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## The Literature Review Method in Discourse Analysis: Syntax, Semantic Structure, and Interpersonal Function as an Analytical Framework

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the literature review as a discursive practice by examining how syntactic structure, semantic organization, and interpersonal function operate within discourse analysis. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and a systematic literature review method, the research synthesizes findings from scholarly works that apply Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to various texts, including political speeches and academic writing. The results show that syntax structures the organization of discourse through hierarchical patterns, clause relations, and textual sequencing. Semantic structure constructs meaning networks through conceptual, referential, and evaluative relations, revealing how writers establish themes, connect ideas, and develop interpretations. Interpersonal function emerges through stance-taking, modality, pronoun choice, and evaluative language, positioning writers as interpreters and argument builders. Across the reviewed studies, integrative literature reviews demonstrate the most complex discursive features by combining layered syntactic patterns, abstract semantic relations, and explicit evaluative voice. This study concludes that analyzing literature reviews through the lenses of syntax, semantic structure, and interpersonal function provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how academic texts construct knowledge, negotiate meaning, and shape authorial positioning within discourse analysis.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis has become an essential approach in contemporary linguistic studies, offering systematic ways to understand how language constructs meaning, represents

social realities, and shapes interpersonal relationships. Within this field, several analytical dimensions such as syntax, semantic structure, and interpersonal function serve as fundamental components for interpreting how texts operate

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both linguistically and socially. Syntax provides insight into the arrangement of linguistic units and how structural patterns contribute to coherence. Semantic structure offers a deeper understanding of meaning relations within discourse, including how ideas are organized, connected, and interpreted. Semantic analysis examines the meanings conveyed through language, emphasizing how specific discourses reflect social and ideological practices (Speed, 2023). This aspect is crucial for understanding how language can reinforce or challenge dominant narratives within various contexts (Macrae, n.d.). Meanwhile, interpersonal function highlights the roles, intentions, and relationships negotiated between speakers and audiences through linguistic choices.

Given the extensive theoretical foundations and the variety of perspectives applied in discourse analysis, a literature review method becomes a strategic approach for synthesizing existing knowledge. A well-structured literature review not only maps the development of analytical frameworks but also reveals how scholars employ syntactic, semantic, and interpersonal perspectives across diverse contexts and discourses. Syntax pertains to the grammatical structures that shape discourse, focusing on how words are arranged to convey meaning (West, 2011). It involves analyzing sentence structures and their roles in creating coherent discourse, which is essential for understanding the organization of texts (Paltridge, n.d.). This method allows researchers to critically examine previous studies, identify gaps, and clarify the relevance of each analytical dimension in understanding meaning-making processes.

Therefore, this study aims to explore and synthesize scholarly works related to discourse analysis through the lenses of syntax, semantic structure, and interpersonal function. By employing a literature review method, the research provides a comprehensive overview of how these three analytical components have been conceptualized, utilized, and integrated within linguistic studies. Ultimately, this investigation contributes to a more robust understanding of discourse analysis frameworks and offers a theoretical foundation for future empirical and analytical research.

## **II. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a literature review method using an analytical critical approach to examine how syntactic structures, semantic organization, and interpersonal functions serve as analytical frameworks in discourse studies. A literature review is a comprehensive and critical analysis of existing scholarly sources related to a specific research topic. It serves multiple purposes, including identifying gaps in current knowledge, synthesizing relevant information, and providing context for new research. This foundational aspect of academic writing is essential for establishing credibility and justifying the need for further investigation in a given field (Samish, 2023). It highlights areas where research is lacking, guiding future studies (Samish, 2023). Contextualizing Research: It situates new research within the existing body of knowledge, demonstrating its relevance (Hazari, 2023).

The research adopts a qualitative descriptive design that focuses on interpreting and synthesizing theoretical and analytical concepts from previous works, allowing the researcher to explore the conceptual foundations of discourse analysis without engaging in empirical data collection. The data consist of secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, theses, dissertations, conference proceedings, and credible online publications related to syntactic analysis, semantic structure, and interpersonal function, all selected based on relevance, credibility, recency, and scholarly contribution. Data collection involves identifying key concepts, searching academic databases (Google Scholar, ResearchGate, JSTOR, and Scopus-indexed journals), screening literature based on topic relevance and conceptual depth, and organizing selected studies into thematic categories aligned with the research focus.

The analysis applies an analytical critical technique consisting of concept mapping, comparative analysis, and critical synthesis to identify theoretical patterns, highlight conceptual gaps, and formulate a comprehensive understanding of how syntax, semantic structure, and interpersonal function operate within discourse analysis. To ensure validity and reliability, the study employs source triangulation, peer cross-checking against established linguistic

theories, and critical evaluation of each source's methodology, argument quality, and relevance.

### **III.RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Semantic Structure in Political Speeches: Field, Tenor, Mode, and Cohesion**

The analysis in this study demonstrates that the article in the employs Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) from (Darong et.al., 2022) as the primary theoretical framework for examining political speeches. Through a literature review approach, the study emphasizes three major dimensions of discourse analysis: syntax, semantic structure, and interpersonal function.

At the syntactic level, SFL is used to examine transitivity through material, mental, and relational processes, as well as clause structures involving mood and modality. At the semantic level, analysis focuses on the components of field, tenor, and mode, along with lexical cohesion and reference systems. Meanwhile, the interpersonal function is explored through pronoun use, mood structures, and modality choices such as will, must, and can. The data presented in the article offers a comprehensive illustration of how literature review methods can be used to compare theories, concepts, and analytical models within political discourse studies.

From the syntactic perspective, the article shows that material processes dominate the three political speeches (Obama, Biden, Trump), indicating a strong emphasis on concrete actions, activities, and processes of change. This aligns with literature review findings that political discourse typically highlights agendas, movements, and actions as persuasive strategies. Additionally, all speeches demonstrate a dominance of declarative clauses, signifying a preference for delivering information directly and reinforcing key messages.

The semantic structure of the speeches also follows consistent patterns. The field analysis reveals that the speeches focus on collective action for the advancement of America, while the longest lexical string "America" indicates that the core discourse centers on nationalism and the nation's future. In terms of tenor, Obama and Biden frequently employ the pronoun "we," creating a sense of closeness with their audience, whereas Trump's dominant use of "I" reflects a

greater interpersonal distance. Regarding mode, all speeches fall under the spoken mode due to their use of simple nominal groups. Textual cohesion is also evident through the prevalence of anaphoric references and repeated keywords such as America, we, and people. From a literature review standpoint, such semantic structures are commonly found in political discourse, which relies heavily on thematic clarity, repetition, and coherence to maximize persuasion.

The interpersonal function is further demonstrated through mood, modality, and pronoun usage. Declarative mood dominates the speeches, indicating an emphasis on asserting ideas rather than negotiating them. Obama and Trump extensively use will to express future commitments, while Biden relies on must, signaling moral urgency and collective responsibility. Pronoun choice reinforces these rhetorical strategies: "we" fosters inclusion and closeness, while "I" projects personal authority. These findings highlight how political leaders build interpersonal relationships with their audiences through linguistic choices.

Overall, the analysis confirms that the literature review method enables researchers to identify common syntactic patterns, synthesize semantic structures, and compare interpersonal functions within political discourse. The SFL-based analytical framework effectively reveals the interconnectedness between linguistic forms, meanings, and social relationships in political speeches. These three analytical dimensions syntax, semantics, and interpersonal function are interrelated and become more prominent when examined through a structured and theoretically grounded literature review. Thus, the data from the article provides a comprehensive understanding that syntax reinforces clause structure, semantic patterns create thematic coherence, and interpersonal function shapes the relational dynamics between speaker and audience in political discourse.

#### **4.2 Interpersonal Function and Reviewer's Voice in Academic Discourse**

The syntactic analysis of the literature review from (Khoo et.al., 2010) in the article Analysis of the Macro-Level Discourse Structure of Literature Reviews demonstrates that the

discourse is constructed through the organization of sentences and the systematic encoding of information. The XML schema employed in the article represents syntactic units such as topic, study, what, description, along with components such as method, result, interpretation, meta-summary, and meta-critique. These elements form a hierarchical structure that regulates not only sentence patterns but also relational structures between discourse units at the paragraph level. Distinct syntactic patterns are evident between the descriptive and integrative types of literature reviews. Descriptive reviews tend to follow a linear pattern with numerous subject process data structures and a strong emphasis on study, method, and result elements. In contrast, integrative reviews employ more complex sentences involving causal, comparative, and synthetic relations and demonstrate a more hierarchical organization through the dominance of topic, meta-summary, and meta-critique. The use of cue phrases such as on the other hand, in contrast, and these studies suggest that further illustrates how syntactic markers contribute to the cohesion of the argumentation.

From the perspective of semantic structure, each element within the schema functions as a carrier of meaning. Topic conveys conceptual meaning at the macro level, study provides referential meaning derived from the cited research, and meta-summary along with meta-critique offers interpretative and evaluative meanings. These relationships form a semantic network that moves from topic exposition to evidence, evaluation, and the formulation of new propositions by the reviewer. Semantically, descriptive literature reviews highlight denotative meanings such as factual descriptions of methods and results, whereas integrative reviews emphasize more abstract conceptual meanings, including patterns, trends, critiques, and the construction of mini-frameworks. This semantic structure aligns with the rhetorical functions of the CARS model, in which the writer establishes the territory, reviews prior research, identifies gaps, and positions their study accordingly.

The analysis of interpersonal function reveals that integrative literature reviews provide greater space for the reviewer's voice. Elements such as meta-critique and meta-summary

demonstrate the writer's evaluative stance and their role as an argument builder. Expressions such as it was found that, the reviewer pointed out, and the results suggest contribute to an objective tone while reinforcing academic authority. In descriptive reviews, interpersonal function is minimal, with the writer acting primarily as a transmitter of information. Conversely, in integrative reviews, interpersonal function becomes a strategy of academic persuasion in which the writer directs readers toward identifying research gaps, constructing arguments, and asserting theoretical positions. Together, these three analytical dimensions reveal that literature reviews are complex discursive practices. Syntax provides the logical structure through the organization of elements such as topic study summary critique.

Semantic structure creates meaningful connections among research findings through concepts, patterns, and evaluation. Interpersonal function positions the writer within the discourse through stance-taking, assessment, and gap identification. Overall, the integrative literature review emerges as the most comprehensive form of discourse because it integrates layered syntactic organization, abstract semantic relations, and strong interpersonal functions, resulting in a coherent, critical, and persuasive academic text.

### **4.3 Interpersonal Positioning and Evaluative Stance in Literature Review Writing**

Based on the analysis the literature review from (Wall et.al., 2015):

#### **1. Syntactic Analysis**

In both articles, the literature review is understood as a type of discourse systematically constructed through sentence structure and the organization of information. The document Critical Discourse Analysis as a Review Methodology emphasizes that discourse analysis in literature reviews begins with identifying linguistic patterns, propositional structures, and relationships between textual units before moving toward meaning and ideology. Meanwhile, the Macro-Level Discourse Structure article illustrates that the syntactic construction of literature reviews is shaped through elements such as topic, study, method, result, interpretation, meta-summary, and meta-critique.

These components function as syntactic units that organize the text from the sentence level to the paragraph level. In descriptive literature reviews, syntactic patterns tend to be linear, dominated by repetitive subject–process–data structures. In contrast, integrative literature reviews demonstrate more complex syntactic organization through causal, comparative, and synthetic relationships. The CDA article further asserts that the initial phase of discourse-based literature review methodology involves examining sentence patterns and propositional structures that frame the writer's arguments. Thus, syntactically, literature reviews are multilayered constructions that combine description, summary, and evaluation within a systematic organizational structure.

## 2. Semantic Structure Analysis

The semantic structure of the literature review is built through relationships among meaning units such as topic, study, summary, and critique. The CDA article explains that semantic analysis serves to uncover meaning patterns, determine which information is prioritized, and map how writers connect theories and findings to construct a particular conceptual framework. In other words, semantic structure not only conveys content but also generates new meaning through interpretation and argument construction.

Descriptive literature reviews highlight denotative meanings involving factual descriptions of methods and results, whereas integrative literature reviews produce more abstract meanings such as patterns, trends, critiques, and the development of mini-frameworks through synthesis. This structure aligns with the rhetorical functions of the CARS model, which organizes the discourse flow from establishing the research territory to reviewing prior studies and creating a niche. Within the CDA framework, semantic structure also reveals how writers frame phenomena, adopt particular positions, and assign evaluative meaning to the literature under review.

## 3. Interpersonal Function Analysis

The interpersonal function in literature reviews involves the ways writers position themselves, express evaluations, and build

relationships with readers. The CDA document stresses that a literature review is not a passive reproduction of previous studies but a discursive act that positions the writer as an evaluator, interpreter, and constructor of scholarly claims. Expressions such as it was found that, the reviewer pointed out, and the results suggest help construct an objective tone while simultaneously reinforcing the writer's academic authority.

In descriptive literature reviews, interpersonal function is minimal because the focus lies primarily on reporting information. In contrast, integrative literature reviews demonstrate stronger interpersonal involvement through evaluation (meta-critique), synthesis, and the articulation of theoretical stance. The CDA file also shows that interpersonal function can reveal ideological orientations, reflected through evaluative lexical choices, emphasis, or argumentation that guides readers toward accepting specific interpretations. Therefore, interpersonal function serves as a strategy of academic persuasion that helps readers identify research gaps, understand theoretical arguments, and recognize the significance of the reviewed studies.

## 4. Synthesis: Literature Review as a Discourse-Analytical Practice

When syntactic structure, semantic structure, and interpersonal function are integrated, the literature review emerges as a complex discursive practice. Syntax provides the organizational framework for structuring information; semantic structure weaves networks of meaning to highlight patterns, trends, and interpretations; and interpersonal function positions the writer as an authoritative discourse actor who evaluates and constructs arguments. Integrative literature reviews represent the most comprehensive form of this analytical framework due to their multilayered syntax, abstract semantic relations, and explicit interpersonal stances. The CDA document demonstrates that critically analyzed literature reviews reveal how writers frame knowledge, reproduce or challenge ideologies, and craft persuasive scholarly narratives. Thus, an analytical framework grounded in syntax, semantics, and interpersonal function offers a comprehensive understanding of how literature reviews function both as academic

texts and as social practices within discourse analysis.

#### **4.4 Discourse-Level Syntactic Patterns in Literature Reviews**

Based on the article the analysis literature review from (Pasaribu et.al., 2020):

##### **1. Syntactic Analysis**

Across the three documents, the literature review is consistently viewed as a structured discursive practice shaped by the organization of sentences and the arrangement of information. The file Critical Discourse Analysis as a Review Methodology emphasizes that syntactic examination is the initial stage in discourse-based literature review, focusing on the identification of linguistic patterns, propositional structures, and the relations among textual units. Meanwhile, the Macro-Level Discourse Structure article provides a more explicit syntactic blueprint, demonstrating how elements such as topic, study, method, result, interpretation, meta-summary, and meta-critique serve as syntactic units that organize the text at both the sentence and paragraph levels.

The syntactic differences between descriptive and integrative literature reviews are also evident. Descriptive reviews use linear syntactic patterns dominated by repeated subject-process–data structures, resulting in straightforward informational presentation. In contrast, integrative reviews display a more complex syntactic configuration, using causal, comparative, and synthetic clause relations to construct layered argumentation. The SFL-based article contributes further insight into syntactic organization by showing how textual metafunction particularly theme rheme structure, cohesion, and clause arrangement determines the ordering of information in a review. Taken together, these findings show that syntactically, literature reviews operate as multilayered constructions that interweave description, synthesis, and evaluation within a systematically organized discourse structure.

##### **2. Semantic Structure Analysis**

The semantic dimension of the literature review is constructed through relationships between meaning-bearing units such as topic, study, summary, and critique. The CDA-based

methodology highlights that semantic analysis reveals the patterns of meaning selected and foregrounded by the writer, showing how theories and findings are connected to build a particular conceptual framing. This corresponds closely with the semantic framework outlined in the Macro-Level Discourse Structure article, where each syntactic element functions semantically—topic conveys conceptual meaning, study conveys referential meaning, and meta-summary or meta-critique conveys interpretative and evaluative meaning.

The SFL article enriches this by demonstrating how ideational metafunction and transitivity analysis assist in uncovering the semantic construction of actions, events, and participants in texts. Semantic differences between descriptive and integrative reviews also become clear. Descriptive reviews construct denotative semantic meaning, focusing on factual reporting of methods and findings. Integrative reviews, however, generate more abstract semantic relations by identifying patterns, trends, conceptual links, and mini-frameworks formed through synthesis. These semantic structures align with the rhetorical stages of the CARS model: establishing a territory, reviewing previous studies, and identifying a niche. In the CDA perspective, this semantic construction also reflects how writers frame phenomena, select a stance, and embed evaluative meaning within the literature. Thus, semantic analysis shows how the literature review goes beyond describing existing knowledge to constructing new interpretive meaning.

##### **3. Interpersonal Function Analysis**

The interpersonal dimension of the literature review involves how writers position themselves within the discourse, express evaluation, and guide reader interpretation. The CDA article stresses that a literature review is a discursive act rather than a neutral summary, positioning the writer as evaluator, interpreter, and argument builder. Expressions such as it was found that, the reviewer pointed out, and the results suggest help maintain an objective tone while simultaneously constructing academic authority.

In descriptive reviews, interpersonal function is minimal because the primary focus is on transmitting information without overt judgement.

In contrast, integrative reviews demonstrate a stronger interpersonal role through the formulation of evaluations (meta-critique), the development of synthesized claims, and the articulation of theoretical stance. The SFL article deepens this analysis through its interpersonal metafunction framework, including speech function, modality, and appraisal. These tools reveal how writers (or characters in literary texts) use language to express certainty, obligation, power, emotion, and evaluative positioning. Applied to literature review discourse, this framework uncovers ideological orientations, authorial stance, and persuasive strategies embedded within evaluative choices and argumentative structures. Interpersonal function therefore serves as an academic persuasion mechanism that directs readers to recognize research gaps, understand theoretical orientation, and accept interpretive positions.

#### 4. Synthesis: Literature Review as a Discourse-Analytical Practice

When syntactic structure, semantic structure, and interpersonal function are integrated, the literature review emerges as a complex discursive practice rather than a mere academic summary. Syntax provides the organizational framework for arranging the discourse; semantic structure constructs networks of meaning that reveal patterns, trends, and theoretical relationships; and interpersonal function positions the writer as an authoritative voice shaping interpretation and scholarly evaluation.

Integrative literature reviews exemplify the fullest realization of this multidimensional framework. They employ hierarchical and layered syntax, abstract and interpretive semantic relations, and strong interpersonal positioning that guides readers toward recognizing gaps, evaluating previous studies, and understanding the significance of the current research. The CDA document further demonstrates that critically analyzed literature reviews can expose how writers frame knowledge, negotiate ideologies,

and craft persuasive academic narratives. Meanwhile, insights from SFL show that multifunctional analysis provides a comprehensive linguistic lens to understand how meaning, structure, and stance operate throughout the review.

Thus, analyzing literature reviews through syntax, semantic structure, and interpersonal function provides a holistic framework for understanding their role both as academic texts and as social practices within discourse analysis. Through this framework, the literature review becomes a site where knowledge is organized, meaning is constructed, and authorial voice is strategically deployed within the broader landscape of scholarly communication.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the literature review, when examined through the lenses of syntax, semantic structure, and interpersonal function, operates as a complex and multidimensional discursive practice. Syntactically, literature reviews are organized through layered structures that integrate description, comparison, and evaluation, with integrative reviews showing the highest degree of complexity. Semantically, literature reviews construct interconnected networks of meaning by linking concepts, identifying patterns, and generating interpretive insights that move beyond mere reporting of previous studies.

Interpersonally, writers position themselves as evaluators and argument builders, using linguistic choices to establish authority, guide interpretation, and shape scholarly perspectives. Overall, the integration of these three analytical dimensions demonstrates that literature reviews are not passive compilations of sources but strategic acts of knowledge construction. This framework reinforces the importance of discourse analysis in understanding how academic texts structure information, build meaning, and negotiate scholarly stance, offering a solid theoretical foundation for future research in linguistic and discourse studies.

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