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17. Discourse Analysis

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[I]n the world of human beings, you won't find a language by itself – the Dutch language strolling the canals, or the English language having a nice cup of tea, or the German language racing madly along the autobahn. You only find discourse.

Robert de Beaugrande (1997: 36)

To imagine a world without discourse is to imagine a world without language and therefore to imagine the unimaginable. We get through our day exchanging various oral and written language (or, talk and text). We live by *languaging* or *discoursing*, not in discrete audio or visual units but in connected sound waves and orthographic forms to which we assign meaning on the basis of our past experience with them and on the basis of the situations in which these waves and forms are used. Discourse analysis is concerned with the contexts in and the processes through which we use oral and written language to specific audiences, for specific purposes, in specific settings. Many years ago, the well-known linguist William Labov observed that the term "sociolinguistics" is redundant – to him language is inherently social and so should be linguistics, the study of language. Today, we might draw an analogy about discourse analysis: one cannot understand language fully without looking at language use.

1 What Is Discourse? A Preliminary Characterization

The term "discourse" is used by many in very different senses, some having little to do with language. For instance, the term "the discourse of racial discrimination" as used in the media and some of the social sciences often refers not to the language use of those who practice racial discrimination but to the ideologies and belief systems generated therein. In fact, studies of racial discriminatory discourse in political science or history for example may not pay any attention to language at all. To differentiate discourse studies which do not focus on language and those which do, some researchers have made the distinction between the big D which concerns general ways of viewing the world and general ways of behaving (including speaking) and the small d which concerns actual, specific language use. Here, we are concerned with discourse as situated language use, or the small d, if you will.

What makes discourse analysis stand out as a discipline independent from although intricately interwoven with other domains of linguistic inquiry is that, more than any other domains of linguistics, discourse analysis emphasizes that language is not merely a self-contained system of symbols but more importantly a mode of doing, being, and becoming. Comparing with other domains of linguistics which have a specific / definable scope of inquiry (e.g., phonology on sound systems, pragmatics on rules governing information processing in the mind), discourse analysis's concern may seem far broader and therefore more elusive: discourse analysis seeks to describe and explain

linguistic phenomena in terms of the affective, cognitive, situational, and cultural contexts of their use and to identify linguistic resources through which we (re)construct our life (our identity, role, activity, community, emotion, stance, knowledge, belief, ideology, and so forth). Essentially, it asks why we use language the way we do and how we live lives linguistically.

To this end, discourse analysts insist on the use of naturally occurring language data (as opposed to invented data). However, in spite of the shared global aim, different discourse analysts may focus on vastly different aspects of communication, draw upon divergent analytical traditions, and resort to sometimes incommensurable theories and methodologies. The main purpose of this chapter is not to systematically trace the intellectual genesis or diversity of discourse analysis or to review all approaches and methods used in discourse analysis. Readers interested in these issues are referred to Schiffrin (1993), van Dijk (1997), Ochs et al. (1996). My objective here is to address in simple terms the following question: what is discourse analysis and what do discourse analysts do?

As mentioned before, discourse analysis focusses on language as not merely systems of acoustic and orthographic symbols and rules for sequencing words or inferring meaning, but, rather, on language use motivated by real communicative needs and language as a means through which we accomplish various actions and interactions. Broadly speaking, discourse research can be divided into two major types of inquiries: (1) why some but not other linguistic forms are used on given occasions and (2) what are the linguistic resources for accomplishing various social, affective, and cognitive actions and interactions. Below we will consider both emphases.

2 Communicative Motivations for the Selection of Linguistic Forms

One set of questions that discourse analysts are concerned with have to do with the communicative motivations for the selection of linguistic forms. Unlike formal linguists (or autonomist linguists) who believe that language is a self-contained system, discourse linguists maintain that language is inseparable from other aspects of our life and that the selection of linguistic forms should be explained in terms of authentic human communicative needs (i.e., social, interactional, cognitive, affective needs). This position is compatible with and is inspired by insights from a number of different sources including anthropology, cognitive science, functional linguistics, psycholinguistics, philosophy, and sociology.

The following is a transcript of the beginning of an actual face-to-face meeting between a university student Susan (S) and her academic advisor Neil (N). The meeting was audio-recorded by myself as part of a project on institutional discourse (He 1998). S intends to go to medical school and wishes to find out which major will give her the best chance of being accepted by medical school. Helen, mentioned in their talk, is another academic advisor. I will use this segment and segments related to it to illustrate some of the main issues which concern discourse analysts and some of the important analytical traditions which have influenced the practice of discourse analysis.

(1)

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":" = prolonged syllable; "=" = latching, i.e., when the
current speaker barely finishes, the next speaker begins;
"CAPS" = stressed syllable; "(.)" = untimed micropause; "."
= falling intonation; "," = rising intonation; "(0.0)" =
silences roughly in seconds and tenths of seconds; "( )" =
undecipherable hearing; "[" = onset of overlap.
001  N:  So:.
002  S:  All right um so,=
003  N:  =RIGHT now you are a math major.
004  S:  I AM a math I mean I TRANSferred as a math major.
005  N:  Ok.
006      (.)
007  N:  Oh (.) Probably PRE-math.
008  S:  Premath (.) that's right=
009  N:  =Ok,=
010  S:  =Lemme=
011  N:  =( ) look at your file.
012  S:  Trans- yeah I HAVE that.
013      (.8)
014  S:  Ok I'll FIND it in a second,
015  N:  All right=
016  S:  =But um (.2) see (.) um I: would like to go to (.)
017      med school,
018  N:  Uhuh,
019  S:  Ok, (.8) and uh when I (.2) when I was in the
020      orientation, (.) Helen told me that (.2) it's a
021      LOT better if I am a MATH major, (.) 'cause uh
022      medical schools they prefer math major people.
023      (.4) And I am not sure how that I mean I I
024      believed her THEN but NOW I've been talking to
025      [people
026  N:  [And NOW you DON'T believe her.
027  S:  Yeah I am NOT sure if that is the (.2) the RIGHT
028      thing or no:t.
029  N:  I would say um (.) I'm not as much of an expert (.)
030      about what happens to math majors (.) as Helen is.
031      She's (.2) doing research with what WHAT (.) has
032      happened to CU math majors and where they GO.
033      (.3)
034  N:  Uh but I'd say that certainly (.) medical school
035      doesn't CARE what your major IS.
036      (.8)
037  N:  Y=
038  S:  =Yeah that's what I heard.
039  N:  What they do care is (.2) uh did you take the
040      appropriate classes, Do you have the: (.) the
041      grades for appropriate classes, Do you have the
042      overall GPA do you have letters of recommendation
043      and so on so on so on.
044      (.5)
```

Looking at this transcript, discourse analysts will consider a number of things, centered around the question why the speakers select the linguistic forms that they do on this particular moment. Below we discuss some of the concerns, not in any particular order.

2.1 Context

One of the first questions discourse analysts ask is what is happening in this stretch of talk, who the participants are, where they are, and why they are there. In other words, discourse analysts are quintessentially concerned with the *context* of language use. For discourse linguists believe that linguistic choices are not made arbitrarily but, rather, are systematically motivated by contextual factors. One influential model to describe context comes from a branch of linguistic anthropology known as ethnography of speaking or ethnolinguistics or ethnopragmatics (Duranti and Goodwin 1992). In this model, the range of parameters which need to be taken into consideration when characterizing context is summarized by the *SPEAKING* acronym (Hymes 1974), which stands for Situation (setting, scene), Participants (addressor and addressee), Ends (goals and outcomes), Act sequence (message form and message content), Key (tone, manner), Instrumentalities (channel, forms of speech), Norms (norms of interaction and norms of interpretation), and Genres (text types). Context as so described helps us understand what type of *speech events* or *speech activity* – a set of interpersonal relationships and a set of interpretative frames in relation to some communicative goal – we are dealing with. Given that we have in front of us an academic counseling encounter and not a job interview, for example, we will have certain expectations about topical progression, turn-taking rules, and outcome of the interaction as well as constraints on context. In this case, the Situation is an academic advising meeting taking place in a university. Participants include the student and her advisor. The Ends are to help the student choose the optimal path while observing the university's rules and policies. The Act sequence entails problem presentation and problem solution. The Key is formal but friendly. The Instrumentality is spoken language. The Norms include the advisor withholding personal opinions and leaving decision making to the student. And the Genre is a face-to-face interview.

Another important tradition which has impacted the approach to context in discourse analysis is a school of functional linguistics called Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday 1985, Hasan 1995). In this theory, the notion of context owes its origin to the notion of *context of situation* developed by the anthropologist Malinowski. In Malinowski's sense, the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of utterances; in other words, a given utterance has no meaning unless it is accompanied by ethnographic analysis of situations within which interaction takes place. This notion was later elaborated and modified by Firth, a British linguist, who points out that a context of situation for linguistic work entails the following dimensions: (a) the relevant features of participants: persons, personalities, both verbal and nonverbal actions of the participants; (b) the relevant objects; and (c) the effect of the verbal action. When the idea is further developed by Halliday (1985), the leading figure in Systemic Functional Grammar, and his colleagues, context is represented as a complex of three dimensions: First, the *field* is the field of social action in which the discourse is embedded. Second, the *tenor* is the set of role relations among the relevant participants, including their statuses and roles and their permanent and temporary relationships. And third, the *mode* is the role of language in the interaction. In this view, language is a system of choices, choices made on the basis of a contextual configuration which accounts for field, tenor, and mode.

In our example, what is taking place (Field) is seeking and giving advice concerning academic matters in an American university setting. It is a routine activity for many undergraduate students in US universities and colleges and their on-campus academic advisors. The relationship between the student and the advisor (Tenor) is a complex one: on the one hand, the advisor represents the university institution and implements the university's various rules and policies; on the other hand, the advisor is also an advocate of the student's interests. Language in this instance constitutes the advising activity itself (Mode) – it is through talk that problems are identified and solutions formulated.

2.2 Rhetorical goal

On a more local level, some discourse analysts are concerned with the *rhetorical goal* of utterances. Consider lines 19–22 for instance:

```
019  S:  Ok, (.8) and uh when I (.2) when I was in the
020      orientation, (.) Helen told me that (.2) it's a
021      LOT better if I am a MATH major, (.) 'cause uh
022      medical schools they prefer math major people.
```

Is Susan's utterance here designed as a simple narration of a past event (that Helen told her something at some point) or is it a precursor to her counseling request (i.e. please tell me whether Helen is correct so that I can make up my mind about my major)? Does it function as an elaboration of what has been said before in line 16 "But I'd like to go to medical school" in which "but" already forecasts trouble? Or does it serve as a contrast to what has been said? These concerns fall within the domain of "rhetorical management" (Chafe 1980) or "rhetorical structures" (Mann and Thompson 1987) of information.

2.3 Speech act

Discourse analysts following a philosophical tradition called speech act theory will be asking what kind of *speech act* Susan's utterance is in these same lines and whether this act is accomplished through direct or indirect means. Speech act theory (Austin 1962, Searle 1969, 1979) says that language is used not only to describe things but to do things as well. For example, we use language to make requests (belonging to the class of directives), promises (commissives) or apologies (expressives). Utterances in instances like these (e.g., "But I would like to go to medical school") cannot be assessed in relation to truth and falsity; instead, they can only be assessed in relation to the necessary and sufficient conditions (known as "felicity conditions") for their accomplishment. Further, utterances act on three different levels: the literal level (locutionary act), the implied level (illocutionary act), and the consequence of the implied act (perlocutionary act). The locutionary meaning of what Susan says in lines 19–22 is thus what Helen told her. The illocutionary force is however subject to further determination: is it an indirect request for a second opinion? Or does it imply an invitation for Neil to ask further questions? Whichever the case, the perlocutionary upshot can be that Susan is taking advantage of the advisor–student relationship on this occasion to get Neil to do things without explicit requests. This line of inquiry leads to the analysis of language use by combining the analysis of the propositional content of utterances with their illocutionary force, which in turn permits us to draw inferences about the speaker's intentions and his / her inner world of beliefs, assumptions, desires, attitudes, stances, and so forth.

2.4 Scripts / plans

Psychologically oriented discourse analysts will also be interested in these lines, but more from the viewpoint of how this utterance will be processed in the head of the listener. What sorts of *scripts, plans*, and *macrostructure* (van Dijk and Kintsch 1983; Schanck and Abelson 1977) are relevant and necessary for Neil to understand Susan's utterance as it is intended? For instance, Neil would need to have a knowledge of what often takes place in an advice–seeking and advice–giving encounter so that any narration of past events may be assessed in terms of their problem–ridden nature. He would also need to properly position Susan's utterance in the context of her immediate and overall goals as well as in the context of the overall structure of meetings of this kind (which often begin with problem presentation, followed by problem solution, etc.). Script is a term used to describe the knowledge that we have of the structure of stereotypical event sequences such as seeking and giving academic advice in a university institutional setting. If such knowledge can be described in a formal way with explicit rules and conditions, then we may have a theory of how humans process natural language; furthermore, we may be able to program and test that knowledge on a computer.

2.5 Referentiality

Given the interest in the organization of information, discourse analysts have paid special attention to how entities are referred to in our utterances. Let us take a look at how Helen is referred to in the data segment. Below is the subsection containing reference to Helen.

```
019  S:  Ok, (.8) and uh when I (.2) when I was in the
020      orientation, (.) Helen told me that (.2) it's a
021      LOT better if I am a MATH major, (.) 'cause uh
022      medical schools they prefer math major people.
023      (.4) And I am not sure how that I mean I I
024      believed her THEN but NOW I've been talking to
025      [people
026  N:  [and NOW you DON'T believe her.
027  S:  Yeah I am NOT sure if that is the (.2) the RIGHT
028      thing or no:t.
029  N:  I would say um (.) I'm not as much of an expert (.)
030      about what happens to math majors (.) as Helen is.
031  N:  She's (.2) doing research with what WHAT (.) has
```

We see that when Helen is first mentioned in this spate of talk, she is referred to by her name (line 20). When she is mentioned again in the same speaking turn by Susan, she is referred to as "her" (line 24). She is referred to in the same way by Neil in line 26. The choice between a proper noun "Helen" and a pronoun "her" (and other possibilities such as "that lady," "this other advisor") partly has to do with whether and how Helen has been mentioned before in prior talk and whether the entity "Helen" is recoverable or accessible from previous discourse or from the listener's existing knowledge. In other words, it has to do with the *information status* of "Helen" – whether "Helen" is *given* information or *new* information (also known as old vs. new, or shared vs. new, or known vs. unknown) (Halliday 1967, Prince 1981, Givon 1983). In line 20, since Helen has not been mentioned before, the choice of "she / her" is out of the question. And presuming academic advisors know each other and often address each other on first name basis, it is appropriate and efficient for Susan to choose "Helen" among all possibilities. In line 24, since Helen has been introduced into the talk and since no other female person has been mentioned, "her" is the most efficient reference and cannot be mistaken for anyone else. In line 26, Neil shows that he really follows what Susan is saying by predicting what she will say next; "her" in this case then is intended and can only be interpreted to be coreferential with "her" in line 24. Some discourse analysts, sometimes known as text linguists (Halliday and Hasan 1976, de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981) are particularly interested in how referential forms make a stretch of discourse *cohesive* in form and *coherent* in meaning.

We may then ask why in line 30 Neil refers to Helen by her name again, since he has already previously referred to her with a pronoun "her." Well, besides old vs. new, other factors come into play. Note that between Neil's two speaking turns which respectively begin at line 26 and line 29, there is an intervening turn by Susan (lines 27–8). And that turn is about "I" (Susan) and says nothing about Helen. When Neil speaks again in line 29, he speaks of himself in comparison with Helen. In other words, lines 19–28 constitute a problem–presentation phase; beginning from line 29, Neil starts giving advice. These two sections are two different *episodes* (Fox 1987, van Dijk and Kintsch 1983). Discourse studies have shown that at the beginning of a new episode, references are likely to be made in ways similar to how they are made for the first time.

2.6 Topicality and thematicity

Another set of issues which concern how information is presented – what is an utterance about, what is the starting point of a message, what is the focus of a message – includes *topic* and *theme*. These are some of the most controversial concepts in discourse studies; until this day there remain substantial disagreements among discourse linguists as to whether these two notions are the same and what they entail.

Topic has been defined in terms of aboutness, i.e., the part of the utterance about which something is said. It has also been considered in terms of its grammatical and discourse functions. For example, in some languages such as Chinese, the element central to discourse is often placed initially preceding the utterance and assumes a certain grammatical role (e.g. "Xiaomei, wo zao jiu renshi ta le" (Xiaomei, I have known her for a long time) where "Xiaomei" specifies the topic). These languages are called

topic-prominent languages (Li and Thompson 1976).

The notion of Theme was originally developed by a European linguistic tradition known as the Prague School (Danes 1974, Mathesius 1975). Working with Slavic languages whose word order is more flexible than languages such as English and depends crucially on degrees of knownness / givenness of information, Prague School linguists developed what is called the *functional sentence perspective* which says that word order has to do with how informative each element in the utterance is – *communicative dynamism*, or CD. A sentence begins with elements with the lowest CD and ends with those with the highest CD. Theme, in this framework, is the part of the utterance with the lowest degree of CD. Influenced by the Prague School approach, linguists working within systemic functional grammar take thematic information to be information from which the speaker proceeds and thematic organization to be a method of development of the text (Fries 1981, Hasan and Fries 1995).

Back to the interaction between Susan and Neil. We have seen that at the beginning of their meeting, Susan reported to Neil what Helen had told her about choices of major for medical school. At a later point, Neil comments as follows (presented clause-by-clause; indentation shows sub-clauses; initial elements up until the grammatical subject of the clause are in bold face):

(2)

```
Neil2: 121-137
   N:  y' see there're there're two ways  (.2)
          you can read what she said.
       One way is (.)
     medical schools look at transcripts
          and look for major
       and they see math major
       and they circle with a red pen
       and they they add ten points to your your score or
          something
       and they let you in more often.
     (.3)
   N:  The other thing is
     they look at your transcript
          and look at your scores  (.2)
       and (they look at) your MCAT
          and look at your letters of recommendation  (.2)
       they admit people
       and when you look at the people they admit,
          there are more math majors than you expect.
     (1.0)
```

Here Neil outlines two ways of interpreting what Helen said with "One way" and "The other thing" at the beginning of his two main clauses. In each interpretation, he begins with "medical schools" or "they." A topical analysis says that, in this stretch of talk, "medical schools" is the entity about which something is said. A thematic analysis says that "medical schools" specifies the frame within which something is said. Hence Topic and Theme may (but do not necessarily) reside in the same elements, but they represent different meanings.

2.7 Sequential organization

The selection and interpretation of linguistic forms in a given utterance have a lot to do with the *sequential context* of the utterance (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 1996, Ford 1993, Ochs et al. 1996, Schegloff 1979, 1996). For instance, where is the utterance positioned in interaction? Is this utterance opening a dialog? Or is it a response to some prior talk? Or is it a repair of some prior talk? Or is it part of a narrative episode? Discourse analysis in recent years has been profoundly influenced by a distinct approach to human interaction known as Conversation Analysis (Sacks et al. 1974, Sacks

1992, Atkinson and Heritage 1984). This analytical tradition has provided the most systematic and rigorous account of how we manage talk in interaction. Central to conversation analysis is the concept of *turn taking*, which can be described by a set of rules with ordered options that operate on a turn-by-turn basis as a locally, sequentially managed system. This system explains how speakers "earn" their right to speak, how speaking rights are negotiated and interactionally managed, how the next speaker is selected, how overlaps occur and how they are resolved, and how speakers fix problems in comprehension and miscommunication. A turn is constructed with turn-constructional-units, which refer to sentential, clausal, phrasal, lexical, intonational, or pragmatic units (Sacks et al. 1974, Ford and Thompson 1996). The rules of turn taking apply at the end of each turn-constructional-unit, which is called a transition-relevant-place.

I will introduce two more concepts from conversation analysis to prepare for the discussion of the following sample data segment. One of them is *adjacency pair* (Schegloff and Sacks 1973) – a sequence of two utterances adjacent to each other, produced by different speakers, ordered as a first part and second part, and typed, so that a first part requires a particular second part or range of second parts. A good example of an adjacency pair is a question–answer pair. The other concept is called *repair organization* (Schegloff et al. 1977). When trouble in conversation occurs, it is noticed and then corrected, either by the party whose turn contains the source of trouble or by some other party. This sequence of trouble + initiation-of-correction + correction is known as a *repair trajectory*. Repair occurs when one party corrects his or her own talk or that of another party and can be accomplished in a number of ways.

Now let's consider the following segments (3) and (4) from the same meeting between Susan and Neil. Here they are discussing specific courses Susan has taken and can take the next semester. I wish to show through these two segments how Neil and Susan define and modify the meanings of the modal verb "can" through interaction.

(3)

```
"italics" = modal verbs
230  S:  No. Uh I'm going to (.2) well I have a Fortran,
231  N:  Uhuh,
232  S:  That Helen said we can just=
233  N:  =should should should accept that.
234  S:  Right.
```

(4)

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283  N:  Ok. [you can swi- you can switch.
284  S:      [and I figured it's a lot harder.
285  S:  I can?=
286  N:  =Y'know you can take 8A 6B 6C if you want.
287      That's fine. [No problem.
288  S:               [Ok. Yeah.
289      (.)
```

In theory, *can* can mean a number of different things: it can index the speaker's knowledge or belief, it may imply necessity or logical possibility or probability, it may indicate interpersonal obligation, and so forth. In (3), Neil completes the turn that is initiated by Susan (lines 232–3). In the course of doing so, he replaces S's reported *can* (line 232) with *should* (233) and finishes S's turn, thereby interpreting S's report of what Helen said. S agrees with such an interpretation ("Right," line 234). Thus through Neil's completion and repair of Susan's turn and Susan's subsequent ratification, Neil and Susan jointly interpret *can* as used by Helen to mean "should."

(4) is a case involving S initiating repair (line 285) of N's turn (283), which results in N's repair in 286.

The interpretation of *can* in 285 and 286 should not be made arbitrarily; it should be made in relation to *can* in the original turn of 283, as 285 is a repair initiation of 283 and 286 is a repair (a specification) of 283.

The above is not an exhaustive list of features to which discourse analysts attend. Neither is it an inventory list for anyone who does discourse analysis to follow. It only gives us an idea of some of the features which often draw the attention of discourse analysts. Depending upon their intellectual persuasion, different discourse analysts may focus on one or several of the above features. There is, however, no single study which considers all of them at the same time.

We have so far considered one set of questions which occupy discourse analysts: on given occasions, why do we select the linguistic form that we do? We have seen that the answer to this question is complex and multifaceted. Discourse analysts have sought to explain linguistic choices in terms of ethnographic contexts, knowledge structure, rhetorical organization, communicative intentions, textual organization, information management and sequential organization, among others. Next we turn to the other set of questions: how does language use contribute to our social, cultural, intellectual, emotional life?

3 Linguistic Resources for Doing and Being

As discussed previously, discourse linguists take a dialectical view of the relationship between language and other aspects of human life. On the one hand, the selection of linguistic forms is shaped by various contextual factors; on the other hand, the way in which we use language contributes to / constitutes other aspects of life. Thus our second set of questions are corollaries of the first set. In this section, I first sketch some of the topical areas of work along this line. I then illustrate how analysis may be performed by returning to the interaction between Susan, the university student and Neil, her academic advisor.

Some of the earlier work in discourse studies concerned how *ordinary, everyday activities* are accomplished linguistically. The tradition of Conversation Analysis, for instance, was developed in the late 1960s and 1970s and was motivated by a concern with the linguistic and interactional resources that we deploy in making sense of everyday life. Conversation, or talk-in-interaction, is considered the primordial means through which we conduct our social life and construct various social relationships. Discourse work from early socio-linguistics looked at, for example, how syntactic structures reconstructed life experience in narratives (Labov 1972).

Recently there has been a surge of research interest in how *institutional, professional activities* are carried out linguistically (e.g., Cazden 1988, Drew and Heritage 1992, Gunnarsson et al. 1997, He 1998, Lemke 1990, Young and He 1998). How do doctors talk to their patients, therapists to their clients, advisors to their advisees, business people to their counterparts, teachers to their students, prosecutors to their witnesses, interviewers to their interviewees, etc.? What kinds of speech exchange system (e.g., a particular turn-taking pattern; storytelling) are characteristic of the particular speech event? What are some of the salient lexico-grammatical forms (e.g., modal verbs such as *can* and *must;* generic uses of personal pronouns such as *you* or *they*) used in these events? How does the way in which the participants use language reenact, maintain, or alter their institutional roles and identities? How are institutional activities accomplished through verbal and nonverbal interaction?

Furthermore, discourse analysts have undertaken to examine how *identities* are reconstructed linguistically. Instead of treating the language user's identity as a collection of static attributes or as some mental construct existing prior to and independent of human actions, discourse analysts approach identity as something dynamic which is continually emerging and which identifies what a person becomes and achieves through on-going interactions with other persons and objects (Ochs 1993, Shotter 1993). Along this line, institutional identities (Sanders 1994), gender identities (Tannen 1990), ethnic / cultural identities (Scollon and Scollon 1981, Wierzbicka 1992) have been examined as they evolve together with language use.

In a similar vein, discourse analysts have pursued the role of language in the (re)construction of *ideology* (van Dijk 1991), *epistemology* (Whalen and Zimmerman 1990), *emotion* (Capps and Ochs 1995), *cognition* (Goodwin 1994), *expertise* (Jacoby and Gonzales 1991), *power* (Duranti 1995),

among other facets of life.

Last but not least, research from a branch of linguistic anthropology, known as language socialization, has been dedicated to the scrutiny of the impact of language use on the *socialization* of values, norms, and other sociocultural knowledge. The focus is on the organization of communicative practices through which novices (e.g., children) learn to become competent members of their communities (e.g., Heath 1983, Ochs 1988, Schieffelin 1990). This body of research examines audio- / video-recorded, carefully transcribed, recurrent socialization activities involving experts (e.g., caregivers) and novices (e.g., children) and explores the impact of the verbal and non-verbal details of interaction on the construction of social and cultural ideologies that define a community.

Space does not permit me to include more topical areas of discourse work or to cite more studies for illustrative purposes. We can safely say that with our life and our world becoming increasingly rich and diverse, the possibility and potential for discourse analysis is unlimited. Let me next return to the data segment about Susan and her academic advisor Neil to illustrate how analysis of language data *vis-à-vis* some of the concerns sketched above may be carried out.

3.1 Roles and identities

The first order of business when the participants sit down in the counseling office is to establish who and what they are to each other *vis-à-vis* the counseling encounter. This may sound superfluous as clearly both participants already have pre-existing respective identities as "counselor" and "student" defined by the university. But these pre-existing titles do not specify what kind of counselor or student they are, nor do they provide concrete guidance as for example how one student's problem might be treated differently from another's or how one counselor's advice might be taken differently from another's. Despite their generic roles and identities, the participants still need to establish their attributes specific to their meeting – the student in terms of his / her academic conditions which occasioned his / her visit and the counselor in terms of his / her authority and expertise with respect to the student's conditions.

In the above data segment, how to categorize the student in terms of an academic major is the focus of talk in the initial minute. Is she a math major or a pre-math major? Is she a committed math major or a math major by virtue of the fact that she transferred to CU as a math major? How do the participants arrive at a shared understanding? Why do the participants choose academic major as an attribute relevant and important to the beginning of their encounter? How is this categorization to affect subsequent talk and subsequent counseling activities? Is the counselor a knowledgeable and competent one?

3.2 Activities and tasks

In addition to establishing occasion-specific identities, the participants also need to determine and agree upon the task and purpose of their meeting. What is the counseling problem? How is the problem presented, identified, and formulated? What role does each participant play in the identification and formulation of the counseling problem? When the student makes an appointment with the academic counseling office, he / she is asked what his / her needs are. The university representative who schedules the appointment summarizes the student's response on the basis of the former's understanding of what the problem is or could be. With that summary he / she (the representative) then fills in the slot "purpose of visit" on the appointment slip. Hence what is stated on the appointment slip as "purpose of visit" reflects how the person who schedules the appointment characterizes the problem, a characterization often inevitably too distilled to be informational and sometimes unfortunately too speculative to be accurate.

In the case of Susan, "choosing a major" was put down as purpose of visit on the appointment slip. This could mean a number of different things. It could be that the student has not declared a major and is in need of help with choosing a major. It could be that the student has not officially declared a major but has already made up her mind about which major to choose and is therefore in need of help with technical procedures to get into the major. It could be that the student already has a major but for one reason or another is contemplating changing into a different major. It could also be that the student has a number of concerns, the top one on the list being matters related to choosing a major. Each of the above scenarios presents a different set of tasks and activities – different forms to

fill, different kinds of information to discuss, and different ways of talking and interacting. Although the student's record file can supply certain information (e.g., whether or not the student has officially declared a major), which scenario each specific case is can only be determined through the actual encounter between the student and the counselor.

It turns out that Susan already has a major. How do the counselor and student unpack the stated purpose of visit: "choosing a major"? Note that nowhere in the above segment can we find utterances such as "I am here because I would like to …" or "Tell me specifically what I can help you with." How then do the participants come to a shared orientation to re-considering majoring in mathematics as their task?

For ease of reference, let me reproduce the first 8 lines below:

```
001  N:  So:.
002  S:  All right um so,=
003  N:  =RIGHT now you are a math major.
004  S:  I AM a math I mean I TRANSferred as a math major.
005  N:  Ok.
006      (.)
007  N:  Oh (.) Probably PRE-math.
008  S:  Premath (.) that's right=
```

We see that in the very beginning Neil identifies Susan in terms of her major (line 3, "you are a math major") and displays his orientation to the service request; his "RIGHT now" (line 3) casts being math major as S's temporary identity and forecasts a change of major, which will be the focus of discussion. Subsequently, Susan corrects Neil's categorizing her as a math major through a self-repair of her own utterance (line 4, "I AM a math I mean I TRANSferred as a math major"). By changing from "I AM," indicating a present state of being, to "I TRANSferred," indicating a past action, Susan focusses on the process of how she became a math major. She also displays a lack of commitment to being a math major, and thereby converges with Neil's understanding (line 3) that their encounter is to be about a change of major. In what follows, Neil revises "math major" into "PRE-math" (line 7), an official university category which on this occasion also echoes and reinforces Susan's tentativeness displayed in her previous turn. Susan then acknowledges that Neil's categorization of her is accurate (line 8). Hence, before the first seven utterances are completed, a shared orientation to the student's identity and the institutional task at hand has been constituted.

Susan's identity, in this instance her academic major, is co-constructed in this case to scaffold the counseling problem (i.e., choosing a major); the selection of "math" or "pre-math" as an identificatory category is bound to what the participants collectively take this particular counseling encounter to be about. It can also be seen that the establishing of institutional identity is a reciprocal process; the establishment of the student's identity also establishes that of the counselor. Recall that Susan produces her initial correction of Neil as a self-repair of her own utterance ("I AM a math I mean I TRANSferred as a math major," line 4). With this self-correction, it appears that she is correcting herself and not the advisor, a strategy by which she collaborates in constituting the advisor's expert role. Though Neil mitigates his subsequent correction by using an adverb of uncertainty ("probably") in "probably PRE-math," this choice of modifier in fact enhances his expertise by invoking a large body of experience from which he can generalize. The advisor thus demonstrates his ability to make judgments on the probability of facts which are not explicit. By situating the identity of Susan's major within the specific counseling task at hand and in relation to the advisor's expert role, we are now able to view the identity of the student not only as embedded in the academic counseling context, but also actively contributing to the context.

3.3 Knowledge and stances

Equally important are the institutional knowledge the participants exhibit and the affective stances they project. How does Susan present her understanding that being a math major may pose a problem for her to later attend medical school? Does she appear to be certain or tentative? In either case, what does she do linguistically to help her construct that appearance? What is the function of

quoting Helen, another advisor? What role does Neil play while the student is fleshing out her purpose of visit? How does Neil address her concern? Does he provide a straightforward answer? Is he assertive, direct, cautious, and / or empathetic?

In more general terms, how do the participants come to know what they know? How do they assign responsibility of what they say and what they experience? How do they position themselves in relation to each other and to the university institution? How does the counselor manage the dual role of being an institutional gatekeeper and an advocate of the student's interests?

Again, for ease of reference, here are lines 16–33:

```
016  S:  =But um (.2) see (.) um I: would like to go to (.)
017       med school,
018  N:  Uhuh,
019  S:  Ok, (.8) and uh when I (.2) when I was in the
020       orientation, (.) Helen told me that (.2) it's a
021       LOT better if I am a MATH major, (.) 'cause uh
022       medical schools they prefer math major people.
023       (.4) And I am not sure how that I mean I I
024       believed her THEN but NOW I've been talking to
025       [people
026  N:  [NOW you DON'T believe her.
027  S:  Yeah I am NOT sure if that is the (.2) the RIGHT
028       thing or no:t.
029  N:  I would say um (.) I'm not as much of an expert (.)
030       about what happens to math majors (.) as Helen is.
031       She's (.2) doing research with what WHAT (.) has
032       happened to CU math majors and where they GO.
033       (.3)
```

Here Susan reports that Helen has stated that medical schools accept a higher percentage of math majors. In the report, Susan carefully retains her own attitude separate from Helen's through her distinct temporal and modal choices. What Helen reportedly said is encoded with straightforward tense markers only (lines 19–22); whereas the student's own commentary is encoded with hedges ("not sure" in lines 23 and 27) which help construct a sense of doubt and uncertainty in contrast to the certainty and truthfulness of Helen's speech. Thus Susan portrays the account of the problem as certain and truthful and her own attitude as doubtful and uncertain, which in turn warrants Neil's attention, alignment, and subsequent advice. And Neil is not merely a passive recipient of Susan's report. Rather, he actively anticipates her account (line 18), sympathetically collaborates with her in her account (line 26), and cautiously provides his assessment of the situation without discrediting Helen, his colleague (line 29 and onward).

Hence we see the attitudes and dispositions of the advisor and the student interact closely with the task of seeking and giving advice as well as with the participants' role identities. Being a competent academic advisor means in part to be able to make clear to the students what is required, what is assumed, what is preferred and what is permitted by the university. Complementarily, part of being a competent student advisee entails being able to project others' as well as their own stances so as to effectively elicit the advisor's advice.

Put more generally, the above analysis views the university institution as not merely a represented entity but a lived one. Institutions such as a university academic advising center do not just exist in the form of physical structure, personnel, and various rule books such as the university catalog, written policies regarding course credits and so forth. They are lived by their members through seemingly routine actions, interactions, and activities. Knowledge and knowledgeability regarding institutional structures and constraints, institutional goals and institutional roles is produced and reproduced through the details of the participants' moment-by-moment conduct.

We have, to some extent, looked at the aspect of participants' conduct that is accomplished through

language use. By language use, I have meant not only the use of vocabulary and grammar and but also the sequential organization of talk. These two jointly provide means through which institutions live and change. As academic counselors and student counselees talk to each other, as they ask and answer questions, as they tell and retell stories, as they quote others' speech, as they hedge or assert, they are actively engaged in reconstructing the institutional nature of their encounter.

4 Discourse Analysis, Linguistics, and More

By way of concluding this chapter, let me say a few things to re-situate our discussion both within and beyond linguistics. While it is correct to say that discourse analysis is a subfield of linguistics, it is also appropriate to say that discourse analysis goes beyond linguistics as it has been understood in the past. For as I have discussed above, discourse analysts research various aspects of language not as an end in itself, but as a means to explore ways in which language forms are shaped by and shape the contexts of their use. Further, discourse analysis draws upon (and is practiced by scholars in) not only linguistics (especially functional linguistics), but also anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, cognitive science, and other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences concerned with human communication.

Discourse analysis is a wonderfully creative enterprise. It is also a disciplined enterprise. It is creative in the sense that one can, for instance, combine interests in conversation analysis, grammar, storytelling, institutional discourse and gender by investigating how gender is reflected and recreated through specific speech exchange systems and specific grammatical processes in conversational storytelling at workplaces. It is disciplined in the sense that not all approaches to discourse are equally defensible against all sources of doubt and that one needs to determine what constitutes the nature of the research question and to choose which set of theoretical and methodological constraints to abide by.

Discourse analysis promotes a view of language which says that language use is not only reflective of other aspects of our lives but is also constitutive of them. In this sense, it revitalizes, advances, and systematizes functional and anthropological oriented schools of linguistics, thus creating a healthy balance with autonomist linguistics. As it draws insights from various disciplines, it also contributes to interfacing linguistics with other domains of inquiries, such that for example we might now investigate the construction of culture through conversation or program computers to generate interactive texts based on our understanding of the rules and principles of human interaction. Finally, discourse analysis brings to linguistics and related disciplines a human dimension. It focusses on language as it is used by real people with real intentions, emotions, and purposes. It reminds us that "language has a heart" (Ochs and Schieffelin 1989) and that language users and linguists do too.

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