

外语语言文学系列教材

语篇分析学

张应林 主编

華中師範大學出版社



外语语言文学系列教材

语篇分析学

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2006年·武汉



华中师范大学出版社

新出图证(鄂)字 10 号

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

语篇分析学/张应林 主编. —武汉:华中师范大学出版社,2006.2

ISBN 7-5622-3364-0/H·265

I. 语… II. 张… III. 英语—语篇分析 IV. H31

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2004)第 088292 号

语篇分析学

主编:张应林 ©

责任编辑:廖国春

责任校对:章光琼

封面设计:甘 英

选题设计:文字编辑室(027-67863220)

出版发行:华中师范大学出版社

社址:武汉市珞喻路 152 号

邮编:430079

销售电话:027-67863040 027-67867371 027-67861549

传真:027-67863291

邮购:027-67861321

网址: <http://www.ccnp.com.cn>

电子信箱: hscbs@public.wh.hb.cn

经销:新华书店湖北发行所

印刷:湖北恒泰印务有限公司

督印:姜勇华

字数:265 千字

开本:787mm×960mm 1/16

印张:16.125

版次:2006 年 2 月第 1 版

印次:2006 年 2 月第 1 次印刷

印数:1—5 000

定价:25.00 元

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敬告读者:欢迎举报盗版,请打举报电话(027)67861321

前 言

语篇 (discourse) 是使用中的真实语言。在人们的交际中,它表达完整的意思。语篇是一种社会文化现象,没有语篇,就没有社会文化。从某种意义上讲,任何一种语言的最终体现形式必须是语篇,否则,就是乱码。本书所讨论的语篇是广义的,它既包括话语,也包括篇章。本书讨论的是语篇分析理论方面的问题,主要涉及语篇的功能、种类、模式、衔接、连贯、语篇与社会和文化、语篇与认知等。

语篇分析学 (Discourse Analysis) 是国外语言学近 30 多年来发展起来的一门新兴交叉学科。1952 年 Zellig Harris 在 *Language* 杂志上发表了题为 “Discourse Analysis” 的论文,创造了这一术语。尽管 Harris 在该论文中所使用的 “discourse analysis” 的意思与我们今天对这一术语的理解有很大的差异,客观地讲,这篇论文应被视为现代语篇分析学的开端。

语篇分析学作为一门学科是 20 世纪 60 年代中期逐渐发展起来的。它广泛吸收了包括语言学、符号学、社会学、人类学、心理学、认知科学、人工智能、哲学研究、交际学等学科的研究成果及相关原则,逐渐建立了自己的理论框架与分析模式。语篇分析学主要研究超句现象,研究自然语言,同时考虑社会、文化、心理语境。本书书名定为《语篇分析学》,旨在强调语篇分析是 “一门专门研究交际中的语言使用情况并涉及多个学科的学问”(黄国文,2001)。

本书共由八章组成。第一章,语篇及语篇分析,从理论上回顾语篇分析发展的历程,着重讨论对语篇、语篇分析的不同界定、语篇的特征、语篇分析的原则及常用方法。第二章探讨语篇的功能及语篇的主要形式:话语、会话与篇章,在介绍语篇类型的同时,重点论述话语与篇章的差异及相关分析模式。第三章,语篇的结构,主要从宏观上论述与语篇结构相关联的问题:线性化问题、语篇起首及演示、信息结构等,重点实例分析记叙文和议论文的篇章结构。第四章,语篇的衔接与连贯,以韩礼德的 “Cohesion in English” 为主要依据,综合近几年国内外学者的有关语篇衔接与连贯的相关理论,全面介绍语篇衔接手段及影响连贯的因素。第五章,语篇的语境,从语言、

文化和认知的角度探讨语境的概念,并探讨语境在语篇分析中的作用。第六章,语篇与社会和文化,从社会 and 文化的层面分析语篇,探讨语篇与社会、文化之间的关系。第七章,语篇与认知,从心理的层面分析语篇,是语篇的深层次分析,重点讨论语篇与认知的关系及相关认知模式。第八章,如何分析语篇,简要介绍 Portter & Wetherell 提出的语篇分析“十步法(10 stages)”。

本书综合介绍国外近十年来最新的语篇分析理论及研究成果,内容新颖,语料翔实,可以作为英语专业本科生、研究生语篇分析学课程的教材来使用,也可供对该领域研究有兴趣者参考。

本书由张应林主编并撰写第一、六、七、八章,柯贤兵撰写第二章,许梅先撰写第三章,周晓莉撰写第四章,彭贝妮撰写第五章,最后由张应林修改、审阅全书。

本书的出版,首先要感谢华中师范大学英语系张强博士的热情支持和热心帮助。还要感谢华中师范大学出版社廖国春先生为本书进行的细致的加工和润色。最后,还特别感谢本书所引著者,他们的最新研究成果及方法激励编者撰写本书。

限于水平,本书难免存在缺点、疏漏与谬误,敬请读者批评指正。

张应林

华中师范大学英语系

2005年3月

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Chapter 1 Discourse and Discourse Analysis

1.1 What Is Meant by “Discourse”?

The traditional concern of linguistic analysis and a good deal of language teaching has been the construction of sentences. Yet we all know that there is more to using language and communicating successfully with other people than being able to produce grammatically correct sentences because not all sentences are interesting, relevant, or appropriate and because people cannot just put any sentences together at random and hope that they make sense or mean something. In real communication people do not always speak or write in complete sentences, yet they still succeed in communicating. For instance:

- (1) The King of France is bald.
- (2) Certain objects, such as guitar strings, vibrate when touched. These objects first emit sound. This sound then passes through the air. Next, our eardrums detect this sound. Finally our eardrums send electrical signals to the brain.
- (3) John wants to visit his girlfriend. Mr. Smith lives in a small village nearby. The vacuum cleaner didn't work. The barber down the street couldn't help. The paper had been sold. It is going to be a long dull talk.
- (4) A: How about that?
B: Not too bad.
A: The last one?
B: For the time being.

Questions:

1. Which of the four stretches of language is meaningless in communication although it is accepted grammatically?
2. Which of them are relevant and appropriate?
3. Which one does not make sense? Why?
4. Which piece of language consists of incomplete sentences?

All these questions are not difficult to answer, but they do illustrate a point. The first stretch of language is meaningless in communication although it is grammatically correct because there is no King in France now. The second piece, which consists of five sentences, very clearly does make sense. It is coherent, meaningful and unified. The third one, which has six complete sentences, simply does not make sense. It gives no feeling of unity. It seems to have come into existence by placing a number of unrelated sentences in random order. But if some words are changed, a discourse is the result.

- (5) John wants to visit his girlfriend. Mary lives in a small village nearby. The car wouldn't start. The garage down the street couldn't help. The last bus has already left. It is going to be a long hot walk.

Example (5) illustrates that the existence of connections between sentences or utterances is an important characteristic of a passage. Example (4) communicates something though it consists of incomplete sentences. As we have observed, in real communication, particularly in face-to-face communication, people do not always speak in complete sentences. It is the background knowledge or shared knowledge that makes the complete sentences unnecessary. In this example both Speaker A and Speaker B know exactly what "that" refers to. It can refer to either an examination or a tooth extraction or something else in a specific communicative event.

From the analysis of the previous examples we notice that discourse is the language which has been used to communicate something and is felt to be coherent

as a unified whole. Discourse is real language used by real people in real communication for the real communicative purpose. Discourse is language in use within multiple contexts — textual, social, cultural, and psychological. It has to do with the way relationships get mediated by language and other signs. For example, how authors appeal to their readers and how texts apprehend the world they purport to describe. Tannen (1989) defines discourse as language beyond the sentence. “Discourse — language beyond the sentence — is simply language — as it occurs, in any context (including the context of linguistic analysis), in any form (including two made-up sentences in sequence; a tape-recorded conversation, meeting, or interview; a novel or play)” (Tannen, 1989: 6). *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* defines discourse as “a general term for examples of language use, i. e. language which has been produced as the result of an act of communication” (Richards, et al, 1985: 83).

Generally we use the word “discourse”, as an uncountable noun, to refer to any stretches of language, spoken or written, or of whatever length, that is coherent and is received by the receiver as a unified whole. But on the other hand, we use it more concretely, as a countable noun, to refer to a single, particular conversation or news report as in “this discourse” or “a discourse on the front page...” In that case, we may even use the plural “discourses” when referring to several instances of text or talk.

1.1.1 Terminology: Discourse / Text

The terms *discourse* and *text* require some comment, since their use is often ambiguous and confusing. We do not propose to draw any important distinction between the two terms. As they are used in the literature, they often simply imply slight differences in emphasis, on which we do not wish to base any important theoretical distinction. First, people often talk of spoken discourse versus written text. Or alternatively, discourse often is naturally occurring spoken language, as found in such discourses as conversations, interviews, commentaries, and speeches, which implies interactive discourse; whereas text is written language, as

found in such texts as essays, notices, newspaper articles and chapters, which implies non-interactive monologue, whether intended to be spoken aloud or not. For example, one talks of the written text of a speech. Such ambiguities arise also in everyday terms for discourse. For instance, a lecture may refer to a whole social event, or only to the main spoken text or its written version. And also people can speak of an academic paper, meaning what is delivered or read to an audience, or its printed version (Goffman, 1981). A second distinction is that discourse implies length, whereas a text may be very short. In this usage, complete texts include: "Exit" or "No smoking" (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Some researchers have attempted to draw the distinction in a more interesting way. For example, Widdowson (1979) distinguishes textual cohesion, recognizable in surface lexis, grammar and propositional development, from discourse coherence which operates between underlying speech acts. The distinction between surface cohesion and underlying functional coherence is an important one, but clearly they can both operate in a given discourse or text. The basic problem is to account for the recognizable unity or connectedness of stretches of language, whether this unity is structural, or semantic or functional. Another theoretical way to draw a distinction is proposed by van Dijk (1977). He uses the term *text* to refer to an abstract theoretical construction which is realized in discourse. In other words, text is to discourse as sentence is to utterance. Halliday (1978: 40) uses the term *text* to point to the same distinction, but he chooses the opposite term to refer to surface realization, and talks of language being actualized in text.

All the distinctions discussed above are not clear-cut, and there have been many other uses of these labels. In particular, both discourse and text can be used in a much broader sense to include all language units with a definable communicative function, whether spoken or written. On the one hand, language use is not limited to spoken language, but also involves written or printed language, communication and interaction, as is the case when we read our daily newspapers, our textbooks, our mails on paper or emails, or the myriad of different text types that have to do with our academic or other kind of work. On the

other hand, there are many similarities between the ways people speak and write when using language to communicate their ideas. The same is true for listening to or reading spoken and written discourse. Therefore, in this book we use the term *discourse* to refer to any stretch of spoken or written language that is felt as complete in itself. In this case the terms *discourse* and *text* are interchangeable.

1.1.2 Discourse and Grammar

Grammar refers to the rules a language uses to form grammatical units such as phrases, clauses, and sentences whereas discourse refers to larger units of language such as books, paragraphs, conversations, and interviews. In grammar studies a sentence is the largest unit, but in discourse analysis a sentence is the smallest one. Compare the following tree diagrams:

Figure 1 Grammar Studies

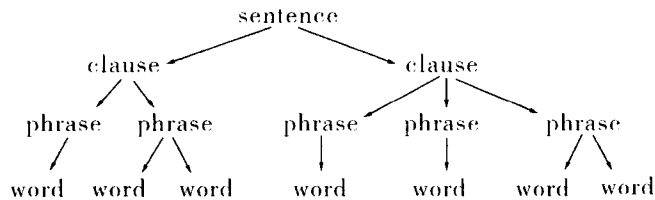
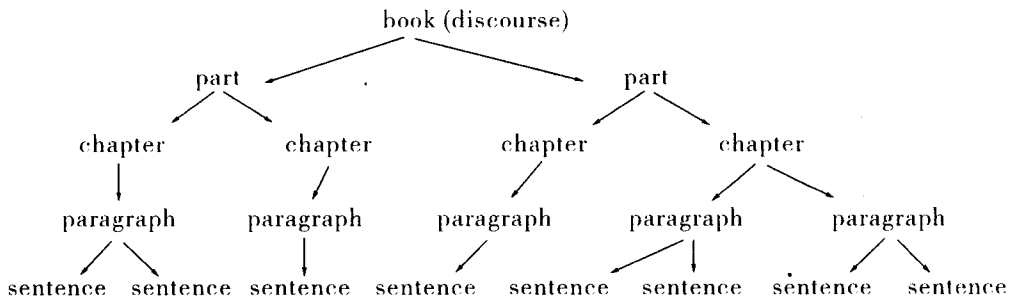


Figure 2 Discourse Studies



There are rules within sentences, limiting which words can follow others. There are

also rules within discourse, limiting which sentence can follow another one. Let's look at Example (3) again. The first sentence "John wants to visit his girlfriend" limits or constrains the next sentence. The second sentence "Mr. Smith lives in a small village nearby" seems quite unreasonable, but "Mary lives in a small village nearby" goes well with the first sentence. Then, how can we recognize a stretch of language as unified and meaningful? First we employ language rules of the type studied by grammarians and taught in most language textbooks. These rules operate between sentences as well as within them. Second, we employ knowledge of the world, of the speaker, of social convention, of what is going on around us as we read or listen in order to make sense of the language used in communication.

1.1.3 Discourse and Sentence

Guy Cook claims: "We have, then, two different kinds of language as potential objects for study: one abstracted in order to teach a language or literacy, or to study how the rules of language work, and another which has been used to communicate something and is felt to be coherent (and may, or may not, happen to correspond to a correct sentence or a series of correct sentences). This latter kind of language — language in use, for communication — is called *discourse* and the search for what gives discourse coherence is discourse analysis" (Cook, 1989: 6). The first kind of language is a sentence or sentences constructed artificially according to certain grammatical rules. These sentences are supposed to be complete and correct grammatically. Discourse may be composed of one or more well-formed grammatical sentences. It can, however, have grammatical mistakes in it. Discourse treats the rules of grammar as a resource very flexibly, conforming to them when it needs to, but departing from them when it does not. It sometimes does the same with the conventional meanings too. For example:

(6) Which of you people is the fish? (Cook, 1989)

What does this sentence mean? In textbook terms this sentence seems to be

nonsense because people cannot be the “fish” biologically. But if we put this sentence in a specific context, for instance, in a restaurant context, probably it is acceptable. When a waitress comes with a plate of fish on her hand, asking me and the people I am eating with: “Which of you people is the fish?” we can understand her. In fact, discourse can be anything from a single cry for help right up to a whole novel like *War and Peace*. What matters is not its conformity to rules, but the fact that it communicates and is recognized by its receivers as coherent.

1.1.4 Discourse In Context

Discourse makes the study of language in context. We have constantly referred to the environment, circumstances or context in which language is used. In recent years, the idea that a linguistic string or a sentence can be fully analyzed without taking context into consideration has been seriously questioned. In fact, since the beginning of the 1970s, linguists have become increasingly aware of the importance of the context in the interpretation of discourse. Fillmore points out that “The task is to determine what we can know about the meaning and context of an utterance ... I find that whenever I notice some sentence in context, I immediately find myself asking what the effect would have been if the context had been slightly different” (Fillmore, 1977: 119). In this case we need to know what it would mean for the context to be “slightly different”. Look at the following example:

(7) I am hungry.

What does this utterance mean? The literary meaning of this utterance is to describe the speaker’s physical state. But this utterance could be used by a starving beggar to request food or by a naughty child to delay going to bed, or by a student to suggest that the teacher dismiss his class. Bloomfield (1933) argues that linguistics is only concerned with those phonological, lexical and syntactic features which the utterances share. He feels it is no concern of linguistics to explain how identical utterances can have different functions in different contexts, nor how

listeners correctly decode the intended message. As we know, when we receive a linguistic message, we pay attention to many other factors apart from the language itself. For example, when we are having a face-to-face communication with the person sending the message, we notice what he is doing with his facial expressions, and body movement while speaking. These are the paralinguistic features of a spoken message, which are lost if we write the message down. In written messages we may be influenced by handwriting or typography, and by whether the message is underlined or italicized or bold-faced. We are also influenced by the situation in which we receive messages, by our cultural and social relationship with the participants, by what we know and what we assume other participants know. All these factors take us beyond the study of language and force us to look at other areas — the mind, the body, culture, society and the whole physical world. It is generally believed that context gives the meaning of a word, a phrase, a sentence or even a discourse. It is true to say that the answer to the question of what gives discourse its unity may be impossible to give without taking context into consideration.

In short, the need to consider both discourse and context increases the scope of discourse analysis. One obvious reason is that context can be tremendously broad and can be defined in different ways, for example, in the ways of mutual knowledge, social situations, speaker-hearer identities, and cultural constructs. Another reason is that the discourse-context relationship is not independent of other relationships often assumed to hold between language and context — context as culture, society or interaction. Discourse context will be explored theoretically in Chapter 5.

1.1.5 Discourse as Verbal Structure

In modern linguistics, discourse researchers may analyze auditory sounds and visual marks on paper. This is how language is used when we speak or write, hear and read discourses. In spoken discourse sounds do not come alone. Several types of non-verbal activities, such as gestures, facial expressions and body movement,