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语篇分析：理论与实践

杨玉晨 主编

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS:
FROM THEORY
TO PRACTICE

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杨工昌 [illegible]

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Preface

Discourse analysis has become over the past several decades a major growth industry in modern language study (Hoey, 1991) and has come to be used in a wide range of meanings with a wide range of activities (Brown & Yule, 1983). As a generic term, it has come to mean many different things to many different people. For rhetoricians, discourse analysis involves the study of literacy texts and the stylistic and rhetorical features of various texts. For pragmaticians (e. g. the Birmingham School), discourse analysis is particularly concerned with semantic relationships between constructed pairs of sentences and their syntactic realizations. They are concerned, too, with relationships between forms and functions, sentences and the world in terms of whether or not sentences are used to make statements which can be assigned truth values. For functional linguists (e.g. Halliday, 1994), discourse analysis involves the study of form-function relationships within language segments usually larger than the sentence or utterance, though seldom larger than the paragraph for written language, or the brief dialogue for oral language. They are particularly interested in the theme-rheme patterns of sentence structures and the patterns of information flow in sentences and their relations to text coherence. For formal linguists or text linguists (e.g. Van Dijk 1972, De

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Beaugrande 1980, Halliday and Hasan 1976), discourse analysis is often the study of text corpora, usually to examine text type variations, linguistic features, processes and systems determined by non-sentential relations (i.e. anaphora, deixis, aspect, etc). For sociolinguistics, discourse analysis is primarily assumed to involve the study of social interaction manifested in conversation and their descriptions emphasize features of social context which are particularly amenable to sociological classification. They are particularly interested in real language data, especially the transcribed spoken discourse. For psycho-linguistics and cognitive psychologists, discourse analysis is primarily involved with the study of relations between language units, conceptual units, retention, comprehension, production, and the mental representation of knowledge. For applied linguists, discourse analysis involves the study of language as it develops and is used by different cultural / learner groups. For composition researchers and educationalists, discourse analysis involves the development and assessment of students' writing abilities (Kaplan, 1976).

While most researchers agree that discourse analysis involves the study of language beyond the level of the sentence/utterance unit, actual discourse research fragments into a broad array of assumptions, procedures, databases and research goals. This variation depends, in part, on whether research is intended to show the interactional structures of oral language, or the importance of discourse structure constraints in writing in terms of cognitive, stylistic, or pedagogical perspectives.

The book is intended to introduce readers, students of linguistics in particular, a comprehensive view of what discourse

analysis is. It tries to cover the basic theories and ideas related to the field and demonstrate how real language is at work, and how practical and relevant discourse analysis can be to both language teachers and students in terms of using language for speaking or writing. The book starts with a brief introduction of the development of discourse analysis from the perspective of second language teaching, showing how discourse analysis is of practical value to language learning and teaching. Then it shifts to the discussion of linguistic theories relevant to discourse analysis, distinctive terms and definitions, providing a brief theoretical foundation for the actual learning and using discourse skills in observing language data. The discourse analysis proper follows a bottom-up manner, starting from the examination of intra- and inter-sentence relations—grammatical and lexical cohesion, to conversational and spoken interactions, theme-rheme patterns and information organizations in written discourse, genre analysis and intertextuality. There are surely parts that the students will find familiar with (especially the linguistic theories from various sources and the basic ideas of cohesion and coherence). But analysis from different theoretical perspectives and issues (e.g. concerning the relation between cohesion and coherence, the ways genre research is carried out and the dialogic nature of intertexuality, etc) will definitely be very interesting and enlightening to them as these areas are not well explored yet and thus will prove to be promising branches of learning for discourse analysis in terms of its generation and interpretation.

The strength of the volume lies in its comprehensiveness in contents, compatibility between theory and practice, and clarity in

ideas and research orientations. Moreover, the book will offer an overview of how important and relevant discourse analysis can be to various areas of language learning and teaching, especially the learning or teaching of creative writing and sensible reading.

Acknowledgements

It takes several years before this book has come into being. In 1996 when I studied in The Thames Valley University, London, for my second master degree, I received the initial systematic training in discourse analysis with Celia Robert, a very capable expert in discourse analysis, though my interest in the field started long before. In 1998 I successfully gained the support from the Chinese Education Commission and set up discourse analysis as a national research project, to which I have toiled and been dedicated in the last seven or eight years. In particular, I have been teaching Discourse Analysis with my M. A. graduate students since the year of 1997 and supervised about twenty students in the research of discourse with their dissertations. In 2000～2001 I stayed in St. Michael's College, Vermont, U. S. A., using their library facilities to get myself more familiarized with this research field. Without these experiences and support of various kinds, I don't think I can venture into such an ambitious field, not to say this present book. Although, as readers will definitely find, there are still a lot of errors or mistakes, this book will prove beneficial for those who are interested in discourse analysis, students of linguistics in particular.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the authors mentioned in the book for their excellent work from various

perspectives of discourse analysis; it is their work that led me onto the right track of the related field. Many ideas are quoted in the work without previous formal permissions from the original writers, because of my inability to contact them from China, for which I express my sincere apology.

No lecturer fails to learn from his students and I have been particularly fortunate in mine. Although I cannot name all of them because of the space limit, I would particularly mention some devoted ones, like Zhan Lili (who is now a teacher at Dalian Technical and Engineering University), Liu Xiaoxia (who is going to teach in Beijing University), Liu Xiaoping (Tianjin Foreign Languages University), Zhao Zhimei (Dalian Communications University) and Jiang Yansheng, Ningning, Zhu Lijuan (Northeast Normal University) et al., from whom I have learnt enormously. And their effort surely has helped the development and improvement of the book.

I have also benefited greatly from other professors in the Northeast Normal University where I am working. Professor Yang Zhong, my Ph. D. supervisor, has constantly encouraged me with my academic development, supplying materials which he believes are of my interest and giving intelligent advice in time of need. Professor Zhang Shaojie's vivid lectures on Semiotics provide me with new perspectives to look at discourse analysis.

Of course I would like to thank my family, my deceased father and my mother, my husband and my daughter, for their love and ardent and selfless support for my academic career in the past years.

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Yang Yuchen
at Northeast Normal University
Changchun, P. R. China
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