

Pragmatic Concepts in Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

The analysis of discourse is the study of language in communication. Such a study involves contextual considerations and so it necessarily belongs to that area of linguistics called pragmatics.

Pragmatics is concerned with the three- termed relation which unites linguistic forms and the communicative functions; these forms are capable of serving with the contexts or settings in which given linguistic forms can have certain functions. In other words, it is the study of the use and meaning of utterances in relation to their situation.

Pragmatics, as an integrated approach to language, has lately acquired growing importance as pure formalist approaches to language are proving inadequate, as they fail to account for the whole process of linguistic communication.

So any analytic study of the language of any piece of discourse must adopt a pragmatic approach which takes into consideration such notions as the context of situation, cohesion, coherence, text, co-text, presupposition, inference, and other notions relevant to the analysis of discourse.

الجوانب اللغوية المستخدمة في تحليل الخطاب

المستخلص :

يعرف تحليل الخطاب بأنه دراسة لغة التواصل سواء اكانت محكية ام مكتوبة؛ ويهدف الى دراسة البنية اللغوية على مستوى يتعدى مستوى الجملة الى مستويات اكبر مثل الحوار او النص مهما كان حجمه ، ويهتم هذا الميدان ايضا بدراسة اللغة في سياقها. ويذكرنا هذا التعريف بمنحى اخر للدرس اللغوي وهو دراسة استخدام اللغة Pragmatics من منظور وظيفي؛ أي دراسة التركيب اللغوي بالاشارة الى عوامل غير لغوية كالنص والمتكلم الذي يستخدم اللغة والسياق الذي تستخدم فيه.

ولكي نفهم موضوع تحليل الخطاب واستخدام اللغة بمزيد من العمق؛ لابد لنا من التعرف على الجوانب اللغوية التي يتناولها هذا الميدان من اهمها : التماسك اللغوي للنص Cohesion؛ الوحدة الموضوعية Coherence؛ العلاقات المنطقية بين الجمل مثل الاقتضاء Presupposition والاستلزام Entailment؛ الاستنتاج Inference وغير ذلك من الظواهر. وهذا يقودنا الى التحدث عن اللغة في سياقها Pragmatics وعن كيفية استخدام الجمل المقبولة نحويًا ودلاليًا في سياق مقبول.

Introduction :

This paper focuses on discourse analysis, using pragmatics in a new combined way called pragma-discourse analysis. It can be said that this is a cognitive approach to both pragmatic and discourse analysis.

The aim of this paper is to propose pragmatic view in discourse analysis, combining both disciplines in order to explain the intentional phenomena that occur in most communicative intention of persuading.

The first section of the paper consists of a few remarks about the different approaches taken in discourse analysis in general in order to situate our own double perspective combining pragmatics and discourse analysis. The second section is devoted to co-text or the surrounding discourse. The third one focuses on text and texture. We end with a few concluding remarks which is the topic of the fourth section.

1.Context of Situation :

This concept was formulated by Malinowski in 1933, and elaborated by Firth in 1957, and ever since a number of linguists and philosophers, such as Hymes and Lewis, have worked over this concept. According to Hymes (1964: 34), the context of situation defines the range of possible interpretations on the one hand, and supports the intended interpretation on the other:

The use of linguistic form identifies a range of meanings.

A context can support a range of meanings. When a form is used in a context ,it eliminates the meanings possible to that context other than those the form can signal; the context eliminates from consideration the meanings possible to that form other than those the context can support.

An understanding of the context of situation is essential to identify and predict the nature of discourse: The more specifically we can characterize the context of situation, the more specifically we can predict the properties of a text in that situation (Halliday and Hassan, 1976:22).

Hymes (ibid:72) categorizes the features of context as addressor, addressee, audience, topic, channel, code, message-form and event.

The addressor is the speaker or writer who produces the utterance or sentence.

The addressee is the hearer who receives the utterance or sentence.

Audience: This notion is important in specifying the context, as the presence of over- hearers may contribute to the speech event.

Topic is simply what is being talked about . Here a distinction has to be made between sentential topic and discourse topic. Sentential topic is a grammatical term which identifies a particular constituent of the sentence.

Setting: The term setting refers to the time and place in which a communicative event takes place as well as the physical relations of the participants in the communicative act with respect to posture and gesture and facial expressions.

Channel The term channel refers to the means by which communicative contacts are maintained. This term has been referred to in the context of language variation categories as mode.

Code: This term refers to the language, dialect, or style of language being used in the communication.

Message-form: This term refers to the form intended in communication such as chat, fairy-tale, sonnet ,letter, etc....

Event is the nature of the communicative act within which a genre could be embedded

2. Co-Text

The features listed above play a part in defining the interpretation of discourse and in predicting the nature of discourse as well. But these features are by no means the only criteria governing interpretation. Another is co-text. In The Study of Language, Yule (2006 : PP.98-9) remarks that:

The co-text of a word is the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence. This surrounding co- text has a strong effect on what we think the word means.

Co-text or the surrounding discourse ,does not only constraint the interpretation of individual lexical items, but it constraints the interpretation of larger stretches of discourse (Van Dijk, 1977 : PP. 43-5).

3. Text and Texture :

In fact the term is used rather loosely by many people to refer mainly to written passages. In linguistics, however, the term takes on a tighter definition. While some linguists have defined" text "as" the verbal record of a communicative event" (Brown and Yule,1983:190), others have insisted on the principle of connectivity in defining the term. A text, they argue, cannot be a text unless it

has a texture, and it is, his texture, which is provided by the cohesive relation, that distinguishes the text from anything that is not a text. A text may be spoken or written, it may be short or long, that does not matter. What matters, however, is that it should have a unified entity:

The word TEXT is used in linguistics to refer to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length that does form a unified whole.....it may be anything from a single proverb to a whole play, from a momentary cry for help to an all-day discussion on a committee (Halliday and Hassan, 1976: 11).

According to this view adopted by Halliday and Hassan, a text is best considered as a unit of meaning rather than of form; a text does not consist of sentences but is realized by sentences. The texture is partly provided by the cohesive relation that exists between two or more co-referential items, that is, items which are identical in reference.

e.g. Don' t call on Jack now. He' s very busy drafting a report, but you can phone him this evening.

Here, a cohesive tie exists between Jack, He and him, and the sentences are recognized to have a texture and to constitute a text. Halliday and Hassan (1976:98) recognize five kinds of cohesive ties, namely, reference, substitution, ellipses, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

4. Cohesion :

Cohesion is a syntagmatic relationship between the ties and connections that exist within a text. Referring to this concept of cohesion, Halliday and Hassan remark:

Cohesion occurs where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependant on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other, in the sense that it can not be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text. Cohesion is expressed

partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary
(ibid : PP.4-5).

A distinction is thus made between two major categories of cohesion: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion includes reference, substitution and ellipsis. Conjunction, they argue, is on the border line of grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion; it is mainly grammatical but with a lexical component in it(ibid : 274).

4.1.Reference :

The term "reference" has been widely and confusingly discussed by formal semanticists and discourse analysts. In traditional semantics the term is used together with sense in discussing lexical meaning as isolated from the purpose of language users . According to Lyons (1977: 57) : The term "reference" has to do with the relationship which holds between an expression and what that expression stands for on particular occasions.

As such the term has no appeal to the discourse analyst who does not isolate language users from the process of linguistic communication. Lyons (ibid:58), however proceeds to explain that reference is an action on the part of the speaker writer:

It should be noted that it is the speaker who refers (by using some appropriate expression) :he invests the expression with reference by the act of referring(ibid).

Donnellan(1978:60) draws the distinction between speaker reference and semantic reference: People refer and expressions refer. Let us call these phenomena **SPEAKER REFERENCE** and **SEMANTIC REFERENCE** respectively.

It is in the sense of speaker reference that the term will be used throughout. Referring expressions will be called co-referential items. These are words which make reference to something else for their interpretation" instead of being interpreted semantically their own right". Brown and Yule (1983:205) state that:

the term reference can be taken out of discussions of lexical meaning and reserved for that function whereby speakers(writers) indicate, via the use of a linguistic expression, the entities they are talking (writing) about.

4.1.1.Referential Meaning

Referential meaning is sometimes known as cognitive or descriptive meaning and contrasted with emotive or effective meaning. Lexical items like "pen", "drink", and "Ahmed", for instance, are said to have referential meaning in that they are names for an object, a process and a human being.

4.1.2. Situational versus Textual Reference :

The distinction between situational and textual reference is represented by the term exophora and endophora . Situational reference is signaled by items whose interpretation is to be found in the context of situation rather than the text in which they occur. Such items, called exophoric co-referential items, are not simply synonymous to referential meanings. Exophoric items instruct the addressee to look outside the text to identify what is being referred to. Endophoric co-referential items, on the other hand, are those items which instruct the addressee to look inside the text for interpretation. Endophoric relations could be either anaphoric or cataphoric. Anaphoric co-referential items are those items used to refer back to something, whereas cataphoric co-referential items are those used to refer forward to something.

The distinction between situational and textual reference is contested by Brown and Yule (1983: PP.199-204). They argue that the addressee who encounters a text with many co- referential items does not normally resolve the reference by going back up through the chain of reference to the original expression which releases him from the text and relates what he hears or reads out to the real world in which he lives. Rather, the addressee seems more likely to establish a referent in his mental representation of the discourse he encounters and "relates subsequent references to that referent back to his mental representation". Such a processing model seems more plausible than the model which suggests that addressees process discourse by referring back through a chain of co- referential items to the initial verbal expression in the text. It is on this ground that they question the validity of the distinction between exophoric and endophoric co-reference drawn by Halliday and Hassan:

In both cases, we must suppose, the processor has a mental representation. In the one case, he has a mental representation of what is in the world, in the other, he has a mental representation of a world created by the discourse. In each case he must look into his mental representation to determine reference (1976:201).

4.1.3. Types of Co-Reference-

Co-referential items can be categorized in terms of person, demonstratives, and comparison. All these items, except for the demonstrative adverbs (here, there, or then), function within the noun phrase.

Personal co-referential items include the personal pronouns , the possessive determiners and the possessive pronouns. The term "personal" might seem somewhat misleading as the system includes such pronouns as "it" and "its" that are actually used to refer to objects or non-personal entities. The term, however, may be justified by arguing that most grammatical terms express the typical meaning of the category in question, and, to put it in Halliday and Hassan 's words, "are justified by being in this way simple and easy to remember" (1976 : 45).

Personal co-referential items designate either participants in some process or possessors of some entity. When they designate participants, they are classified as noun, sub-classified as pronoun, and function within the noun phrase as head. If the noun phrase is the subject the co-referential item assumes one of the following forms: I, you, we, he, she, it, they and one. Otherwise, it could be me, you, us, him, her, it, them, or one. When used to designate a possessor of some entity, the co-referential item may function as head(mine, yours, ours, his, hers, its, theirs) or as modifier (my, your, our, his, her, its, their, one' s).

A distinction of these items can be made between "one" and "you". "One" is a generalized, formal and impersonal item that has a human referent. It is possible that the word is borrowed from French "on", but whereas the French "on" can function only as subject, English "one" is used to perform various grammatical functions. Unlike British English, American English does not retain "one" in subsequent occurrences and normally substitutes "he". In informal English, "you" is used with the same generic indefinite reference.

Formal : One never knows what may happen.

Informal : You never know what may happen.

Novelists sometimes use "you" instead of "one" in the course of narration so as to keep an informal tenor.

4.1.3.1. Demonstrative Co-Reference

In substance, demonstrative co-reference items are forms of verbal pointing by means of which speakers \ writers identify their referents by locating them on a scale of proximity. The set of demonstrative items includes the adverbs "here", "there", "now" and "then", which are used to refer directly to the location of a process in space of time, and the determiners "this", "these", "that" and "those" which are used to refer to the location of some entity. Halliday and Hassan(1976:PP.70-74) treat the definite article "the" as a demonstrative. According to them, "the" is an unmarked and specific deictic expression which could be either exophoric or endophoric.

There are two cases in which "the" occurs with an exophoric power. First, it occurs when the reference is made to a particular individual or subclass which is identifiable in the speech situation.

e. g . : Pass me the sugar.

Here 'the sugar' may be interpreted in the light of an underlying meaning similar to "pass me the sugar, which you and I know, is on the table."

Second, it occurs when the reference is not situational but rather based on extra- linguistic grounds. In this case, where the co-reference is not situation-tied,the relation is called homophora. "The" is homophoric if the reference is made to a member of a whole class whose identification is presupposed in the absence of specific indication to the contrary.

e. g. : The government should do something.

Here, the government is understood by the speaker and addressee to be theirs, as no indicator to the contrary was made. Homophoric "the" also occurs when it is used to refer to something which is understood to be unique in the context, e . g . the sun.

Halliday (1975: PP. 60-1) sums up the cases in which "the" occurs with cataphoric, anaphoric or homophoric power in written English:

In written English the general picture is as follows: there is a high probability that (a) if there is a modifier (other than "the") or qualifier in the nominal group, "the" is cataphoric, (b) if there is no modifier or qualifier,then,(1) if in the preceding context there has occurred a lexical item which is either the same item as, or from the same lexical set as the head of the nominal group, "the" is anaphoric, (2) if not, "the" is homophoric.

4.1.3.2. Comparative Co-Reference

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976 : 78) "comparison is a form of reference, alongside personal and demonstrative reference."This is because "likeness is a referential property. A thing cannot just be like, it must be like something."In English, a distinction can be made between general comparison and particular comparison.

General comparison deals with likeness between two things regardless of particular properties. It is expressed by a certain class of adjectives like same, equal and identical, expressing identity; such and similar, expressing similarity; other, different and else expressing difference. It is also expressed by adverbs like identically, expressing identity, so, similarly and likewise, expressing similarity; differently and other- wise, expressing difference.

Particular comparison expresses likeness between things in respect of quantity or quality. In terms of quantity, the comparison is expressed in the numerative element in the structure of the noun phrase and taking the form of a comparative quantifier like "more" in "give him more milk", or an adverb of comparison sub-modifying a quantifier like "as" in "as much as you can".

In terms of quality, the comparison is expressed in the epithet element of a noun phrase. This element could be either a comparative adjective like "better" in "he secured a better job." or an adverb of comparison as "so" in "I can' t buy so expensive a car." The comparison is also expressed by a comparison adverb (He drove faster this time) or by an adverb of comparison sub-modifying an adverb (They played as well).

4.2. Substitution

The key concept to substitution is that it is the replacement of one item by another. Substitution is a grammatical relation between words or phrases within a text, different in substance from reference in that it is a relation in the wording rather than in the meaning (Schiffrin, 1984 :96).

Among the items which occur as nominal substitutes to provide a cohesive relation in texts is "one" which always functions as head in noun phrases. Following the general rule stipulating that "the substitute item has the same structural function as that for which it substitutes". The above mentioned item can substitute only for items which function as head in noun phrases.

It is important to differentiate between the lexical item (one) which occurs as substitute in texts and all other words taking the same form. These are the personal pronoun "one", the cardinal numeral "one", determiner "one" and pro-noun "one", designating a person. Following are examples illustrating the various occurrences of "one":

1. as a personal pro-noun: One never knows what may happen.
2. as a cardinal numeral: Take one and leave me the other two.
3. as a determiner A: I 'd like a cup of coffee.
B Then pour yourself one.
4. as a pro-noun: You are the one that I want.

Verbal substitution is realized by the verb do. When this verb occurs as a substitute, it functions as head in the logical structure of the verb phrase.

e . g . : Do you speak English?
Yes, I do.

The verb "do" also occurs as lexical verb, general verb, pro-verb and verbal operator. It is important to distinguish these from the substitute do. The following sentences exemplify the use of non-substitute "do":

- 1.lexical : He 's got to do the homework.
- 2.general : They did a dance.
- 3 pro-verb : I 'll do that.
- 4.operator : Did he come?

Clausal substitution is realized by the words so and not. In this case, the Substituted element is a whole clause.

4.3. Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a particular case of substitution as it is "substitution by zero." Like reference and substitution, ellipsis is a form of presupposition, a device for identifying something by means of referring to some element already known by the addressee. The following examples show the difference between reference, substitution, and ellipsis.

Reference : This is a fine hall you have here. I 'm proud to be lecturing in it.

Substitution : This is a fine hall you have here. I 've never lectured in a finer one.

Ellipsis : This is a fine hall you have here. I 've never lectured in a finer.

The basic principle underlying the notion of ellipsis is that the full form and the elliptical one are both possible.

4.4. Conjunction

The fourth type of cohesive relation is conjunction which is provided by such markers as "and", "so", "but" etc... Unlike reference, substitution and ellipsis, conjunctive relations are not tied to any particular sequence in the expression. Conjunction items relate what is about to be said to what has been said before. An exhaustivelist of the types of conjunctive relations is provided by Halliday and Hassan in four categories: additive, adversative, causal and temporal (1976 : PP.226-73).

Additive markers include: and, and also, nor, or, or else, furthermore, in addition, besides, alternatively, incidentally, by the way, that is, I mean, in other words, for instance, thus, likewise, similarly, in the same way, on the other hand, by contrast, etc...

Adversative markers include: yet, though, only, but, however, nevertheless, despite this, in fact, actually, as a matter of fact, at the same time, instead, rather, on the contrary, at least, in any case, anyhow, at any rate, etc...

Causal markers include: so, then, hence, therefore, consequently, because of his, for this reason, on account of this, as a result, in consequence, for his purpose, for, because, it follows, in this respect, in this regard, with reference to this, etc...

Temporal markers include: then, next, after that, previously, before that, finally, at last, at first, at once, thereupon, soon, after a time, next time, up to now, hitherto, to sum up, in short, in conclusion, etc....

4.5. Coherence

Cohesion, however, cannot by itself provide an integrated account for how linguistic messages are understood. It is true that words, syntactic structures and lexical items play a part in the interpretation of discourse chunks, yet it would be a gross mistake to argue that these are the sole elements people use in processing discourse. Nor does the physical connectedness between words or linguistic strings completely account for the interpretation of discourse. The

addressee, in fact, works out discourse in a way that fits in with his experience and perception of the world. When readers encounter disconnected or even ungrammatical discourse, they would normally try to make sense of what they read rather than reject it as bad language. Describing coherence as complementary to cohesion in interpreting texts, Yule remarks:

The key to the concept of coherence is not something which exists in people. It is people who "make sense" of what they read and hear. They try to arrive at an interpretation which is in line with their experience of the way the world is (Yule,2006 : 106).

4.6. Inference

Discussing coherence as a process partially conducive to the interpretation of discourse leads to the discussion of inference. Inference is a process adopted by addressees to reach an interpretation for utterances or for connections between utterances. Inferences are clearly derived from background knowledge already familiar to the addressee who establishes possible interpretation for utterances, which he easily abandons, if the following information does not fit in with his experience. The following example shows that addressees, by applying a process of deduction based on conventional socio- cultural knowledge, abandon their inferences and establish new ones according to the subsequent information:

1. John was on his way to school.
2. He was really worried about the math lesson
3. Last week, he had been unable to control the class.
4. It was unfair of the math teacher to leave him in charge.
5. After all, it is not a normal part of a janitor' s duties.

4.7. Presupposition

Another pragmatic concept of interest to the discourse analyst is presupposition. Presuppositions are assumptions taken by the speaker to be the common ground of partners to a communicative act. A question like "Why did you call on my brother yesterday?" implies two presuppositions:

1. the addressor has a brother.

2. the addressee visited the addressor 's brother yesterday.

To check for presuppositions underlying sentences, a negation test is involved. The negative version of a sentence carrying a presupposition does not alter that presupposition. For instance , the negative version of "my watch is waterproof"—"my watch is not waterproof"—still implies the presupposition that I have a watch.

5. Summary and Conclusion

Pragmatics is the study of language use in particular situations. Pragmatics, like discourse analysis, goes beyond structural study of the phrase and focuses on higher units : what is more, it focuses on its object of study through consideration of the context and its construction, through recognition of the speaker' s intention and through the establishment of implicit elements which the hearer has to access.

Doing discourse analysis certainly involves doing syntax and semantics, but it primarily consists of doing pragmatics; pragmatic facts are frequently necessary for explaining syntactic and semantic facts.

The subject of pragmatics is now very familiar. Some twenty years ago, however, it was not so. At the time, pragmatics seemed to be the waste-paper basket in which formalist linguists threw what they thought to be irrelevant data. Now the outlook to pragmatics is quite different. Many would argue that we cannot really understand the nature of language itself unless we understand pragmatics.

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