Discourse Analysis

Phoneme

Morpheme

Word / meaning

Clause

Sentence/utterance

Pragmatics

Discourse

What is Discourse Analysis?

- How do we make sense of what we read?

- How can we recognize well-constructed texts?

- How can we understand speakers who communicate more than they say?

- How can we successfully take part in the complex activity called conversation?

- "Discourse" → "language beyond the sentence"

- " Analysis of Discourse" → "the study of language in texts

  and conversation"

One of the earliest discourse analysts, the linguist Zellig Harris (1952), posed the question: how do we tell whether a sequence of sentences is a *text*1 – that is, the sentences relate to one another and collectively form some larger whole – as opposed to just a random collection of unrelated bits? The answer to that question, Harris thought, would make clear what kind of structure exists 'above the sentence'. Texts would have this structure, whereas random collections of sentences would not.

Discourse analysis

- **<u>Discourse analysis:</u>**

- 1- we (as language users) are capable of recognizing correct versus incorrect forms and structures.

- 2- we can cope with fragments in newspaper headlines.

- E.g (a causal relation exists between the two phrases)

- Trains collide ⟶ two die

- No shoes ⟶ no service

Ability to create discourse interpretations of linguistic messages

The definition offered by *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (Crystal, 1992) says: discourse analysis is

- the study of how sentences in spoken and written language form larger meaningful units such as paragraphs, conversations, interviews, etc.

- how the choices of articles, pronouns, and tenses affects the structures of the discourse

- the relationship between utterances in a discourse

- the moves made by speakers to introduce a new topic, change the topic, or insert a higher role relationship to the other participants

- Analysis of **spoken discourse** is sometimes called ***conversational analysis*** (CA). Some linguists use the term ***text linguistics*** for the study of written discourse.

Discourse vs. pragmatics

Pragmatics is traditionally mentioned in contrast with semantics, and primarily concerned with language in use.

In modern linguistics, pragmatics is applied to the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choice they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication

Discourse Analysis is specifically about the understanding and examination of spoken or written language in actual communication.

Pragmatics is a fundamental tool to analyze discourse.

But discourse is something 'larger', it deals with the concepts of text, textuality and genre as we saw at the beginning.

Text?

- Texts may refer to collections of written or spoken material…

- The study of texts has become a defining feature of a branch of linguistics referred to as **textlinguistics** or discourse analysis.

- Our knowledge of linguistic form and structure is the key to interpreting discourse.

Interpreting Discourse

My Town

- My natal was in a small town, very close to Riyadh capital of Saudi Arabia. The distant between my town and Riyadh 7 miles exactly. The name of this Almasani that means in English Factories. It takes this name from the peopl's career. In my childhood I remember the people live. It was very simple. Most the people was farmer

- contains ungrammatical forms.

- Rather than simply rejecting the text as ungrammatical, we try to make sense of it. That is, we attempt to arrive at a reasonable interpretation of what the writer intended to convey.

- Most people say they understand the 'My Town' text quite easily.

🟢 We can even cope with texts, written in English, which we couldn't produce ourselves and which appear to break a lot of the rules of the English language.

… Yet we can build an **<u>interpretation</u>**.

The effort to interpret & how we accomplish it are the key elements investigated in the study of discourse.

Areas of Study

- Speech acts

- Coherence and cohesion

- Conversation analysis

Cohesion

Texts must have a certain structure that depends on factors quite different from those required in the structure of a single sentence.

Those factors are described in terms of cohesion.

My father once bought a Lincoln convertible. He did it by saving every penny he could. That car would be worth a fortune nowadays. However, he sold it to help pay for my college education. Sometimes I think I'd rather have the convertible.

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Those **cohesive ties** will allow us to:

- Understand how writers structure what they want to say

- Judge whether something is well written or not.

Cohesion would not be sufficient to enable us to make sense of what we read.

- It is easy to create a highly cohesive text that has a lot of connections between the sentences, but is very difficult to interpret

My father bought a Lincoln convertible. The car driven by the police was red. That color doesn't suit her. She consists of three letters. However, a letter isn't as fast as a telephone call.

Sentences are linked by **lexical** and **grammatical** items.

Cohesion refers to the surface structure of texts, on how words and sentences are organised to form a cohesive whole.

The connection between the words could be distinguished by an important factor that is usually described as

" **Coherence** "

Coherence refers to deeper structures (**not** surface structures) in texts. It involves a semantic (meaning) and pragmatic level.

Coherence

- Everything fitting together well.

- Not something that exists in words or structures, but something that exists in people.

- People "make sense" of what they read and hear.

- People's interpretations are results of their experience of the way the world is …..

- **Doesn't exist in words, it exists in people; they make sense of what they hear and read.**

That is present in the interpretation of casual conversation.

A great deal of what is meant is not actually present in what is said.

- HER: That's the telephone.

- HIM: I'm in the bath.

- HER: O.K

There are certainly no cohesive ties within this fragment of discourse.

- She makes a request of him to perform action.

- He states reason why He cannot comply with request.

- She undertakes to perform action.

It is clear that language users have a lot of knowledge of how conversations work that is not simply " linguistic" knowledge.

Speech Events

- By analyzing conversations or any other speech event,
We realize that there is numerous variation in what people say and do in different circumstances.

- **Factors that influence what is said and how it is said:**
- 1. We have to specify the role of the hearer (or hearers) and the speaker and their relationship.
- Friends
- Equals/ unequals
- Man, woman….etc.
- 2. specify topic of conversation
- 3. specify what setting it took place in.

Those factors will influence what is said and how it is said

As language users in a particular culture, we have a sophisticated knowledge of how conversations work.

Example...

- Him: Oh, Mary I'm glad you're here.
- Her: What's up?
- Him: I can't get my computer to work.
- Her: Is it broken?
- Him: I don't think so.
- Her: What's it doing?
- Him: I don't know. I'm useless with computers.
- Her: What kind is it?
- Him: It's a Mac. Do you use them?
- Her: Yeah.
- Him: Do you have a minute?
- Her: Sure.
- Him: Oh, great.

The previous example may be called a 'requesting' speech event without a central speech act of request.

There was no actual request stated. We can characterize 'Do you have a minute?' as a pre-request so that the hearer has the chance to say no.

By saying 'sure', the hearer is:
- Acknowledging that she has time
- and is willing to do the unstated action

RULES OF CONVERSATION

Conversation Analysis

English conversation:

An activity where two or more people take turns at speaking.

Participants will wait until one speaker indicates that he or she has finished by signaling a **completion point** by: asking a question, pausing.

Participant might indicate that they want to **take the speaking turn** by: making short sounds, body shifts, or facial expressions,

1 -Turn-taking

There are different styles and strategies of participation in conversation.

Some strategies lead us to describe the person as rude or shy according to the different conventions of **turn-taking.**

Example: p.146

Turn-taking

- 1. Rude (if one speaker cuts in on

- another speaker

- 2. Shy (If one keeps waiting for an

- opportunity to take a turn and none

- Seems to occur.

Different conversational styles

- *participants who are "rude" or "shy" may be adhering different conventions of **turn-taking**

Turn-taking

- **<u>Long-winded speakers:</u>**

- Are those who are used to "holding the floor".

- We all use this strategy to some extent.

- Where?

- In situations where we have to work out what we are trying to say while actually saying it.

- End of sentence + pause = indicates end of turn

- "keep the turn" avoid that.

- Cont. your sentence?

- use connectors

-'fill' your pause with hesitation markers *[er, um, ah, ah]*.

- Speaker X produces filled pauses after having almost lost the turn at his first brief hesitation:

- *X: well that film really was… [wasn't what he was good at*

- *Y: when di-*

- *X: I mean his other… em his later films were much more… Er*

    really more in the romantic style and that was more what

    what he was… you know… em best at doing

- *Y: So when did he make that one*

- These strategies are part of what makes conversation work.

- Ways of organizing our turns of social interactions via language.

One of the most important principles of conversational discourse is that is " co-operative"

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