

Discourse Analysis for Variationists

Agenda

1. What do I mean by DA?
2. How might DA fit into variation studies? How might variation fit into DA?
3. Discourse data, and transcripts
4. A non-exhaustive list of stuff to look for
5. Writing (doing) discourse analysis
6. Interviews as discourse
7. Sandbox

Example 1

What is 'interesting' about this conversation?

How is it structured?

Why do the speakers form their utterances as they do?

What do I mean by DA?

Approaches: Gricean pragmatics, Princean information structure, speech acts, conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics, ethnography of speaking, Gumperzian interactional sociolinguistics, Labovian narrative analysis, syntactic and lexical choice.

I take an ecumenical toolbox approach.

DA is not the same as qualitative content analysis.

Discourse analysis argues from individual cases.

What is discourse?

Some important principles of analysis:

Principle of Autonomy: Discourse analysis is in neither person's head, but rather focuses on the discourse as jointly created by two people working toward intersubjectivity. So the method looks at how linguistic form and meaning are used by speakers to negotiate this intersubjectivity.

Principle of Intuition: There is no such thing as intuition. But, we notice more details than we realize. So, use intuition as a starting point, then find out what details you notice in intuition.

How might DA fit into variation studies? How might variation fit into DA?

DA and variation are both concerned with the choices that speakers make in crafting utterances. Even variationists have to do qualitative interpretation.

DA can be useful at the beginning of a variation analysis.

DA adds to explanation of how variables are used in the context of other variables (adds a syntagmatic understanding to the paradigmatic variationist view).

Support for arguments based on identity, accommodation, prestige, non-conformity, stance, etc. by showing how speakers orient to each other and their talk.

DA can suggest discursive categories for independent variables (aka factors): framing, speech activity, voicing, stance.

Discourse variables: When or how are certain discourse devices deployed? (But, the variable context can be problematic.)

Data

Ideally use omniscient 3D panoramic video. But even then there is a perspective!

The main questions are what to represent, and how to represent it?

The goal is a balance between detail and usability/readability.

Use standard spelling. Especially as a variationist!

Some things to look for/about

Syntactic constructions, especially unusual constituent ordering

Presupposition, implicature

Patterns of cohesion: anaphora and repetition

Turn taking patterns (silence, overlap, length of turns)

Adjacency pair structure

Larger action sequences (openings, closings, invitations, etc.)

Repairs

Participation framework and production format

Voicing

Intertextual links (frame, genre, speech activity, etc.)

Categorization

Writing/doing DA

[See handout of contrasting analyses]

Some Maxims:

- Do not simply repeat the example line by line.
- Do not try to analyze a long stretch all at once.
- Do not psychologize. All you have is the discourse!
- Your intuitions should not be presented as such.
- Do not make claims you cannot justify.
- Be specific.

If there are one or two points that are the focus of the analysis, you can mark them in the transcript with an arrow, or bold the line number.

Interviews as special kinds of interactions

How does the speech event/activity affect the linguistic choices?

Use DA to better understand how each speaker orients to, or frames, the event (more like a job interview or a chatty TV interview, or an appearance with John Stewart?)

How does the interviewer construct and constrain the interviewee?

Things to look for:

- Repair
- voicing
- preferred and dispreferred responses
- insertions
- categorizations

Are other voices brought into the interview? How and why?

Others?

Sandbox

Suggested/sample reading

Textbooks

General

Cameron, Deborah. 2001. *Working with Spoken Discourse*. Sage Publications. ISBN (Pb): 0761957731.

Johnstone, Barbara. 2002. *Discourse Analysis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. ISBN (Pb):0631208771

Schiffrin, Deborah. 1994. *Approaches to Discourse*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Specific approaches

Hutchby, Ian and Robin Wooffitt. 1998. *Conversation Analysis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell (Polity Press).

Sidnell, Jack. 2010. *Conversation Analysis: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Schegloff, Emmanuel A. 2006. *Sequence Organization in Interaction, Volume 1: A Primer in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Articles/Chapters/Monographs

Antaki, C., Billig, M., Edwards, D., Potter, J., 2003. Discourse Analysis Means Doing Analysis: A Critique Of Six Analytic Shortcomings. *Discourse Analysis Online* 1,1. [<http://www.shu.ac.uk/daol/previous/v1/n1/index.htm>]

Bauman, Richard. 1992. Contextualization, tradition, and the dialogue of genres: Icelandic legends of the *kraftaskáld*. In Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin (eds), *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Briggs, Charles and Richard Bauman. 1992. Genre, intertextuality, and social power. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2: 131-172.

Chafe, Wallace. The deployment of consciousness in the production of a narrative. In Wallace Chafe (ed), *The Pear Stories: Cognitive, Cultural, and Linguistic Aspects of Narrative Production*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex. 9-50.

Edwards, Jane A. 1993. Principles and contrasting systems of discourse transcription. In Jane A. Edwards and Martin D. Lampert (eds), *Talking Data: Transcription and Coding in Discourse Research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. 3-32.

Fairclough, Norman. 1985. Critical and descriptive goals in discourse analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics* 9: 739-763.

- Gardner, Rod. 2005. Acknowledging Strong Ties between Utterances in Talk: Connections through 'Right' as a Response Token. *Proceeding of the 2004 Australian Linguistic Society Annual Meeting*. <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/115>.
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- Goffman, Erving. 1981. Footing. In *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goodwin, Charles. 1986. Audience diversity, participation and interpretation. *Text* 6: 283-316.
- Kiesling, Scott F. and Elka Ghosh Johnson. 2010. Four forms of interactional indirection. *Journal of Pragmatics*, Special issue on indirectness. Scott Kiesling (ed.). 42,2:292-306.
- Labov, William. 1972. The transformation of experience in narrative syntax. In *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*, 354-396. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Mishler, Eliot. 1991. Representing discourse: The Rhetoric of transcription. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*. 1: 255-280.
- Ochs, Elinor. 1979. Transcription as theory. In Elinor Ochs and bambi Schieffelin (eds), *Developmental Pragmatics*. Academic Press. 43-72.
- Prince, Ellen F. 1992. The ZPG Letter: Subjects, Definiteness, and Information-status. In *Discourse Description*, Mann, William C. and Sandra A. Thompson (eds.), 295 ff.
- Ribeiro, Branca Telles. 2006. Footing, positioning, voice. Are we talking about the same things? In *Discourse and Identity*, ed. by Anna De Fina, Deborah Schiffrin, and Michael Bamberg. New York: Cambridge University Press. 48-82.
- Schegloff, Emmanuel. 1982. Discourse as an Interactional Achievement: Some Uses of 'uh huh' and Other Things That Come Between Sentences. In *Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics 1981: Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk*, ed. by D. Tannen. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 71-93.
- Schegloff, Emmanuel and Harvey Sacks. 1973. Opening up closings. *Semiotica* 8: 289-327.
- Schiffrin, Deborah. 1981. Tense Variations in Narration. *Language* 57.45-62.
- Schiffrin, Deborah. 1987. Background: What is discourse? In Deborah Schiffrin *Discourse Markers*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1-30.
- Schiffrin, Deborah. 1996. Narrative as self-portrait: Sociolinguistic constructions of identity. *Language in Society* 25: 167-203.
- Sherzer, Joel. 1987. The 'gathering house': Public and political 'gatherings.' In Joel Sherzer, *Kuna Ways of Speaking*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. 72-109.
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- Widdicombe, Sue. 1998. 'But you don't class yourself': The interactional management of category membership and non-membership. In *Identities in Talk*, ed. by Chales Antaki and Sue Widdicombe. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 52-70.

Transcripts

- 1) Steph: so. (0.3)
 2) Mrs. Dorsey's having some (1.7)
 3) like some tests done °to see what's wrong°
 4) (1.5)
 5) Pam: she still smoke like a chimney?=
 6) Steph: =umm hmm
 7) (1.7) [sniff] (0.8)
 8) she's not gonna quit we had this discussion actually today=
 9) =she said (0.8)
 10) it's one of the *few* pleasures I ha:ve,
 11) and it's too late.
 12) (0.8) (???)
 13) Pam: it's *true*:↑↓ though y'know↑
 14) (2.8)
 15) Scott: 's *not* worth the trouble.
 16) (0.6)
 17) Pam: it probably *is*:↑↓ too late.
 18) Steph: (0.6) (Yeah↓)
 19) (1.6)
 20) and I guess she had some *heart* tests done because uh (1.1)
 21) (she) was having some *chest* pains? (0.5)
 22) her heart's *fi:ne*. (1.3)
 23) so,
 24) (1.3)
 25) Scott: 's her *lungs* that are the problem (though).
 26) Steph: Right.
 27) Pam: How *old* are they.
 28) (1.0)
 29) Steph: *seventy-five*:↑↓
 30) (0.6)
 31) Pam: mmn
 32) (3.0)
 33) Scott: Pretty *good* for *seventy-fi:ve*
 34) Steph: Yeah.

Original

- 1) Steph: So Mrs. Dorsey's having some..like some tests done.
- 2) Pam: She still smoke like a chimney?
- 3) Steph: umm hmm She's not gonna quit. We had this discussion actually today. She said, it's one of the few pleasures I have,and it's too late.
- 4) Pam: It's true, though, y'know.
- 5) Scott: It's not worth the trouble.
- 6) Pam: Well it is too late.
- 7) Steph: And I guess she had some heart tests done because uh she was having some chest pains? Her heart's fine so.
- 8) Scott: It's her lungs that are the problem.
- 9) Steph: Right.
- 10) Pam: How old are they?
- 11) Steph: 75.
- 12) Pam: Uh.
- 13) Scott: Pretty good for 75.
- 14) Steph: Yeah.

Column Transcript

	<i>Steph</i>	<i>Pam</i>	<i>Scott</i>
1	So Mrs. Dorsey's having		
2	some..like some tests		
3	done.		
4		She still smoke like a	
5		chimney?	
6	mm hmm She's not gonna		
7	quit. We had this		
8	discussion actually		
9	today. She said, it's		
10	one of the few		
11	pleasures I have,and		
12	it's too late.		
13			
14		It's true, though,	
15		y'know.	
16	And I guess she had		It's not worth the
17	some heart tests done		trouble.
18	because uh she was		
19	having some chest		
20	pains? Her heart's fine		
21	so.		
22			
23			It's her lungs that are
24	Right		the problem.
25		How old are they?	

Staff Transcript

1

Steph: So Mrs. Dorsey's having some like some tests done

Pam:

Scott:

2

Steph: umm hmm She's not gonna

Pam: She still smoke like a chimney?

Scott:

3

Steph: quit. We had this discussion actually today. She said, it's one

Pam:

Scott:

4

Steph: of the few pleasures I have, and it's too late.

Pam:

It's true

Scott:

5

Steph:

Pam: though y'know

Scott:

It's not worth the trouble

6

Steph:

Pam: It probably is too late.

Scott:

7

Steph: And I guess she had some heart tests done because uh she was

Pam:

Scott:

8

Steph: having some chest pains? Her heart's fine so.

Pam:

Scott:

9

Steph: Right

Pam:

How old are they?

Scott: It's her lungs that are the problem.

Transcript 2: Football on TV

Conversation started after television was turned on.

- 1) Krystle: Oh my gosh, cable. See we only have like 3, 6, and 10 at home.
- 2) Mark: |You fol-
- 3) Mark: You follow pro football at all?
- 4) Krystle: What?
- 5) Mark: Do you follow pro football at all?
- 6) Krystle: Wha?
- 7) Mark: Do you follow pro football at all?
- 8) Krystle: Um, I know the Eagles are playing the playoffs today. My boyfriend's sitting at home in his Eagles jersey.
- 9)
- 10) Jill: [laughs]
- 11) Mark: [laughs]
- 12) Krystle: I think they're playing the Giants at 4 o'clock.
- 13) But that's, yeah that's not til 4:30, but there'll probably be a game at 1:30 too. I
- 14) think.
- 15) Mark: There's a game now.
- 16) Krystle: Yeah, I think. It, it probably starts at 1:15 or 1:30 and it's 1 o'clock.
- 17) Jill: Wow.
- 18) Krystle: 'Cause there's =
- 19) Mark: [yelling across to someone else in room] =(...the upset?)
- 20) Jill: Can you turn the volume down?
- 21) Mark: You talking to me?
- 22) Jill: Nooo, I'm n|ot talking to anybody.
- 23) Krystle: |It's all playoffs and so there's probably a game at 1, 4, and 8 or
- 24) something
- 25) Jill: Maybe.
- 26) Krystle: Today
- 27) Mark: Maybe.
- 28) Krystle: That's usually how it is, |like 1, 4, and 7:30.
- 29) Mark: |There were two last night.
- 30) Krystle: Huh?
- 31) Mark: There were two last night. I think it's just 1 and 4.
- 32) (2.0)
- 33) Krystle: It might be. Just 1 and 4.
- 34) (3.3)
- 35) Jill: How did I get food on my zipper?
- 36) Krystle: Yeah, I just watch the, the Eagles and the Steelers. That's about it.
- 37) Jill: I don't even
- 38) (1.7)
- 39) Mark: You don't understand the game.
- 40) Krystle: You don't |understand the game?
- 41) Jill: |This is true. I *don't* understand football. People have tried to explain it
- 42) to me and I have like the barest, sketchiest idea.=
- 43) Krystle: =You just have 4 t|ries

- 44) Jill: |BIG MEN RUN UP AND DOWN THE FIELD AND THROW
44a) THEM|SELVES on top of each ot|her.
- 45) Krystle: |4 tries |4 tries to get 10 yards. If you don't get 10 yards in
45a) 4 tries the other team gets the ball.
- 46) (4.2)
- 47) Mark: Yo|u have the ball, right?
- 48) Krystle: |That's You h|ave
- 49) Jill: |Don't even try.
- 50) Krystle: You have to get 10 yards, |right?
- 51) Jill: |Yeah.
- 52) Krystle: You have 4 tries ↑ to get 10 yards. ↑ (1.0) And if you don't, you either kick it to the
53) other team or it switches to the other team.
- 54) Mark: Um, the object of the game is to get the ball into the other person's endzone.
55) Everything else besides that is safety rules.
- 56) Krystle: Yeah, I don't understand any of the other things.=
- 57) Jill: [laughing] Okay.
- 58) Krystle: =Like, I just got a basic grasp on holding, maybe, a little bit, tentative.
- 59) Mark: Nobody has a good grasp on holding.
- 60) Jill: Except the people who are actually holding.
- 61) Jill: HAAA| HAAA
- 62) Krystle: |I never really, |I
- 63) Mark: |N|o
- 64) Jill: |No, grasp holding haa haa [laughs]
- 65) Krystle: Nobody has a hold on holding.
- 66) Mark: (???)
- 67) Krystle: Um
- 68) Jill: Yeah, nobody holds by ho|ldin (in)
- 69) Krystle: |You want to get to the other end and it's in sets of,
69a) basically, in sets of going 10 yards.
- 70) (1.4)
- 71) Jill: Okay.
- 72) Krystle: It's, does that make sense?
- 73) Jill: Sure.
- 74) (1.4)
- 75) Krystle: I shouldn't have tried.=
- 76) Jill: =No, part of it is, is deliberate (0.5) on my part.
- 77) Krystle: O|kay. Well, then there's no hope.
- 78) Jill: |So, it's like, you can't, you can't, right exactly. You can't talk to somebody who
79) refuses to li|sten.
- 80) Krystle: |You can't say that, oh people have tried to explai|n it to me
- 81) Jill: |Oh, they |have.
- 82) Krystle |but I just
83) don't get it if you're ju|st fighting it.
- 84) Jill: |I know, I mean, right. (0.6) Well=
85) Mark: =Yeah, it's really, that's all it is. The safety rules get kind of complicated.
- 86) Krystle: Yeah, I don't pay attention to those really.
87) (9.8)

Analysis 1

The next interaction also features Saul. In this interaction, from the same party, Saul is talking to a prospective member, or rush. Saul is talking to a rush, as prospective members are called, about the fact that the rush plays baseball, and has asked him what position he plays. Saul then shouts across the room to ask Alex what position he plays in the fraternity's intramural softball team. (It is useful to know that a "dip" is a certain kind of chewing tobacco which comes in a small can shaped like an ice-hockey puck; the men often "pack" it by slapping the can to make it more dense before they put it in their mouths.)

Excerpt 4

1 Saul: Hey ALEX
 2 What position you gon' play in softball bro?
 3 (.) ((presumably Alex responds "first base"))
 4 EASY NOW, we got a first baseman right here man.
 5 That's all right Alex will get the water for us, in between innings?
 6 Rush: [Laugh]
 7 Saul: We'll have, yknow, in case we need another dip Alex'll just pack it up for us?
 8 You'll get it packed up for us right Alex?
 9 [Laughter]
 10 Rush: Right get it ready.
 11 (.)

As exemplified in excerpt 2, Saul and Alex have a recurrent sports-boast competition that forms much of their relationship with each other, so it is not pretense that causes Saul to yell to Alex; he may also have known that Alex plays first base. As above, they are creating a camaraderie with their verbal sparring, and there is thus a similar kind of stance indirection at work. However, they do not only *display* the camaraderie of the fraternity; Saul momentarily *includes* the rush in that camaraderie, and in fact includes him as a member of the fraternity through his proposed place on the softball team. In lines 5 and 7 he constructs Alex as a servant for Saul and the rush, in which Saul and the rush share principal-ship (in Goffman's 1981 terms), with Saul as animator and author for the two. Saul thus includes the rush on the softball team in a status above Alex, and he inserts the rush into the competitive but friendly exchange.

This exemplifies both production indirection and participation indirection: Saul's 'false' inclusion of the rush in the team is production indirection because Saul includes the rush as part of a 'collective principal-ship,' authored and animated by Saul. Second, Saul deftly switches addressees throughout the exchange while keeping the non-addressee an indirect recipient. The initial switch in addressee is indicated in line 1, in which Saul uses a vocative with Alex's name to open the exchange. He continues to address Alex through line 4, while the rush remains the recipient as just discussed. In line 5 Saul switches to addressing the rush and Alex becomes an indirect recipient. This switches back in line 8.

Finally, notice how the topic of playing baseball is not really the most important part of this social interaction. The topic is functioning as a kind of metaphor for the fraternity. Rather than saying

“we have great fun in this fraternity, you should join,” Saul uses interaction to show the rush how that camaraderie works, to give him a sample, as it were.

We thus see all four types of indirection in this short excerpt.

Analysis 2

We saw above a small view of the camaraderie that was displayed between members in rush settings. Below is another example of such a display. Saul is talking to a rush (not Tom) about the fact that the rush plays baseball (but not for the university’s varsity team), and has asked him what position he plays. Saul then shouts across the room to ask Alex what position he plays in softball. (It is useful to know that a “dip” is a certain kind of chewing tobacco which comes in a small can shaped like an ice-hockey puck; the men often “pack” it by slapping the can to make it more dense before they put it in their mouths.)

(7)

1 Saul: Hey Alex
 2 What position you gon’ play in softball bro?
 3 (.) ((presumably Alex responds “first base”))
 4 Easy now! We got a first baseman right here man!
 5 That’s all right Alex will get the water for us, in between innings?
 6 Rush: Laugh
 7 Saul: We’ll have, yknow, in case we need another dip Alex’ll just pack it up
 for us?
 8 You’ll get it packed up for us right Alex?
 9 Laughter
 10 Rush: Right get it ready.
 11 (.)
 12 Al: What are you playing
 13 Saul: Well you give me a little something and I’ll tell you wh-
 14 Al: What are you playin’.
 15 Saul: See how you are man
 16 Al: What are you playin’.
 17 (.)
 18 Saul: Wherever the fraternity needs me man.
 19 Yknow I’m just one of those utility players.
 20 Al: Wh- Wh-
 21 Saul: I played third base but fuckin’ we got Scooter to play third base now
 22 I’ll probably play- I’ll probably outfield or shortfield ((meaning
 ‘shortstop’))
 23 Al: ??
 24 Saul: Well he’s short I don’t know if he can stop much
 25 Laughter

Saul and Alex have a recurrent sports-boast competition that forms much of their relationship with each other (see the exchange in Kiesling in press), so it is not pretense that causes Saul to yell to Alex; he may also have known that Alex plays first base. But they are creating a camaraderie here with their verbal sparring, as they do it constantly interspersed with laughter. Not only do they display the camaraderie of the fraternity, but Saul momentarily includes the rush in that camaraderie, and in fact includes him as a member of the fraternity through his proposed place on the softball team. In lines 5 (*Alex will get the*

water for us) and 7 (*in case we need another dip Alex'll just pack it up for us?*) he constructs Alex as a servant for an *us* comprising Saul and the rush, in which Saul and the rush share a footing (in Goffman's 1981 terms), with Saul as animator and author for the two, who together form the principal. Saul thus includes the rush on the softball team in a status above Alex, and he inserts the rush into the competitive but friendly exchange. If one of the attractions of the fraternity is a sense of belonging and inclusiveness in a competitive world, as suggested by Jean's speech, then Saul is in a sense giving the rush a sample of it, showing him what camaraderie there is and thus creating desire in the rush to join the fraternity. Here the boasting, usually a confrontational speech act, has the effect of creating homosociality and is thus socially indirect. It is not, however, linguistically indirect: It still functions as, and has the effect of, a boast.