

Summary of the main concepts of Discourse Analysis

Here are short definitions of the main terms from a discourse analysis perspective:

- **Cohesion:** How the surface elements of language (words, phrases) connect to create a unified text. (e.g., using pronouns to refer back to nouns)
- **Coherence:** How the ideas in a text fit together logically to make meaning for the reader/listener. (e.g., a story with a clear beginning, middle, and end)
- **Linguistic competence:** Knowledge of the grammar and rules of a language.
- **Communicative competence:** The ability to use language effectively in a social context. (e.g., knowing when to use formal vs informal language)
- **Schema:** A mental framework that helps us understand and interpret information. (e.g., schema of a restaurant helps us understand menus)
- **Deixis:** Words or phrases that rely on context for meaning. (e.g., "this," "here," "now")
- **Speech act:** Using language to perform an action. (e.g., apologizing, promising)
- **Speech event:** The complete context surrounding a spoken interaction. (e.g., a lecture, a conversation)
- **Shared knowledge:** Information that both speaker/writer and listener/reader already know.
- **Context:** The situation or setting that surrounds a piece of communication.
- **Text:** A written or spoken communication product.
- **Discourse:** Language used in a social context. (Discourse can include multiple texts, like a conversation)
- **CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis):** A type of discourse analysis that examines the role of language in power and social inequality.
- **Anaphora:** A reference back to a previously mentioned word or phrase. (e.g., "The cat chased the mouse. It then ate it.")

- **Critical Theory:** A broad category of approaches that question underlying power structures and ideologies in society. CDA is one application of critical theory.
- **Pragmatics:** The study of how language is used in context to achieve communication goals.
- □ **Adjacency pairs:** Sets of two utterances that are expected to go together in conversation (e.g., question-answer, greeting-response).

Critical theory has a few core concepts that guide its analysis of society and culture. Here are some of the main ones:

- **Critique of Power:** It questions how power operates in society, focusing on how dominant groups maintain their power and how marginalized groups are disadvantaged.
- **Ideology:** Critical theory views society's norms and values as ideologies, meaning sets of beliefs that aren't neutral but serve the interests of certain groups. It aims to expose these ideologies.
- **Social Construction:** This concept argues that our understanding of the world, including social categories like race, gender, and class, is not fixed but constructed through language and social interaction.
- **Emancipation:** Critical theory is ultimately about achieving social change and liberation for marginalized groups. It aims to empower these groups to challenge oppressive structures.

These core concepts provide a framework for analyzing how language, culture, and institutions reflect and perpetuate power imbalances.

Adjacency pairs are fundamental building blocks of conversation in discourse analysis. They are essentially two-part exchanges between speakers that are expected to follow each other in a conversation. Here's a breakdown of their key features:

- **Two Utterances:** An adjacency pair consists of two utterances, one from each speaker, delivered one after the other.
- **Different Speakers:** The utterances are produced by different speakers in the conversation.
- **Functional Relationship:** The first utterance sets up a certain expectation for the kind of second utterance that will follow. There's a functional relationship between the two parts.
- **Order Matters:** The order of the utterances is important. The first part typically initiates the exchange, and the second part responds to it.

Here are some common examples of adjacency pairs:

- **Greeting-Greeting:** "Hello!" - "Hello!"
- **Question-Answer:** "What time is it?" - "It's 3 pm."
- **Offer-Acceptance:** "Can I help you?" - "Yes, please."
- **Request-Grant:** "May I borrow your pen?" - "Sure, here you go."

Pragmatics and discourse analysis are both fields that focus on how language functions beyond the literal meaning of words. However, they differ in their scope and level of analysis:

- **Focus:**
 - **Pragmatics:** Focuses on how **context** affects meaning in **individual utterances** and conversations. It's about understanding how speakers

convey more than what the words themselves say, considering things like shared knowledge, intentions, and social setting.

- **Discourse Analysis:** Looks at language use in **broader contexts** like entire texts, speeches, or social interactions. It analyzes how language is structured to achieve communicative goals, considering factors like cohesion, coherence, genre conventions, and power dynamics.

- **Level of Analysis:**

- **Pragmatics: Micro level**, focusing on sentence-level meaning and how it's shaped by context. (e.g., understanding sarcasm)
- **Discourse Analysis: Macro level**, analyzing larger stretches of language and how they function as a whole. (e.g., how arguments are structured in a political speech)

Here's an analogy:

- **Think of pragmatics as understanding the nuances of a single brushstroke in a painting.** It considers the color, pressure, and technique used.
- **Discourse analysis is like understanding the entire painting.** It analyzes how brushstrokes, composition, and subject matter work together to create meaning.

Discourse analysis (DA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are both concerned with how language functions in social contexts, but they differ in their goals and focus:

Discourse Analysis (DA):

- **Focuses on:** Understanding how language is structured and used to create meaning in different contexts. It analyzes features like cohesion, coherence, genre conventions, and participant roles.

- **Goals:** To describe and explain how language works to achieve communicative purposes. It can be used for various purposes, like analyzing political speeches, educational texts, or advertising.
- **Neutrality:** Generally strives to be neutral, focusing on the mechanics of language use without necessarily taking a critical stance on the underlying ideologies.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA):

- **Focuses on:** Examining how language reflects and reinforces power structures and social inequalities. It analyzes how language choices can marginalize or empower certain groups.
- **Goals:** To critique and challenge dominant ideologies by exposing how language is used to maintain power imbalances. It aims to promote social change.
- **Critical Stance:** Inherently critical, drawing on concepts from critical theory to analyze the social and political implications of language use.

Here's a table summarizing the key differences:

Feature	Discourse Analysis (DA)	Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)
Focus	Mechanics of language use	Social and political implications
Goals	Describe & explain communication	Critique & challenge ideologies

Think of it this way:

- **DA is like dissecting a flower to understand its structure and how its parts work together.** It focuses on the mechanics of language.
- **CDA is like examining the flower to understand its role in the ecosystem.** It analyzes how language choices can benefit or harm certain groups.

Overlap:

Although distinct, DA and CDA can overlap. Discourse analysis methods can be used within CDA to analyze the specific language choices that contribute to a particular ideology.

Discourse analysis (DA) and conversation analysis (CA) are both tools for examining language use, but they have distinct approaches:

Scope:

- **Discourse analysis:** Broader scope, encompassing written and spoken language across various contexts like speeches, media, social media interactions, and even literature.
- **Conversation analysis:** Focuses specifically on spoken interaction, typically in everyday, unscripted conversations.

Focus:

- **Discourse analysis:** Analyzes how language is structured and used to achieve communicative goals within a particular context. It looks at elements like cohesion, coherence, genre conventions, and participant roles.
- **Conversation analysis:** Examines the minute details of spoken interaction to understand how participants construct meaning turn-by-turn. It focuses on features like turn-taking, adjacency pairs (expected conversation exchanges like question-answer), repair mechanisms (correcting misunderstandings), and preference structures (how participants express agreement or disagreement).

Level of Analysis:

- **Discourse analysis:** Macro level, analyzing larger stretches of language and how they function as a whole.
- **Conversation analysis:** Micro level, focusing on the sequential organization of talk within conversations and how participants achieve mutual understanding moment-by-moment.

Data Analysis:

- **Discourse analysis:** Can use a wider range of data analysis methods depending on the research question.
- **Conversation analysis:** Often relies on detailed transcriptions of conversations, including non-verbal cues like pauses and laughter, to analyze the sequential organization of talk.

Here's an analogy:

- **Think of discourse analysis as analyzing the overall structure and plot of a movie.** It considers how different scenes and characters contribute to the story.
- **Conversation analysis is like examining a specific scene in the movie frame-by-frame.** It focuses on how the actors deliver lines, their body language, and how these elements contribute to the flow of the conversation.

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Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has several key characteristics that set it apart from other forms of discourse analysis:

- **Focus on Power and Inequality:** CDA's primary focus is examining how language reflects, reinforces, or challenges power structures and social inequalities. It analyzes how certain groups are marginalized or privileged through language choices.

- **Critical Stance:** Unlike traditional discourse analysis that strives for neutrality, CDA takes a critical stance. It draws on concepts from critical theory to analyze the underlying ideologies and power dynamics at play in language use.
- **Multilayered Approach:** CDA examines language at multiple levels. It goes beyond the surface meaning of words to analyze how grammar, vocabulary, and discourse structures contribute to the reproduction of power.
- **Focus on Text and Context:** While analyzing the text itself, CDA heavily emphasizes the social and political context in which the language is used. Understanding the context helps reveal the power dynamics at play.
- **Emancipatory Goal:** Ultimately, CDA aims to be an agent for social change. By exposing the ways language reinforces inequalities, it aims to empower marginalized groups and challenge dominant ideologies.

Here are some additional characteristics of CDA:

- **Interdisciplinarity:** It draws on various disciplines like sociology, linguistics, anthropology, and political science.
- **Focus on Historical Context:** CDA considers the historical background of a text or discourse to understand how power relations have evolved.
- **Use of Specific Techniques:** CDA employs specific techniques like analyzing metaphors, nominalizations, and passive voice to uncover hidden ideologies within a text.

By combining these characteristics, CDA provides a powerful tool for critically analyzing how language shapes and reflects our social world.