

Vol 4 December 2008: Diversity of Discourse Analysis

Editorial

Some academics have taken a critical view of the wide variation of discursive investigation.

Georgakopoulou and Gutsos called for 'more constructive dialogue' between practitioners of various approaches to avoid the danger that discourse analysis 'will come to loosely mean any work from diverse analytic perspectives with no common meta-language, method or technical apparatus' (1997, p. 187), while van Dijk expressed the need for 'explicit or systematic analysis' based on 'serious methods and theories' (1990, p. 14).

Lee (2005) however, says that the development of a meta-language has already begun. We believe that a process of transformation will take time to occur as emerging researchers experience and experiment with a concept that needs to be better understood and applied.

Bearing this in mind, this issue of Working Papers brings together a small selection of papers presented at the conference which illustrate the diverse approaches to discourse analysis, but at the same time provide an opportunity to see where commonality might exist.

Thilagavathi Shanmuganathan from the Department of English Language, University of Malaya explores combining conversation analysis with ethnography to understand the intricacies of real estate negotiation, while Lusvita Nuzuliyanti and Lina Puryanti from the English Department, Airlangga University, Surabaya Indonesia discuss the results from seven months observing the virtual dialogue between members of an online-fan forum for Korean celebrities.

Lidia Tanaka from the Asian Studies Department, La Trobe University in Victoria, Australia examined shifts in casual and formal-speech styles in the language of callers to Japanese radio talk-back programmes to determine why this occurs.

Imran Ho-Abdullah and Ruzy Suliza Hashim from the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, at the Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia use a cognitive linguistics approach to tackle the visual and written discourses of Malaysian editorial cartoons in their treatment of gender and sexuality of women.

Finally social scientist Bev Majda from the Division of Education, School of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of South Australia applies critical discourse analysis to examine the restructuring of Australia's health financing policy.

It is useful when considering such diversity in research to reflect on the commentary of Norman Fairclough, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at Lancaster University and one of the founders of critical discourse analysis, who acknowledges that discourse can be confusingly used in various disciplines (1995).

To deal with this he suggests the importance of understanding discourse as having two main senses. 'One is predominant in language studies: discourse as social action and interaction, people interacting together in real social situations. The other is predominant in post-structuralist social theory [Foucault] a discourse as a social construction of reality, a form of knowledge' (Fairclough, 1995, p. 18)

The objective of the Working Papers in Culture, Discourse and Communication has always been to give academics the opportunity to have their works in progress peer reviewed and commented on before publication.

At the same time it is hoped that this issue, along with consideration of Fairclough's comment above, will serve to inspire and encourage researchers to note the diversity of discourse analysis but at the same time endeavour to see where common ground might be achieved.

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