1 What is discourse analysis?

> 'I only said "if"!' poor Alice pleaded in a piteous tone.
>
> The two Queens looked at each other, and the Red Queen remarked, with a little shudder, 'She *says* she only said "if"—'
>
> 'But she said a great deal more than that!' the White Queen moaned, wringing her hands.'Oh, ever so much more than that!'
>
> **Lewis Carroll: *Through the Looking Glass***

1.1 A brief historical overview

Discourse analysis is concerned with the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used. It grew out of work in different disciplines in the 1960s and early 1970s, including linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology and sociology. Discourse analysts study language in use: written texts of all kinds, and spoken data, from conversation to highly institutionalised forms of talk.

At a time when linguistics was largely concerned with the analysis of single sentences, Zellig Harris published a paper with the title 'Discourse analysis' (Harris 1952). Harris was interested in the distribution of linguistic elements in extended texts, and the links between the text and its social situation, though his paper is a far cry from the discourse analysis we are used to nowadays. Also important in the early years was the emergence of semiotics and the French structuralist approach to the study of narrative. In the 1960s, Dell Hymes provided a sociological perspective with the study of speech in its social setting (e.g. Hymes 1964). The linguistic philosophers such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975) were also influential in the study of language as social action, reflected in speech-act theory and the formulation of conversational maxims, alongside the emergence of

pragmatics, which is the study of meaning in context (see Levinson 1983; Leech 1983).

British discourse analysis was greatly influenced by M. A. K. Halliday's functional approach to language (e.g. Halliday 1973), which in turn has connexions with the Prague School of linguists. Halliday's framework emphasises the social functions of language and the thematic and informational structure of speech and writing. Also important in Britain were Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) at the University of Birmingham, who developed a model for the description of teacher–pupil talk, based on a hierarchy of discourse units. Other similar work has dealt with doctor–patient interaction, service encounters, interviews, debates and business negotiations, as well as monologues. Novel work in the British tradition has also been done on intonation in discourse. The British work has principally followed structural–linguistic criteria, on the basis of the isolation of units, and sets of rules defining well-formed sequences of discourse.

American discourse analysis has been dominated by work within the ethnomethodological tradition, which emphasises the research method of close observation of groups of people communicating in natural settings. It examines types of speech event such as storytelling, greeting rituals and verbal duels in different cultural and social settings (e.g. Gumperz and Hymes 1972). What is often called *conversation analysis* within the American tradition can also be included under the general heading of discourse analysis. In conversational analysis, the emphasis is not upon building structural models but on the close observation of the behaviour of participants in talk and on patterns which recur over a wide range of natural data. The work of Goffman (1976; 1979), and Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) is important in the study of conversational norms, turn-taking, and other aspects of spoken interaction. Alongside the conversation analysts, working within the sociolinguistic tradition, Labov's investigations of oral storytelling have also contributed to a long history of interest in narrative discourse. The American work has produced a large number of descriptions of discourse types, as well as insights into the social constraints of politeness and face-preserving phenomena in talk, overlapping with British work in pragmatics.

Also relevant to the development of discourse analysis as a whole is the work of text grammarians, working mostly with written language. Text grammarians see texts as language elements strung together in relationships with one another that can be defined. Linguists such as Van Dijk (1972), De Beaugrande (1980), Halliday and Hasan (1976) have made a significant impact in this area. The Prague School of linguists, with their interest in the structuring of information in discourse, has also been influential. Its most important contribution has been to show the links between grammar and discourse.

Discourse analysis has grown into a wide-ranging and heterogeneous discipline which finds its unity in the description of language above the sentence and an interest in the contexts and cultural influences which affect language in use. It is also now, increasingly, forming a backdrop to research in Applied Linguistics, and second language learning and teaching in particular.

1.2 Form and function

The famous British comedy duo, Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise, started one of their shows in 1973 with the following dialogue:

(1.1) Ernie: Tell 'em about the show.
Eric (to the audience): Have we got a show for you tonight folks! Have we got a show for you! (aside to Ernie) Have we got a show for them?

This short dialogue raises a number of problems for anyone wishing to do a linguistic analysis of it; not least is the question of why it is funny (the audience laughed at Eric's question to Ernie). Most people would agree that it is funny because Eric is playing with a grammatical structure that seems to be ambiguous: 'Have we got a show for you!' has an inverted verb and subject. Inversion of the verb and its subject happens only under restricted conditions in English; the most typical circumstances in which this happens is when questions are being asked, but it also happens in exclamations (e.g. 'Wasn't my face red!'). So Eric's repeated grammatical *form* clearly undergoes a change in how it is *interpreted* by the audience between its second and third occurrence in the dialogue. Eric's inverted grammatical *form* in its first two occurrences clearly has the *function* of an exclamation, *telling* the audience something, not asking them anything, until the humorous moment when he begins to doubt whether they do have a show to offer, at which point he uses the same grammatical form to ask Ernie a genuine question. There seems, then, to be a lack of one-to-one correspondence between grammatical form and communicative function; the inverted form *in itself* does not inherently carry an exclamatory or a questioning function. By the same token, in other situations, an uninverted declarative form (subject before verb), typically associated with 'statements', might be heard as a question requiring an answer:

(1.2) A: You're leaving for London.
B: Yes, immediately.

So how we interpret grammatical forms depends on a number of factors, some linguistic, some purely situational. One *linguistic* feature that may affect our interpretation is the intonation. In the Eric and Ernie sketch, Eric's intonation was as follows:

(1.3) Eric (to the audience): Have we got a SHOW for you tonight folks!
Have we got a SHOW for you! (aside to Ernie)
↑HAVE we got a show for them?

Two variables in Eric's delivery change. Firstly, the *tone contour*, i.e. the direction of his pitch, whether it rises or falls, changes (his last utterance, 'have we got a show for them' ends in a rising tone). Secondly, his voice jumps to a higher *pitch level* (represented here by writing *have* above the line). Is it this which makes his utterance a question? Not *necessarily*. Many questions have only falling tones, as in the following:

(1.4) A: What was he wearing?
B: An anorak.
A: But was it his?

So the intonation does not *inherently* carry the function of question either, any more than the inversion of auxiliary verb and subject did. Grammatical forms and phonological forms examined separately are unreliable indicators of function; when they are taken together, *and* looked at in context, we can come to some decision about function. So decisions about communicative function cannot solely be the domain of grammar or phonology. Discourse analysis is not entirely separate from the study of grammar and phonology, as we shall see in Chapters 2 and 4, but discourse analysts are interested in a lot more than linguistic forms. Their concerns include how it is that Eric and Ernie interpret each other's grammar appropriately (Ernie commands Eric to tell the audience, Eric asks Ernie a question, etc.), how it is that the dialogue between the two comics is coherent and not gobbledygook, what Eric and Ernie's roles are in relation to one another, and what sort of 'rules' or conventions they are following as they converse with one another.

Eric and Ernie's conversation is only one example (and a rather crazy one at that) of spoken interaction; most of us in a typical week will observe or take part in a wide range of different types of spoken interaction: phone calls, buying things in shops, perhaps an interview for a job, or with a doctor, or with an employer, talking formally at meetings or in classrooms, informally in cafés or on buses, or intimately with our friends and loved ones. These situations will have their own formulae and conventions which we follow; they will have different ways of opening and closing the encounter, different role relationships, different purposes and different settings. Discourse analysis is interested in all these different factors and tries to account for them in a rigorous fashion with a separate set of descriptive labels from those used by conventional grammarians. The first fundamental distinction we have noted is between language forms and discourse functions; once we have made this distinction a lot of other

conclusions can follow, and the labels used to describe discourse need not clash at all with those we are all used to in grammar. They will in fact complement and enrich each other. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this book will therefore be concerned with examining the relationships between language forms (grammatical, lexical and phonological ones), and discourse functions, for it is language forms, above all, which are the raw material of language teaching, while the overall aim is to enable learners to use language functionally.

Reader activity 1

Form and function

Can you create a context and suggest an intonation for the forms in the left-hand column so that they would be heard as performing the functions in the right-hand column, *without changing their grammatical structure*?

1.	did I make a fool of myself	(a) question	(b) exclamation
2.	you don't love me	(a) question	(b) statement
3.	you eat it	(a) statement	(b) command
4.	switch the light on	(a) command	(b) question

1.3 Speech acts and discourse structures

So far we have suggested that form and function have to be separated to understand what is happening in discourse; this may be necessary to analyse Eric and Ernie's zany dialogue, but why discourse analysis? Applied linguists and language teachers have been familiar with the term *function* for years now; are we not simply talking about 'functions' when we analyse Eric and Ernie's talk? Why complicate matters with a whole new set of jargon?

In one sense we *are* talking about 'functions': we are concerned as much with what Eric and Ernie are *doing* with language as with what they are *saying*. When we say that a particular bit of speech or writing is a *request* or an *instruction* or an *exemplification* we are concentrating on what that piece of language is *doing*, or how the listener/reader is supposed to react; for this reason, such entities are often also called *speech acts* (see Austin 1962 and Searle 1969). Each of the stretches of language that are carrying the force of requesting, instructing, and so on is seen as performing a particular act; Eric's exclamation was performing the act of informing the audience that a great show was in store for them. So the approach to

communicative language teaching that emphasises the functions or speech acts that pieces of language perform overlaps in an important sense with the preoccupations of discourse analysts. We are all familiar with coursebooks that say things like: 'Here are some questions which can help people to remember experiences which they had almost forgotten: "Have you ever . . . ?", "Tell me about the time you . . . ?", "I hear you once . . . ?", "Didn't you once . . . ?', "You've . . ., haven't you?"'*. Materials such as these are concerned with speech acts, with what is *done* with words, not just the grammatical and lexical forms of what is *said*.

But when we speak or write, we do not just utter a string of linguistic forms, without beginning, middle or end, and anyway, we have already demonstrated the difficulty of assigning a function to a particular form of grammar and/or vocabulary. If we had taken Eric's words 'have we got a show for you' and treated them as a *sentence*, written on a page (perhaps to exemplify a particular structure, or particular vocabulary), it would have been impossible to attach a functional label to it with absolute certainty other than to say that in a large number of contexts this would most typically be heard as a question. Now this is undoubtedly a valuable generalisation to make for a learner, and many notional–functional language coursebooks do just that, offering short phrases or clauses which characteristically fulfil functions such as 'apologising' or 'making a polite request'. But the discourse analyst is much more interested in the process by which, for example, an inverted verb and subject come to be heard as an informing speech act, and to get at this, we must have our speech acts fully contextualised both in terms of the surrounding *text* and of the key features of the situation. Discourse analysis is thus fundamentally concerned with the relationship between language and the contexts of its use.

And there is more to the story than merely labelling chains of speech acts. Firstly, as we have said, discourses have beginnings, middles and ends. How is it, for example, that we feel that we are coming in in the middle of this conversation and leaving it before it has ended?

(1.5)
A: Well, try this spray, what I got, this is the biggest they come.
B: Oh . . .
A: . . . little make-up capsule.
B: Oh, right, it's like these inhalers, isn't it?
A: And I, I've found that not so bad since I've been using it, and it doesn't make you so grumpy.
B: This is up your nose?
A: Mm.
B: Oh, wow! It looks a bit sort of violent, doesn't it? It works well, does it?

(Birmingham Collection of English Text)

* L. Jones: *Functions of English*, Cambridge University Press, 1981 ed., p. 22.

Our immediate reaction is that conversations can often begin with *well*, but that there is something odd about 'try this spray . . .'. Suggesting to someone 'try X' usually only occurs in response to some remark or event or perceived state of affairs that warrants intervention, and such information is lacking here. Equally, we interpret B's final remark, 'It works well, does it?' as expecting a response from A. In addition, we might say that we do not expect people to leave the question of whether something is a fitting solution to a problem that has been raised dangling in the air; this we shall return to in section 1.10 when we look at written text.

The difficulty is not only the attaching of speech-act labels to utterances. The main problem with making a neat analysis of extract (1.5) is that it is clearly the 'middle' of something, which makes some features difficult to interpret. For instance, why does A say *well* at the beginning of his/her turn? What are '*these* inhalers'? Are they inhalers on the table in front of the speakers, or ones we all know about in the shops? Why does A change from talking about '*this* spray' to *that* in a short space of the dialogue?

The dialogue is structured in the sense that it can be coherently interpreted and seems to be progressing somewhere, but we are in the middle of a structure rather than witnessing the complete unfolding of the whole. It is in this respect, the interest in whole discourse structures, that discourse analysis adds something extra to the traditional concern with functions/speech acts. Just what these larger structures might typically consist of must be the concern of the rest of this chapter before we address the detailed questions of the value of discourse analysis in language teaching.

Reader activity 2

What clues are there in the following extract which suggest that we are coming in in the middle of something? What other problems are there in interpreting individual words?

A: I mean, I don't like this new emblem at all.
B: The logo.
A: Yeah, the castle on the Trent, it's horrible.
C: Did you get a chance to talk to him?
A: Yeah.
C: How does he seem?

(Author's data 1989)

1.4 The scope of discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is not only concerned with the description and analysis of spoken interaction. In addition to all our verbal encounters we daily consume hundreds of written and printed words: newspaper articles, letters, stories, recipes, instructions, notices, comics, billboards, leaflets pushed through the door, and so on. We usually expect them to be coherent, meaningful communications in which the words and/or sentences are linked to one another in a fashion that corresponds to conventional formulae, just as we do with speech; therefore discourse analysts are equally interested in the organisation of written interaction. In this book, we shall use the term *discourse analysis* to cover the study of spoken and written interaction. Our overall aim is to come to a much better understanding of exactly how natural spoken and written discourse looks and sounds. This may well be different from what textbook writers and teachers have assumed from their own intuition, which is often burdened with prejudgements deriving from traditional grammar, vocabulary and intonation teaching. With a more accurate picture of natural discourse, we are in a better position to evaluate the descriptions upon which we base our teaching, the teaching materials, what goes on in the classroom, and the end products of our teaching, whether in the form of spoken or written output.

1.5 Spoken discourse: models of analysis

One influential approach to the study of spoken discourse is that developed at the University of Birmingham, where research initially concerned itself with the structure of discourse in school classrooms (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). The Birmingham model is certainly not the only valid approach to analysing discourse, but it is a relatively simple and powerful model which has connexions with the study of speech acts such as were discussed in section 1.3 but which, at the same time, tries to capture the larger structures, the 'wholes' that we talked about in the same section. Sinclair and Coulthard found in the language of traditional native-speaker school classrooms a rigid pattern, where teachers and pupils spoke according to very fixed perceptions of their roles and where the talk could be seen to conform to highly structured sequences. An extract from their data illustrates this:

(1.6) (T = teacher, P = any pupil who speaks)

T: Now then . . . I've got some things here, too. Hands up. What's that, what is it?
P: Saw.

T: It's a saw, yes this is a saw. What do we do with a saw?
P: Cut wood.
T: Yes. You're shouting out though. What do we do with a saw? Marvelette.
P: Cut wood.
T: We cut wood. And, erm, what do we do with a hacksaw, this hacksaw?
P: Cut trees.
T: Do we cut trees with this?
P: No. No.
T: Hands up. What do we do with this?
P: Cut wood.
T: Do we cut wood with this?
P: No.
T: What do we do with that then?
P: Cut wood.
T: We cut wood with that. What do we do with that?
P: Sir.
T: Cleveland.
P: Metal.
T: We cut metal. Yes we cut metal. And, er, I've got this here. What's that? Trevor.
P: An axe.
T: It's an axe yes. What do I cut with the axe?
P: Wood, wood.
T: Yes I cut wood with the axe. Right . . . Now then, I've got some more things here . . . (etc.)

(Sinclair and Coulthard 1975: 93–4)

This is only a short extract, but nonetheless, a clear pattern seems to emerge (and one that many will be familiar with from their own schooldays). The first thing we notice, intuitively, is that, although this is clearly part of a larger discourse (a 'lesson'), in itself it seems to have a completeness. A bit of business seems to commence with the teacher saying 'Now then . . .', and that same bit of business ends with the teacher saying 'Right . . . Now then'. The teacher (in this case a man) in his planning and execution of the lesson decides that the lesson shall be marked out in some way; he does not just run on without a pause from one part of the lesson to another. In fact he gives his pupils a clear signal of the beginning and end of this mini-phase of the lesson by using the words *now then* and *right* in a particular way (with falling intonation and a short pause afterwards) that make them into a sort of 'frame' on either side of the sequence of questions and answers. *Framing move* is precisely what Sinclair and Coulthard call the function of such utterances. The two framing moves, together with the question and answer sequence that falls between them, can be called a *transaction*, which again captures the feeling of what is being done with language here, rather in the

way that we talk of a 'transaction' in a shop between a shopkeeper and a customer, which will similarly be a completed whole, with a recognisable start and finish. However, *framing move* and *transaction* are only labels to attach to certain structural features, and the analogy with their non-specialist meanings should not be taken too far.

This classroom extract is very structured and formal, but transactions with framing moves of this kind are common in a number of other settings too: telephone calls are perhaps the most obvious, especially when we wish to close the call once the necessary business is done; a job interview is another situation where various phases of the interview are likely to be marked by the chairperson or main interviewer saying things like 'right', 'well now' or 'okay', rather in the way the teacher does. Notice, too, that there is a fairly limited number of words available in English for framing transactions (e.g. *right*, *okay*, *so*, etc.), and notice how some people habitually use the same ones.

Reader activity 3

1. How many other situations can you think of where framing moves are commonly used to divide up the discourse, apart from classrooms, telephone calls and job interviews?
2. Complete the list of what you think the most common framing words or phrases are in English and make a list of framing words in any other language you know. Do framing words translate directly from language to language?
3. What is your favourite framing word or phrase when you are teaching, or when you talk on the phone?

If we return to our piece of classroom data, the next problem is: does the question–answer sequence between the teacher and pupils have any internal structure, or is it just a string of language forms to which we can give individual function or speech-act labels? Sinclair and Coulthard show clearly that it does have a structure. Looking at the extract, we can see a pattern: (1) the teacher asks something ('What's that?'), (2) a pupil answers ('An axe') and (3) the teacher acknowledges the answer and comments on it ('It's an axe, yes'). The pattern of (1), (2) and (3) is then repeated. So we could label the pattern in the following way:

1. Ask T
2. Answer P
3. Comment T

This gives us then a regular sequence of TPT–TPT–TPT–TPT, etc. So we can now return to our extract and begin to mark off the boundaries that create this pattern:

(1.7) (/ = T/P/T // = TPT//TPT//TPT)

T: Now then . . . I've got some things here, too. Hands up. What's that, what is it? /
P: Saw. /
T: It's a saw, yes this is a saw. // What do we do with a saw? /
P: Cut wood. /
T: Yes. You're shouting out though. // What do we do with a saw? Marvelette. /
P: Cut wood. /
T: We cut wood. // And, erm, what do we do with . . . etc.

We can now isolate a typical segment between double slashes (//) and use it as a basic unit in our description:

(1.8)
T: // What do we do with a saw? Marvelette. /
P: Cut wood. /
T: We cut wood. //

Sinclair and Coulthard call this unit an *exchange*. This particular exchange consists of a question, an answer and a comment, and so it is a three-part exchange. Each of the parts are given the name *move* by Sinclair and Coulthard. Here are some other examples of exchanges, each with three moves:

(1.9)
A: What time is it?
B: Six thirty.
A: Thanks.

(1.10)
A: Tim's coming tomorrow.
B: Oh yeah.
A: Yes.

(1.11)
A: Here, hold this.
B: (takes the box)
A: Thanks.

Each of these exchanges consists of three moves, but it is only in (1) that the first move ('What time is it?') seems to be functioning as a question. The first move in (2) is heard as giving information, and the first move in (3) as a command. Equally, the second moves seem to have the function, respectively, of (1) an answer, (2) an acknowledgement and (3) a non-verbal response (taking the box). The third moves are in all three exchanges functioning as feedback on the second move: (1) to be polite and say thanks, (2) to confirm the information and (3) to say thanks again. In order to capture the similarity of the pattern in each case, Sinclair and Coulthard

(1975: 26–7) call the first move in each exchange an *opening move*, the second an *answering move* and the third a *follow-up move*. Sinclair and Brazil (1982: 49) prefer to talk of *initiation*, *response* and *follow-up*. It does not particularly matter for our purposes which set of labels we use, but for consistency, in this book the three moves will be called *initiation*, *response* and *follow-up*. We can now label our example exchanges using these terms:

Move	*Exchange 1*	*Exchange 2*	*Exchange 3*
Initiation	A: What time is it?	A: Tim's coming tomorrow.	A: Here, hold this.
Response	B: Six-thirty.	B: Oh yeah.	B: (takes the box)
Follow-up	A: Thanks.	A: Yes.	A: Thanks.

In these exchanges we can observe the importance of each move in the overall functional unit. Every exchange has to be initiated, whether with a statement, a question or a command; equally naturally, someone responds, whether in words or action. The status of the follow-up move is slightly different: in the classroom it fulfils the vital role of telling the pupils whether they have done what the teacher wanted them to; in other situations it may be an act of politeness, and the follow-up elements might even be extended further, as in this Spanish example:

(1.12) A: Oiga, por favor, ¿qué hora es?
B: Las cinco y media.
A: Gracias.
B: De nada.

Here A asks B the time, B replies ('half past five'), A thanks B ('gracias'), and then B says 'de nada' ('not at all'). Many English speakers would feel that such a lengthy ritual was unnecessary for such a minor favour and would omit the fourth part, reserving phrases such as 'not at all' for occasions where it is felt a great service has been done, for example where someone has been helped out of a difficult situation. The patterns of such exchanges may vary from culture to culture, and language learners may have to adjust to differences. They also vary from setting to setting: when we say 'thank you' to a ticket collector at a station barrier as our clipped ticket is handed back to us, we would not (in British society) expect 'not at all' from the ticket collector (see Aston 1988 for examples of how this operates in Italian service encounters in bookshops).

In other cases, the utterance following a response may be less obviously a follow-up and may seem to be just getting on with further conversational business:

(1.13) A: Did you see Malcolm?
B: Yes.

A: What did he say about Brazil?
B: Oh he said he's going next month.
A: Did he mention the party?
B: No.
A: Funny . . . (etc.)

Different situations will require different formulae, depending on roles and settings. The teacher's role as evaluator, for example, makes the follow-up move very important in classrooms; where the follow-up move is withheld, the pupils are likely to suspect that something is wrong, that they have not given the answer the teacher wants, as in our extract from Sinclair and Coulthard's data:

(1.14) T: What do we do with a hacksaw, this hacksaw?
P: Cut trees.
T: Do we cut trees with this?
P: No. No.

The pupils know that 'cut trees' is not the right answer; it is only when one pupil says 'metal' that the full follow-up occurs ('We cut metal. Yes we cut metal'); the question 'Do we cut trees with this?' is simply recycling the initiating move, giving the pupils a second chance.

Reader activity 4

1. Can you put the moves of this discourse into an order that produces a coherent conversation? The conversation takes place at a travel agent's. What clues do you use to establish the correct order? Are there any moves that are easier to place than others; and if so, why?

   'You haven't no, no.'
   'No . . . in Littlewoods is it?'
   'I'm awfully sorry, we haven't . . . um I don't know where you can try for Bath actually.'
   'Can I help you?'
   'Okay thanks.'
   'Yeah they're inside there now.'
   'Um have you by any chance got anything on Bath?'
   'Um I don't really know . . . you could try perhaps Pickfords in Littlewoods, they might be able to help you.'

   (Birmingham Collection of English Text)

2. Think of a typical encounter with a stranger in the street (e.g. asking the way, asking for change). What is the minimum number of moves necessary to complete a polite exchange in a language that you know other than English?

The three-part exchanges we have looked at so far are fascinating in another sense, too, which relates back to our discussion in section 1.3 on speech acts, in that, taken out of context and without the third part, it is often impossible to decide exactly what the functions of the individual speech acts in the exchange are in any completely meaningful way. Consider, for example:

(1.15) A: What time is it?
B: Five past six.
A:

What could fill the third part here? Here are some possibilities:

1. A: Thanks.
2. A: Good! Clever girl!
3. A: No it isn't, and you know it isn't; it's half past and you're late again!

'Thanks' suggests that A's question was a genuine request for information. 'Clever girl!' smacks of the classroom (e.g. a lesson on 'telling the time' with a big demonstration clock), and 'No it isn't . . . etc.' suggests an accusation or a verbal trap for someone who is to be reproached. Neither of the last two is a genuine request for information; teachers usually already know the answers to the questions they ask of their pupils and the reproachful parent or employer in the last case is not ignorant of the time. These examples underline the fact that function is arrived at with reference to the *participants*, *roles* and *settings* in any discourse, and that linguistic forms are interpreted in light of these. This is not to say that all communication between teachers and pupils is of the curious kind exemplified in (1.15); sometimes teachers ask 'real' questions ('How did you spend the weekend?'), but equally, a lot of language teaching question-and-answer sessions reflect the 'unreal' questions of Sinclair and Coulthard's data ('What's the past tense of *take*?; 'What does *wash basin* mean?'). Nor do we wish to suggest that 'unreal' classroom questions serve no purpose; they are a useful means for the teacher of checking the state of knowledge of the students and of providing opportunities for practising language forms. But in evaluating the spoken output of language classrooms we shall at least want to decide whether there is a proper equilibrium or an imbalance between 'real' communication and 'teacher talk'. We would probably not like to think that our students spent all or most of their time indulging in the make-believe world of 'you-tell-me-things-I-already-know'.

1.6 Conversations outside the classroom

So far we have looked at talk in a rather restricted context: the traditional classroom, where roles are rigidly defined and the patterns of initiation, response and follow-up in exchanges are relatively easy to perceive, and where transactions are heavily marked. The classroom was a convenient place to start, as Sinclair and Coulthard discovered, but it is not the 'real' world of conversation. It is a peculiar place, a place where teachers ask questions to which they already know the answers, where pupils (at least younger pupils) have very limited rights as speakers, and where evaluation by the teacher of what the pupils say is a vital mechanism in the discourse structure. But using the classroom is most beneficial for our purposes since one of the things a model for the analysis of classroom talk enables us to do is evaluate our own output as teachers and that of our students. This we shall return to in Chapter 5. For the moment it is more important to examine the claim that the exchange model might be useful for the analysis of talk outside the classroom. If it is, then it could offer a yardstick for the kind of language aimed at in communicative language teaching and for all aspects of the complex chain of materials, methodology, implementation and evaluation, whatever our order of priority within that chain.

Conversations outside classroom settings vary in their degree of structuredness, but even so, conversations that seem at first sight to be 'free' and unstructured can often be shown to have a structure; what will differ is the kinds of speech-act labels needed to describe what is happening, and it is mainly in this area, the functions of the parts of individual moves, that discourse analysts have found it necessary to expand and modify the Sinclair–Coulthard model. Let us begin with a real example:

(1.16) (Jozef (J) is a visiting scholar from Hungary at an English department in a British university. He has established a fairly informal and relaxed relationship with Chris (C), a lecturer in the department. He pops into Chris's room one morning.)

C: Hello Jozef.
J: Hello Chris . . . could you do me a great favour.
C: Yeah.
J: I'm going to book four cinema tickets on the phone and they need a credit card number . . . could you give me your credit card number . . . they only accept payment by credit card over the phone.
C: Ah.
J: I telephoned there and they said they wouldn't do any reservations
C: ⌊ without a card.
J: Yes and I could pay you back in cash.
C: Yes . . . sure . . . no problem at all.
J: Yes.

C: Mm . . . I've got this one, which is an Access card.
J: And I just [tell them your number.
C: [You tell them my number . . . this one here.
J: And they tell me how much.
C: That's right . . . that's all . . . that's my name there and that number.
J: Yes . . . and I can settle it.
C: Yes and bring it back when you're done.
J: Yeah . . . I'll just telephone then.
C: Right . . . okay.
J: Thanks Chris.
C: Cheers.
(Jozef leaves the room.)

(Author's data 1988)

This is not like the classroom. Jozef and Chris are more or less equals in this piece of interaction, therefore each will enjoy the right to initiate, respond and follow up in their exchanges. It is not merely a question-and-answer session; sometimes they inform each other and acknowledge information. But their talk is not disorganised; there are patterns we can observe. The sequence begins and ends with framing mechanisms not entirely unlike the 'right' and 'now then' of the classroom: after the initial greeting, Jozef pauses and his voice moves to a higher pitch:

(1.17) J: Hello Chris . . . ↑ could you do me . . . (etc.)

We shall return in greater detail to this use of pitch in Chapter 4. For the moment it is sufficient to record it as a signal of a boundary in the talk, in this case marking off the opening from the main business of the conversation. Starting the main business, Jozef then begins a long sequence, all of which is concerned with eliciting a favour from Chris. He does not immediately ask his question but in his initiating move gives the background to it first ('I'm going to book four . . . etc.'). This speech act we shall call a *starter*, after which comes the main part of the elicitation ('could you give me . . . etc.'). Jozef expands his elicitation with several comments ('they only accept payment . . . etc.'), during which he is supported by a sort of grunt from Chris ('ah') and an occasion where Chris completes Jozef's words for him, as if he has predicted what Jozef wanted to say ('without a card'). Jozef's long elicitation ends with 'and I could pay you back in cash'. Chris then responds ''Yes sure . . . etc.') and Jozef follows up with 'yes'. The fact that Jozef says so much in asking the favour is because he is potentially inconveniencing Chris, and he thus has to prepare the ground carefully; this relationship between what is said and factors such as politeness and sensitivity to the other person is taken up in section 5.2.

So, complex though it is, we have initiation–response–follow-up

sequences here that form meaningful exchanges just like the classroom ones. What we have here, which we would not expect in the classroom, are Chris's verbal supports; we should be very surprised to hear in a classroom of young children:

(1.18) T: Now . . . I have some things here.
Ps (in chorus): Oh yes . . . ah-ha.
T: Used for cutting things.
Ps: Oh, really?

But we can pare Jozef and Chris's exchange down to its basics:

(1.19) J: // Could you give me your credit card number and I'll pay you in cash. /
C: Yes sure no problem. /
J: Yes. //

It now begins to look a little more manageable, and in it we can see the difference in complexity between a simple speech act and elaborated ones of the kind demanded by politeness, which can be difficult for the learner with limited linguistic resources in an L2. We can also see the difference between bare exchanges of the kind often found in coursebooks and the way, in natural discourse, that speakers support and complete one another's moves, how they follow up and acknowledge replies, and other features that we have not yet discussed. It is in this way, by using descriptive categories such as the exchange and its sub-components, that discourse analysis enables us to describe actual performances, to delimit targets more accurately in language teaching and to evaluate input and output in the teaching/learning process.

This extract also serves as a reminder of the form and function problem raised in section 1.2. Some of Jozef's declarative forms are heard by Chris as questions requiring a confirmation (or correction if necessary):

(1.20) J: And I just [tell them your number.
C: [You tell them my number . . . this one here.
J: And they tell me how much.
C: That's right . . . that's all . . . (etc.)

They are heard as questions since Chris is the person with the knowledge that Jozef is seeking to have confirmed (at least Jozef assumes that he is). Chris will not suppose that Jozef is telling him something he (Chris) already knows, and so will assume he is being asked to confirm.

Equally, we can observe the same kinds of exchange boundaries occurring in the middle of speaker turns as we did in the classroom data:

(1.21) J: // And they tell me how much. /
C: That's right . . . that's all . . . that's my name there and that number. /
J: Yes // . . . and I can settle it. /

C: Yes and bring it back when you're done. /
J: Yeah // . . . I'll just telephone then.

The double slashes in Jozef's turns come after the follow-ups to Chris's answers and before new initiating moves. The conversation finally ends with a framing move similar to the teacher's ('right . . . okay'), and an expression of thanks.

Obviously there are numerous other features in the conversation (intonation, gesture, etc.) which make us more confident in our analysis, and we shall return to the most central of these later, but this short conversation should at least serve to illustrate that even apparently loosely structured talk adheres to norms and is regularly patterned. It is this type of patterning that can be as useful to the language teacher as the regular patterns of syntax are in clauses and sentences.

So far we have looked only at one model for the analysis of spoken interaction, the Sinclair–Coulthard 'Birmingham' model. We have argued that it is useful for describing talk in and out of the classroom; it captures patterns that reflect the basic functions of interaction and offers a hierarchical model where smaller units can be seen to combine to form larger ones and where the large units can be seen to consist of these smaller ones. The bare bones of the hierarchy (or *rank scale*) can be expressed as follows:

TRANSACTION
↕
EXCHANGE
↕
MOVE
↕
ACT

The lowest rank is what we have referred to as 'speech acts'; Sinclair and Coulthard simply call them *acts*, but for our general purposes, any fine distinction the terminology might suggest is unimportant. Sinclair and Coulthard's model is very useful for analysing patterns of interaction where talk is relatively tightly structured, such as between doctors and patients (see Coulthard and Ashby 1975), but all sorts of complications arise when we try to apply the model to talk in more informal, casual, and spontaneous contexts.

1.7 Talk as a social activity

Because of the rigid conventions of situations such as teacher talk and doctor–patient talk, it is relatively easy to predict who will speak when, who will ask and who will answer, who will interrupt, who will open and close the talk, and so on. But where talk is more casual, and among equals,

everyone will have a part to play in controlling and monitoring the discourse, and the picture will look considerably more complicated.

Reader activity 5

Consider the problems which arise when we try to analyse the following extract from the point of view of exchange and transaction boundaries. Are there straightforward initiating, responding and follow-up moves? Decide where each move begins and ends and try to label some of the more obvious speech acts (e.g. *elicitations*, *replies*, *comments* and so on). There are complications here, not least because there are more than two people talking. Do you feel this extract is more or less tightly structured than the classroom talk or the conversation between Jozef and Chris? What extra problems does this sort of transcript raise for discourse analysts?

(1.22) (University lecturer (L) at a student bar where he has just ordered drinks for a group of students (S1, S2, etc.). The barman (B) is attending to the order and the group are standing at the bar.)

L: Well, that should blow a hole in five pounds, shouldn't it?
S1: It's quite cheap actually.
L: (laughs)
S1: What's the um lecturers' club like, senior, senior, you know.
L: └Ah it's very cosy and sedate and, er, you know, nice little armchairs and curtains . . . there are some interesting characters who get there.
S2: Is that the one where they have the toilets marked with er gentlemen, no, 'ladies and members'?
L: └Oh, oh
S2: └Yeah it was one of the other lecturers who pointed it out, he thought it was quite amusing.
L: └Yeah, I hadn't noticed that, yeah, might well be, yeah.
B: Four sixty-seven please.
L: Is that all, God, I thought it would cost more than that (pays) . . . thank you . . . I thought it would cost more than that.
S1: It's quite cheap.
S2: I wouldn't argue with that one.
S3: No, it's quite good.
L: Now, how are we going to carry all these over?

(Author's data 1989)

There are features which can be handled by the Sinclair–Coulthard exchange structure model (the lecturer's 'now' at the end seems to be a typical boundary marker, and his laugh at the beginning of the talk could be seen as a follow-up to the student's remark), but there are many complications. The student who asks about the toilets does not get a proper answer from the lecturer, and, if anything, answers her own question; the barman comes in and disrupts the continuity of the talk, and, at one point, three people are talking at once. If this were a classroom, many would consider that the lecturer had lost all control over the discourse, and that people were behaving 'out of turn'.

Complications of this kind have led many discourse analysts to devote their attention more to observing how people behave and how they cooperate in the management of discourse, rather than to a concern with building elaborate models of structure (see Levinson 1983: 286). Observing conversational behaviour close to has been the preoccupation of a school of analysts roughly grouped under the name *ethnomethodologists*, though sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists have also made significant contributions. This approach has been largely, but not exclusively, an American phenomenon, and it has concentrated on areas of interest such as how pairs of utterances relate to one another (the study of *adjacency pairs*), how turn-taking is managed, how conversational openings and closings are effected, how topics enter and disappear from conversation, and how speakers engage in strategic acts of politeness, face-preservation, and so on. The emphasis is always on real data, and observing how people orient to the demands of the speech event. We shall look more closely at this kind of conversational analysis in Chapter 5, but the student–lecturer data extract above exemplifies some of the ways in which data can be dealt with.

Because the lecturer and his group are not in the classroom, students, as well as lecturer, feel free to raise new topics. S1 asks about the staff club, but he is hesitant, and stutters somewhat in his question; such hesitancy is a significant detail, and is a typical signal of deference. The lecturer feels free to overlap with his answer before the student has finished speaking. Turn-taking rights are exercised, with people taking turns at talk when they feel they have the right to say something. For example, the barman considers his right to continue the purchasing transaction to override the group's conversation, and the three students all feel they have an equal right to comment on the lecturer's remark about the price of the drinks. However, we might also observe that the talk is all directed at the lecturer, rather than student to student. Is this because the lecturer is seen as 'dominant speaker', a hangover from the classroom, which the group have only recently left? It is to answer such questions that ethnomethodologists examine large amounts of data to observe regular patterns of behaviour that might indicate adherence to underlying norms or 'rules' of conver-

sation. In Chapter 5 we shall look at some of their findings concerning the issues our extract has raised, as well as others of a similar type. This is not to say that such findings must automatically have any implications for language teaching, but some of them may.

1.8 Written discourse

With written texts, some of the problems associated with spoken transcripts are absent: we do not have to contend with people all speaking at once, the writer has usually had time to think about what to say and how to say it, and the sentences are usually well formed in a way that the utterances of natural, spontaneous talk are not. But the overall questions remain the same: what norms or rules do people adhere to when creating written texts? Are texts structured according to recurring principles, is there a hierarchy of units comparable to acts, moves and exchanges, and are there conventional ways of opening and closing texts? As with spoken discourse, if we do find such regularities, and if they can be shown as elements that have different realisations in different languages, or that they may present problems for learners in other ways, then the insights of written discourse analysis might be applicable, in specifiable ways, to language teaching.

In Chapter 2, we shall consider some grammatical regularities observable in well-formed written texts, and how the structuring of sentences has implications for units such as paragraphs, and for the progression of whole texts. We shall also look at how the grammar of English offers a limited set of options for creating surface links between the clauses and sentences of a text, otherwise known as *cohesion*. Basically, most texts display links from sentence to sentence in terms of grammatical features such as pronominalisation, ellipsis (the omission of otherwise expected elements because they are retrievable from the previous text or context) and conjunction of various kinds (see Halliday and Hasan 1976). The resources available for grammatical cohesion can be listed finitely and compared across languages for translatability and distribution in real texts. Texts displaying such cohesive features are easy to find, such as this one on telephones:

(1.23) If you'd like to give someone a phone for Christmas, there are *plenty* to choose from. *Whichever you* go for, if *it*'s to be used on the BT [British Telecom] network, make sure *it*'s approved – look for the label with a green circle to confirm *this*. Phones labelled with a red triangle are prohibited.

(*Which?* December 1989: 599)

The italicised items are all interpretable in relation to items in previous sentences. *Plenty* is assumed to mean 'plenty of phones'; *you* in the first and second sentence are interpreted as the same 'you'; *whichever* is interpreted

as 'whichever telephone'; *it* is understood as the telephone, and *this* as 'the fact that it is approved'. These are features of grammatical cohesion, but there are lexical clues too: *go for* is a synonym of *choose*, and there is lexical repetition of *phone*, and of *label*.

Reader activity 6

Pick out the cohesive items between clauses and sentences in this text extract in the same way as was done for the telephone text:

(1.24) British men are a pretty traditional bunch, when it comes to shaving; two out of three use a blade and soap, rather than an electric shaver. *Which?* readers are more continental in their tastes; around half of you use an electric shaver, about the same proportion as in the rest of Europe.

For women, shaving is by far the most popular method of removing body hair. 85 per cent of the *Which?* women readers who removed body hair told us that they used a shaver.

(*Which?* December 1989: 613)

Notice that, when talking of cohesion in the telephone text, we spoke of interpreting items and understanding them. This is important because the cohesive items are clues or signals as to how the text should be read, they are not absolutes. The pronoun *it* only gives us the information that a non-human entity is being referred to; it does not necessarily tell us which one. *It* could potentially have referred to *Christmas* in the phone text, but that would have produced an incoherent reading of the text. So cohesion is only a guide to coherence, and coherence is something created by the reader in the act of reading the text. Coherence is the feeling that a text hangs together, that it makes sense, and is not just a jumble of sentences (see Neubauer 1983: 7). The sentences 'Clare loves potatoes. She was born in Ireland.' are cohesive (*Clare/she*), but are only coherent if one already shares the stereotype ethnic association between being Irish and loving potatoes, or is prepared to assume a cause–effect relationship between the two sentences. So cohesion is only part of coherence in reading and writing, and indeed in spoken language too, for the same processes operate there.

1.9 Text and interpretation

Markers of various kinds, i.e. the linguistic signals of semantic and discourse functions (e.g. in English the *-ed* on the verb is a marker of pastness), are very much concerned with the *surface* of the text. Cohesive markers are

no exception: they create links across sentence boundaries and pair and chain together items that are related (e.g. by referring to the same entity). But reading a text is far more complex than that: we have to interpret the ties and make sense of them. Making sense of a text is an act of *interpretation* that depends as much on what we as readers bring to a text as what the author puts into it. Interpretation can be seen as a set of *procedures* and the approach to the analysis of texts that emphasises the mental activities involved in interpretation can be broadly called *procedural*. Procedural approaches emphasise the role of the reader in actively building the world of the text, based on his/her experience of the world and how states and events are characteristically manifested in it. The reader has to activate such knowledge, make inferences and constantly assess his/her interpretation in the light of the situation and the aims and goals of the text as the reader perceives them. The work of De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) is central to this approach. If we take a text which is cohesive in the sense described above, we can see that a lot more mental work has to go on for the reader to make it coherent:

(1.25) The parents of a seven-year-old Australian boy woke to find a giant python crushing and trying to swallow him.

The incident occurred in Cairns, Queensland and the boy's mother, Mrs Kathy Dryden said: 'It was like a horror movie. It was a hot night and Bartholomew was lying under a mosquito net. He suddenly started screaming.

'We rushed to the bedroom to find a huge snake trying to strangle him. It was coiled around his arms and neck and was going down his body.'

Mrs Dryden and her husband, Peter, tried to stab the creature with knives but the python bit the boy several times before escaping.

(from *The Birmingham Post*, 12 March 1987, p. 10)

This text requires us to activate our knowledge of pythons as dangerous creatures which may threaten human life, which strangle their prey and to whose presence one must react with a certain urgency. More than this we make the cognitive link between 'a hot night' and the time of the event (this is implicit rather than explicit in the text). The boy's screaming must be taken to be a *consequence* of the python attacking him (rather than, say, prior to the arrival of the python). The 'creature' must be taken to be the python rather than the boy (which 'creature' could well refer to in another text), since parents do not normally stab their children in order to save their lives. All this is what the reader must bring to any text. What we are doing in making these cognitive links in the text is going further than just noting the semantic links between cohesive items (e.g. *creature* = general superordinate, *snake* = genus/superordinate, *python* = species/hyponym); we are

creating coherence (see De Beaugrande and Dressler 1981: 6–12, 31–47). The various procedures that mediate between cohesion and coherence will be returned to in greater detail in sections 6.4–7, as this area of text analysis is obviously crucial in any discourse-based approach to reading and writing.

Another level of interpretation which we are involved in as we process texts is that of recognising *textual patterns*. Certain patterns in text reoccur time and time again and become deeply ingrained as part of our cultural knowledge. These patterns are manifested in regularly occurring functional relationships between bits of the text. These bits may be phrases, clauses, sentences or groups of sentences; we shall refer to them as textual *segments* to avoid confusion with grammatical elements and syntactic relations within clauses and sentences. A segment may sometimes be a clause, sometimes a sentence, sometimes a whole paragraph; what is important is that segments can be isolated using a set of labels covering a finite set of functional relations that can occur between any two bits of text. An example of segments coinciding with sentences are these two sentences from a report on a photographic exhibition:

(1.26) The stress is on documentary and rightly so. Arty photographs are a bore.

(*The Guardian*, 27 October 1988: 24)

The interpretation that makes most sense is that the relationship between the second sentence and the first is that the second provides a *reason* for the first. The two segments are therefore in a *phenomenon–reason* relationship with one another. An example of a segment consisting of more than one sentence can be seen in extract (1.27), where the relationship between the first segment (sentence 1) and the second segment (sentences 2–5) is one of *phenomenon–example*; all of sentences 2–5 have to be read as part of the act of exemplification for the text to make sense.

(1.27) Naturally, the more people pay for their houses, the more they want to rename their neighbourhoods. Suppose you've just coughed up £250,000 for an unspectacular house on the fringe of Highgate – an area with loads of cachet. The estate agent tells you it's Highgate. You've paid a Highgate price. There's no way you're going to admit that it's in Crouch End.

(Simon Hoggart, *The Observer Magazine*, 11 March 1990: 5)

The interpretation of relations between textual segments is a cognitive act on the part of the reader, who might be supposed to be asking questions of the text as it unfolds, such as (for extract 1.26) 'The stress is on documentary; why?' In this sense, reading the text is like a dialogue with the author, and the processing of two segments could be seen as analogous to the creation of an exchange in spoken discourse. Whether this dialogue with the author is a reality or an analytical construct is not a question that can be easily answered here, but a model which suggests this kind of interaction

between reader and text or author might be able to capture difficulties readers experience in text processing and offer ways of attacking them.

The approach to text analysis that emphasises the interpretive acts involved in relating textual segments one to the other through relationships such as *phenomenon–reason*, *cause–consequence*, *instrument–achievement* and suchlike is a *clause-relational* approach, and is best exemplified in the work of Winter (1977, 1978) and Hoey (1983). The *phenomenon–reason* relation which united the two sentences of extract (1.26), along with *cause–consequence* and *instrument–achievement*, can be brought under the general heading of *logical sequence* relations. When segments of a text are compared or contrasted with one another, then we may talk of *matching* relations, which are also extremely common. *Logical sequencing* and *matching* are the two basic categories of the clause-relational approach. This view of text is dynamic; it is not just concerned with labelling what are sometimes called the *illocutionary acts* (a bit like speech acts) which individual clauses, sentences and paragraphs perform in a text, but is concerned with the relationships the textual segments enter into *with one another*.

It would of course be wrong to suggest that all texts are like the two sentences from the photo exhibition text and that the whole operation of reading was some sort of perverse guessing-game where authors made life difficult for readers. Texts often contain strong clues or *signals* as to how we should interpret the relations between segments; these are not absolutely deterministic but are *supporting evidence* to the cognitive activity of deducing the relations. For example, we may find in a text a sentence such as: 'Feeling ill, he went home', and here we would note that the subordination of one element to another by the grammatical choice of joining a main clause to a subordinate one is a characteristic device of cause–consequence relations; it is a signal of the likely relation, which would have to be reinterpreted if the sentence were 'Going home, he felt ill'. Equally, an author might help us with a conjunction: '*Because* he felt ill, he went home', or else use items of general vocabulary to signal the same relation: '*The reason* he went home was that he was feeling ill'. Other types of signals include repetition and syntactic parallelism (using the same syntax in two or more different clauses to draw attention to a comparison or contrast, for example). In the sentence 'The politicians were in a huff, the industrialists were in a rage, the workers were in the mood for a fight', the parallelism of the 'subject + *be* + prepositional phrase' underlines the comparison between the three groups of people. The clause-relational approach takes all this evidence into account in its analyses.

Reader activity 7

Here are some extracts from real texts. Decide what kind of relation exists between segments separated by a slash (/) in each case, and note any supporting evidence such as syntactic parallelism.

1. The BBC has put off a new corporate advertising campaign due to be aired this month, extolling the virtues and values of both television and radio. / A BBC spokesman delicately suggests that this may not be the most appropriate time to be telling the audience how wonderful the Beeb is.

   (*The Observer*, 16 November 1986: 42)

2. In Britain, the power of the unions added an extra dread, / which made British politics a special case; / on the Continent, Margaret Thatcher was regarded as something of a laboratory experiment, rather like a canary put down a mine-shaft to see if it will sing.

   (*The Sunday Times Magazine*, 30 December 1979: 14)

1.10 Larger patterns in text

The clause-relational approach to text also concerns itself with larger patterns which regularly occur in texts. If we consider a simple text like the following, which is concocted for the sake of illustration, we can see a pattern emerging which is found in hundreds of texts in a wide variety of subject areas and contexts:

(1.28) Most people like to take a camera with them when they travel abroad. But all airports nowadays have X-ray security screening and X rays can damage film. One solution to this problem is to purchase a specially designed lead-lined pouch. These are cheap and can protect film from all but the strongest X rays.

The first sentence presents us with a *situation* and the second sentence with some sort of complication or *problem*. The third sentence describes a *response* to the problem and the final sentence gives a positive *evaluation* of the response. Such a sequence of relations forms a *problem–solution* pattern, and problem–solution patterns are extremely common in texts. Hoey (1983) analyses such texts in great detail, as well as some other common text patterns, some of which we shall return to in Chapter 6.

These larger patterns which may be found in texts (and indeed which may constitute the whole text) are the objects of interpretation by the

reader, just as the smaller clause-relation were, and in the same way, are often *signalled* by the same sorts of grammatical and lexical devices such as subordination and parallelism. In our concocted text, for instance, we have a conjunction (*but*) indicating an *adversative* relation, backward lexical reference to 'this problem' (damage caused by X rays) and a forward reference to the solution (lead-lined pouches). Both readers and writers need to be aware of these signalling devices and to be able to use them when necessary to process textual relations that are not immediately obvious and to compose text that assists the reader in the act of interpretation. The larger patterns such as the problem–solution pattern are culturally ingrained, but they are often realised in a sequence of textual segments which is not so straightforward as our concocted text suggests. The sequence situation–problem–response–evaluation may be varied, but we do normally expect *all* the elements to be present in a well-formed text; where the sequence is varied, signalling plays an even more important part in *signposting* the text, that is, showing the reader a way round it.

Reader activity 8

Identify the elements of the problem–solution pattern in these extracts from advertisements and note any signalling devices.

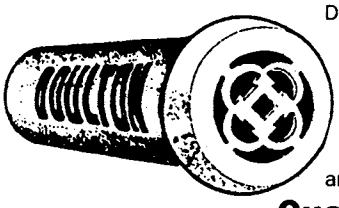
1.

DAMP WALLS, FLAKING PAINT,
PEELING WALLPAPER, MUSTY SMELLS

could mean **Rising Damp**

Rising damp, if not treated effectively could in time cause extensive damage to the structure of your home, ruin decoration and furniture. Damp also causes repugnant mould and mildewy smells and could be a hazard to health.

Doulton Wallguard guarantee to cure rising damp



Doulton, the international specialists in ceramic technology have developed a unique ceramic tube that when installed in walls draws moisture out and ensures it stays out for good. This tried and tested process requires no structural work and is usually installed in just one day.

Guaranteed for 30 Years

2. **In engineering jargon there is a phenomenon known as N.V.H. It stands for noise, vibration and harshness.**

You can easily tell how badly your car suffers from N.V.H. by the volume at which you have to play your radio and the way that you feel after a long journey. It's very tiring.

The rudimentary cure is to fill the car with sound deadening material. Everybody does this to some extent, even Ford.

But we believe that prevention is better than cure. After all, with the technology that we have at our disposal, there are more scientific ways of reducing N.V.H.

At the Ford design and development centre we have a room which is known as the anechoic chamber. It's here, on the rolling road, that our acoustics engineers explore new techniques in sound proofing.

The result is a car that never feels as if it's trying. Even at Autobahn speeds, with the smooth V6 engine and all round independent suspension, the performance is effortless.

(from *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 30 December 1979, pp. 42, 49)

1.11 Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that discourse analysis is a vast subject area within linguistics, encompassing as it does the analysis of spoken and written language over and above concerns such as the structure of the clause or sentence. In this brief introduction we have looked at just some ways of analysing speech and writing and just some aspects of those particular models we have chosen to highlight. There is of course a lot more to look at. For example, we have not considered the big question of discourse in its social setting. In subsequent chapters we shall return to this and mention the Hallidayan model of language as social action (see Halliday 1978), looking at types of meaning in discourse and their relationship with the notion of *register*, the linguistic features of the text that reflect the social context in which it is produced. This and further discussion of the approaches outlined here will form the background to a reassessment of the basics of language teaching as they are conventionally understood: the *levels* of language description (grammar, lexis and phonology) and the *skills* of language use (reading, writing, listening and speaking). There will also be suggestions concerning teaching materials and procedures whenever it seems that discourse analysis has some direct bearing on these matters.

Further reading

Coulthard (1985) is an indispensable introduction to discourse analysis, as is Stubbs (1983).

Brown and Yule (1983) is a thorough and detailed survey, but is harder going because of its less obvious structure.

Van Dijk's (1985) collection of papers covers a vast range of areas within discourse analysis; the introduction sets the scene, and the papers can be dipped into according to area of interest.

Levinson (1983), although concerned with the broader field of 'pragmatics', provides a balanced criticism of the British, exchange-structure school as against the American conversation analysis.

G. Cook (1989) is a more recent book at an introductory level.

For the original Birmingham discourse model, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) is still unsurpassed, though extensions and modifications as described in Coulthard and Montgomery (1981) and Sinclair and Brazil (1982) should also be consulted.

Further extensions and modifications are to be found in Carter and Burton (1982), Francis and Hunston (1987), and, specifically on the follow-up move, Hewings (1987).

More introductory reading on acts and communicative functions, as well as on speech and writing may be found in Riley (1985).

Schenkein (1978) is a seminal collection of American conversational analysis.

On written text, Halliday and Hasan (1976) is essential for the notion of cohesion, De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), though difficult in places, expands on the procedural approach, while Winter (1977 and 1978) and Hoey (1983) are the best works for the clause-relational model.

Hewings and McCarthy (1988) offer a summary of the clause-relational approach with some pedagogical applications.

Halliday (1978) contains much discussion on language in its social setting.

Widdowson (1979), De Beaugrande (1980), Van Dijk (1980), Neubauer (1983) and Tannen (1984) are all useful sources on cohesion/coherence.

Reddick (1986) argues for the importance of personal interpretation in the analysis of text structure.