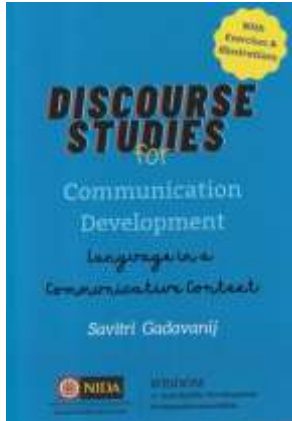


Book Review: Discourse Studies for Communication Development: Language in a Communication Context.

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Review by:	Woravit Kitjaroenpaiboon
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Discourse Studies for Communication Development: Language in a Communication Context by Savitri Gadavani is a timely and pedagogically sound contribution to discourse studies and applied linguistics. Explicitly positioned as both a discourse studies textbook and a practical guide to improving communicative effectiveness, the book successfully bridges a gap that often separates theoretical discourse analysis from real-world communication. By foregrounding “real language in use by real people,” Gadavani aligns the volume with functional, pragmatic, and socially oriented traditions in linguistics. As a result, the book is relevant not only to students of linguistics but also to professionals seeking to enhance communication in institutional and workplace contexts.

Drawing on foundational work by internationally recognized scholars such as Grice, Austin, Halliday, Sacks, and Brown and Levinson, the book adopts a pluralistic approach to discourse analysis. Its central organizing principle -*being a good communicator*- provides a clear pedagogical thread running through all eight chapters. Rather than presenting discourse analysis as an abstract or purely analytical endeavour, the author consistently frames it as a practical means of understanding, evaluating, and improving communication in context.

The book is systematically organised into eight chapters, each addressing a key factor contributing to successful communication and pairing it with an appropriate discourse-analytic framework.

Chapter 1, *What Does It Mean to Be a Good Communicator of English*, lays the conceptual foundation for the book. Discourse analysis is introduced as a perspective concerned with meaning as action, rather than meaning as isolated linguistic form. Communication is presented as a collaborative process in which meaning is jointly constructed by interlocutors. This chapter effectively situates discourse analysis as a discipline concerned with language use, social action, and interpretation, thereby preparing readers for the applied orientation of the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2, *What Makes Language a Discourse?: Cohesion and Meaningfulness*, provides a clear and systematic account of cohesion and coherence. The discussion of cohesive devices -such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical cohesion- is comprehensive and accessible. In particular, the treatment of lexical cohesion, including collocation, reiteration, synonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and antonymy, is especially useful for readers who may struggle to see how vocabulary choices contribute to textual unity beyond individual sentences.

Chapter 3, *Discourse Says One Thing but Means the Other*, shifts attention from textual cohesion to pragmatic coherence. Drawing on Grice’s Cooperative Principle and the notion of conversational implicature, the chapter explains how meaning is often inferred rather than explicitly stated. The discussion of speech acts, communicative intention, felicity conditions, and the distinction between direct and indirect speech acts is well integrated. The chapter effectively illustrates how pragmatic competence underpins successful communication and why misunderstanding is not necessarily communicative failure, but often a predictable outcome when shared assumptions differ.

Chapter 4, *Choices in Discourse and Meaning: Unstated Yet Communicated*, introduces Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a framework for understanding language as a system of socially motivated choices. Complex concepts such as transitivity, process types, and lexico-grammar are explained with notable clarity. By linking linguistic structure to social meaning, this chapter reinforces the book’s central argument that language behavior is inherently social behavior - an argument that is firmly grounded in Hallidayan linguistics.

Chapter 5, *Meaning Is What You Expect It to Mean*, explores schema theory and conversation analysis. The discussion of mental and discourse schemata offers valuable insight into how prior knowledge shapes interpretation. The introduction to conversation analysis -including turn-taking, sequence organisation, and transcription conventions- is particularly beneficial for readers new to ethnomethodological approaches. The inclusion of transcription symbols and analytical procedures provides readers with practical tools for conducting empirical discourse analysis.

Chapter 6, *Language Variety and Identity*, examines linguistic variation and its relationship to identity and communicative purpose. The chapter covers language, dialect, register, and standard and non-standard varieties, and introduces examples such as African American Vernacular English to illustrate sociolinguistic complexity and covert prestige. The application of the S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G framework to professional communication further reinforces the book's applied orientation.

Chapter 7, *Communicating Appropriately: Politeness Theory and Social Relationship*, focuses on politeness as appropriateness rather than as mere linguistic etiquette. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, the chapter examines concepts such as face, face-threatening acts, and politeness strategies, while also acknowledging cultural variability. This discussion is particularly relevant to intercultural and professional communication, where pragmatic misalignment can have significant social consequences.

Chapter 8, *Discourse Analysis Application: Refining Communication in the Workplace*, concludes the book by applying discourse-analytic insights to organizational contexts. By emphasizing specific cultures and organizational norms, Gadavani demonstrates how discourse analysis can function as both a diagnostic and developmental tool for improving workplace communication.

In the reviewer's assessment, one of the book's key strengths lies in its balanced integration of theory and practice. Rather than privileging a single discourse-analytic tradition, Gadavani adopts an inclusive approach that reflects the interdisciplinary nature of discourse studies. The use of authentic discourse samples and exercises throughout the book enhances reader engagement and supports experiential learning.

Pedagogically, the book is well suited to undergraduate and postgraduate courses in discourse analysis, pragmatics, applied linguistics, and communication studies. At the same time, its accessible style and strong applied focus make it suitable for non-linguist professionals -an achievement that is relatively uncommon in discourse studies textbooks, which often presuppose familiarity with specialized linguistic terminology.

That said, readers with advanced training in corpus linguistics or quantitative discourse analysis may find the book's methodological orientation predominantly qualitative. While this aligns with the book's stated aims, future editions might benefit from a more explicit engagement with corpus-based approaches, particularly in light of the growing prominence of mixed-methods research in contemporary discourse studies.

Overall, *Discourse Studies for Communication Development: Language in a Communication Context* is a well-organised, theoretically informed, and practically oriented contribution to discourse studies. By presenting discourse analysis as a means of becoming a more effective communicator, Savitri Gadavani succeeds in making complex theories accessible without oversimplifying them. The book offers lasting value for students, educators, and professionals, and merits inclusion on reading lists for courses concerned with language, communication, and society.

In short, this is a book that practices what it advocates: it communicates its ideas clearly, coherently, and appropriately - arguably the highest praise that can be given to a work on discourse.

Reference

Gadavani, S. (2022). *Discourse Studies for Communication Development: Language in a Communication Context*. National Institute of Development Administration Press.