



VNU Journal of Foreign Studies

Journal homepage: <https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/>

## DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE: NEW TOOLS FOR CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Publisher: Oxford University Press, 2008

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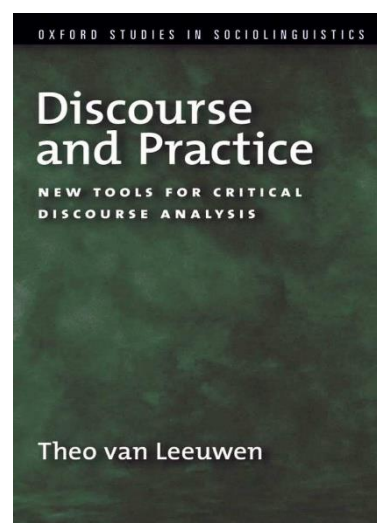
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Received 09 April 2024

Revised 03 October 2024; Accepted 03 February 2025

### 1. Introduction

“**Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis**” by Theo van Leeuwen (2008) stands as a pivotal work in the development of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, hereafter), particularly in the exploration of how social practices are represented and transformed through various semiotic means. As CDA continues to evolve, van Leeuwen's work provides a crucial framework for understanding the intricate interplay between discourse and social reality. This book is particularly suited for researchers, academics, and advanced students in fields such as linguistics, media studies, and sociology, providing them with both theoretical insights and practical tools for analyzing discourse. It meets the needs of its intended audience by offering a multidisciplinary approach, integrating both linguistic and visual modes of analysis, which caters to scholars engaged in cross-disciplinary research.



The book consists of 185 pages divided into 9 chapters. In Chapter 1, “*Discourse as the Recontextualization of Social Practice*”, van Leeuwen lays the foundation by discussing the interrelationship between genre and field in CDA.

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Chapter 2, “*Representing Social Actors*”, explores how individuals are depicted in various discursive contexts, while Chapter 3, “*Representing Social Action*”, focuses on how social actions are portrayed through discourse.

In Chapter 4, “*Time in Discourse*”, van Leeuwen examines the temporal aspect of discourse, and Chapter 5, “*Space in Discourse*”, addresses how spatial representations shape social reality.

Chapter 6, “*The Discursive Construction of Legitimation*”, analyzes how discourse establishes authority and credibility, and Chapter 7, “*The Discursive Construction of Purpose*”, investigates how intentions are communicated.

Chapter 8, “*The Visual Representation of Social Actors*”, delves into the semiotics of racial representation and visual racism. Finally, Chapter 9, “*Representing Social Actors with Toys*”, combines critical discourse analysis and multimodal semiotics, illustrating how social actors are visually recontextualized, particularly through children's play.

## **2. Discussion**

### ***2.1. Connections of the Book to CDA and Other Related Fields***

The book engages with and establishes significant connections to a diverse range of theoretical perspectives and scholarly traditions within CDA and related fields, enriching ongoing debates and offering new insights into the complexities of language, power, and social change. This contribution furthers ongoing discussions and developments within the discipline.

The book establishes noteworthy connections with Fairclough's CDA, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), Sociocultural Approaches to Discourse, Critical Applied Linguistics, Intersectionality, and Critical Race Theory.

First, van Leeuwen's work builds upon the foundational principles of Fairclough's CDA (1995), particularly in its focus on the social, political, and cultural dimensions of discourse. Both scholars emphasize the importance of examining discourse as a site of power negotiation and social construction, highlighting the ways in which language shapes and reflects societal structures and ideologies.

Second, van Leeuwen's integration of linguistic and visual modes of communication aligns with the principles of MDA. Scholars such as Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Jewitt (2009) have contributed extensively to the development of MDA, exploring how various semiotic resources, including images, gestures, and spatial arrangements, interact to produce meaning in discourse. van Leeuwen's framework extends this approach by incorporating multimodal analysis into the study of critical discourse.

Third, van Leeuwen's emphasis on the sociocultural dimensions of discourse resonates with the work of scholars such as Gee (2014) and Wodak (2015), who advocate for a sociocultural approach to discourse analysis. By situating discourse within broader social, historical, and cultural contexts, these scholars highlight the complex interplay between language, power, and identity, offering insights into the ways in which discourse both reflects and shapes social reality.

Fourth, van Leeuwen's work intersects with the field of Critical Applied Linguistics, which seeks to apply critical perspectives to the study of language in real-world contexts. Scholars such as Pennycook (2001) and Canagarajah (2011) explore the implications of language use for social justice, identity negotiation, and linguistic diversity, aligning with van Leeuwen's focus on the transformative potential of critical discourse analysis.

Finally, van Leeuwen's discussion of visual racism and the representation of social actors resonates with the principles of Intersectionality and Critical Race Theory. Scholars such as Crenshaw (1989) and Ladson-Billings (2006) emphasize the interconnected nature of social identities and the ways in which systems of power and privilege intersect along lines of race, gender, class, and other axes of social difference. van Leeuwen's analysis contributes to these discussions by examining how discursive practices perpetuate and contest systems of racial inequality and oppression.

In summary, “**Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis**” actively involves various theoretical perspectives and academic traditions within CDA and related areas. Among the many frameworks on CDA and MDA, this book solidifies its position by reinforcing the theory on the interplay of different semiotic modes in discourse. Additionally, its comprehensive contribution to the social actor representation framework offers significant analytical tools, enhancing our understanding of how social identity is shaped and represented across discourses. It successfully meets the needs of its intended audience by offering practical tools for analyzing both linguistic and visual discourses, making it a valuable resource for scholars who seek to explore the interrelations between language, power, and society across various modes of communication. It enhances current discussions and introduces fresh understandings regarding the intricate dynamics of language, power dynamics, and societal transformation.

## ***2.2. Positive Aspects and Contributions of the Book***

I consider “**Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis**” to be an immensely significant and valuable resource for critical discourse analysts and researchers interested in the critical examination of language use. The book is detailed, comprehensive, accessible, and practical, offering a wealth of theoretical insights and practical tools for analyzing discourse.

Expanding on the discussion, it is essential to highlight the abundance of visual aids present in the book, and their role in facilitating understanding of the framework. Throughout the book, van Leeuwen incorporates numerous diagrams, tables, networks, and pictures to elucidate key concepts and illustrate the application of his analytical framework. These visual aids serve as invaluable tools for clarifying complex theoretical concepts and enhancing comprehension for readers. For instance, when introducing the framework for analyzing the representation of social actors, van Leeuwen might provide a detailed diagram or network illustrating the various elements involved, such as linguistic features, visual representations, and contextual factors. By visually mapping out these components, readers are better able to grasp the interconnectedness of different elements and understand how they contribute to the construction of social identity within discourse.

Moreover, van Leeuwen often includes clear examples to illustrate how the framework operates in practice. These examples typically involve the analysis of real-life discourse samples, wherein van Leeuwen applies his analytical tools to deconstruct and interpret the discursive strategies at play. Through meticulous analysis and interpretation of these samples, readers gain a deeper understanding of how the framework can be applied to uncover underlying meanings and power dynamics within discourse. He also provides clear explanations of key concepts and analytical categories, ensuring that readers are equipped with the necessary theoretical foundation to engage with the material. Concepts such as Exclusion and Inclusion are carefully defined and elucidated through concrete examples, allowing readers to grasp their significance within the broader framework of critical discourse analysis.

Furthermore, van Leeuwen offers detailed analyses of samples to illustrate how the network of discursive elements operates in practice. By dissecting and interpreting specific instances of discourse, he demonstrates how linguistic and visual cues work in tandem to construct and negotiate social meanings. Through these analyses, readers gain insight into the intricate dynamics of discourse and learn how to apply the analytical framework to their own research projects.

The eminent contribution of the book lies in its groundbreaking exploration of social actor representation within discourse. Van Leeuwen's work offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing how individuals are portrayed and constructed through linguistic and visual means, providing invaluable insights into the complexities of social identity construction and power dynamics within discourse.

The book integrates linguistic and visual modes of representation in the analysis of social actors. van Leeuwen demonstrates how language and other semiotic resources, such as images, gestures, and spatial arrangements, work together to construct and negotiate social meanings. By examining both verbal and non-verbal cues, van Leeuwen offers a more nuanced understanding of how social actors are depicted within discourse, moving beyond traditional approaches that focus solely on linguistic features.

Moreover, van Leeuwen's framework goes beyond surface-level analysis to uncover deeper layers of meaning and ideology embedded within representations of social actors. Through meticulous analysis of discursive strategies, he reveals the ways in which power, hierarchy, and social norms are reinforced or contested through the portrayal of individuals in discourse. By highlighting the discursive mechanisms through which social actors are constructed and positioned within social hierarchies, van Leeuwen's work contributes to broader discussions about the relationship between language, identity, and social inequality.

Additionally, van Leeuwen's emphasis on reflexivity encourages researchers to critically examine their own assumptions and biases when analyzing social actor representation. By acknowledging the role of the researcher's perspective in shaping interpretations of discourse, van Leeuwen promotes a more self-aware and ethically responsible approach to discourse analysis.

I disagree with Hou's (2010) critique of the structural arrangement of the book, particularly regarding the separation of chapters dealing with linguistic and visual recontextualization of social actors (Chapters 2, 8, and 9). In my view, providing background knowledge through chapters 3 to 7 before delving into chapters 8 and 9 is essential for readers to fully grasp the concepts presented. This sequential arrangement ensures that readers are equipped with the necessary foundation before engaging with more advanced topics, thereby enhancing comprehension and the overall learning experience.

Reading “**Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis**” offers numerous benefits for both students and researchers interested in the field of CDA. The book provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing discourse, encompassing both linguistic and visual elements. This framework equips readers with a holistic approach to understanding how language and other semiotic modes shape social practices and representations. Second, van Leeuwen offers practical tools and analytical categories that readers can apply in their own research projects. By providing clear examples and detailed explanations, the book empowers students and researchers to conduct rigorous discourse analysis across diverse contexts. Third, van Leeuwen's work bridges the gap between linguistics, semiotics, and sociology, offering an interdisciplinary perspective on discourse analysis. This interdisciplinary approach encourages

readers to consider the complex interplay between language, culture, and social reality.

Fourth, the book includes numerous diagrams, tables, networks, and pictures to illustrate key concepts and analytical frameworks. These visual aids enhance comprehension and facilitate the application of theoretical concepts to real-life discourse samples. Fifth, through detailed analyses of discursive practices, van Leeuwen encourages readers to develop a critical awareness of power dynamics, ideology, and social inequality embedded within discourse. This critical perspective enables readers to uncover hidden meanings and challenge dominant narratives in society. Sixth, while grounded in Western sociocultural contexts, the book prompts readers to consider the cultural specificity of discourse and discourse scholarship. This awareness encourages researchers to approach discourse analysis with sensitivity to diverse cultural perspectives and experiences. Seventh, van Leeuwen's emphasis on reflexivity reminds readers to critically examine their own ideological and political standpoints. This self-awareness fosters a more nuanced understanding of the researcher's positionality and its implications for discourse analysis. Lastly, by introducing innovative concepts and methodologies, the book inspires students and researchers to push the boundaries of discourse analysis and contribute new insights to the field. Van Leeuwen's work encourages readers to explore emerging trends, such as multimodal discourse analysis, and apply them to their own research agendas.

### ***2.3. Some Considerations***

While “**Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis**” by Theo van Leeuwen is an influential and comprehensive work in the field, it is not without limitations.

One limitation of the book lies in the complexity of van Leeuwen's analytical framework, which may present challenges for readers, particularly those who are new to discourse analysis or lack a robust background in semiotics and linguistics. The framework encompasses numerous concepts and analytical tools, such as Exclusion and Inclusion, which require analyzing linguistic and visual cues to understand how social actors are represented in discourse. However, applying these concepts consistently across diverse research contexts can prove difficult. This multi-dimensional approach may be daunting for practitioners, especially those without extensive training in critical discourse analysis or semiotics, potentially resulting in inconsistencies or misinterpretations in their analyses.

Furthermore, I concur with Hou's (2010) review of the book, which suggests that its emphasis on English language and Western sociocultural contexts could potentially restrict the applicability of its frameworks in cross-cultural or multilingual contexts, where discursive practices vary considerably. Van Leeuwen acknowledges the cultural specificity of his analysis but primarily draws on examples and case studies from Western societies. This could potentially alienate readers from diverse cultural backgrounds and hinder their ability to apply the framework to their own cultural contexts.

As critical discourse analysts, it is essential to remain reflexive about our ideological and political standpoints. While van Leeuwen's work reflects a certain ideological stance, such as anti-authority, it is crucial to recognize that this perspective may not be universally justified across different cultural contexts. In different sociocultural contexts, for example, values of authority and virtue may be approached differently, and critiques should be grounded in culturally acknowledged values specific to the civilization in question.

Lastly, while van Leeuwen's work provides a comprehensive overview of social actor representation, it may not fully address the intersectional nature of identity and power dynamics

within discourse. The framework predominantly focuses on the representation of social actors in relation to dominant social categories such as race, gender, and class, but may overlook the complexities of intersecting identities and marginalized voices within discourse.

### 3. Conclusion

In summary, “**Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis**” offers students and researchers valuable theoretical insights, practical tools, and critical perspectives for conducting rigorous discourse analysis. Whether initiating a research project or aiming to enhance their understanding of discourse studies, readers will discover this book as an invaluable resource for advancing their scholarly pursuits. Notably, by providing a comprehensive and theoretically rigorous approach to analyzing social actor representation, van Leeuwen's work advances our understanding of how language and other semiotic resources shape social reality and contribute to processes of social change. While the book offers valuable insights and tools for critical discourse analysis, it is essential for readers to approach the book with a critical awareness of its limitations. By acknowledging these limitations and supplementing the book's framework with additional resources and guidance, researchers can overcome barriers and adapt the framework to suit their specific research needs and contexts.

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