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An Overview of Discourse Analytical Approaches to Research

Brendan O'Rourke
Dublin Institute of Technology, brendan.orourke@dit.ie

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Dublin Institute of Technology, brendan.orourke@dit.ie

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The field of discourse analysis (DA) is vast, varied and contested with traditions ranging from conversational analysis (Sacks, 1995, [1964-1972]), to more Foucauldian inspired approaches (e.g. Kendall & Wickham, 1999), to critical discourse approaches (Van Dijk, 2001; Fairclough, 2003). This diversity means that this overview is necessarily selective. Nonetheless, this introduction should provide a platform from where readers can then further investigate those currents of DA that are of particular interest. In order to locate DA within the range of methodology discussed in this volume, and to argue for the unity of various DA approaches, a short history is outlined. A survey of DA is then provided, organized by what various approaches mean by 'discourse' and by what theories and concepts they use for analysis. An illustrative exercise in the discourse analysis of some interview data is then given. Finally, a guide to further reading and resources is provided for the reader who wishes to study discourse analysis in greater depth.

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