What is Discourse Analysis?
(Part I)

ENG 429 – Discourse Analysis & Stylistics
Discourse analysis (DA) is an approach to the analysis of language which ...

1) Focuses on
   – Knowledge about language beyond the word, clause, phrase, and sentence that is needed for successful communication.

2) Looks at
   – Patterns of language across texts and considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used.
DA is an **approach** to the analysis of language which ...

3) **Considers**
   - The ways the use of language presents different **views of the world** and different understandings.

4) **Examines**
   - How the use of language is influenced by **relationships** between participants as well as the effects the use of language has upon **social identities** and relations.
DA is an approach to the analysis of language which ...

5) Considers
   – How views of the world and identities are constructed through the use of discourse.

6) Examines
   – Both spoken and written texts.
The term *discourse analysis*

- First introduced by Zellig Harris in 1952 as a way of analyzing connected speech & writing

- Harris had two main interests
  - Language *beyond* the level of the sentence
  - Relationship between *linguistic* & *non-linguistic* behavior
“Language beyond the level of the sentence”

• Harris observed that there are typical ways of using language in particular situations.

• He argued that these discourses shared particular meanings and characteristic linguistic features.
“Relationship between linguistic & non-linguistic behavior”

• Harris refers to how people know, from the situation they are in, how to interpret what someone says.

• Expressions have a particular meaning in a particular situation and may mean something different in another situation.
"The runway is full at the moment."

- **Speaker:** Pilot
- **Instruction:** not to land the plane
- **Speaker:** Person waiting to pick someone up at the airport
- **Explanation:** of why the plane is late
Discourse analysis & pragmatics

• Discourse analysis is closely related to pragmatics.
  – Both analyze stretches of spoken and written language in particular (authentic) situations

• Pragmatics
  – How the interpretation of language depends on knowledge of the real world.
  – What people mean by what they say (aside from the literal meaning of their words)

Paltrridge (2006)
Notion of *context*

- **Who**
  - Speaker/writer
  - Hearer/reader
- **Topic**
- **Purpose**
- **Where**
- **When**
- **How**
  - Above features impact speech or writing

Paltridge (2006)
Thus ...

- Discourse analysis considers the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used.

- Chimombo & Roseberry (1998):
  - Primary purpose of DA is to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of texts and how they become meaningful to their users.