

RESENHA

SCHIFFRIN, Deborah (1994) *Approaches to Discourse* (Blackwells Textbooks in Linguistics 8). Oxford: Blackwells, 470 pp.

Resenhado por: Antonio P. BERBER SARDINHA (University of Liverpool, UK/ Bolsista CNPq, Brasília, DF)

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This recent work by Deborah Schiffrin covers six approaches to discourse analysis: 'Speech Act Theory', 'Interactional Sociolinguistics', 'Ethnography of Communication', 'Pragmatics', 'Conversation analysis', and 'Variation Analysis'.

Part I of the book, **The Scope of Discourse Analysis**, introduces and discusses the dichotomy between structural (or formalist) and functional approaches to discourse in two chapters. Its main idea is that the scope of discourse analysis is difficult to circumscribe not only because discourse analysis is interdisciplinary, but also because the many disciplines that have contributed to its character derive from two conflicting analytical backgrounds: structuralism (or formalism) and functionalism.

Part II, **Approaches to Discourse Analysis**, consists of six chapters (3 to 8), each of them dedicated to a different approach to discourse analysis.

Chapter 3, entitled 'Speech Act Theory', focuses on 'communicative acts performed through speech' (47), and is based on the work of Austin and Searle. In the section devoted to Austin, the concepts of performative, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts are described, as well as the contrast between performative and constative verbs. In the section devoted to Searle, Schiffrin starts with the notion that it was Searle who incorporated speech act theory into linguistic theory by means of his 'principle of expressibility'. She then goes on to describe three types of acts: utterance, propositional, and illocutionary acts. Her criticism of the 'Speech act theory' is that this approach has given more attention to utterance types than to actual utterances spoken in real life.

Chapter 4 is devoted to 'Interactional Sociolinguistics', an approach which occupies itself with 'social and linguistic meanings created during interaction' (:47). This chapter includes the works of John Gumperz and Erving Goffman, and is said to be influenced by Anthropology, in the case of Gumperz, and Sociology, in the case of Goffman. The description of Gumperz's work includes the discussion of the concepts of 'contextualization cue', 'contextual presupposition', 'situated reference', and 'social construction of meaning'. The description of Goffman's work provides an overview of the concepts of 'face', 'other', and 'frame', among others. According to Schiffrin, the work of Gumperz focuses on how 'the meaning, structure, and use of language is socially and culturally relative' (:98), whereas that of Goffman provides 'a description of how language is situated in particular circumstances of social life, and how it reflects, and adds, meaning and structure in those circumstances' (:111).

Chapter 5 is entitled 'The Ethnography of Communication', and centers around the work of Dell Hymes. This approach is considered by the author to be the most integrative of all the approaches included in the book. It is defined as an approach to discourse that "builds a single framework in which communication has a central role in both anthropological and linguistic studies", deriving from the common interest of anthropology and linguistics in 'communication' (:138). Ethnography of communication is taken as a prototype for the functional paradigm of discourse analysis.

Chapter 6, 'Pragmatics', concentrates on the works of Grice and his 'cooperative principle'. It includes a presentation of his maxims and an introduction to implicature. The history of pragmatics is traced back to the writings of Morris in 1938. There is a discussion of the semiotic sign-based version of Morris's pragmatics and the linguistic-philosophic nature of Gricean pragmatics.

Chapter 7 is on 'Conversation Analysis', which is defined as an approach that 'considers the way participants in a conversation construct systematic solutions to recurrent organizational problems of talk' (:273). The leading figures chosen to be discussed in relation to this approach are Harold Garfinkel, Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson.

And finally, Chapter 8, 'Variation Analysis', concentrates on the work of William Labov. Variation Analysis, the only approach included in the book that stems directly from linguistics, is identified as an approach that focuses on 'structural categories of texts' (:47), 'how form and meaning help to define text' (:47), and how 'constraints on alternative realizations of an underlying form (...) help determine which realization of a single underlying representation appears in the surface form of the utterance' (:287).

Part III, **Conclusion**, shows that there are important similarities between approaches in discourse analysis, and that these similarities undermine that rigid distinction between structural and functional approaches introduced in part I.

Part III consists of four chapters: Structure and Function, Text and Context, Discourse and Communication, and Conclusion: Language as Social Interaction.

Chapter 9, 'Structure and Function', reconsiders the concepts of 'structure' and 'function' in discourse analysis in view of the presentation of the individual approaches in part II of the book.

Chapter 10, 'Text and Context', reviews how each approach takes account of textual and contextual information, and provides important redefinitions of 'text' and 'context'. Text is understood as 'linguistic material', and context, as 'the environment in which "sayings" occur'. The discussion then links back to chapter 9 to include the notions of 'structure' and 'function'. It is claimed that structural approaches are text based as opposed to functional approaches, which tend to be context based. In the end, it is concluded that different approaches 'differ in their understanding of the processes by which speakers/hearers rely upon text and context to construct/discover the meaning of an utterance and the coherence relations across utterances' (:366) not in their allegiance to the realms of context or text alone.

Chapter 11, 'Discourse and Communication', discusses three models of communication: code, inferential, and interactional. Each of these models is said to be linked to an approach to discourse analysis. Thus, variation analysis would relate to a code model of communication; pragmatics and speech act theory would follow an inferential model; and interactional sociolinguistics, ethnography of

communication, and conversation analysis would fit into an interactional model.

And finally, in chapter 12, 'Conclusion', the author discusses how, despite having different origins, and therefore different assumptions and motivations, and different conceptions of language, the approaches discussed in the book still relate to a basic issue in discourse analysis: how each utterance contributes to what is said in others, and how each utterance relates to others.

After part III, three appendices follow: 'Collecting data', which gives short tips on recording data and where to obtain data; 'Transcription conventions' reproduces annotation guidelines published in other important works, and includes guidelines for the transcription of both linguistic and non-linguistic features; and 'Sample data' presents a transcribed conversation.

As can be seen from this short account of the contents, *Approaches to Discourse* is structured as a potentially good coursebook. In this respect, it has many points in its favor. It presents each approach in a different chapter, complete with background information on the origins of each individual approach, leading figures, key concepts, and, very important for didactic purposes, sample analyses based on the methodology and concepts associated with each individual approach, as well as exercises, which could be useful in the classroom. In addition, the appendices provide important information for data collection and preparation, together with some data already transcribed and ready for analysis according to the models in each approach. The text is not elementary, though. The book is written in dense, well articulated prose, and therefore does not function easily as a reference guide, because it lacks diagrams and summary tables. Teachers, therefore, have to take this into consideration, and reserve this book for courses in which depth is desirable.

The same qualities that make *Approaches to Discourse* a fine coursebook also make it good reading for those interested in the history and conceptualization related to discourse analysis. Each leading figure is discussed in relative detail and with ample backing from the literature. The concepts and methodology linked to each approach are discussed in considerable length to be appreciated by those already carrying out analyses of discourse.

Some criticism also applies. First, the book concentrates on those approaches and scholars which have been dedicated to the analysis of spoken language. If the reader wants a discussion of research done into written text, s/he will have to look elsewhere. Second, the author is not impartial; her personal view of discourse favours a functionalist paradigm, and she makes that clear in the last chapter. And third, the selection of approaches and key scholars is clearly non-European: out of the six individual chapters, four are of American origin. Of course, these restrictions do not represent bias, but a choice that the author had to make. It is a choice that reflects the author's own background, as well as the context in which the book was conceived (it was originated in the course which the author taught in the Linguistic Society of America in 1987).

Overall, *Approaches to Discourse* is an important addition to the field. It maps the history, as well as the concepts, methodologies, and works of important figures associated with individual approaches. It can be of relevance to students as well as researchers.

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