EL4252 Interactional Discourse

Topic 1: Introduction and the notion of speech v writing

1. The notion of discourse

<u>Definition 1</u>
A term used in LINGUISTICS to refer to a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) LANGUAGE larger than a SENTENCE — but, within this broad notion, several different applications may be found. At its most general, a discourse is a behavioural UNIT which has a pre-theoretical status in linguistics: it is a set of UTTERANCES which constitute any recognisable SPEECH event (no reference being made to its linguistic STRUCTURING, if any), e.g. a conversation, a joke, a sermon, an interview… [Crystal, *Dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*, 3rd edn 1991]

<u>Definition 2</u>
Discourse generally seems to be used for all those sense of language which, in the words of Bakhtin, emphasise its 'concrete living totality' (1981); the term 'language' itself being orientated more towards a linguistic system. Discourse is also used in more (inter-)active senses.

(1) Its technical uses appear to have really little to do with the senses recorded in the *COD*, for instance: namely a formal written 'treatise' or 'dissertation' …

(2) One prominent and comprehensive sense, for which there is indeed no other direct equivalent, covers all those aspects of COMMUNICATION which involve not only a MESSAGE or TEXT but also the ADDRESSER and ADDRESSEE, and their immediate CONTEXT OF SITUATION. Leech & Short (1981) emphasise its INTERPERSONAL or transactional nature, and also its social purpose. …

(3) Out of sense (2) in the 1980s came the term **discourse stylistics**, made popular in the 1990s … marking a new direction in STYLISTICS (q.v.) away from formal analysis to contextualised, discourse-oriented approaches, including sociolinguistic, pragmatic and feminist.

(4) With the emphasis on communication in speech or writing it is often used simply as an alternative to VARIETY or REGISTER: LITERARY v. non-literary discourse, dramatic, philosophical, etc.…

(5) With the emphasis on communication, or mode of communication, it is sometimes used in discussions of novel discourse to refer to the representation of speech and thought; hence terms like FREE DIRECT or INDIRECT **discourse**.

(6) **Discourse** is popularly used in linguistics and LITERARY THEORY in a more loaded sense after the work of Foucault. Discourse transmits social and institutionalised values or IDEOLOGIES, and also creates them. Thus we can speak of the discourse of New Labour, of the tabloid, of regulations, etc.

(7) In the broad sense of (2), **discourse** 'includes' TEXT (*q.v.*), but the two terms are not always easily distinguished, and are often used synonymously.

Some linguists would restrict discourse to spoken communication, and reserve text for written: the early discourse analysts, for instance …

A well-established definition of discourse views it as a series of connected utterances, a unit of potential analysis larger than a sentence.… [Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, 2nd edn, 2001]

> The baby cried.
> The mommy picked it up. (Sacks 1972)

> Later, an item about vasectomy and the results of the do-it-yourself competition. (Stubbs 1983: 93)

> LADIES. (Widdowson 1995)

> drugs

- Discourse: usually spoken, or either spoken or written?
- Discourse: made up of sentences or utterances?
- Discourse = text? Discourse analysis = text analysis?
- Discourse: encompasses context, intrinsically interactional?
- Discourse: encompasses ideology / hegemony?
- Discourse = text type / genre / register?

<u>Mills's comment</u>
Use depends on context/discipline. Sara Mills (1997) locates its use in:
- cultural theory/critical theory/literary theory – 'general domain of all statements', 'an individualisable group of statements', 'a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements' (Foucault 1972: 80)
- mainstream linguistics ('linguistic communication')
- social psychology/critical linguistics ('speech or writing seen from the point of view of the beliefs, values and categories which it embodies', Roger Fowler)

The role of 'interpretation' in discourse studies is important. Note the adjectival uses: *eg discourse* strategies, *discursive strategies*, *discoursal* strategies.

1A. Discussion

What do these people mean by *discourse*? Specifically, is the focus on **ideology**, **politics**, **culture**, **structure** and **organisation**, **genre**, **speech**, **writing** or something else? Don't worry too much if you don't follow everything clearly.

1. Underlying the idea of colonial <u>discourse</u> … is the presumption that during the colonial period large parts of the non-European world were *produced* for Europe through a <u>discourse</u> that imbricated sets of questions and assumptions, methods of procedure and analysis, and kinds of writing and imagery. (Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters* [London: Methuen, 1986: 2)

NOTE: *imbricate* = To place so as to overlap like roof-tiles. Also with *together* (in *fig.* sense). (*OED*) A word commonly used in Lacanian literary theory.

2. [The] limitations [of the Sinclair-and-Coulthard approach] are the absence of a fully developed social orientation to <u>discourse</u>, and insufficient attention to interpretation. These limitations can be related to their choice of data; they concentrate on a traditional teacher-centred mode of classroom <u>discourse</u>, and their data does not reflect the diversity of current classroom practices. This makes classroom <u>discourse</u> seem more homogeneous that it actually is, and naturalises dominant practices. It presents them as simply 'there', rather than as having been put there through processes of contestation with alternative practices, and as having been 'invested' with particular ideologies (e.g. views of learners and learning), and as helping to sustain particular relations of power within society. In short, the Sinclair and Coulthard approach lacks a developed social orientation in failing to consider how relations of power have shaped <u>discourse</u> practices, and in failing to situate classroom <u>discourse</u> historically in processes of social struggle and change. (Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and social change* [London: Polity, 1992: 15])

3. The fact that every object is constituted as an object of <u>discourse</u> has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structure of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence. (Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, trans. Moore and Cammack [London: Verso, 1985: 108])

4. The purpose of this book is to analyse ads as **discourse**. Although the main focus of **discourse analysis** is on language, it is not concerned with language alone. I t also examines the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation; through what medium; how different types and acts of communication are involved, and their relationship to each other. When music and pictures combine with language to alter or add to its meaning, then discourse analysis must consider these modes of communication too. (Guy Cook, *The Discourse of Advertising*, 2nd edn [London: Routledge, 2001: 3])

5. In seeking to make general sense of larger tendencies in terms of how the prestige press publications covered the global rise of English, I established four primary <u>discourse</u> categories. These categories were:

1. Populism
2. Universal progress
3. Triumphalism
4. Linguistic conflict and competition

All of these <u>discourses</u> on the global hegemony of English embraced a number of variations on a theme. For example, the <u>discourse</u> of universal progress includes what I call the theme of utilitarian instrumentalism, economic efficiency, and unity

and common language need.

Generally speaking, three of the four <u>discourses</u> on the global hegemony of English – universal progress, triumphalism, and populism – represented this social phenomenon in largely positive and mostly uncritical terms. By 'uncritical' I mean that these <u>discourses</u> rarely problematised the global hegemony of English in terms of larger social relations of power, hierarchy, inequality or domination. So, for example, not a single article, or even a part of an article, in my 275-text data pool examined the crucial question of domain colonisation by English. Nor did a single text home in on the thorny and important question of whose English standard does, and ought to, prevail in which global contexts of power. This despite the fact that conflict and controversy are inherent in these questions *and* despite the fact that conflict and controversy constitute the most fundamental of news values (Missouri Group, 2005). The <u>discourse</u> of linguistic conflict and competition included nearly all of the American prestige press representations, which pushed more towards critical conceptualisations of the global hegemony of English. Most of these fell into a variation of this <u>discourse</u> that I call linguistic diversity. When told through the prism of linguistic conflict and competition, the story of the global hegemony of English often reflected considerable intra-textual variation and contradiction. A handful of texts addressed some of the potentially negative consequences of English's global rise, for instance, examining possible links between the global rise of the English language and the rapid and intensifying disappearance of languages around the globe. One the whole, however, sustained critique of the global hegemony of English in the texts analysed was rare. [Christof Demond-Heinrich (2008), 'American "prestige press" representations of the global hegemony of English', *World Englishes* 27(2): 161–180, p. 168]

6. We shall define pedagogic discourse as the rule which embeds a discourse of competence (skills of various kinds) into a discourse of social order in such a way that the latter always dominate the former. We shall call the discourse of transmitting specialised competences and their relationship to each other *instructional* discourse, and the discourse creating specialised order, relation and identity *regulative* discourse. (Basil Bernstein (1990), *Class, codes and control: vol IV: the structuring of pedagogic discourse* [London: Routledge], p. 180)

7. *Here are some more examples of less specialised usage of 'discourse' from the Bank of English:*

(a) This level of reflection also implies the need to assess the educational implications and consequences of both actions and beliefs. As a result, there is debate over principles and goals. The third level of reflection addresses both ethical and political concerns as part of educational <u>discourse</u>. Principles such as justice, equality, and emancipation are used as criteria in deliberations over the value of educational goals, curriculum content and teaching practices (*UK magazine*)

(b) Erm the questionnaire of conversation model suggests that you should never do this but an identical question is not treated in a er like sort of measuring the length of something twice. There's a clear emotional <u>discourse</u> effect to it. If you start asking the same question again they'll say well why the hell are you asking me this? (*UK Spoken*)

(c) If it's published in a literary magazine where all may read it it's written for its own sake not for its sincerity not for its effectiveness in persuading a given woman to give her love er as a piece of verse. But you can't turn any <u>discourse</u> into a work of verbal art simply by reading the message for its own sake so a a railway timetable will stubbornly remain a referential message a dictionary remains a series of metalingual messages unless somebody starts to manipulate them select from them erm cut them up (*UK Spoken*)

(d) Between 1905 and 1915, the number of individual churches allied with the league doubled to almost 40,000. With such forces behind them, ASL activists confidently styled themselves the moral vanguards of progressivism. They abhorred the <u>discourse</u> of turn-of-century conservatism, with its fear of mass democracy and assumption that human nature was unchangeable. (*US Book*)

(e) *Desdemona*: Alas, Iago, What shall I do to win my lord again? Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven, I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel [*She kneels.*] If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love, Either in <u>discourse</u> of thought or actual deed, Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense Delighted them in any other form; Or that I do not yet, and ever did, And ever will – though he do shake me off To beggarly divorcement – love him dearly, Comfort forswear me!

(f) Mr Downer accused the minister of misleading Parliament in his answers to the parliamentary committee. <New Para> By failing to act on the advice of his director-general at a time when national security was threatened his negligence makes him personally responsible for the damage which consequent public <u>discourses</u> did to Australia's national security, he said. <New Para> That is why he is trying to avoid the conclusion that he had ruled out an inquiry at the time of the public disclosures. (*Australian News*)

2. The notion of interaction

'Formalist' (structural) *v.* 'Functional' approaches
- Formalists view language as being made up of units, and these units are interconnected in some way ('cohesion'): morpheme → word → phrase → clause → sentence → discourse.
- Functionalists view discourse as *language in use* ('the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use', Brown & Yule 1983: 1). Some functionalists try to make the grammar carry the load of pragmatics too.

*That function which language serves in the expression of 'content' we will describe as **transactional**, and that function involved in expressing social relations and personal attitudes we will describe as **interactional**. Our distinction 'transactional / interactional', stands in general correspondence to the functional dichotomies — 'representative / expressive' found in Bühler (1934), 'referential /emotive' (Jakobson, 1960), 'ideational / interpersonal' (Halliday, 1970b) and 'descriptive /social-expressive' (Lyons, 1977).* [Brown & Yule 1983:1]

3. Therefore, this module will focus on speech (as opposed to writing) and interaction (as opposed to transaction)

Labels
- Generic Structure Potential
- Speech-Act Theory (*will not focus on this*)
- (Gricean) Pragmatics (*will focus on face and politeness*)
- Ethnomethodology or Conversation Analysis (*will not focus on this*)
- The Birmingham School (Exchange Structure)

4. Approach
- Analysis
- Explication
- Theoretical/Interpretive Discussion (objective or subjective?)

5. Requirements
- Practical Transcription
- Class Test
- Analysis/Essay
- Class Presentation

6. An early note about the exam:

A take-home exam. The question will be released at 9am and answers should be returned by 6pm of the same day. Details will be released later.

7. What is the difference between speech and writing?

Elbow suggests that speech is part of our **biological package**, whereas writing originated in **culture**. Writing is associated with authority and accords legal status.

The difference might also be emphasised by the different systems of writing. There are three basic systems for writing – alphabetic, logographic and syllabic. We can arrange written languages in the phonographic-logographic continuum.

Pure phonograpy (*eg* the IPA)	Finnish	French	English	Korean	Japanese	Chinese	Pure logograpy (*eg* maths symbols, cryptographic codes)

(Elbow, p. 38)

7A. Data and activity: spoken or written?

Suggest some diagnostics for identifying spoken texts.

(a) *Friends' conversation (ICE-SIN S1a-005)*

\<$A> \<#>So so when's Mary coming back here
\<$C> \<#>She's on the way \<#>Any moment I'm waiting for the pager to buzz and
\<$A> \<#>and pick her up from the
\<$C> \<#>I'll go and pick her up \<#>No on her way

<$D> <#>On her way back
<$C> <#>Yah
<$D> <#>Oh I thought I thought she's uh
<$A> <#>She she she went to what
<$C> <#>Malacca
<$A> <#>What is this a holiday or
<$C> <#>Just a look-see and shop
<$A> <#>Alone
<$C> <#>With some small group members
<$A> <#>Orh
<$C> <#>Two other ladies
<$A> <#>Malacca is quite a nice place
<$D> <#>For sure they won't have a doubt
<$C> <#><O>laughter</O> <#>Does it tally
<$A> <#>Or does it done by coach or by train or something
<$C> <#>Coach <#>Sans tours
<$A> <#>So she can land up somewhere in that People's Park or something like that

(b) *Friends' discussion*

G: Ra-Rama's father is a teacher or something, right?
S: Hmm
G: I remember first time I asked him.
    I said, 'Where is your father?'
    He said, 'He's a principal.'
    So I said, 'Where is he a principal?'
S: Haig Boys, I think.
G: No, said Oxford.

(c) *Parliamentary debate (ICE-SIN S1B-053)*

<$B> <#> Mr Chairman Sir I beg to move that the sum to be allocated for head to be reduced by ten dollars in respect of code fifteen hundred of the main estimates <#>Sir my subject is uh fixing of airline fares <#>Sometime last year about twenty airlines which fixes air fares in Singapore in a cartel called the Intra-Marketing Programme collapsed in the process <#>uh air fares to London were literally halved what it was <#>But for the last several years in nineteen uh eighty nine there was a different programme called market development programme which again form a similar airlines uh to regulate set minimum prices for air fares <#>All this fixing of air fares out of Singapore is to the disadvantage of the consumers the Singaporeans especially <#>This fixing of air fares leads to ridiculous <unclear> word </unclear> whereby it's cheaper for Malaysians to travel from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore and to London than for Singaporeans to travel from Singapore to London

(d) *From the play 'The Lift' by Heng Siok Tian*

MAN. Jam?
WOMAN. If jam, how come can go up and down and door won't open.
MAN. That's why its [*sic*] jammed, door can't open.
WOMAN. Hah? Or maybe some naughty boy is playing with the lift inside.
MAN. Maybe.
WOMAN. Maybe one of those Ah Fei and their girlfriends playing. Nowadays all these boys and girls always fool around. Only two weeks ago at the other block got girl jump from the top. Got baby some more people say. Tsk tsk young, you know. Maybe only 16 or 17.
MAN. Bodoh.
WOMAN. Yah (*Pause*). Hmm … really, don't know who's inside. Maybe could be old man.
MAN. Old man?
WOMAN. Yah. There's an old man who always stand around here. He wears a white singlet. I see him all the time, usually at night when I come home from shift duties. Carries two bird cage, wears thick glasses.

(e) *Singapore: The Encyclopedia (2006), p. 15*

Ang Peng Siong (1962–) Sportsman. National swimmer and two-time Olympian. Ang Peng Siong recorded the world's best time (22.69 sec) for the 50-m freestyle in 1982. Unfortunately, that was before the event was officially recognized in the Olympics. A repeat of the feat in Seoul (1988), when the event was finally introduced to the Games, would have given him a bronze medal.

(f) *The Linguistics Encyclopaedia (1990), p. 100*

The term **discourse analysis** was first employed in 1952 by Zelig Harris as the name for 'a method for the analysis of connected speech (or writing)' (Harris, 1952, p. 1), that is, for 'continuing descriptive linguistics beyond the limits of a single sentence at a time', and for 'correlating "culture" and language' (p. 2).

(g) *Rex Shelley (1995),* Island in the Centre, *p. 106*

They met the next day, Vicky rushing back to the de Cruzes' from the beach picnic the girls had organised. She drove down to Singapore the next weekend. He met her tired and dirty from the drive. She didn't stay at the de Cruzes'. They collapsed into each other's arms and coalesced into an intimacy, consummating the fires that their collision on the trunk road had ignited.

8. Some diagnostics

(*a*)   Lexical density (Halliday):
Words are either **lexical** (*ie* content words) or **grammatical** (pronouns, articles, auxiliary verbs, etc.) – 'the number of lexical items … per ranking (non-embedded) clause' (p. 20)
Ure's formula is

$$\frac{\text{No. of lexical words} \times 100\%}{\text{Total no. of words}}$$

> Lexis may also be seen in contrast with GRAMMAR, as in the distinction between 'grammatical WORDS' and **lexical words**: the former refers to words whose sole function is to signal grammatical relationships (a role which is claimed for such words as *of, to* and *the* in English); the latter refers to words which have **lexical meaning**, *ie* they have semantic CONTENT. [Crystal 1991: 201]

(*b*)   Written texts exhibit grammatical complexity (at the *group/phrase* level, as opposed to the *above-clause* level)

(*c*)   Textual markers

(*d*)   Explicitness: spoken texts rely more on context and shared information and therefore do not always required to be explicit — at the *lexical* as well as the *grammatical* level.

(*e*)   Generalised vocabulary (*core lexis*) is therefore a result of the above.

(*f*)   Repetition is not uncommon in spoken texts — for the purpose of emphasis, or as a result of the channel (written texts allow backtracking). Structures (syntactic forms) can also be repeated.

(*g*)   Fillers (like *you see, er, erm, you know*) — words that are almost semantically 'empty'. Back channels (eg *mm, uh-um, yeah, no, right, oh*) to signal acknowledgement or understanding.

(*h*)   The tendency towards *parataxis* as opposed to *hypotaxis*. Tendency to avoid the passive.

A corpus approach to spokenness and writtenness
Frequency counts of different registers (taken from Douglas Biber, *Variation across speech and writing* (1998), p. 15) – raw frequencies followed by normalised counts per 100 words

	passives	nominalisations	1st and 2nd person pronouns	contractions
conversation	0/0	1 / 0.84	12 / 10.2	6 / 5.1
scientific prose	3 / 6.8	5 / 11.4	0 / 0	0 / 0
panel discussion	2 / 2.2	4 / 4.3	10 / 10.8	3 / 3.2

See also Conrad & Biber (eds), *Variation in English: Multi-dimensional studies* (2001).

9. A grammar of spoken English?
Is there a case for saying that spoken English and written English have different grammars? Carter and McCarthy point out the following:
- Frequent use of adjectives to modify whole propositions, eg *basically, usually, literally, possibly, certainly, of course*

- Use of **binomial expressions**: these occur in a paired relationship and are fixed in order (eg *spick and span; ups and downs; swings and roundabouts; cash and carry; hit and miss*). There are also **trinomials:** *ready, willing and able; this, that and the other; morning, noon and night.*
- High reliance on deictic words.
- Frequent use of **delexical verbs**: *take a long walk, have a swim; have a good look; give someone a ring.*
- Frequent use of ellipsis.
- Frequent use of **fixed expressions***: as a matter of fact, once and for all, at the end of the day, a good time was had by all, honesty is the best policy, carry the can, an open-door policy, as far as I am concerned.*
- **Fronting or front-placing**: 'the movement of an element from its "canonical" position and its relocation as the first element in a construction': *To that man and his music I dedicated my life.*
- **Heads or topics**: 'Heads perform a basically orienting and focusing function, identifying key information for listeners and establishing a shared frame of reference for what is important in a conversational exchange'. They are almost exclusively in informal spoken English. In the following, the heads have been underlined:
    - *That chap over there, he looks like your brother.*
    - *This friend of ours, Carol, her daughter, she decided to buy one.*
    - *The women in the audience, they all shouted in protest.*
- **Tails (right dislocation)**: these are slots 'available at the end of a clause in which a speaker can insert grammatical patterns which amplify, extend or reinforce what (s)he is saying or has said'. Tails have been underlined in the following examples:
    - *She's a really good actress, Clare.*
    - *Singapore's far too hot for me it is.*
    - *They haven't mended the road yet haven't those workmen.*
    - *They complain about it all the time they do.*
    - *He's quite a comic that fellow, you know.*
    - *It's not actually very good is it that wine?*
    - *They do tend to go cold, don't they, pasta?*

10. Walter Ong's orality (think about Old English society)

- Use of mnemonics and formulas (think of clichés in speech)
- Additive (not subordinate) (think of *parataxis* as opposed to *hypotaxis*)
- Aggregative (not analytic)
- Redundant and copious
- Conservative and traditionalist
- Close to human life world
- Agonistically toned [Greek, *agon*: a contest for a prize, whether of athletes, or of poets, painters, etc.]
- Empathetic and participatory (not objectively distanced)
- Homeostatic [*homeostasis* or *homoeostasis*: tendency towards the maintenance of internal stability of a system]
- Situational (not abstract)

11. Puzzle: Spoken or Written?

Play detective. What are the clues as to their spoken or written status? List them out, and reach a decision. (Mind you, there is an area known as 'forensic linguistics'.)

TEXT A

I don't know whether to kill you or to kill myself. I keep thinking of what you did over the past weeks, what you didn't do – what you showed me, and what you might have hidden – and I don't know. I just don't know anything any more. Sometimes I think you did a Judas, sometimes I don't. I don't know what to think. What shall we do? If you did betray me, then there is nothing you can say to me; if you didn't betray me, then no words of mine can ever heal the hurt I caused you. I don't know whether to strangle you or to fall at your feet. Who am I? Villain or victim? I don't know. I guess I'll never know, unless you tell me who framed me. But I guess you've already said that you won't, so I'll never know. And even if you do tell me, will I be able to believe you? I don't know. Will we see each other again? Probably? Not?

TEXT B

Fatty is wrong again and again and the best he can do is bluster and puff and be even more stooooopid dumb in public. He was ripped off by a major USA university for a cereal packet degree in economics that he either is lying about (more lies from fatty) about his degree from a major usa university (a claim for which he has provided no proof) or he is simply fantasising about his degree in economics from a major USA university. What of course is quite blatantly clear, is that fatty has no idea about economics or the creation of money. What is the reader to assume? Fat Freddy must be a sectioned patient in a major USA mental institution and has some access to usenet.

[Adapted]

TEXT C

Doctor Martin Luther King Junior lies only a few miles from us tonight. Tonight he must feel good, as he looks down upon us. We sit here together, a rainbow, a coalition, the sons and daughters of slave masters, and the sons and daughters or slaves, sitting together around a common table, to decide the direction of our party and our country.

TEXT D

Oh yes, yes, yes mind you my parents were really quite well-off when we lived in Ireland but the education in England was very expensive and I can remember my mother had jewellery and silver and things she used to keep selling it to pay for our extra music lessons and tuition in this and that and er I it was, must have been difficult for her husband. She was brought up in affluence, you know, and now she has to be a very economical housekeeper. We had two maids in residence, erm a cook and a house parlour-maid so we didn't really do anything ourselves in the house. I suppose we must have had a gardener. I don't remember that really. We didn't have much of a garden in Clifton, anyway, not like the one in Ireland.

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