

Purpose of the text: To show “What academic discourse is and why it is important” (p.1)

1. What is academic discourse?

1.1 “Ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy” (p.1)

1.2 Significance:

a) educating students

b) demonstrating learning

c) disseminating ideas

d) constructing knowledge

1.3 Material of academic enterprise:

a) Textbooks

b) Essays

c) conference presentations

d) dissertations

e) lectures

f) research articles

1.4 Goal: teaching and reseaching

1.5 Communication ‘the life blood of academia’. Depend on it:

a) promotion of knowledge

b) establishment of reputation

1.6 The language of academy is becoming “the dominant mode for interpreting reality and our own existence” (p.2)

1.7 Its importance in educational role is increasing

2. Why this interest in academic discourse?

2.1 Greater diversity between the students

2.2 Increase of competition between the institutions

2.3 Idea of education as a comercial issue

2.4 The emergence of English as the international language of scholarship

2.5 Significant growth in English academic publications

2.6 This ‘standardization’ of English makes the knowledge easier to be universalized.

3. Education: discourse, acculturation and learning

3.1 Discourse and student writing are at the center of teaching and learning in Higher Education

3.1.1 Discourses and difficulties

- a) Discourses make us represent our ideas in a different way we are used to
- b) There are many problems to second language students

3.1.2 Abstraction and technicality.

- a) "... academic writing disrupts our everyday perceptions of the world and sets up different expectations" (p. 7)
- b) Discourses in:
 - Sciences: more technical
 - Humanities: more abstract

3.1.3 Discourses and deficit

- a) The complexity of the academic discourses can make readers misunderstand what the author wanted to demonstrate
- b) Students are seen as a group with the same formation, culture, way of thinking or acting.
- c) Difference between language as a system and language in everyday use causes problems
- d) Literacy and writing – many barriers
- e) "...texts don't exist in isolation but are part of the communicative routines of social communities" (p. 10)

4. Knowledge: discourse, persuasion and truth

- a) Funding, constructing and evaluating knowledge
- b) The concept of knowledge is not the same as before.

4.1 Knowledge and language

- a) "...induction offers probabilities rather than proof" (p. 10)

- b) "The problem for scientific views of knowledge, then, is that nature cannot speak to us directly and interpretation of events" (p. 11)
- c) Theory against argument

4.2 Discourse and constructionism

- a) Individuals write and talk acting as members of social groups: Individual against collective
- b) Knowledge is constructed through our everyday writing and talking
- c) Society's beliefs are filtered through theories and language
- d) Texts can never represent the world as it is
- e) "This knowledge, then, is not a privileged representation of reality, but a conversation between individuals" (p. 12)

4.3 Discourse and community

- a) Writers guide readers to an interpretation, and do not show proofs
- b) "Persuasion (...) involves using language to relate independent beliefs to shared experience" (p. 13)
- c) Academic discourses: linked to social activities, styles and beliefs.
- d) Readers have background information, writers have linguistic power
- e) Particular knowledge against maintenance of prestige outside
- f) Individuals use language to:
 - align themselves with particular communities
 - display their competence
 - persuade others to accept their ideas
 - ring fence and protect their interests

5. Reputation: discourse, authority and reward

- "The power it [the academic discourse] wields in the career of individual academics" (p. 14)
- Power against Reputation

5.1 Discourse and reward

- a) Academic discourses show the ways individuals:
 - construct themselves as competent academics
 - build professional visibility
 - establish reputations.
- b) "Discourse is the interface between the individual and the discipline" (p. 15)
- c) An elite is formed: standards professionals influences the others
- d) There is an "emphasis placed on the ownership" (p. 15)
- e) "...a contribution of information is exchanged for recognition." (p. 15)
- f) These "standards of social utility appear to be replacing traditional values of academic knowledge based on truth" (p. 15)

5.2 Reputation and competition

- a) Academic publication has much competition because:
 - Reputation
 - Material and symbolic capital are scarce
- b) It is stimulated by many institutions, and not approved by others
- c) There are institutional hierarchies

6. Conclusions and caveats

- a) Academic discourse is very central in academics lives
- b) It constructs knowledge, disciplines and the professional careers of academics themselves.
- c) "We have to see them [the discourses] as part and parcel of institutional and community practices" (p. 18)
- d) "Discourses are used in different ways to represent different ideological approaches" (p. 19)

Main author's conclusion: "...in the context of what we do in the academy we are defined and judged by our control of academic discourses" (p. 19)