

LINGUISTICS

FOURTH YEAR

LECTURE (3): DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: COHESION AND COHERENCE

- **Discourse** is usually defined as “**language beyond the sentence**” and so the analysis of discourse is typically *concerned with the study of language in texts and conversations*.
- While traditional linguistics might concentrate on **individual words or sentences**, discourse analysis **extends beyond this** to examine how sentences **link** together **to create cohesive, coherent** messages in real-life interactions.

1. Cohesion: The grammatical and lexical ties and connections that exist within a text.

□ **Example:** 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.

○ Cohesive ties:

- **References and deixis:** (he, this, that, such, the father)
- **Conjunctions (connector):** (and, but, however, therefore)
- **Lexical cohesion:** repetition, synonyms, collocations.

2. Coherence: The quality of being logical, consistent and forming a unified whole. It depends on shared knowledge, context, and understanding—not just grammar. For example:

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

SPEECH EVENT

- **A speech event** refers to a specific type of communicative activity that occurs within a given **cultural** or **social context**.
- Speech events are **structured interactions**, like **conversations, interviews, or speeches**, that are defined by certain **rules** or **conventions**.

They can vary significantly from one discourse into another depending on **different factors**.

□ **Key Elements of a Speech Event:**

1. **Participants**: The **roles** of the speaker and the listener, their **relationship, age, education**, etc. (e.g., **friends, strangers, men, women, young, old, of equal or unequal status**)
2. **Setting**: **Where** and **when** are they speaking?
3. **Purpose**: The **reason** or **goal** of the interaction (e.g., **to inform, entertain, persuade**).
4. **Form and Structure**: The **format** or structure of the communication (e.g., **question-answer sequences, turn-taking**).
5. **Topic**: The **subject** matter or **theme** of the speech event.
6. **Norms**: **Social and cultural rules** that guide how participants should behave and speak.

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

- **A Conversation Analysis:** is the study of the structure and organization of spoken interaction.
- It focuses on how people take turns, sequences, repairs, and meaning in everyday talk.
- ☐ Typically, only **one person** speaks at a time and there tends to be **avoidance of silence**. If more than one participant tries to **talk** at the same time, one of them usually **stops**, as in the following **example**.

- ❖ ☐ A: Didn't you [know why-
- ❖ ☐ B: [But he must've been there by two
- ❖ ☐ A: Yes but you knew where he was going.
[= overlapping

- **Completion point** occurs when the participants wait until one speaker indicates that he or she has finished.
- Speakers can mark their turns as complete in a number of ways:
 - By asking a question.
 - By pausing at the end of a completed syntactic structure like a phrase or sentence.
 - Eye contact.
- Other participants can indicate that they want to take the speaking turn, also in a number of ways.
 - They can start to make short sounds, usually repeated, while the speaker is talking,
 - often use body shifts,
 - Facial expressions to signal that they have something to say.

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS: ADJACENCY PAIRS

1. **Adjacency pairs** are **two-part exchanges** in conversation where one speaker's utterance creates an **expectation** for a specific type of response. These pairs are a building block of conversation and create coherence and predictability. **For example:**

Greeting:

- Speaker A: "Hello!"
- Speaker B: "Hi!"

Question and Answer:

- Speaker A: "How are you? "
- Speaker B: "I'm fine."

Request and Acceptance/Refusal:

- Speaker A: "Could you pass the salt?"
- Speaker B: "Sure, here you go." / "Sorry, I can't reach it."

Invitation and Acceptance/Decline:

- Speaker A: "Would you like to join us for lunch?"
- Speaker B: "I'd love to!" / "I can't today, sorry."

Apology and Acceptance:

- Speaker A: "I'm really sorry for being late."
- Speaker B: "No worries at all!"

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS: TURN-TAKING

2. Turn-taking is the mechanism by which speakers organize **who speaks**, **when**, and **for how long**. Turn changes are usually smooth - with **little overlap or silence**.

- In an ideal exchange:
 1. Speakers take turns **smoothly**.
 2. They wait for **completion points**.
 3. They avoid **interruptions** and **long silences**.

- However, social factors like **rudeness** or **shyness** can disturb this balance.

RUDENESS IN TURN-TAKING

□ **Rudeness:** occurs when someone **violates politeness** norms or ignores **turn-taking rules**, showing lack of **respect** or **consideration**.

• **Characteristics of Rudeness in Turn-taking**

1. Interrupting frequently: break conversational rules by speaking before the other person **finishes**.
(e.g., **A: I think we should—** **B: No, that's wrong!**)

2. Holding the floor too long ('Long-winded' speakers): talk **excessively** without waiting for a **pause** or **natural turn transition**, disregarding others' speaking rights. They **avoid having normal completion points** by making their sentences **run on** by using connectors such as **and, and then, so, but** ...etc., placing **pauses** at points where the message is clearly **incomplete**, preferably filling the pause with hesitation markers such as **er, um, uh, ah**, and **voiding eye contact**

3. Ignoring attempts to take a turn: When someone **signals** they want to speak, but the current speaker continues talking, showing a lack of consideration for **cooperative communication**.

4. Overlapping speech: Intentionally speaking at the same time to overpower or dismiss the other speaker.

5. Abrupt topic shifts: **Changing the subject** without acknowledging what the previous speaker said.

6. Using a harsh tone or dismissive responses, such as **"Whatever."** / **"I don't care."**, can sound disrespectful.

EXAMPLES OF RUDENESS IN TURN-TAKING

1. **Interrupting the Speaker.** For example:

- ❖ **A:** “I think the best solution would be—”
- ❖ **B:** “No, that won’t work at all!”

2. **Talking Over Someone (Overlapping Speech).** For example:

- ❖ **A:** “Yesterday I went to the—”
- ❖ **B:** “Yeah, yeah, I already know, you told me.”

3. **Ignoring Someone’s Attempt to Speak.** For example:

- ❖ **A:** “Can I just say someth—”
- ❖ **B:** “Anyway, as I was saying, the meeting is at 9.”

4. **Holding the Floor Too Long.** For example:

- ❖ **A:** (speaks for five minutes without pause) “—and another thing, I remember back in college...”
- ❖ **B:** (tries to speak) “Yes, but—”
- ❖ **A:** “Wait, I’m not done yet!”

5. **Abrupt Topic Change.** For example:

- ❖ **A:** “So, about my mother’s health—”
- ❖ **B:** “Did you see the football match last night?”

SHYNESS IN TURN-TAKING

□ **Shyness:** refers to hesitation or fear of speaking, often caused by low confidence or anxiety in social interactions.

- **Characteristics of Shyness in Turn-taking**

1. **Long pauses before speaking:** The shy speaker waits **too long** after a **completion point**, causing **silence**.
2. **Avoiding interruptions and confrontation:** Even when they want to speak, shy participants rarely **interrupt others**.
3. **Few self-selected turns:** They **hesitate**, making it unclear when they want to speak.
4. **Yielding turns quickly:** They speak **briefly**, fearing they are taking up too much space.

EXAMPLES OF SHYNESS IN TURN-TAKING

1. Long Pauses Before Speaking. For example:

- ❖ A: “What do you think about the plan, Sarah?”
- ❖ (pause... 5 seconds)
- ❖ Sarah: “Uh... I’m not sure... maybe it’s okay.”

2. Speaking Quietly or Incompletely. For example:

- ❖ A: “Did you like the movie?”
- ❖ B: (softly) “Um... yeah, it was... good.” (voice fades)

3. Yielding the Turn Quickly. For example:

- ❖ A: “Tell us about your weekend, Ali.”
- ❖ Ali: “Uh... not much, just stayed home.”
- ❖ A: “Okay, anyone else?”

4. Avoiding to Take a Turn (Silence or Minimal Response). For example:

- ❖ A: “Does anyone want to add something?”
- ❖ (Silence)
- ❖ A: “No one? Okay, let’s move on.”

5. Needing to Be Invited Repeatedly. For example:

- ❖ A: “Lina, would you like to share your opinion?”
- ❖ Lina: “Oh... me? Uh... okay, well... maybe later.”

THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

- **The Cooperative Principle** is an idea proposed by the British philosopher **H.P. Grice**.
- It suggests that participants in a conversation typically **cooperate** with each other to achieve **effective communication**.

□ Grice identified **four maxims** that underpin this principle:

- 1) **Quantity maxim:** Provide **the right amount of information**. This means giving as informative as is required, but **not more**, or **less**, than is required.
- 2) **Quality maxim:** Say **the truth**. Do not say what you believe to be false
- 3) **Relation maxim:** **Be relevant**. That is, keep the conversation focused on the topic at hand.
- 4) **Manner maxim:** **Be clear, brief and orderly**. Avoid obscurity and ambiguity, and be orderly in your presentation.

THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE: EXAMPLE

1. Maxim of Quantity

Violation: Providing **too much** or **too little** information. For example:

➤ **Too Little:** Person A: "How was the party? "

Person B: "Fine." (Response doesn't provide any details about the party.)

➤ **Too Much:** Person A: "What did you do today?"

Person B: "Well, I woke up at 7 AM, had breakfast, which was eggs and toast, then I got dressed, went for a 30-minute jog around the neighborhood, came back, showered, went to work, worked on several projects including the upcoming presentation, had lunch at 1 PM, etc."

(This response overwhelms Person A with unnecessary details.)

2. Maxim of Quality

Violation: **Lying** or providing information **without evidence**. For example:

➤ Person A: "Did you finish your report?"

Person A: "Why is the sky blue?"

➤ Person B: "Yes," (but B didn't do it).

Person B: "Because aliens painted it."

(B gives an unsupported and false explanation.)

THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE: EXAMPLE

3. Maxim of Relation

Violation: Making **irrelevant contributions**. For example:

- **Person A:** "What do you think of the new restaurant in town?"
- **Person B:** "I had spaghetti yesterday."

(The response doesn't address the question about the restaurant and seems out of context.)

4. Maxim of Manner

Violation: Being **unclear** or **overly ambiguous**. For example:

- **Person A:** "Did you bring the book?"
- **Person B:** "I brought a book."

(B's vagueness causes confusion.)

HEDGES

- **Hedges:** Words or phrases that **soften** statements, showing **uncertainty** (that what we are saying is sufficiently correct or complete) or **politeness**.
- We use certain **types of expressions** to show that we are concerned about following the maxims while being **co-operative participants** in conversation.

1. Concerning the **Quality** maxim:

- ❖ **Sort of...kind of...** (for accuracy) as in *His hair was kind of long.*
- ❖ **As far as I know**
- ❖ **correct me if I'm wrong,...**
- ❖ **I'm not absolutely sure, but...**
- ❖ **Possibly...likely...** (**not certain**)
- ❖ **Think or feel** (**not know**)
- ❖ **May or could happen** (**not must**)

HEDGES

2. Concerning the **Quantity** maxim:

- As you probably know,...
- Cut a long story short,...
- I won't bore you with all the details,...

3. Concerning the **Relation** maxim:

- Anyway,...
- Well, anyway...
- Oh, by the way... (to mention something unconnected)

4. Concerning the **Manner** maxim:

- I'm not sure if this makes sense, but...

IMPLICATURE

➤ **Implicature:** Meanings that are implied but not explicitly stated, based on the maxims.

For example:

❖ Carol: Are you coming to the party tonight?

❖ Lara: I've got an exam tomorrow.

- Obviously, it is a violation of the maxim of relation, but Lara's statement is not an answer to Carol's question. Lara doesn't say Yes or No. Yet Carol will immediately interpret the statement as meaning "No" or "Probably not."
- In order to describe the conversational implicature involved in Lara's statement, we had to appeal to some (about exams, studying and partying) that must be shared by the conversational background knowledge participants.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- ❖ **John was on his way to school last Friday.**
- ❖ **He was really worried about the math lesson.**
- Most people think that **John is probably a schoolboy**, although this piece of information is **not directly stated in the text**.
- Other inferences, for different readers, are that **John is walking** or that **he is on a bus**. These inferences are clearly derived from our **conventional knowledge**, in our culture, about “**going to school**,” and no reader has ever suggested that **John is swimming or on a boat**.
- Here is the next sentence in the text.
- ❖ **Last week he had been unable to control the class.**
- On encountering this sentence, most readers decide that **John is, in fact, a teacher and that he is not very happy**. Many report that **he is probably driving a car to school**.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

➤ Then the next sentence is presented.

❖ **It was unfair of the math teacher to leave him in charge.**

Suddenly, **John reverts to his schoolboy status**, and the inference that **he is a teacher** is quickly **abandoned**.

➤ The final sentence of the text contains a surprise.

❖ **After all, it is not a normal part of a janitor's duties.**

- The exercise provides us with some insight into the ways in which **we “build” interpretations** of what we read by using a lot more information than is presented in the words on the page. That is, **we actually create what the text is about, based on our expectations of what normally happens**. In attempting to describe this phenomenon, researchers often use the concept of a **“schema”** or a **“script.”**

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE: SCHEMA

- **Schema:** A **conventional knowledge structure** that exists in memory. It organizes **knowledge** and **expectations** about a particular concept or situation.
 - It helps us **understand** and **interpret** what **we read or hear** by connecting **new information** to **what we already know**.
 - In discourse analysis, schemas explain how **background knowledge** shapes our understanding of **texts** or **conversations**. For instance,
- **Imagine a restaurant schema:**
- ❖ **Components:** **Tables, menu, waiters, food, payment.**
 - ❖ **Expectations:** **You enter, get seated, choose food, eat, pay, and leave.**
- The schema for "**restaurant**" helps the listener understand the **unstated steps** like **ordering food** or **being served**, even if **they are not explicitly mentioned**.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE: SCRIPT

- **Script:** A **dynamic schema**. It includes a **sequence of expected actions or events** in a specific order.
- Scripts focus on what happens **first**, **next**, and **last** in familiar or **routine activities**. For instance,

❑ Using the restaurant script:

1. Enter the restaurant.

2. Wait to be seated.

3. Look at the menu.

4. Order food.

5. Eat food.

6. Pay the bill.

7. Leave.

- If a speaker says: "We walked in, waited 10 minutes for a table, and the food took forever to come."
- Listeners can infer that the speaker followed a "**restaurant script**" but faced **delays**.

- A **script** is essentially a **series of dynamic conventional actions**, while **Schema** is a set of **typical fixed features**.

Thank You