Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching

Dushyanthi Mendis
Department of English
University of Colombo

14.09.2007
Contents

1. Definitions
2. Functions
3. Applications
4. Data
5. Implications for language teaching
6. Works cited
7. Acknowledgments
8. Conclusion
What is discourse?

- Discourse: 1. a serious speech or piece of writing about a particular subject; 2. serious conversation; 3. connected language in speech or writing;
  

- Discourse is language above the level of the sentence
Discourse must be understood in its widest sense: every utterance assuming a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker, the intention of influencing the speaker in some way ... it is every variety of oral discourse of every nature from trivial conversation to the most elaborate oration ... but it is also the mass of writing that reproduces oral discourse or that borrows its manner of expression and its purposes: correspondence, memoirs, plays, didactic works, in short, all genres in which someone addresses himself as the speaker, and organizes what he says in the category of person (Benveniste, 1971:110)
What is discourse analysis?

- Discourse analysis is a vast 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 (McCarthey 1991)

- Discourse Analysis is concerned with the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used (McCarthey 1991)
Why analyse discourse?

- To inform ourselves about the language we use
- To dispel myths about the language we use
- To find out how language changes and evolves over time
- To find out the most effective uses of language for communication
Discourse analysis and language teaching

- Articles (a, the)
- Referential pronouns (it, they, this, that, one)
- Speech acts (requesting, apologising, ordering)
- Idioms (a slap in the face)
- Discourse markers (first, next, then)
- Logical connectors (moreover, nevertheless)
- Modals (would, could, may, might)
- Introductions and conclusions etc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written British English</th>
<th>Spoken British English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. the</td>
<td>1. the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. to</td>
<td>2. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. and</td>
<td>3. and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. of</td>
<td>4. you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. a</td>
<td>5. it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. in</td>
<td>6. to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. was</td>
<td>7. a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. it</td>
<td>8. yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I</td>
<td>9. that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. he</td>
<td>10. of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. that</td>
<td>11. in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. she</td>
<td>12. was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. for</td>
<td>13. it’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. on</td>
<td>14. now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. her</td>
<td>15. Mm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Carter, 2007)
Dispelling myths

basically I like watching films err (.2) yeah mostly watch English films (.2) and (.2) yeah err I like all sorts of films (.2) some of the films I really like are (.1) mm acti- I like action films I also like err drama (.2) type of films also (.2) I like horror films not too much but yeah relatively okay I also like comedies err (.2) one of the s- some of the main films have err (.2) inspired me is patch adams and also v for vendetta I like this because it’s a err very inspiring films which talk about how people (.4) deviate from erm (xx) sort of social structures
Changing and evolving language

Eg 1: I’ll give you a ringcut
Eg 2: Ring kərəlā cut kərələnə

Eg 3: Yeah Dushy
Eg 4: I’m at a meeting now I’ll call you

Eg 5: Sorry I cudn wish you. ny way hp dat us hav a Happy n safe jrny. God bless u. GN.
Eg 6: Hey man already done 4 d da um. Goin arnd 3.30 whr r u? nw u, @ d rescorc cntr. C ya dn.
Language for effective communication

- The language of speech and writing
- The language of disciplinary discourses
- The language of genres
- Rhetorical expression
- Discourse markers and signposting devices
References


Acknowledgments

**My students:**
- Heshan Dharmawardana for speech data on movies
- Rizana Hassan for mobile phone data
- Gayani Ranasinghe for SMS data
Thank you