

Revisiting Discourse in Linguistic Theory: Insights into Military Communication

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Abstract: By the end of the 20th century, global linguistics had increasingly shifted its focus toward analyzing speech structures and the communicative activities associated with them from the perspective of both the speaker and the interlocutor. In modern linguistic theory, the concept of discourse has emerged as a result of approaches aimed at studying speech patterns within interactive communication. A variety of theoretical perspectives have been proposed on discourse, and their analysis is essential for synthesizing differing viewpoints and identifying interrelations among them. Historically, the term text was often used interchangeably with discourse. However, over time, a distinction has been drawn: text generally refers to written communication, while discourse typically implies spoken interaction. This article explores the core essence of discourse and critically examines the major theoretical approaches to its study, with a particular emphasis on military discourse.

Keywords: Discourse, text, military discourse, approach, intentional structure, spoken discourse, written discourse.

Introduction: The term discourse originates from the Latin *discursus*, meaning “reasoning”, “movement” or “conversation”. In French, *discours* translates more directly as “speech”. This term has undergone extensive exploration in linguistics, philosophy, and epistemology. The first scholarly conceptualization of discourse is attributed to Émile Benveniste, a successor of Ferdinand de Saussure. Diverging from Saussure’s binary opposition of *langue* (language system) and *parole* (individual speech), Benveniste introduced the term discourse to reflect a more dynamic and functional aspect of language use.

This study aims to examine the theoretical underpinnings of discourse and to highlight its practical implications. A combination of linguistic analysis and philosophical-epistemological approaches was employed. The research involved a comparative review of major scholarly works on discourse theory, while also utilizing historical and cognitive methods to investigate how discourse has been interpreted across various schools of thought. Structuralist and post-structuralist paradigms provided the primary frameworks for analyzing terminological approaches.

Literature review

Discourse, from both scientific and linguistic perspectives, is broader and more complex than the concept of text. It encompasses not only the process of speaking but also the resultant textual product. Whereas a text is often seen as a static and complete artifact, discourse is perceived as an ongoing, evolving process of communicative interaction. In linguistic literature, the definition of discourse continues to evolve, reflecting its application in contexts ranging from textual segments to entire communicative events.

Although discourse remains a complex and sometimes ambiguously defined term, it has gained significant attention in contemporary linguistic research. The earliest mention of discourse analysis in linguistics appeared in Zellig Harris's 1950s works, where he emphasized the communicative processes constituting discourse, rather than viewing it as mere speech or text. Discourse is now widely accepted as not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a sociocultural process of meaning-making and interaction.

In recent years, discourse studies have become a

central focus in modern linguistics. While interpretations vary, the fundamental objective remains the clarification and refinement of core concepts such as speech, text, and dialogue. For example, A.Pardayev defines discourse as a dynamic process in which interlocutors utilize both linguistic and non-linguistic tools to achieve effective communication. He emphasizes the practical use of language forms and styles chosen by speakers for their communicative impact.

Scholars have approached discourse from various theoretical angles. Initially, it was associated with cohesive text, but over time, the term has been expanded to include dialogue, conversation, and other forms of speech interaction. In English- and French-speaking cultures, the notion of "speech" encapsulates aspects such as performance, cognition, and interaction, whereas in Russian and several other European languages, the term lacks a precise equivalent and may correspond to "speech", "text" or "thought" depending on the context.

Three dominant approaches to defining discourse have emerged in linguistics. Some consider it analogous to a genre, characterized by a fixed structure, specific linguistic tools, targeted audience, and a defined communicative purpose. Others view discourse as a morally and ethically governed form of speech. N.Abdurakhmonova regards the term as polysemous, identifying several common interpretations such as "coherent text", "oral form of textual communication", "dialogue", "monologue" and "spoken narrative."

Deborah Schiffrin proposed a tripartite framework for discourse analysis. The first, a formal linguistic approach, defines discourse as language above the sentence. The second, a functional approach, describes discourse as the study of any aspect of language use, focusing on the socio-cultural purposes of communication. The third, an interactional perspective, conceptualizes discourse as utterances - contextually embedded units of language functioning in real-life communication.

Overall, discourse is not limited to linguistic features alone but is inherently tied to extralinguistic factors, including pragmatic, socio-cultural, and psychological dimensions. It is interpreted as a purposeful social action and an inseparable part of speech activity, interpersonal communication, and cognitive processes.

Findings

The conducted study has demonstrated that discourse is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but is inherently linked to socio-cultural and psychological processes. The approach developed by Émile Benveniste underscores the dynamic nature of discourse,

distinguishing it from traditional static language systems. Throughout the research, it was established that discourse should be viewed as a linguistic structure operating above the level of individual sentences, encompassing broader communicative and cognitive functions.

As a linguistic category, the term discourse emerged in the mid-20th century and has since been used in various senses within pragmatically oriented linguistic research. It has been interpreted as: a synonym for speech; a linguistic unit larger than a phrase; a mode of communication shaped by speech situation and audience effect; a reflection of speaker positioning in conversation; a process involving the use of linguistic resources; an ideologically or socially constrained form of expression; and a theoretical framework for analyzing the conditions under which texts are produced. Consequently, the concept of discourse has evolved into a multidimensional object of inquiry across diverse branches of linguistics.

Discourse is thus a complex communicative-cognitive phenomenon, which must be studied as a dynamic process that unfolds in real-time interaction, shaped by linguistic and extralinguistic factors in a given socio-cultural context. It is not limited to verbal information alone but also entails non-verbal cues, shared knowledge, societal values, and cognitive operations. These components are crucial in the processes of understanding, interpreting, and accepting discourse.

A defining feature of discourse is its anthropocentric character—it is structured around human cognition, perception, and creativity. This feature enables discourse to construct and represent a subjective "artistic world," especially evident in literary communication. In such contexts, the discourse involves not only the author and the reader but also fictional characters, each actively participating in the communicative process.

V.Z.Demyankov, analyzing the intensional structure of discourse, posits that it possesses a logical organization, comprising interconnected propositional sequences governed by conjunctions, disjunctions, and other logical relations. According to him, discourse encompasses not only events and participants but also:

- a) post-event conditions—contexts emerging from the consequences of events;
- b) background information—contextual elements necessary for correct interpretation;
- c) evaluative components—subjective assessments by participants;
- d) comparative information—correlations between discourse data and actual events.

These elements collectively constitute the interpretive and functional structure of discourse.

The rise of discourse studies as an independent field occurred at the end of the 20th century, marking a shift in linguistic research toward the study of spoken interaction. Scholars have expressed skepticism about considering the paragraph as the maximal unit of speech due to its dependence on stylistic and graphical conventions. Sh. Safarov argued that only discourse, not the paragraph, can serve as the highest level of speech unit, thus justifying its classification as a phenomenon surpassing text in both linguistic and communicative complexity.

Discourse is commonly divided into two forms: spoken and written. Spoken discourse unfolds in real-time and is characterized by features such as repetition, hesitation, and ellipsis. The spontaneity and immediacy of speech interactions often result in incomplete or grammatically imperfect constructions. In contrast, written discourse is premeditated, structurally refined, and adheres to grammatical and stylistic norms. It is constructed outside of real-time constraints, ensuring greater coherence and logical consistency.

Therefore, spoken discourse is interactive and dynamic, whereas written discourse is reflective and static. Each form plays a distinctive yet interrelated role in the process of communication. Based on our analysis, we conclude that while spoken and written discourse exhibit contrasting features, they must be studied in tandem to understand the full scope of discourse phenomena in human interaction.

Discourse is not merely a collection of linguistic units; rather, it is a complex phenomenon deeply embedded in communicative processes and social context. A comprehensive understanding of discourse necessitates not only linguistic analysis but also the consideration of its social, cultural, pragmatic, psychological, and communicative dimensions.

Information and communication. Discourse conveys not only specific content but also entails the manner in which information is presented and perceived. The mode of delivery and the recipient's interpretation are central to the meaning-making process.

Participants in communication. The interaction between the speaker (addresser) and the listener or reader (addressee) is fundamental. The identity of the speaker, the intended audience, and the context of communication significantly influence the construction and interpretation of discourse.

Situational context. Every discourse emerges within a particular situational and environmental context. For instance, a political speech, a scientific article, or an

informal conversation each occur in distinct settings, shaping their structure and content accordingly.

Spatial and temporal dimensions. The time and place in which discourse occurs are integral to its structure. For example, interpreting an ancient text in a contemporary context, or analyzing discourse across cultures, requires attention to spatial and temporal factors.

Mode of communication and style of expression. Oral and written discourse differ in structure and stylistic features. While repetition and intonation are crucial in spoken discourse, written discourse prioritizes logical coherence and structural clarity.

Evaluation by communication participants. Discourse reflects not only objective information but also subjective perspectives and value judgments. For instance, media coverage of political events can present identical facts through differing ideological lenses.

According to Professor G.N. Manaenko, discourse can be defined as "a socially and historically conditioned form of verbal behavior, regulated by institutionalized norms of organization and interpretation within any sphere of human activity" (Manaenko, 2010, p.160). He identifies four core components of discourse: environment, social subject, content, and text.

Discourse arises from the human need for communication, driven by material and spiritual requirements that vary across time and space. This variability indicates the dynamic and evolving nature of discourse. As a multifaceted communicative phenomenon, discourse encompasses not only the textual component but also the extralinguistic factors essential for understanding that text.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the linguistic and philosophical foundations of discourse. It highlights that discourse should not be viewed solely through the lens of linguistics, but also as a significant category within the social sciences, philosophy, and psychology. The multidimensional nature of discourse calls for interdisciplinary approaches:

- Linguistic analysis explores the structure, grammar, and semantics of discourse;
- Cultural approach examines discourse formation in social and cultural contexts;
- Political analysis investigates the role of ideology and power;
- Psychological perspective assesses participant motivation and communicative influence.

Therefore, discourse should not be considered

as a mere aggregation of sentences but as a powerful medium through which social reality is constructed and negotiated. Based on the analysis presented, discourse exhibits the following essential characteristics:

- **Abstract nature:** an open-ended phenomenon with no rigid boundaries;
- **Complex structure:** involving multilayered relationships across disciplines;
- **Social embeddedness:** shaped by cultural, political, and historical contexts;
- **Communicative product:** emerging as speech or text with specific intent;
- **Spatio-temporal specificity:** dependent on the conditions of time and space;
- **Intentional speech act:** requiring a purposive communicative effort to qualify as discourse.

The results of the study provide a deeper understanding of the linguistic and philosophical foundations of the concept of discourse. Discourse is not limited to linguistics but is also a significant category within social sciences, philosophy, and psychology. As a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, discourse is essential for the formation of social reality through communicative interaction. In our research, we have identified that discourse must be examined through various academic lenses to fully comprehend its significance.

From a linguistic perspective, discourse is analyzed in terms of its structure, grammar, and semantic features. A cultural approach delves into how discourse is shaped within social and cultural contexts. Political analysis explores the role of ideology and power dynamics in discourse. Psychological analysis investigates the motivations and influences on the participants of discourse. Consequently, discourse should not be regarded merely as a series of connected sentences, but as a vital tool in shaping social perceptions and realities.

Furthermore, the study highlights that discourse is a dynamic phenomenon, continuously evolving with the changing social, political, and cultural landscape. It is not just a static linguistic structure but an ongoing process influenced by time, space, and context. The study of discourse, therefore, requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing not only linguistic analysis but also an understanding of the extralinguistic factors that shape communication.

In conclusion, discourse is a powerful communicative phenomenon that shapes and reflects the social, cultural, and cognitive realities of its participants. Future research should focus on exploring the semiotic

and cognitive dimensions of discourse, as well as its practical applications in various fields. Expanding the scope of discourse analysis will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of its role in communication and its impact on social processes.

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