Global Spectrum of Research and Humanities
ISSN: 3007-9136
Vol. 3 No. 4 (2026): Winter

The Role of Communication in the Formation of Discourse

Elnaz Aliyeva

Doctor of Philosophy in Philology, *Department of English Language and Translation, Nakhchivan State University, Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan*

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4172-4748

© 2026 Elnaz Aliyeva. This is an open-access article published in *Global Spectrum of Research and Humanities (GSRH)*. Licensed under **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)** — free to share, adapt and use commercially, with attribution.

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

DOI: https://doi.org/10.69760/gsrh.0260304001

Abstract

This article examines the role of communication in the formation of discourse, focusing on the relationships among linguistic form, communicative purpose, context, and participant roles. It adopts a descriptive conceptual approach, drawing on foundational scholarship and recent studies of interaction and digital discourse and using constructed examples to clarify distinctions rather than report empirical findings. The discussion addresses three questions: how discourse differs from its textual record, how communicative functions operate within discourse, and how addressee relationships shape spoken, written, and literary communication. The analysis proposes that discourse is best understood as situated meaning-making rather than as either an isolated text or the simple transmission of information. Informative, regulatory, expressive, and phatic functions are treated as overlapping analytical categories, while monologue and dialogue are distinguished by their organization of participation rather than by the presence or absence of communication. Particular attention is given to the difference between an addressee and a person mentioned in an utterance, and to the layered audiences of literary discourse. The article concludes that communication provides an organizing basis for discourse analysis when linguistic choices are examined alongside purpose, audience, medium, and context. Its contribution is a compact conceptual framework for interpreting these relationships, with the limitations of a non-empirical study explicitly acknowledged.

Keywords: *discourse; communication; communicative functions; context; participant roles; text analysis*

1. Introduction

Discourse is a central concept in linguistics, yet its scope varies across theoretical traditions. Some approaches foreground the organization of connected language, whereas others emphasize language as social action or examine the cognitive conditions of interpretation. These differences need not make the concept unusable. They indicate that discourse can be studied at several related levels: linguistic organization, communicative activity, and the social circumstances in which meaning is produced and interpreted. Brown and Yule (1983) situate discourse analysis in the study of language in use, a perspective that helps connect these levels without reducing discourse to sentence structure. The question is not

only how expressions are connected, but also what participants accomplish through those connections.

The present article examines communication as an organizing basis for discourse. Its central argument is that linguistic forms become interpretable as discourse through their relationship to purposes, participants, and contexts. This does not mean that communication and discourse are interchangeable terms. Communication may involve gesture, images, or other resources, while the discussion here concentrates on language-mediated discourse. Nor does discourse require a visible reply: a written announcement or a literary narrative may address recipients who are absent at the moment of production.

The article addresses three questions. How should discourse be distinguished from the text through which it is studied? How do communicative functions contribute to discourse organization? How do changing participant roles affect the interpretation of monologue, dialogue, and literary discourse? Clarifying these questions helps avoid several problematic assumptions: that speech always primarily transmits information, that writing lacks interactional orientation, and that the person mentioned in an utterance is necessarily its addressee.

2. Conceptual Approach and Scope

This is a conceptual article based on descriptive conceptual analysis. It does not report interviews, a corpus investigation, an experiment, or a systematic literature review. Selected foundational works are used to frame distinctions relevant to the argument. Harris (1952) provides a point of reference for analysis beyond the individual sentence; Fairclough (2003) connects textual analysis with social research; van Dijk (2008) foregrounds the relationship between discourse and context; and Mammadov (2018) brings structural, functional, and cognitive perspectives into the study of text and discourse.

The discussion proceeds through conceptual comparison and illustrative reasoning. It first distinguishes linguistic records from situated communicative events, then examines communicative functions and participant configurations. The brief examples are constructed for explanation and are not collected observations. Accordingly, the conclusions are analytical propositions rather than empirically validated findings about the frequency or distribution of particular discourse practices.

The sources provide a selective foundation rather than comprehensive coverage of discourse theory. The article's contribution lies in making the relationship between communication and discourse more explicit and internally consistent. It does not propose a universal taxonomy or claim that one analytical perspective can replace all others. The expanded discussion combines foundational accounts of speech acts, language functions, cohesion, and participation with five journal studies published in 2020–2021. These studies were selected for their direct relevance to sequential organization, expressive action, and mediated interaction. Their findings are discussed as evidence from their respective settings, not as data collected for the present article.

3. Communication, Text, and Discourse

3.1. Textual Organization and Situated Meaning

Harris's (1952) work establishes the relevance of examining connected speech and writing beyond sentence-level description. This concern remains important because discourse is organized through relations among utterances, not simply through isolated grammatical

structures. Nevertheless, identifying linguistic patterns and explaining their communicative significance are different analytical tasks. A repeated expression may connect parts of a text, but understanding its purpose also requires attention to the situation in which it occurs. Halliday and Hasan (1976) provide a complementary account of cohesion, including grammatical and lexical resources that establish relations within texts. Cohesion, however, should not be treated as a sufficient test of communicative coherence. Readers may infer a meaningful relationship where an explicit connector is absent, while a grammatically connected passage may remain difficult to interpret without contextual knowledge.

For the purposes of this article, text refers to the linguistic material available for analysis, while discourse refers to language considered in relation to its production, interpretation, and social use. This is a working distinction, not a claim that all discourse traditions define the terms identically. Fairclough's (2003) socially oriented textual analysis supports examining how linguistic choices relate to wider practices. Van Dijk's (2008) account of context also makes participants' understandings relevant to explaining discourse.

Consider the constructed utterance, “The door is open.” Its wording may remain unchanged while its communicative role varies. It can inform a person about a room, indirectly request that someone close the door, or reassure a visitor that entry is welcome. The linguistic expression alone does not establish which interpretation is appropriate. Participants must relate it to their activity, prior interaction, and expectations. Communication therefore contributes to discourse formation through interpretation as well as production. Grice (1975) offers a basis for explaining how hearers infer meanings that exceed what is explicitly said. In the example, interpreting a request requires an inference about why this particular observation is relevant at this particular moment. Such an inference is context-sensitive and may fail if participants do not share the assumptions on which it depends.

3.2. Spoken Records and Written Communication

Transcribing speech changes its representation, but it does not turn the original event into an instance of writing. A transcript is a record of spoken interaction. Depending on its conventions, it may preserve pauses, overlap, emphasis, and other relevant features, or omit them. Analysis should therefore distinguish the communicative event from the representation used as evidence. A transcript containing only words may support some questions while leaving others unresolved.

Written texts likewise participate in communication. Their readers may be distant, anonymous, or encountered only later, but writers can still anticipate readers' knowledge and possible responses. A public notice, for example, selects information and wording in relation to an expected audience. The absence of immediate turn-taking does not remove this orientation. Mammadov's (2018) treatment of text and discourse across different genres provides a useful background for considering such relationships without restricting discourse to face-to-face speech.

4. Communicative Functions and Discourse Organization

4.1. Four Overlapping Functions

The original problem can be clarified by distinguishing four broad functions: informative, regulatory, expressive, and phatic. These categories are used here as a practical heuristic rather than an exhaustive classification. Informative communication contributes knowledge or explanations. Regulatory communication seeks to influence conduct, decisions, or further speech. Expressive communication conveys an attitude or emotional position. Phatic

communication establishes, maintains, or closes contact between participants. The distinction is informed by Jakobson's (1960) account of language functions, particularly orientation toward context, addresser, addressee, and contact. It is deliberately narrower than his model, which also includes metalingual and poetic functions. The four categories used here therefore organize the present discussion rather than replace a broader theory of language functions.

A single utterance may perform several functions. In a constructed classroom example, “I am pleased with your progress; please revise the final paragraph” expresses an evaluation while directing further action. A greeting followed by a question may maintain social contact and open an exchange of information. Consequently, identifying one dominant function should not obscure additional functions operating in the same turn or passage. Austin (1975) and Searle (1969) establish the importance of examining utterances as actions, including promising, requesting, and asserting. Their work also cautions against identifying an action solely through sentence form. An interrogative can function as a request, and a declarative can perform more than a description. The relevant issue is how form, circumstances, and conventions support the action being performed.

Communicative purpose is also not exhausted by the speaker's intention. A recipient may interpret an intended suggestion as criticism or treat an apparently factual statement as a request. Analysis should therefore distinguish intended purpose, available linguistic cues, and displayed interpretation where evidence permits. This distinction avoids assuming that communication succeeds merely because an utterance has been produced. Empirical support for multifunctionality comes from Ogiermann and Bella (2021), whose analysis of pandemic closure signs in Athens and London examines greetings, apologies, thanks, and wishes as relational work. Their findings show how public writing can combine practical information with attempts to maintain relationships. The study supports distinguishing the informational content of a sign from the social work performed through its expressive features.

4.2. Functions, Topics, and Genres

Communicative function, subject matter, and genre provide different bases for classification. Political, religious, and military discourse are not subdivisions of a single political topic. They identify domains of activity that may overlap in particular situations. A genre, such as a lecture or an interview, organizes expectations about how communication proceeds. A function concerns what an utterance or sequence accomplishes within that activity.

These dimensions can combine in different ways. A political interview may include informative explanations, regulatory appeals, expressive evaluations, and phatic openings. Conversely, a regulatory function can occur in a classroom, a workplace, or a family conversation. Classifying an entire text solely by one speech act therefore risks overlooking its internal variation. The more useful question is how functions are distributed and connected within a particular communicative activity.

Function can change as discourse develops. An exchange may begin with a greeting, move to a request, introduce an explanation, and end with thanks. Such shifts contribute to its organization. They also show why discourse cannot be adequately characterized by topic alone: participants may discuss the same subject while performing different actions and negotiating different relationships. Kendrick et al. (2020), drawing on conversational data from twelve languages, identify recurrent patterns of sequence organization while also recognizing cultural variation in their use. This evidence strengthens the case for analyzing communicative actions in relation to preceding and following actions. A question creates expectations for a response, but the response may also contest the question or redirect the activity. Sequence and function therefore need to be examined together.

5. Participant Roles in Dialogue and Monologue

5.1. Speakers, Addressees, and Referents

The speaker is the producer of a spoken utterance, while the addressee is the person or group to whom it is directed. A referent is someone or something mentioned. These roles must be distinguished. If one colleague tells another, “The manager has changed the schedule,” the manager is the referent, whereas the colleague is the addressee. Mentioning a third person does not automatically direct the utterance to that person.

Participation may nevertheless be more complex than a two-person exchange. A statement directed to one individual can also be designed for others who are present. In a classroom, a teacher's response to one student may provide an explanation for the whole group. Analysis should examine available evidence of address, including names, pronouns, wording, turn allocation, and the activity itself, rather than infer the audience from grammatical person alone. Goffman (1981) provides a more differentiated view of participation than a simple speaker–hearer pair allows. His account makes it useful to distinguish addressed recipients from other participants and to consider shifts in footing. For the present argument, this means that audience configuration can change within one exchange even when the physical participants remain the same.

5.2. Monologue and Literary Address

Monologue differs from dialogue in the organization of turns, but it is not necessarily non-interactive in purpose. A lecturer may speak for an extended period while anticipating confusion, acknowledging alternative views, or inviting later questions. The immediate distribution of speaking rights is relatively one-sided, yet the discourse remains oriented toward recipients. Similarly, a written argument can respond to earlier positions without directly exchanging turns with its readers.

Literary discourse adds further layers. An author communicates through a work; a narrator presents a story; and characters may address one another within it. These levels should not be collapsed. A character's words can be directed to another character while also becoming available to the reader as part of the narrative. The reader's access to the words does not make the reader their direct addressee within the fictional situation.

Fictional dialogue is also a crafted representation of interaction rather than a transparent record of ordinary conversation. It can support analysis of characterization, narrative perspective, or represented communication, but claims about everyday speech require appropriate evidence. Changes between narration and dialogue may alter the local participant configuration without eliminating the broader communicative relationship established by the literary work.

5.3. Digital Mediation and the Organization of Communication

Digital interaction makes the relationship between medium and discourse especially visible. Seuren et al. (2021) examine latency in video consultations and show how transmission delays can generate silences and overlapping talk that participants must manage. A delay is not simply external interference with an otherwise unchanged conversation: it affects the timing through which participants recognize opportunities to speak. Interpretation therefore depends partly on what the communication system makes available to each participant.

Written digital exchanges also challenge the assumption that dialogue consists of a single linear sequence. Virtanen et al. (2021) analyze Finnish group messaging and describe

practices for managing simultaneous lines of talk, including linguistic devices and platform-provided reply marking. A message can respond to an earlier contribution even when other messages intervene. Its sequential position on the screen and its position within a particular exchange may consequently differ. Analysts need to establish which contribution is being answered before assigning communicative function.

Tanskanen (2021) examines lexical cohesion across a YouTube video and its comments, showing how connections can extend across modes and levels of interaction. This finding complements traditional work on textual cohesion while drawing attention to the broader communicative environment in which links are established. It does not imply that every comment thread is coherent. Instead, it demonstrates that apparent fragmentation does not, by itself, establish the absence of discourse organization.

Together, these studies indicate that communication is shaped by temporal, relational, and technical conditions. The implication proposed here is to treat medium as part of discourse analysis whenever it affects access, sequence, or interpretation. Face-to-face turn-taking should not be imposed unchanged on messaging, just as features of one platform should not be generalized automatically to all digital communication. This extends the article's central argument while retaining a clear distinction between the cited empirical findings and the conceptual synthesis offered here.

6. Analytical Implications and Limitations

The preceding distinctions suggest a compact approach to examining discourse: establish the communicative activity, identify participants and audiences, interpret the functions of particular passages, and relate linguistic choices to the unfolding context. This sequence is a proposed analytical aid, not a tested coding instrument. Its value lies in preventing text, purpose, and participation from being treated as independent or interchangeable objects.

The approach also requires restraint. An analyst cannot infer every intention or contextual assumption from wording alone. When recordings, contextual documentation, or recipient responses are unavailable, interpretations should remain qualified. In literary analysis, the evidence concerns textual representations; in interactional research, claims about participants' understandings require support from the interaction or other relevant materials.

Because this paper uses selected scholarship and constructed examples, it cannot establish how commonly the proposed relationships occur across languages, communities, or genres. Future research could apply the distinctions to a clearly defined collection of classroom exchanges, interviews, or written narratives. Such work would need explicit sampling criteria and a transparent procedure for relating interpretations to evidence.

7. Conclusion

Communication contributes to the formation of discourse by connecting linguistic expression with purpose, audience, interpretation, and context. The argument is therefore more precise than simply equating discourse with information transfer. Textual organization matters, but its communicative significance emerges through situated use. Written discourse and monologue remain communicative even when recipients cannot respond immediately.

Three distinctions are especially important: the distinction between a communicative event and its textual record, between function and discourse domain, and between an addressee and a referent. Informative, regulatory, expressive, and phatic functions may coexist and change within the same activity. Literary discourse further demonstrates that multiple levels of

address can operate simultaneously. Taken together, these distinctions offer a coherent basis for examining communication as an organizing condition of discourse while leaving their empirical application open to further investigation.

Declarations

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, investigation, writing – original draft, and writing – review & editing: E.A.

How to Cite:

Aliyeva, E. (2026). The role of communication in the formation of discourse. *Global Spectrum of Research and Humanities, 3*(4), 5–12. https://doi.org/10.69760/gsrh.0260304001

References

Austin, J. L. (1975). *How to do things with words* (J. O. Urmson & M. Sbisà, Eds.; 2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198245537.001.0001

Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge University Press.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Routledge.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics: Vol. 3. Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004368811_003

Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. Longman.

Harris, Z. S. (1952). Discourse analysis. *Language, 28*(1), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.2307/409987

Jakobson, R. (1960). Closing statement: Linguistics and poetics. In T. A. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in language* (pp. 350–377). MIT Press.

Kendrick, K. H., Brown, P., Dingemanse, M., Floyd, S., Gipper, S., Hayano, K., Hoey, E., Hoymann, G., Manrique, E., Rossi, G., & Levinson, S. C. (2020). Sequence organization: A universal infrastructure for social action. *Journal of Pragmatics, 168*, 119–138. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.06.009

Mammadov, A. (2018). *Studies in text and discourse*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Ogiermann, E., & Bella, S. (2021). On the dual role of expressive speech acts: Relational work on signs announcing closures during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of Pragmatics, 184*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.07.020

Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.

Seuren, L. M., Wherton, J., Greenhalgh, T., & Shaw, S. E. (2021). Whose turn is it anyway? Latency and the organization of turn-taking in video-mediated interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics, 172*, 63–78. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.11.005

Tanskanen, S.-K. (2021). Fragmented but coherent: Lexical cohesion on a YouTube channel. *Discourse, Context & Media, 44*, Article 100548. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2021.100548

van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Discourse and context: A sociocognitive approach*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511481499

Virtanen, M. T., Vepsäläinen, H., & Koivisto, A. (2021). Managing several simultaneous lines of talk in Finnish multi-party mobile messaging. *Discourse, Context & Media, 39*, Article 100460. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2020.100460

Received: 20 August 2026
Accepted: 05 October 2026
Published: 08 October 2026