
MIGUEL ÁNGEL MARTÍNEZ-CABEZA
Senior Lecturer in English Language and Literature
Universidad de Granada

THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE BEYOND
THE SENTENCE: FROM TEXT GRAMMAR
TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS



EDITORIAL COMARES
2002

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	13
PREFACE	15
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	17
1. TEXT GRAMMAR AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	
1.1. Introduction	19
1.2. Sentence grammar, text-linguistics, and the description of discourse	23
1.3. Pragmatics and the study of discourse	31
1.4. Definitions of text and discourse	37
1.5. Norms of textual communication	39
1.6. Exercises	44
1.7. Further reading	46
1.8. Topics for discussion and research	46
2. TEXTUAL COMPONENTS	
2.1. Text analysis	47
2.2. Text, context, and cognition	50
2.3. Textual units	56
2.3.1. Sentences	58
2.3.2. Paragraphs	61
2.4. Text types	65
2.5. Text forms	70
2.6. Exercises	72
2.7. Further reading	75
2.8. Topics for discussion and research	75
3. COHESION AND COHERENCE	
3.1. Cohesion and coherence	77
3.2. Reference	85
3.3. Substitution	87
3.4. Ellipsis	89

3.5. Conjunction	91
3.6. Lexical cohesion	91
3.7. Examples	93
3.7.1. Dramatic dialogue	94
3.7.2. Speech	95
3.7.3. Expository essay	96
3.7.4. Advertisement	98
3.8. Exercises	99
3.9. Further reading	102
3.10. Topics for discussion and research	103
4. THEMATIC AND INFORMATION STRUCTURES	
4.1. The clause as message: thematic structures	105
4.2. The concept of <i>given/new</i> : intonation and syntax	109
4.3. Information status	117
4.4. Thematic connection and discourse strategies	120
4.5. Exercises	126
4.6. Further reading	129
4.7. Topics for discussion and research	129
5. FROM TEXT GRAMMAR TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	
5.1. Semantics and pragmatics	131
5.2. Definitions of discourse	138
5.2.1. The formalist definition of discourse	139
5.2.2. The functional definition of discourse	141
5.2.3. Discourse as utterances	143
5.3. Discourse and communication	145
5.3.1. Context	145
5.3.2. Models of communication	147
5.4. Exercises	151
5.5. Further reading	153
5.6. Topics for discussion and research	153
6. SPEECH ACT THEORY	
6.1. Origins and development: Austen and Searle	154
6.2. Acts and rules	159
6.3. Types of speech acts	161
6.4. Indirect speech acts	168
6.5. The organization of communicative interaction	173
6.6. Exercises	176
6.7. Further reading	179
6.8. Topics for discussion and research	179
7. CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE	
7.1. Gricean pragmatics	181
7.1.1. Speaker-meaning and sentence-meaning	181

- 7.1.2. The Cooperative Principle 185
- 7.1.3. Meaning, implicature, and entailment 187
- 7.1.4. Pragmatics and the analysis of discourse 190
- 7.2. Relevance 196
 - 7.2.1. Inference, explicature, and implicature 197
 - 7.2.2. The roles of implicatures in comprehension 201
- 7.3. Exercises 202
- 7.4. Further reading 204
- 7.5. Topics for discussion and research 204

- 8. **DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**
 - 8.1. The study of naturally-occurring conversation 205
 - 8.2. Classroom interaction 208
 - 8.3. The analysis of casual conversation 210
 - 8.3.1. Revising Burton’s framework 213
 - 8.3.2. Analysing fictional dialogue and naturally-occurring conversation 215
 - 8.4. Exercises 222
 - 8.5. Further reading 224
 - 8.6. Topics for discussion and research 224

- 9. **CONVERSATION ANALYSIS**
 - 9.1. The sociological perspective of conversation 227
 - 9.2. Turn-taking 228
 - 9.3. Adjacency pairs 232
 - 9.4. Preference, organization 234
 - 9.5. Pre-sequences 235
 - 9.6. Methodology in conversation analysis 236
 - 9.7. Exercises 238
 - 9.8. Further reading 240
 - 9.9. Topics for discussion and research 240

- 10. **THEORIES OF POLITENESS**
 - 10.1. Politeness and maxims 241
 - 10.2. Politeness as face management 246
 - 10.3. Politeness as conversational contract 250
 - 10.4. Politeness as functional adjustment 251
 - 10.5. An illustration 252
 - 10.6. The study of language in context 256
 - 10.7. Exercises 258
 - 10.8. Further reading 262
 - 10.9. Topics for discussion and research 263

- REFERENCES 265
- INDEX 271

PREFACE

There is a well-known passage in *Hamlet* in which Polonius asks Prince Hamlet: “*What do you read, my lord?*”, and the Danish Prince answers: “*Words, words, words.*” This passage has very often been used to illustrate the range of literary phenomena, the power of language, the reflection upon language, even the change of English grammar in terms of tense and aspect. My aim is more simple since I just want to highlight a basic element: the relation between words and action, which is a phenomenon relevant to linguistics as the scientific study of language. The example taken from Shakespeare focuses on the problem in terms of an important issue.

Nowadays, at the beginning of the 21st century, the scope of the literature dealing with this issue is wide-ranging. The 50’s and 60’s consumed scholarly energy in the study of morphology and syntactic relations: the sentence became the Jewel of the Crown of grammar. The later 70’s and 80’s witnessed an era devoted to the linguistic consideration of textual structures, texture, and textuality. A new focus had been achieved. Later, the 90’s concentrated upon discourse, the non-linguistic part of communication, the integration of textuality in communicative potentialities, and the consideration of language in use. There was even a further nuance: the cognitive approach. Mind became the in word in linguistics.

Consequently, turning back and looking back with zeal requires a strenuous effort. Many papers and books have been published on the relationships between language and action. The principles established by J.L. Austin and J.R. Searle in the sixties have become part of the common heritage of linguistics. The development of these ideas was followed by related concepts studied by other linguists. The Cooperative Principle, by H.P. Grice, or the Principle of Politeness and further applications, marked the concern for language in action. Naturally, university undergraduates need a coherent and comprehensive view from the bridge. This book offers potential solutions. It is a useful summary of concepts, ideas, developments, achievements, and problems on the research agenda of present-day linguists. This book addresses

the problem of text and discourse in terms of a continuum, a kind of scholarly rite of passage. The linguist tries to cross the threshold of syntax, the sentence itself. To do this, the linguist must go beyond the sentence into text, and later on he or she must go beyond the text into discourse. That is the realm of the unknown: presuppositions, implicatures, negative face, positive face, face threatening acts, hedges, inferences and onwards. The terms may initially seem daunting. This book, however, explains everything simply and offers a view full of illustrations and avoiding unnecessary complexities. Furthermore, the final section in each chapter is an excellent summary of the previous exposition. The examples and exercises proposed are one of the most interesting features of this book. This section aptly titled 'Topics for discussion and research' is intended to be used for the overt application of all the information previously expounded and discussed. The strenuous effort of reading and comparing different views and opinions will bear fruit. It is up to the reader who is seeking this type of knowledge to check his or her own understanding of the text and issues involved. The book proves to be a valuable introduction to the issues of text and discourse but also serves as a source of practical application of the matters discussed.

If the study of pragmatics is a must in present day linguistics, grammar is 'presupposed' and semantics is 'implied'. This book takes all this into account and explains the possibilities of study underlying the diverse grammatical and textual structures. The study of pragmatics seems to be central to modern language studies and this work carries out the task in a comprehensive and reader-friendly approach. The problems of discourse and communication can be easily grasped once one has completed the preliminary steps outlined in this book. After all, reading involves conversation, and conversation analysis is one of the milestones in the text and context issue.

José Luis MARTÍNEZ-DUEÑAS

Universidad de Granada

1

TEXT GRAMMAR AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The title of this book, *The study of language beyond the sentence*, may prove misleading for anyone acquainted with Halliday's Functional Grammar, so a preliminary clarification seems necessary. For Halliday, «beyond the clause» means the metaphorical modes of expression, more specifically, metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche as forms of lexical variation stemming from the semantic relation of elaboration, extension, and enhancement (Halliday 1985:ch.7). Thus «beyond» is understood as «outside the scope of» or «apart from» the clause. In a different way, the meaning of «beyond» here is «outside» and also «above». Following the conventional representation of the levels of language description as the steps of a ladder, texts have been traditionally situated «above the sentence». Halliday avoids the term «sentence» but uses «clause complex» with a similar meaning. Consequently, in the section «above the clause», he analyses the clause complex. To continue this prepositional note, cohesion, the distinguishing feature of texts, is placed «around the clause». Finally, intonation and rhythm are displayed simultaneously with other constituent structures, so they are presented «beside the clause».

Considering the text as a unit «beyond» the sentence is more accurate than simply a unit «above» the sentence because the relationship between sentences and texts is not one of constituency. As Halliday and Hasan (1976:2) put it:

A text is best regarded as a SEMANTIC unit: a unit not of form but of meaning. Thus it is related to a clause or sentence not by size but by REALIZATION, the coding of one symbolic system in another. A text does not CONSIST OF sentences; it is REALIZED BY, or encoded in, sentences.

The advantage of understanding texts in this way is that this interpretation captures the differences in structural integration among the parts of a text and the parts of a sentence. This is a central aspect of the sense in which «text-grammar» and its near

synonym «text-linguistics» are presented in this book. Many scholars refer to text-linguistics and discourse analysis interchangeably. A distinction is attempted here although not without problems. I contend that it is possible to speak of the *grammar* of a text by analogy with sentence grammar, but it is only possible to speak of discourse *analysis*.

Robert de Beaugrande's «story language science» (Beaugrande 1997) aptly depicts the difficulty in distinguishing text from discourse even though this distinction appears as a logical corollary to the isolation of linguistic domains which has characterized modern linguistics: from phonemes to morphemes, then to sentences and eventually on to texts. Beaugrande's view of modern linguistics based on the study of «language by itself» is one of increasing difficulty leading to a deadlock caused precisely by the exclusion of context. The beginning was promising because in phonological description, the isolation of real sound units and their matching with theoretical units was viable. Next came morphology. But the «reality» of visual representations of the abstractions called morphemes was no longer transparent, as can be seen when comparing the morphemes in *unreadable* and *ineffable*. Also, the map of all the morphemes in a language was not feasible in the way a map of all the phonemes had been.

Modern linguistics was based on four principles:

1. Study one domain of language at a time.
2. Describe each domain as a system of theoretical units corresponding to the practical units in the data.
3. Describe each unit by the features that clearly identify it from the rest.
4. Investigate by carefully transcribing the native speaker's utterances, segmenting them into units, and classifying the units. (Beaugrande 1997:38)

These principles guided the study of phonology and to some extent worked for morphology, but syntax presented too great demands. At this level, the links that tie constituents—presumably morphemes—together are not observable but only inferable. This means that ties are firstly decided and constructed and then segmented and classified. In other words, the task of studying language by itself was rendered impossible because language is not found by itself.

The concern with «language by itself» was based on the introspection and intuition of the analyst as a native speaker and focused on invented sentences disconnected from authentic discourse. So far, research in syntax following the said principles has failed to produce the whole system of underlying patterns and rules of any natural language. The problem, according to Beaugrande, is that «the arrangement of words in phrases and sentences is *decided only partly by syntax, and partly by speakers'*

knowledge of the world and of their society.» (Beaugrande 1997:39, *orig. emphasis*). At this stage, discourse analysis offers good prospects in two ways: this approach¹ targets its efforts towards the connection between language and knowledge and also works with authentic data.

This picture is admittedly oversimplified and not all linguists tried to disconnect language from discourse, notably systemic functional linguists, but I would like to push the «story» a bit further than syntax and attempt a distinction between text grammar and discourse analysis. The following example, taken from a longer passage provided by Egon Werlich (1976:153) and analysed for different purposes, can illustrate my point here.

Example 1

«Could I have two sherries, please?»

«Dry?» Inquired the English teacher who took his order.

«Two!», replied the boy indignantly.

I have deliberately omitted all contextual information (with the exception of the metalinguistic comments that specify speakers and speech acts) so that the analysis can explore the meanings in potential contexts. Firstly, we can consider what features make these three sentences a text. The most basic answer is cohesion². Lexical cohesion is displayed in the superordinate relationship between *sherry* and *dry*, the reiteration of *two*, and the pairs of complementary opposites *inquire / reply* and *teacher / boy*. Syntax also contributes to cohesion mostly through ellipsis: the question *Dry?* could be rephrased as *Do you want dry sherry?* and the answer *Two* as *I want two sherries?* These features belong to the formal level of description and explain the *texture* of this piece of language. In addition, we could explore the ways in which this text resembles other dialogues and differs from monologues, or even its combination of both in the direct report and the third person point of view. It should be noticed that this analysis remains constant across situations in the same way as the propositional meaning does, i.e., *you* means the hearer and *sherry* means *fortified wine* in any context.

Accurate though it is, this account misses most of the conversational meanings that speakers construct by means of these forms. A second and complementary analysis can focus on the actions performed by speakers by means of these utterances, in other words, *what happens* in this verbal exchange. Three such actions are stated

¹ It is an oversimplification to consider «discourse analysis» as a single approach but the shift in emphasis from form to meaning in use can represent a shared assumption in most pragmatic approaches.

² Chapter 3 deals with the various morphosyntactic and lexical cohesive devices.