

***Presentation of the volume:
Between the lines and through metaphors: Emerging voices in discourse
analysis***

Presentación del volumen: Entre líneas y a través de metáforas: Voces emergentes en análisis del discurso

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This volume of *Jóvenes en la Ciencia* brings together five articles written by students of the 4th semester in the B.A. in TESOL at the University of Guanajuato. These papers present a collection of mini-scale studies where the students analyzed the metaphors found in texts such as songs, interviews and bible chapters. The papers demonstrate the competencies gained by students after taking the course on Discourse Analysis as part of their training as English teachers.

Through their analysis the authors exercise their critical thinking skills. During the course, the students worked systematically to understand concepts and to gain theoretical foundations to engage in a process of text analysis beyond language. This process led them to develop a methodology that would guide the analysis of the texts they chose to work with. The analytic work therefore focused on describing and guiding the readers to see how meaning is constructed through the use of discourse to unveil issues of ideology, power and hegemony, or in other cases, to explain how rhetoric devices such as metaphors allow to explain complex concepts with the purpose of creating meaningful messages for the audiences who consume these kinds of texts that are part of our everyday activities.

The student-authors of the papers in this volume come from different backgrounds and have rich linguistic repertoires that include at least two languages. Their work is presented in English as this the language used as a medium of instruction in the B.A. in TESOL. Writing in English in this case, adds a special value to the work of the authors as they are in the process of developing and improving their academic language skills. As future English teachers having had this experience of writing, looking up references, reading, negotiating the use of AI and editing for publication makes them aware of the challenges found in writing. As the lecturer in charge of this course, I hope that this process translates into a learning experience that will undoubtedly strengthen their confidence both as students and in their future teaching practice.

Discourse analysis, a brief overview

Language and *using* language to communicate is often taken for granted as this is something 'we do' all the time. We talk to ourselves and others, writing messages or comments on social media has become a common everyday activity for most of us, and not only do we produce messages in different forms and contexts, but we are also on the receiving end of endless of texts that intent to communicate messages in different contexts



and for particular purposes. We are constantly engaged in the process of coding and decoding messages found in all kinds of written, oral, visual, audio-visual, and even interactive texts. Although this might seem like a typical task of modernity, propelled by the rapid technological advances of our time, and considering how bombarded we are with information, making sense of 'texts' is not a new skill or task. This is something we have done for as long as language has existed. What has changed is the fact that the systematization of this task has resulted in the development of a discipline called Discourse Analysis.

Discourse analysis emerged as a discipline within the social sciences in the 1950s. Zellig Harris first used this term to describe his interest and work related to "the examination of language beyond the level of the sentence and the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour" (Paltridge, 2012, p. 2). In other words, Harris knew it was not enough to understand words and their semantic value to make sense of a sentence, an utterance or a text. There was more to it, and this meant understanding how *meaning is made* through the language we use.

Moreover, to understand the meaning of a text and to depict 'the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic behavior' one must learn to 'examine' or 'explore' a variety of elements that will give us the information needed to interpret the meaning of the 'text' in question. That is, we must look at the context. The context, generally speaking, provides key information related to the situation, the topic, and the actors involved in the interaction or the production of the text. Considering this, van Dijk (2008) warns us about the subjectivity of contexts and the constructs emerging in interactions. In other words, we must consider what people 'do' with language to navigate the world. In doing this, the way language is used and how texts are structured will reveal information about ideologies, power-relations, beliefs, and orientations just to mention some aspects.

Discourse analysis and language teaching

Since language is a central concern for discourse analysis, it is fundamental for language teachers to become familiar with this field of study not only to learn more about how language works, but to deeply understand the implications of language use in the real world. Language teachers not only teach language forms to enable students to communicate messages or in the worst-case scenario to replicate phrases, but they also must discuss language functions and how cultural aspects play a significant role in how successful communication is configured. Moreover, the language used by teachers, how it is used, their beliefs and practices around language is in itself a message with a clear meaning for students too.

According to Durand Sepúlveda (2017), "[t]he analysis of discourse is often thought to be hard to use in language classrooms and teachers have assumed their students are perhaps not ready to apply it" (p. 2). This has led language teachers to overlook important concepts and theoretical aspects coming from discourse analysis that, if taught across language classrooms, would provide language learners with important knowledge that is highly applicable to engage in real world communication in their own language and the foreign or second languages they aim at learning. Therefore, providing Discourse Analysis training in teacher education programs might be a catalyst for the development of critical thinking skills for both language teachers and language learners. Additionally, having a deep understanding of text forming devices, text-structure, social and cultural written and oral practices would help language teachers not only to build meaningful materials



and activities, but to critically observe the materials used in the teaching process to identify potential cultural biases, symbolic violence and hegemonic discourses that could impact how learners perceive their target language and themselves as language users (Bonyadi, 2019).

With this in mind, we now turn to the presentation of an overview of the articles and their content. The work done by the authors provides evidence of how becoming familiar with key aspects of discourse analysis leads to observing the world and the everyday activities with a new set of eyes, critical eyes.

Summaries and commentaries of the articles

The article by Astrid Guadalupe Rico Rico analyzes the metaphors used in the representation of floods in Genesis 6–9, focusing on how the narrative constructs meanings of destruction and renewal. Astrid identified key symbols associated with the story of Noah's ark, and through the analysis of the metaphorical characteristics of the text she explains the deep meaning that this biblical passage has, and which has prevailed throughout history as a fundamental narrative in the Judeo-Christian tradition and in other civilizations too.

Trying to make sense of experiences 'out of this world' is not an easy endeavor. It is in these cases where metaphors become highly important for human beings. Beatriz Cancino Salinas invites us to 'reach a star' through the narrative of Eugene Cernan, commander of the Apollo 17 mission. The analysis of the metaphors used by Cernan not only bring us closer to the sensation of what it is like to be in space looking at the earth from far way, they evoke deep reflections of our place in the universe and the tensions of being tied to deeply human ideas of perseverance, collective effort, spiritual reflection, and human unity.

Following the idea of unity and imagination, Charline Nagel shares her analysis of John Lennon's song Imagine. A song that has prevailed and become a symbol of peace around the world and through multiple generations. Although the song is widely known and sung by people of all backgrounds, perhaps for the simplicity of its lyrics, deep meanings are constructed through the use of words and phrases. The metaphorical analysis of Charline provides evidence that the song's political force lies partly in the tension between linguistic simplicity and ideological complexity: ordinary words and familiar experiences are used to invite listeners to reconsider borders, institutions, possessions, violence, and collective identity.

The article written by Brenda Jimena Arenas Neri, takes us through the journey of a poem creation. The song chosen by the author looks at metaphors that represent the creative process of writing. This paper is an interesting metalinguistic exercise where language is used to talk about language, and in which words become living entities, inspiration is personified, and the poet's identity is reflected in his creations.



Finally, the work of Sarahí Sánchez Apolinar presents an analysis and a reflection about love and its meaning. This paper analyzes the metaphors in the song *Amar y Querer* by José José, which is a widely known song in Mexico and Latin America. Sarahí, takes key phrases used in the song to describe the meaning of love to discover the ideologies behind them. These ideologies depict love as total surrender and emotional intensity. The paper demonstrates how metaphors do not function merely as poetic language, but as cultural and ideological tools that shape how love from a perspective of sacrifice is understood and normalized.

References

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