CHAPTER 1.

TEMPORAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS AN ANALYTIC FOR LIFESPAN WRITING RESEARCH

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My attraction to Lifespan perspectives is related to the rich, contextualized ways in which readers and writers are positioned, described, and considered across time. I attend to literacy as operating within a "dynamic confluence of literate forms that are always changing in relation to social situations and purposes" (Dippre & Smith, 2020, p. 28). I am attracted to Lifespan perspectives that center learners and their lives. By recognizing the "whole child" (Noddings, 2005) as students move in and out of schools, operating in the present while drawing on past and carrying aspirations for the future, lifespan research centers people.

While this book and this chapter are ostensibly about being and becoming writers, writing is but one of a myriad of practices that produce and continually reproduce society through the "regular, ongoing work of participants from one minute to another" (Dippre & Smith, 2020, p. 29). Unlike retrospective interviews or life narratives, longitudinal research captures experiences in temporal proximity to events. Thus, longitudinal researchers are more likely to encounter the unfolding sense-making of participants. Lifespan researchers present fundamental challenges to linear, developmental models as they resist comparing individuals to established and assumedly universal trajectories of growth which have the potential to misrepresent what people can do and what they know. As Bazerman and his colleagues reported (2018), idealized norms can "mask, mischaracterize, or punish human variation" (p. 6). Lifespan writing researchers focus on unique, idiosyncratic and contextualized being and becoming across time. Thus, longitudinal qualitative research and lifespan approaches—particularly projects that involve rich and varied data sources that capture the textures and contexts of people's experiences—are particularly salient to people interested in equity and educational access. These data recognize and honor a vast range of individual experiences that reflect various social orientations, perceptions, behaviors, and the meanings that are made based on these experiences. In a significant way, these approaches reveal the longitudinal and life-long effects of bias, privilege, and opportunity.

WHAT IS TEMPORAL DISCOURSE
ANALYSIS, AND WHAT CAN IT DO?

The complex and creative process described above informed an analytic method that I call *temporal discourse analysis.* Specifically, *temporal discourse analysis* provides insights into how people make sense of their experiences across and within time. While this analytic method can be applied to discourses across long or short periods of time and data collected using a range of methodologies (e.g., case studies, ethnographies, classroom-based studies, narrative inquiries), it is particularly useful for scholars with an interest in lifespan writing research who may be interested in aspects of discourse that appear, re-appear, or change across time. Specifically, temporal discourse analysis is especially useful when dealing with large data sets that include similar and/or contrasting data across time. Temporal discourse analysis addresses research questions that ask: What has changed or is changing? What is the nature of becoming? And what changes might be important to educators as they work with children across time? Temporal discourse analysis is also useful when working with teams of scholars in that it provides a set of shared analytics that can be used to examine and make sense of data that have been collected by different people across time.

Temporal discourse analysis reveals three ways in which people draw upon time to convey meanings about themselves and their worlds: 1) how people locate themselves in time, 2) how people experience the pace of activities, and 3) how they make and convey meaning across time.

People use language to locate and present themselves in the present moment, relative to shared social histories, and within personal/familial histories that involve past, present, and future. People use temporal words (e.g., *yesterday, next week, a long time ago, last semester, next time, always*) to situate themselves and their activities relative to the present moment. These terms enable people to locate themselves, their understandings, and interpretations of what was, what is, and what could be.

People also reference the speed at which events occur. For example, references to the pace of schooling and timelines that operate in schools reveal lived experiences of time. Temporality operates through reading levels, writing rubrics, and benchmarks that correlate with children's ages and/or grade levels. As researchers, we might ask what it feels like to undertake activities relative to timelines and how temporal expectations are experienced by children. References to school bells, passing time between classes, and 45-minute class sessions point to the temporality of school.

Finally, repeated discourses and repeated stories reveal how people make sense of experiences across time. Repeated discourses can reveal not only what

and how meanings circulate across time and among participants, but also indicate when and how discourses are sustained, shifted, and challenged. Tracking these discourses allows researchers to explore how people's understandings of their worlds may have expanded or been reimagined.

TEMPORAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: AN APPROACH TO LONGITUDINAL DATA ANALYSIS

By tracking discourses across time, I not only see slices of people's experiences but I also begin to witness their longitudinal sense-making. I am methodologically interested in the affordances of tracking how discourse practices emerge, are used, taken up, transformed, repurposed, and laminated, to meet new contextual demands across time. I argue that discourse serves as a marker—perhaps a proxy—of regular and ongoing work and meaning-making and, thus, serves as a viable and valuable tool for making sense of lifespan and longitudinal data.

While I see myself as a literacy scholar rather than a writing scholar, I appreciate and celebrate the affordances of writing as a longitudinal data source. First, written words can present snapshots of particular points in time. They can be read as the physical "lamination of practices" (Dippre & Smith, 2020, p. 31) and have a permanence not shared by spoken words and readings. When spoken words of participants are transcribed, they inevitably involve the researcher's transcription processes and stylistic preferences. Perhaps even more importantly, people's written words often serve as stimuli for talk about what was written. Participants can explain, rationalize, legitimize, or problematize what they have put on paper. Written products can be revisited across time. People can read what they wrote days, weeks, months, and years ago and tell us what makes sense and what has changed. People can identify strands of symmetry or challenge their past selves across time.

Written artifacts can also present challenges. For example, "social circumstances and social exigencies are less immediately visible in writing" (Bazerman et al., 2018, p. 26) than during observations of writers as they write, make their way to school, locate themselves in classrooms, and engage with other children. Thus, lifespan writing research must entail more than documents. Multiple data sources are essential, as contextual factors—"practices, people, artifacts, and environments operate in each moment of writing" (Dippre & Smith, 2020, p. 31). Contextual factors sometimes involve the re-inscription of hegemonic, mainstream, privileged, and dominant discourses. Thus, writing can be an important space for challenging hegemonic discourses and disseminating counter- narratives and non-dominant accounts.

By analyzing discourses across time, I glimpse into "how people and things are mobilized and paralyzed, facilitated and restricted, in different measure and in relation to institutions and systems with long histories" (Smith, 2020, p. 19). In short, temporal discourse analysis can reveal students' thoughts about being and becoming writers, and how they situate themselves in relation to school, community, home, and global spaces. Bazerman and colleagues (2018) highlight the need for lifespan writing researchers to intentionally focus on individual writers—their purposes, their efforts, and the challenges they face. By analyzing discourses and how writers present their thoughts, experiences, and practices across time, we can begin to jettison our assumptions and catalyze individual journeys as conveyed by their words—written and spoken—across time.

Lifespan writing research, with a focus on how people change and develop across time, requires analytic processes that attend to change and stasis. I have used temporal discourse to identify longitudinal patterns across data sets. Specifically, longitudinal research:

1. provides deep insights into people's experiences by considering not only the here-and-now, but also past experiences and future visions
2. invites researchers and participants to develop rich and trusting relationships
3. creates important opportunities for advocacy and collaboration
4. reveals the complexity of situations alongside the vulnerability of participants whose life situations are defined by limited resources

We cannot "overlook the cultural and linguistic differences, variations in circumstances, and social inequalities that characterize life as people experience it" (Bazerman et al., 2018, p. 12). In the examples below and in the following, power is revealed as we consider children from two very different immigrant families, from different parts of the world, with different languages, and with differential access to cultural and economic resources.

COMPTON-LILLY'S LONGITUDINAL BECOMING: THE ORIGINS OF TEMPORAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

This chapter revisits and extends a set of analytical processes that I have found useful for analyzing longitudinal data and, thus, lifespan writing research data. Specifically, I describe lessons that I learned as I extended a one-year dissertation study into a ten-year project (Compton-Lilly, 2003; 2007; 2012; 2017). Admittedly, my longitudinal methods were far from perfect, and the methods I came to use were often improvised through trial-and-error (e.g., Thomson & Holland, 2003).

When I began my dissertation study, I never dreamed I would follow the children into high school. Thus, as I collected data for this new longitudinal study, I treated each phase as a new study. While the data I collected was informed by what I had learned during earlier phases, I was neither intentional in how I collected my data nor how the study design could have facilitated longitudinal analysis of these data. Avowedly, I was a novice researcher with no background in longitudinal methods. My ignorance was exacerbated by an ongoing lack of transparent discussions about qualitative longitudinal research methods, which with few exceptions—including this current volume—continues today.

In my original study, my data analysis process involved four separate stages of coding interview data and field notes, which aligned with my four phases of data collection. During the first phase, data were coded across cases into grounded categories. As I analyzed data from Grade 5, I worried that students' stories were obfuscated by my cross-case analysis. Thus, during Phase 2 and again in phase 4, I coded and analyzed cases separately prior to identifying cross-case patterns. During Phase 3, I again used cross-case coding. Thus, I moved between identifying cross-case patterns and telling individual stories.

However, these analytics, while productive in allowing me to attend to both individual cases and cross-case patterns, did little to reveal longitudinal patterns. Comments from parents—who watched their children move through school—led me to consider the children's long-term experiences and trajectories. It became apparent that separate, sequential, and grounded codings of data obfuscated longitudinal patterns. Over time, I began to notice that data collected during early phases of the project gained significance when viewed in relation to data collected years later (e.g., Compton-Lilly, 2020). I began to hear repeated phrases and stories across time. However, writing about these longitudinal patterns required rereading huge stacks of data and using the search function on my word processor to locate words and phrases from interview transcripts collected years apart.

Based on these concerns and frustrations, my next longitudinal research study was intentionally designed to reveal longitudinal patterns across time. In that study, the research team collected parallel data sets, asking participants to complete the same or similar tasks, and answer the same or similar interview questions each year (Bazerman, 2018). We coded data using combinations of *a priori* codes—reflecting our initial research questions—and grounded codes which were periodically revised. Each case was coded longitudinally; the same codes were used for each year as we created one coded data set for each student. Thus, if I was interested in a particular child's literacy practices at school, I could download stacks of coded data for that child and read that data set for longitudinal patterns—repeated language or stories, changes across time, and

reminiscences. In some cases, minor modifications were made in my code list to accommodate changes as the children grew older and technology changed.

The possibility of analyzing temporal discourses is not new. Gee's (e.g., 2004) discussion of discourse analysis consistently posed the possibility of attending to temporal language. Temporality is inherent in nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2007; Wohlwend, 2020) as researchers examine children's actions and analyze video footage, tracking what happens over time in classrooms and other spaces. What is different about temporal discourse analysis is the intentional focus on what people say and how they enact and display their understandings of their world over time. Temporal discourse analysis, while it can be used to analyze data from short-term studies, has a particular salience and applicability to longitudinal data sets.

Unlike other chapters in this volume, I do not present a full methodology. Instead, I describe an analytical process that can be used with a range of methodologies (e.g., case studies, ethnographies, classroom-based studies, narrative inquiries) when researchers are interested in temporality. While studies that use temporal discourse analysis will often be longitudinal, any research project that involves multiple data collection points and seeks to examine change may find these analytics useful.

APPLYING TEMPORAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TO MY DATA

In my past writing, I have identified five types of temporal discourses (Compton-Lilly 2014a; 2015) related to the educational experiences of my participants: 1) the language people use to situate themselves in ongoing time; 2) comments and practices related to long social histories; 3) references to the pace of schooling and the timelines that operate in schools; 4) repeated discourses across time that reveal shared ways of understanding the world, and 5) repeated stories that present changing or consistent meanings across time. The first two types of discourses listed above reveal how people locate themselves in time. The third type of discourse reveals how people experience the pace of activities. The fourth and fifth reveals how people make and convey meaning across time.

Together, I argue that attending to these temporal discourses allows researchers to explicitly focus on how participants situate themselves in time and how they use language to convey meaning. Below, I present an example of each type of temporal discourse from the study that I discuss in the following chapter.

The Language that People Use to Situate Themselves within Time

Across interviews with children, their parents, and their teachers, we often heard temporal language. This language revealed how participants situated themselves

and others within time. Words, such as "always," "forward," and "was" convey temporality, situating the speakers in relation to events presented as past, present, recurring, or in the future. Teachers often used temporal language to report on children's learning or writing practices. For example, Maya's bilingual kindergarten teacher believed that her strong Spanish literacy skills would "help push her *forward* and keep pushing her *forward*." Felipe's second- grade teacher was concerned that when Felipe wrote stories "[the storyline] *always* has to be with those [video] games and playing with them."

Children and their parents routinely used temporal language. As a fourth grader, James commented on his mother's pronunciation of English words, saying, "*Once* my mom was reading the map, and she saw Houston, and she thought it said 'House-ten'." Maya's mother proudly reported, *"Peinso que sera multilingual cuando cresca"* (I think *she will be* multilingual when she grows up). Similarly, Adam's mother reported on the present with the future in mind, "I use the Arabic with him because *I don't want him to forget* . . . [For] the kids it's easy to forget their language so *I keep talking* to them just Arabic." By attending to temporal language, we glimpse how teachers, parents, and children position themselves and others within larger temporal and social contexts.

LANGUAGE RELATED TO THE PACE OF SCHOOLING

Temporality also manifested in how participants spoke about schooling and the temporal expectations that defined school success. Temporal discourses were often related to the pace of learning. In some cases, participants reported being able to learn things quickly and easily. At age eight, Adam described speaking multiple languages as "easy" saying, "It took me like *only two days* to learn English." Adam claimed to know "five languages"—"English, Arabic, French, Spanish and a little bit Chinese." Similarly, Maya's kindergarten teacher reported, "she's *only been here a month and a half, maybe two now*, but it's like you can see every single sound represented and she's got spaces between her words."

In other cases, participants were concerned about children keeping pace with learning benchmarks. For example, by fourth grade, Maya's dual language teacher identified English vocabulary as a problem:

> Probably the one thing, understandably, that she's working on
> is the lack of vocabulary, and even then, she is doing so well
> in English. But [that's] compared to her Spanish, you know,
> I really see her *starting to catch up* in English . . . when you
> think about students being in the bilingual program, you are
> thinking about that great foundational basis in their native
> language [and] that it's *going to transfer.*

While this teacher reported that Maya's Spanish abilities exceeded her abilities in English, she noted that Maya was "starting to catch up" with English and predicted a promising future, explaining that her knowledge of Spanish was "going to transfer" and support her in reading and writing in Spanish.

The Language That People Use to Locate Themselves in Larger Social Histories

Historical and constructed meanings were apparent across the data set when participants described historical events that affected their understandings of school and literacy learning. When asked how he felt about the education his son, James, was getting in the United States, Mr. Li described his former teachers in China. He explained that these Chinese teachers used political slogans to teach English, including "China is a great country," and "Serve the people heart and soul." Mr. Li complained that these English phrases were useless, saying "Nobody [in the USA] says [things] this way." He described this instruction as "no good," saying, "I consider[ed] myself as a very good English student, but then when I saw my first [English] movie . . . I couldn't understand a thing [in] the whole movie." Mr. Li used this story—drawing on his experiences of historical practices in China—to explain and convey his support for the educational system in the United States.

Repeated Discourses Across Time

In some cases, similar discourses recurred across the data set. The most common example of repeated discourse in my current longitudinal study involved repeated talk about text reading levels:

> Elina (grade 2): I'm on level 14 for my reading.
>
> Carlos (grade 2): In English I'm level 20, and then [in] Spanish level 25.
>
> Felipe (grade 5): My teacher told me [my] grade in reading . . . I am close to "Z" which is the best grade or reading level.

Teachers also used textlevel discourses. For example, across the first four years of the study, Carlos' teachers routinely discussed his reading abilities in terms of text levels.

Grade 2 Teacher: I know he is reading at an advanced level. . . . He's reading at a level 20.

> Grade 3 Teacher: He's done extremely well. He's not quite at a level 30, which is considered [the] end of 3rd grade, but he's

like a 27 or something like that.

Grade 4 Teacher: I've done some assessments with him, and
he's passed with flying colors [met the designated text level
benchmark].

In some cases, discourses referencing the progress of children from immigrant families were repeatedly marked by references to the child's English learner status.

Grade 3 Teacher: [Felipe's] still an ESL kid.

Grade 4 Teacher: . . . especially for [Felipe] being an ELL
student,

Grade 5 Teacher: [Felipe's] by far my strongest linguist-language learner reader.

Not only were discourses about text level and ELL status repeated across time, but they also circulated among children, their teachers, and sometimes family members. Tracking the same or similar discourses across time is one means of identifying how meanings are made, sustained, and sometimes disrupted as participants took up and sometimes challenged ways of discussing their experiences.

REPEATED STORIES ACROSS TIME

In some cases, participants told the same stories at different points of time. For example, in first grade, Gabby often spoke about going fishing with her father and her brothers. When asked what she wrote about at school, Gabby responded, "mostly going fishing" and described a fishing story that she had written at school. By the end of that year, Gabby's father had moved out of the home; Gabby reported that they used to fish "but not no more." A year later, she fondly recalled a fishing adventure with her dad, saying "I remember I caught a cod on [my brother's] fishing pole." In grade three, she again revisited this memory.

And I caught a huge carp, like this big. (Gabby spreads her
hands apart to show the size) . . . My dad told me [that there
was a fish on the line] because I was playing on the statue.
There's a statue and me and my friend used to play on it when
we went [fishing]. Well, me and Javon, my friend [were play-
ing] and my dad and my uncle had to reel it [in] for me . . . .
It was too [big].

As with many fishing stories, Gabby's account expanded across time, possibly because she was older and better able to articulate her thoughts or perhaps

because this event, involving her estranged father, became increasingly salient after he left the household. Notably, the cod became a carp, the fishing party expanded to include her uncle and a friend, and a statue appeared. These morphings speak to how memories are negotiated, reworked, and rearranged as they become the stories people tell themselves and others.

LONGITUDINAL REFLEXIVITY AND METHODOLOGICAL COMPLICATIONS

When considering longitudinal and lifespan research, researcher reflexivity assumes particular significance. Revisiting findings, reworking claims, and complicating conclusions inherently involve reflexivity. While traditional statements of researcher reflexivity generally reference the significance of background, race, gender, age and other dimensions of self, there is much more that could be considered when thinking reflexively. Bourdieu argued that researchers must acknowledge their struggle for legitimation within academic fields, the scholarly capital they accumulate, and how capital operates within academic fields (Grenfell, 2011; Grenfell & Pahl, 2018). For example, my scholarly becoming was sometimes constrained by accepted methodological practices. For example, I conducted my dissertation as a short-term grounded theory study (Compton-Lilly, 2003). I have clear memories of repeatedly reading Strauss and Corbin's (1990) book to discern the correct method for conducting a grounded theory study. My focus was on doing things correctly. However, this quest for correctness was shattered by my longitudinal efforts and the need to accommodate longitudinal data and the long-term ethical commitments researchers make to participants (Compton-Lilly, 2014a; 2015).

Longitudinal trajectories do not unfold in empty spaces. Being/becoming always occurs within spaces populated by histories. Racism, colonization, inequity, and cruelty affect children's learning trajectories. While the details of our experiences differ, like my participants, I am operating in a post 9/11 world, post-Trump country, where Black Lives Matter, a pandemic has unfolded, and climate change is creating chaos in people's lives. Thus, my readings of my data are inseparable from the times in which I live, the field, participants' experiences, and my positionality, which invites me to read data in particular ways and launch particular ways of thinking, while discouraging other directions.

Finally, longitudinal relationships are often close and trusting, complicating claims of objectivity or distance. Participants in longitudinal educational studies often ask for advice related to schooling, educational opportunities, and children's college plans. In addition, participation in a research project can affect participants in unintentional ways. In my original longitudinal study, after eight

years of participation, one of my former students asked me if I had selected him for the longitudinal study because he sometimes misbehaved in first grade. Behavior was neither the focus of the study nor among the criteria I used to recruit families. In short, participation in longitudinal projects can convey enduring unintended messages to participants.

As Thomson and Holland (2003) noted, "the structure of the research encouraged young people to present themselves as being involved in a progressive and developmental process of change" (p. 24). As they explain, this sometimes became a challenge for students whose long-term trajectories were less successful. As longitudinal and lifespan researchers, we must constantly ask ourselves what it might mean to young people when we repeatedly return to talk with them about literacy, if literacy learning is a site of personal challenge, failure, or distress. Are we playing a role in reifying that failure? Through longitudinal research, we learn that our interpretations are always provisional and that the next round of data collection has the potential to challenge past findings. The child who struggled in school can become successful. The religious and polite child can get in trouble. The struggling single mother can be promoted into management. However, to what degree are these possibilities visible, tangible, and viable for our participants?

A FEW LONGITUDINAL CONCLUSIONS

Not only does lifespan research provide insight into the lived experiences and insights of participants, but it also holds us accountable to participants and honors the complexity of literacy learning and practices. Lifespan writing research invokes a "special ethical responsibility to tend and care for the relationship with participants" (Smith, 2020, p. 24). This responsibility is necessary to ensure the continued participation of participants, but even more, it is deeply premised on the caring relationships that emerge alongside longitudinal relations with participants. These relationships are premised on listening to participants' accounts and the accounts of people around them. Considering the perspectives, intentions, interests, and experiences of participants is key to conducting thoughtful and responsive research. I maintain that temporal discourse analysis is a tool for listening closely (also see Fulford & Rosenberg, this volume).

Temporal discourse analysis reveals how people draw on time, use time, and make meaning across time as they convey understandings about themselves and their worlds. Specifically, we are allowed glimpses of how people locate themselves in time, how they experience time, and how they make and convey meaning across time. As Bazerman reported,

Longitudinal studies offer the possibility of understanding individuals following unique pathways leading to unique skills, orientations, and responses in

situations rather than being normalized through cross-sectional groups of age, educational level, or other category, with individuals being characterized as typical or atypical. (2018, p. 328)

Discourse analysis is one tool for looking longitudinally at how people make sense of themselves, their worlds, and their becomings across time.

In short, temporal discourse analysis, rich description, and multiple data sources allow researchers to attend to change, trajectory, and becoming as fertile means for making sense of people's experiences. While many implications could be offered, I close by sharing three claims:

1. All research has the potential to become longitudinal and to explore lifespan eras. I would encourage lifespan writing researchers, when possible, to revisit former research sites and participants. Discover what has happened to people who were involved in past projects and be willing to challenge the findings and insights that seemed compelling at the time of the original study.
2. Lifespan writing researchers must continue to craft analytic procedures that allow them to analyze data collected across long periods of time. Simply coding events at each phase of a project will not reveal longitudinal patterns. Sophisticated methods for exploring change, documenting trajectories, and understanding processes of becoming are needed (Compton-Lilly, 2014b).
3. Understanding the cumulative effects of schooling and other aspects of people's lives across time require longitudinal methods. The effects of poverty, race, cultural and linguistic differences may become increasingly visible across long periods of time as participants describe and reflect on critical incidents, identify the accumulation of micro-aggressions (Compton-Lilly, 2020) and conceptualize alternative possibilities for literacy learning and school success.

Finally, I offer advice to novice scholars interested in using temporal discourse analysis to analyze data. I would encourage scholars to ask themselves two questions: First, are you asking research questions that involve discourses and/ or change over time? If you are doing single interviews, you are only hearing participants' thoughts at one point in time; temporal discourse analysis requires multiple data points distributed across time in ways that allow change to become visible. For some research questions this will require long periods of time. For other research questions, shorter timespans will suffice. Second, have you designed your study to see change over time? For example, multiple interviews with very different foci might not reveal change in the same ways as interviews that entail similar or parallel data sources.

If temporal discourse analysis seems feasible, be prepared for a messy process. As you review transcribed files—which I always do in hard copy—note temporal language, watch for references to larger social histories, and note repeated discourses and stories. While you can aspire to code for temporal discourses, I have not found coding sufficient. The problem is that early data becomes increasingly salient as later data is reviewed. A passing comment in first grade becomes significant when repeated, extended, or challenged in third grade. Thus, rereading, revisiting, and reviewing of data is unavoidable. Getting started means digging in. As with all qualitative analysis, insights and surprises await. Enjoy the mess and cherish the opportunity to learn from people's lives and experiences.

RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE

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