Discourse Analysis and Rhetorical Studies

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Rhetoric in Detail

Discourse analyses of rhetorical talk and text

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CHAPTER 1

Discourse analysis and rhetorical studies

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Overview

This book brings together twelve studies, all written by scholars who identify themselves primarily as rhetoricians, that employ theory and/or method from linguistic discourse analysis. The studies make use of a variety of discourse analytic resources, including those of critical discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, narrative analysis, and computer-aided corpus analysis. They illustrate the utility of discourse analysis in research in a variety of rhetorical sites, including discourses of public memory and collective identity, rhetoric of science and technology, vernacular argumentation, media discourse, and immigration studies. The method these projects share begins in close attention to the linguistic details of records of discourse, be they written texts or transcripts of talk. The authors take a mostly qualitative, interpretive approach, but one that differs from the approaches often taken in rhetorical studies in being data-driven rather than theory-driven. Working upward from particular, situated instances of text and talk rather than downwards from abstract models of discourse, they take systematic approaches to exploring why particular utterances take the particular shapes they do. The approach involves beginning with an attitude attuned to multiple sources of contextual constraint, rather than beginning with theory and seeking evidence for it. While the studies in these chapters deal with various rhetorical issues in a variety of ways, they all share three methodological characteristics: They are empirical, in the sense that they are based in observation rather than introspection alone; they are ethnographic, in that they seek to understand the rhetorical workings of discourse and context through the eyes and minds of those engaged in them; and they are grounded, returning again and again to their data as they build theory to account for it.

Originating in an analytical heuristic rather than in a pre-chosen theoretical framework, these studies illustrate the potential of discourse-based, observation-driven theory building for rhetorical studies and criticism. As the
focus of rhetoric widens from the planned to the spontaneous and from the public to the private, rhetoricians acknowledge the need for new methods, and they will find some illustrated here. Discourse analysts may likewise discover some new tools. The first theorists of discourse in the Greco-Roman intellectual tradition were the philosophers and sophists who described and taught public speaking to those citizens whose voices mattered in a newly democratic fifth-century BCE Athens, and the authors whose work appears here represent the reinvigoration of this tradition, particularly in North America, in the “new rhetoric” of the later twentieth century. In new ways, many of these studies draw on the traditional analytical tools of rhetoric – figures of speech, topoi, lines of argument; invention and style; ethos, logos, and pathos – showing how they can inform and be informed by discourse analysts’ attention to how lexicon and syntax can evoke styles, genres, and prior texts and speakers, and thereby create social relations and experiential worlds in talk and writing.

Methods and issues in North American rhetorical studies

Rhetoricians have always taken an inclusive approach to analytic method. In addition to using the analytic vocabulary of classical rhetoric, practitioners have borrowed and adapted methods from other disciplines, taking intuition-based reasoning from philosophy, for example, and explication de texte techniques and a variety of critical-theoretical lenses from literary and sociological theory. These tools were developed to answer questions about the carefully planned, often institutional genres that were the primary object of rhetorical critique. The focus of rhetoricians’ attention is widening, however, from public to private spheres, from official to vernacular rhetoric, from oratory to written and multimedia discourse, from the carefully crafted to spontaneous discourse emerging from fleeting everyday rhetorical situations. Now we are asking not just about the rhetoric of politics, but also about the rhetoric of history and the rhetoric of popular culture; not just about the rhetoric of the public sphere but about rhetoric on the street, in the hair salon, or online; not just about the rhetoric of formal argument but also about the rhetoric of personal identity. To address these new concerns and sites, we need to continue to supplement traditional modes of work with new techniques for analyzing the language of text and talk and with ways of describing the sociocultural and material contexts of discourse.

Since at least as long ago as the Wingspread conference in 1970, evaluations of the health of rhetoric as a discipline have stressed the widening, deepening object of rhetorical study and the need for appropriate methods and conceptual frameworks for exploring this object. In the proceedings of that conference (Bitzer & Black 1971), particularly in articles by Becker, Brockriede, and Henry
Johnstone discussing trends in the field, the momentum in rhetoric was observed to be moving out from a speaker-audience dyadic, text-bounded model of study toward studies of communication processes and interactions, situated and constituted in rich, real-world settings. Rhetorical analysis and criticism were no longer being applied only to historical works, but also to contemporary communication. Rhetorical scholarship no longer focused only on institutionalized speech situations, but was increasingly turning to experiments, to interactive and everyday speech genres, and to other studies of meaning-making as situated activity.

As Brockriede (1971) observed, this trajectory would require the conceptual and methodological flexibility needed to “let the transaction [under study] itself suggest its own analytic categories,” while maintaining lively connections with established theoretical inquiry so as not to become isolated and trivial. This trajectory in the discipline, acknowledged again in more recent reflections (cf. Benson 1993; Ensos & McNabb 1996; Gross & Keith 1997; Cherwitz & Hikins 2000; Schiappa et al. 2002; Simons 2003), has demanded the development of conceptual and methodological frameworks beyond, while not wholly independent from, those already institutionalized, such as the Burkean and Neo-Aristotelian. Where these traditional approaches to rhetorical criticism have been discussed as heuristics for invention and interpretation as much as they are methods for systematic analysis (Nothstine et al. 1994), some rhetoricians have turned to linguistic discourse analysis for that sought-after conceptual and methodological flexibility. Tracy (2001) describes the connections that have emerged between communication studies and discourse analysis. Scholars in rhetoric and composition studies have also issued calls for the inclusion of discourse analytic methods. MacDonald has termed discourse studies “the interconnected fields of rhetoric and composition and applied linguistics” (2002). Barton (2002) has suggested that composition studies can benefit from discourse analytic approaches particularly in “connections between texts and contexts, with a focus on the repeated use of linguistic features ... and the associated conventions that establish their meaning and significance in context” (285).

One way of describing the contribution this volume makes is in terms of a set of general issues that are both current and fertile for rhetorical theory-building: context, agency, and the relationship between style and argument. In the following discussion, we sketch trajectories within these issues toward grounded analyses of discourse, demonstrating how rhetoricians have and can further benefit from discourse analytic approaches.

Context and agency

Among rhetoric’s most fundamental disciplinary practices has been the study of discourse in context. In his treatise on rhetoric, Aristotle discussed the components
of a speaking situation and very clearly established the connection of rhetoric to public, civic discourse. Rhetoric's self-imposed limitation to civic discourse alone has passed, but its central premise that discourse must be shaped by context has not.

Similarly foundational is rhetoric's interest in the power and choices a rhetor—a speaker or writer—brings into a situation. Some definitions of rhetorical discourse distinguish it primarily through the assumption that it is discourse that is intended to change, and capable of changing, the situation for which it was designed. Hence, agency is an essential feature of rhetorical problem spaces. Jeff, for example, discusses agency as a source of tension between enlightenment conceptualizations of the self and post-modern critiques of these conceptualizations, in a sophistic and Ciceronian tradition which he renames “humanistic rhetoric”:

The humanistic approach entails a productively ambiguous notion of agency that positions the orator both as an individual who leads an audience and as a community member shaped and constrained by the demands of the audience. ... [This tradition may] include a suspicious attitude toward abstract theory not only in respect to rhetoric, but also to ethics and politics, a conviction that discourse, especially discourse that allows for argument on both sides of an issue, has a constitutive role to play in civic life; a valorization and idealization of eloquence that entails a strong connection between eloquence and virtue; and a conception of virtue that is decisively linked to political activity. (Jeff 2003: 135, 136)

Attempting to define and study rhetorical spaces, and the tensions between presumed rhetorical agency and acknowledged constraints of context, has proven to be one of contemporary rhetoric's most productive theoretical problems (cf. Bitzer 1968; Vatz 1973). And it is in relation to this problematic space that rhetorical studies have engaged the challenge of describing the interaction of rhetoric, agency and context. In the last few decades, work stemming from Habermasian public sphere theory (1989) has provided a productive way of thinking about this intersection. In rhetorical studies, a central concern is with the study of concrete, agential discourse in the public sphere. As Hauser has written,

At its best, a democracy's rhetoric is united by Enlightenment standards of reason. Consequently, some thinkers, such as Habermas, who have been the staunchest champions of discourse as democracy's anchoring concept, have found the strategic impulses of rhetoric problematic. But excluding rhetorical processes from our assessment of democracy's ongoing conversation also excludes the agency by which democratic decisions are reached. Before we can rehabilitate public life, we first must understand the way actually occurring discourse shapes it. Otherwise, whatever critique we advance or remedy we propose is entirely analytic, producing conclusions that follow logically from a priori assumptions about the rational/ideological standards for "valid" assent but that lack an empirical referent in the actual discursive method that members of publics employ. (Hauser 1999: 273)
Hauser's positive program, then, is to adopt an empirical attitude toward the study of how rhetors act in publics, valorizing the study of vernacular discourses over theoretical generalizations based on the solitary reading of institutional discourses. This resonates with Asen's (2004) admonition to develop a sense of the democratic citizen by shifting "from what constitutes citizenship to how citizenship proceeds," and with Simons' (2000) admonition to "proceed to the particular, the local, the unique – to a theory of the specific event – out of which one could then derive a sense of limits and possibilities and of the tradeoffs involved in selecting this option rather than that" (448–9). Illustrating this pursuit, Johnstone (1996) uses discourse analysis to investigate how the complex of rhetorical agency and context is constituted in discourse, and McCormick (2003) focuses rhetorical analyses on vernacular discourses which could benefit from CDA.

Style and argument

Throughout its history, rhetoric's fraught relationship with style has drawn it in and out of favor with other disciplines. The scope of this perpetual interest in style has shifted, of course. Much of the conflict between sophist and Platonic/Aristotelian traditions revolved around the significance of style and of style's role as a central component in rhetorical practice, teaching, and theory. During the Middle Ages, when philosophers such as Ramus deemed invention to be the realm of dialectic and philosophy, rhetoric retained a position as the art overseeing style, alongside delivery (Conley 1990). More recently, the mid-twentieth century's "new" rhetoric (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969) can be distinguished in part by its interest in style as constitutive rather than merely ornamental. Several conceptual developments, which did not so much occur in the mid-twentieth as disciplinarily cohere then, mark the current rhetorical attitude toward style. For example, Burkean treatmets of metaphor (Burke 1945, 1950) depart rather dramatically from the Aristotelian (1991) discussion of metaphors as other names, into an appreciation for the knowledge-making work of metaphor and the essentially metaphoric nature of rhetorical practices.

Rhetorical studies of style should include levels of analysis that discourse studies can inform, still engaging the resonances for which style remains a useful concern in rhetorical studies (MacDonald 2002). Herndl, Fennell, and Miller (1991) demonstrate the need to study texts at multiple levels (linguistic, semantic, argument) to engage both the evidence and the critical framework of discourse adequately. In rhetorical analyses of political discourse, concerns for style are often attached to constitutive force. Several studies have followed Charland's (1987) influential discussion of how language choices in significant political texts constitute agents and agentic communities. One recent example is Cordova's (2004) study of a Puerto Rican populist campaign of the mid-twentieth century.
Rhetoric's interest in invention - the finding and creating of arguments, and more generally the making of meaning - has been both a part of its foundation and also, during some periods of its history, banished from its discipline. Contemporary rhetorical studies have renewed the interest in invention (cf. Young & Liu 1994), both in relation to composition studies and in terms of epistemic rhetoric, or the study of how meaning or knowledge is made via rhetorical processes. Several studies have advocated discourse analytic methods for analyzing invention behaviors in composition classrooms (Sperling 1994; Hodges 1994), and some focus on micro-rhetorical features in these moments as opportunities for studying classroom invention and invention in writing pedagogy (Hillocks 1994; Strauss & Xiang 2006).

Further connecting the rhetor to the community, many rhetoricians and communications scholars have used the intersection of style and argument as a way to typify rhetorical discourse and characterize types of practices. The Aristotelian classification of public discourses as forensic, epideictic, and deliberative included components of types of appeals being made (and the types of proofs on which they operated), but also discussed expectations of stylistic features which would typify each mode. This tradition persists in studies of genre or typification, often through combined attention to style and argument. Dunmire's work, for example, (2005, 2000, this volume) examines the role of constructions of temporality in genres that involve shaping the future. Illustrative studies of typical practices within disciplines include Winsor (2000, 1999), Bazerman (2000), Myers (2003) and Fahnstock and Secor (1991).

What is discourse analysis?

Linguists who refer to themselves as discourse analysts explore what can be learned about language and about speakers by studying language in use. Unlike generative linguists in the Chomskyan tradition, they examine written texts or transcripts of spoken or manually signed discourse rather than relying on their own intuitions about grammatical possibilities. They are interested in the structure and function of pieces of talk or text that are larger than a single sentence, and in how the structure of sentences is influenced by how they function in the linguistic and social contexts in which they are deployed. By "discourse," they mean actual instances of talk, writing, or linguistic communication in some other medium. Some discourse analysts explicitly try to link features of discourse in this sense with aspects of what scholars in the Foucauldian tradition call "discourses": circulating sets of ideas and social practices that may include ways of talking. Other discourse analysts have other agendas. Some are interested in the kinds of questions linguists have always asked: questions about how language is represented in the mind, how the produc-
tion and interpretation of discourse can best be modeled, how languages change, how language is acquired, and so on. Others explore the linkages between discursive and social phenomena in a wide variety of contexts, including institutional communication, the discursive construction of identity and memory, political discourse, organizational behaviour, communication in families, and so on.

Along with other strands of contemporary linguistics, discourse analysis has historical roots in nineteenth-century philology, in other words in diachronic (historical) language study aimed at the exegesis of texts. Following Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1916) call to refocus language study on synchronic structure, dominant approaches for most of the twentieth century attended to sounds, phrases, and clauses rather than connected discourse. Beginning in the 1960s, however, linguists working in several intellectual traditions began to converge on two related ideas about discourse: (1) the idea that the structure of phrases and sentences is shaped in part by how they function in conversations and texts, and (2) the idea that texts and conversations are shaped, just as sentences are, by repeatable patterns of structure that could be called “grammar.” In the U.K., M. A. K. Halliday, building on work by J. R. Firth, began to develop “systemic-functional grammar” and to ask about how sentences cohere with others in texts (Halliday 1994; Eggins 1994). In the U.S., Kenneth Pike and other linguists associated with the Summer Institute of Linguistics developed a similarly function-based way of understanding sentence and discourse structure, which they called tagmemic grammar (Pike 1967). At the same time, the emergence of variationist sociolinguistics, Conversation Analysis, and interactional sociolinguistics, and the ethnography of communication brought discourse into the purview of students of language change, the sociology of language, and anthropological linguistics, respectively (Labov 1963, 1972; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson 1974; Ten Have 1999; Gumperz 1982; Gumperz & Hymes 1972).

In France, Marxist linguists began to explore how ideology is constructed in and revealed through discourse (Pêcheux 1969). Somewhat later, linguists influenced by Birmingham-school social theory brought a similarly critical approach to discourse to Anglophone attention, proposing that, since discourse analysis could never be simply descriptive, its goal should be to uncover how power circulates, usually invisibly, in discourse (Fairclough 1992, 2003; Wodak 1996, 2005, see also the introduction to Section II of this volume). This approach, usually called Critical Discourse Analysis, remains influential, and several of the chapters in this volume draw on it. Other current work by discourse analysts is more eclectic, drawing on pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and interactional linguistics and on various strands of argumentation, rhetorical, sociological, literary, and anthropological theory. Many discourse analysts, particularly those whose disciplinary homes are in linguistics, continue to be interested primarily in questions about language, but the use of discourse analysis, however defined, as a systematic,
grounded method of analysis has become increasingly interdisciplinary. Textbooks no longer presuppose that all discourse analysts are linguists; instruction in discourse analysis is offered, sometimes in the context of programs in "discourse studies," in various academic specialities, and journals such as Discourse Studies, Discourse in Society, Discourse and Communication and Text and Talk publish the work of people with a variety of disciplinary affiliations.

A heuristic approach to discourse

The discourse analyses illustrated in the chapters in this volume all start in work by A.L. Becker (1995, see also Johnstone 2008). We begin our work with a heuristic technique, a particularistic, interpretive, but systematic approach to unpacking why a given text is the way it is. Discourse analysts work with material of many kinds, including transcripts of audio- or videorecorded interactions, written documents, texts transmitted via oral tradition such as proverbs, and printouts of online communication. Their material sometimes consists of words alone and sometimes includes pictures, gestures, gaze, and other modalities. But no matter what sort of discourse we consider, the basic question a discourse analyst asks is "Why is this stretch of discourse the way it is? Why is it no other way? Why these particular words in this particular order?"

To answer these questions, we obviously need to think about what our "text" is about, since clearly what a person is talking about has a bearing on what is said and how it is said. We also need to think about who said it, or who wrote it or signed it, who is thought, in its particular sociocultural context, to be responsible for what it says, who the intended audience was and who the actual hearers or readers were, because who the participants in a situation are and how their roles are defined clearly influences what gets said and how. We need to think about what motivated the text, about how it fits into the set of things people in its context conventionally do with discourse, and about what its medium (or media) of production has to do with what it is like. We need to think about the language it is in, what that language encourages speakers and writers to do and what is relatively difficult to do in that language. We need to think about the text's structure and how it fits into larger structures of sets of texts and sets of interactions.

We can divide the questions that need to be asked about a text into six broad categories. Each of these categories corresponds to one way that context shapes texts and texts shape contexts. Each of these aspects of text-building is both a source of constraint -- a reason why texts are typically some ways and not others -- and a resource for creativity, as speakers, signers, and writers express themselves by manipulating the patterns that have become conventional.
Figure 1 lists these six aspects of the shaping of texts. These six observations about discourse constitute a heuristic for exploring, in a systematic way, what is potentially interesting and important about a text or a set of texts. A heuristic is a set of discovery procedures for systematic application or a set of topics for systematic consideration. Unlike the procedures in a set of instructions, the procedures of a heuristic do not need to be followed in any particular order, and there is no fixed way of following them. A heuristic is not a mechanical set of steps, and there is no guarantee that using it will result in a single definitive explanation. A good heuristic draws on multiple theories rather than just one. The heuristic we use here forces us to think, for example, about how discourse is shaped by ideologies that circulate power in society, but it also forces us to think about how discourse is shaped by people's memories of previous discourse, along with other sources of creativity and constraint. We may end up deciding, in a particular project, that the most useful approach will be one that gives us ways of identifying how ideology circulates through discourse, or that the most useful approach will be one that helps us describe "interextuality," or that the most useful approach will be one that helps uncover the relationships between the text and its medium, the language it is in, or its producers' goals or social relationships. The heuristic is a first step in analysis which helps the analyst see what sorts of theory are needed in order to connect the particular observations about discourse made as one uses the heuristic with general statements about language, human life, or society. It is a way to ground discourse analysis in discourse, rather than starting with a pre-chosen theory and using texts to test or illustrate the theory.

Locating the heuristic in rhetorical theory

Each of the six elements of our analytical heuristic draws on a body of thought about language and communication that is, at least in part, already familiar to rhetoricians. The claim that texts and interpretations of texts are shaped by the world and shape the world is rooted in rhetorical and linguistic theory about the role of reference in the production and interpretation of discourse. Discourse
arises out of the world or worlds that are presumed to exist outside of discourse, the worlds of the creators and interpreters of texts. Whether or not discourse is thought to be about something is relevant to how it is interpreted. Discourse that is thought not to refer to anything may be seen as nonsensical or crazy; it may be the result of a linguistic experiment like Dadaism in poetry; it may be required in ritual. The Western tradition of thought about language has tended to privilege referential discourse and to imagine that discourse (at least ideally) reflects the pre-existing world. But as twentieth-century philosophers (Foucault 1980), rhetoricians (Burke 1942), and linguists (Sapir 1949; Whorf 1941) showed us again and again, the converse is also true, or perhaps truer: human worlds are shaped by discourse.

When we point to how texts and their interpretations are shaped by the structural resources that are available, we are adducing the fact (well known to rhetoricians interested in style and arrangement) that there are conventionalized ways of structuring texts on all levels. Speaking a language, such as English or Korean, means using conventional ways of structuring syllables (a new English word could start with the syllable pri but not with ngt), conventional ways of structuring words (the -s that shows that an English word is plural goes after the stem, not before), conventional ways of structuring sentences (in declarative written English sentences, the subject typically precedes the predicate). Likewise, there are conventional ways of structuring larger chunks of discourse, some culturally specific and others resulting from what human cognition is like. They include ways of moving from familiar information to new information, for example, or moving from examples to general claim or from general claim to examples, or moving from question to response.

The claim that discourse is shaped by interpersonal relations among participants and helps shape interpersonal relations should bring to mind traditional ways of thinking about audience and rhetorical ethos, as well as newer ways of thinking about how speaking positions and roles are mutually shaped and enabled, in the context of larger structures of power. The interpersonal relations connected with discourse include the relations among the speakers and writers, audiences, and overhearsers who are represented in texts, as well as the relations among speakers and writers, audiences, and overhearsers who are involved in producing and interpreting texts.

The observation, next in the heuristic, that discourse is shaped by expectations created by familiar discourse, and new instances of discourse help shape our expectations about future discourse, should also be familiar to rhetoricians engaged with contemporary theory about genre (Miller 1984; Swales 1990) and intertextuality (Bakhtin 1986). Intertextual relations among texts enable people to interpret new instances of discourse with reference to familiar activities and familiar categories of style and form. The uses of discourse are as varied as human cultures
are, but often-repeated activities involving discourse give rise to relatively fixed ways of proceeding with the activities, and these ways of proceeding often include relatively fixed, routinized ways of talking and types of texts.

Visual rhetoricians (Handa 2004; Prelli 2006) and others interested in multimodality (Hodge & Kress 1988; Levine & Scollon 2004; Scollon & Scollon 2003) should also be sympathetic to the claim that discourse is shaped by the limitations and possibilities of its media, and the possibilities of communications media are shaped by their uses in discourse. Finally, the observation that discourse is shaped by purpose is at the root of the discipline of rhetoric, and the idea that discourse also shapes possible purposes should resonate with anyone who thinks about how epideictic or deliberative rhetoric works in contemporary contexts.

Starting out by interrogating texts in all the ways suggested by the heuristic means that analysis starts with the texts and a systematic way of thinking about possibly relevant contexts. This results in a broad, multidimensional, "thick" description (Geertz 1983). Having done that, the analyst is in a position to focus on one or two questions, taking any of a number of approaches to fleshing out the details. The papers in this volume illustrate some of these approaches, some of the ways in which linguistic discourse analysis can provide a grounded, rigorous set of analytical methods for answering a variety of rhetorical questions. Different authors focus on different elements of the heuristic. In each case, though, the authors pay systematic attention to the ways that texts and discourses are shaped and enabled, in the context of close attention to the structural and semantic characteristics of particular instances of text and talk.

Discourse analysis in contemporary research in rhetoric

Although many rhetorical critics are not familiar with discourse analysis, they have colleagues who are. English department rhetoric-and-composition specialists have long looked to linguistics as a source of ideas and methods (cf. Cooper & Greenbaum 1986; Raskin & Weiser 1987). Compositionists Barton and Stygall note that "the analysis of discourse is basic to the enterprise of composition studies: Every study in the field is based implicitly or explicitly on the analysis of texts and/or talk in their various contexts" (Barton & Stygall 2002:1). Barton and Stygall's volume collects work by linguists and rhetoricians (and scholars who are both) having to do with writing in general, academic writing, second-language writing, and scientific and professional discourse, as well as analyses of discourse in writing classrooms. Bazerman and Prior's (2004) volume focuses on methods for studying writing, including linguistic discourse analysis. Students interested in quantitative text analysis can turn to Geisler's (2004) textbook, and Kaufer and his colleagues (Kaufer & Butler 2000; Kaufer et al. 2004) have developed an automated
text-analysis system based on rhetorical principles. Critical discourse analysis has also resonated with students of literacy (Gee 2005).

In North American communications departments, discourse analysis is often practiced not by rhetoricians but by people studying interpersonal or organizational communication, media discourse, or argumentation. Ethnographers of communication like Philipsen (1992) and Carbaugh (2005) do discourse analyses, as do scholars like Tracy (2002) and Fitch (1998) in the "language in social interaction" tradition. Jacobs and Jackson (1982) have developed a theory of argumentation based on the principles of Conversation Analysis, and Critical Discourse Analysis is popular in communications programs. However, people who think of their work as rhetorical criticism or rhetorical theory have yet to see a collection of articles that introduce discourse analysis to them and show them its utility for answering the kinds of questions they ask. The approaches to discourse analysis we offer and exemplify in this book are meant to illustrate the many productive ways close, rigorous attention to language can pay off for rhetoricians.

Chapter themes

We have arranged the book topically. Section II consists of studies of style and legitimation in carefully crafted and relatively formal political discourse. Section III consists of studies of identity and agency in media discourse and in interaction, both face-to-face and computer-mediated. Section IV consists of studies of the ways controversy is entextualized and enacted, in media discourse as well as in interactions in mundane public spaces. Each section begins with an introduction focused on the analytic methods the section's authors employ. These introductions are meant to provide brief overviews of some of the ways discourse analysts work, together with references to key sources.

The four chapters in Section II all focus on sentence- and paragraph-level features of discourse which would fall within the traditional rhetorical canon of style. They explore how small grammatical and rhetorical choices contribute to the political activity of legitimation, or the discursive representation and reification of institutional power and its exercise. Patricia L. Dunmire and Susan Lawrence discuss the ways linguistic constructions constitute particular kinds of claims and evidence, typifying or confounding the conceptual categories of deliberative and epideictic genres. Dunmire's chapter has to do with how the future is linguistically represented in political discourse and with the rhetorical functions of such representations. Dunmire sees the future as a discursive construct which rhetors embed within and project through the linguistic design of their texts, and which thereby functions in deliberative discourse to ground and legitimate specific calls to action. Lawrence explores how the design of the amnesty hearings that were part of
the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s work affected how responsibility was talked about. Lawrence draws together the rhetorical concepts of epideictic discourse; to describe the TRC’s intention that the hearings help create social cohesion in South Africa, and figuration, to catalog the ways that applicants’ testimony was shaped by the TRC’s rules about what could count as a valid argument for amnesty. She explores how amnesty applicants named and otherwise characterized their victims, often in ways that made the victims appear to share responsibility for their abuse.

Andreea Deciu Ritivici and Christopher Eisenhart each discuss how stylistic moves and variations constitute political agents and political actions. Ritivici explores how, during the Cold War, the leader of a would-be Romanian government in exile used the sorts of micro-rhetorical strategies traditionally thought of as stylistic choices to project an aura of political legitimacy. Her analysis shows how letters he wrote to representatives of the U.S. government made strategic use of transitivity, to convey assertiveness and self-confidence, and modality, to depict the Romanian refugees as united under his leadership and committed to the fight against communism. Eisenhart compares the official reports of two U.S. government agencies involved in a 1993 standoff between government agents and the members of a religious community near Waco, Texas. He shows how both reports draw on conventional features of bureaucratic genre and style to represent the events in such a way as to reassert the government’s control over the story. In particular, Eisenhart examines how the characters in the story were construed through choices about transitivity and naming and how the metadiscursive framing of the reports – the talk in them about how they were created, and by whom – also serves to apportion responsibility and blame.

The four studies in section III illuminate the context-agency problem space. Studying media discourse, computer-mediated communication, and face-to-face talk, the authors focus on identity and agency, issues that are of current concern across the humanistic and social scientific disciplines. In his study of the debate surrounding a controversial medical treatment for deafness, the cochlear implant, Sean Zdenek shows how the representation of others’ voices and languages can deprive them of rhetorical agency. Zdenek’s chapter asks “Who has the right to speak for deaf people? To what extent are deaf voices spoken for by the mainstream media?” He finds that members of the Deaf community are regarded as lacking a recognizable rhetorical voice. Like Zdenek, Amanda Young considers a population that sometimes lacks a rhetorical voice. Young’s research site is an after-school program for girls at risk of unplanned pregnancy, where Young developed and tested an interactive computer program meant to encourage the girls to re-imagine themselves as rhetorical agents, ready to make themselves heard.

Martha S. Cheng and Neeta Bhasin each study ways that identity formation arises as a response to rhetorical exigency. In her analysis of an online chatroom
that was part of a distance-learning course for software-development managers, Cheng shows how brief narrative allusions to personal experience help construct professional identities for students and their teacher. Bhasin explores the rhetorical usefulness of the nonce concepts of “Indian humor” and “American humor,” which arise in a conversation among students from India in the U.S. Elaborating on this fleetingly imagined contrast helps Indian students differentiate themselves from their American colleagues and constructs them as an ethnic community, even though they would be seen as culturally and ethnically diverse in their home environment.

The three chapters in Section IV examine the ways controversy (and debate) arise and are bounded in their own participants’ discourse. As Cramer suggests in his chapter, rhetorical conceptions of “controversy” have often borrowed commonsensical definitions of the term and treated it as an a priori conceptual frame applied to certain kinds of discourse. The three chapters here each spotlight the constitution of controversy and debate from within, as it is built and bounded in media discourse and in everyday public spaces.

Craig O. Stewart’s study of a scientific controversy problematizes the rhetorical conception of argumentative spheres, reconceptualizing normative, clearly bounded spheres in terms of looser, less stabilized orders of discourse (a concept he borrows from Foucault via critical discourse analysis). Stewart’s analysis of how arguments about “reparative therapy” for homosexuality cross from the scientific order of discourse to the popular and back demonstrates the permeability of the boundaries between ways of speaking. In his study of a corpus of print media accounts about an art exhibition in Brooklyn, New York, Peter A. Cramer explores how media representations call a controversy into being by creating it as an “event category.” Genre, he argues, is rhetorically constructed or assigned by being made relevant in discourse. Questioning the perceived lack of functional public discourse in the U.S., Susan Gilpin systematically observed mundane public spaces, examining the discourse therein for substantive engagement with significant and controversial public topics. Gilpin’s participant-observational study of clients and stylists interacting in hair salons explores the conditions under which people engage in the kind of open-minded, exploratory discourse about public issues that can result in change rather than entrenchment.

The intellectual history of this book

As we have noted above, all the authors whose work appears here are in some way affiliated with the Rhetoric Program in the English Department at Carnegie Mellon University. Ritivoi and Johnstone are on the program’s faculty, and the others earned their Ph.D.s in Rhetoric there between 1996 (Dunmire) and 2007 (Bhasin).
At Carnegie Mellon, the tradition of exploring the links between rhetoric and discourse studies has a history dating to the 1970s and early 1980s, when discourse analysis was just being proposed in linguistics and when rhetoric was just being rediscovered in English studies. In 1975, Richard Young, then on the faculty of the Humanities Department in the School of Engineering at the University of Michigan, and A.L. Becker, his friend and colleague in the Department of Linguistics there, together with Kenneth Pike, Becker's mentor and one of the first American theorists of discourse, published an extremely influential textbook for writing courses (Young, Becker, & Pike 1975). *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* was one of the first such texts to be based on rhetorical principles and one of the first to expect students to approach texts in somewhat the way a field linguist might.

Partly on the strength of that book, Young was hired by Carnegie Mellon's English Department to start an undergraduate program in professional and technical writing. He also founded the Ph.D. program that accepted its first students in 1980, one of the first such programs in Rhetoric. Students in the program would address questions about writing and writing instruction in richly interdisciplinary ways, combining ideas from classical Greco-Roman rhetorical theory with ideas from cognitive psychology, computer science, design, organizational sociology, and linguistics. Since then there has always been at least one discourse analyst on the program's faculty, and close attention to the details of language and text have always been a hallmark of its students' and faculty's work.

A.L. Becker was a continuing influence, visiting Young often and lecturing to the students in the Rhetoric Program. At the University of Michigan, Becker's students in linguistics were encouraged to think in innovative interdisciplinary ways, just as Becker does (Becker 1995). As early as the 1970s, they read Pike's work and the work of a growing number of other linguists about the structural characteristics of discourse, but they also read discourse theory from anthropology (such as Geertz), critical theory (Ricoeur, Propp, Derrida), sociology (Goffman), and cognitive psychology (Shank and others on frames and schemas). Becker's students from that era were among the first linguists to call themselves discourse analysts, and they have been able to watch the field mature in theoretical nuance and intellectual stature. Johnstone, this volume's senior editor, was one of those students. Her interest in persuasive discourse across languages led her, with Becker's encouragement, to courses in the history and theory of rhetoric. Johnstone's move to Pittsburgh in 1997 thus retraced the intellectual route between linguistics and rhetoric, and between the University of Michigan and Carnegie Mellon University, that had been mapped decades earlier by Young and Becker.

A more recent impetus was a panel at the 2002 meeting of the Rhetoric Society of America that was meant to illustrate how discourse analysis could be of use to rhetorical critics. Audience members were interested, but if "discourse" had any prior resonance with them, they were thinking of Foucault and structures of
power, taking a macroscopic view without connecting it to a microscopic one. We sensed that there was a gap our work could fill in rhetorical studies, and since then we have heard more and more explicit calls from rhetoricians for new ways of thinking about new modes of discourse. We are happy to find ourselves positioned to describe and illustrate some of these.

Above all, this project was made possible by the Rhetoric Program at Carnegie Mellon, where interdisciplinary collaboration, close attention to language and to method, and a generous sense of the purview of rhetorical studies are unremarkable. We are grateful to department head David Kaufer for encouraging faculty and students alike to think around disciplinary boundaries and beyond the rhetorical canon, and to the rest of our colleagues and students at CMU for asking us to explain what we do and why and being interested in our answers. We are grateful too for the support and feedback from colleagues at UMass Dartmouth, particularly from Catherine Houser and Jerry Blitfield. We are also grateful to Ruth Wodak and Greg Myers, editors of the series in which this book appears, for seeing its potential; to two anonymous reviewers they recruited; and to Isja Conen at Benjamin in Amsterdam for seeing the manuscript into production.

References


Chapter 1. Discourse analysis and rhetorical studies


