

HUMA2035 FALL2026 Tentative Course Outline

Language in Action: Doing Discourse Analysis Contexts

Instructor: Dr. Cathy Ping PAN (hmpanping@ust.hk)

Time: Monday & Wednesday 12:00-13:20

Venue: LG5202

Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday: 12:00-13:30; Or by appointment

Course TA: Christie LAM (hmchristie@ust.hk)

Course description

The course delves into the study of language as a dynamic social practice, exploring how meaning is constructed, communicated, and contested across various contexts. Through the lens of discourse analysis, students will examine spoken, written, and multimodal communication, uncovering the ways in which language reflects and shapes social norms, power structures, and identities. The course integrates traditional discourse analysis frameworks with contemporary digital issues, introducing students to key theories and methods for analysing texts in our global world. Examples will be drawn from everyday conversations, advertisements, social media ecosystems, political communication, and the evolving discourse around AI and algorithmic environments. Emphasis will be placed on hands-on data analysis, enabling students to critically engage with various types of texts and apply discourse-analytic tools to real-world examples.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):

1. Describe the key concepts and approaches in the study of discourse analysis.
2. Apply the concepts and methods of discourse analysis to examine language use in diverse contexts.
3. Explain how language reflects and shapes social practices, power and identity.
4. Articulate the value of discourse analysis in different social domains of life

Assessments:

- **Class participation:** 15%
- **In-class Quizzes:** 30% (Week 6 & 13)
- **A Group Discourse Analysis (DA) Project:** 55%
(Guidance will be provided continuously throughout the course.)
 - a. Project proposal (1-page outline/mind-map) & consultation (5%)
 - b. Project presentation (15%)
 - c. Project report (35%)

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Class Participation	ILO-1, 2, 3, 4	Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions and hands-on activities. By examining real-world texts and discourse examples in class, students will practice applying theoretical frameworks to actual data. Some of these in-class analytical tasks will be graded, contributing to the class participation mark.
In-class Quizzes	ILO-1, 2, 3, 4	There will be 2 in-class quizzes designed to consolidate and test students' understanding of the key concepts, frameworks and theories delivered in the readings and lectures. These quizzes will be primarily data-driven, encouraging students to use course concepts to identify and analyse features in provided spoken, written, or multimodal texts.
Group Project	ILO-1, 2, 3, 4	Students will form groups and carry out a small-scale, text-based discourse study. They will select a bounded dataset of written, spoken, digital, or multimodal texts (e.g., everyday conversations, corporate discourse, digital media, AI-mediated communication, etc.) and apply one or more specific DA frameworks to analyse how recurring linguistic and/or semiotic patterns construct meaning and reflect social dynamics. The project will be documented through an in-class presentation and a comprehensive written report. (Note that this project will focus on close analysis of the selected discourse data, rather than on surveying language users' attitudes, preferences, or self-reported practices.)

Course Schedule (*subject to changes*):

Week	Lecture Topic
1	Opening the conversation: An overview of the course; introducing discourse analysis as an area of study in applied linguistics, centring on language in use: How does language do social work in texts, interactions, and everyday communicative practices?

2	Discourse architecture: How do speakers and writers organise topics and information so that a text or interaction becomes understandable and purposeful?
3	The texture of text: How do specific linguistic devices (e.g., pronouns, conjunctions, and lexical repetition, etc.) stitch sentences together to create a cohesive and meaningful text?
4	Discourse and genre: How do recurring communicative purposes and social expectations shape the ways particular genres are organised and interpreted?
5	Discourse, context, and implicit meaning: How do people communicate – and understand – meanings that are not explicitly stated?
6	Conversation analysis: How do participants organise talk together, manage turns, resolve trouble, and accomplish social actions in interaction? Quiz 1
7	Discourse, power, and identities: How do texts and interactions represent people, position identities, and reproduce or challenge relations of power and ideology?
8	Multimodal discourse: How do language, image, layout, sound, and other semiotic resources work together to construct meaning?
9	Corpus-assisted discourse analysis: What recurrent linguistic patterns become visible across a collection of texts, and what do they reveal about discourse?
10	Discourse and digital media: How do digital-platform affordances and participation practices shape how discourse is produced, circulated, and interpreted?
11	Discourse around AI and algorithmic environments: How do generative AI and algorithmic systems shape the production, visibility, authority, and interpretation of discourse?
12	Group presentations & wrap-up
13	Group presentations & wrap-up Quiz 2

Recommended books and resources (selected):

(Note: Weekly readings and supplementary materials will be made available on Canvas.)

1. Canning, P., & Walker, B. (2024). *Discourse analysis: A practical introduction*. Routledge.

2. De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2020). (Eds.). *The Cambridge handbook of discourse studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: Critical study of language* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
4. Jewitt, C., Bezemer, J., & O'Halloran, K. (2025). *Introducing multimodality* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
5. Jones, R. H. (2024). *Discourse analysis: A resource book for students* (3rd ed.). London and New York: Routledge.
6. Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2020). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
7. Paltridge, B. (2021). *Discourse analysis: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Assessment and Grading:

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing, and grades will not be assigned using a curve. The marking rubric for the project is as follows:

A (Excellent Performance)	The project presents an outstanding and professionally communicated DA study. It demonstrates exceptional command of relevant discourse-analytic concepts and/or frameworks, applying them critically and appropriately to a clearly bounded dataset of written, spoken, digital, and/or multimodal discourse. The analysis is systematic, original, and closely grounded in well-selected textual, interactional, and/or semiotic evidence. It moves convincingly beyond description to explain how recurring patterns construct meaning, and reflect or shape social relations, identities and ideologies. The work considerably exceeds expectations in both scholarly rigor and communicative effectiveness.
B (Good Performance)	The project presents a solid, competent, and clearly organised discourse study. It displays a good grasp of relevant discourse-analytic concepts and applies an appropriate framework to a suitably defined dataset. The analysis is clear, supported by relevant textual, interactional, and/or semiotic evidence, and leads to logical interpretations of how discourse constructs meaning and relates to its communicative, social, or cultural context. Its analytic procedure, interpretation, and/or methodological reflection may not have the depth or precision expected of an A-level project.
C (Satisfactory Performance)	The project presents a basic but relevant discourse study. It demonstrates satisfactory but limited understanding of relevant discourse-analytic concepts, and the selected framework may be applied inconsistently or at a relatively superficial level. The dataset and research question are present but may be too broad, insufficiently described, or only partly suited to the chosen method. The analysis includes some relevant examples, but it is primarily descriptive without adequately explaining their patterns, functions, or significance.

	Interpretations of meaning, social context or relations are weakly evidenced, or only partially connected to the analysis.
D (Marginal Pass)	The project demonstrates marginal understanding of discourse analysis and/or the selected framework. Its research question, dataset, or focus may be unclear, overly broad, or insufficiently documented. The analysis is superficial, underdeveloped, or relies heavily on unsupported impressionistic observations/ description rather than close analysis of discourse data. Claims about meaning, context, social relations/ ideology are unsubstantiated, or not logically derived from the evidence.
F (Fail)	The project fails to demonstrate a coherent understanding of discourse analysis. The research question, dataset, and/or selected framework are absent, irrelevant, or significantly inappropriate. There is no meaningful close analysis of discourse data, no credible use of evidence, or effective application of course concepts. The work does not meet the minimum standards required for the course.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Policy on Use of GenAI:

Generative AI may be used to identify sources of information and brainstorm ideas, but it must not be used to compose the final assignments on your behalf. The core analytical, compositional, and synthetic work of the final assignments must be your own. Any use of generative AI must be properly acknowledged and clearly explained, including which AI tool(s) were used, and how they facilitated the project work, and which parts of the project writing were assisted.

Communication and Feedback:

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include details appropriate to the assignment type. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.