

---

# DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse refers to written or spoken communications. The field of discourse analysis has emerged as means of understanding these communications – either at an individual level (i.e. a specific speech) or at a collective level (i.e. a group of speeches).

## LAYERS OF ANALYSIS

<b>TEXTUAL LAYER</b> <i>What is said in the story?</i>	This layer is a description of the content of the story. It is concerned with words (i.e. work), signals (i.e. pointing at an object) and key units of informational content (i.e. a sentence) in the story. Looking at stories through a textual lens will ascertain ‘what’ the storyteller is talking about. At a basic level, this can be understood as topic. Through analysing sets of stories in this way, we can begin to identify generalisation and norms (i.e. in general, the storytellers spoke about work when discussing their lives).
<b>COMPOSITION LAYER</b> <i>How is the content expressed in the story?</i>	This layer is an explanation of the content of the story. It is concerned about the way in which words, signals and key units are structured within the story and their relationships with one another (i.e. a change in the tone of the storyteller’s voice when talking about a specific topic). Looking at stories through this lens allows us to better understand the ways in which people are talking about the topics in their stories. It can give us an insight into the relationship between topics (i.e. how work impacts on family life and vice versa) or how people feel about certain topics via the inferences they make (i.e. facial expressions etc.)
<b>CONTEXT LAYER</b> <i>Why is the storyteller expressing themselves in this way?</i>	This layer is a contextual interpretation of content of the story. It is concerned with understanding why people choose to talk about topics in the way that they do and connects the storyteller and story from the environment which they exist and were told. Looking at stories in through this lens provides an opportunity for us to understand the micro and macro contexts (i.e. social, political, cultural, geographical, historical etc.) that contribute to people’s lives and the stories that they tell.

## APPROACHES TO ANALYSIS

- **Content Analysis:** Objective, systematic and/or quantitative analysis of the content of the story (i.e. how many times certain words are used).
- **Thematic Analysis:** Grouping or categorising of key content from stories across themes/topics. These can be pre-determined or emergent from the stories. (i.e. employment, family, housing, social life).
- **Structural Analysis:** Analysis of the different parts of the story (e.g. words, codes, composition) and the relationships between them that give it meaning. (i.e. pauses/hesitations between sentences, voice tone).
- **Critical Analysis:** Exploration of the social, political, cultural and historical context of the discourse through the lens of positions of power (i.e. a young female’s experience of work in a male dominated industry).