Introduction

This book is a partial answer to the question: what can close linguistic analysis bring to the understanding of discourse? Discourse studies have focused on pragmatic factors such as genre expectations, discourse coherence relations, and inference. In part this has been a natural reaction to earlier, rather unsuccessful attempts to apply the techniques of linguistic analysis beyond the sentence. The current emphasis also follows from increased understanding of the area of pragmatics, and of the role of context in language use and interpretation.

It has sometimes seemed, though, that nothing at all is conveyed by linguistic forms, while everything is due to pragmatics or lexical content. I attempt to right the balance here, at least in part. I propose a local level of discourse, the Discourse Mode, which has linguistic properties and discourse meaning. I posit five modes: Narrative, Report, Descriptive, Information, and Argument.

The Discourse Modes are classes of discourse passages, defined by the entities they introduce into the universe of discourse and their principle of progression. The discourse entities are essentially aspectual. They include the familiar Events and States, and some less-familiar categories. The Discourse Modes grew out of my work on aspect and tense. In studies of situation types in discourse, I noticed interesting differences between passages of different types. Investigating further, I arrived at the Discourse Modes. If I am right about their contribution to discourse, they make it clear that temporality is one of the key sub-systems in language.

I characterize the modes by their linguistic features, that is, grammatical forms with consistent interpretations. The linguistic features of the modes are covert categories in the sense of Whorf (1956). They are not overtly marked but they have characteristic patterns of distribution, and of interpretation. These properties are subtle, but they are demonstrably part of a person's knowledge of language. The emphasis throughout this book is on grammatical rather than lexical features of discourse.

The modes are, therefore, linguistic categories. I was curious to know whether they would be related to anything in the field of rhetoric. When I looked at the

1

2   *Introduction*

literature, I found to my surprise that the Discourse Modes have counterparts
in rhetorical tradition. The Modes correspond to "text types" which have been
recognized as important in discourse but not analyzed before, I believe, in terms
of their linguistic properties. This correspondence is independent validation of
the idea of Discourse Modes, I think.

One major goal of this book, then, is to present and explore the notion of
Discourse Modes as a significant category in discourse.

Another goal is to use grammatical forms as a tool for exploring the com-
plexity of discourse. I wanted to understand and make precise the different
kinds of information that a discourse conveys. It has always intrigued me that
one recognizes immediately whether an example is constructed or "real." Con-
structed examples seem thin, simplistic. I conjecture that one reason is density
of information, or lack of it. We construct examples to investigate or demon-
strate a particular point – say, anaphoric or tense patterns – and our examples
convey information about that point. The constructed examples have little other
information, however. Natural texts, in contrast, convey information of several
kinds.

Using passages of Discourse Modes as a basis, I study two other kinds of in-
formation conveyed by the sentences of a text: subjectivity and surface structure
presentation.

I argue that we can distinguish "subjective" sentences from others on the
basis of a set of linguistic forms that convey a particular voice. By subjectivity
I include such notions as point of view, perspective, and content of mind. When
we encounter such forms, we ascribe responsibility for them to the author
or another source. I present a "composite" account, stating rules that look at
subjective forms in a sentence and in context. The rules assign the role of
Responsible Source to a participant in the text situation or to the author.

Surface structure presentation concerns how syntactic structures give cues
to the organization of a sentence, and how it affects continuity in the sentences
of a text. I take the notion of sentence topic as the main organizing factor.
The area is a thorny one but I hope to have found a useful synthesis. I use
the notions of topic and strong focus to examine the presentational features of
non-canonical syntactic structures. I bring together facts and theories about the
discourse effects of syntax, although the account is not exhaustive. There are
many studies of single structures, or closely related structures. After looking at
such studies I analyze the syntactic structures in a group of texts, with special
attention to the combinations that appear.

The study is at the interface of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. It is in-
formed by some of the insights of Cognitive Science, especially the analytic

stance. I attempt to understand and explain some of the complexity of discourse. I also attempt to formalize the analysis, using the dynamic framework of Discourse Representation Theory, due originally to Kamp (1981) and Heim (1982). One of the questions that I deal with in the book is what kinds of information can and cannot be analyzed within this framework.

What is new here is the distinction between grammatical and lexical information for texts; the information-based, composite feature approach to presentation and point of view; the Discourse Modes themselves.

The inquiry was carried out with a group of natural texts that I read, analyzed, and used for examples. They range in length from books of several hundred pages to short newspaper articles. I worked with what seemed intuitively to be good examples of different genres. The core set consists of twenty texts, which I consulted often. The core was supplemented by other texts that I remembered or encountered by chance in the course of doing the work. I am aware that this is a small sample and can only be taken as suggestive, perhaps representative. Larger-scale studies are needed to supplement this exploratory work.

Most of the texts offer examples of more than one mode, as expected. One of the arguments that I make in favor of the Discourse Modes is that texts are quite varied, usually having passages of more than one mode. Some of the texts that I used are presented in an appendix.

This work is intended for linguists of different stripes, and others interested in discourse. Since the book includes formalization, some sections are quite technical, but they are, I hope, made reasonably accessible by the explanations.

I   Discourse structure

1   *The study of discourse*

This book studies discourse passages from a linguistic point of view. Discourse is made up of sentences, and through linguistic analysis we have learned a good deal about them. The perspective of linguistics, however, can't be used directly to study an entire discourse. Novels, histories, arguments, and other types of discourse are activities with their own character and conventional structure. Receivers draw on discourse knowledge to construct interpretations.

The first problem for the linguist interested in close study of discourse, then, is to find a fruitful level for analysis. Larger units are organized primarily by convention and expectation. I will work more locally, at the level of the passage. There are intuitive differences between the passages of a discourse. People recognize passages of several kinds, namely Narrative, Description, Report, Information, and Argument. The intuitions are linguistically based: the passages have a particular force and make different contributions to a text. They can be identified by characteristic clusters of linguistic features. I shall say that a passage of text with certain features realizes a particular "Discourse Mode." The Discourse Mode is appropriate for close linguistic analysis, because at this level linguistic forms make a difference. Discourse Modes appear in texts of all types of activity, or genres. I use the terms "discourse" for spoken and written material, "text" for written material.

The Discourse Modes constitute an interesting level of text structure. I analyze them in two ways. I first discuss the differences between text passages of each mode. I then look at passages in terms of subjectivity and surface structure presentation, features that the modes have in common. Much of the analysis is formalized in the framework of Discourse Representation Theory.

Part I of this book discusses the Discourse Modes and lays out the context for the inquiry. Part II presents the linguistic characterization of the modes, emphasizing the differences between them. Part III discusses subjectivity and surface structure presentation across modes. Text passages are thus considered from complementary points of view in the second and third parts of the book. The different analyses are brought together in Part IV.

8   *The study of discourse*

Section 1.1 of this chapter introduces the Discourse Modes; 1.2 outlines the approach to texts and analysis that I take in this book; 1.3 presents the main ideas to be developed later, with examples of passages analyzed for different kinds of information that they convey; 1.4 concludes with summary characterization of the modes and brief comments on the importance of temporality for human beings.

1.1   *Discourse Modes*

I recognize five modes: Narrative, Description, Report, Information, and Argument. This list is not exhaustive, but I think it covers the major modes that appear in texts. I do not deal with conversation, nor procedural discourse.[1] The modes can be characterized with two features. Each mode introduces certain types of situation – Event, State, generalization, abstraction – into the universe of discourse. The modes also have characteristic principles of progression, temporal and atemporal. There are linguistic correlates to these features. Knowledge of one's language includes knowledge of these forms and meanings, some of them quite subtle.

The notion of Discourse Mode accounts for the variety that one finds in texts. Actual texts are usually not monolithic. In narratives, for instance, the significant unit is the episode: a group of Events and States in sequence that are bound together by a unifying theme. Narrative episodes, however, rarely consist only of sequence. There are also descriptive passages, and perhaps argument as well. Similarly the expository genres often have narrative sequences which support the main line of argument. Narrative, description, and argument make different contributions to a text, and have different linguistic features and interpretations. Each constitutes a distinct Discourse Mode.

The short passages below exemplify the five modes; they are taken from a group of texts that will be discussed repeatedly throughout this book.[2] Sources for the natural examples are listed at the end of each chapter; some of the texts are reproduced in Appendix A.

(1)   She put on her apron, took a lump of clay from the bin and weighed off enough for a small vase. The clay was wet. Frowning, she cut the lump in half with a

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1. Persuasive discourse is not listed separately. All genres and modes of discourse may have a persuasive component.
2. The texts were chosen to provide a variety of examples. They include short stories, novels, books, articles from journals and newspapers. They were analyzed intensively by the author. Appendix A provides a list of the texts and significant fragments from the ones most often used.

cheese-wire to check for air bubbles, then slammed the pieces together much harder than usual. A fleck of clay spun off and hit her forehead, just above her right eye.

(2)   In the passenger car every window was propped open with a stick of kindling wood. A breeze blew through, hot and then cool, fragrant of the woods and yellow flowers and of the train. The yellow butterflies flew in at any window, out at any other.

(3)   Near a heavily fortified Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip, an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian policeman were wounded as Palestinian protests for the release of 1,650 prisoners degenerated into confrontations. Israeli military officials say they are investigating the source of fire that wounded the soldier.

(4)   Thanks to advanced new imaging techniques, the internal world of the mind is becoming more and more visible. Just as X-ray scans reveal our bones, the latest brain scans reveal the origin of our thoughts, moods, and memories. Scientists can observe how the brain registers a joke or experiences a painful memory.

(5)   The press has trumpeted the news that crude oil prices are three times higher than they were a year ago. But it was the $10 or $11 price of February 1999, not the one today, that really deserved the headlines.

In order, these fragments exemplify the modes of Narrative, Description, Report, Information, and Argument. Passages of the Discourse Modes are linguistic units, since they have recognizable linguistic features. They also have rhetorical significance. In fact the Discourse Modes are text units both linguistically and notionally. They function as a bridge between the sentences of a text and the more abstract structures that it evokes. The relations between Discourse Modes and such abstract structures are discussed in Chapter 11.

In close analysis of a text one considers the linguistic forms, asking what information is conveyed by the sentences and sentence sequences of a discourse. Since this study is limited to written texts I do not discuss such matters as stress and intonation, audience, or specific setting.

The inquiry shows that the information in a text is varied at the local level, providing multiple meanings. Thus the analysis in this book is a partial explication of text complexity.

1.2   *Approaches to the study of texts*

1.2.1   *Linguistic features and discourse structure*

Discourse is a human activity with language at the center. Types of discourse are usefully grouped into genres, each genre with its own purpose, structure, and conventions. Knowing the genre of a discourse provides indispensable cues to its structure.

10   *The study of discourse*

The idea of discourse as a type of activity helps us to discard our customary expectations and to analyze it afresh (Levinson 1979/1992). The idea harks back at least to Wittgenstein's "language games." The term was coined to draw attention to language as part of action. This passage from Wittgenstein's *Brown Book* outlines a simple language game:

> Its function is the communication between a builder A and his man B. B has to bring A building stones. There are cubes, bricks, slabs, beams, columns. The language consists of the words "cube," "brick," "slab," "beam," and "column." A calls out one of these words, upon which B brings a stone of a certain shape.

In a different game, calling out the same word would have different force. A and B might be archaeologists investigating a site, for instance, and A might call out a word – *column*, *brick* – to convey to B what he has found. To interpret A's utterances, we have to understand the language game being played: the activity and the role that language plays in it. Wittgenstein glosses the term "language game" as referring to "the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven."[3]

Knowing the language game, or genre, requires knowledge of an activity as a whole. This knowledge is not conveyed by linguistic forms. The global structure of a discourse is rarely if ever stated explicitly. People understand discourse with different kinds of information, including what is conveyed by linguistic forms. They use general information about genre and principles of communication, and specific information about a particular case. There are some differences among genres. Scientific articles and textbooks often lay out the specific relations between their parts, whereas literary genres tend to be less explicit.

1.2.2   *The linguistic approach*
At the level of the passage, close linguistic analysis of discourse can be fruitfully pursued. I am interested in working out information that is conveyed by linguistic forms, directly and indirectly. To interpret text passages, people draw on syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic knowledge; see Chapter 3 for some discussion.

I rely on two insights in the analysis. The first is that linguistic meaning is often due to a group of forms – a composite – rather than to a single form.

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3. R. Rhees, in a Preface to *The Blue and Brown Books*, says that Wittgenstein introduced the notion of language games "in order to shake off the idea of a necessary form of language . . . He is insisting that . . . understanding is not one thing: it is as various as the language games themselves." *The Blue and Brown Books* were dictated in 1934–35 and published in 1958.

Whether a sentence expresses an Event or a State, for instance, depends on the composite of the verb and its arguments, as well as adverbials in the sentence. Together, these forms express a State or an Event. The composite approach is used throughout the book.

The second insight is that grammatical terms such as tense and pronouns often have two different functions in discourse. Besides the direct information that they code in a sentence, they give cues to local text structure. Maintenance or change of pronouns, for instance, often indicates continuity or change of direction. In this way grammatical forms contribute to the pattern of a text.

I work with surface syntactic structures. I assume a generative syntax with movement rules. The surface syntax makes available the constituent structure of a sentence, grammatical relations such as subject and object, and the semantic features associated with particular morphemes and constituents. For specificity, I use structures roughly following generative theory of the 1990s, somewhat simplified.[4] I use only surface structures in this book: no syntactic rules are stated.

I take the stance of the receiver of a text. I assume that receivers assemble and interpret the different cues that a text contains. They include lexical and semantic choices, syntactic and information structure, patterns within and across sentences, cue words, typography. The preferred interpretation is the one most compatible with all the information available. I do not attempt to model the actual processes involved nor the shifts in attention as readers make their way through a text. The analysis is not a psycholinguistic one but an idealization, in the tradition of modern linguistics. The interpretation is given in the form of an ongoing semantic-pragmatic structure, in the framework of Discourse Representation Theory. This theory is explicitly formulated to deal with discourse.

Sentences in discourse have a dual nature that has been difficult to understand. The difficulty is that sentences are self-contained units from a certain point of view; but for interpretation they depend on linguistic and extra-linguistic context. This dependence cannot be captured simply by making connections between sentences. The meaning of a sentence often requires information from the context. The realization that sentence meaning can be elucidated only in context is the leading idea of Discourse Representation Theory (Kamp 1981; Heim

4. The syntactic surface structures that I use are based on such works as Culicover (1997) which are in the Principles and Parameters generative framework. I do not take a position on types of movement rules or the mechanisms that trigger movement.
    There is no level of Logical Form in this approach: the semantic interpretation is developed in the Discourse Representation Theory framework.

12   *The study of discourse*

1982). As discourse is dynamic, so representations must be: new information
is added, familiar entities are referred to, situations change. The representation
is updated as a discourse develops.

Rules of the theory construct a representation from information in the sur-
face structure of sentences. The representation gives the conceptual information
that a receiver grasps in understanding discourse. Text representation consists
of "discourse entities" for individuals, situations, and times; and conditions
that characterize the entities. In some cases a discourse entity is embedded
in a sub-structure and is not available as antecedent for anaphoric reference.
Embeddings represent the scopal effects of operators such as negation, quan-
tifiers, and modality. There is a second, truth-conditional level, at which the
structure is interpreted within a formal model.

Information about Discourse Mode and some aspects of presentational struc-
ture will be encoded in Discourse Representation Structures. I introduce the
theory and its representations in Chapter 3; later chapters formalize the analysis
in the structures of the theory. Given the richness of the information that is con-
veyed in sentences, an interesting question arises: how much of the information
conveyed by a sentence should survive in representations of text meaning? This
question is particularly difficult for those aspects of meaning that are clearly not
truth-conditional. The question will be discussed from time to time throughout
the book.

1.3   Overview of key ideas

I introduce four key ideas explored in later chapters of this book, and then
present multiple analyses of text passages in which all of them are exhibited.

1.3.1   Situation type, text progression, subjectivity, surface
structure presentation

Types of situation: the sentences of a text introduce situations into the universe
of discourse. Events and States are the basic types in most studies of aspect and
discourse. Adding to this tradition, I recognize General Statives and Abstract
Entities as two other types. General Statives are expressed by generic and
generalizing sentences. They invoke patterns of Events and States rather than
particular situations. The complement clauses of certain predicates refer to
facts and propositions, which are Abstract Entities. Situations of all types are
entered in the structures of Discourse Representation Theory as entities, along
with individuals and times. They are known as "situation entities," discussed
in Chapters 2 and 4.