



LSLP Micro-Paper 95:

A Three-Tiered Discourse Model

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Defining the Term

Micro-Paper 22 defined discourse as “oral and written interactions with and through language in diverse social settings, to make sense of how people use language and what social and cultural factors appear as most influential.” Although different views of [Critical Discourse Analysis](#) have looked at discourse from large-scale and small-scale perspectives, deeper reflection may contend that this does not encompass all levels of society. Therefore, this Micro-Paper proposes a three-tiered model to describe discourse linked to the three levels of society (MACRO-Meso-micro), as follows:

- DISCOURSE(S) (read as ALL-CAPS discourse) refers to discursive patterns, trends, and practices that stem from and operate at the MACRO level of society. In educational settings, DISCOURSE refers to messages from central government entities and policies, providing official statements and positions about how they expect others to frame ideas about language and literacy. Although DISCOURSE comes from the MACRO level, its implications also affect society’s Meso and Micro levels.
- Discourse(s) (read as Capital D discourse) describes discursive patterns, trends, and practices that stem from and operate at the Meso level of society. In educational settings, Discourse describes messages from smaller official entities and more prominent, more established communities in education and society. Discourse, we argue, interacts with the MACRO level, sometimes complementing it, contesting it, and influencing discourses at the micro level.
- Finally, we have discourse(s) (read as lower-case d discourse), which refers to discursive patterns, trends, and practices that stem from and operate at the micro levels of society. In this case, discourses refer to what happens in more informal communities and what individuals do with language. In some instances, discourses emerge as a follow-up to DISCOURSES and Discourses. In many others, discourses may become spaces for resistance and transgression when playing with language.

The three-tiered discourse model can help us better understand where messages come from and how different communities and sectors of society create and address them. Through this model, better methodological frameworks may also emerge to examine the various power

dynamics present in the literacy practices in our cities and educational cultures.

Connecting it to LSLP

This three-tiered model results from our research on the city as literacy. As our research has evolved, we have started to examine counternarratives and the possibilities of envisioning the city as a third space. We realized that current frameworks from Critical Discourse Analysis do not allow us to examine the different levels of official discourse that [permeate our cities](#) vis-à-vis language.

The three-tiered model for discourse, along with the other elements of our city-as-literacy framework, will enable us to examine the sources of these patterns more closely and analyze how different sectors of society and individuals respond to them. Through the three-tiered model, we can also better understand how, for example, counter-discourses appear at the Meso and micro levels as possibilities for language creativity and resistance.

Expanding Second Language Research

Language learning and teaching are areas where the three-layered discourse model may provide new avenues for inquiry. Policy, curriculum, and teaching are areas where DISCOURSES, Discourses, and discourses collide, sometimes as overlaps, sometimes as contradictions.

Using the three-layered discourse model can help [second-language](#) researchers and advocates orient teachers into navigating these existing discourses. The model can also provide clues to help teachers increase their agency in their instructional practices and settings.

References

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author wrote the first draft of this text and made only final edits using Grammarly before uploading the micro-paper. The author takes full responsibility for the publication's content.



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