



## THE CONCEPT OF DISCOURSE: INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF LANGUAGE, INFLUENCE AND SOCIAL PROCESSES

<sup>1</sup>Aziza Muxtorova

<sup>2</sup>Charos Bakhromovna Abdullaeva

<sup>1</sup>Institute of International School of Finance Technology and Science (ISFT)

a third-year student of the Philology Faculty

<sup>2</sup>Institute of International School of Finance Technology and Science (ISFT)

PhD, Associate Professor,

Philology and Teaching Languages Department

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**Annotation:** This article investigates discourse as an important multidisciplinary topic, focusing on its function in constructing social structures, identities, and ideologies. The article chronicles the history of discourse studies, using linguistics, psychology, and social sciences to examine the link between language and power. Discourse is classified into two types: written and spoken, emphasizing its importance in communicating and sustaining social norms. The paper also discusses the methodology of discourse analysis (DA).

**Keywords:** discourse analysis, language and power, written discourse, spoken discourse, sociocultural contexts.

**Introduction.** In today's world of fast globalization and digital communication, discourse has become an important tool for shaping social structures, identities, and ideas. It is more than just using language; it connects power, culture, and knowledge, influencing how people see things and interact with each other. [4] Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of how discourse works is essential to make sense of our increasingly interconnected world, where boundaries between public and private communication are constantly shifting. [2]

This study views discourse as an interdisciplinary field that brings together linguistics, poetics, psychology, and social sciences, focusing on systematic theories and the analysis of discourses in their diverse contexts. Notably, this field has developed based on similar research in these disciplines. For instance, from a linguistic perspective, it is acknowledged that the use of language cannot be fully understood by analyzing individual sentences alone. Moreover, literary studies, traditionally centered on literary discourses, have required more precise models of discourse structure to evaluate specific literary or rhetorical forms. At the same time, psychology and artificial intelligence have focused on the cognitive processes involved in creating and understanding discourse.

Before beginning the lexicographic analysis of the term "discourse," it is essential to establish a conceptual foundation that highlights its interdisciplinary significance. [3] Discourse, as both a linguistic and social construct, goes beyond the mere use of language, encompassing the broader dynamics of communication, power, and cultural norms. [5] Its multifaceted nature makes it a key analytical tool across various fields—from linguistics and sociology to healthcare. Understanding the complexities of discourse through a lexicographic lens helps to better assess its role in shaping interactions, identities, and social structures. This analysis will serve as a basis for exploring how the term is defined and applied in different contexts, broadening our understanding of its theoretical and practical implications.

**Results and discussion.** Let us now turn to a detailed lexicographic analysis of the term "discourse" as reflected in dictionaries, which provides a broader etymological explanation of this phenomenon.

It is appropriate to begin with the Online Etymology Dictionary, which offers an extensive etymological perspective on the term:

1. discourse (n.) "process of understanding, reasoning, thought," from French *discours*, from Latin *discursus* "a running about," in Late Latin "conversation," in Medieval Latin "reasoning" noun use of past participle of *discurrere* "to run about, run to and fro, hasten," in Late Latin "to go over a subject, speak at length of, discourse of," from *dis-* "apart" (see *dis-*) + *currere* "to run" (from PIE root *kers-* "to run"). [6]

2. Meaning "a running over a subject in speech, communication of thought in words" is from 1550s; sense of "discussion or treatment of a subject in formal speech or writing," is from 1580s. [7]

In the Cambridge Dictionary, the term "discourse" is defined as follows:

1. the use of language to communicate in speech or writing;

2. to talk or write about a subject, especially for a long time and in a way that suggests you know a lot about it;



3. to have a conversation or discussion; [8]

In the American Dictionary, the term "discourse" is interpreted as follows:

1. spoken or written discussion: [ U] political discourse
2. discourse (v.) "hold discourse, communicate thoughts or ideas, especially in a formal manner," 1570s, from discourse (n.). Sense of "speak or write at length" is from 1560s. Earlier in now-obsolete sense of "run or travel over" (1540s), the literal sense of the Latin verb. Related: Discoursed; discoursing. [9]

The next source of information is the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary, which provides the following definition of the concept of discourse:

ДИСКУРС – Discourse – Speech or conversation as an object of linguistic study.

In the Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary, the term "discourse" is defined as follows:

Discourse (from French discours – speech) refers to a coherent text combined with extralinguistic factors, such as pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological, and other elements. It is a text considered in the context of events; speech viewed as purposeful social action and as a component of human interaction and cognitive processes). [10]

The analysis of dictionary definitions of the term "discourse" has led to the conclusion that this lexical unit shares common meanings in both English and Russian languages. However, English-language dictionaries do not emphasize the key interpretation of discourse as a "coherent text combined with extralinguistic factors," which is a distinctive feature of how discourse is understood in the Russian linguistic tradition.

This distinction highlights the broader conceptual framework in Russian lexicography, where discourse is perceived as not only a linguistic construct but also as deeply integrated with pragmatic, sociocultural, and psychological dimensions, enriching its interpretation within specific contexts.

Thus, based on the lexicographic analysis, discourse is understood as a multifaceted term that extends beyond the mere use of language. It encompasses the ways in which language, communication, and social dynamics intertwine, shaping perceptions, relationships, and structures of power.

Moreover, language serves as the primary modality for human communication, yet this communicative act is more than just a combination of words. In this sense, discourse involves the study of language and meaning within a broader context, shaped by various sociocultural and contextual factors.

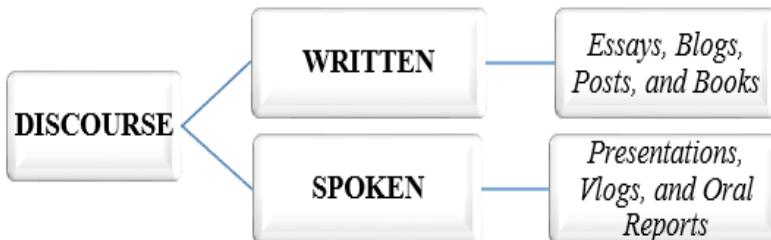
Over the past decade, the terms "discourse" and "discourse analysis (DA)" have gained significant attention in academic circles, often being used without precise definitions. [1] As a result, the lack of clarity in the theory of discourse and DA complicates the interpretation of key research findings and hinders the effective application of DA as a methodological approach. Therefore, this study aims to provide healthcare professionals with tools to use DA as a viable research strategy.

Furthermore, the concept of discourse traces back to ancient rhetoric, particularly to the works of philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, who examined the influence of language and persuasion in public speaking. In particular, the modern understanding of discourse began to take shape in the 20th century, driven by significant contributions from fields such as linguistics, semiotics, and sociology. [4] Prominent scholars like Michel Foucault and Ferdinand de Saussure played a pivotal role in the development of discourse analysis—a methodological framework for exploring the interconnections between language, power, and society.

To explain, discourse extends beyond the traditional concept of conversation, encompassing any form of communicative interaction. Moreover, it has become a significant topic in social theory, with research spanning disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, continental philosophy, and discourse analysis. Under the influence of Foucault's works, these fields view discourse as a system of thought, knowledge, or communication that shapes our perception of reality. In this sense, controlling discourse is akin to controlling perception, making it a central focus of investigation in social theory.

In theoretical linguistics, discourse is understood as the exchange of linguistic information, serving as a primary driver for dynamic semantics, where meanings are related to their ability to alter the discourse context. Thus, discourse encompasses the use of language to convey ideas, insights, and information, including artistic and poetic works as well as non-fiction prose. Managing discourse equates to managing perception, making it a central object of study in social theory. It is important to note that, to be considered discourse, a written text must exceed a single sentence in length and possess a clear purpose and meaning.

It is important to note that this study will focus primarily on written discourse, while acknowledging that the fundamental principles are universally applicable to all forms of discourse. Furthermore, discourse can be conveyed in both written and spoken forms and is generally categorized into two types: written discourse and spoken discourse.



It is appropriate to note that this study focuses on written discourse, recognizing that its fundamental principles are universal across all forms of discourse.

The primary purpose of written discourse is the dissemination of ideas. Authors may also pursue additional objectives, such as informing, persuading, or eliciting empathy from their audience. While the term "discourse" is often associated with serious or academic dialogue, it encompasses a wide range of topics aimed at exchanging knowledge, ideas, and conclusions.

In terms of classification, written discourse can be divided into several types that closely align with established genres of writing: descriptive discourse, narrative discourse, expository discourse, and argumentative discourse. Additionally, beyond these specific types, written discourse can be grouped into three broad categories: poetic, expressive, and transactional. [2]

Discourse Analysis (DA) is an evolving interdisciplinary field that has gained increasing popularity as a research approach across various disciplines but remains underutilized in medical research. Specifically, this method emphasizes the sociocultural and political contexts surrounding texts and dialogues.

DA enriches our understanding of the relationship between language and ideology by examining how power dynamics and perceptions of reality are encoded in linguistic structures, styles, and rhetorical techniques. It is a powerful qualitative methodology that has yet to be fully harnessed in the field of medical studies. [3] Therefore, it is crucial to deeply understand the theory of discourse and DA to interpret key research findings effectively and apply DA as a viable research strategy.

**Conclusion.** Discourse transcends its basic linguistic function, significantly influencing communication, concept formulation, and social interaction across various contexts. It affects not only individual speech but also broader social structures, reflecting and reinforcing power dynamics, ideologies, and cultural norms.

Discourse analysis offers critical insights into how language shapes reality, enhances cognitive processes, and impacts human interactions. Language and discourse evolve in parallel, continuously shaping the world around us.

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