ROUTLEDGE

RESEARCHING DISCOURSE

A Student Guide

EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER HART

Researching Discourse

This book offers a 'how-to' guide to conducting research in discourse analysis. Organised around different approaches to discourse analysis and working with different types of discourse data, the book will help students answer questions such as: Which approach should I take? What kind of data should I analyse and how do I set about collecting it? What consideration should I give to ethics? How do I make my analyses systematic and rigorous? How do I report my findings?

Both qualitative and quantitative (corpus-based and experimental) methods are covered. Illustrated with far-ranging, detailed, and original case-studies, each chapter follows a consistent format that takes readers step by step through the research process, from design to implementation and presentation. Chapters can be read independently of one another.

This is the ideal companion for any student undertaking research in discourse analysis within English language, linguistics, applied linguistics, and communication studies programmes.

Christopher Hart is Professor of Linguistics at Lancaster University, UK. His research is focussed on the link between language, cognition, and social action in political contexts of communication. He is the author of *Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science* (2010) and *Discourse, Grammar and Ideology* (2014).

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Acknowledgements

This book was written at the invitation of the publishers. In the highly competitive, target-driven and performance-focussed environment that is UK higher education it isn't always easy to see the value in producing such a text, while it is all too easy to lose sight of the fact that communicating not just research findings but research know-how to new generations of students and scholars is an essential aspect of what we do or ought to be doing. In writing this book, we are reminded of this fact and are rewarded with a renewed appreciation for the merits, outside the immediate context of research targets and assessments, of producing such a book. The book is intended as a research guide for students but in producing it we as authors have also been given an opportunity to reflect on and consider explicitly aspects of the research process which are often otherwise taken for granted. This, I believe, has made us better researchers and better teachers. I'd therefore like, first and foremost, to thank Louisa Semlyen at Routledge for persuading us to undertake this project.

The book is the culmination of efforts made by colleagues in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University. This includes those who have directly contributed to the book by writing chapters but also a great number of other colleagues who have provided support and inspiration in all sorts of other ways. Besides the contributing authors, then, who have given their time and energy to this project both generously and enthusiastically, I'd like to thank all of my colleagues and friends in the department, academic and administrative, for making it such a wonderful – stimulating, collegial, and, above all, fun – environment in which to work.

Of course, the book is a product of the experiences we have had, accumulated collectively over many years, in teaching discourse analysis and working with students on dissertations and other research projects in various different approaches to discourse analysis. Those experiences are, for us, a motivation and a learning curve. I'd therefore like to thank the many students who over the years, at undergraduate and postgraduate level, have studied with us and have, as a result, helped to shape and inspire this book. As a point of fact, several of the contributors to this book were

themselves once students at Lancaster who have both benefited and benefited from the teachings of other fellow contributors.

Although the chapters contained within this book have been written exclusively by researchers at Lancaster University, it is by no means our intention to suggest that there are not a great many other leading figures in discourse analysis, affiliated to other institutions, who are equally or better qualified to have produced such a book. Working together in the same department, however, affords obvious logistical advantages when it comes to putting collections like this together. In all of the chapters contained herein, we hope to have been as inclusive and accurate as possible in representing the works of the great many researchers around the world whose ideas have defined and continue to define the field of discourse analysis.

Finally, no book is produced without a debt of gratitude owed to friends and family. We would each like to thank the loved ones in our lives, near and far, lost and present, for all that they give. In particular, I, as always, must thank my parents, my partner Heather, and now my daughter Ivy. Discourse analysis is ultimately about finding meaning in contexts. In my own personal context, I have found my ultimate meaning in her.

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Editor's introduction

Christopher Hart

Discourse analysis is a rich and multifaceted, cross-disciplinary, field that is broadly concerned with the structures and functions of language in use – discourse. The term 'discourse analysis' has its roots in the work of Zellig Harris (1952), an American structuralist, who coined the term to designate a formal method for analysing language 'above the sentence'. That is, Harris saw discourse as the highest rank-level of linguistic organisation and discourse analysis as an area of descriptive linguistics akin to phonology, morphology, and syntax. However, Harris recognised two different ways of approaching discourse analysis:

> one can approach discourse analysis from two types of problems, which turn out to be related. The first is the problem of continuing descriptive linguistics beyond the limits of a single sentence at a time. The other is the question of correlating 'culture' and 'language' (i.e. non-linguistic and linguistic behaviour).
>
> (Harris, 1952: 1)

Harris's work focussed on the first of these issues and discourse analysis in this sense has since become an important part of linguistics (e.g. Brown and Yule, 1983; Schiffrin, 1994). Indeed, up until the 1970s 'discourse analysis' meant, almost exclusively, looking at the structural properties of linguistic units larger than the sentence (Reisigl, 2011). Since then, however, 'discourse analysis' has come increasingly to cover a broad range of scholarship addressing the second issue identified by Harris. Discourse analysis in this second sense is not concerned so much with the mechanics of discourse as it with the social actions performed in and through discourse, which are constitutive of the identities, relations, norms, values, institutions, conventions, and expectations etc. that define a given 'culture'. That is, with discourse as a form of social practice. Of course, the two issues are closely connected, as Harris observed, such that it is not possible to address one in isolation from the other (Coulthard, 1985; Johnstone, 2002). Rather, as always, the distinction is a matter of emphasis. Approaches to discourse analysis which emphasise the connections

between discourse and social dynamics take many forms, coming from quite different academic disciplines, with different methods, perspectives, and epistemologies. Such approaches, for example, come from disciplines as far-ranging as sociology, anthropology, and psychology. However, approaches to discourse analysis in this broader 'social' sense have also been developed in linguistics as a form of *applied linguistics*, and this is where the present book is situated. The principle chapters in this book all outline approaches to discourse analysis which are based in linguistics but which go beyond the structural analysis of discourse to see discourse as indexical of, and constitutive of, structures and conditions in society. One particularly influential form of discourse analysis in the applied linguistics sense that developed in the late part of the twentieth century is *critical discourse analysis* (originally *critical linguistics*) (e.g. Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Fowler et al., 1979; Hodge and Kress, 1979). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is not a single approach to discourse analysis – it is not, itself, homogeneous and is not associated with any specific method. Rather, what characterises CDA, as with other forms of critical social research, is a desire to transcend the standard academic tasks of describing and explaining, in the most objective way possible, and to instead adopt an openly political stance and seek social change through intellectual inquiry. Researchers in CDA therefore usually start from some perceived social problem, such as social inequality, and use the various tools afforded by discourse analysis to show how patterns of language use contribute to creating and sustaining that problem. A critical perspective is thus possible with any approach to discourse analysis and many, though not all, of the chapters in this volume do assume an explicitly critical stance toward the data they analyse.

There are many excellent and recent textbooks introducing linguistic and applied linguistics approaches to discourse analysis, including CDA (e.g. Bartlett, 2014; Blommaert, 2005; Bloor and Bloor, 2007; Gee, 2014a, 2014b; Georgakopoulou and Goutsos, 2004; Jones, 2012; Machin and Mayr, 2012; Paltridge, 2012; Simpson and Mayr, 2009). There are also several comprehensive handbooks (e.g. Flowerdew and Richardson, 2017; Gee and Handford, 2013; Hart and Cap, 2014; Jaworski and Coupland, 2006; Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton, 2001; van Dijk, 2011). However, this book is neither intended as a textbook nor as a handbook. As suggested by its title, the book is intended to provide a practical guide for students of linguistics, whether undergraduate or post-graduate, who, perhaps for a taught module or as part of a dissertation or thesis, are embarking on an independent research project in discourse analysis (in the applied linguistics sense). It aims not only to provide an introduction to theoretical and analytical concepts in different approaches to discourse analysis but also to make explicit and explain the kind of decisions and practical steps involved in operationalising those concepts in a discourse analysis project. In other words, the book aims to make transparent those

parts of the research process that researchers often take for granted in their writings and which, as a result, are not always immediately accessible to students.

Even discourse analysis in the more restricted sense of applied linguistics is multifaceted, consisting of various approaches that draw on and apply different models of linguistic description and different methods of linguistic inquiry, so that students can sometimes find it difficult to orient themselves. Common questions are: Which approach should I take? What kind of data should I analyse and how do I set about collecting it? What consideration should I give to ethics? How do I make my analyses systematic and rigorous? How do I report my findings? This book is intended to help students find answers to questions such as these. It therefore has a focus on issues of research design, methodology, and presentation throughout. Indeed, while the first chapter provides an overview of definitions, decisions, and debates in discourse analysis, all of the remaining chapters follow the same basic structure: (i) introduction; (ii) outline of approach; (iii) identifying research questions; (iv) data collection and ethics; (v) analysing and interpreting data; (vi) presenting findings and results; (vii) issues and limitations; and (viii) further reading. This places the book more in the vein of a research methods guide (e.g. Litosseliti, 2010; Podesva and Sharma, 2013) dedicated specifically to the subject of discourse analysis.

I hope that (prospective) students of discourse analysis will read the whole book in order to gain an insight into some of the different approaches that one can take toward a discourse analysis project, as well as to appreciate the connections between approaches and the recurrent themes and decisions involved in any research project. However, one or two chapters are always likely to stand out as most relevant for a given project and each chapter can be read independently of the others.

As a result of its practical focus, the book is organised around different analytical frameworks in discourse analysis rather than particular domains of language use (e.g. politics, law, health, literature). Alongside a general overview, each chapter, with the exception of the first and the final one, presents a particular case study by way of illustration. However, this should not be taken as implying that the approach in question is limited to only that data type. Although different approaches have been designed to account for specific phenomena in discourse – from turn-taking to transitivity, from metaphor to collocation and semantic prosody – and clearly lend themselves to analysing different quantities of data (e.g. large versus small samples), produced in different modalities (e.g. spoken versus written), the same or similar discourse phenomena occur across domains and genres, albeit where they may function differently and need to be analytically interpreted within their local context. Thus, while many of the chapters in this volume happen to focus on discourse topics and genres that can be characterised, more or less broadly, as 'political' (Chilton and Schäffner, 2002), the methods of linguistic analysis illustrated, including those based in systemic functional

linguistics, corpus linguistics, and cognitive linguistics, can also be applied to texts produced in other, e.g. literary or legal, contexts, as indeed they have been in the fields of stylistics (Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010; Simpson, 2014) and forensic linguistics (Coulthard and Johnson, 2016; Coulthard, Johnson, and Wright, 2013) respectively. Equally, methods of analysis such as conversation analysis, which in this volume is illustrated with reference to the literary setting of book groups, are equally applied in other interactional settings within 'political' realms (e.g. Hutchby, 2006).

The chapters contained within this book are all written by researchers currently working in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University in the UK. The approaches covered reflect the kinds of projects our students most frequently undertake. This, of course, may be down to the particular makeup of the department and the book, therefore, does not necessarily cover all approaches that could potentially have been included. But it does cover what we feel are currently the most interesting and popular of approaches, which have a firm footing in linguistics and whose models and methods are therefore likely to be familiar to students of linguistics and/or English language. This includes well-established approaches based in conversation analysis, ethnography, systemic functional linguistics, and corpus linguistics. However, it also includes newer and more nascent approaches based in cognitive linguistics, multimodal social semiotics, digitally mediated communication studies, and experimental methods. It is hoped, then, that as the field of discourse analysis continues to change and expand in new directions, the book will provide a valuable resource for students of discourse analysis for at least a few years to come.

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1 Introduction to discourse

Definitions, debates, and decisions

Alison Sealey

Introduction

The chapters in this book will help readers to understand how a wide range of researchers have analysed discourse in different ways, and how you, as a student of discourse analysis, might plan a research project of your own investigating some particular aspect or area of discourse. The authors introduce various approaches to, and methods of, researching discourse. This opening chapter is therefore aimed at setting the scene by providing an overview of what is generally involved in the analysis of discourse. I begin with a brief survey of some of the ways in which the term ‘discourse’ is used within the study of language and linguistics, before presenting four elements which are core to the enterprise of discourse analysis: (i) the data that comprise discourse; (ii) the producers of discourse; (iii) the reception of discourse; and (iv) the perspective of the analyst.

Definitions

The conventional way to get a handle on what a term means is to consult a dictionary, and one trusted authority, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, informs us that ‘discourse’, like many words, has changed its meaning over time. (It also indicates that ‘discourse’ can be used as a verb, as in ‘The early writers discoursed at some length …’, but that’s not so relevant for us here.)

Among earlier definitions of ‘discourse’ as a noun are senses such as these: ‘reasoned argument or thought’; ‘the thread of an argument’; and ‘a narrative or account of a particular subject’. More recently, ‘discourse’ has meant:

> The action or process of communicating thought by means of the spoken word; interchange of words; conversation, talk. Also: the words exchanged by this means; speech. In later use also: the written representation of this; communication in written form.

The most current definitions are, in general contexts, (a):

> The body of statements, analysis, opinions, etc., relating to a particular domain of intellectual or social activity, esp. as characterized by recurring themes, concepts, or values; (also) the set of shared beliefs, values, etc., implied or expressed by this. Frequently with *of* or modifying word.

And in a more specifically linguistic sense, (b):

> A connected series of utterances by which meaning is communicated, *esp*. one forming a unit for analysis; spoken or written communication regarded as consisting of such utterances.

Since you are reading this book, you are probably already familiar with the concepts summarised by (a) and (b) above, but it is worth pointing out that the broad academic enterprise of discourse analysis may involve placing different degrees of emphasis on the different perspectives suggested by (a) and (b). Notice particularly the coda in (a): 'Frequently with *of* or modifying word'. This extra information indicates that 'discourse' often occurs in formulations such as these:

- the discourse of multiculturalism
- discourses of masculinity
- the discourse of colonialism
- political discourse
- feminist discourse
- dominant discourse

Now, these phrases would seem to relate more readily to definition (a) – i.e. to 'particular domain[s] of … social activity' and their 'shared beliefs [and] values' – than to definition (b), which is more formal, concerned with 'series of utterances' or sentences and the way these are 'connected' linguistically. Yet many discourse analysts, including those who have contributed to this book, do research that bridges both senses of the term 'discourse'. That is, their linguistic training enables them to analyse the many ways in which the components of language (words, phrases, sentences, utterances) are linked together to form larger units, such as whole texts (written or spoken) and conversations. At the same time, they are interested in what these discursive choices indicate about individuals' thought processes, attitudes, and values, and also about broader social conventions, norms, and priorities. One analyst who draws attention explicitly to the link between these two senses of 'discourse' is James Paul Gee, who coined the use of 'little d' versus 'big D' discourse to distinguish between, on the one hand, the way language is used to enact activities and

identities, and, on the other hand, the way other non-linguistic ‘stuff’, such as gestures, material artefacts, values, and attitudes, are melded with language in situated communication practices (Gee, 2005).

You will notice different perspectives in the chapters that follow as well as in your wider reading about discourse analysis. I shall say a bit more about this later. For now, however, let us conclude this section with some definitions of ‘discourse’ sourced from the academic literature.

1. Discourse analysis examines how stretches of language, considered in their full textual, social, and psychological context, become meaningful and unified for their users (Cook, 1989: ix).
2. People in a variety of academic departments and disciplines use the term ‘discourse analysis’ for what they do, how they do it, or both … Discourse analysts pose many different questions and propose many different sorts of answers (Johnstone, 2002: 1).
3. So abundant are definitions of discourse that many linguistics books on the subject now open with a survey of definitions … They all, however, fall into … three main categories … (1) anything beyond the sentence, (2) language use, and (3) a broader range of social practice that includes non-linguistic and nonspecific instances of language (Tannen, Hamilton, and Schiffrin, 2015: 1).

As you read the chapters in this book, and in your wider reading, try to identify where the author(s) position themselves in relation to these definitions, and consider too where you would position yourself as a budding discourse analyst.

Discourse data

How many words do you think you have spoken this week? How many have you heard spoken? (And how do you define a word – do ‘um’/‘erm’ count?) How many words have you read this week? (Including those you may have read inadvertently, like labels and signs you encounter in passing.) How much have you written? (Including online/on your mobile phone.) Now imagine multiplying all the linguistic communication you have been involved in during this one week by all the weeks of your life so far, and then by all the people alive now, and then by all the human beings who have ever left any records – written, recorded as audio signals, or in any digital form. If we assume that most of this communication could be classified as ‘discourse’, we get some idea of the ‘universe’ of data that might potentially be available to discourse analysts – and that is before we extend the range to include non-linguistic signs, such as photographs, soundtracks, emojis, and so on (see Chapters 8 and 9, this volume, which take stock of the ‘multimodal turn’ that discourse analysis has undergone in recent years

to account for the wider range of semiotic modes used in contemporary communication and the interactions between these).

So, when you set out to design a research project around 'discourse', an early stage in the process will necessarily involve narrowing down your focus, and there are various ways that you might do this. Each chapter in this book takes a different approach to discourse analysis, and this often includes making different decisions about what kind of data to investigate. However, while such differences sometimes reflect contrasting perceptions about the very nature of discourse, in other cases the differences are more a matter of emphasis.

One way to set some boundaries around which data to collect is to identify some type or *genre* of communicative event or activity as your starting point. This could be, for example, informal conversations among friends, workplace meetings, political interviews or classroom interactions (e.g. Chapter 2, this volume), or it could be the virtual social gatherings enabled by digital media (e.g. Fester and Cowley, 2018). Data will then likely be restricted to detailed records of these interactions, in the form of recordings and transcripts of talk, or archives of messages exchanged, etc. More broadly, the starting point may not so much be a type of event, but rather a *social setting*, such as a school, small business, nursery, or community centre (e.g. Chapter 3, this volume), or even more formal institutional settings such as the Convention on the Future of Europe (Krzyżanowski and Oberhuber, 2007). In this kind of approach, the data may comprise a range of materials, including written texts, images, interviews with the people in the setting, field notes, and so on.

Some discourse analysts are particularly interested in the ways that different *modes* of communication influence the way it occurs. I know of several researchers who choose to explore exclusively written texts because of the challenges posed by working with speech. These include, for example, taking into account all the paralinguistic and prosodic features of spoken language which are very difficult to capture in transcriptions (see e.g. Cook, 1990). On the other hand, for some researchers, this is exactly what interests them – how the different components of face-to-face communication interact with one another. So if your interest lies primarily in one or more modes of communication, this could entail contrasting two kinds of data, such as, for example, both authentic informal conversation and scripted talk that aims to simulate casual interactions. Alternatively, your interest in a specific mode might lead you to restrict your data to one kind of mode, such as telephone conversations/emails/formal letters/Facebook posts/tweets: these are all examples of how a focus on the mode of communication leads to the selection of particular types of discourse from the vast range of potential data available for a discourse analysis project.

An aspect of discourse that intrigues some researchers is *how* it comes to take the forms it does. For some analysts, this line of research entails collecting very large quantities of data in order to reveal patterns in the

way words and phrases behave, including as they co-occur with one another (see Chapter 7, this volume). This is particularly interesting because users of language themselves are often not aware of these patterns. Other analysts look from the other end of the telescope, so to speak, zooming in on the internal processes that must be happening within the minds of language users to account for the formation of particular concepts (see Chapter 6, in this volume). As Hart explains, such 'cognitive' approaches tend to use as data texts that at least have the appearance of being 'monologic' (i.e. having been produced by one voice) rather than conversations, which are inherently 'dialogic' (i.e. produced in more interactional settings). I return to the issue of the production of data in the next section. Some analysts claim that these 'two ends of the telescope' are inevitably at odds with one another, but others believe that they need not be. For example, Hoey (2005) seeks to account for a central phenomenon associated with corpus analysis, namely 'the recurrent co-occurrence of words', and argues that it is a psychological concept, 'priming', that explains this. So his claim is that 'the mind has a mental concordance of every word it has encountered' which 'can be processed in much the same way that a computer concordance is' (2005: 11; see also Gries, 2005, 2006). These examples begin to point to another of the issues explored in this book: how much data is needed for different kinds of analysis, and does the analyst *measure* phenomena (quantitative analysis) or *interpret* them (qualitative analysis), or does the research, as is often the case, involve a combination of both?

Yet another point of departure in deciding on the kind of data to collect is the identification of a *social problem*, such as racism or gender inequality, which discourse plays a part in creating and sustaining. Again, this perspective and those summarised above are not mutually exclusive. The point is just that the primary motivations of the analysts may be different. That is, while one researcher investigates, say, casual conversations among friends in order to better understand turn-taking procedures in their own right, another may analyse the same data with a view to exploring gender dynamics and the way some speakers assert dominance over others. One form of discourse analysis directly concerned with issues of power and inequality is critical discourse analysis (CDA), a leading proponent of which is Norman Fairclough. Fairclough, and others working in this tradition, take care to point out that CDA is not a particular method or subdiscipline of discourse analysis, since a critical perspective is possible in any approach to discourse analysis. The relevance to us here is that CDA is discourse analysis that 'explicitly defines and defends its own sociopolitical position' (Van Dijk, 2001: 96). So, in this tradition, the starting point is a perceived social problem and the selection of data is guided by a concern to highlight and address 'the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination' (Fairclough, 2001: 96). For this reason, many CDA projects select as data the discourse

that is produced by 'elite' social actors, agencies, and institutions, such as politicians or the press, whose discourse, arguably, exerts the most influence over society. For many researchers in CDA the ultimate goal is to resist power and inequality as they are expressed in, and enacted through, discourse (see below for further discussion of what it means to take a critical stance).

Finally, for now, it is worth recognising that there has been a 'discursive turn' across the social sciences, and with this an increasing degree of collaboration between discourse analysts and researchers in other disciplines. For example, I gained access to a data set of transcriptions of parliamentary discourse (nearly 1000 sessions of Prime Minister's Questions) through a collaboration with a political scientist. His interests are primarily in political processes and how these are enacted in these events, and our joint analyses have focused sometimes more on these issues (Holden Bates and Sealey, 2019) and sometimes more on the pragmatics of the interactions (Sealey and Bates, 2016). Some other examples of where discourse analysis has been integrated with the concerns of other disciplines include collaborations with scholars who do research in disability studies (Grue, 2016), business and economics (Kelsey et al., 2016), and health policy (Evans-Agnew et al., 2016). In such cases, the data may well be similar to that in other discourse analysis projects, but the selection will be influenced by the specialist knowledge of collaborators from beyond linguistics.

The producers of discourse

This book is itself an example of one kind of written, published discourse, and, like nearly all the books you read, it contains at the beginning a copyright notice. This forbids anyone from making copies of the text without 'the prior permission in writing of the publishers', and each author whose chapters are included here has signed a 'contributor agreement' that 'asserts his/her moral right to be identified as the author', while at the same time we grant the exclusive copyright of our chapters to the publishers. Before the text reached the form you see it in now, there were lots of discussions about the content between the authors and editors, and correspondence by email with the publishers. Some changes were made to the drafts of the various chapters, first by the authors themselves and then by the book's editor, as well as by the 'copy editors' who work for the publishers and finalise matters such as the consistency of the layout and the accuracy and formatting of the references. This is because every chapter includes some quotations from other people's work and references to their ideas, which must, legally, be fairly acknowledged. So who, then, are the producers of this book as an example of discourse?

Some of the issues identified in the previous paragraph are technical and perhaps seem quite trivial – such as where to put the brackets, italics, and commas in a bibliographic reference. Another aspect of this area, though, is in the moral or even legal domain, usually identified in research projects as the consideration of 'ethics'. The chapters that follow include sections that discuss what is expected of researchers working with human participants, which often – although not always – applies to discourse analysis. Where relevant, each author explains how the procedures usually required within universities seek to safeguard both the collectors and the producers of data from causing or experiencing offence or even harm, for example, by intruding on privacy, breaching confidentiality, or triggering painful memories, etc.

So most examples of discourse cannot be thought of as produced by a single individual. Written texts often pass through the hands of several people; speakers draw on their prior experience of discourse as they produce utterances of their own, and the very process of speakers' interactions influences subsequent turns; texts that reach listeners as spoken, such as politicians' speeches, for example, may actually have been drafted and redrafted in writing by a number of different advisers (and as such are not truly monologic). This introduces the concept of *intertextuality* in discourse. Most published texts, in particular, are arrived at via a series of transformations that they undergo as they traverse an intertextual chain. Every text thus contains a 'trace' of previous texts. Other forms of intertextuality occur as texts directly reference other texts, as in the quotations characteristic of academic writing, or as texts like political speeches allude to other, well-known, texts by borrowing or creatively adapting memorable phrases. In other words, then, the ways in which discourse is produced are multifaceted, complex, and rarely, if ever, reducible to the intentions and actions of single individuals.

It is worth bearing all this in mind as you focus on the discourse data you choose to research. While, as I have said, the different approaches included in this book are not necessarily at odds with each other, there are conflicting views among discourse analysts about some matters concerning the producers of data. For example, the kind of large corpora with which Baker works (see Chapter 7, this volume) consist of texts produced by so many different people that it is not possible to consult each of them and interrogate them about the discourse they have produced. So some critics object to the omission from corpus studies of the viewpoint of discourse producers. Conversely, linguistic ethnographers often interview the producers of the texts they are analysing (see Chapter 3, this volume). However, a charge against the kinds of discourse analysis that works in depth on limited data is that findings cannot be generalised. As a result, there is a growing commitment in some quarters to approaches that combine methods and an example concerns the genre of news discourse. One team who research this area (Catenaccio et al., 2011) is very critical of

the 'lack of attention to the news production process' that typifies many discourse studies of news texts which are analysed without any reference to how they come to take the form they do. Their criticism arises from their claim that '[t]he production process underlying the news text is an essential constitutive component of news contexts' (Catenaccio et al., 2011: 1845, see also Philo, 2007; Carvalho, 2008). These writers are not alone in drawing attention to 'the fluidity, complexity, and intricacies involved in jointly negotiating meaning' (Catenaccio et al., 2011: 1846), and this leads us to the third corner of what we might think of as the triangle of discourse – the audience, or reader, or 'receiver' of discourse. So, should discourse analysis encompass the perspective of readers and audiences, and if so, how?

Discourse reception

The term 'reception' presupposes a concern with certain modes of discourse rather than others. That is, when two or several participants in an interaction are co-producing discourse, as in the context of everyday conversations, for example, it is usually the case that each of them switches rapidly between the roles of speaker and hearer. In those cases, as various analysts have suggested, the concepts of 'production' and 'reception' of discourse are less relevant than that of collaboration (e.g. Coates, 1994; Jacoby and Ochs, 1995).

As noted above, some modes of discourse are more monologic than others, and it is when there is a clear distinction between producers and receivers that the notion of 'reception' may be most applicable, since, as another commentator on discourse analysis has observed, 'what a writer means by a text is not the same as what a text means to a reader' (Widdowson, 1995: 164). There is, of course, no infallible way to access the thought processes of discourse participants, but nevertheless several methods have been developed which seek to approach this goal.

At the intersection between discourse analysis and stylistics are studies of audience reception of literary texts. While stylistics conventionally examines the linguistic features of texts in order to understand, partly, how these features influence readers' interpretations, some researchers collect data from 'real readers'' discussions about the texts (Hall, 2009). Thus, discourse analytic studies of reading groups can shed light on how interpretations of texts are made and displayed in discourse (Peplow et al., 2015). Reading groups typically pre-date the arrival of the researcher, unlike the focus groups with which they otherwise have some features in common – and it is to this aspect of discourse reception research that I turn next.

One kind of discourse in which I am interested is the way that non-human animals are represented in language. Our research team compiled an electronic corpus of around 13 million words of text, from a variety of genres, which we explored in various ways from our own position as

analysts (e.g. Sealey, 2018, 2019; Sealey and Pak, 2018). In addition, though, we implemented an approach developed by the lead investigator on the project, Guy Cook (e.g. Cook, 2004; Cook and Ancarno, 2019), and incorporated into our analyses data collected from both discourse producers and receivers of the texts that made up our primary data. These took the form of interviews with people whose jobs involve communicating about animals (e.g. wildlife broadcasters, campaigners for the right to hunt foxes), and focus groups with various people who hold different views about animals (e.g. vegans, livestock farmers). Reactions to contrasting texts about animals and human–animal relations were elicited from members of these focus groups, who were also prompted to contribute their thoughts about examples of discourse about animals that they identified themselves.

Focus group interviews, which are not used exclusively for discourse analysis but also in various kinds of social research, are typically fairly open-ended. This means that, although the moderator of the focus group seeks to obtain the views of its members on a particular topic or issue, the participants can offer their own interpretations, in their own words. However, as mentioned above, no discourse is produced in a vacuum, and social interactions, including focus group interviews, are co-constructions, where factors such as imbalances of power and assumptions about what is expected or accepted can all influence what people say (see e.g. Edley and Litosseliti, 2018).

Taking a different approach to the reception of discourse, one chapter in this book is devoted to the use of experiments to test the analyst's hypotheses about how different versions of similar texts influence the way people interpret them (Chapter 10, this volume). Hart includes a thorough discussion of the methodological issues related to experiments in discourse analysis, so I don't cover those in detail here. In another of his chapters (Chapter 6, this volume), he explains how cognitive linguistics is concerned with the conceptual structures that texts evoke in the minds of readers, highlighting again how discourse analysts may choose to focus on responses and reception as well as the discourse itself.

Overall, then, while most discourse analysis focuses directly – and sometimes exclusively – on discourse as the data to be analysed, this section and the previous one serve as reminders that, where authentic language is concerned, there are always people – with their own interests, aims, attitudes and interpretations – involved in its production and reception.

The perspective of the analyst

Previous sections have discussed the 'triangle of communication' – discourse as data, the people and processes involved in its production, and those involved in its reception. Different approaches to analysis place different degrees of emphasis on each of these strands, while the tools and techniques associated with different approaches will also vary. The chapters