

'A valuable addition to the discourse analysis literature in English, this book is a much-needed introduction to the enunciative pragmatics developed by French poststructuralists and an application of it in analysis of intellectual and academic discourse.'

— Norman Fairclough, *Lancaster University, UK*

'Johannes Angermuller is one of the few authors I know who has evolved a robust model of "theory into practice" for applying poststructuralist discourse analysis to written texts. He resolves the problem of a text's interpretive authority by analyzing the 'markers of enunciation' readers follow in order to grasp the competing voices within any text. This is ground-breaking work in the field of discourse analysis.'

— Judith Baxter, *Aston University, UK*

French thinkers, such as Lacan, Althusser, Foucault and Derrida, have been widely perceived as theorists of the linguistic turn. Yet, the linguistic and semiotic traditions which informed the theoretical imagination of these theorists so decisively have hardly been accounted for outside French linguistics. This book presents past and present developments in French discourse analysis, while also paying special attention to the development of enunciative pragmatics, which hinges on the discursive construction of subjectivity. Five textual fragments by these theorists, all written around 1966 when the controversy over structuralism was at its height, are analyzed in detail in relation to the question of how theoretical texts are used in discourse where one constantly needs to define one's position vis-à-vis others. The book will be valuable to students, researchers and practitioners within discourse analysis, pragmatics, linguistics and semiotics, as well as all those interested in the analysis of the social production of meaning.

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Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis

Johannes Angermuller

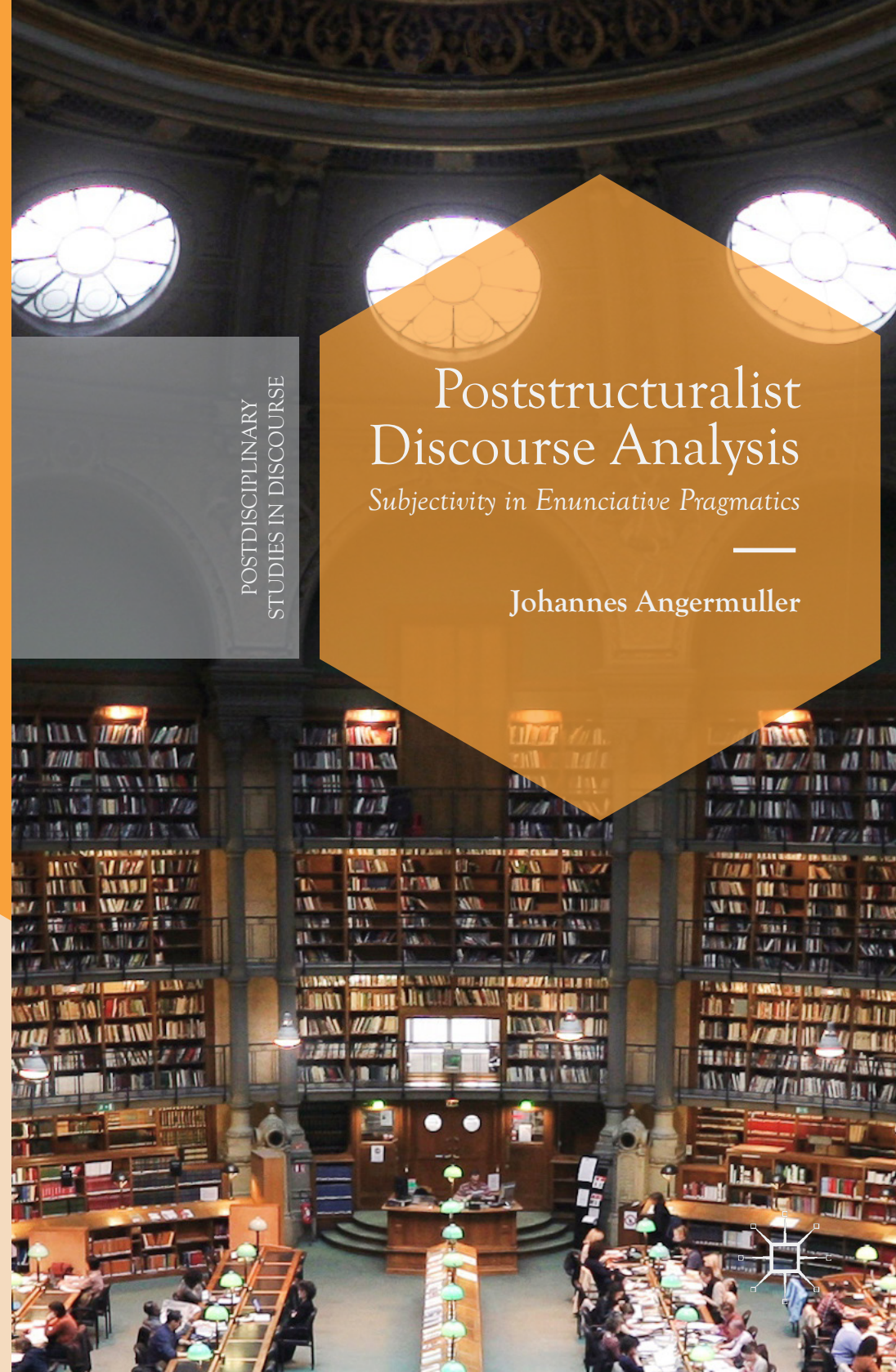


POSTDISCIPLINARY
STUDIES IN DISCOURSE

Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis

Subjectivity in Enunciative Pragmatics

Johannes Angermuller





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The cover picture represents the interior of the old National Library of France (BNF), where a great deal of poststructuralist discourse was produced until the 1980s.

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1

Introduction: Poststructuralism and Enunciative Pragmatics

The controversy over structuralism reached its peak around 1966–7, when a new generation of French theorists, including Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, came onto the intellectual scene. Inspired by Marxism and psychoanalysis, these intellectuals are today known for their critical epistemologies that point to the symbolic constitution of the subject and insist on the constitutive role of language in society. Yet while these theorists have been greeted as representatives of the linguistic turn in the social sciences and humanities, the linguistic and semiotic traditions themselves, which have so decisively stimulated the imagination of the interdisciplinary theoretical debate, are hardly known outside a rather restricted circle of specialists. Not surprisingly, these thinkers have often been perceived as sweeping theorists of language in society, but of rather limited help when it comes to analyzing linguistic and semiotic texts.

By making key canonical texts from French Theory the object of rigorous linguistic scrutiny, *Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis* attempts to bridge this gap and to present discourse analysis as it has developed in France since the late 1960s, notably enunciative pragmatics, also known as the linguistics of enunciation (*énonciation*). For some linguists, ‘enunciation’ refers to fundamental operations of language as a grammatical system (for example in Culioli), whereas for others it designates the pragmatic dimension of language use. Generally speaking, enunciative pragmatics asks how utterances (*énoncés*) mobilize sources and voices, speakers and points of view, locutors and enunciators at the moment of enunciation. Following Benveniste’s famous definition of enunciation as the ‘enactment of language through an act of individual usage’ (Benveniste 1974: 80),¹ enunciative pragmatics asks how linguistic expressions, markers, traces and shifters (*marqueurs*,

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repères, indices énonciatifs ...) reflect those who speak in a the context of enunciation. In line with the pragmatic turn in French linguistics since the late 1970s, the growing interest in the question of enunciation has contributed to a new enunciative strand in pragmatics which has not only helped to direct attention to questions of subjectivity, context and communication but also to the sociohistorical dimensions of discourse more generally, as can be seen in Foucault's project for an 'enunciative discourse analysis' (1969: 143[123])² and Maingueneau's enunciative-pragmatic work on genre and scenography (1993). One might also think of the often overlooked theorizations of enunciation in Deleuze/Guattari (1980), Lyotard (1988) and some of Lacan's seminars of the 1960s and 1970s (for example 1973).

As there is no direct English equivalent of *énonciation*, translations have often failed to render the rich tradition of pragmatics that has characterized French linguistics in the post-war period. While in English 'enunciation' usually means the articulation of speech, especially in a clear and distinct way, the linguistic term *énonciation* designates linguistic activity more generally. The correlate of *énonciation* is *énoncé*, that is a specific semiotic realization of a communicative act, which often has the form of a phrase. In English, *énonciation* and *énoncé* are not easily distinguished as both are sometimes interchangeably translated by 'utterance.' In the following, I will use 'utterance' in the sense of *énoncé* and take 'enunciation' to be the equivalent of *énonciation*. Much more could be said about the surprisingly difficult task of translating linguistic terminology from French into English, and vice versa. Suffice it to say that with all these terms—that is *énonciation*: the act or process of using language; *énoncé*: the utterance as a product of this process; *énoncer*: utter, say, voice, speak; *énonciatif*: communicative, pragmatic, discursive, indexical, subjective; *énonciateur*: speaker, voice, source, perspective—all deriving from the common root *énonc-*, a new and distinctive tradition has formed, that is enunciative pragmatics, which accounts for the construction of subjectivity in the many voices of discourse.

Having emerged from structuralist linguistics and semiotics, enunciative pragmatics connects to various disciplinary fields and traditions at the crossroads of language and society (Angermuller et al. 2014). One can cite the philosophy of language as seen in the later work of Wittgenstein (1997), who criticizes the idea of pure language and points out that we cannot use language without engaging in some sort of creative action. With an interest in the question of how, in what modalities and under what circumstances utterances are produced, enunciative pragmatics follows

Austin's idea (1962) that utterances, whether oral or written, reflect speech acts produced by somebody with a specific illocutionary force. Moreover, for qualitative social scientists, enunciative pragmatics adheres to the idea that language is always tied up with practices in which social identities, relationships and subjectivities are constituted. Thus, one can ask how individuals are constructed by means of 'membership categorization devices' and defined as social beings in turn-taking sequences (Sacks 1986) or how polyphonic instances such as animator, principal and author are orchestrated in the interactive situation (Goffman 1981). Yet, unlike actor-centered strands in social research, which place emphasis on observable social practices in their setting, enunciative pragmatics does not claim to have immediate access to the practice of using language. Enunciative pragmatics deals with written or spoken utterances circulating in a discursive community rather than with meaning-producing subjects and situated practices.

Enunciative pragmatics belongs to the universe of linguistic pragmatics. As a subfield of linguistics, pragmatics catalogues linguistic expressions that reflect the use of utterances by somebody 'here' and 'now'. A range of linguistic phenomena, such as deixis, presupposition, argumentation, implicatures and negation, testify to how this activity is linguistically encoded. Here, language serves to construct relationships, as has been argued by politeness theorists who point to the desire in any communicative action to save or improve one's face (Brown and Levinson 1987), like the research on expressing stance, style and identity. In a systematic way, the pragmatic idea of language as social action was theorized in the Systemic-Functional Linguistics of Halliday (1978) which, crucially, has contributed to social semiotics (Hodge and Kress 1988; Leeuwen 2005), appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1992). From this perspective, the individual needs to make certain linguistic choices, given the communicative functions to be fulfilled in a social situation (see also the functional pragmatics of Ehlich 2007).

The major features of enunciative pragmatics vis-à-vis these other strands in linguistic pragmatics may be summarized as follows: (1) an emphasis on the opaque materiality of (mostly written) texts whose meaning cannot be read from the surface; (2) the break with meaningful experience and subjective interpretation through an analytical practice which highlights the formal linguistic markers of enunciation (for example *I*, *but*, *not* ...); (3) a preference for the non-subjectivist study of discursive subjectivity over more semantic, hermeneutic or content-related approaches.

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Enunciative pragmatics prolongs the anti-humanist intellectual heritage of structuralism and poststructuralism and breaks with subjectivist conceptions of meaning-making. The subject is not a source of meaning; rather, as Bakhtin (1963) argues, it is a product of the many voices staged by the utterances of a discourse. At the same time, enunciative pragmatics offers a wealth of analytical tools to account for the positions subjects occupy in discourse. Therefore, the methodology of enunciative pragmatics allows us to analyze how, in the act of reading and writing, utterances are contextualized with respect to who speaks, when and where. Inspired by the critique of the sovereign subject in Foucault (1969), it shows how subjectivity is constructed in a multitude of voices, sources and speakers and tied to the linguistic forms and formal markers which organize the enunciation.

It should now be clear that the title of this book—*Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis*—refers not only to a theoretical discourse which is sometimes labeled ‘poststructuralist’ (even though this label is hardly known in France, see my sociohistorical account of French intellectuals in France, Angermüller 2015). Following the critical constructivist spirit that has come to pervade sociolinguistics, conversation analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (Baxter’s *Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis* can be cited as an example, 2003), it also outlines enunciative pragmatics as a poststructuralist framework which breaks with the static, homogenizing and abstract approaches to language one commonly associates with structuralism. Yet, while both French Theory and enunciative pragmatics have emerged as a reaction to structuralism, there has been little exchange between them, the first having its base in the literary and cultural field and the interpretive social sciences, the latter in French linguistics.

In responding to the demand for this long overdue encounter, this book delineates the contours of a poststructuralist discourse analysis. In this view, discourse presents itself as an open and dynamic terrain of protean perspectives and nested voices in which the discourse participants are confronted with the difficult practical task of defining their place in discourse. Discourse is considered to be a linguistically encoded practice of positioning oneself and others and creating discursive relationships with others within a play of polyphonic voices. As opposed to a structuralist vision of a grand discourse from above, we will zoom in to the level of small textual passages and discover the complex polyphonic play of voices staged by the utterances of discourse. The objective is to account for the traces the subject leaves in its utterances—a subject which must not be confounded with a

constituted origin or source of meaning (that is an ‘author’ or ‘actor’) but which should rather be seen as a set of shifting and unstable places and positions which the discourse participants process as they enter discourse. Yet even though this monograph deals with texts, one must not forget that intellectual discourse as a positioning practice is not only linguistically but also socially constrained. If it catalogues the linguistic resources through which the discourse participants negotiate their positions in intellectual discourse, the social, institutional and political resources mobilized in the positioning practices of their field have been accounted for elsewhere (Angermüller 2015).

With the discourse analysis techniques of enunciative pragmatics, it aims to reveal the gaps and fissures, the bugs and glitches, the conflicts and antagonisms in discourse. Thus, *Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis* can be said to be directed against three theoretical adversaries: the humanist, who believes in autonomous subjects as the source and origin of social and linguistic activity; the realist, who believes in objective realities that exist independently of discourse; and the hermeneuticist, who believes in a world of transparent and homogeneous meaning. It is critical of silencing the voice of the Other, of policing resistant practices and controlling disobedient knowledge, of homogenizing the social through representations of ‘the’ society, ‘the’ culture or ‘the’ discourse.

This book consists of four parts. To map the evolution of discourse analysis in France, Chapter 2 will conduct a detailed discussion of the enunciative-pragmatic turn in French linguistics. Then, in Chapter 3, I will sketch out a poststructuralist methodology in discourse research which investigates the ways in which a written text refers to its context. In Chapter 4, I will apply the discourse analytical instruments to a sample of key theoretical texts from around 1966 (Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, Derrida, Sollers), which will reveal the subtle play of voices and references via which these theorists negotiate their positions in discourse. In the conclusion, I will plead for ongoing critical reflection on the subject by taking into consideration our own symbolic practices when we read, speak and write.

In bridging pragmatics and poststructuralism, this monograph addresses all those who are interested in reconciling discourse theory with discourse analysis. By radicalizing the critical constructivist tendencies in sociolinguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, it responds to a need of rigorous analytical instruments for analyzing language in its social dimensions. Even though the book is firmly rooted in linguistics, one does not have to be a linguist to adopt its frame of analysis. Philosophers of language may be interested to see how to account for

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discourse by departing from utterances as the smallest units of analysis. Literary critics can find inspiration in an approach that accounts for the question of auctoriality and intertextuality. Cultural analysts will observe the creative appropriation of subject positions in a polyphonic play of voices. And social scientists will discover how social order and agency are constructed and represented through the textual markers of polyphony. Yet, just as with any other text, the meaning of this text, too, needs to be constructed by readers coming from a discursive community whose background is more or less out of reach, at least for the originator of this text.

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