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RESPONSE PAPER #1 - DISCOURSE STUDIES

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Guided study presented to the Department of Modern Letters, for evaluation on the subject of Discourse Studies, in the undergraduate degree course of Letters of the College of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo, coordinated by the PhD Professor Daniel de Mello Ferraz.

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According to Angermuller, Maingueneau & Wodak (2014) " Discourse Studies could be considered as not only a trans-disciplinary or even post-disciplinary project but rather one which runs counter to the division of knowledge into specialized disciplines and sub-disciplines"(p.1)[1]. To that extent, a great range of disciplines contest the idea that it is derived and/or a branch of Linguistics, the authors emphasize. In spite of all the different nuances that may give reason to any of these contestations, it must be considered to be an undeniable premise that Linguistics sets itself as the discipline which studies the functioning of natural languages in all of its forms and occurrences: from Literature to chit-chat conversations.

Inside the linguistics field of Studies of the Meaning, or even Semantic Studies, there's varied group of areas, each of which focuses on a particular facet of the effects of language as a meaning conceiving tool/vehicle. Most of them tend to establish a dialectic relation with one another, such as Semantics and Pragmatics, Semiotics and Discourse analysis and so on and so forth. The latter *duo* is usually differentiated by their scope of sample universe: Semiotics tend to consider the effective empirical data from which to drawn on interpretations and conceive meanings only the text itself. Be what it be that any given research or theoretical frame considers to be this text, usually the common premise is to not take into consideration biographical data, for example, or any type of information regarding and surrounding the text that comes to be seen as adjacent.

On the other hand, Discourse analysis usually sets itself on the other side of the spectrum, considering adjacent data surrounding the text as fundamental in order to perceive the whole intended meaning conveyed by and through it. One could even say that Discourse analysis sets itself to investigate the meaning **intended** by the text, whereas Semiotics aims only at the meanings willingly or unwillingly **conveyed** by this same text.

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[1] ANGERMULLER, Johannes; MAINGUENEAU, Dominique; WODAK, Ruth. The Discourse Studies Reader: An introduction. In: ANGERMULLER, Johannes; MAINGUENEAU, Dominique; WODAK, Ruth. **The Discourse Studies Reader:** Main currents in theory and analysis. Amsterdam/philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014. p. 1-15.

> "Meaning, in other words, is not to be understood as an inherent property of utterances or texts. Rather, it results from the use that is made of language in specific contexts. In order to have some meaning for somebody, texts need to be contextualized. For discourse analysts, therefore, meaning is a fragile and contested construction of the discourse participants." (*ibidem, p*.3)

Most and foremost, I drew this superficial and general comparison because the course to be coordinated by Professor Ferraz will provide me an immense amount of theoretical input, given not only my preference inside the undergraduate degree for the studies of meaning but also that I just three months ago began a research project in the field of Semiotics. Due to that scenario, having the opportunity to be in contact with two of the most fruitful branches of linguistics will be in and of itself a enriching experience.

The very first class we were given constituted a practical and brainstorming activity through which we were able to foresee how our main object - Meaning - would be regarded as and studied. The professor set and later distributed a series of images derived from all sorts of public genres of discourse: fashion magazines, photo books, advertising portraits and cetera. Utterly, all of us students were asked to make up groups, pick up one of the aforementioned images and brainstorm on the which values and/or mindsets were conveyed by them.

My group chose to analyze a restaurant advertising portrait, more specifically a marketing piece of photoshoot for Madero - a middle bourgeoisie directed, low-key cooled-off type of snack bar/*à la carte* restaurant. The picture had a voluptuous cheese-burger food-styled to look impeccable, with a a saying that went [in bold golden caps lock letters]: "Tasty and healthy", alongside a chef at the bottom of the portrait. Firstly, we noticed how the font and layout made it all look like a film billboard - the star there being the burger. Considering the current trend for niche-market-health-obsessed positions but at the same time, the glamourization of junk food that comes way beyond this last trend in time, it was supposed to be a consubstantiation of the best of both worlds.

After that, we pointed out how the chef figure was there probably to portray authority[2] in the cooking matter, assuring the buyer of the greatness and refinement of Madero's healthy burger in opposition to any *not-gourmet* and indeed *fast* fast-food out there.   Utterly we got to hear what the other groups in the classroom had to say about what they thought their chosen image conveyed.

All in all, it striked me as an extremely enriching discussion to *set the pace* on how the discussions shall be driven and how are we supposed to look at any text - verbal, non-verbal, multi-modal type texts and cetera: trying to perceive the final ideological goals the text seem to have and what went in to set such goals to the final reader.

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[2] Specially now - with cooking reality tv shows such as Masterchef becoming more and more mainstream and the concept *gourmet cuisine* becoming one of the many phenomena in the making of people's reification of consciousness at our present cultural moment.