

Discourse

Foucault presents possibly the best definition of discourse. He defines discourse as, “Systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, and courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak.”

Originally, it has roots in the Latin language. The term assumes slightly different meanings in different contexts. In literature, discourse means speech or writing, normally longer than sentences, which deals with a certain subject formally. In other words, discourse is the presentation of language in its entirety, while performing an intellectual inquiry in a particular area or field, such as theological discourse or cultural discourse.

General Classifications of Discourse

Discourse can be classified into four main [categories](#), namely:

Exposition

The main focus of this type of discourse is to make the [audience](#) aware about the topic of the discussion. *Definitions and comparative analysis of different ideas and beliefs* are examples of discourse [exposition](#).

Narration

Narration is a type of discourse that relies on stories, [folklore](#) or a [drama](#) as a medium of communication.

Stage play, story, and folklore are [narrative](#) discourse examples.

Description

This type involves describing something in relation to the senses. Descriptive discourse enables the audience to develop a mental picture of what is being discussed. *Descriptive parts of novel or [essay](#)* are descriptive discourse examples.

Argument

This type of discourse is based on valid logic and, through correct reasoning, tries to motivate the audience. Examples of argumentative discourse include *lectures, essays, and [prose](#)*.

Examples of Discourse in Literature

Poetic Discourse

Poetic discourse is a type of literary conversation which focuses on the expression of feelings, ideas, imaginations, events, and places through specific rhymes and rhythms. Poetic discourse makes use of common words in appealing ways to present feelings and emotions. The mechanism of poetic discourse involves certain steps starting from different sources, then entering the mental process, mental realization, and then finally into a finished product as poetry.

Example #1: *A Character* (By William Wordsworth)

“I marvel how Nature could ever find space
For so many strange contrasts in one human face:
There’s thought and no thought, and there’s paleness and bloom
And bustle and sluggishness, pleasure and gloom.”

Expressive Discourse

Expressive discourse does not involve the presentation of facts, or the motivating of others, but is rather a reflection of our emotions that form the foundation of our expressions. This is a form of basic or entry-level discourse and is beneficial for beginners in the field of literature. It

primarily deals with generating ideas with no concrete source. Examples include academic essays and diaries.

Example #2: *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (By Samuel Pepys, 1660)

“We met very early at our office this morning to pick out the twenty-five ships which are to be first paid off. After that to Westminster and dined with Mr. Dalton at his office, where we had one great court dish, but our papers not being done we could [not] make an end of our business till Monday next. Mr. Dalton and I over the water to our landlord Vanly, with whom we agree as to Dalton ...”

Transactional Discourse

The basic aim in this kind of discourse is to convey the message in such a way that it is clearly understood without any confusion. Whatever is said has no [ambiguity](#) – everything is clear for the reader. Usually, this type of discourse is in active [voice](#). Examples include *instructions, guidelines, manuals, privacy policies, and patient instructions as written by doctors*.

Function of Discourse

The role of discourse is hard to ignore in our daily intellectual pursuits, for it provides a basis to conduct a comparative analysis and frame our perceptions about different things. For instance, two competing discourses about the civil war in Syria today can be used to qualify the war as either “war against dictatorship,” or “war against imperialism.” On the other hand, it could be deemed as “war against Islam,” or “war for humanity.” Thus, both discourses provide a distinct [style](#), vocabulary, and presentation, which are required to convey the respective ideas to a specific audience.

According to Jacques Lucan and Ferdinand de Saussure, language (discourse) is the main force which works behind all kinds of human [activities](#) and changes in social fabric; whereas Modernists attribute

discourse is to generate and preserve truth as argued by the Postmodernist theories.