

# Use of Discourse Analysis in Various Disciplines

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## Abstract

The language plays an important role in the exchange of information and communication of knowledge of society, history, culture, traditions, and customs. Linguists analyse various uses of language to determine its impact and role in various domains of society such as media, politics, journalism, reporting, advertisement, war, criticism, and other such areas. Discourse analysis is associated with the use of language in various forms of communication such as written, spoken or signs of language. It helps in analysing how people say things, its impact on the audience, and how it affects the society, or the way society influences language/communication. This study aims to provide a systemic review of literature from various domains to determine how previous researchers explored discourse and language use in the society. The result reveals a strong connection between discourse analysis and language that reflect social practices and issues.

**Keywords:** discourse analysis, language use, society, the language of critique, disciplines, and critical discourse analysis

## 1. Introduction

Discourse analysis is defined “as a discursive formation in which the structures of sayability prompt the language of critical intervention with a much greater probability than in mainstream scholarship” (Nonhoff, 2017, p. 6). There are many concepts and definitions associated with the word discourse. Chilton (2014) defined it as ‘the use of language’ in any form of communication such as written, spoken, or sign language. The language plays an important role in communicating or transferring messages and knowledge across society, time, culture, and customs. For example, signs have played an important role in communicating socio-cultural practices of ancient Egyptians. Archaeologists and philologist use ancient and primitive written or sign languages to identify social practices, history, culture, customs, social norms, traditions, and other such information about the old civilizations and other societies. Van Dijk (1985) exemplifies the scope of discourse analysis as the use of written, spoken, and printed language to analyse the impact and role of texts or language in society through media communication, language and content of news, reports, journalism, political speech, advertisement, the language of war, criticism, and other such uses of language in the society in various disciplines.

As defined by Breeze (2011), discourse analysis, especially critical discourse analysis assists in “interpreting the way ideology functions in and through discourse” that helps in bridging the gap between “real language phenomena and the workings of power in society” (Breeze, 2011, p. 520). The discourse analysis provides a detailed understanding of how people say things, its impact on the audience, and how it affects the society, or the way society influences language/communication. Discourse involves all forms of communication and language use in the society, which offers a broad spectrum for its application in society and in research. Discourse theory focus on language use for human expressions and knowledge reflected in the society, the way it affects the society, and social factors that influence language use. Michael Foucault explored “regimes of truth” in various domains of society including social, psychological, political, sexual, and criminal perspectives, considering discourse analysis as an archaeology of knowledge (Foucault, 1977; 1980, p. 112). This paper aims at bridging the existing gaps to investigate dimensions and various disciplines that are explored or can be explored by the discourse analysis or applying the language of critique to understand various aspects of society.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Defining Discourse Analysis and Its Origin

The origin of discourse analysis “can be traced back to the study of language, public speech, and literature more than 2000 years ago” (Van Dijk, 1985, p. 1). The evidence of its historical existence can be seen in the classical rhetoric, public/political speeches, and the normative rules for using grammatically correct language. A discourse analyst is essentially interested in “who uses language, how, why and when” (van Dijk, 1997c, p. 3). This involves proper organization, planning, and approaches to language use to ensure persuasive effectiveness by focusing on classical rhetoric (Van Dijk, 1985).

According to Bavelas et al. (2002), discourse analysis can be defined as a systematic study of naturally occurring communication in the broadest sense at the level of meaning. However, recently the scope of discourse analysis has spread across several disciplines with diverse goals. This constantly growing and developing nature of the field of discourse analysis is also authenticated by Wood and Korger (2000) when they enlist several diverse disciplines where discourse analysis plays a vital role such as: philosophy, sociology, linguistics, and literary theory, anthropology, communication, education, and psychology (Wood & Korger cited in Bavelas et al., 2002, p. 103).

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the emergence of historical and comparative linguistics, rhetoric lost much of its importance in research and other uses of language. During 1974–1984, structural analysis of language replaced rhetoric with the developments in various fields of humanities and social sciences. These revolutionary changes resulted in the birth of discourse analysis as an interdisciplinary approach for the analysis of language use in various fields and disciplines including politics, academia, research, media, journalism, and many other fields (Van Dijk, 1985).

“Russian formalism” in anthropology, poetics, and linguistics development extended the use of discourse analysis in the theory and practice of art and film, semiotics, poetics, anthropology, folktale, phonology, morphology, psychology and many other disciplines (Van Dijk, 1985, p. 2). According to Van Dijk, 1985, French structuralism in the 1960s brought further changes in the anthropology, poetics, and other disciplines of the humanities and social science with interdisciplinary developments and semiotics. Modern discourse analysis emerged in the middle 1960s.

During 1970s discourse analysis gained more attention with the publication of the first monographs and use of systematic discourse analysis in various disciplines. A major development was recorded in the early 1970s with “the discovery in linguistics of the philosophical work by Austin, Grice, and Searle about speech acts” when the role of language was investigated in context-not only on sentence level. Furthermore, the emergence of new disciplines of science and technology such as artificial intelligence rediscovered the application of discourse analysis through various notions such as ‘script’, ‘scenario’, and ‘Trame’, in the works of Schank and Abelson during 70s (Van Dijk, 1985, p. 6). During the early 70s, developments in discourse analysis can be witnessed with the critical exploration of everyday conversations and natural dialogues in the society, studied under the discipline of sociology. Discourse analysis also assists in the exploration of discourse genres such as texts, stories, myths, folktale, as well as in the domains of grammar use, turn-taking in conversation, structures of sentences, pragmatics, philosophy, anthropology, speech acts, and various other disciplines.

### 2.2 Discourse Analysis and Critique

Discourse analysis is closely connected with the critique as it helps in examining and analysing various aspects of society through the medium of language. As stated by Breeze, Fairclough’s ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’ was subtitled as ‘The critical study of language’ (Breeze, 2011, p. 496). This is the reason; discourse analysis serves as an in-depth analysis and close understanding of various social phenomena reflected by the language or symbols. Foucault (1972) also discussed that discourse analysis was an effectively critical approach to view the clear picture of any socio-cultural phenomenon. Foucault also discussed the discourse analyses in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* as an effective approach to view the clear picture using critical approach (Foucault, 1972).

Nonhoff (2017) defined the relationship between discourse analysis and critique in two ways: (1) external and (2) integrated. The external relationship of discourse analysis and critique is expressed through core positions (Nonhoff, 2017). This concept is based on analysing social, political, and other problems with the critical perspectives, which is focused on “real” or “serious” problems using linguistic discourse analysis. Thus, it helps in a critique of certain societal conditions that can be transferred into a discourse analysis for the evaluation or analysis. As “critique precedes the analysis, it forms an external relationship with discourse analysis” (Nonhoff,

2017, p. 9). According to Herzog (2016, p. 288) discourse analysis helps in determining the human sufferings, 'discursive construction of realities', and revealing social responsibility to promote the social change.

In the integrated form, discourse analysis itself serves as a critique. As defined by (Nonhoff, 2017, p. 1), "critique emanates from discourse analysis itself, we would speak of an integrated relationship and would no longer speak of discourse analysis and critique, but of discourse analysis as critique". Breeze (2011) also discussed the effectiveness of discourse analysis for the evaluation of texts in determining the role of language and power in any social, political, or other such context.

### 3. Methodology

This study used the qualitative approach, which is effective for the in-depth study of a social phenomenon (Chenail, 2011; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014). This study investigated how various disciplines of discourse (language use in the society) are explored by previous researchers through the language of critique or using discourse analysis as a tool for critical analysis. For this purpose, a systemic review of previous research studies, scholarly articles, and research papers is conducted that are based on exploring how discourse analysis is used in various disciplines by Content analysis. Due to the limitation of time and specific subject area, the data was collected by selecting single research paper from the following mentioned disciplines. The data then coded and categorised into major themes for further analysis. In all, sixteen research papers are selected, one from each discipline as evidence that discourse analysis have become an effective tool for critique.

- 1) Politics
- 2) Media
- 3) Film
- 4) Literature
- 5) Journalism
- 6) Anthropology and trans-disciplinary fields
- 7) Science
- 8) Phonology & Morphology
- 9) Psychology
- 10) Nursing & Medicine
- 11) Law
- 12) Engineering and IT
- 13) Business, Economics, and Finance
- 14) Religion
- 15) Arts & Architecture
- 16) Marketing and Advertising

The research study for each discipline was selected using specific keywords on Google scholar and Google search engine to access authentic and reliable resources such as Elsevier, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Sage, Research gate, and other such resources. The keywords used for the selection of research papers were; discourse-analysis, language use, society, the language of critique, disciplines, and critical discourse analysis; along with the name of specific discipline. The method of analysis applied was thematic analyses in a tabular form to investigate research objectives and research questions. According to Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2014), "In the context of literature review, discourse analysis involves examining how sources are made meaningful through these processes and the role they play in the formation of social reality via meaning making" (p. 57). One research paper selected from each discipline gives evidence that discourse analysis has been successfully used in various domains through a cross-sectional study instead of longitudinal.

According to Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2014), "DARS process extends knowledge of the importance of rigor, transparency, and the qualitative analysis process as important concepts to consider when presenting a series of articles such as the literature review" (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2014, p. 61). Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2014) suggested the effectiveness and importance of integrating the discourse analysis-based research synthesis (DARS) for the practitioners and researchers to address "significant areas such as political, social and other sign systems inherent in research and the reporting of research" (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2014, p. 61). Therefore, this method

is selected to analyse the dimensions and various disciplines that are explored or can be explored by the discourse analysis or applying the language of critique to understand various aspects of society.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

As stated by Van Dijk (1985, p. 7), the boundaries of discourse analysis and “real” language use in the sociocultural context is no longer limited to address, rituals, or myth, but extended “to the mundane forms of talk in different cultures, such as greetings, spontaneous storytelling, formal meetings, verbal duelling, and other forms of communication and verbal interaction”. The data collected from various disciplines reveals how discourse analysis is used to express social norms, power, dominance, social realities, practices, cultures, societal orders, institutional practices, development, psychological issues, ideologies, priorities, justice, injustice, strategies, policies, conflicts, violence, extremism, characteristics, and many other such aspects reflected in every discipline. Table 1 (see Appendix A) categorised various research studies in sixteen disciplines that reflect how discourse analysis explores various social factors through language use in the society and criticism.

The selected research studies from sixteen disciplines reflect that discourse analysis serves as an effective tool to identify and analyse various social issues through linguistic analysis and its application in a throng of disciplines: For example, Al-Majali (2015) identified socio-political aspects of Arab Spring Revolution by critically examining the lexical features of Presidential speeches. The Arab Spring was a series of pro-democracy insurgences that encompassed several largely Muslim countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Bahrain. The revolts in these nations generally began in the spring of 2011, which marked the name of the revolution. However, the political and social impact of these popular uprisings remain significant today, years after many of them ended. This reflects how political ideologies, policies, messages, and influences were communicated through speech by repetition, synonymy, and hyponymy in these speeches. These characteristics were not commonly found in the speeches during normal circumstances.

In the same manner, a study conducted by Zheng (2014) reveals that discourse analysis plays an important role in determining the impact of economic or financial policies that affect global economic development and investment decisions. Thus, researchers from a variety of disciplines used discourse analysis as a way to examine language use for the interpretation of policies, ideologies, and other aspects that reflect social norms and practices. According to Breeze (2018), media offers a picture of social conditions, issues, and crises through news, newspapers, and other such means. For example, Ballmann (2017) defines and analyses Brexit in his thesis “Brexit in the news” as “the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union and the possibility of it, has been discussed in the news with reference to the term ‘Brexit’ extensively for at least the last two years. The role of the media has been an important issue around the Brexit decision, which had its peak in June 2016 with the EU-referendum, where the population of the United Kingdom voted in favour of leaving the EU (Ballmann, 2017, p. 2). Thus, Breeze (2018), investigated online news, journalism research, and news reporting and the manner in which these social and anti-social practices are observed such as Brexit media discourses.

Makki and White (2017) and Molek-Kozakowska (2017) focused on the socio-cultural conditioning of style and structure in journalistic discourse for the political news reporting. Discourse analysis continues to play an active role in films also. In a study conducted by Bednarek (2015), characteristics of the language used in films were analysed for its effectiveness in language learning, characterisation, issues concerning audio-visual translation, dubbing, and subtitling, and representation of gender and sexuality. Discourse analysis is also widely used for the critical evaluation of the art. Panicker (2008) analysed ‘Indian architecture’ and the production of a postcolonial discourse by investigating Indian architecture and design for the specific period. Bednarek (2015) used this approach for the analysis of film and television content reflecting social realities, complex characters, plots, reactions, critics, and global attraction with multiple meanings. Yeibo’s (2011) study presented a textual examination of literary and thematic features of JP Clark-Bekederemo’s poems. These studies clearly reveal that there are a number of ways in which, discourse analysis has successfully been used to reflect on the social or political conditions.

One of the main purposes of using discourse analysis is to present power and dominance features to represent the inequalities, subjectivity, and other issues in society. These social issues, inequalities, and power dominance are more prominent in the study conducted by Richard and Nwizug (2017), which examined the Courtroom Proceedings to unveil power abuse, dominance, and inequality in the courtroom. According to Van Dijk (1985), the field of law also has a textual or dialogical nature, comprised of laws, legal (inter)action, and legal documents that also demands discourse analysis to reveal inequality in the courtroom reflected through language as language is the most powerful natural weapon to effectuate justice in societies.

Potter (2012) used discourse analysis to analyse how the psychological issues and objects are constructed,

understood, and displayed in the interaction of everyday lives of people, both individually and collectively. The discourse analysis is used by Bergh et al. (2015) to critically analyse the interview responses of nurses and managers. The study reflects how cost-effectiveness, ideologies, and priorities affect nurses' patient education work. Kim et al. (2015) analysed the relationship between children's bilingual experience and morpho-syntactic development and concluded that the linguistic complexity of teacher talk and instructional approach may influence children's development of morphological and morpho-syntactic awareness.

Ferreira et al. (2012) presented these aspects in visual programming. Discourse analysis, Semiotic Engineering and the Cognitive Dimensions framework also assisted in the representation of new teaching strategies in computational thinking programs with Agent Sheets. Mulderrig (2017) investigated the UK government's anti-obesity campaign by critically analysing the adverts and policy documents to reveal how obesity was reconceptualised and distorted during the campaign. Discourse analysis has its manifestations in the systemic analysis of language used in literature as well. As evidence, Yeibo (2011) examined grammatical structures, language use, the manner of speaking of interlocutors, their roles, attitudes, nature, and stylistics using Halliday's systemic functional Grammar. A strong argument is presented by Törnberg and Törnberg (2016) to picture the image of Muslims in social media discourse by combining corpus-linguistic (CL) approach with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This study reveals how language communicates conflict, violence, and extremism. Thus, discourse analysis served in a number of ways to reflect not only the socio-political aspects, but it serves the purpose beyond identifying and criticising social problems, injustices, inequalities, and other such factors that affect societies.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study offered a brief idea about how various disciplines of discourse (language use in the society) are explored by previous researchers through the language of critique or using discourse analysis as a tool for critical analysis. However, there are various limitations to the subject area and time constraints that restrict further investigation. There is a need to investigate and explore every discipline in more detail along with the discovery of using discourse analysis in new disciplines. This study can help in determining many social issues and realities through linguistic analysis and its function in the society. This study also establishes the strong relationship between discourse analysis and use of the language of critique that serves in-depth evaluation of social factors to identify its impacts. For example, power, dominance, social realities, practices, cultures, societal orders, institutional practices, development, psychological issues, ideologies, priorities, justice, injustice, strategies, policies, conflicts, violence, extremism, characteristics, and many other such aspects reflected through linguistic analysis in every discipline.

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### Appendix A. Thematic Analysis and Systemic Review of the Literature

Disciplines	Authors (year) and purpose of the study.	Description & relationship between discourse analysis and use of the language of critique within a specific discipline	The ways researchers explored language using social factors to identify its impacts.
Politics	Al-Majali (2015), conducted a study on Political Discourse Analysis that analysed various Political Speeches of the Arab Presidents during the Arab Spring Revolution	The political speeches during the Arab Spring Revolution have distinctive features as compared to the normal circumstances. Some lexical features such as repetition, synonymy, and hyponymy are repeatedly used by the presidents to communicate political ideologies.	Researchers analysed seven political speeches delivered by the ousted Arab presidents were using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework of cohesion
Media	Breeze (2018) conducted the study to analyse the impact of media and language of news as "Enemies of the people"	The paper is focused on analysing the language and various aspects of news reporting and media discourse.	The researcher analysed Daily Mail's reporting using 50 articles as a case study on pro-Brexit media discourses and corpora compiled from other UK newspapers
Film	Bednarek (2015) conducted a corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis of television and film narratives.	The content of film and TV narratives is very rich that is comprised of social realities, complex characters, plots, reactions, critics, and global attraction with multiple meanings	The researchers analysed characteristics of film/TV language, its effectiveness in language learning, characterisation, issues concerning audio-visual translation, dubbing, and subtitling, and representation of gender and sexuality
Literature	Yeibo (2011), used Discourse-Stylistic Analysis for the textual examination of JP Clark-Bekederemo's poems	The study focused on literary and thematic features of the poem	The study examined grammatical structures, language use, the manner of speaking of interlocutors, and their roles, attitudes, nature, and stylistics using Halliday's systemic functional Grammar
Journalism	Makki & White (2017) explored the "Socio-cultural conditioning of style and structure in journalistic discourse: The distinctively "objective" textuality of Iranian political news reporting" based on a dataset of one month's political news reporting from two newspapers	Study focus on Farsi/Persian language political print news reports in Iran covering Speeches, announcements, interviews, media conferences and media releases by politicians, senior government officials or leading religious figures. Information on the dataset on which the paper relies is provided below.	The use of English language with "hard news" reporting style for reporting political news reflects the subordination of news media organisations to the political establishment in Iran
Anthropology and transdisciplinary fields	Zienkowski (2017), conducted a study on reflexivity in the transdisciplinary field of critical discourse studies	The study focuses on reflexivity for interaction and subjectivity; methodological praxis; discursive and non-discursive systems; and late modernity	The study offers an agenda for critical discourse studies for the notion of reflexivity in the social sciences
Science	Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska (2017) used discourse analysis for Reporting climate change in commercial science journalism.	The study presents how language is recruited to de-emphasize some representations through implicitness, under specification, or syntactic and compositional devices in order to achieve ideological aims	The study is based on systematic coding and discourse analysis of linguistic resources addressing narratives and news values, alarming risks/threats, and lexical choices to present phenomena, agency, and institutional practices

Phonology & Morphology	Kim et al. (2015) analysed the relationship between children's bilingual experience and morpho-syntactic development within cross-linguistic classroom discourse	The study reflects the syntactic complexity of teacher talk, language learning, and bilingual classroom experiences using discourse analysis as a tool	The study reveals how the linguistic complexity of teacher talk and instructional approach may influence children's development of morphological and morpho-syntactic awareness. The study is comprised of groups of children from general education programme, Spanish-speaking group, children from a Spanish-English dual-language group, and children from English-speaking group.
Psychology	A study conducted by Potter (2012) used discourse analysis to study psychological questions	In this study, the researcher addressed discursive psychology (DP) to study the psychological issues that affect or occur in the lives of people.	The study analysed how the psychological issues and objects are constructed, understood, and displayed in the interaction of everyday lives of people
Nursing & Medicine	Bergh et al. (2015) discussed the manner of managers' speaking about patient education in hospital care.	The study reveals issues with the heavy workload that affects managers' role as a supporter of the patient education provided by nurses,	The discourse analysis is used to critically examine the interview responses of nurses and managers that reflect how cost-effectiveness, ideologies, and priorities affect the nurses' daily patient education work
Law	The study conducted by Richard and Nwizug (2017), used Critical Discourse Analysis for the examination of Courtroom Proceedings	The study offers discourse analysis as an effective tool to analyze social power abuse, dominance, and inequality that are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the courtroom.	The researchers used proceeding from Nigerian courts. The analysis reveals inequality in the courtroom reflected through language as language is the most powerful natural weapon to effectuate justice in societies The study presents how various aspects of discussion such as cross-examination, turn-taking, objections, and other legal proceedings occur in court and reflect power domination.
Engineering and IT	Ferreira et al. (2012), used discourse analysis to explore the power of notations in visual programming. The study also combines cognitive and semiotic approaches.	The study focuses on game design and programming to substitute the computational thinking acquisition.	The research analyzed the impact of additional representations on program comprehension and modification for the empirical evidence using the verbal account of experience with Agent Sheets. Discourse analysis, Semiotic Engineering, and the Cognitive Dimensions framework also assisted in the representation of new teaching strategies in computational thinking programs with Agent Sheets.
Business, Economics, and Finance	Zheng (2014) use discourse analysis for the examination of financial remarks	The study presents the importance of financial remarks made by the Chairman Federal Reserve Board. The researcher reflects on how economic or financial policies that affect global economic development and investment decisions.	The study used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA to analyse Ben S. Bernanke's neutral, credible and undistorting financial remarks. The study analyses textual features of the speeches considering discursive and social aspects to identify hidden ideological messages.
Religion	Törnberg & Törnberg (2016) addressed Muslims in social media discourse: Combining topic modeling and critical discourse analysis.	This article combines a corpus- linguistic (CL) approach with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) By using customized web crawlers, we downloaded and anonymized the entire content of the forum between May 2000 and May 2013, which comprised 50 million posts. The corpus for this study is extracted from Flashback, which is currently one of the largest web forums in the world. At the time of writing, there are 1 025 264 registered users and 53 601 028 posts.	The analysis shows that Muslims are portrayed in the forum as a homogeneous outgroup that is embroiled in conflict, violence, and extremism: characteristics that are described as emanating from Islam

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Arts & Architecture	Panicker (2008) analysed 'Indian architecture' and the production of a postcolonial discourse	The study is focused on the analysis of Indian architecture and design from 1984–1992.	The study reflects the cultural, historical, and social aspects reflected through architecture and discourse analysis helps in interpretation.
Marketing and Advertising	Mulderigg (2017) conducted a study to analyse obesity and impact of a marketing campaign using critical discourse analysis	This paper analyses the UK government's 'Change4Life' anti-obesity social marketing campaign.	This paper offers a systematic textually-oriented critical analysis of advert and policy documents to reflect how obesity is recontextualised, and distorted in the campaign.

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