital humanities and communication studies, discourse analysis has been applied to explore the formation of online identities, virtual communities, and the linguistic mechanisms underlying polarization or solidarity in social media environments.

Researchers such as Gee (2018) and Fairclough (2013) have emphasized that discourse is not simply a reflection of social reality, but an active force that shapes and reshapes social structures, power relations, and ideological frameworks. Their work highlights how discourse both mirrors and produces the conditions under which people live, work, and think. More recently, emerging studies have extended these foundational insights to address the dynamics of discourse in contemporary hybrid and digital communication contexts.

Newer research further highlights that discourse analysis is especially suited to unpacking the cultural, ideological, and technological transformations brought about by digital globalization. Studies by Afrasiab *et al*. (2025) and Megantari *et al*. (2025) have explored how global digital platforms have created new modes of language negotiation, where linguistic norms are not only localized but also hybridized, giving rise to fluid and evolving discursive practices. In these environments, discourse serves as both an instrument for identity performance and a site for contesting authority and power, reaffirming its social and political centrality in the digital age.

Discourse analysis also plays a pivotal role in the study of educational discourse, healthcare communication, legal narratives, and social justice activism. Whether examining how institutional power is embedded in the language of policy documents, or how marginalized communities reclaim agency through narrative practices, discourse analysis equips researchers with tools to analyze meaning beyond the surface structure of texts.

Ultimately, discourse analysis has evolved from Harris's early syntactic explorations of connected language to a multifaceted interdisciplinary inquiry capable of addressing the layered complexities of human communication. Its continued relevance in academic research rests on its ability to adapt and respond to the ever-changing nature of language as it is lived and experienced, especially in the context of global communication networks. Whether in the sphere of politics, digital interaction, or cultural critique, the study of discourse continues to illuminate how language functions as both a social practice and an ideological battleground.

This study argues that discourse analysis offers a powerful and necessary lens for understanding the dynamic relationship between language, power, and identity in both physical and digital contexts. Unlike traditional linguistic models, which prioritize formal structure and grammatical rules, discourse analysis emphasizes the social function of language and its role in constructing reality. As global communication increasingly takes place within hybrid, digital, and transnational spaces, the ability to critically engage with discourse becomes essential for uncovering how language shapes ideologies, maintains or disrupts power structures, and frames collective identities. Through this research, it is proposed that discourse is not merely an instrument of communication but an active and evolving social force — one that reflects, reinforces, and challenges the norms and hierarchies embedded in both historical and contemporary human interaction.

2. Defining *Discourse*: Multiplicity in its Meaning

Before taking up how discourse in used in different disciplinary, we will consider how the term discourse is founded and defined in literature. The history of the word 'discourse' dates back to the 14th century. Although the term has its origin in the Latin word *discursus* meaning 'running to and fro' or *discurrere* 'to run apart', where *currere* means 'to run', or 'conversation' (McArthur, 1996). However, in its current usage the term embodies different meanings to different people. The concept of discourse encompasses multiple meanings and is not monolithic in its composition. It represents post-structuralists ideas such as plurality, fuzziness and multiplicity. Such a conception of discourse does not help in lending any fix meaning to the term and cause it to be obfuscating in its nature. This diversity and plurality of meaning, the term discourse derives because of many reasons, primary among them is the treatment of the term by a variety of disciplines differently. Consequently, the term has specific disciplinary inflected meaning in Linguistics, Sociology, Philosophy, Feminism, Post-Colonial Studies.

The diversity the concept of discourse imbibes in itself may further be clear when we look at how the term is defined by dictionaries. Microsoft Encarta 2007 defines the term discourse as both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it is defined as serious speech or a piece of writing or a piece of language that extends beyond the sentences. As a verb, it is defined as to seriously speak or write on a topic. Sometimes, it is defined as 'a serious speech or piece of writing on a particular subject' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2001).

The term has come to mean different things for different people. For Harris (1952), it is connected speech that defines discourse, whereas alternatively it is also a term to be located in the overall interactive process in a sociocultural context. Alternatively, the term can also be looked up in contrast to other terms such as text, sentence, and ideology. For instance, David Crystal emphasizes that the term on the one hand focuses on the structure of spoken language – like conversations, interviews, commentaries, and speeches and on the other hand focuses on the structure of written language - like essays, notices, road signs, and chapters (quoted in Mills 1997: 4). Similarly, Geoffrey Leech sees it in terms of conversation between sender and receiver embedded in its social milieu, be it either spoken or written (quoted in Mills 1997: 4). Roger Fowler views discourse with respect to ideology. This means the mode of language (written or spoken) is immaterial in defining the term, but what is important is the underlying systems of belief and values. The make of those ideas and beliefs lends a perspective to look at the social world around us – its institutions and organisations and the specific ideology associated with those social units. The representations of the experiences are encoded by the use of different discourses in different context in which it is used.

It is clear, the word in its current usage conveys several significations depending on the disciplinary domains and field of study, but it generally relates to language in use. It encompasses both the spoken and written modes without limitation to the length of the language segment. An important feature to consider while understanding or doing discourse is the distinction between spoken and written language. 'discourse' is occasionally employed to stand for what is spoken, whereas the word 'text' is employed to denote what is written, however, that the text/discourse distinction highlighted here is not always sharply defined and can sometimes be used interchangeably. Another distinction that needs to be considered is that of a sentence and an utterance. Utterance is a physical event in contrast to the traditional notion of 'sentence', which is a unit of language analysis in the grammatical system of a language. The term discourse is often defined as language use rather than idealisations or conceptions of language. However, discourse analysis is often used for both the written and oral language use. Units larger than the sentence like paragraphs, conversations and interviews can be said to come under 'discourse'.

The term can also be understood by maintaining a distinction in formal and the functional approaches. According to Schiffrin (1994) the formal approach concerns language use above and beyond the sentence. In this formal or structural approach, language analysis concerns with units larger than sentences. Schiffrin (1994) ascribes the highest place of discourse in the hierarchy morpheme, clause and sentence in which there is internal structural relationships between smaller units below the discourse.

The functional approach focuses on language use in the real world. In such a scenario the context takes the centre-stage in explaining the term discourse. This means any understanding and knowledge of the language is contingent upon factors outside language – the real world functions the language serves. In this approach, discourse analysis fulfills the job to investigate the functions of language in which contextual factors paly an instrumental role. It is the context that determines both the meaning and the function of the language use. The context may be defined in its broadest sense to include not only the socio-cultural and historical factors but such

factors as social roles, status and prestige, domains of language use, formal vs informal use of language, institutions and setting of language use, the political circumstances the norms of language use etc.

3. Context in Discourse and its Analysis

As stated earlier, the method of discourse asks for langue analysis in its real context. The context offers different perspective and layers of meaning and understanding that the traditional grammatical analysis fails to achieve. The context can be linguistic or extra-linguistic (Widdowson, 1973). Context can be understood as the linguistic elements that surrounds any given utterance that help in proper interpretation of language use. This linguistic environment is often termed as the 'co-text'. Thus, co-text is the linguistic context of language use (Yule 1985; Hartmann & Stork, 1972). In its broadest sense, context is anything outside the language that helps in unwrapping different layer to the meaning of the language used. In discourse the context helps in interpretation not only the formal or constituent meaning of language but goes beyond its linguistic boundaries to include the external world. Contexts of language use undertakes the relationship of utterances to the situations in which the utterance is used. It follows that such a conception of language use in context shifts the focus of linguistic analysis from a sentence-centred approach to examine the interplay of language and the external world to get true understanding of meaning and knowledge of language.

4. Methods and Approaches to Discourse Analysis

In the previous sections, it has been seen that discourse its analysis can mean many and often contradictory things to different people. The term embodies a truly post-structural ideas of multiplicity, further it meaning is also affected by the domain of its use and methods and approaches found in academic disciplines in which it is used. Consequently, it is not a surprise many methods and approaches to discourse analysis can be identified in the literature depending on the domain in which is applied. Despite different interdisciplinary trends the term is in application, discourse is unified in its concern for the description of 'language above the sentence' in real world McCarthy (1991). McCarthy enumerates the following approaches to discourse analysis:

1. Harris's (1952) work on text structure and the links between text and social situation.
2. Semiotics and the French structuralist approach to the study of narrative.
3. Dell Hymes's studies in the 1960's of speech in its social setting.
4. The linguistic philosophers Austin, Searle and Grice's interest in the social nature of speech (speech act theory & conversational maxims).
5. Pragmatics and its focus on meaning in context.
6. M.A.K. Halliday's functional approach to language in the 1970's.
7. Ethnomethodology and its concern with cross-cultural features of naturally occurring communication within specified speech events.
8. The study of classroom talk as developed by Sinclair and Coulthard.
9. Conversation analysis: the study of recurring patterns in natural spoken interaction.
10. The analysis of oral storytelling as part of narrative discourse analysis by William Labov.
11. Text-grammarians' work on written discourse exemplified by Halliday & Hasan's and Van Dijk's interest in internal textual connectedness.
12. The Prague School of linguistic and its focus on the relationship between grammar and discourse.

5. Situating *Discourse* within Disciplines

In previous sections, we have that attempts to define discourse have brought multiple meanings to the fore. We now try to chalk out its domain in various academic disciplines. An alternative path to understand the concept in the disciplinary boundaries within which the term is used. In this exercise at least five different perspectives emerge.

5.1. Traditional Linguistic Perspective

Following the foundational work of Harris (1952), the concept of discourse has been distinguished from sentence-level linguistic analysis by its defining emphasis on the length and structural complexity of a text or utterance. Discourse is concerned not merely with isolated sentences but with stretches of language that exhibit an internal organization governed by principles of coherence and cohesion — properties that allow language users to construct meaning across sentences, paragraphs, and turns in conversation. While mainstream linguistics has traditionally prioritized the analysis of language's formal properties, such as syntax, morphology, and phonology, discourse emerged as a complementary approach that focuses on the way language operates in context, particularly

in authentic communicative events. Here, both talk and text are viewed not only as structured linguistic artifacts but also as socially situated actions shaped by their context of production.

From the 1960s onward, a significant shift in linguistic inquiry began to take place as scholars increasingly moved beyond the decontextualized sentence toward an understanding of language embedded in its social environment. This intellectual movement reflected a growing awareness that language cannot be fully understood as an abstract set of rules or propositions divorced from the situations and relationships in which it is used. As discourse studies evolved, the contextual dimension of language became central, broadening the scope of linguistic analysis to include not just what is said but also why, how, and under what circumstances it is said. Scholars argued that meaning is not contained solely within linguistic forms but is co-constructed by speakers and listeners within real-world settings.

This contextual sensitivity led to a growing body of research concerned with how language use varies across domains, social roles, and communicative situations — a perspective often captured under the term "register analysis." Influential examples of this approach include Sinclair and Coulthard's (1992) analysis of the classroom lecture, which demonstrated how educational discourse follows predictable patterns shaped by the institutional context, and Hymes' (1972) ethnography of communication, which emphasized how forms of speech such as religious sermons or greetings are embedded in culturally specific communicative norms. Studies of telephone conversations and everyday dialogue further underscored the dynamic and interactional nature of discourse, revealing how participants collaboratively construct meaning through turn-taking, repair mechanisms, and the management of shared knowledge.

As this body of research suggests, discourse cannot be reduced to static sequences of sentences but must be understood as language-in-action, deeply intertwined with the speaker's intentions, the listener's interpretations, and the social contexts that frame them both. The evolution of discourse analysis from these early structural insights into a more pragmatic and ethnographically oriented discipline underscores its enduring relevance for investigating language as a tool for social organization, identity construction, and meaning-making.

5.2. Ethnographic Approach to Discourse

Hymes' (1972) approach does not concern itself with the abstract *langue* as the object of its investigation. Ethnography of communication, as the term is alternatively known, is riveted around the ethnographic approach to the study of language in use. Ethnography is sub-discipline of Sociology, the concern of which lies in the description and analysis of ethnic groups. The term represents a site of intersection of linguistics and ethnography. In the 1960s, Dell Hymes and John Gumperz took an alternative approach to the study of language at the centre of which was the concern to find out the "universals of language use" rather than the universals of language grammar. At the core of this approach is to reject "abstract category of language or grammar (Hymes 1972, 1999), essentially an approach divergent to the Saussure's linguistic structuralism and Chomsky's transformational approach to the study linguistics. Unlike Saussure and Chomsky, Hymes focused on studying "language use in its sociocultural setting" (Hymes 1972).

The main thrust of Hyme's approach is to bring "socially constituted linguistics" (Hymes 1999: 14) at the centre of stage because of Hymes underlying belief in the idea that linguistic features are the outcome of social functions. Hymes has a different path to chart in which language is not simply the technology of mind, in which abstract psychological system is the object of true inquiry. Hymes called this abstract system as "I language" or "linguistic competence" as against the socially informed contextual use of language which he called as "communicative competence." According to Hymes (1999), Saussure "in seeking structure," is concerned with the word and Chomsky was concerned with the sentence, whereas his approach is concerned with the act of speech (Hymes 1999). Some keywords in the Hymes approach to the study of language are concepts like speech community, speech situation, speech event, speech act, components of speech events.

5.3. Conversational Analysis Approach to Discourse

Conversation Analysis (CA) is a methodological approach within linguistics that focuses on the fine-grained, micro-level examination of spoken interaction, especially as it unfolds in real-time conversational exchanges. As an analytical framework, CA is characterized by its attention to the natural organization of talk rather than isolated, artificially constructed examples. It places a strong emphasis on examining both spontaneous and formal conversations across diverse settings — ranging from everyday informal dialogue to structured institutional talk — thereby making it a versatile and widely applicable tool in discourse analysis. What distinguishes CA from other linguistic approaches is its commitment to studying naturally occurring conversations, which are typically

audio-recorded, transcribed with great precision, and analysed without reliance on external statistical measures or pre-established coding schemes.

The central aim of Conversation Analysis is to uncover the recurring sequential patterns that shape interaction, particularly the organization of turn-taking and the ways in which participants collaboratively construct meaning at each moment in the exchange. The emphasis lies on describing what is empirically observable within the talk itself rather than speculating on what could or should occur. This descriptive and inductive orientation enables researchers to ground their insights directly in the evidence of spoken discourse, rather than imposing interpretive frameworks from outside the interaction. Analysts pay meticulous attention to linguistic features such as pauses, overlaps, interruptions, self-repairs, and repeated phrases, as these elements often reveal the subtle mechanisms by which meaning is produced, negotiated, revised, or contested by participants in real time.

One of the methodological strengths of CA is its insistence on respecting the speaker's own displayed orientations and meanings. While the immediate, surface-level meanings expressed by participants typically serve as the primary focus of study, the analyst also remains alert to underlying or competing interpretations that might complement, contradict, or even neutralize what has been explicitly stated. This attention to both manifest and latent meanings ensures that the analysis captures the multi-layered nature of human conversation, where ambiguity, irony, and indirectness frequently play important roles.

Conversation Analysis also foregrounds the concept of context but treats it in a very specific way. The emphasis is placed on what is called the "local" or "endogenous" context — that is, the context that emerges within the conversation itself, as opposed to broader "exogenous" social factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, historical background, or institutional affiliation. Such factors are introduced into the analysis only when and if they become explicitly relevant in the talk, meaning when participants themselves orient to them. This selective inclusion underscores CA's commitment to allowing meaning to arise from the interaction, rather than from the analyst's assumptions about the participants' social identities.

The practical range of Conversation Analysis extends across multiple social domains, including but not limited to classrooms, courtrooms, medical consultations, religious rituals, customer service interactions, and even digital and virtual conversations. The core mechanisms of interaction are understood to be the scaffolding that makes coherent conversation possible across these varied contexts. According to their model, conversation is organized around a set of procedural rules that guide the selection of the "next speaker" and determine the point at which speaker transition occurs. This mechanism is neither random nor purely intuitive but reflects an orderly system of cues and strategies that participants follow to maintain the smooth flow of dialogue.

Alongside turn-taking, Conversation Analysis explores other key phenomena such as adjacency pairs, which structure the expected sequence of responses in conversation (e.g., a greeting followed by a return greeting), dialogue repairs where misunderstandings or misstatements are corrected, and the role of silence, pauses, or repetitions in maintaining or disrupting the rhythm of interaction. These features collectively reveal how participants negotiate understanding and manage breakdowns in communication through subtle adjustments in their talk.

However, one of the most consistent critiques of Conversation Analysis arises from its deliberate exclusion of larger social structures from the core of its analysis. By focusing exclusively on the local, moment-to-moment organization of talk, CA consciously brackets out questions of social power, ideology, history, and macro-level social dynamics. This methodological purism, while lending CA its precision and descriptive depth, has also led some scholars to challenge its applicability for analyzing language as a tool of political or ideological struggle. In limiting its scope to the micro-architecture of dialogue, CA risks overlooking the ways in which broader societal forces shape, constrain, or inflect everyday interactions.

Nevertheless, this focus on the internal structure of conversations — free from predetermined theoretical assumptions — allows Conversation Analysis to capture aspects of social interaction that might otherwise be overlooked by more theory-driven frameworks. Its commitment to methodological rigor and its rich, detailed transcriptions have made it an influential and enduring method within sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, even as debates continue regarding the extent to which the social and historical contexts of speakers should be integrated into its findings.

5.4. Sinclair-Coulthard Approach

The focus of CA was on the immediate micro analysis of talk by using member's method. For Sinclair and Coulthard CA present a overly simplistic understanding of conversation and does not account for "the ambiguity

inherent in language." Those ambiguities present real challenges in any meaningful study of conversation which people can exploit. For instance, look at the conversation below:

Dad: Is that your coat on the floor again?

Son: Yes. (goes on reading)

In the above example, the speaker proceeds with an interrogative, but the listener exploits the inherit ambiguity in the sentence and ignores the underlying command in it. The chief interest of this approach to discourse analysis is in the organization of interaction in its situation or context of use. One important assumption of Sinclaire and Coulthard's method is the ranking of structures within discourse. Like there is a hierarchical relation between sentences and clauses – clauses make sentences, there is a similar hierarchy that exists between transactions, exchanges, moves and acts, in which acts occupy the bottom of hierarchy.

Sinclaire and Coulthard's model, at its very core has heavily drawn from Halliday's (1961) rank scale approach in which beliefs that each unit at a given rank is made up of one or more units of the rank below. For instance, a word is made of smaller units called morphemes, the words themselves combine with other units at the same rank to create units that are above the unit of words. Let us look at the following exchange to have a better understanding of how the model works.

A: initiation (opening)

B: response

A: feedback (follow up)

T: I've got some things here too. (starter)

Hands up. (cue)

What's that, what is it. (elicit)

In the above illustration it can be noticed, the three acts make up the opening move. The three acts are: a starter, prepares the addressee in anticipation of what comes next; a cue, encourages the participants to offer a response; and the last part is an elicit, a question that bears the chief function of the move. Elicitation, directive, and informative are three main acts in any exchange. Elicitation asks for a linguistic response, a non-linguistic directive (writing, listening whereas an informative act is the one that is required to inform of facts, ideas and opinions, the suitable response to which is an acknowledgement of the information is received.

Generally, an elicitation is like a question and can be realized by an interrogative, a directive can be realized by an imperative, whereas an informative can be realized by a declarative. However, in the context of use these complementary relationships can be floated. Take for instance, 'Can you tell me the time?' can be interpreted not a yes/no question but alternatively a competent language user may interpret it either a request or a command to fulfill certain actions. A directive in its unmarked form can be interpreted as an imperative, open the window', or alternatively in its marked form can be realized in an interrogative, declarative and mood-less structures. A competent user of a language can comprehends such intricacies of language use depending on the context and environment in which the language is used.

5.5. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA acknowledges the existence of asymmetries in the provision of power and resources to different people in a hierarchical society. CDA concerns itself with the junction where language and ideology interplay. This critical approach to discourse analysis was popularized by Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992) and Ruth Wodak (1997). Fairclough, in his analysis of language combines Foucault's ideas of discourse linguistic analysis. For him language is not a transparent neutral medium of communication which may represent power and inequality but how power and ideology operate in and through language. Such an approach to discourse "...inherently functions to construct and reproduce social identity and norms (that is, discourse does not simply reflect existing external 'facts', it plays a central role in constructing the world as we see it.) consequently, the object of analysis in discourse is the role of discourse in constructing and reproducing social inequalities.

In short, the crux of CDA is language and ideology in which it is presumed language is pivotal in the creation, maintenance and legitimating inequality, injustice, and marginalization in society. CDA ''aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power'' (Fairclough 1995).

Scholarship in CDA pay special attention to the nexus between language and ideology, marginalization, subjugation (Widdowson (1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1998). In particular, and despite a broad range of approaches and

methodologies within CDA, Fairclough and Wodak ([1997](#): 271-80) propose eight basic concepts which seem to be at the core of any research characterized as CDA:

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture
4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offer essential, though differing, perspectives on the study of language and its role in human interaction. CDA deliberately moves beyond this level to focus on how language both reflects and constructs power, inequality, and ideology within broader social contexts. Rather than seeing these approaches as conflicting, it is more productive to view them as complementary. It situates these communicative practices within the larger dynamics of social hierarchy, institutional control, and historical continuity. In an age of global communication, social media, and the increasing entanglement of language with politics, both approaches remain critically relevant for investigating how language operates not only as a medium of expression but also as a powerful social force capable of shaping worldviews, relationships, and structures of inclusion and exclusion.

6. Conclusion

Discourse, at its core, represents a dynamic and multifaceted concept that challenges traditional structuralist views of language. Originating from the 14th-century Latin term *discursus*, meaning "running to and fro," discourse has evolved from a simple notion of any language unit beyond the sentence to a rich and inclusive concept of "language in use." This evolution highlights the idea that meaning is not solely embedded within isolated sentences but is intricately woven into the fabric of social, cultural, and situational contexts. In this research, we have demonstrated that the understanding of discourse is inherently tied to its context of use.

The environments in which language is deployed—ranging from everyday interactions to specialized institutional settings—play a crucial role in shaping its meaning. As a result, multiple methods and approaches have emerged across academic disciplines to analyse discourse. These approaches vary according to the specific domains in which language is studied, whether it is in traditional linguistics, ethnography, conversational analysis, or critical discourse analysis.

Despite this diversity in methodological approaches, there exists a unifying thread: the commitment to examining language beyond the confines of the sentence. As McCarthy ([1991](#)) suggests, discourse analysis remains fundamentally concerned with exploring the "language above the sentence"—revealing not only the structural regularities of language but also the subtle ways in which language interacts with social and cultural realities. This approach enables researchers to uncover the underlying patterns and practices that govern language use in real-world contexts.

By moving beyond a focus on isolated linguistic elements, discourse analysis opens new avenues for understanding how language functions as a tool for communication and social action. It provides insights into the complex relationship between linguistic form and the extra-linguistic factors that influence meaning, such as power dynamics, cultural norms, and historical contexts. These insights are particularly valuable in addressing practical problems across various fields, from education and media studies to politics and social policy. The study of discourse invites us to reframe our understanding of language—recognizing it as a dynamic system that is continually shaped by its use in diverse contexts. This research underlines that despite diverse methodologies and theoretical frameworks, the primary goal of discourse analysis remains constant: to unveil the intricate landscape of language as it is dynamically used in everyday contexts.

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