

Parker, I. (1992) *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*. London: Routledge.

Part I

Discourses

[p.1]

Discourse analysis already has a history in psychology, and I set the scene for an analysis of discourse dynamics in this first part of the book. In the first chapter I work through the consequences of a definition of discourses as sets of statements which constitute an object. I elaborate a set of criteria and then three additional points to do with institutions, power and ideology. Through these criteria I use post-structural work on discourse to show how the study of language must attend to tensions and contradictions which express political matters. Without these three supplementary points, an analysis of discourse could become just another method, just an academic exercise, and then just as other frameworks psychologists use to describe action and experience.

I cannot pretend that a focus on institutions, power and ideology is not a moral/political matter (and perhaps it is only that), and the following chapters in this book rest on the assumption that amoral/apolitical psychology is worse than useless. Each theoretical resource used by discourse analysts in psychology (whether it be sociology of scientific knowledge, microsociology, analytic philosophy, rhetoric, semiology or post-structuralism) can all too easily draw us into versions of linguistic relativism, idealism. A focus on the structures of language at the expense of an analysis of material coercion is one that discourse analysts feel differently, and ambivalently, about. Chapter 2 takes this issue seriously, and outlines a realist view of language and the material resources which make discourse possible. The study of the dynamics which structure texts has to be located in an account of the ways discourses reproduce and transform the material world.

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