

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Handbook of Discourse Analysis. Edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003, xxx + 872 pp.

Reviewed by SAMUEL G. OBENG* and CHRISTOPHER R. GREEN**

Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton have brought together some of the world's distinguished scholars representing a variety of fields of the linguistic sciences to contribute to this comprehensive volume. Rarely does one find a discipline so fully explicated, discussed, and synthesized from such diverse theoretical frameworks and methodological orientations.

An obvious strength of the *Handbook* is its wide scope and the lucidity of the ways in which the various theories and methodologies have been explicated. In particular, it is refreshing to observe how such diverse theoretical linguistic traditions are handled in relation to discourse analysis.

Another important strength is the contributors' close and systematic attention to the historical developments of their various sub-fields. Unlike most ordinary journal articles, which make cursory references to relevant literature, most of the authors took pains to review the literature and to point out the growth that their respective sub-fields have seen over the years. The chapters by Brinton, Couper-Kuhlen, Gumperz, Kendall and Tannen, Lakoff, Mey, Norrick, Schegloff, Shuy, and van Dijk stand out in this regard.

Another strength of the volume is the richness and originality of the data used, as well as the painstaking discussions of it. As field linguists, we were gratified to find that the authors did not shy away from natural data. We venture to put words in the authors' mouths by saying that for them "data is theory" and that their close attention to data provides a window into the discourse participants' worldviews.

The aspect of the volume that needed strengthening is the attention to discourses from languages other than English. Only a few of the authors, such as Biber and Conrad, Edwards, Mey, and Polanyi, included excerpts from other languages in their chapters. Given the history of linguistics and of discourse analysis in particular, the tendency to formulate theories based solely on English or mostly on Indo-European languages, and the dangers inherent in such limitations, this omission is worth pointing out.

The editors grouped the chapters under four broad sections. The first section, "Discourse analysis and linguistics," comprises nine chapters dealing with the interconnectedness between discourse analysis and such sub-fields of linguistics as phonetics and phonology, semantics, syntax, historical linguistics, and linguistic typology. The papers in this section point to a growing interest in showing how discourse analysis sheds light on linguistics and how linguistics illuminates discourse analysis. Specifically, the authors show how close attention to phonetic, semantic, syntactic, and typological as well as historical linguistic details can tell us about how discourse is structured, interpreted, and situated in different sociocultural contexts.

*Linguistics Department, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405, USA. E-mail: sobeng@indiana.edu

**Linguistics Department, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405, USA. E-mail: greencr@indiana.edu

Couper-Kuhlen (pp. 13–34) provides a concise yet thorough introduction to the motivations behind research on intonation phenomena, as well as suggestions and hypotheses about future trends in the subject. This chapter, like some of her earlier work (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen, 1996), points to the fact that a cross-fertilization of phonetic and prosodic studies with discourse analysis provides considerable insights into the pragmatics of prosody.

Martin's explication of the rather complex components of cohesion and texture (pp. 35–53) leads the reader to a sampling of the ways in which speakers transfer meaning to discourse in a comprehensible manner. His incorporation of theory and methodology in his definition and recontextualization of coherence and texture is fascinating. However, the multi-layered hierarchical structure of coherence as explained in the chapter may be difficult for some readers to follow.

Schiffrin's chapter (pp. 54–75) on the various approaches to studying discourse markers is outstanding, as is Norrick's (pp. 76–99), which provides a remarkable amount of evidence supporting the claims regarding the linguistic analysis of meaning. The discourse-oriented approach to the study of meaning is a welcome change to the field of semantics, which in the past focused on lexemes and isolated vocabulary items. Norrick provides a comprehensive explication of the relationship between semantics and discourse.

Blakemore's chapter (pp. 100–118) challenges the reader to look beyond the convenience of accepting structured views of discourse processing to a more cognitively based interpretation of the differences between relevance and coherence. Brinton's discussion of historical discourse analysis (pp. 138–60) is fully accessible to both the experienced and novice reader.

Ward and Birner provide an excellent introduction to the study of contextual constraints that motivate the structural options available to speakers of English (pp. 119–37). Their provision of a cohesive and understandable explanation of the constraints on English information structure that guide the placement of "old" versus "new" material in discourse in several diverse environments is an eye-opener. Myhill treats the various compatibilities and differences between linguistic typology and discourse analysis (pp. 161–74).

The authors in this section did a superb job of bringing linguistic theory to reality. The main weakness is the imbalance in the discussion of linguistics and discourse analysis, especially the tendency by some of the authors to put more emphasis on the mainstream theoretical linguistic aspect than on the discursive facet of their discussion.

The second section, "The linking of theory and practice in discourse analysis," is made up of eight chapters. As in Section I, the main strengths of this section are the contributors' ability to link theory with concrete data and the situation of the discussions in sensible natural contexts in ways that make discourse analysis a less abstract field of study. Lakoff's work on apologies (pp. 199–214) tackles the topic of the interdisciplinarity of discourse analysis by discussing the ways in which the analysis of apologies relates to various sub-fields of linguistics. Her exposition, like that of Gumperz (pp. 215–28), is detailed, very informative, and thought-provoking.

The chapter by Heller (pp. 250–64) takes an abstract approach, presenting a somewhat undefined branch of discourse methodology that has difficulty explaining precisely what it hopes to accomplish. Even though Heller's conclusions restate the importance of studying interactions in discourse, the argument it makes for "interactionist" discourse analysis itself (as defined in the chapter) needs further explication. The missing pieces in the interactionist puzzle leave readers with questions to ponder.

The third section, "Discourse: language, context, and interaction," comprises sixteen papers by some of the world's leading critical discourse analysts. Like the previous sections, the papers in this section emphasize the relevance of language, text, and context in discourse analysis. What is unique about this section is its attention to various social, cultural, and institutional domains (education, the courtroom, politics, medicine, and the media, among others). The main strengths of the section are its scope and the depth in which some of the chapters are explicated. The chapters by Herring (pp. 612–34), Johnstone (pp. 635–49), Scollon and Scollon (pp. 538–57), van Dijk (pp. 352–71), and Wilson (pp. 398–415) stand out in terms of their depth. Those by Adger (pp. 503–17), Fleischman (pp. 470–502), and Shuy (pp. 437–52) offer insights into the study of discourse through excellent exemplification, as well as deep synthesis and analysis of the cited excerpts.

The fourth section, "Discourse across disciplines," deals with strategies employed by scholars outside of mainstream linguistics – psychologists and social psychologists, cognitive scientists, language teachers and applied linguists, sociologists, literary scholars, and computer scientists – in dealing with discourse and how discourse informs the various disciplines in which the above scholars work. The main strengths of this section lie in the broad manner in which some of the chapters deal with various phenomena. For example, Chafe's discussion of the structure and compartmentalization of discourse topics and schema (pp. 673–87), his incorporation of prosody, gaze, phrase/syllable duration, and alterations in intonation to discourse study, and his explication of various verbal and nonverbal strategies that speakers employ to negotiate the flow of discourse, provide the reader with a great deal of knowledge about the field of discourse analysis.

Olshtain and Celce-Murcia's contribution, "Discourse analysis and language teaching" (pp. 707–24), is a welcome addition to this *Handbook* given the fact that it is one of the few papers in the volume that offer information about the application of discourse analysis to educational settings and processes. Tracy's work on "Discourse analysis in communication" (pp. 725–86) is very wide in scope. In addition to discussing the nature and scope of telephone talk, accounting for actions through speech, straight talk (a way of getting straight to the point), and speech in academic colloquia, she touches on a rather delicate issue: "the preference for talk over written texts" on the part of discourse analysts. Tracy does a good job articulating the fact that studying talk "increases the visibility of people as part of what is being studied" (p. 735) – something which texts, in the way they are presented¹ and studied, cannot do.

Grimshaw (pp. 750–71) critiques the way discourse analysis is approached by most discourse analysts, and challenges scholars to go beyond simple data collection and classification in order to begin real scientific analysis of discourse as carried out by critical discourse analysts and by narrative and text analysts, among others. Although Grimshaw's criticism may be perceived as harsh in a number of ways, it forces the reader to reflect on the field of discourse analysis itself, including some of the chapters in the volume. Grimshaw's work thus strengthens this section in particular and the volume as a whole.

Clark and van der Wege's co-authored chapter, "Imagination in discourse" (pp. 772–86), provides an interesting commentary on a specialized subject that scarcely overlaps at all with any other material in the volume. Their discussion of how individuals use their imaginations to "feel" words that they speak or hear is succinct. Mey (pp. 787–97) deals with literary pragmatics and explicates the relationship that develops between the author of

a text and the individual who reads it. His ability to link linguistics with literary discourse makes this section stand out in the volume.

A major strength of this section lies in Webber's demonstration of the connection between discourse analysis and two fairly new fields of study – computational linguistics and natural language processing – and the benefits derived from such connections (pp. 798–816).

Bringing out the link between discourse analysis and other disciplines, this important section also highlights weaknesses in some of the chapters. For example, its thorough exposition notwithstanding, Harré's chapter (pp. 688–706) reaches too far outside of the study of discourse analysis proper. And despite the strength it brings to the section, Tracy's chapter could have addressed what discourse analysis itself stands to gain from looking toward the field of communication.

One of the contributors provides interesting insights about future directions in the study of discourse. Being linguists ourselves, we take comfort in Couper-Kuhlen's direction in the study of intonation (pp. 13–34). For most phonologists, there is no doubt that phonological theory has been weakened in recent decades by a tendency on the part of some to shun natural data and resort instead to the use of context-deprived isolated words and phrases. Given the considerable improvement in transcription techniques and also in acoustic phonetics, we anticipate conversational phonologists and phoneticians devoting considerable time to exploring the correlations between discourse and prosody. It is refreshing to see Couper-Kuhlen emphasizing this path for future intonation and discourse research. Schiffrin's call (pp. 54–75) for defining the source of discourse markers, for exploring the relationship between discourse markers and context, and for stressing the importance of the influence of syntax and semantics in discourse analysis is a welcome sign, given the considerable insights such cross-fertilization will yield.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that for linguists, sociologists, information technologists, and all scholars for whom language and discourse are central issues – certainly including the readership of *World Englishes* – this volume is the place to find inspiration, knowledge, and directions for future research. The multidisciplinary and poly-theoretical nature of the contributions highlights the importance of language study in both humanistic and social science research. It is rare to find a book that can very easily serve as a resource and a research guide in numerous disciplines.

NOTE

1. Texts are often presented without such prosodies as rhythm, tempo, loudness, duration/ length, and pitch; hence, there is always the danger of misinterpretation, non-interpretation, or multiple interpretation.

REFERENCE

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