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Discourse Analysis

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Discourse Analysis

Author: H.G. Widdowson (2007)

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This book is part of the Oxford series of introductions to language studies, edited by H.G. Widdowson. It is an introduction to discourse analysis. Here, discourse mainly refers to how language is used in context, leaving out socio-cultural constraints. As the author pinpoints in the preface, the main purpose of the book is to provide a clear and concise introduction to the field.

accessible tool for an audience, academic or otherwise, approaching this subdiscipline of. like the whole series itself, aims at “preparing the conceptual ground” (p. xi), in order to su

Discourse Analysis is organised into four intertwined sections:

- Survey: the core of the book, provides an overview of the analysed discourse topics ;
- Readings: various excerpts from the specialist literature which function as useful cor
- References: a selection of suggested readings accompanied by a series of comments and also point out the difficulty level of the suggested texts
- Glossary: the meanings of the technical terms highlighted in bold in the survey part; terms appear is signalled

The survey section aims at introducing the key concepts of discourse analysis. The language that it achieves clarity but not at the expense of elucidating complex concepts. So while ch; fundamental notions. This section is subdivided into eight chapters.

- Chapter 1, “Language in use”, distinguishes between the fundamental notions of text communicative unit, whereas discourse as the meaning the text producer intends to
- Chapter 2 delves into communicative competence, describing its four characterising the feasible, the appropriate, and the performed.
- Chapter 3 is devoted to showing the tight connection between communication and c a specific situational context that is supposed to be shared in some way by participar
- Chapter 4, however, points out that language is not produced by relying only on situ continuity of our individual and social lives” (p. 27). It is related to the mental context the schematic conventions described in this chapter are frames of reference, interpe
- Chapter 5 investigates how these schemata are actually put to work in the production which cohesion and coherence are the chief principles.
- Chapter 6 is devoted to analyzing the mechanisms at play in the communication pro process, participants have to negotiate meaning and cooperate. Not surprisingly the maxims—quality, quantity, manner and relation—are the main concern in this chap more of the latter produces effects revealing that language is being used for the man

- Chapter 7 examines in detail this rhetorical aspect of language, focusing on the various ways the language producer in order to persuade the addressee. In examining these manoeuvres the author uses the tools of discourse analysis: “revealing to the unwary language user the ideological influences on language use, ranging from lexical to grammatical choices, which must also rely on co-textual relations”.
- Chapter 8, “Text analysis”, highlights the role played by corpus linguistics in enabling the analysis of language in real language, for instance collocation patterns.

In a small book serving as an introduction to a field, generalizations are to be expected; however, the author is careful to do so in a way that makes sense. For instance, in Chapter 5 “Co-textual relations” the author deals with pro-forms and uses the exact terms of the linguistic phenomena he is actually referring to, i.e., substitution, ellipsis, etc., even when he gives examples. For instance, he states that “verb phrases can be copied into noun phrases in the following cases:

A: We went to Romania for our holidays last summer.

B: We did too.

A: We thought it was a wonderful place.

B: Well, we didn't.

In this sense, the author uses the general term “pro-form” for both cases, but these are in fact different phenomena.

The most interesting and original part of this book are the readings, substantive excerpts from specialist literature tackled in the book. Each excerpt is taken from the specialist literature so, as we might expect, some are highly technical. For example, there are excerpts from Labov's *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (1972), Wilson's *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (1995)—among others. Widdowson provides crucial points covered in each excerpt. These selections from more advanced texts serve a useful purpose. Reading samples from such resources challenge readers/students to improve their understanding. Comprehension questions after each text stimulate further thinking and entice the reader to read more of this book. Moreover, such samplings from the literature give the reader the chance to familiarize themselves with the work performed in linguistics.

Discourse Analysis might serve as a preliminary exposure to discourse analysis. The use of innovative readings section make this volume thought-provoking and challenging for any student of linguistics.

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