QUALITATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS *IN* THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

EDITED BY RUTH WODAK & MICHAŁ KRZYŻANOWSKI

QUALITATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Also by Ruth Wodak

Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis (with S. Titscher, M. Meyer and E. Vetter)
Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (with M. Meyer)
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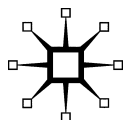*The Politics of Exclusion: Debating Migration in Austria* (with R. Wodak)
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Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences

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Ruth Wodak and Michał Krzyżanowski

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Introduction: Discourse Studies – Important Concepts and Terms

Ruth Wodak

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Introduction

> Discourse Studies is the discipline devoted to the investigation of the relationship between form and function in verbal communication. (Renkema 2004:1)

The notions of *text* and *discourse* have been subject to a hugely proliferating number of usages in the social sciences. Almost no paper or article is to be found which does not revisit these notions while quoting Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau or many others.[1] Thus, *discourse* means anything from a historical monument, a *lieu de mémoire*, a policy, a political strategy, narratives in a restricted or broad sense of the term, text, talk, a speech, topic-related conversations, to language *per se*. We find notions such as racist discourse, gendered discourse, discourses on un/employment, media discourse, populist discourse, discourses of the past, and many more – thus stretching the meaning of *discourse* from a genre to a register or style, from a building to a political programme. This causes and must cause confusion – which leads to much criticism and many misunderstandings.[2]

However, we rarely find *systematic definitions and operationalizations* of these concepts. Even less frequently – although sometimes brief text materials (interview sequences or small quotes of press articles) are given – are the respective terms applied in an explicit and consistent way. Usually, in the social sciences, text sequences are used as illustrations, sentences are taken out of context, and specific text sequences are used to validate or reject claims without relating them to the entire textual material and without providing any explicit justification or external evidence for their selection.

Comment

Until recently, for example, 'open questions' in questionnaires and hour-long debates in focus groups have often been subjected to quantitative methods of 'content-' or 'frame-analysis', thus neglecting the contextualized detailed argumentative patterns in such debates as well as the evolving group dynamics in discussions.[3]

Because of both the *linguistic* and *cultural turns* in sociology, political science, anthropology and history, texts and discourses have become more than a means for quantitative analysis, for example content analysis of media or other printed materials, or some kind of illustrative and mostly paraphrased analysis of narrative interviews.

Comment

New communication technology (for example, email lists, internet debate forums, web-sites, and so forth) which has evolved in recent years involves interesting hybrid texts, a mix of visuals and written data. Thus new methodologies had to be created. These new texts and genres (see below) have usually been subjected to mostly quantitative analysis, not taking into account the impact of the visual which necessarily interacts with textual meanings. Thus, we have to add one more *turn*, the *visual turn*, to our scholarly debates, and incorporate toolkits for the analysis of the visual (*multimodality*; *hypermodality*).

Many scholars have recently become aware of the intricacies of textual materials and are searching for more adequate methodologies. They are turning to discourse analysts for information and expertise. This is why we decided to write this book: to provide researchers with the most important concepts, discovery procedures, strategies, methods and tools to analyze a range of *genres of texts and talk* which researchers and students come across when studying complex social phenomena: *political speeches, focus groups, media, the internet, interviews, policy documents* and so forth.

Discourse analysis provides a general framework to *problem-oriented social research*. It allows the integration of different dimensions of *interdisciplinarity* and multiple perspectives on the object investigated. Every interview, focus group debate, TV debate or visual symbol is conceived as a *semiotic entity*, embedded in an *immediate, text-internal co-text and an intertextual and socio-political* context. Analysis thus has to take into account the *intertextual and interdiscursive relationships* (see below) between utterances, texts, genres and discourses, as well as the extralinguistic social/sociological variables, the *history and archaeology of an organization*, and institutional frames of a specific *context of situation*.

Intertextuality refers to the fact that all texts are linked to other texts, both in the past and in the present. Such links can be established in different ways: through continued reference to a topic or main actors; through reference to the same events; or by the transfer of main arguments from one text into the next. The latter process is also labelled *recontextualization*. By taking an argument and restating it in a new context, we first observe the process of decontextualization, and then, when the respective element is implemented in a new context, of recontextualization. The element then acquires a new meaning because meanings are formed in use (see Wittgenstein 1967). *Interdiscursivity*, on the other hand, indicates that discourses are linked to each other in various ways. If we define discourse as primarily topic-related, that is a discourse on X, then a discourse on un/employment often refers for example to topics or subtopics of other discourses, such as gender or racism: arguments on systematically lower salaries for women or migrants might be included in discourses on employment (see below for definitions of text and discourse).

Van Dijk (2007) summarizes the history of *Discourse Studies* (DS) in a very precise way, and emphasizes that 'the "core" of the new discipline remains *the systematic and explicit analysis of the various structures and strategies of different levels of text and talk'*. Thus, DS must draw on anthropology, history, rhetoric, stylistics, conversation analysis, literary studies, cultural studies, pragmatics, philosophy, sociolinguistics and so forth. The history of the field is summarized in detail in Renkema (2004) and Van Dijk (forthcoming).

In the chapters of this volume, each dedicated to different *genres* and *methods* for the analysis of these genres, we illustrate through our examples how the field of DS is now organized in various subdisciplines that have become more or less independent. The methods for the analysis of *text* and *talk*, that is *text in context,* also cover a whole range of grammatical and multimodal approaches which will be discussed extensively throughout this book (see also Titscher *et al.* 2000).

Taking van Dijk's historical summary of the field of DS further (van Dijk, 2007), we can identify the following developments: Between the mid 1960s and the early 1970s, new, closely related disciplines emerged in the humanities and the social sciences. Despite their different disciplinary backgrounds and a vast diversity of methods and objects of investigation, some parts of the new fields/paradigms/linguistic subdisciplines of *semiotics, pragmatics, psycho- and sociolinguistics, ethnography of speaking, conversation analysis and discourse studies* deal with discourse and have at least seven dimensions in common (see ibid.: xxii–xxiii):

- An interest in the properties of *'naturally occurring' language use* by real language users (instead of a study of abstract language systems and invented examples).
- A focus on *larger units than isolated words and sentences*, and hence new basic units of analysis: texts, discourses, conversations, speech acts or communicative events.

- ■ The extension of linguistics *beyond sentence grammar* towards a study of action and interaction.
- ■ The extension to *nonverbal (semiotic, multimodal, visual) aspects* of inter-action and communication: gestures, images, film, the internet and multi-media.
- ■ A focus on dynamic (socio)-cognitive or interactional moves and strategies.
- ■ The study of the functions of (social, cultural, situative and cognitive) *contexts of language use*.
- ■ Analysis of a vast number of *phenomena of text grammar and language use*: coherence, anaphora, topics, macrostructures, speech acts, interac-tions, turn-taking, signs, politeness, argumentation, rhetoric, mental mod-els and many other aspects of text and discourse.

Comment

Throughout this volume, many of the dimensions mentioned above will be discussed in detail. For example, when analyzing interviews, we view the interview as a dialogue between interviewer and interviewee (the genre), and analyze many features of spo-ken discourse, such as politeness charateristics, turn-taking, actors and agencies, top-ics, coherence, strategic moves, and so forth. Thus, in each of the following chapters, the specific genre-related features will be defined and adequate methods of analysis illustrated – step by step, with examples which should allow readers to understand the analysis as well as to learn *how to do it*.

Discourse and text

Discourse

> Discourse is what makes us human. (Graesser *et al.* 1997:165)

First it is important to explain some of the many different meanings of *discourse*, several of which are discussed extensively later on, throughout this vol-ume. The term *discourse analysis* stems etymologically from the Greek verb *analuein* 'to deconstruct' and the Latin verb *discurrere* 'to run back and forth'.

The term *discourse analysis* has in recent decades penetrated many disci-plines, such as sociology, philosophy, history, literary studies, cultural studies, anthropology, psychology and linguistics. In all these disciplines the term car-ries distinct meanings, including a social science methodology, the label for a whole field, a subdiscipline of linguistics, a critical paradigm and so forth. Reisigl (2004) lists twenty-three meanings of *discourse* used by Michel Foucault throughout his famous lecture in the Collège de France on *orders of discourse*. In his seminal lecture, Foucault formulates a number of crucial axioms about the nature and contexts of discursive events (*énoncés*):

> I make the assumption that the production of discourse is at once controlled, select-ed, organized and canalized in every society – and that this is done by way of certain procedures whose task it is to subdue the powers and dangers of discourse, to evade its heavy and threatening materiality. (Foucault 1984:10–11)

Although Foucault refers to many definitions of *discourse* in the course of his famous lecture, it is equally important to note what discourse is not supposed to mean in Foucault's work – specifically, that it is neither defined thematical-ly nor by a strict system of concepts, and that it is not an object but rather a set of relationships existing between discursive events. These stipulations open the door to a dedicated functional approach, enabling the cultural critic to identify both static and dynamic relationships between discursive events and to address the causes and consequences of historical change.[4]

However, and in contrast with Foucault's more abstract notion, in the tra-dition of Wittgenstein's *language games* (1967) and Austin's *speech acts* (1962), *discourse* is mainly understood as *linguistic action*, be it written, visu-al or oral communication, verbal or nonverbal, undertaken by social actors in a specific setting determined by social rules, norms and conventions.

Comment

For example, if I say 'I promise to bring the book tomorrow', I make the speech-act of 'promising', which underlies very explicit, socially defined, rules, norms and sanctions in Western societies (thus, people get angry if I do not keep my promise), and I spec-ify what I promise: to bring the book tomorrow.

As early as 1990, while distinguishing discourse analysis from *text linguistics*, van Dijk (1990:164) defined *discourse* as *text in context*; the latter concept probably being one of the most complex, vague and challenging notions for research in DS.[5] Utz Maas (1989) demonstrates, moreover, that the meaning of *discourse* has shifted from 'scholarly deliberation' to 'dialogue' in recent years (see also Wodak 1996: 20ff.), in particular when drawing on the Habermasian theory on discourse and communication (Habermas 1981).

Furthermore, language-specific meanings exist as well as distinct uses with-in the Anglo-American academic community on the one hand, and European scholarship on the other. For example, in British research, the term *discourse* is frequently used synonymously with *text*, meaning authentic, everyday lin-guistic communication. The French *discours*, however, is more focused on the connection between language and thought, for instance meaning 'creation and societal maintenance of complex knowledge systems' (Ehlich 2000:162). In German, in functional pragmatics *Diskurs* denotes 'structured sets of speech

acts' (ibid.). In the analysis of discourse, the meaning of *discourse* is therefore closely linked to the particular research context and theoretical approach.

It is not within the scope of this introduction to elaborate further on the many, frequently undefined uses of *discourse*. Nor is it – unfortunately – feasible to discuss the relevant philosophical debates between for example Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas here (but see Wodak 1996; Torfing 1999). It is important, however, to acknowledge that discourse analysts and scholars employing various methods of discourse analysis should be required to present their theoretical background and consider other approaches beyond the necessarily limited scope of their school, discipline or academic culture.

Comment

This broader perspective implies, especially for linguists who by nature should be competent in more than one language, including literature from different research paradigms in different cultures, in languages other than English. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case in the Anglo-American world, where references are more often than not restricted to research published in English by authors of British, American, Canadian or Australian origin, interspersed with a few translations from prominent, often 'trendy' scholars.

Following the most important traditions in text linguistics and Discourse Studies,[6] we distinguish between *discourse* and *text* in this volume and take Jay Lemke's definition (1995: 7ff.) as a starting-point:

> When I speak about discourse in general, I will usually mean the social activity of making meanings with language and other symbolic systems in some particular kind of situation or setting . . . On each occasion when the particular meaning characteristic of these discourses is being made, a specific text is produced. Discourses, as social actions more or less governed by social habits, produce texts that will in some ways be alike in their meanings . . . When we want to focus on the specifics of an event or occasion, we speak of the text; when we want to look at patterns, commonality, relationships that embrace different texts and occasions, we can speak of discourses.

In other words, *discourse* is defined on a different, more abstract, level as *text*. *Discourse* implies patterns and commonalities of knowledge and structures whereas a *text* is a specific and unique realization of a discourse. Texts belong to genres. Thus a discourse on New Labour could be realized in a potentially huge range of genres and texts, for example in a TV debate on the politics of New Labour, in a New Labour manifesto, in a speech by one of New Labour's representatives and so forth.

Text

Texts are often considered to be longer pieces of writing. The word text itself evokes the idea of a book, a letter or a newspaper. The decisive contribution of linguistics in this respect has been to introduce a concept of text that includes every type of communicative utterance and which relates to the more abstract notion of discourse presented above in complex ways. Clear criteria ultimately decide whether or not something can be viewed as text or discourse (Fairclough 1992:3ff.). These criteria are purely linguistic in nature and relate to the syntactic and semantic relations within a text. A text may be an inscription on a tombstone, a part of a conversation, a book or a newspaper article. On the one hand, this indicates a very broad concept of communication that regards language and speech as forms of action and derives from Wittgenstein's *language games* (see above); on the other, it suggests a notion of *sign*, as used in modern semiotics. The concept of *semiosis* (meaning-making) relates to any sign (including for instance a traffic sign) that according to social conventions is meaningful (Halliday 1978). Hence, the answer to of what a text is must always be theory-dependent.

Sanders and Sanders (2006:598) define *text* in the following way:

> We consider a text to be a monological stretch of written language that shows coherence. The term 'text' derives from the Latin verb texere 'to weave' (hence the resemblance between the words 'text' and 'textile'). But what makes a text a text? This question has been at the centre of attention of the fields of discourse studies and text linguistics, especially since the 1970s.

And they continue (ibid.:599):

> At present, the dominant stance is that 'coherence' explains best the connectedness shown by texts. Coherence is considered a mental phenomenon; it is not an inherent property of a text under consideration. Language users establish coherence by relating different information units in the text.

Hence, Sanders and Sanders (2006) also recur to the seminal, first *Introduction to Text Linguistics* 1981, by Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler. In what follows I first list the seven criteria proposed by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) for the definition of texts (see also Titscher *et al.* 2000: 14ff. for an extensive discussion). This taxonomy is widely adopted and accepted, and for this reason I present it as a first working definition. Below, I examine each of the criteria in turn:

Cohesion concerns the components of the textual surface that signal the

text-syntactic connectedness. The linear sequence of linguistic elements in a text is in no way accidental, but obeys grammatical rules and dependencies. All the functions applied to create relationships between surface elements are categorized as *cohesion*. Cohesion is achieved *inter alia* by:

- *Recurrence*: repetition of lexical elements, sentence components and other linguistic elements
- *Anaphora* and *cataphora*: anaphora directs attention to what has previously been said or read (for example, through the use of pro-forms, such as *s/he* referring to a person previously introduced), while cataphora points to what is to come (for example through the use of deictic elements, such as *then*, *there*, when the site of interaction or the time of the interaction will be specified later on).
- *Ellipsis:* normally unintelligible without the communicative situation and the shared world knowledge (presuppositions) of participants in a conversation.
- *Conjunctions:* these signal relations or connections between events and situations. There are conjunctions (linking sentence structures of the same status), disjunctions (linking sentence structures with differing status), contra-junctions (linking sentence structures of the same status that seem to be irreconcilable, such as cause and unexpected effect) and subordinations (used where one sentence structure is dependent on another).

Coherence (or textual semantics) constitutes the meaning of a text (see above). This often refers to elements that do not necessarily require a linguistic realization. For example, cognitive linguistics assumes cognitive structures in recipients that are actualized through a text and help to determine interpretations (Chilton 2005; van Dijk 2005). Similarly, under certain circumstances, elements of knowledge that are not expressed in a text may also be implied and may likewise influence reception (like Grice's concept of *implicature* or many devices in pragmatics – see Sperber and Wilson 1995; Brown and Yule 1973). De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) suggest that *concepts* (meanings) are bound through logical, cognitive or semantic *relationships* and then realized in the textual surface.

Comment

For example, causality is a relationship: this affects the manner in which an event of situation may influence other events or situations in a direct way. In 'Jack fell down and broke his crown' – *fall* is the cause of the event *break*.

A text creates no sense in itself but only in connection with knowledge of the world and of the text (Van Dijk 2003, 2005). This implies that in the process

of language acquisition certain ways of structuring both reality and texts also have to be acquired.

Intertextuality has to be mentioned again at this point: every text relates both synchronically and diachronically to other texts, and this is the only way it achieves meaning.

Intentionality relates to the attitude and purpose of text-producers. What do they want and intend with the text? Accordingly, talking in one's sleep would not count as a text, whereas a telephone directory would.

Acceptability is the mirror of *intentionality*. A text must be recognized as such by recipients in a particular situation (*dialogicality* of texts, implying that every text necessarily addresses an audience, is thus by nature dialogic; for example Bakhtin 1982). This criterion is related to conventionality. Acceptability therefore concerns the degree to which hearers and readers are prepared to expect and understand a text that is useful or relevant. Acceptability is therefore context-dependent (see below).

Informativity refers to the quantity of new or expected information in a text. This also addresses the quality of what is offered: how is the new material structured, and using what cohesive means?

Situationality means that the talk-constellation and speech situation play an important role in text production. Only particular varieties or types of text, speech styles or forms of address are both situational and culturally appropriate.

An additional important feature of all definitions of text is expressed in the seven text criteria: the first two criteria (cohesion and coherence) might be viewed as text-*internal*, whereas the remaining criteria are text-*external*. In this way a first distinction may be made between traditional *text linguistics* and *discourse analysis*. In those approaches which are purely *text linguistic* in orientation, the investigation and modelling of cohesion and coherence are predominant (text-grammar); all the text-external factors, in the sense of intervening variables, are in the background. In DS, however, it is precisely these external factors that play an essential role, and texts (that is cohesion and coherence phenomena) are viewed as a manifestation and result of particular combinations of factors. Recent approaches emphasize the functional aspect (Renkema 2004).

Comment: Text criteria

Unlike de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), I believe that these criteria concern different textual dimensions and should therefore not be considered equally important. Cohesion and coherence should be characterized as constitutive of texts: every text must satisfy these two criteria, independently of co-text and context (see below).

However, *intentionality*, *informativity*, *acceptability* and *situationality* are context-dependent. *Intertextuality,* for example, is directly related to the assumption that every text is embedded in a context and is synchronically and diachronically related to many other texts (see the section 'Context' below).

> A linguistic text analysis is therefore defined by its focus on cohesion and coherence, unlike other (sociological) methods of text analysis that select only a few instances of one of these two dimensions. Classical content analysis for example restricts itself to the level of the lexicon (that is to one dimension of semantics). The focus is therefore on the semantic level. Syntax is used merely to support the selection of units of analysis. A linguistic text analysis, however, incorporates syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels. Most of the sociological methods, on the other hand, stay with only one of these semiotic categories.

Context

The concept of *context* has been associated with text linguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics and DA for a considerable time (see de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981; Cicourel 1992; Duranti and Goodwin 1992; Wodak 1996; 2000a). By contrast, Noam Chomsky restricted his examples in the field of generative grammar to context-free individual sentences; *context* was seen as a quasi-wastebasket consisting of unsystematic, unpredictable factors (Chomsky 1965).

In the early days of sociolinguistics, however, context was initially defined in terms of sociological variables such as age, sex, class and so on, and linguistic units were statistically correlated with these variables.

Pragmatics, on the other hand, did investigate speakers, hearers and the communicative setting, but in such microlinguistic examinations other contextual factors were often ignored. This is despite the concepts of presupposition (that is assumed knowledge) and implicature (implied assumptions) requiring significant theoretical assumptions about context (see Titscher *et al.* 2000).

Conversation analysis (CA), particularly in the debates between Schegloff/Wetherell and Billig (*Discourse and Society* 1998), takes account of only those nonverbal contexts which can be explicitly deduced from the sequence under investigation (see Schegloff 1998). Everything else is discounted as speculative and purely interpretative.

Recent theoretical approaches, for example that of Teun van Dijk (2001, 2005), see context in cognitive terms, and assume 'context models' which lead to the recognition and knowledge of contextual information. As such, in the course of our socialization we acquire the necessary knowledge to interpret, understand and remember language behaviour, at least in our own culture(s). Van Dijk further claims that it is possible to describe these 'context models' only in terms of a theory of 'knowledge'. He has not yet detailed how such a theory is constructed. This kind of knowledge and these kinds of contextual models can be based only on implicit or explicit theories which draw on related disciplines, by means of integrative interdisciplinarity (see Weiss and Wodak 2003). In a given case (or text sequence), we have to draw on this theoretical background to construct our interpretation and analysis coherently and transparently. If we encounter an unfamiliar situation, we have first to

find out more about it and establish the rules and norms – otherwise we might misunderstand a great deal. We also have to be able to evaluate contexts, or else we might miss incorrect or inappropriate linguistic behaviour. For example, a defendant in a trial may, according to the norms of our courts, answer a judge, but may not ask questions.

The concept of 'context' is thus an inherent part of DA and contributes significantly to how systematically it can be applied as part of interdisciplinary approaches (see Wodak and Weiss 2004). In the course of investigating complex social problems it is necessary to draw on multiple theoretical approaches to analyze given contexts and relate these to texts. To make this possible in a meaningful way, decisions must be made about the theoretical foundations and interdisciplinarity of discourse analysis. In other words, whether 'context' is included in linguistic analysis and the definition of 'context' are dependent on prior theoretical decisions. It is not possible to go into further detail about these decisions here, but see Wodak and Weiss (2004). In any case, context is a central concept in our discourse analysis approach.

Let me illustrate these claims with some brief instances, beginning with Example 1.1; I claim that many instances of everyday conversation need a lot of background information to be understood. When we return home from a holiday, we often do not understand TV or radio news items. The intertextuality is missing and we can not update our information.

EXAMPLE 1.1

In the election campaign by the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) – a right-wing populist party close to Le Pen's party in France – in September 1999, a poster was displayed in Vienna bearing the slogan 'Two real Austrians'. It also showed Jörg Haider, the then leader of the FPÖ, and the then vice-president of the Freedom Party, Thomas Prinzhorn, who was the principal candidate in the election and became the vice-president of the Austrian parliament until 2006. How should such a slogan be understood? Discourse analysts need theories and methodologies to be able to analyze such texts. In this case, many factors are relevant, such as the election campaign and the ongoing discussion about who might be defined as a 'real' Austrian or as a foreigner, which touches on a presupposed and ideologically constructed Germanic–Aryan chauvinistic tradition of German-speaking Austrians; moreover, this poster alludes to an incident that happened many years ago (1970) in which a similar slogan was used by the Austrian People's Party against the then chancellor of the Social-Democratic Party, Bruno Kreisky, who was defined as a 'not-real' Austrian, because he was of Austrian-Jewish origin.

A more pragmatic approach, like that of Nicos Mouzelis, seems suitable for the analysis of such multilingual meanings. In his recent book *Sociological Theory: What Went Wrong?* (1995), Mouzelis introduces the idea of 'conceptual pragmatism' as a possible way out of the theory crisis in the social