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A BOOK REVIEW: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS



Reviewed by Antonius Suratno¹

Readers of books on discourse might have been familiar with this book, first because the older addition of this book was published by Blackwell in 2002, secondly because the writer is

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among the highly cited writer in the area of discourse. She has been a prolific author of books in the area of discourse and has had her books such as *Variation in Discourse*, *Discourse Analysis and Narrative*, *Repetition in Discourse* and many more titles published since 1989. If you ever tried to search Google Scholar and put her name on the search box, it should not come by surprise that her name is on high count of hits suggesting people's familiarity with her work.

Discourse analysis (DA) is very often described broadly enough to encompass most if not all of what we have mapped as the area for Language and Social Interaction. The word 'discourse' has been broadly used and becomes a very fashionable term in various walks of lives. Given the breath the term encapsulated in various texts and debates, it is often used indiscriminately, and due to the lack of limitations in its conceptual definition, the meaning has often become vague and even confusing, either meaning many things or almost nothing. In her terms, as she said, "discourse analysis" is to mean what people do, how they do it, suggesting that it is a phenomenon and it is also an approach. She admits why it is called "discourse analysis" rather than "language analysis" to underscore the fact that it is not centered on language as a form but rather on language in use. As a phenomenon it is not singular, and as an approach it is multiple and even multidisciplinary approach usable to investigate many different social phenomena in various types of research strands.

As the title of this book suggests, it essentially is an account of basic concepts of discourse, as characterized by the scope and the level of discussion in every chapter. Crystal clear and down-to-earth language signifies the major strength of this book which is intended to beginner rather than advanced audiences in the field of discourse. Its status as the Second Edition suggests the value of readership and that it has gained vast acceptance. Compared to the older edition this second edition has undergone some changes

which include such areas as inclusion of discussion on the use of large corpora as data for discourse analysis, new sections on indexicality, stance and style, and social and personal identity, and expansion on intertextuality and interdiscursivity, a new section on the analysis of multimodal discourse and a new material on conversational implicature and an expanded discussion of critiques of speech act theory.

This book starts with overview of what DA is, what it is used for, the facets of discourse analysis, the types of data available for analysis, why transcription is necessary relevant to purposes analysts intend to pursue. The following chapter outlines the issue of discourse in its relation to the world, outlining such areas as history of philosophy and describing how language and thought, language and culture, or discourse and society are related. This is necessary in particular when people are dealing with theories and arguments in which the question of knowledge *foundation* to be advanced is required, and if theory needs support and what position arguments are resting on. In other words, this is touching the aspect of ontology and epistemology which represent people's worldview, overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world, which should be the basis for any investigation.

The subsequent chapter is about how discourse is shaped by various kinds of structural conventions, and how structural conventions are influenced by what speakers use. Discussion highlights the intersection between "grammar" and discourse which clarify for instance why researchers take Systemic Functional Linguistics approach to discourse instead of Conversational Analysts due to the differences of the conceptualization of structure. Whilst the former sees the communicative function as shaping the grammar, the latter sees structure as an inherent part of conversation. This chapter also details some other concepts of various units of discourse such as phrases, lines, utterances,

paragraph, episodes, etc. which often becomes the focus of analysis. Issue of participants in discourse is also touched upon in another chapter. The interplay between people and discourse has generally been understood as mutual, people shapes discourse and discourse shapes people. This relationship has been partly explicated in the relation between power and discourse through the exploration of the roles of stance and hedging in discourse. The last three chapters were devoted to provide account on the concept of intertextuality and interdiscursivity by proposing a subtitle of prior-texts and prior discourses. This chapter is an important section of the book which provides basic understanding of those two concepts alongside repetition and coherence in discourse to readers which are potential area of investigation in discourse. Additional relevant discourse themes were also covered by this book.

The plus points of this book are in the simple and illustrative language the writer has used which obviously fits to the beginner learners of discourse analysis as well as the dialogic nature of each chapter as shown by the provision of discussion sections in every end of section. *Further reading* is another excellent feature of this book in an attempt to instigate deeper exploration of the discussed issues. Another great feature is that each section of the book ends summary and discussion questions intended to provide readers a chance to reflect what has been understood about the section and is expected to expand readers' perspective about the proposed issues. As a case in point, a section of discussion may ask readers to think about what they and other people in their field do or might do with discourse analysis, as well as ideas for small research projects using discourse analysis, are interspersed throughout the chapters. This for sure is not only challenging to readers but also instigating more critical and inquisitive thinking.

This book, however, is not without its flaws, despite the breath of perspectives offered, this book lacks necessary outline of general approaches that discourse analysts may adopt. It should be

more interesting and potentially inspiring should Chapter IV which covers relationship, roles and identities be explained in the perspective of likely approach someone can take, rather than repeatedly discussing relativity aspect of discourse in three different chapters. Thus, it can be said that this book fail to deliver a general outline of research approaches that discourse analysts should be aware of.

Given the scope of topics and area of discussion, this book is of benefit to anyone interested in studying discourse, spoken and written discourse analysts may benefit from understanding the nature of the data by learning from chapter 2 on the topic of discourse and world. Having clearly indentifying the characteristics of data in relation to the relevant ontology and epistemology, a researcher may pick up relevant research methods that will be best capable of answering the issues in questions, meaning that whether a researcher adopts Conversation Analysis (CA), Corpus Linguistics (CL), Rhetorical or genre perspective, or Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will very much depend on the nature of the data to be investigated. Equally beneficial is the conceptualization of ideology which is explicated in the perspective of discourse analysis which should be area of interest for anyone who is set to unveil power inequality in discourse through CDA. Students may be benefited from understanding the general principles of doing DA through the understanding of what it is as a subject or research methodology. This book is useful primarily to beginner graduate students taking discourse as disciplinary course, also teachers of discourse who use it as a course book.

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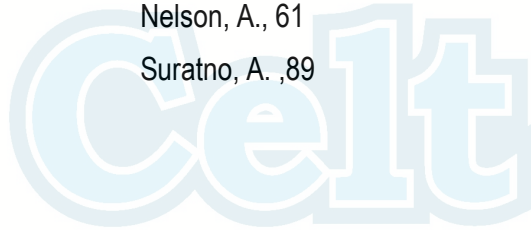
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