Discourse Analysis I
TE 991, Section 1, Fall 2009
Erickson 133E, Tuesdays 12:40–3:30

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Course Description
This course provides an introduction to discourse analytic approaches to research in education and related areas of inquiry. We will consider discourse analysis through an interdisciplinary lens and through traditions that range from interactional sociolinguistics and narrative analysis to conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis. We will primarily focus on language-in-use. The course is intended for advanced doctoral students who have already taken introductory courses in educational inquiry and who would like to learn about discourse analysis to advance their own educational research endeavors. This class provides an introduction to Discourse Analysis, whereas Discourse Analysis II (offered in alternating years to Discourse Analysis I) takes you into more depth with particular approaches and particular projects you are working on. We will read some classic and contemporary works in discourse studies from a range of perspectives and applied to a range of problems (some explicitly educational, some not); my particular interest is in narrative approaches to the study of literacy and classroom interaction. However, my interests will provide only a framework for our work together.

Through a series of in-class data sessions and written transcription and analysis exercises, you will have an opportunity to practice data analysis and to receive critical feedback on your work. You will become more familiar with theoretical and empirical literature about discourse analysis through engagement with an assortment of writings. Finally, you will also develop and propose future projects of your own using discourse analytic methods.

Specifically, I hope you will gain:

- Practice in, and feedback on, various approaches to discourse analysis.
- An appreciation for the interaction of theories about discourse and methods of discourse analysis in the practice of research.
- An increased awareness of how different research problems invite various discourse analytic approaches.
- Increased familiarity with a range of educational research deploying discourse analytic approaches.
- An expansion of your "research imagination" to include discourse analytic approaches to data.

Texts
Required (books are available at the MSU Bookstore):
1. Course Reader: Available on ANGEL.
   Please keep in mind that many papers from this text have been abridged—this is a SERIOUS limitation: when you use one of these articles for any work you do in the class (e.g., your data exercises or your final project) or in your future discourse analytic work, please be sure to read the original text in full and to use the original citation. I strongly recommend that you read the Introductions to the various sections of the book; although not required for this class, they are very helpful for contextualizing the papers. Also, I am adopting the 2nd edition of this volume; however, if you find a copy of the first edition, that should work just as well—the pagination will just be slightly different from that indicated in the syllabus.

Recommended:
I will make reference to recommended papers and books that tie in with our discussions. I encourage you to read further among these recommended texts, as time and interest permit. If I do not mention further reading, but you find an interest in an area, please be sure to ask me for recommendations. Many of the book-length recommended
texts are available from the MSU Bookstore. Two generally recommended books, to support your ongoing study of and engagement with discourse analysis in education, are:


I also recommend another book, which includes a number of deeply theorized empirical (mostly ethnographic) studies that employ discourse analysis:


For those interested in discourse analysis in classrooms, I refer you to the following three books, which are all recently out:

4. Rymes, B. (2009). *Classroom discourse analysis: A tool for critical reflection*. Cresskill: Hampton (Note: if you order directly from publisher [contact Barbara Bernstein at hamptonpr1@aol.com and mention my name], you may be able to get a really good deal on this book because the publisher has some extra copies of an earlier printing)—*this book is written for a teacher audience*.

If you are interested in learning more about critical discourse analysis, here is one book-length resource to get you started:


Course Requirements

1. **Weekly course required reading, course attendance, small-group projects and individual presentations, ANGEL responses and discussions (if relevant), and face-to-face participation in classroom conversations.** (30%)

   *Attendance*: Because a seminar such as this one depends on all the class members for its effectiveness, everyone needs to be present and prepared for each class. Sometimes intervening circumstances occur, however. Therefore, during this semester, you may choose (or circumstances beyond your control may dictate) one week where you are not present and/or prepared. I will expect you to turn in any missed work at the start of the following class. Additional absences, incomplete work, or excessive tardies will be reflected in your final course grade.

   *Leading Discussion*: You will work in groups of 2–4 to prepare the following for one class session.

   *Key terms and ideas*: Generate a list of key terms (no more than 8) and ideas introduced in each reading along with working definitions and relevant passages. (Hard copies for everyone in class or post to ANGEL 2 days in advance of class)

   *Discussion points*: Develop a list of guiding questions and/or important passages to inform our discussion of each reading. (Hard copies for class or post to ANGEL 1 day in advance of class)

   *Data sample*: Bring a small amount of data to help ground our discussion. Ideally, this will be data to be analyzed for one of your data exercises. The data can be spoken (transcript) or written. It can also be an image, video, or audio recording. Be prepared to lead us in applying the theories and methods from the week’s readings to an analysis of the data. (Hard copy or post)

   *Class participation can take many forms*: Some examples include preparing notes or discussion points based on the Reading before class, contributing your interests and backgrounds in ways that advance the class conversation, preparing and posing questions, responding to one another in on-line ANGEL discussions, and introducing the class to new resources.

2. **One transcription and two data analysis exercises.** See Appendix for details. You are invited to share your data with the class during data sessions, to assist you with the analyses. (30%)
3. Final Project. See Appendix for details. A one-page title and outline is due on 10/27. A completed draft of the project is due on 12/1, to create an opportunity for peer feedback during class several weeks before the final project is due (12/15). This should provide time for substantive feedback and revision based on that feedback. A one-page cover letter should accompany the final draft. Beginning work early in the semester on this final project, and working on it weekly—indeed daily—over the semester, will greatly increase the odds that you will produce an excellent piece of writing, one that might have use beyond this class. (40%)

Course Schedule (this may change)

Part I: Conceptual and Practical Foundations for Discourse Analysis

9/8 Introductions
Focal Questions: Who are we and what are we interested in vis-à-vis discourse analysis? What is the logic and organization of this course? What are some various traditions of discourse analysis inspiring and informing educational inquiries? What ethical issues confront discourse analytic work, as distinct from other qualitative research work? Are there questions about human subjects requirements for DA work?

Required Reading:
1. Course Syllabus. Please read carefully and come prepared to ask questions, if you have any.
   Please read this piece as a kind of orientation, a compass to help you know where you at different points throughout the course—you may find it helpful to return to this text during the semester. In their volume introduction, Jaworski and Coupland overview some major scholarly and disciplinary traditions in which discourse analysis is, and has been, done. As you read, try to make connections with your own background and experiences: Are there approaches that seem compelling or logical, given your own research interests and/or previous training? Do you find gaps or any “blind spots” on the part of the authors?
3. Johnstone, B. (2008). Introduction [ch. 1] (pp. 1–31)—NOTE: it is OK if you delay reading of this chapter because you were unable to get a copy of the book in time.

Activities: Sign up for Data Sessions; Sign up for leading discussions; Discuss introductory readings

9/15 Building conceptual understandings for discourse study I
Focal Questions: How do theories of language or discourse shape approaches to discourse analysis? How can discourse analysis be understood as a cultural practice and process? How can translation issues be conceptualized in discourse analytic work?

Required Readings:

Activities: Review models of Spencer proposal

9/22 Building conceptual understandings for discourse study II
Focal Questions: How do we define and conceptualize terms for discourse analysis, such as the following: discourse, utterance, genre, text? How should we approach the task of “operationalizing” our definition/conceptualization of a unit of language for an analysis? How do discourse analysis and other methodologies and inquiry approaches work together? How do technologies mediate practices of discourse analytic work?

Required Reading:

This empirical study comes from a large collaborative research effort that included discourse analysis. As you read it, consider: How are various terms defined and operationalized? How are theory and method made explicit? How does a theory of language get taken up and used in the piece? How would you relate this piece back to the taxonomy introduced by Jaworski & Coupland? This piece also anticipates a more in-depth discussion of transcription and narrative.

**Activities:** Data Session Model: MJ’s (old) data

9/29 Transcription

**Focal Questions:** What are some of the available options for doing transcription work? What are the complexities involved in relating written and spoken language? What choices and assumptions inform processes of transcription?

**Required Reading:**
1. Atkinson, J.M., & Heritage, J. (1999). Jefferson’s transcript notation. In Jaworski & Coupland (pp. 158–165). This short, technical piece lays out the basic principals of CA-style transcription, which is designed to carefully capture such phenomenon as turn-taking, sequencing, and so on. Read it as a guide for working on the transcription exercise and plan on coming back to this piece as you work through the transcription work.
2. Ochs, E. (1999). Transcription as theory. In Jaworski & Coupland (pp. 167–182). This now-classic theoretical paper was one of the early arguments that transcription is theoretical and analytical work, rather than being a transparent representation of “what happened.” Ochs makes the point that any transcription is necessarily selective and depends on the research questions under study, the knowledge of the field, among other issues. She questions prevailing norms of transcription in child language acquisition research—for those of you in early literacy, this is likely to be interesting.

**Recommended Reading:**

**Activities:** Data Session: Transcription practice (using MJ’s data)

Part II: Ways in to Discourse Analysis

10/6 Narrative Analysis

**Focal Questions:** How do Gee and Labov similarly/differently define narrative? Can you imagine operationalizing the term narrative and text, following Gee and/or Labov, for a discourse study in education?

**Required Reading:**
2. Gee, J. (1991). A linguistic approach to narrative. *Journal of Narrative and Life History, 1*(1), 15–39. Please read (and quite possibly, re-read) this chapter as an analytic and methodological model: you will be asked to use it for your transcription exercise. Given the definitions and explanations of the various “layers” of narrative
Gee lays out, what are the key terms and concepts if one follows this model? What transcription methods follow from these terms and concepts? How does Gee’s approach relate to Labov’s definition of narrative?


**Recommended Reading:**


For those of you who find yourself interested in narrative discourse analysis, this is a wonderful book (and, for me anyway, was a pleasure to read). It is a kind of theoretical review of a wide range of narrative sociolinguistic literature, since Labov. Based on a wide range of analyses of narratives in everyday conversations among intimates, Ochs and Capps trouble some of the structuralist assumptions of Labov. Highly recommended!

**Activities:** Data session 1

**Assignment:** Discussion Group 1

10/13 Poetics, verbal art, and performance

**Focal Questions:** How can the 8 functions of language identified by Jakobson be generative for discourse analytic work? How can the poetic function be useful for understanding discourse in education? How have researchers operationalized ethnopoetic perspectives in the study of narrative talk in classrooms?

**Required Reading:**

   
   This is a classic theoretical piece about 8 “functions” of language, written by one of the language luminaries of the twentieth century. A key idea in this piece is that the poetic function needs to assume a more prominent place in linguistic analysis. The subsequent pieces use this idea in their analyses.


   This piece offers a contrastive ethnopoetic analysis of two different styles of children’s storytelling and some implications for education and literacy learning. Although not terribly long, it is a dense and meaty analysis, worth spending time with.


   In this paper, Spanish literacy researcher David Poveda elegantly combines ethnopoetic analysis with interactional analysis. The paper focuses on an oral narrative performance, told during *la ronda* (roughly equivalent to sharing time in the US) by a Gypsy child in a primary-level classroom. Poveda shows, how at the micro-linguistic level, the teacher systematically supports and scaffolds this child’s narrative.

**Recommended Reading:**


   This is a literature review and many may find it a bit difficult to read because of its scope. Yet it contains important background on poetic and ethnopoetic approaches to discourse analysis, if this is an approach to DA of interest to you.


   This is a great book and it summarizes some of the major themes from Hymes’s research on narrative and reprints several previously published journal articles. In it, Hymes explicitly responds and re-analyzes some of the narrative data previously analyzed by Gee and Michaels.


   This paper comes from my dissertation research. It is a multi-layered ethnopoetic analysis of an oral narrative told by a teacher in a middle school literacy classroom. I use the analysis to show how moral messages can be fashioned through oral narratives in teacher discourse. I use a textual analysis of the narrative to argue for a conceptualization of teaching as rhetorical action.
Assignments: Discussion Group 2
Activity: Data session 2

10/20 Conversation Analysis (CA): Sequencing, turn taking, linguistic construction of context

Focal Questions: What is Conversation Analysis (CA)? What are some theoretical concepts and methodological principals from this tradition of discourse study? What kinds of educational questions and problems can the study of language-in-interaction address?

Required Reading:
This piece, written by two of the early researchers in CA, studies a corpus of phone conversation starters. As such, it exemplifies the general method and approach of CA.
This piece comes from Schiffrin’s dissertation research, which was a study of what she called “discourse markers” in conversation. This is a classic example of CA work.

Recommended Reading:
If you are interested in CA or in studying talk-in-interaction, this piece is foundational.

Assignments: Transcription Exercise DUE, Discussion Group 3
Activities: Group discussion about transcription exercise. Mid-term Instructor Feedback

10/27 Contextualization processes

Focal Questions: What are contextualization cues and why is this concept useful for discourse analysis? How has this concept been expanded in the years since it was introduced?

Required Readings:
This is a classic and foundational piece in the history of discourse analysis. One of the key ideas that many educational researchers have found helpful is the idea of contextualization cues.
This piece is a micro-analysis I did of some data from the larger collaborative project that you read about earlier in the semester.

Assignments: Final Project Title and One-page outline DUE; Discussion Group 4
Activities: Share 3-minute overview of final project with group

11/3 Dialogic and interactional analysis 1

Social participation, frames, dialogism, positioning

Focal Questions: How does Goffman define “facework” and what does this concept have to do with discourse? What do Tannen and Wallat mean when they write about “framing”? What are the key ideas of Wortham’s “dialogic approach to discourse”? What does a dialogic approach to the study of teaching and learning involve? What are some available tools for studying classrooms from a dialogic perspective?

Required Reading:
This piece is our (woefully inadequate) general introduction to the work of Irving Goffman. The paper elaborates the notion of face work, which—as we will see from Vasquez’s piece the following week—can be a huge issue in certain educational settings, including supervision of new teachers.
This piece builds on notions of dialogicality that are introduced in the work of Bakhtin (though not, particularly, in the 1986 piece on speech genres that we read together for this class) and have become enormously influential in
anthropology, linguistics, literary studies, education, and related fields. Wortham elaborates several tools for operationalizing Bakhtin’s ideas in empirical analysis.

3. Tannen, D., & Wallat, C. Interactive frames and knowledge schemas in interaction: Examples from a medical examination/interview. In Jaworski & Coupland (pp. 332–348).

This piece elaborates the notion of framing (see #4 and #5 below), further developing Goffman’s idea of “face.”

**Recommended Reading:**


This is a terrific, and very helpful book, on the concept of framing. Highly recommended!


In many ways, this piece is an elaboration of ideas introduced in *Frame analysis.* In it, Goffman introduces a number of concepts that have been widely taken up by other researchers across disciplines: production format, participant frames, and so on. Although Goffman does not perform systematic, CA-style analyses, his work is provocative and generative—much in the way Bakhtin’s is for many.


This is a groundbreaking, theoretically rich quantitative study of classroom discourse across many classrooms. In it, Nystrand and colleagues operationalize Bakhtin’s notion of the dialogic, by focusing on activities and questions that teachers and students ask in classroom conversations. It is a brilliant work, building on previous classroom studies by Cazden, Mehan, and Sinclair and Coulthard to make a very practical argument about English teaching.

**Assignments:**

Data Analysis I DUE; Discussion Group 5

**Activity:** Data Session

**11/10 Dialogic and interactional analysis 2: Discourse, participation, and dialogism in classrooms and other contexts of schooling**

**Focal Questions:** How do three researchers in education study participation and positioning from a dialogic perspective? How does Vasquez use Goffman’s concept of face to analyze interactions between supervisors and teaching assistants in post-observation meetings? How can discourse study allow us to consider gender issues in classrooms? How do we think about the range of methodologies across these three studies?

**Required Reading:**


This piece was a pilot study for a dissertation study. Vasquez analyzes the challenging face work that an Intensive English Program director and assistant director negotiated as they conducted post-observation meetings with English language teachers, balancing between the conflicting stances of critical evaluation and support. This piece, and the line of research of which it is part, have changed the way I think about doing field instruction!


**Recommended Reading:**


This is a book-length literature review, written for a general audience, on classroom discourse.


**Activity:** Dr. Beth Herbel-Eisenmann visit; Data session 4

**11/17 Intertextuality**

**Focal Questions:** How can discourse analysts pay attention to text-to-text relationships in discourse? What can we learn from doing so? How can using genre as a unit of analysis be useful in understanding intertextual relations
across texts?

**Required Reading:**
2. Johnstone, ch. 5.

**Recommended Reading:**

**Assignments:** Discussion Group 6

**Activity:** Data Session 5

**11/24 Discourse and Medium**

**Focal Questions:** To what does the term “medium” refer in discourse studies? How do scholars working in discourse analysis conceptualize the relationship between discourse and medium? How can this distinction be mobilized in the study of educational settings and texts?

**Required Readings**
1. Johnstone, ch. 6 Discourse and Medium.

**Recommended Readings:**

**Assignments:** Data exercise 2 DUE; Discussion Group 7

**Activities:** Data session 6; Group work with data exercises

**12/1 Identity, subjectivity, and the discursive production of knowledge**

**Focal Questions:** How does discourse shape identity and subjectivity? How can discourse analysis intervene with processes, such as those described by Goodwin & Mehan?


**Assignments:** Full draft of final project DUE

**Activities:** Peer review proposal drafts

**12/8: Critical Discourse Analysis: Ideology, power, and discourse**

**Focal Questions:** How do scholars concerned with discourse conceptualize ideology and power relations? What is “critical” about “critical discourse analysis”? What do critical approaches to discourse offer to education? What kinds of educational problems and questions is critical discourse analysis poised to address?

**Required Reading:**
1. Fairclough, Global capitalism and critical awareness of language. In Jaworski & Coupland (pp. 146–157).

**Activities:** Dr. Samantha Caughlan visit; Discuss Cover Letters for Final Project

**Final Class Meeting** (week of Dec. 15): This meeting will be largely celebratory, though I will require attendance since we will be doing several things “in conclusion.” Please post to the ANGEL discussion board your final project abstract and your reference list (one two-sided page, maximum), with relevant contact information, to share your
final work to colleagues in the class. This way, everyone has access to everyone else’s final project abstract and reference list. We will also be doing course evaluations.
Appendix: Transcription & Data Analysis Assignments, Final Project, and Confidentiality Statement

Transcription Assignment (10% of course grade)
For this exercise, you will choose a segment of data that you have generated or obtained from another source. Transcribe 2–5 minutes of spoken discourse using the linguistic criteria of Gee (1989, 1991, 2005). Arrange the discourse into a “text” that includes lines and stanzas (see Gee, 1989, 1991, 2005; Juzwik, 2004; and Poveda, 2002 for further elaboration and example). You may find it helpful to use oral narrative data for this assignment. Then, carefully re-transcribe one minute of your data using the conventions of conversation analysis (Atkinson & Heritage, 1999). Consult Rymes (2001); Schegloff & Sacks (1999); and Schiffrin (1999) for some (varied) examples of transcription in the conversation analysis tradition. Use Atkinson and Heritage (1999) as your definitive guide.

In a 500-word (approximately) discussion, compare the two transcriptions and the processes involved in your transcription work. Your comparison may touch upon such issues as: Describe the natural history of this decontextualization, entextualization, and recontextualization process? What does each transcription process you have used foreground, or allow you to see/hear most vividly? What does each background? What sorts of questions or problems might each type of transcription be useful in addressing? What sorts of audiences would be appropriate for each of the transcription methods, if embedded within a longer argument or article? Through the comparison, what insights do you glean about the “rhetoric” of transcription (Mishler, 1991)? What new questions/problems/issues related to transcription are opened up for you through this exercise? But, please, do not feel compelled to answer all these questions. In addition to reflecting on your work, this piece will be a conversation starter for in-class discussion. You will be expected to share this work with a small group during class on the day it is due: You are also welcome and encouraged to share the “live” data during a data session, if you like. You should get started with this exercise well before it is due—transcription always takes me longer than I project it will (due date—10/20).

Data Analysis Assignments 1 and 2 (10% each)
For these exercises, you will write two 4-page analysis papers, in which you connect ideas from course Reading and discussions to detailed observations from discourse data (your own, or someone else’s). You may wish to focus on the text you produce in the transcription assignment and to cut into this same text/context from two different angles in each of the two papers. Alternatively, you may want to pursue similar themes across different data, looking at how an issue/strategy plays out comparatively (this could potentially be moving toward an article-length paper). You may also choose to approach each analysis separately. In the data sessions, you are invited to share data that you would like to use in the analysis papers, and work through your data with the class. These assignments are meant to emphasize process over product; therefore, I will be looking to see that you have done an in-depth exploration of a particular “way in” (or perhaps a cluster of “ways in” to your data. I do not expect a polished analysis for either of the exercises (due dates—11/3 & 11/24).

Final Project (40% of course grade)
Imagine and design a practicum-length or dissertation-length study that incorporates discourse analysis as (at least) one of the methods to be used and write a proposal to obtain funding for this study. This project, which follows partial specifications for the Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship competition (www.spencer.org/programs/index.htm), should include the following:

a) 200-word abstract, summarizing the substantive focus and research design of the study and its contribution to education;
b) 2,000-word (or less) narrative describing the proposed project and written for a generalist audience. Include the goals of the project, its contribution to the field, and the significance of the work, especially as it relates to education. Place the project in context and outline the theoretical grounding and the relevant literature. Describe the research questions and the research design, the methods of gathering and analyzing data, and interpretation techniques. This narrative discussion should not exceed 2,000 words or 10 double-spaced typed pages. An additional one-page single-spaced bibliography (using the citation style most relevant to your field of interest) of the sources most important to your research should be appended. Works cited in the narrative discussion should be included in this bibliography.
General criteria by which this proposal will be evaluated for purposes of this class include: a) importance of the research question to education, b) quality of the research approach and theoretical approach, and c) quality of writing. More specific questions that will be used to evaluate your proposal include these:

- To what extent does the narrative display an adequate grounding in discourse theory?
- To what extent are the discourse analytic design and the discourse analytic methods appropriate to answer the research question(s)?
- To what extent is the study’s argued relevance to education convincing? To what extent is the study likely to yield new knowledge about an important educational issue?
- To what extent does the narrative discussion display strong authorship skills, with a clear organization and structure?

A proposed title for your final project and a (no more than) one-page outline of your proposal is due at the beginning of class on October 27. A completed (not partial) draft of your proposal is due at the beginning of class on December 1. Please bring five hard copies of the draft to class: one each for a group of 4 and one for me. On that day, you will work with a group of peers to give and receive feedback on your writing; I will not respond to this draft. The final (for this class) draft of the project is due in hard copy at the beginning of our course meeting on December 15. Along with the final draft of your proposal, please prepare a one-page cover letter, to me, in which you discuss how this proposal shows your learning in this course. What key concepts from your reading in, and beyond, this seminar have you used or further developed? What discourse analytic approach(es) have been especially generative and how have you interpreted the approach(es) for your work? I encourage you to identify specific key words and analytic practices that are crucial to the methodology and/or theory outlined in your proposal. In working through the proposal, what *new* issues have been raised as you imagine conducting a discourse-intensive analysis. This letter, along with the above questions, will guide my reading of your final proposal. The letter may also include any particular feedback you would like to receive from me, future goal(s) for this text, and so on.

For our final class (December 15), please post to the ANGEL discussion board your final project abstract and your reference list (one two-sided page, maximum), with relevant contact information, to share your final work to colleagues in the class.

Confidentiality Statement
Because some of the tapes we view may involve people living in Michigan, it is essential that you remember to make every effort to protect the anonymity and privacy of these participants. This is the agreement we make with participants when we ask them to be taped and when we gain permission from an IRB board to carry out research using discourse. Thus if you meet someone who you think appeared in one of the videotapes, do not bring up the subject. Even if *they* mention that they may have been in a videotape in your class (highly unlikely), it is your responsibility to tell them you cannot talk about it because of issues of confidentiality.

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