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Oral and Written Discourse: Features and Differences

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***Abstract:** This article covers about the concept of oral and written discourse, its history and different aspects. In turn, conclusions are given about the use of the concept of oral and written discourse in other fields and the level of study in modern linguistics.*

***Key words:** oral and written discourse, the mode of communication, characteristics, styles.*

Understanding the distinctions between oral and written discourse can help individuals effectively communicate, adapt their style, and engage with others in diverse contexts and mediums. Oral discourse is information that is given as spoken words and has a purpose, while written discourse is written words that have a specific subject or structure for the purpose of the written statement. The differences between oral and written discourse lie in the mode of communication, characteristics, styles, and conventions associated with each form of language expression. There are some key distinctions between oral and written discourse:

1. Mode of Communication:

- **Oral Discourse:** Involves spoken language, verbal cues, intonation, pitch, rhythm, and nonverbal elements such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language. It occurs in real-time interactions between speakers and listeners.
- **Written Discourse:** Involves written language, symbols, letters, grammar, punctuation, and visual cues on a physical or digital medium. It allows for asynchronous communication, where the message can be read and interpreted at a later time by the reader.

2. Persistence and Permanence:

- **Oral Discourse:** Generally ephemeral and transient, as spoken words disappear once they are uttered unless recorded. Oral communication relies on memory, immediate understanding, and interaction between participants.

- **Written Discourse:** Permanent and enduring, as written texts can be stored, revised, read, and referenced over time. Written communication provides a lasting record of information and enables in-depth analysis and review.

3. Level of Formality:

- **Oral Discourse:** Tends to be more informal, spontaneous, and interactive, allowing for immediate feedback, clarification, and adaptation based on the context and audience. Oral communication often involves personal anecdotes, conversational features, and colloquial language.
- **Written Discourse:** Can range from informal (e.g., emails, social media posts) to formal (e.g., academic papers, reports, official documents). Written communication requires greater attention to grammar, syntax, structure, and organization compared to oral communication.

4. Structural Features:

- **Oral Discourse:** Typically follows a less structured format, with repetitions, pauses, fillers (e.g., um, ah), and interactive elements like questions, responses, and interruptions. Oral communication may include nonverbal cues to supplement the spoken message.
- **Written Discourse:** Often follows a more structured format, with clear organization, paragraphs, headings, and use of punctuation to convey meaning. Written communication allows for complex ideas, detailed arguments, and logical progression of information.

5. Audience Interaction:

- **Oral Discourse:** Emphasizes direct engagement with the audience, involving eye contact, listening, turn-taking, and adaptability to the listener's responses and feedback.
- **Written Discourse:** Lacks immediate audience interaction, requiring the writer to anticipate the reader's interpretation, comprehension, and potential questions. Written communication tends to be more one-way and unilateral.

1. Several scientists and scholars have conducted research on written discourse, contributing to our understanding of language, communication, and information exchange through written texts. Michael Halliday is As the founder of systemic functional linguistics, Michael Halliday's research focuses on how language functions in written texts to convey meanings, structures, and interactions. His work emphasizes the role of grammar, lexis, and context in written discourse analysis.
2. Mikhail Bakhtin: The Russian philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin explored the dialogical nature of written discourse, investigating how texts represent multiple voices, perspectives, and cultural contexts. His ideas on polyphony and heteroglossia influence the study of narrative and discourse in literature and linguistics.
3. Susan Hunston: A linguist specializing in discourse analysis, Susan Hunston's research investigates how words, phrases, and patterns function in written discourse to create coherence, cohesion, and communicative effectiveness. Her work on lexical cohesion and phraseology enhances our understanding of language use in various text types.
4. James Paul Gee: An educational linguist, James Paul Gee examines how discourse shapes learning, knowledge construction, and literacy practices in written texts. His research on discourse analysis, social linguistics, and identity theory informs educational approaches to writing instruction and literacy development.

5. Anne Beaufort: A scholar in rhetoric and literacy studies, Anne Beaufort explores how writing processes, genres, and rhetorical strategies impact written discourse in academic and professional contexts. Her research on writing development and genre-based pedagogy contributes to understanding how writers engage with various discourse communities through written texts.
6. Catherine Emmott: A discourse analyst and corpus linguist, Catherine Emmott investigates how language is used in written discourse, particularly in legal contexts. Her research on discourse markers, argumentation, and textual coherence enhances our understanding of language use in specific genres and professional communication.
7. Francis Christensen: A linguist and writing theorist, Francis Christensen's work on the structure of English prose and sentence combining has influenced writing instruction and style analysis in written discourse. His research highlights the importance of sentence variety, coherence, and readability in effective writing.

These scientists and scholars have made significant contributions to the study of written discourse, rhetoric, language analysis, and literacy practices, expanding our understanding of how language functions in written texts and shapes communication in diverse contexts.

Their research continues to inform scholarly discussions, pedagogical approaches, and professional practices related to writing, discourse analysis, and textual interpretation.

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