

Discourse Analysis

EXPLORATION

ANALYSING DISCOURSE

ch.3

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, wavy, curved shapes in various shades of orange and red, with a thin white line tracing a path across them. The graphic starts from the bottom left and curves upwards and to the right, filling the lower half of the slide.

DOING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: FIRST STEPS

Three perspectives on discourse:

- Beyond the clause → coherence of texts
 - Language in use → communicative purpose & relationships
 - Social practice → identity, ideology, values
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- signs → rich material for discourse analysis
 - signs ≠ a practical instruction;
 - arrangement of words and design features = imp.
 - omission of “little words”= clarity for hurried readers
 - resembles newspaper headlines



- employs a more mixed approach
- this dual tone → both authoritative and explanatory
- directive vs. explanatory
- typography ≈ the communicative impact
- bold, capitals, underlining, colors
- visual strategies ≠ core message = anticipate resistance
- signs are crafted to:
 - ✓ **instruct efficiently**
 - ✓ **persuade firmly**
 - ✓ **minimize potential objections.**



Mask Signs Analysis

1. The first sign:

- impersonal and indirect tone.
- frame = a statement ≠ command
- any identifiable speaker = distant
- the rule = objective requirement ≠ directive
- depersonalizing = reducing resistance



2. The second sign:

- company name & logo included (MelroseINC).
- responsibility shifted to government (“City of Los Angeles”).
- dual attribution → comply with governmental regulations + deflect potential blame
- roles specified: customers vs staff.
- company presents itself:
 - obeying the government
 - protecting employees
 - serving customers.
- tone :strict (“NO EXCEPTIONS”) + polite (“We apologize”).



The role of context:

- effectiveness → relies on shared contextual knowledge
- no mention of COVID-19 explicitly.
- relies on shared background knowledge from media, government, conversations.
- different audiences interpret differently (trust vs skepticism).

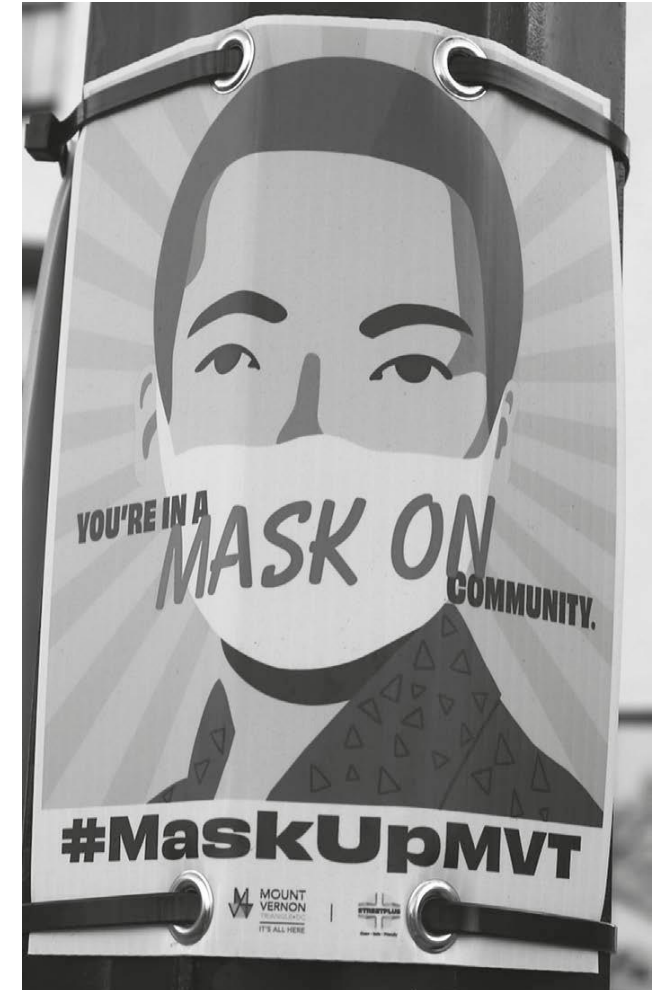
accordingly:

- signs → reflect reality + contribute to shaping it
- normalizing mask-wearing → reinforced the perception of an ongoing pandemic


signs demonstrate how discourse both regulates behavior and constructs social reality

3. The third sign:


- font, bold colors, mask image → clarity + authority
- bold & contrasting colors → emphasize the central requirement
- visual symbols → the verbal message
- more professional than the previous signs;
- goal → instruct + create cooperative & civic relations with readers
- frame → collective responsibility
- less emphasis on obedience to external authority
- more emphasis on mutual accountability within a socially conscious environment.



Analyzed through the four principles of discourse:

- Language is unambiguous, requires little inference.
 - Meaning depends on pandemic context and public placement.
 - Positions readers as responsible citizens protecting others.
 - Uses multimodality—text, image, and design working together
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Analysing Texture

- texture?
 - different genres exhibit different kinds of texture
 - **cohesion** → achieved through different devices depending on the text type.
 - descriptive texts → pronoun reference
 - advertising texts → repetition
 - legal texts → repetition
 - analytical & argumentative texts → conjunctions
 - **coherence** → textual structure and the world knowledge readers bring to interpretation
 - **intertextuality** → linking a text to other discourses
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Cohesion in the Article

From the Independent

Baby dolphin dies after being passed around for selfies with tourists

Marine rescue group condemns 'selfish' holiday-makers who poked and took photos of 'terrified' calf after it washed up at beach Chris Baynes, Wednesday 16 August 2017 14:29 BST 105 comments

Substitution

- baby dolphin → the creature → the tiny mammal.
- avoids repetition, maintains clarity.
- Common in newspaper texts for concise reporting.

Reference, lexical cohesion and conjunction

visual cohesion



Coherence in the Article

- coherence → readers' recognition of the type of text
 - the text type = news article
 - recognition → activates a set of expectations
 - common structural pattern in journalism = 'inverted pyramid'
 - headline → plays a central role in coherence
- what? who? why?
- secondary headlines or subheadings = elaboration
 - coherence → shared cultural knowledge and world models
 - background knowledge allows readers to interpret the text as the authors intended



Intertextuality in the Article

intertextuality?

intertextuality in article → incorporates voices from multiple sources:

Marine rescue group → 'selfish', 'terrified'

direct quotation lends authority to the text


intertextuality → editorial choices (whose voices represented/ whose excluded)

Equinac's voice is central × the tourists are absent

this selective inclusion → the reader's perception



Analysing Genres

- analysing genres involves more than identifying structural moves in a text;
 - genres function within specific discourse communities
 - they are not static;
 - genres → linked to other genres in sequential chains or networks
 - chains: one genre triggers another (e.g., videos → comments → discussions).
 - networks: non-sequential relationships (e.g., job letter → ad, references).
 - genres exist within broader genre ecologies
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Competing Discourses

- Competing discourses → reveal the ideologies and social perspectives that shape how reality is represented.
- CDA = tools:
- how participants & actions are represented?
- how the text positions the reader?
- how other voices are appropriated?
- how language indexes broader social values or Discourses

e.g., a local newspaper commentary from the London borough of Tower Hamlets



Lutfur Rahman, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

In Tower Hamlets, the council has been making effective use of CCTV to tackle crime and make the borough a safer place to live, work and visit.

Live 24-hour monitoring of the CCTV system by council operators resulted in 837 proactive arrests in 2012, and 907 in 2011....or leads the police to a suspect afer ...

CCTV is one of the most powerful tools to be developed during recent years to assist with eforts to combat crime and disorder..

- focuses on the use of CCTV surveillance cameras
- the town council and council operators → the most prominent participants.
- actors → agents performing material processes
- other participants→ passive, lacking agency and detailed description
- absence of ordinary citizens!!!
- this absence helps define version of reality suggested by the text.
- text also demonstrates how voices from other sources can be appropriated or masked.
- controlling voices = aligning readers with a particular ideological viewpoint.
- certain words → index broader Discourses
- lexical choices→ CCTV operations + implicitly promotes surveillance justification

Analysing Speech Acts

- apologies, refusals, and consent → social actions
- Pragmatics and conversation analysis?
- apology = a clear example of ambiguous speech acts;
- “I’m sorry” or “I apologize” = apology
- success of apology → depends on additional elements:
e.g., “I’m sorry you feel that way”
- apologies can appear in contexts where no wrongdoing has occurred!
e.g., “Sorry, could you repeat that?”

Apologies are highly context-dependent and multifunctional.

- Refusals → represent a “dispreferred response” = rarely direct
- hedges/ explanations/ delays → to soften the impact
e.g., “No, I can’t help.” vs. “I’d love to help, but I’m really busy this week.”
- refusals between employee & employer → delicate negotiations of autonomy vs. obligation.
- Consent
- expressed explicitly (“Yes, I agree”) or
- implicitly (silence, inaction) = inferred
- risk of ambiguity when inferred
- can be coerced/manipulated
e.g., “I agree to the Terms and Conditions”

Speech acts are context-dependent and not formulaic

Interpreting Apologies

Apologies interpretation → remains complex and context-dependent.

main challenge → different individuals require different conditions to feel that an apology is satisfactory

e.g.,

A: You forgot!

B: Yes. I am sorry.

A: You're always doing it.

B: I know.

context & placement within the interaction → crucial for interpretation

dispreferred response → the apology has not been sufficient

saying "I am sorry" ≠ guarantee a successful apology

apologies → collaborative acts

Owen (1983) proposed felicity conditions to define successful apologies:

fulfilling these conditions ≠ ensure acceptance

➤ TWO limitations to Owen's felicity conditions:

1. implicit offense: apologies often imply rather than state the offense.

e.g., "I'm sorry for upsetting you" instead of "I'm sorry I forgot."

2. counting as regret: Saying "I'm sorry" may be insufficient.

expressions of regret can also occur in non-apologies (e.g., "We regret to inform you...").

Cohen et al. (1986) – Five Strategies of Apology

1. Expression of apology – “I am sorry.”
2. Explanation/account – “I’ve had a lot on my mind.”
3. Acknowledgement of responsibility – “I know.”
4. Offer of repair – “How can I make it up to you?”
5. Promise of forbearance – “I’ll never do it again.”

These strategies carry risks!!

