UNIT 1

Text as a Connected Discourse

Many books offer lengthy discussions about proving or disproving theories. Despite being extensive and tedious, the writings in those books remain coherent. On the other hand, other books like recipe books and manuals contain instructional writings. They present procedures and steps. The long and comprehensive discussions as well as the instructional writings are referred to as discourse.

Objectives

- Identify the nature and purpose of a discourse.
- Differentiate between the types of discourses.
- Identify and differentiate between the types of literary discourses.
- Distinguish between literary and academic discourses.

Learn about It!

I. Definition and Purposes of a Discourse

- A discourse is a formal and often lengthy discussion of a topic, where concepts and insights are arranged in an organized and logical manner. Also, it refers to the way how language is used to convey meanings or to propel action or provoke a specific response. It is often associated with speech, but it may also be written. It usually serves as a writer’s or a scholar’s analysis of a concept or theory proposed by another writer.
- Below are the purposes of a discourse.
  1. To inform – A discourse that aims to inform provides a descriptive and comprehensive discussion on the topic. It points out what one should know about a topic or subject.
  2. To persuade – A discourse that aims to persuade tries to convince the readers that the proposed claim or solution is better than any other proposal.
  3. To entertain – A discourse that aims to amuse provides a source of entertainment for its readers.
• Analyzing a discourse is usually contextual. The reader tries to consider several factors that may have influenced the writer to make certain claims. Those factors explain the author's biases, philosophy, and educational and professional backgrounds, among others. Below are three of those factors.
  1. **Culture** – The beliefs, customs, attitudes, language, and other things that define culture may influence the author’s perspective on several issues. Knowing about the culture the author belongs to, the reader may understand his or her biases.
  2. **Social environment** – The author's physical surroundings and social relationships, as well as the culture of the time may have influenced his or her writing. For instance, during the early decades of the 20th century, most writers produced works that were classified as “modern” because of its distinct feature: stream of consciousness.
  3. **Experiences** – Personal accounts or first-hand experience of events, though subjective, establish credibility and reliability of information presented in any discourse.

II. **Types of Discourse**

• **Argumentation** – In this type of discourse, the writer aims to persuade the audience or readers. He or she presents valid claims or counterclaims, each supported by evidence, to prove a point. In proving claims, the writer presents studies, experts' opinions, and statistical data, among others. Moreover, an argumentative discourse should appeal to logic or reason instead of emotion.

**Example:**

*A recent study confirmed that playing video games may cause children to become violent. However, this is only true for some children. Dr. Charlotte Cooper and Dr. Markey Vitasa of ABC University explained that children who manifest a combination of three personality traits—high neuroticism, disagreeableness, and low levels of conscientiousness—are more likely to be aggressive toward others after playing video games.*

In order to convince the readers, the author of the passage mentioned a study to support his or her claim about video games. The author did not simply state that video games may cause children to become violent; he or she proved it by citing two experts.

• **Description** – This type of discourse is based on the main impression of the author about the topic or subject. His or her impression is influenced by prior knowledge, culture, environment, and experiences, among others. As the writer describes his or her observations, it triggers sensory images among readers.
Example:
When I first saw my childhood friend Margarette, she was about my younger sister Viv’s height. Her hair was curly and dark, and her skin was pale. But what really struck me when I first saw her was her big round blue eyes.

Through the author’s description, the reader can infer what the person Margarette looks like.

- **Exposition** – This aims to inform, clarify, and explain a phenomenon. It defines what something is and provides an in-depth discussion about topics that are usually less explored. Moreover, it gives reader instructions on how something is done.

Example:
*How to set up an email account*
1. Choose the web host.
2. Look for the sign up button. Click it.
3. Provide the required information.
4. Think of a unique username and a password. *(Tip: For the password, type in uppercase or add characters.)*
5. Start using the newly setup email account.

The passage gives instructions on how to set up an email account. Some examples of an exposition may be found in some magazine articles or editorials, which usually include life hacks.

- **Narration** – This type of discourse is like storytelling. It recalls events chronologically. It is told in the first, second, or third person point of view. Moreover, its structure may be linear or nonlinear. A **linear structure** follows a typical format: beginning, middle, end; while a **nonlinear structure** may start from the end or in the middle.

Example:
*I remember the time when I learned how to swim. I was only eight years old and afraid to bathe in a pool. I envied the kids who played with inflatable balls and animals. Whenever my family would visit the clubhouse, I would sit beside the pool and never really jump in to join them. A summer camp opened in our neighborhood, and my mom thought of enrolling my brother and me in a swimming class. Two days before the class started, my mom gave me a pep talk; that made me realize that I did not want to miss out the fun just because I was afraid.*

The passage conveys a person’s experience about learning how to swim. The events are told chronologically, and the story is told in the first person point of view.
III. Literary Discourse

- A literary discourse is generally focused on creative works, including nonfiction. Also, it includes texts that are used strictly for business communication. The following are the three types of literary discourse:

1. **Poetic** – This type of discourse is commonly found in creative works like poems, novels, short stories, and plays. It focuses on how language is used to form themes and convey ideologies. Some meanings in creative works are explicit, while some are implied, especially in poems. Ordinary words, especially those used in a poem, are made appealing through sound patterns.

   **Example:**

   *The Road Not Taken (An Excerpt)*

   *By Robert Frost*

   I shall be telling this with a sigh
   Somewhere ages and ages hence:
   Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
   I took the one less traveled by,
   And that has made all the difference.

   In the text, the author used the roads as a metaphor for making life decisions. Also, notice that the last words in the poem rhyme: *sigh*, *I*, and *by; hence* and *difference*.

2. **Expressive** – This type of discourse is commonly found in academic journals, letters, diaries, and blogs. It is a personal narrative and is typically written in the first person point of view. In the process, the writer reveals something about his or her identity. In literary terms, expressive discourses are referred to as creative nonfiction.

   **Example:**

   *The Diary of a Young Girl (An Excerpt)*

   *By Anne Frank*

   Sunday, 21 June 1942

   Everyone at school is waiting to hear what happens next. Who will move up a class, and who will stay down? We’re all trying to guess! I think my girlfriends and I will be OK, though we’ll have to wait patiently to find out. Most of my teachers like me, but old Mr Keesing gets angry with me because I often talk too much! He made me do some extra homework and write about ‘Someone Who Talks Too Much.’
Based on the passage, the writer is describing what she felt while waiting for the big announcement in school. She describes what she is like in school—talkative—and how sociable she is as most of her teachers like her.

3. **Transactional** – This type of discourse is commonly found in instructional materials, advertisements, and editorial articles, among others. It is directive in nature as it provides detailed information on how something is done or achieved. Moreover, it encourages the reader to do something or to take action.

**Example:**

*How to Cook Chicken Tinola*

**Ingredients:**
- 1/2 kg chicken wings
- 1 red onion, peeled and sliced
- 1 clove of garlic, peeled and crushed
- 1 small ginger, peeled and julienned
- 1 small green papaya, peeled and cut into wedges
- 1-2 stalks of malunggay
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of pepper
- 3-4 cups of water

**Procedure:**
1. Prepare all the ingredients.
5. Add the papaya. Simmer until the chicken becomes tender.
6. Add the malunggay leaves.
7. Add salt and pepper to taste.
8. Serve and enjoy.

The recipe above shows the instructions in cooking chicken tinola. It is a list that shows the step-by-step detail in cooking the dish.
IV. Academic Discourse

- An academic discourse is expository or argumentative in nature. Sometimes, it presents an individual's insights regarding a concept or method in a scholarly way.

- Unlike other discourses, an academic discourse uses formal language and the third person point of view; it maintains an objective tone. It avoids using figures of speech and idiomatic expressions, including biased or stereotyped and sexist language. Its examples include essays, journals, book reviews, synthesis, literature review, and research, among others.

Example:

*Medea* is portrayed as an empowered woman in the Euripides’ play. It is a far cry from how women were viewed and represented in the Ancient Greece. Women then were mainly portrayed as in charge of producing children, taking care of them, and being a mistress of the household. Medea's character defies and challenges conformities. Her deeds, though evil in nature, stem from the strength of her mind... Medea, although elicits pity from the audience during the first part of the play as an abandoned wife and mother, in the end, is feared and abhorred as she proves to be aware of how wicked her deeds are and yet would not have it the other way around: “I understand what evil I am about to do but my wrath is stronger even than my thoughts...” (Euripides 27).

The text is a review of Euripides’ famous play *Medea*. The critic, although stating his or her insights of the play, writes in an objective tone, using the third person point of view. Moreover, the review does not use a figure of speech or idiomatic expression to describe, elaborate, or prove a point.

- Structures or formats of academic discourses may vary depending on the approved or recommended style guide to use. Below is a general format.
  1. **Introduction** – In this part, the writer states the significance of the topic and the issues that need to be addressed. Also, the writer mentions the objectives of the discourse and how it may be beneficial or detrimental.
  2. **Body** – In this part, the writer discusses the methods of gathering information. He or she then presents the findings and interprets them. Moreover, he or she formulates arguments and supports them with evidence.
  3. **Conclusion** – In this part, the writer reiterates the claims and asserts his or her stand. He or she may include insights and recommendations for further studies.
Learning Tasks

Task 1: Read and analyze Abraham Lincoln’s *Gettysburg Address*. Identify the purpose of the discourse.

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Task 2: Identify what kind of discourse is presented in Texts 1 and 2. Justify your answer by stating the characteristics of each text.

Text 1:
Good day! I apologized for the delayed response. The art event will be held on the 16th of July. To get to the venue, turn left from the mall. You will see a drugstore in the corner. Turn right after two blocks. You will find a low-rise building beside a bank. Go inside and inform the receptionist that you are one of the participants. Do not forget to bring a proof of identification. The venue is located on the third floor.

Text 2:
Hi, Mom! Sorry I only checked my email now. It has been crazy lately. I have been working on several course requirements since last week. How are you and Dad? Please tell him I said hi and I miss him. Anyway, I got accepted for internship in an accounting firm. Can you believe it? Finally! My internship starts this October. I will let you know about the details soon.
Task 3: Read Mark Twain's famous essay “Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses.” (The essay is available online.) After reading the essay, explain how it is an academic discourse and not a literary discourse, or vice versa. Support your claims by citing lines from the essay.

Examples

Questions
1. A/An ________ refers to the way how language is used to convey meanings or elicit a specific response.
2. Which of the following is not true about the poetic discourse?
   a. It is used in creative works like poems, novels, and short stories.
   b. It is used in memoirs, diaries, and academic essays.
   c. It uses figures of speech and/or idiomatic expressions.
   d. It uses sound patterns.
3. Gerard would like to write about his recent trip to New Zealand. Which of the following discourses he would most likely engage in?
   a. narration and description
   b. description and argumentation
   c. exposition and description
   d. argumentation and narration

Answers
1. Discourse.
   Explanation:
   A discourse refers to the way how language is used to convey meanings or to propel action or provoke a specific response
2. b. It is used in memoirs, diaries, and academic essays.
   Explanation:
   This statement describes the expressive discourse.
3. a. narration and description
   Explanation:
   Gerard would most likely engage in narration and description. He describes the places he visited in New Zealand, the people he met, or the food he ate. He relates what he has done during his first day until the day he left the country.
Wrap Up

References


