



## Book reviews

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Deborah Cameron and Ivan Panović, *Working with Written Discourse*. London; Thousand Oaks, CA; New Delhi, India; Singapore: SAGE, 2014; xii + 199 pp., ISBN 9781446267226, £75 (hbk), ISBN 9781446267233, £24.99 (pbk).

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Deborah Cameron and Ivan Panović's *Working with Written Discourse* is a welcome and wide-ranging addition to the numerous textbooks on offer for discourse analysis. The volume complements Cameron's (2001) *Working with Spoken Discourse* by focusing specifically on approaches to discourse analysis of the written word. Cameron and Panović emphasise the role discourse analysis can play across the social sciences, not simply as a method for understanding language but as a means of investigating broader social issues. To this end, the focus is on introducing a diverse array of approaches rather than looking in great detail at discourse from any single viewpoint.

The book contains 12 relatively self-contained chapters in three parts, with an introduction and a helpful glossary and index. Part I lays the groundwork for analysis, surveying broad questions about the nature of written discourse. Chapter 1 considers what exactly 'discourse' is. It overviews three possible definitions of discourse: as 'language "above the sentence"', as 'language "in use"' or as 'a form of social practice in which language plays a central role' (p. 3). The ensuing discussion makes it clear that the book's emphasis is on the latter two: discourse as language in use and a form of social practice. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 explore the blurry boundary between spoken and written discourse, the impact of technology on discourse and the use of different written scripts and non-standard spelling as expressions of identity. The main thrust of these chapters is to show that the form of discourse is shaped not by any single cause, but by large complexes of social and contextual factors.

Part II provides the bulk of the book, with six chapters introducing different approaches to analysing discourse. The approaches organising each chapter are in general not theoretical standpoints or analytical tools, but larger programs of research for which many theories or tools can be used. Chapter 5 gives a brief introduction before moving on to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in Chapter 6. This chapter utilises analyses of news and advertising texts to show the possibility of differing ideological framings of events. Linguistic technicality is avoided in the example analyses, with more common-sense

discussions preferred. Chapter 7 introduces corpus-based discourse analysis, using academic discourse and investigations of gender differences in writing as examples. The chapter shows how corpus approaches can be used for a range of questions but makes clear that it does 'not contain detailed instructions on how to do corpus analysis' (p. 81). The following chapter on multimodal discourse analysis primarily concerns image–text relations and surveys Barthes' semiological work as well as some pragmatic approaches, before focusing on the systemic functional/social semiotic view. Chapter 9 surveys language as it is used in computer-mediated discourse, linking back to the chapter in Part 1 on the impact of technology on language. Finally, Chapter 10 looks at discourse analysis in multilingual contexts, an important chapter considering the dominance of monolingual studies of English in the field of discourse analysis.

Part III, titled 'Applications', contains a chapter emphasising the relevance of discourse analysis for broader social scientific enquiries (Chapter 11) and a useful chapter on how to design a discourse analysis project (Chapter 12). This final chapter mirrors a similar one in Cameron's spoken discourse book and helpfully steps through the 'nuts and bolts' of putting together a research project, including designing research questions, ethics considerations, data collection, choices of analytical approaches and finally the writing up.

*Working with Written Discourse* is admirable in the range of approaches considered, highlighting the relatively new areas of multimodality and computer-mediated discourse while not downplaying the importance of more 'traditional' monomodal written communication. In textbooks that seek to cover as large a field as discourse analysis, however, a decision must be made between the breadth of approaches covered and the depth of analytical detail. In this decision, *Working with Written Discourse* firmly favours the former. It covers a very large set of approaches for students to explore in their projects and includes a set of very useful annotated further reading lists in each chapter. This breadth of coverage, however, comes at the expense of depth of detail. Tools for analysing specific features of the language are introduced only rarely, and discussions of how to recognise these features are not foregrounded. This leads to analyses of examples that, although interesting, may give students little insight into how they would go about using the approach themselves. This is particularly glaring when students are asked to do analyses as part of the activity sections of each chapter. For example, in the chapter on CDA (Chapter 6), there is a discussion of a newspaper report from the British newspaper the *Daily Mail* about a man in Wales refusing to pay for his goods unless the shop attendant spoke to him in Welsh. The article is somewhat dismissive of the man and provides a good example of language being used to frame issues from different standpoints. In the 'Activity' section following this, another article about the same incident is given from *The Huffington Post*, with a subtly different stance. Students are asked to pay 'close attention to the linguistic choices made' in the text and, among other things, consider how the presentation of the story is different in each version (p. 72). However, aside from the active–passive voice distinction, there are few relevant linguistic tools presented to the students so that they can in fact pay 'close attention to the linguistic choices'. As the differences between the articles are largely to do with the stances they take, tools for analysing evaluative language would have been useful here, such as Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory or one of a number arising from corpus-based work (e.g.

Bednarek, 2006; Hunston, 2011). Instead, students are left with a single-sentence summary that gives little information for those who may have struggled with the activity. This is unfortunately a pattern repeated throughout the chapters, giving little guidance to students unfamiliar with analysis.

Cameron and Panović's *Working with Written Discourse* is thus best read as an overview of the field of discourse analysis. Viewed this way, it fulfils an important role, distilling the very large set of approaches available in the field into an easy to read and very accessible book. It is possibly less useful, however, as a book to teach students how to actually do discourse analysis. For this, it would be best read in conjunction with one of the many books that look in detail at specific approaches mentioned in the further reading sections.

## References

- Bednarek M (2006) *Evaluation in Media Discourse: Analysis of a Newspaper Corpus*. London: Continuum.
- Cameron D (2001) *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London: SAGE.
- Hunston S (2011) *Corpus Approaches to Evaluation: Phraseology and Evaluative Language*. New York: Routledge.
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Ruth Page, David Barton, Johann W Unger and Michele Zappavigna, *Researching Language and Social Media: A Student Guide*. London; New York: Routledge, 2014; ix + 201 pp., ISBN 9780415842006, US\$39.95 (pbk).

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The collaborative nature and means of communication of recent social media environments call into question some long-held assumptions in communication and linguistic theory, such as the dyadic role split between author and reader or the speech–writing dichotomy. The novel communicative practices afforded by social media have been approached from a variety of academic fields and theoretical perspectives, such as communication studies, information science or anthropology. *Researching Language and Social Media: A Student Guide* makes a useful addition to this emerging field of research by providing a heuristic framework to help readers explore language use in social media contexts. In line with the collaborative style of social media, the book was written as a joint effort and approaches the field from multiple angles, discussing diverse aspects of language study and their relevance for researching language use in social media. The different approaches and areas of inquiry are illustrated by brief case studies contributed by invited researchers at different career stages. Each chapter opens with a list of keywords outlining the contents and includes questions and reflection points for applying the presented ideas and concepts to one's own research projects. The book contains a good balance of theoretical and practical issues of social media discourse and is suitable both as a textbook for undergraduate/postgraduate students and as a reference for scholars who plan to do a research project.