



doing discourse analysis in higher education research

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outline of the day

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ What is discourse analysis?
- ▶ Practical activities using discourse analysis
- ▶ Reflecting back and moving forwards



what is discourse analysis?

- Discourse analysis examines patterns of language across texts and considers the relationship between language and the social context in which it is used. Discourse analysis also considers the ways that the use of language presents different views of the world and different understandings. It examines how the use of language is influenced by the relationship between participants as well as the effects the use of language has upon social identities and relations. It also considers how views of the world, and identities, are constructed through the use of discourse.

Paltridge, B. (2012) *Discourse Analysis: an introduction*, London: Bloomsbury, p.2

What discourse analysis is not: Antaki, C.; Billig, M.; Edwards, D.; and Potter, J. (2002) Discourse Analysis Means Doing Analysis: A Critique Of Six Analytic Shortcomings, *Discourse Analysis Online*, 1(1):

<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/daol/articles/v1/n1/a1/antaki2002002-paper.html>



what can discourse analysis offer higher education research?

- ▶ A different way of seeing higher education that recognises the role of text (broadly defined) in constructing social reality.
- ▶ An approach to understanding how language is influenced by and influences social relations and identities within higher education.
- ▶ A means of connecting higher education texts with their broader social, historical and political contexts.
- ▶ A way to explore the practices of production, dissemination and consumption of texts within higher education.
- ▶ Enhanced reflexivity – recognising that the way we write about higher education will also shape higher education.



practical activities

A **caveat**: these activities are not a 'recipe' for discourse analysis, rather they seek to stimulate debate, discussion and reflection based on actual experience of working with language.

1. Genre analysis

- Doró, K. (2013) The Rhetoric Structure of Research Article Abstracts in English Studies Journals, *Prague Journal of English Studies*, 2:1, 119-139

2. Conversation analysis

- Hardman, J. (2015) Tutor-student interaction in seminar teaching: implications for professional development, *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 1-14: DOI: 10.1177/146787415616728

3. Corpus-based approaches

- Mautner, G. (2005) The entrepreneurial university: a discursive profile of a higher education buzzword, *Critical Discourse Studies*, 2:2, 95-120

4. Multimodal approaches

- Hoang, T.V.Y. & Rojas-Lizana, I. (2015) Promotional discourse in the websites of two Australian universities: a discourse-analytic approach, *Cogent Education*, 2:1011488

5. Critical discourse analysis

- Smith, K. (2010) Assuring quality in transnational higher education: a matter of collaboration or control? *Studies in Higher Education*, 35:7. 793-806



genre analysis

- Genre is a recognisable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalised with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognised purpose(s)

Bhatia, V. K. (1993) *Analysing Genre: language use in professional settings*, London: Longman, p.13.

- Give me some examples of genres? And genres within higher education?



research article abstracts as a genre

- Recognisable as a genre due to their form and place in a research article
- However, they can vary considerably across disciplines and journals (e.g. length, content, communicative purpose)
- Interest in research article sections growing since 1980s (work of Swales on article introductions)
- Santos (1996) – five-move model [situating the research; presenting the research; describing the methodology; summarizing findings; discussing the findings]
- Used by other authors: e.g. Pho (2008); Tseng (2011); Lon et al (2012); Doró (2013)
- One aim of this kind of research is to show importance of writing clear abstracts for journals

See: Doró, K. (2013) The Rhetoric Structure of Research Article Abstracts in English Studies Journals, *Prague Journal of English Studies*, 2:1, 119-139

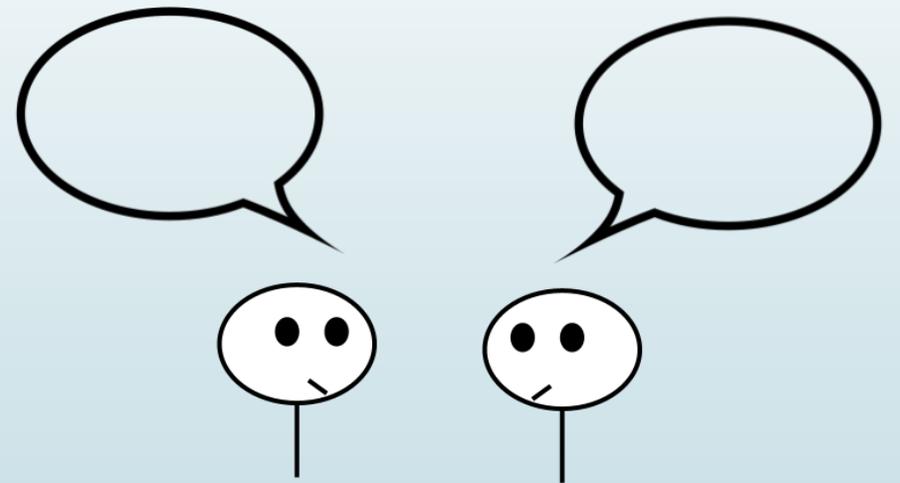
framework for a five-move structure analysis of research article abstracts (Doró 2013, p.125, based on Santos 1996)

Moves	Functions	Questions to ask
1. Situating the research	Setting the scene, topic generalization	What has been known about the field/topic of research?
2. Presenting the research	Setting the purpose of the study, research question / hypothesis	What is the study about?
3. Describing the methodology	Describing the materials, subjects, variables, procedures	How was the research done?
4. Summarizing the findings	Reporting the main findings of the research	What did the research find?
5. Discussing the findings	Interpreting the results, giving recommendations, implications, applications	What do the results mean? So what?

conversation analysis

- Conversation analysis looks at the way in which people manage their everyday conversational interactions. It examines how spoken discourse is organized and develops as speakers carry out these interactions.

Paltridge (2012, p.90)



Some elements of conversation analysis

(Partridge 2012, pp.93-104)

Element	Example
Adjacency pairs	Pairs of utterances, where the second is identified as related to the first: A: <i>how are you?</i> B: <i>very good</i>
Preference organization	Request then acceptance or refusal; offer/invite then acceptance or refusal; question then expected answer or unexpected/no answer.
Turn taking	Signalling the end of a turn: completion of sentence, falling intonation, 'mmm', 'anyway', eye contact, body language
Feedback	Show listening: 'mmm', 'yeah', paraphrasing, repeating, falling intonation
Repair	Correcting what has been said (other repair or self repair)
Conversational openings and closings	Telephone calls: summons/answer; identification; greeting; how are you
Discourse markers	Signposts of coherence: interjections: 'oh'; conjunctions: 'but'; adverbs: 'now'.
Response tokens	'mmm', 'yeah'



tutor-student interaction in seminar teaching

- ▶ What kinds of tutor-student interactions occur in university seminar teaching?
- ▶ What Initiation, Response and Feedback (IRF) moves are made by tutors and students
 - ▶ What types of questions does the tutor ask (open, closed, check)
 - ▶ Are the questions answered (and by whom)?
 - ▶ What types of responses are given in follow-up?
- ▶ What does this mean for the development of university tutors?

See: Hardman, J. (2015) Tutor-student interaction in seminar teaching: implications for professional development, *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 1-14: DOI: 10.1177/146787415616728



corpus-based approaches

- Corpus-linguistics is the study of real-life language use through the quantitative analysis of electronically annotated texts.
- Corpora are large (often millions of words) and they are encoded electronically, meaning that complex calculations can be carried out on large amounts of text very quickly.
- Corpora can also be annotated with additional linguistic information (e.g. part of speech), allowing grammatical analysis to be carried out. Biographical data can also be encoded to enable language comparisons to be made about different types of speaker.
- Corpora can be generic (e.g. the BNC) or specialised, e.g. focussed on a specific text type.
- You can use an existing corpora, or you can build your own.
- See: Baker, P. (2006) *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*, London, Bloomsbury



british national corpus [BNC]

- ▶ The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of British English from the later part of the 20th century, both spoken and written. The latest edition is the BNC XML Edition, released in 2007.
- ▶ The written part of the BNC (90%) includes, for example, extracts from regional and national newspapers, specialist periodicals and journals for all ages and interests, academic books and popular fiction, published and unpublished letters and memoranda, school and university essays, among many other kinds of text. The spoken part (10%) consists of orthographic transcriptions of unscripted informal conversations (recorded by volunteers selected from different age, region and social classes in a demographically balanced way) and spoken language collected in different contexts, ranging from formal business or government meetings to radio shows and phone-ins.

<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/index.xml>



advantages of the corpus-based approach to discourse analysis (Baker, 2006, pp.10-17)

- Reducing researcher bias
- The incremental effect of discourse
- Resistant and changing discourses
 - See Mautner, G. (2005) The entrepreneurial university: a discursive profile of a higher education buzzword, *Critical Discourse Studies*, 2:2, 95-120
- Triangulation

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multimodal approaches

- Multimodal discourse analysis considers how texts draw on modes of communication such as pictures, film, video, images as well as sound in combination with words to make meaning. It has examined print genres as well as genres such as web pages, film and television programmes. It considers how multimodal texts are designed and how semiotic tools such as colour, framing, focus and positioning of elements contribute to the making of meaning in these texts.

Partridge (2012, p.170)

What multimodal texts are prevalent within higher education discourses?



institutional websites

- ▶ Institutional websites are a means for universities to build an image of themselves and to market that image to the public and potential students.
- ▶ Universities, which provide similar 'services', compete for students.
- ▶ In order to have competitive advantage, universities need to create a distinctive image.
- ▶ But since higher education is an 'intangible product', universities need to introduce their products, with concrete evidence to support their distinctiveness.
- ▶ The website is the outlet whereby universities introduce their products to the public and their potential students.

See: Hoang, T.V.Y. & Rojas-Lizana, I. (2015) Promotional discourse in the websites of two Australian universities: a discourse-analytic approach, *Cogent Education*, 2:1011488

multimodal framework for analysing websites

	Stage of Analysis
1	Preservation of first impressions and reactions
2	Inventory of salient features and topics
3	In-depth analysis of content and formal choices
4	Embedded point(s) of view or 'voice' and implied audience(s) and purposes
5	Analysis of information organisation and spatial priming strategies
6	Contextual analysis, provenance, and inference



critical discourse analysis (CDA)

- An approach to studying language and its relation to power, injustice and inequality within contemporary society (van Dijk, 1993)
 - Is multi-disciplinary
 - Is also methodologically eclectic
 - Recognises that life is increasingly textually-mediated
 - Denaturalise taken-for-granted assumptions and reveal ideological goals
 - Has political and emancipatory goals



Norman Fairclough's approach to CDA

- ▶ Analysing linguistic elements in order to reveal connections between:
 - ▶ language, ideology and power
- ▶ Power relations are discursive
 - ▶ power is transmitted and practised through discourse
- ▶ Emphasises the role of language within social processes
- ▶ Supports critical language awareness as part of language education
 - ▶ n.b. Other forms of CDA are available (e.g. Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk)



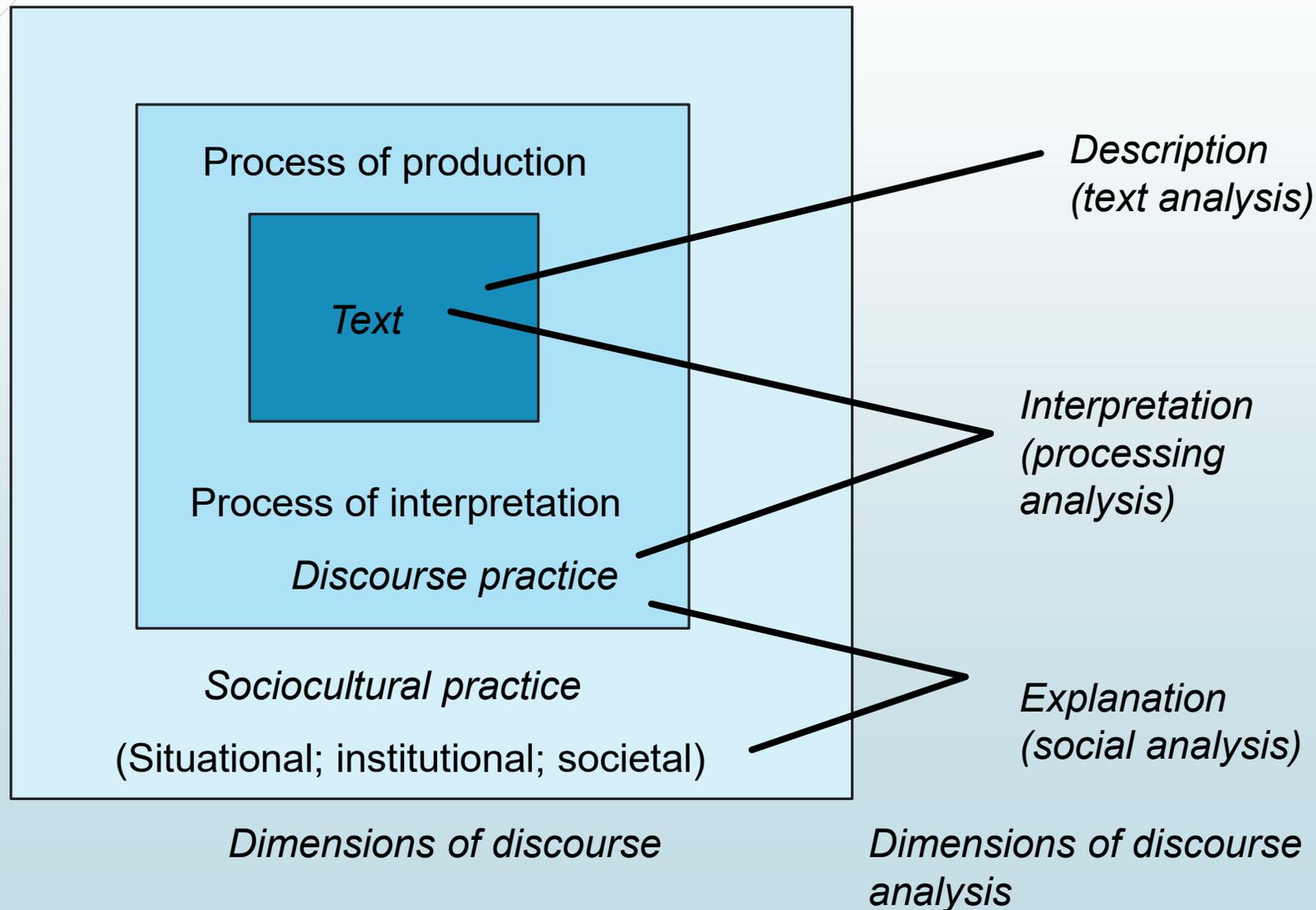
approaching CDA

- ▶ CDA consists of three dimensions of discourse, which require three types of analysis
- ▶ The dimensions are:
 1. The object of analysis (including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts)
 2. The process by which the object is produced and received (writing/speaking/designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects
 3. The socio-historical conditions that govern these processes

See: Janks, H., (1997) Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 18(3), pp.329-342

dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis

Fairclough, N., (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language*, Harlow: Longman, p.133



reflecting back



From your perspective ...

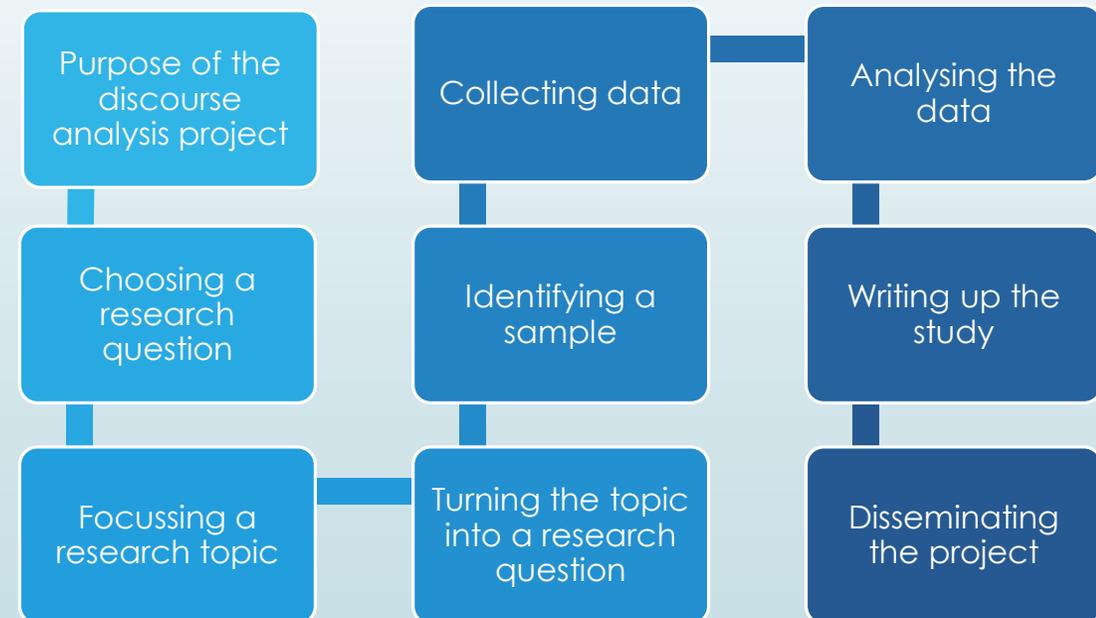
- What has been useful today?
- What would you like to follow up?
- What is still not clear?
- Does doing discourse analysis still appeal to you?

doing a discourse analysis project

Kinds of discourse analysis projects
(Partridge 2012, pp.209-213)

- Replication of previous studies
- Using different discourse data but the same methodology
- Analysing existing data from a discourse analysis perspective
- Analysing discourse data from a different perspective
- Considering the validity of a previous claim
- Focussing on unanalysed genres
- Combining research techniques

Designing a discourse analysis project is just like designing any research project



Based on: Phillips, N. and Hardy, C. (2002) Discourse Analysis: investigating processes of social construction, London: Sage, pp.59-80 and Partridge (2012), pp.204-213



Gee's building tasks (2005, pp.11-13)

1. **Significance:** how is this piece of language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways?
2. **Activities:** what activity or activities is this piece of language being used to enact (i.e. get others to recognise as going on)?
3. **Identities:** what identity or identities is this piece of language being used to enact (i.e. get others to recognise as operative)?
4. **Relationships:** what sort of relationship or relationships is this piece of language seeking to enact with others (present or not)?

Gee, J.P. (2005) *An introduction to discourse analysis theory and method*, London: Routledge



Gee's building tasks (2005, pp.11-13) continued

- 5. Politics (the distribution to social goods):** what perspective on social goods is this piece of language communicating (e.g. what is 'normal', 'right', 'the way things are', 'like me or not')?
- 6. Connections:** how does this piece of language connect or disconnect things; how does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another?
- 7. Sign systems and knowledge:** how does this piece of language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems (e.g. technical language vs. everyday language, words vs. images) or different ways of knowing and believing or claims to knowledge and belief?

moving forwards

Your own projects

- ▶ Make a list of potential research topics that you could address using discourse analysis.
- ▶ How will you turn your ideas into workable research projects?
- ▶ What challenges do you envisage?





dates for your diary

- ▶ Free events!

- ▶ 27 June @ University of Hertfordshire. Using corpus-based methods to enhance multidisciplinary (including higher education) research. Saskia Kersten and I (University of Hertfordshire) will present our work on the term 'partnership'. There will be other inputs from Tony McEnery (Lancaster University), Paul Thompson (Birmingham University) and Ramesh Krishnamurthy (Aston University)
- ▶ 12 October @ SRHE. Scott Fernie (Loughborough University), Nick Pilcher (Edinburgh Napier University) and I will share our research on the role of higher education research in higher education policy. This research includes genre analysis of policy texts.

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