

Novel Challenges for Discourse Analysis: Cross-Linguistic and Cross-Cultural Perspectives

In the mid-20th century, linguistics saw a great paradigm shift from the formalist and structuralist frameworks inspired by de Saussure's seminal work to novel, multi-faceted and interdisciplinary approaches (Aronoff and Rees-Miller 2003). If the former primarily studied linguistic units on the well-known phoneme-to-sentence continuum in isolation – in other words, *the grammar* in its narrowest and traditional sense – the latter moved beyond these *per partes* investigations and tried to focus not only on *the grammar*, but also on the language in use, its functions, the participants involved, and the social context (van Dijk 2008). This meant that the new approaches had to take into consideration the at that time ground-breaking findings of the new and emerging disciplines in humanities such as, but not exclusively, psychology, sociology, ethnography, anthropology, and computer sciences.

One of these multi-faceted and interdisciplinary approaches is discourse analysis, which has since its beginnings become a very versatile and prolific field of linguistic research. As Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton (2001, 1) point out, there are many different definitions of discourse analysis ranging from the more traditionalist anything-above-the-sentence views to perspectives that pay special attention to language in use and different social practices. The multi-dimensionality of discourse analysis is perhaps best captured in Fairclough's (1989, 22ff) view that language should be analyzed as a special form of social practice, because it is an inalienable part of society, and it is a social process, conditioned by other (non-linguistic) societal features. In other words, language users never use language *in vacuo* but their language production is conditioned by their (current) social position/situation, by the desired social effect, by social conventions and other discourses. For this reason, discourse analysts can and should investigate only the naturally produced language data (i.e., attested data), at the same time rejecting any use of invented data (i.e., non-attested data) for their research.

To encompass all of these dimensions, Fairclough (1989) develops a hierarchically structured three-level framework of analysis, whose aim is first to focus on the formal properties of the text¹ (i.e., the level of description), second, to investigate the processes of text production and text interpretation (i.e., the level of interpretation), and, lastly, to explore the social context (i.e., the level of explanation).

At the stage of description, the analyst explores the formal properties of the text, such as the selection of various vocabulary items, the use of metaphors, the preference for certain syntactic patterns, etc. At this stage, the analyst wants to explore why the language user in a

¹ The author adopts the Hallidayan definition of a text as any meaningful instance of language (Halliday and Hasan 1976).

given social position/context makes certain lexical and syntactic choices. For example, in a student-teacher situation, the lexico-syntactic selection may be (completely) different than in a husband-wife situation.

The key elements at the level of interpretation are the discourse participants: the producer and the recipient of the text. Hence, at this level, the text fulfils two functions – it is both the final product of the process of production (i.e., the producer's perspective) and the resource in the process of interpretation (i.e., the recipient's perspective). The process of interpretation involves six distinct domains, as set out in Fairclough (1989, 140ff): (i) surface of utterance (knowledge of the language – phonology, grammar, vocabulary), (ii) meaning of utterance (semantic and pragmatic aspects of the utterance), (iii) local coherence (meaning connections between connected utterances), (iv) text structure and 'point' (text global coherence, social conventions, different types of discourse), (v) situational context (external cues such as the physical situation, properties of the participants, etc.), and (vi) intertextual context (connection to previous discourses).

At the last level, explanation, the analyst endeavours to present discourse as part of a social process, to determine to what extent the discourse is governed by existing social structures, and at the same time to what extent discourse shapes/changes the existing structures (Fairclough 1989, 163).

Fairclough's (1989) model of reference is very reminiscent of the text linguistics framework as set out by Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), who established the now well-known and referred to seven standards of textuality: (i) cohesion, (ii) coherence, (iii) intentionality, (iv) acceptability, (v) informativity, (vi) situationality, and (vii) intertextuality. In fact, all of these standards are included in the Faircloughian model, either at the stage of description and interpretation. What makes his model different, however, is the special focus on the role discourse plays in society, in particular, the use of language to exert (political) power, to manipulate, and to establish social inequalities (the level of explanation). For this reason, Fairclough's model is referred to as critical discourse analysis.

If original research in text linguistics and discourse analysis primarily focused on text produced by native speakers for native speakers, the turn of the 20th century brought a new challenge for text/discourse analysts: the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca. The designation English as a lingua franca (ELF) refers to interactions between speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds, for none of whom English is the native language. One of its special features is also that the majority of its speakers have adopted it through learning English as a foreign language, i.e., via formal instruction rather than personal contact (Mauranen 2006, 126).

It was not until the beginning of the new millennium that ELF received attention as an object of systematic linguistic studies. The challenge of "accepting a language that is not anybody's native tongue as a legitimate object of investigation and descriptive research" (Seidlhofer 2009, 237) was underpinned by the long-standing paradox of having a language with the largest number of speakers, yet failing to categorize it as a world language. This "conceptual gap" (Seidlhofer 2001) called for a decisive reconceptualization of the nature and function of ELF, as well as language varieties and speech communities in general.

Over the first quarter of the 21st century, ELF has been promoted as the “chosen foreign language of communication for groups of speakers having different first language backgrounds” (Pakir 2009, 229), i.e., a legitimate alternative to English as a native language. Adopting the new perspective has gone hand in hand with a major change in orientation in linguistic research. Several studies have been published on the phonological, pragmatic and lexicogrammatical aspects of ELF. ELF corpora have been compiled in order to facilitate analyses depending on large amounts of data (the first version of VOICE, the first general corpus of ELF, was released in 2009). The focus of ELF description has shifted from the linguistic features as potential means of codification to the functions these indicate in communicative interactions. Departures from native-speaker norms have become to be interpreted as examples of variance rather than errors or signs of incompetence, and bilingual elements like code-switching as means of promoting one’s own cultural identity (cf. Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey 2011; McKay 2018; Seidlhofer 2009). The recognition of ELF speakers as language users in their own right, freed from the pressure of the normative tendency of English as a foreign language, has also had implications for English language teaching and learning. In particular, it has enabled a redefinition of non-native teachers of English from “perennial, error-prone learners of English as a native language” to “competent and authoritative users of ELF” (Seidlhofer 2004, 229).

A great deal of discussion has been devoted to distinguishing ELF from English as a foreign language (EFL). Jenkins (2006, 140) summarizes the differences as follows:

- i) EFL adopts a “deficit” perspective, ELF a “difference” perspective on differences from native-speaker English: the former sees them as errors, the latter as variants;
- ii) the EFL perspective explains deviations from native-speaker English in terms of transfer and metaphor, the ELF perspective in terms of contact and evolution;
- iii) the EFL perspective has a conformative, monolingual bias, the ELF perspective a transformative, bilingual bias;
- iv) the EFL perspective regards code-switching and code-mixing as interference errors, the ELF perspective as bilingual resources.

The use of ELF has been investigated in a number of discourse communities, in particular business, tourism, journalism, school settings and higher education. In these domains of social contact, the spread of ELF has accelerated significantly due to the forces of globalization and internationalization. Some of these communities are placed in the centre of investigation in this special issue of ELOPE, which comprises six research papers, all of which focus on the application of the discourse analysis framework to analyze various texts produced in the ELF context. In particular, in tourism, which has expanded greatly due to globalization, the use of language plays a key role in promoting tourist destinations and interacting with potential customers (see Vuković Vojnović, this volume). Transcreation, a process of adapting translated content to suit the target audience’s context, culture, and expectations, is frequently employed in journalism (see Petrović, this volume). The internationalization of higher education, for example, has transformed language use within academic settings (see Ademilokun and Taiwo, this volume). English has emerged as the primary medium of communication among students, scholars and institutions from different first language

backgrounds, whose social interactions foster intercultural understanding and the exchange of different linguistic practices. In non-Anglophone countries, English-medium instruction programmes have gained popularity, where academic courses are delivered entirely in English. The adoption of ELF in higher education has significantly changed the dynamics of teaching and learning, as well as research (see Shabani; Jokić; Picciuolo, this volume). In turn, the constant shaping of ELF by its speakers opens up new perspectives for discourse studies.

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