



## DISCOURSE ISSUES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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### Abstract

The relationship between linguistics and language education is particularly interesting to follow. In language education, especially English, linguistics provides information on language rules and structure knowledge. However, due to the notion that teaching English language must be taught in a multilingual environment and intercultural approach, linguistics must also provide a complete description of language. To describe language in use, discourse is the key. To linguistic students, discourse is a familiar term, while to some language education students, the term may be unfamiliar. This raises many issues, including what is discourse. Is it important to learn? Is it relatable to language education, particularly English? To answer these questions, we need to take a glimpse of discourse analysis.

**Keywords :** discourse analysis, English language education, linguistics

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between linguistics and language education has been an interesting issue to follow. It is a common matter to relate linguistics to the pure study of language and language education to an educational perspective such as classroom management and teaching materials. Despite having different focuses, both disciplines have been complementing each other. In the teaching of the English language, for example, linguistics plays an important role in introducing and providing all information regarding English language components and structures (Gultom, 2015; Utami, 2023). This information may refer to linguistics rules of language discussed in disciplines, namely phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and even further to applied linguistics including interdisciplinary linguistics such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, forensic linguistics, language acquisition, and many more. Therefore, many experts believe that linguistics is an integral part of language teaching for it provides supporting background and foundations (Kumar & Yunus, 2014; Sheehan et al., 2024). They argue that the concept of language teaching and learning must be understood from the perspectives of language acquisition and multilingualism.



Indonesia is a multilingual society (Halim, 1971), meaning that language teaching and learning fall into the perspectives of language acquisition and multilingualism. Therefore, language education subjects in Indonesia must include linguistics in their curriculums, particularly English. In Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language and the most spoken of all foreign languages (Zein, 2019). To be effective, English must be learned in a multilingual environment and intercultural approach and these can be provided by linguistics. Meng (2009) gives an example of the case. He highlights the relationship between teachers and students. For in-classroom teaching to be effective, communication must be established on equal ground. This means that messages both explicitly and implicitly throughout all interactions in a classroom must be effectively understood and a discipline that may contribute to this is none other than pragmatics. As part of linguistics, pragmatics provides all knowledge of language nature and phenomena.

In addition to pragmatics, linguistics may provide as well a discipline that studies a complete description of language use and this discipline is called discourse study or discourse analysis. To some students of English education, the term discourse is more unfamiliar than pragmatics. The students may learn pragmatics from subjects that are particularly related to both education and linguistics such as educational linguistics. On the other hand, discourse may or may not be introduced during the subject. This situation leaves the students with many questions about discourse including what is discourse? Is it important to learn? And is it relatable to language education, particularly English language teaching? These issues were raised by the English education students.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was a literature review. Research on discourse study, linguistics, and English language teaching was conducted through literature review available on various journals. With descriptive approach, the present writer carefully described the issues on discourse relating to English language teaching.

## 3. DISCUSSION

For many years, discourse has been taught and possibly an integral part of linguistics and language education curriculums, though the term may differ. In some several institutions, discourse is taught as discourse analysis and the other may know it as discourse study. Both of them refer to the same thing.

Many language experts define discourse in their understanding. Paltridge (2000) cites the definitions of discourse from several experts, namely Brown and Yule (1983) connect discourse with the analysis of language use; Richard et al. (1992) propose discourse as the term for language produced by communication; McCarthy and Carter (1994) view discourse as linguistic patterns beyond texts; and Riggenbach (1999) explains discourse as the description of the language in a broader perspective. Of these statements, Paltridge (2000, p. 3) comes to



the conclusion that discourse is “a complete description of language use...it can help us explain the relationship between what we say and what we mean, and understand, in a particular context.” Tox'tayevich et al. (2021) discuss a broader concept of discourse, saying that it is a study of the text that must consider many contexts and factors including situational, cultural, social, ideological, historical, psychological, cognitive, communicative and many more. Meanwhile, Baxtiyorovna (2021) suggest that discourse must be defined through several approaches, namely communicative, structural-syntactic, structural-stylistic, and socio-pragmatics and concludes that discourse can be a process and a result of a text from the perspective of communication. Thus, to put it simply, discourse may be regarded as a broader term for language in use produced from an act of communication, meaning that it does not only cover written texts but also spoken languages that must be understood in particular contexts.

### Issues and The Importance of Learning Discourse

As mentioned previously, many students face several issues regarding the discourse study. Their narrow understanding of discourse makes them think that discourse is all about texts, especially written ones. This leads them to believe that the only benefit of learning discourse is the convenience of reading texts. They think that discourse makes them understand the written text they read easily, just as simple as that. What they do not comprehend is that discourse is not as narrow as they think. The student's understanding of discourse is not without a reason. Bonyadi (2019) points out the reason behind this. He suggests that those who are involved in language teaching seem to take the pedagogical discourse analysis (PDA) approach when studying, teaching, and learning language through discourse. This approach focuses more on reading and writing skills.

In the context of language teaching, there are three approaches to discourse analysis, namely critical discourse analysis (CDA), descriptive discourse analysis (DDA), and pedagogical discourse analysis (PDA). Bonyadi (2019) argues that CDA emphasizes on language in the social and political contexts; DDA describes the use of language; and PDA focuses more on reading and writing skills. According to him, language teachers or practitioners in language education tend to use more the PDA approach, resulting in students' understanding of discourse being merely about written texts. Whereas, in language education, the approach of PDA is not sufficient. Language education students, particularly English, should not be equipped with only the understanding of reading and writing skills, but also speaking and listening skills as well. These skills may support the development of students' communicative competence. Thus, in addition to PDA, CDA and DDA must also be included for they introduce the students to the nature of the language they learn. Should discourse analysis or study be taught in a complete package, the students may understand discourse in a broader and complete understanding of the language they learn.

Furthermore, Alex (2023) and Alsoraihi (2019) propose the same notion. They state that discourse analysis is important to language teaching and learning. It may improve the quality of language teaching and learning. Alsoraihi (2019) even suggests that effective language



teaching and learning cannot be taught and learned separately from discourse analysis because it provides those involved in language education a complete knowledge and skills for successful communication, which according to her is the ultimate goal of language learning and teaching.

Of the definitions proposed by many experts above, it is clear that discourse provides us with a complete and broader description of language, not only written but also spoken and in various contexts. Therefore, by mastering discourse study, language learners are equipped with tools to completely understand the language they learn.

### **The Benefits of Learning Discourse**

Theoretically, it is confirmed that learning discourse study or analysis is important. With discourse both teachers and students are equipped with the appropriate tools to comprehend the language they learn completely. However, the real question is do we have any proof that it is relatable and important to language learning and teaching, particularly English? To answer this question, we must look into several studies that conducted. In his study, Luo (2013) emphasizes the benefit of mastering discourse in an English language teaching classroom. He points out the necessity of creating interactional language use in the classroom by using discourse strategies for the benefit of student learning. Alsaawi (2016) reveals that by applying written discourse analysis in teaching written texts, students' ability to read and write coherent texts may increase.

In Indonesia, several studies highlight the benefits of discourse study or analysis. Nurdiana (2015) explains that from the traditional view, English language teaching may focus on language structures such as phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, but from the discourse analysis view, all of these materials can be completed with the authentic natural data of the language to let the students comprehend the actual language use in real situations. Ghafar (2023) proposes the same thing that discourse may provide students with a real-world experience of language use and social context which are essential for effective language teaching and learning. Chairunnisa (2020) and Roliani et al (2019) conducted a classroom study to see whether discourse knowledge was beneficial. They found out that a teacher familiar with discourse used it as a strategy to keep his students active in the class and create a relaxing situation making the students less stressful and easy to understand. While Alsaawi (2016) reveals the benefit of discourse knowledge application in reading and writing skills, Saputra and Yulianingsih (2024) suggest that CDA or Critical Discourse Analysis is beneficial in enhancing students' speaking skills, particularly for social and political materials theme in ELT or English Language Teaching. Furthermore, Fauzan et al (2023) even propose that the CDA method may play an important role in developing students' Islamic character and instilling the spirit of nationalism. To conclude, Fayzullaevna (2021, p. 175) emphasizes that discourse analysis helps improve students' awareness of how language is used and described in various perspectives by stating "The discourse analysis provides the students with the opportunity to



study the meaningful production and interpretation of texts and talk which may include written texts of all kinds, and spoken data, from conversation to highly institutionalised forms of talks.”

The present writer has experienced a direct benefit from discourse analysis, at least from the student's perspective. Discourse study is taught in the 8th semester. In this semester, the students often face difficulty in determining the analysis of their theses, but discourse provides a solution through genre analysis. This subject of discourse informs the student with specific types of genres based on their thesis purpose. By finding out the purposes of their theses, the students will not be confused in deciding which schematic structures to write.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Language studies, particularly English cannot be taught in isolation. English teachers must provide students with a complete description of the English language including how the language is used and described in various contexts and perspectives. To provide this complete description, discourse knowledge is necessary. Discourse study or analysis is a complete package in language teaching and learning because it helps both teachers and students a full knowledge of language including its use and understanding in all contexts and situations. Mastering a complete discourse (not only PDA) also aids in enhancing the four English skills, namely writing, reading, speaking, and listening and further helps build an effective communication.

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