Introduction

Language has often been defined as a *system* of arbitrary symbols used for human communication. The purpose of this book is to help you discover system in the ways we use language for communication in social contexts. A secondary goal is to convince you that language is not just some entity we *use* in communication, but that much of what we call language "use" is part of language, part of the system of arbitrary symbols.

Discourse analysis is the study of the language of communication – spoken or written. The system that emerges out of the data shows that communication is an interlocking social, cognitive, and linguistic enterprise.

While it is commonplace to talk about system in our linguistic descriptions of phonology, syntax, and semantics, the search for system at the discourse level is still evolving. There is no agreed-upon set of analytic procedures for the description of discourse. The units and processes defined in an analysis depend on the goals of the study. For example, if we want to know how writers show the relation between the claims they make and the evidence for those claims, the analysis will differ from that used to describe the signals children use to interrupt teachers in the classroom. If we are concerned with modeling the language of tutorial sessions, the analysis will differ from that used to study children's narratives. If we want to compare how people complain, gripe, and share their troubles across various languages or study how such communication is carried out by bilinguals or by language learners, the analysis will differ again. If we want to describe how advice is given on radio call-in programs, the analysis will differ from that used in a speech act analysis of advice-giving directives. Given all the ways in which communication is accomplished, it is difficult to see how one and only one "best" method of analysis might apply.

In this book, system in discourse is shown in a series of hierarchically arranged levels. A glance at the table of contents will show you what these are; a chapter is devoted to each. Chapter 1 describes the highest level, or tier – the structure of communication systems. The relation of system signals to conversational analysis is also included in this chapter. Chapter 2 demonstrates the ways in which communication components are realized in specific languages to allow for smooth and appropriate social interaction. Chapter 3 looks inside the communication system at the system of scripts we develop to meet our many different communication goals. In Chapter 4, communication goals are analyzed again, first as speech acts and then as speech events. By using these different analyses, variability is shown not only in analysis but also

within the system and across languages. In Chapter 5, classical rhetorical models are used to analyze written and spoken data. The data described here are largely monologues produced by one person and communicated to others. The chapter also includes a brief introduction to rhetorical structure theory.

Chapters 1 through 5 show the layers, or tiers, of structure in communication. These structures serve as flexible templates that can be used to carry out our communication goals. Chapter 6 shows that specific linguistic devices such as cohesive ties and deictic markers can also be used to make the discourse more coherent. Chapter 7 explores the dimensions of oral and written discourse and the various dichotomies proposed to account for such differences. Chapter 8 gives an overview of pragmatics and of contextual analysis, an analysis that highlights the ways in which specific questions about grammar, lexicon, and prosody can be answered by reference to discourse goals. Finally, Chapter 9 summarizes the many methods of analyzing and interpreting discourse structure.

Each chapter includes sections labeled "Practice." These were included for several purposes: to raise your awareness of systematicity in language at the discourse level, to give practice in analysis by "hands-on" involvement with data, and to offer suggestions to start you on your own independent research. You may want to start a journal for your answers, ideas, and observations. Practice items can also be used as study group assignments; each member can carry out part of the research, and the study group can combine the results for a short research paper. Given these goals, it's not surprising that there is no key with "right" or "wrong" answers to practice items. The Practices are meant to stimulate thought and start you on what I hope will be an adventure in discourse analysis.

There are references at the end of each chapter. They are preceded by a Research and Application section, which presents brief summaries of research similar to that discussed in the chapter and asks for your analysis and comments. You are not expected to complete all of the Research and Application items. Select the topics that interest you most. You may only wish to read through them at this point. Perhaps they will form a basis for a paper or future research activities. Again, the intent is to encourage your involvement in discourse analysis.

Discourse and Language Education was prepared specifically for people with strong interests in language and language acquisition. The book will not tell you "how to teach discourse" to language learners. Nevertheless, if you believe that language learners are, in the best sense of the term, "language researchers," you will find that many of the practice activities can be used with language learners to heighten their awareness of the system behind discourse.

Typically, the people in my courses have been communications and linguistics majors, EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESL (English as a second language) teachers, ASL (American Sign Language) and foreign language

teachers, and teachers whose schools enroll students from many language and ethnic backgrounds. Because their students represent all age levels (preschool to senior citizen classes), all proficiency levels, and a wide range of first languages, an attempt has been made to include examples from an equally wide range of learners.

The majority of the examples given in the book are from data collected in the United States and, most frequently, in Southern California. Examples from other areas of the world and for other languages are also given, but these are limited by my experience and travels. To broaden the scope, your help is requested. When you complete a practice exercise or an activities project and are pleased with the results, I invite you to share your data and your analysis with me. Although no promises can be made that your examples will appear in the next revision of this book, as many as possible will be included. I envision this as a text that has been cooperatively built and collaboratively completed.

In preparing *Discourse and Language Education,* my overall objective has been to reveal system in discourse. This overall objective has been divided into several course objectives.

Objectives

1. You should know the universal system constraints on human communication. (Chapter 1)
   Evidence: List system constraints with an example of each.
2. You should understand that ritual constraints influence the way that system constraints are realized in different languages. (Chapter 2)
   Evidence: Select any of the system constraints and show how ritual constraints of two languages might lead speakers of those languages to misunderstand or misjudge each other.
3. You should be able to relate system constraints to the components of conversational analysis. (Chapter 1)
   Evidence: Given a transcript, identify conversational features that match the system constraints.
4. You should understand the structure of communication shown in script theory. (Chapter 3)
   Evidence: Given any particular communication goal, identify the actors, props, and the actions of the script.
5. You should know how scripts are organized as "pointers" to memory. (Chapter 3)
   Evidence: Given any particular script, identify the higher-level script to which it "belongs." Demonstrate the shared structural units, and explain how these might point to higher levels of memory organization.

6. You should be able to discuss the connection between speech act functions and sentence syntax. (Chapter 4)
   Evidence: Label any particular English sentence with its possible speech act functions. Given any particular speech act, list examples that vary in sentence structure.
7. You should understand the relation between speech events and speech acts. (Chapter 4)
   Evidence: Given a speech event, list its structural components. Then list the major speech act function shown in the speech event, and list other possible speech acts that could fall within the speech event.
8. You should understand the relation between speech events and scripts. (Chapters 3 and 4)
   Evidence: List the structural components of a given speech event. List the corresponding goal, plan, and script components (e.g., actors, props, actions). Compare the outcome of the two analyses.
9. You should be aware that the structure of speech events may vary across language groups. (Chapter 4)
   Evidence: Give examples that show differences in the components of one speech event in different languages.
10. You should know something of rhetorical genre analysis. (Chapter 5)
    Evidence: List the structural components of narrative, procedural, descriptive, and argumentative prose. List insights regarding syntax that are linked to rhetorical form.
11. You should understand that the organization of rhetorical genres differs across language groups. (Chapter 5)
    Evidence: Give examples to show which genres are most universal in structure and which are least. Or, select one genre and show how it differs across languages.
12. You should understand the goals and methods of rhetorical structure analysis. (Chapter 5)
    Evidence: Given a short text, identify the relation between spans of text within it. Explain the effect of the relation (i.e., the possible goal of the author in selecting specific clauses in that particular relation to each other).
13. In addition to the structure supplied by system constraints, scripts, speech events, and rhetorical genre, text coherence can be improved via prosody and syntax. You should be able to relate linguistic signals of reference and deixis to cohesion in text. (Chapter 6)
    Evidence: Given a text, demonstrate how reference is established via deixis and how tracking is accomplished with both cohesive ties and deictic markers.
14. You should know that speakers and writers use syntax and phonology to carry out many discourse tasks. (All chapters)
    Evidence: Show how prosody (stress, pitch, intonation) and syntax

(tense/aspect, articles, passives, existentials, adverbial clauses) can be used for discourse functions that may or may not relate to specific genres.

15. You should know the ways in which organization of discourse texts vary across modes and the ways dichotomies (planned versus unplanned, oral versus written, contextualized versus decontextualized, BICS versus CALP) purport to capture these differences. (Chapter 7)
    Evidence: Given two versions of a text, demonstrate the differences in terminology typical of these dichotomies.
16. You should know that the structure of classroom discourse varies according to culture, content, and course activity. (All chapters)
    Evidence: Compare data from two different classrooms. This comparison should reflect your understanding of system constraints; scripts, plans, and goals; speech events; and so forth.
17. You should consider how a theory of language that includes the discourse system would necessarily differ from a theory of language that centers on syntax (plus phonology and semantics). (All chapters)
    Evidence: No evidence is required at this point. However, thoughtful consideration of this objective is important if you believe that linguistics should include the study of the use of language for human communication.

You will notice that there is no objective that asks you to recount the historical development of discourse analysis because such a history would require a book itself. Perhaps this is an error, for you may complete this manual without a real appreciation for all the work on analysis of texts that took place before the more recent renewal of interest in discourse analysis. You might read van Dijk's (1985) introduction to the field as a way of setting a historical framework for this book.

These, then, are *my* objectives for this book. You, or your instructor, may have quite different goals. As you draw up your own goals and objectives for the course, list them in your journal. Consider, too, how meeting the objectives might be useful when the knowledge obtained is applied to language learning, to intercultural communication, and to common, everyday classroom issues, materials development, language testing, or in applied linguistics research.

Reference

van Dijk, T. A. (1985). Introduction: Discourse analysis as a new cross-discipline. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis, Vol. 1: Disciplines of discourse* (pp. 1–10). London: Academic Press. Each chapter in this particular volume of the handbook gives background regarding discourse analysis within a particular discipline, so you might wish to browse through the entire volume.

1 Communication theory: system constraints and conversational analysis

In his study of human communication, Goffman (1976) claimed that there is a set of *universal constraints* on all communication. Since the constraints are universal, they should appear in all types of communication and in all languages. Each language, of course, would differ in exactly how the constraints are met, and the ways in which the constraints are met should vary according to the communication channel.

Goffman divided these communication constraints into two types: *system constraints,* the components required for all communication systems, and *ritual constraints,* the social constraints that smooth social interaction. Together they provide a systematic framework for our description of discourse, even the discourse of everyday, mundane communication. For example, researchers such as Duncan, Jefferson, Sacks, and Schegloff, among others, have investigated system constraints – the ways we open and close conversations, our conversational turn-taking signals, how we repair messages to make them interpretable, how bracketing is done, and so forth. A discussion of all these system constraints follows. System constraints also apply to more formal channels of communication. We can look, for example, at how we open or introduce topics and conclude or close topics in written text as well. We can use the universal system constraints as a framework to describe classroom discourse (the openings, how teachers organize who talks when), our telephone conversations, or even the personal letters we write.

Before turning to a description of communication systems, though, we need to think about the discourse data that systems are meant to describe. If we wish to describe the system of, say, conversation, we are required to collect and transcribe natural conversational data – language produced by users in ordinary, everyday ways.

Many communication specialists work from videotaped data because nonverbal information such as eye gaze, body orientation, hand movements, and head tilt may serve as communication signals. However, transcriptions are also needed for detailed analysis of the discourse system.

Although there is no set method for transcription of such data, the examples throughout this book display transcription conventions developed by Jefferson (see Atkinson and Heritage 1984) for conversational analysis (variations appear in Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Brown and Yule 1981):

// or / indicates that the next speaker overlaps at this point:

P: but umm in the high school ummm//they
R: //Don't they use 'em?

An alternative is to use a bracket at the point of overlap:

P: but umm in the high school ummm | they
R: | Don't they use 'em?

Brackets also show when two speakers start simultaneously:

R: [I mean it's not time.
P: [We can go.

An asterisk or right bracket shows the point at which overlap ends:

M: It's very /very
H: /interesting*
M: yes interesting uh.

= is used for "latching," to show there is no gap between utterances:

M: mmhmm (.2) ye:s=
H: =like saffron

Numbers in parentheses (.2) usually indicate elapsed time in tenths of a second. A (.) stands for a micropause. Some researchers prefer to use + for a short pause, ++ for a somewhat longer pause, and +++ for a long pause. These are then keyed to the number of seconds represented by each +. Others prefer to use such symbols to stand for the number of syllables or beats in the ongoing rhythm of the conversation.

Punctuation is used for intonation rather than grammatical function. A question mark, for example, indicates strong rising intonation while a comma indicates a slight rise. A colon means the syllable is lengthened. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged syllable.

M: at school? annna university? is difficult.
J: Wo:::::w (held equivalent of five syllables)

Uppercase type is used for stress (pitch and volume):

A: to my BOYfriend ann NOTHING else.

A (°) indicates that the following talk is said softly:

S: (°) hn I don't get it.

(h) indicates explosive aspiration; h without parens means audible breathing. A dot (·) indicates in-breath:

S: · h h oh

Single parentheses may be used when the transcriber is unsure of accuracy. Double parentheses indicate nonverbal sounds such as ((cough)).

S: to do a (chef) or ((hiccough)) hh gosh.

A right arrow (→) or an underline may be used to point to parts of the transcript relevant to the analyst's description.

In transcripts, the spellings of words are altered to try to capture some of the detail of natural speech. However, accurate representation of speech sounds is not the focus of the research, and so phonological or phonetic transcriptions of data are not used. "See you in ten minutes" might be transcribed as "see yuh 'n ten minutes," and "give me the key" might be shown as "gimme the key."

One final note regarding the transcribed data that occurs throughout this manual. It's important that the data be accurately transcribed, because the analysis depends on the transcription. This is true of written data as well as oral data. In all examples, the written data are presented exactly as they were written. That is, misspellings and other "errors" are not corrected even when misspellings or error type are not at issue. Sometimes these "errors" may be more interesting than the issues that are being discussed, but I hope they will not distract you from the basic content – the analysis of discourse.

Now that you are familiar with transcription conventions, let's turn to an examination of system in communication beginning with the first of Goffman's types of constraints: system constraints.

System constraints

There are eight system constraints that Goffman claimed to be universal in all human communication. They are channel open and close signals, backchannel signals, turnover signals, acoustically adequate and interpretable messages, bracket signals, nonparticipant constraints, preempt signals, and a set of Gricean norms.

Channel open/close signals

In all communication, there must be ways to show that communication is about to begin and then begins, and ways to show that it is about to end and then ends. These channel open/close signals will differ according to the channel (e.g., phone calls, letters, meetings, classrooms). The description of these signals and how they vary across mode, channel, and setting is part of the analysis of discourse.

Consider how you project channel opening signals when you meet a friend on the way to class. What do you think you do (nonverbal signals)? What do you think you say (verbal signals)? Simultaneously, the friend must also make opening response signals. What do you think the friend does (nonverbal signals)? And what do you think the friend says (verbal signals)?

Since our intuitions about language may have been shaped in part by written text dialogues (e.g., those used in language instruction or those of plays), it is important to check intuition against real language data. Let's look at such data now. These data are from American telephone conversations, a channel that has quite formalized openings and closings:

((phone ringing))
Marcia: Hello.
Tony: Hi Marcia,
Marcia: Yeah?
Tony: This is Tony
Marcia: HI Tony
Tony: How are you,
Marcia: OHhhh hh I've got a paper b- (0.2) the yearly paper due tomorrow.
Tony: How about that.
Marcia: heheheh hh I can tell you a lot ab(h)out th(h)at . . .

(Data source: Wong 1984)

This particular example shows the four basic parts of phone conversation openings described by Schegloff (1968): (1) summons-answer sequence, (2) identification sequence, (3) greeting sequence, and (4) how-are-you sequence. In other words, phone openings consist of more than a simple "hello."

SUMMONS-ANSWER SEQUENCE

The ringing of the telephone represents the summons, and the answer is a response to that summons. In American phone conversations, the most frequent response is "hello." If the person answering knows ahead of time to expect a call, the response may be a "hi" or even "yeah?" Self-identification responses such as "Acme Computers" or "Dr. Jones's office" more often mark the communication as business rather than personal. (If you were trained to answer the phone as "Smith residence" or whatever, you will object to this last statement. But, if you monitor your calls, you will soon find that the preceding generalizations are true for most American phone calls!)

IDENTIFICATION SEQUENCE

We are very often able to identify the caller or the answerer from minimal voice samples. A caller who recognizes the answerer by the initial "hello" may show that recognition has taken place and invite a reciprocal recognition by simply answering "hi."

((phone ringing))
E: Hello:,
S: Hi.
E: Hi, Sue.

If the answerer and the caller are both recognized from such minimal voice samples, all is well. However, there are sequences where the names of answerers and callers are given in the identification sequence:

((phone ringing))
E: Hello:,
C: Dr. Hatch?

((phone ringing))
E: Hello:,
S: hhMom?

Sometimes the intonation is exclamatory or given with falling intonation.

((phone ringing))
E: Hello?
B: EV-lyn!

((phone ringing))
E: Hello:,
S: MOM-my, you're home.

Callers, too, may give an immediate self-identification.

((phone ringing))
E: Hello:,
S: Hi mom, it's me.

((phone ringing))
E: Hello?
A: Hi Gran'ma this is Arien eatin' popcorn. Yuh hear it?

According to Schegloff (1979), these resources for identification are graded in American phone conversations so that identification from the voice sample alone is "preferred." If a name is given, a first name rather than first and last name is "preferred." It appears that the less information needed for identification, the better. When identification falters even for an instant, however, self-identification is forthcoming, often in the second turn.

((phone ringing))
S: hh Hello,
D: Hi Sue,
S: Hi. =
D: = It's Denise. =
S: = ohh HI, Denise.

GREETING SEQUENCE

We've already seen that much of the work of the identification sequence can be accomplished by an exchange of greetings. However, these opening