



DISCOURSE ANALYSIS FOR ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION STUDENTS: ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN THE ESP CLASSROOM

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Abstract

In the globalized and interdisciplinary landscape of architecture and construction, effective communication is as vital as technical proficiency. This paper explores the necessity of teaching discourse analysis (DA) to students in architecture and construction majors within an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework. Drawing on theoretical and empirical foundations, the article outlines the advantages of integrating DA into ESP courses, such as enhancing communicative competence, critical thinking, and genre awareness. It also addresses practical challenges, including curriculum design, student engagement, and disciplinary specificity. Real-life examples from architectural reports, project meetings, and academic presentations are analyzed to illustrate how DA can bridge linguistic knowledge with professional application.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis (DA); English for Specific Purposes (ESP); Architecture Education; Construction Communication; Genre Awareness; Communicative Competence; Curriculum Integration; Professional Language Use; Critical Thinking; Interdisciplinary Communication



Introduction

Architecture and construction professionals operate in multilingual, multidisciplinary environments where project success often hinges on clear, purposeful communication. While ESP programs aim to meet these learners' professional language needs, they often fall short of addressing deeper discursive competencies. Discourse Analysis (DA)—the study of language use in context—offers tools that can enrich ESP pedagogy by helping learners decode and produce effective communication in their specific domains.

This research investigates:

- Why discourse analysis is essential for architecture and construction students
- The advantages of teaching DA in the ESP classroom
- The challenges faced in implementing such instruction
- Real-world examples that show its relevance in professional practice

Why Teach Discourse Analysis in Architecture and Construction ESP? Communication as a Core Professional Competence. In architectural and construction contexts, professionals engage in a wide array of discourses—technical reports, blueprints, negotiations, presentations, and project documentation. Miscommunication in these contexts can lead to project delays, financial losses, and safety risks. Hence, linguistic competence must go beyond vocabulary and grammar to include **genre knowledge**, **register variation**, and **interactional strategies**.

Secondly, Genre Awareness where Each document type or communication event (e.g., design proposals, site reports) represents a distinct genre with unique conventions. DA equips students to recognize these structures and rhetorical moves, enhancing their ability to interpret and create professional texts effectively.

One of the advantages of Implementing Discourse Analysis in ESP is Enhanced Professional Communication. By analyzing authentic texts and communicative situations, students gain insights into how architects and engineers convey information, make decisions, and collaborate across disciplines.

Example: In a project proposal, architects must present persuasive yet data-driven content. DA helps students understand how modality (“might,” “could”) and hedging (“it is likely that...”) reflect professionalism and openness to feedback.



Improved Critical Thinking. DA encourages students to question how language shapes meaning, ideology, and power in professional settings. This skill is valuable in negotiating contracts, critiquing designs, or leading stakeholder meetings.

Better Integration into Global Work Environments. Understanding pragmatic conventions across languages and cultures (e.g., turn-taking, politeness strategies, directness) prepares students to work in international teams.

Example: In multinational construction projects, architects must adapt their discourse when addressing a British engineer vs. a Japanese contractor—DA facilitates intercultural awareness.

Support for Academic and Professional Writing. DA provides students with strategies to structure arguments, cite sources effectively, and follow disciplinary discourse patterns in academic writing (e.g., thesis writing, journal publications).

Obviously, there are some challenges in implementation such as lack of awareness or training among ESP teachers

Many ESP instructors are not trained in discourse analysis or applied linguistics. As a result, integrating DA into ESP often lacks pedagogical coherence.

Student Resistance or Disinterest. Architecture and construction students may perceive DA as too theoretical or irrelevant to their technical training, especially if not contextualized properly with real-world examples.

Curriculum Constraints. ESP syllabi are often constrained by time and institutional expectations. Including DA may require the removal of traditional grammar or vocabulary-based instruction.

Disciplinary Complexity. Architecture and construction feature multimodal texts (e.g., blueprints, 3D models) and cross-domain knowledge, making discourse patterns more complex and less linear than in other fields.

Several real-life samples and application are investigated in this paper:

Sample 1: Architecture Critique Presentation

Context: A student presents a building design in front of a panel.

DA Focus:

- *Discourse markers:* “As you can see here...” / “Moving on to...”
- *Evaluation and justification:* “This design was chosen because...”



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- *Interpersonal strategies:* Handling questions politely and defending choices.

Sample 2: Site Inspection Report

Text Excerpt: “Minor cracking was observed along the southern wall, potentially due to differential settlement.”

DA Insight:

- Use of passive voice for objectivity
- Modal verbs (“potentially”) to signal uncertainty
- Lexical choices reflect technical precision

Sample 3: Cross-cultural Project Email

Excerpt: “Dear Mr. Tanaka, we would appreciate it if you could share the revised elevations by Friday...”

DA Focus:

- Politeness strategies (indirect requests)
- Cultural tone adaptation
- Time management language

Outcomes from discussion can provide some recommendations for ESP Curriculum Design

- **Use authentic materials:** Collect blueprints, reports, meeting transcripts, and design documents for classroom analysis.
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** Engage architecture faculty in co-designing DA modules.
- **Scaffold DA tasks:** Start with observation, move to analysis, and then to production tasks.
- **Interactive methods:** Role-plays, project-based learning, and peer reviews grounded in discourse principles.

Conclusion

Teaching discourse analysis to architecture and construction students in ESP classrooms is not only beneficial but essential. It equips future professionals with the communication tools necessary for global practice, interdisciplinary collaboration, and reflective thinking. While challenges exist—such as



curriculum rigidity and student perceptions—they can be mitigated through well-designed, discipline-specific pedagogical strategies. Integrating discourse analysis into ESP ensures that language instruction aligns with the real-world demands of architectural and construction professions.

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