

Jan Blommaert: *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005.

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Jan Blommaert's monograph *Discourse: A Critical Introduction* provides a profound introduction to discourse and to the major research disciplines devoted to its study, including Foucaultian discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, ethnography, and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Although Blommaert stresses at the beginning of his first chapter that *Discourse* "is not a linguistic book" (Blommaert 2005: 3), its nine well-structured chapters contribute valuable insights to all fields of research interested in language in society, as well as important desiderata. For instance, the author argues strongly in favour of paying more attention to globalization issues and data from non-first-world contexts. This is undermined by intricate sample analyses of oral, written and mediated sources from global contexts, such as African asylum seekers' narratives (and their interpretations and misinterpretations by immigration officials in Belgium), letters and essays by African youths, or the publicly broadcast hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

Unfortunately, Blommaert's method of being critical does not always do justice to those he criticises. Whereas the author's criticism of CDA is perfectly justified regarding CDA's tendency to concentrate on data from first-world countries, his argument might have been more balanced and well-founded had he not accused CDA of neglecting context and history, but, instead, taken into account CDA work that explicitly discusses context, such as Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, and CDA work that is deeply aware of the historical dimensions of discourse, such as the publications and projects by Ruth Wodak and other representatives of the discourse-historical approach within CDA. In a similar vein, researchers from the field of Conversation Analysis (CA) might feel misrepresented, too, for Blommaert dismisses their context models too readily. Still, even though Blommaert occasionally comes disconcertingly close to addressing a straw man, this does not diminish the general merits of his book.

In spite of these few minor flaws, *Discourse* is an admirably clear and succinct introduction to a complex theoretical field that is currently becoming increasingly interdisciplinary. Additionally, readers are offered a wealth of annotated suggestions for further reading, as well as a concise glossary. This makes Blommaert's book appealing not only to researchers, but also to graduate students. Undergraduate students might be more comfortable with introductory textbooks such as Renkema (2004), or Young & Fitzgerald (2006), where detailed definitions and discussions are combined with exercises and practical instructions. However, they should not be discouraged by the book's ambitious interdisciplinary orientation, for Blommaert's style is lively and engaging, at times even casual. For instance, the author freely uses expressions such as "theoretical ammunition" (34), points out the importance of considering social context by talking about what happens before language users "open their mouths" and "after they have shut them" (35), or concedes that Foucault's postulate regarding the restric-