Discourse Studies

Lecture 11

Outline

1. Discourse studies.
2. Key concepts.
3. Major approaches.
4. Typical data and methods.
5. Current trades in discourse studies.
6. Critical discourse studies.
7. Multimodal discourse in social media.
8. Corpus approaches to discourse.
9. References.

Discourse Studies

- **Discourse** - language-in-use, beyond isolated sentences, embedded in **social, cultural, political and interactional contexts**.
- **Discourse Studies** - interdisciplinary field combining **linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, communication, media & cultural studies, political science**.

- Focuses on:
  - How meaning is constructed in **text, talk, images, multimodal media**
  - How discourse shapes **identities, power relations, ideologies, institutions**
  - How people **do things with language** (e.g. accuse, justify, resist, include, exclude)

Key Concepts

- **Text vs discourse**
  - *Text* - observable product (transcript, article, post)
  - *Discourse* - dynamic process + social practice around texts
- **Context**
  - Not only situation, but **historical, ideological, institutional** layers
- **Genre & register** – recurrent, socially recognisable patterns of language use (e.g. news report, policy brief, therapy session, TikTok video)
- **Power & ideology** – discourse as a site where **hegemony, resistance, inequality** are produced and contested (core to Critical Discourse Studies)
- **Multimodality** – meaning is made through **language + image + sound + layout + gesture**, not language alone

Major Approaches in Discourse Studies

Conversation Analysis (CA)

- ➔ Micro-analysis of **turn-taking, repair, sequence organisation** in interaction
- ➔ Treats talk as orderly, co-constructed action

Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA)

- ➔ How speakers **invoke social categories** (“mother”, “veteran”, “refugee”) and linked expectations in interaction

Critical Discourse Studies (CDS/CDA)

- ➔ Examines how discourse **reproduces or challenges power, inequality, ideology** (e.g. populism, racism, gender, migration, war)

Discursive Psychology (DP)

- ➔ Looks at how psychological realities (emotions, attitudes, identities) are **constructed in and through discourse**, not “inside the head”

Corpus-based approaches to Discourse

- ➔ Uses large digital text collections + quantitative tools (frequency, collocation, keywords) to reveal **patterns not visible by intuition**

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)

- ➔ Systematically analyses **words, images, layout, colour, sound, gesture** in combination (e.g. social media posts, posters, infographics, video)

Typical Data & Methods

- **Data types**
  - Spoken: conversations, interviews, classroom interaction, therapy sessions, parliamentary debates
  - Written: news, policy, textbooks, academic articles, online comments
  - Multimodal: social media posts, memes, news visuals, ads, health campaigns, urban signage

- **Data collection**
  - Naturalistic recordings, screen captures, corpora, archives, ethnographic fieldwork
- **Analytical moves** (generic “toolkit”)
  - Identify **genre & context**
  - Examine **lexis, grammar, evaluation, stance, metaphor, argumentation**
  - Trace **interactional organisation** (turns, sequences)
  - Link local patterns to **broader social issues** (e.g. ideology, inequality, policy)

Current Trends in Discourse Studies

- **Big growth in Critical Discourse Studies**
  - Bibliometric analyses show **rapid increase** in CDA publications (2013–2023), esp. politics, media, policy, populism, ideology, metaphor.
- **Digital / Social Media Discourse**
  - Focus on **platformed communication**, algorithmic visibility, hate speech, online activism, influencer discourse, crisis communication.
  - Multimodal + participatory (comments, likes, shares)
- **Multimodal Discourse Analysis "boom"**
  - Surveys and bibliometric studies identify MDA as a rapidly expanding subfield (education, health, social media, diplomacy).
- **Corpus & computational turn**
  - Integration of **corpus methods, NLP tools, and quantitative metrics** with qualitative discourse analysis.
  - Emphasis on **reproducibility, large-scale patterning, and mixed methods**.

Current Trends in Discourse Studies

- ➔ **CA in applied contexts**
  - ◆ Increasing use of Conversation Analysis in **classroom interaction, L2 learning, institutional talk, healthcare, and L2 pragmatics**.
- ➔ **GenAI & Discourse**
  - ◆ Emerging work on how **Generative AI both produces and re-mediates discourse**, and how CDS can critique AI's role in reproducing social inequalities.
- ➔ **Interdisciplinary expansion**
  - ◆ Discourse Studies used in **urban studies, health communication, migration, climate discourse, conflict and peace studies**.

Critical Discourse Studies Today

Focus topics:

- ➔ **Populism & political rhetoric**
- ➔ **Media framing** (migration, war, pandemics, climate)
- ➔ **Policy discourse** (welfare, education, security)
- ➔ **Inequality and discrimination** (race, gender, ethnicity, ableism)

Methods:

- ➔ Close textual analysis (lexis/grammar, metaphor, argumentation)
- ➔ Intertextual & interdiscursive analysis
- ➔ Linking discourse to **institutional practices and power structures**

Multimodal Discourse in Social Media

Platforms analysed (2020-2025): Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, news platforms.

Key analytical features:

- ➔ Combination of **headline + image + caption + comments**
- ➔ Visual framing of crises, war, health, protest
- ➔ User participation: comments, hashtags, remixing & memes

Methods:

- ➔ Multimodal transcription (verbal + visual + layout + sound)
- ➔ Quantitative coding of large datasets + close reading of key examples

Corpus Approaches to Discourse

Typical applications:

- ➔ Media discourse on migrants, climate, health
- ➔ Political speeches & parliamentary debates
- ➔ Academic discourse and disciplinary variation

Benefits:

- ➔ Empirical robustness, pattern detection
- ➔ Supports mixed-methods: **quantitative + qualitative interpretation**

Handbooks & Overviews

- ➔ Tannen, D., Hamilton, H., & Schiffrin, D. (eds.) (2015/2nd ed. later). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis.* Wiley. (Still a core reference, but supplement with newer work.)
- ➔ De Fina, A., Ikizoglu, D., & R. Scollon (eds.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Discourse Studies.* Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- ➔ Handford, M., & Gee, J. P. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 2nd ed., Routledge, 2023.
- ➔ Friginal, E., & Hardy, J. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Corpus Approaches to Discourse Analysis.* Routledge, 2020.

Critical Discourse Studies

- ➔ Xia, J. (2024). "Ten Years' Development of Critical Discourse Analysis Research: A Bibliometric Analysis (2013–2023)."
- ➔ Research on CDA status & hot topics (e.g., politics, populism, ideology, metaphor).

Multimodal Discourse

- ➔ Mesinioti, P. (2024). "Multimodal Discourse Analysis in Health Communication."
- ➔ Recent survey/bibliometric work on Multimodal Discourse Analysis (2015–2024).

Conversation Analysis & Interaction

- ➔ Stokoe, E. (2024). "Categories in Social Interaction: CA & MCA Framework." *Annual Review of Psychology.*
- ➔ Gosen, M. N. (2025). "Applying Conversation Analysis to Classroom Interaction."
- ➔ Siegel, A. (2025). "CA–CDST for L2 Pragmatic Development."

Discourse Studies in Context

- ➔ Shirazi, R. (2024). "Discourse Studies, Corpus and Multimodality in Urban Research."
- ➔ Special issue / calls on **Critical Discourse Studies & GenAI**.