FROM WORDS TO WORLDS: MASTERING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Plan

Discourse connections:

☐ Sentences or utterances are linked together.

☐ Two concepts are used to show this "connectedness" or "texture":

☐ **Cohesion:** the connections which have their manifestations in the discourse itself.

☐ **Coherence**: the connections which can be made by the reader or listener based on knowledge outside the discourse.

Example

☐ In a sentence like:

"*Mary married and in a year she got pregnant*".

☐ The fact that **she** refers to **Mary** is an example of **cohesion**.

☐ The interpretation that her pregnancy was the **result** of her marriage is an example of **coherence**.

Types of cohesion

- Substitution

- Ellipsis

- Reference

- Conjunctions

- Lexical cohesion

Substitution

☐ The replacement of a word (group) or sentence segment by a "dummy" word.

☐ Three frequently occurring types of substitution: substitution of a "**noun**", "**verb**" and "**clause**".

☐ Example:

(1) These **biscuits** are stale. Get some fresh ***ones***.

(2) A: Have you **called** the doctor?

   B: I haven't ***done*** it, but I will *do* it.

(3) A: Are they still arguing in there?

   B: No, *it* just seems so.

Elipsis

- The omission of a word or part of a sentence.
- Since Ellipsis is closely related to substitution, can be called as "*substitution by zero*".
- Types of ellipsis: *nominal, verbal* and *clausal*.

  Example:
  1) Nominal: These **biscuits** are stale. Those are fresh.
  2) Verbal: He **participated** in the debate, but you didn't.
  3) Clausal**: Who wants to go shopping**? You?

Reference

☐ The semantic relationship between a discourse element and a preceding or following element.

☐ Reference deals with a semantic relationship whereas substitution and ellipses deal with the relationship between grammatical units: words, sentence parts and clauses.

☐ The meaning of a dummy word can be determined by what is imparted before or after it.

☐ (1) I see John is here. *He* hasn't changed a bit.

☐ (2) *She* certainly has changed. No, behind John. I mean Karin.

□ Reference can be acheived by other means: a definite article, an adverb, etc.

 ☐ (1) A man crossed the street. Nobody saw what happened. Suddenly *the* man was lying there and calling for help.

 ☐ (2) I grew up in the 1990s. I was idealistic *then*.

Conjunction/ connectives:

☐ The relationship which indicates how the subsequent sentence or clause should be linked to the preceding or the following (parts of the) sentence.

☐ Three frequently occurring relationships: *addition, temporality, causuality*

☐ In conjunction the relationship can be *hypotactic* (combining a main clause with a subordinate clause or phrase) or *paratactic* (linking two main clauses).

Examples

- **Addition**:
  - *a. **Besides** being mean, he is **also** hateful.*
  - *b. He no longer goes to school **and** is planning to look for a job.*
- **Temporality**:
  - *a. **After** the car had been repaired, we were able to continue our journey.*
- *b. The car was repaired. **Afterwards**, we were able to continue our journey.*
- **Causality**:
  - *a. He is not going to school today **because** he is sick.*
  - *b. Ann got a beautiful job last year **and now she is rich**.*

*a examples are hypotactic; b examples are paratactic.

Lexical cohesion

☐ The links between the content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) which are used in subsequent segments of discourse.

☐ ***Types of Lexical cohesion:***

☐ (a) **reiteration** (b) **collocation**

☐ **Types of reiteration**:

1. Repetition:

☐ A ***conference*** will be held on national environmental policy. At this *conference,* the issue of salination will play an important role.

2. Synonymy:

☐ A ***conference*** will be held on national environmental policy. This environmental ***symposium*** will be primarily a conference dealing with water.

3. Hyponymy/ Hyperonymy: (the relation of flower to tulip and vice versa, subordination and superordination)

- We were in town today shopping for *furniture*. We saw a lovely *table*.
- Did you see the wooden *igloos* in this new town? Oh, they build even stranger *houses* here.

4. Metonymy: (part vs. whole: house/roof; container vs. contents: bottle/water; representative vs. symbol: king/crown).

- After its six-month checkup, the *brakes* have to be repaired. In general, however, the *car* was in good condition.

5. Antonymy:

- The *old* movies just don't do it anymore. The *new* ones are more appealing.

Collocation:

□ The relationship between words occurring in the same surroundings. Like _sheep & wool_, congress & politician, _college & study_.

▢   _Red Cross_ helicopterswere in the air continuously. The _blood bank_
   will soon be desperately in need of _donors_.

Referential elements

- **Endophora:**
  - **Back-referential pronouns/ anaphora:**
    - *John* said that *he* was not going to school.
  - **Forward-referential pronouns/ cataphora**:
    - When *he* came in *John* tripped over the blocks.
- **Exophora:** (reference to another person or thing that is not present in the linguistic context)

How is anaphora interpreted?

- *Mary* said nothing to *Sally*. *She* would not understand the first thing about it.
- *Mary* told *Sally* everything. <u>She (?)</u> could not keep her mouth shut.
- *Mary* told *Sally* everything. *She* could not keep her mouth shut and *Mary* really told *her* off for doing this.

In the first example *'she'* can only refer to *'Sally'*: In the second both references are grammatically possible. While in the third *'she'* can only refer to *'Sally'*.

□ ***Coherence*** (meaning-bearing discourse relations):

□ Concentrates on those links between sentences which bear meaning.

□ Types of meaning-bearing discourse relations:

(a) the additive relation

(b) the causal relation

Additive relation

Additive relation is related to conjunction and various types of coordination:

- **and** (conjunction or addition)

  *John went to Spain on holiday. **And** it was a great decision.*

- **but** (contrast)

  *John went to Spain on holiday. **But** he didn't enjoy it much.*

- **or** (disjunction)

  *John was thinking of a holiday. **Or** the other alternative was a staycation.*

*equivalents of these words can be used..

Causual relation

□ **Causal relation:** can be traced back to an implication and is related to *subordination.*

□ The most important causal relations:

- **cause**
- **reason**
- **means**
- **consequence**
- **purpose**
- **condition**
- **concession.**

- ***Cause***: A consequence that is outside of the domain of volition.
  - *John did not go to school. He was sick.*
- ***Reason***: Often presents a volitional aspect.
  - *John did not come with us. He hates parties.*
- ***Means***: A deliberate use of a cause for achieving a volitional result.
  - *Would you mind opening the door?*
- ***Purpose***: A volitional consequence.
  - *The instructions should be printed in capital letters. It is hoped that in this way, difficulties in reading them will be avoided.*

  Consequence*: John is sick. He is not going to school.*
- ***Condition***: A necessary or possible cause or reason for a possible result.
  - *You can get a job this summer. But first, you have to pass your exam.*
- ***Concession***: A cause or reason for which the expected consequence fails to occur.
  - *He was rich. Yet he never gave anything to charity.*

Discourse relations: semantic-pragmatic dimention

- **Semantic relations** connect discourse segments on the basis of their propositional content, *locutions,* linking the situations that are referred to in the propositions.
  - *John did not come with us. He hates parties.*
    - In this example, the hearer can interpret John's hating parties as a reason, without having to deal with the illocutions of the segments.
- **Pragmatic relations** connect segments on the basis of their *illocutions*.
  - *I'll get the groceries. I have to go shopping anyway.*
    - In this example, the relation does not pertain to the two situations in both sentences, but to the illocutions.

Types of rhetorical relations (pragmatic relation):

The rhetorical aspect deals with relations with which speakers or writers bring about a change in opinion, position or behaviour of their readers or listeners.

- Evidence:
  - *No single measure has had an effect. The traffic jams are still as bad as ever.*

- Conclusion:
  - *The window is open. There must have been a burglar.*

- Justification:
  - *Given the overwhelming evidence of climate change, it is essential to reduce our carbon footprint.*

  Solution:
  - *No single measure has had an effect. With this proposal, our goals will be achieved.*

- Motivation:
  - *Do you want to know more? Write me in DM.*

More types to the pragmatic relations (Sweetser,1990):

- ***Epistemic*** relations: expressing a writer or speaker's conclusion based on a causal relation in reality.

  - He must have a headache. He has drunk too much.

- ***Speech act*** relation: the speech act is motivated by reference to a situation constituting the reason for it.

  - What are you doing tonight, because there is a good movie on.

  - Why don't you close the window because it's cold tonight.

- ***Metalinguistic*** relations: refer to discourse itself.

  - "In conclusion i would like to remark ..."

Rhetorical structure theory/ RST (Mann & Thompson)

- A theory for the analysis of discourse and discourse relations between text segments

- It considers a discourse to be a hierarchical organization of text segments.

- Dividing a text into minimal units, such as independent clauses and labelling the connection between these units by choosing a relation name, Mann and Thompson propose a set of over 20 relations in two divisions:

  - *Subject matter relations*
  - *Presentational relations*

Classification of RST relations

☐ **Subject matter relations**:

⬜ Elaboration, Circumstance, Solutionhood, Volitional cause,Volitional result, Non-volitional cause, Non-volitional result, Purpose, Condition, Otherwise, Interpretation, Evaluation, Restatement, Summary, Sequence, and Contrast.

☐ **Presentational relations**:

⬜ Motivation, Antithesis, Background, Enablement, Evidence, Justification, and Concession.

The units in RST:

- ☐ **Nucleus:** the member of the pair that is more essential to the writer's purpose.

- ☐ **Satellite:** the supporting element.

☐ A pair consisting of a nucleus and a satellite unit is called a **Span**.

☐ Spans can be linked to other units or spans, so that the text is connected together into a hierarchic structure. The largest span created in this manner encompasses the whole text.

Example:

1. Leading indicators

2. Steep declines in capital spending commitments and building permits, along with a drop in the money stock pushed the leading composite down for the fifth time in the past 11 months to a level 0.5% below its high a year ago.

3. Such a decline is highly unusual at this stage in an expansion;

4. for example, in the three most recent expansions, the leaders were rising on average, at about 7% clip at comparable phases in the cycle.

5. While not signalling an outright recession,

6. the current protracted sluggishness of the leading indicators appears consistent with our prognosis of sluggish real GNP growth over the next few quarters.

- Unit 1 is a title and acts as a ***preparation*** that prepares the reader for what is to come,
- Unit 2 gives information about the main subject of the text.
- Units 3 and 4 together ***elaborate*** what mentioned in unit 2.
- Units 5 and 6 ***interpret*** the span that is formed by units 2-4.
- Unit 5 provides ***concession*** (limit) on the degree of interpretation.
- Unit 6 provides the ***interpretation***.

RST analysis model
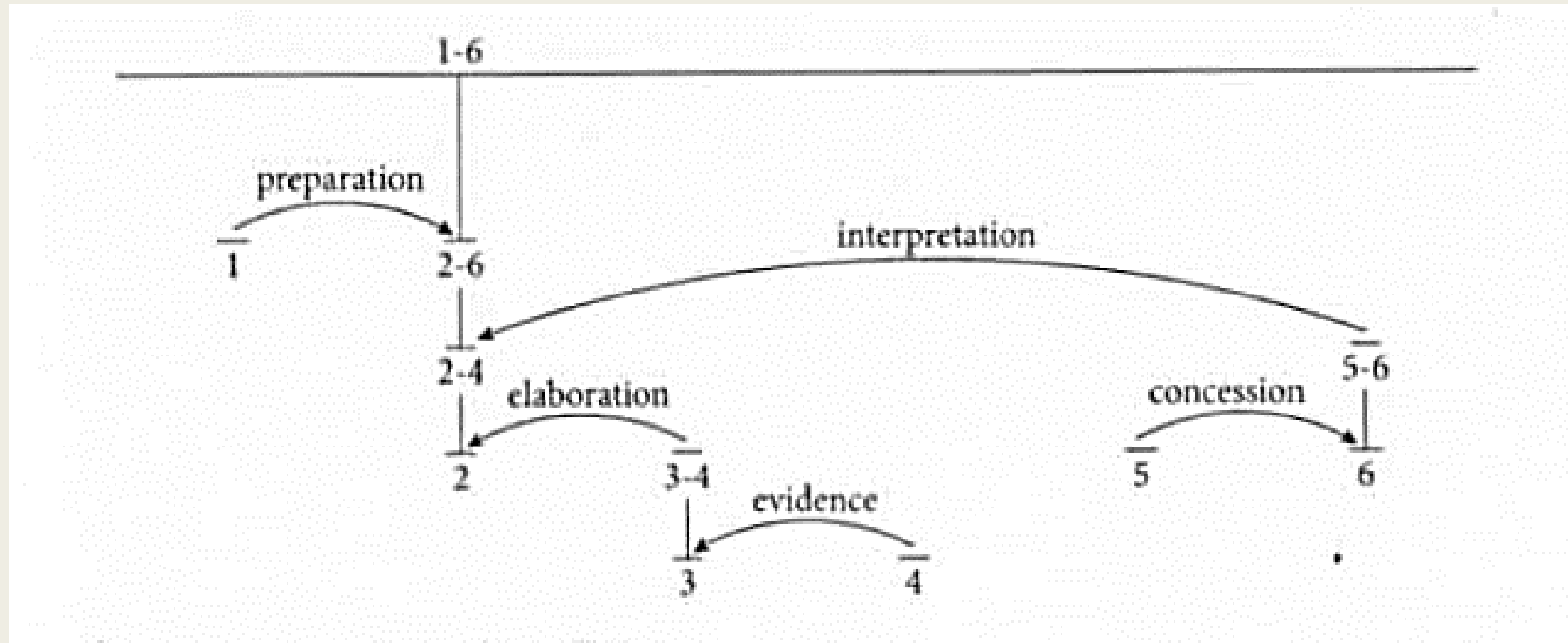
Shortcomings for RST:

(1) The set of relations in RST is purely descriptive and there is no generally acknowledged standard set of relations.

(2) A set of relations is presented without further structuring. This means that a set of discourse relations must not only be descriptively adequate, but also be psychologically plausible.

Sander's classification of discourse relations from the psychological perspective

☐ Discourse relations are defined by four fundamental ordering principles that are called *Primitives*:

- **Basic operation**: Each relation has a causal or an additive component.
- **Source of coherence**: Each relation is coherent on semantic or pragmatic grounds.
- **Order of segments:** this distinction applies only to causal relations. These have a basic order when the antecedent (e.g., cause) is to the left of the consequence (e.g., result) and a non-basic order when the antecedent is to the right of the consequence.
- **Polarity:** Positive and negative relations.

☐ According to Sanders et al. the four primitives can be combined in order to obtain *twelve* classes of discourse relations:

Contextual phenomena:

- deixis
- staging
- perspectivization
- prior awareness
- presupposition
- inferences

Deixis

- derives from the Greek word meaning "*to show*,"
- denotes those elements in a language which refer directly to the discourse situation

*I am **now** standing on the roof*.

I & *now* – deictic field

Roof – symbolic field.

Types of deixis: person, place, time

■ **Personal deixis** (realized by personal pronouns)

Do we have time for that?

Interpretation:

a) when the utterance is being directed al the group in general

b) when a father refers to misbehaving children, who are playing instead of doing what they were asked)

Place deixis

*Place deixis words: (**left/right, here/there, this/that, these/those**)*

Left of Mr. Brown sits Mr. White. (Left and right depend on the viewpoint)

Ambiguity in place deixis

Mary is standing in front of the car

a) Mary is standing between the car and the speaker.

b) Mary is standing in front of the car's front end.

Time deixis

- Deixis to time is represented by the adjectives of time in the sequence ... yesterday ... now ... tomorrow ... and by the verbs in tense forms.

- *I had been walking there.*

- *I have been walking there.*

The present perfect always indicates that either the event or the time frame in which it takes place is still going on, which cannot be said of the past perfect

Staging

- Staging denotes the division of the information into foreground and background.

- *John is **sick**.*

- ***John** is sick.*

The head-tail principle: the cloder to the head (left) – the more important.

- ***Every year** I go to Spain on vacation.*

- ***Spain** is the place where I go on vacation every year.*

- *<u>**It is Spain**</u>, where I go on vacation every year.*

* The last is an emphatic cleft construction.

Perspectivization

- Perspectivization shows the angle from which the narration takes place

- a. *There was a man at the bar. The door opened. A woman and a child* **came in.**

- b. *There was a man at the bar. The door opened. A woman and a child* **walked inside**.

- c. *There was a* **man** *at the bar.* **He looked up** *when the door opened. A woman came in, followed by a child.*

- d. *A woman opened the door for a* **child. He walked in** *and saw a man sitting at the bar.*

Three approaches to perspectivization

- **Vision** (ideological prism)
- **Focalization** (narrator's perspective)
- **Empathy** (speaker's attitude).

Vision

■ Ideological perspective of presenting information.

Ukraine is fighting for freedom and independence protecting its land.

Ukraine continues to be involved in a conflict trying to take back disputable areas.

Focalization

- ■ shows the vantage point of the observer as the narrator can be someone other who has witnessed or is witnessing the event

- ■ is signaled in discourse through verbs of observation (*to see, to hear, to notice*, etc.)

- ■ The subject of the focalization is called the <u>focalizer</u>

- ■ *a.<u>Peter</u> gave a start when he heard the man coming up the stairs.*

- ■ *b. **Mary** felt that <u>Peter</u> was startled when he heard the man coming up the stairs*

Empathy

- is used to describe the degree to which a speaker identifies with a person or object which is part of an event or condition that is described in a sentence

- *a. **John** hit **Mary**. (Empathy is equally divided)*

- *b. **John** hit his wife. (More empathy is directed towards John)*

- *c. **Mary's** husband hit her. (More empathy is directed to Marry)*

Pre-awareness

- the knowledge on the part of readers or listeners that is assumed by the speaker or writer

- Chafe singles out three types of concept: **active (given or evoked), inactive (brand new or unused)** in the listener's consciousness and **semi-active (inferable)** when it is quickly activated on the basis of all available knowledge.

- can be achieved by the use of definite and indefinite articles before words which denote already known from the previous discourse concepts and the new ones

*I about **a** Porsche 911. **The** car is really fast.*

Presupposition

- a term originated in philosophy and logic and means "to assume"

- A presupposition is the background assumption or implicit information that must be true for a sentence to make sense or be considered true or false

- *It took John seven years to complete his studies*

Presuppositions*:*

- a. There is a person named John.

- b. John was a student.

- c. John was not a brilliant student.

- a presupposition is the only type of information that is unaffected by the denial of the original sentence: *John is (not) opening the window.*

In both cases the presupposition is that the window is closed.

Inferences

- The term inference derives from the Latin 'inferre' and means 'to carry in')

- It denotes the phenomenon that discourse summons up knowledge or information which can be used to understand the information given in it.

Types:

- entailment

- conventional implicature

- conversational implicature

- connotation

Entailment

- Entailment is a term borrowed from logic. If A is greater than B and B is greater than C, then it can be concluded that A is greater than C.

- In discourse studies, the term can be used more broadly.

  Pete bought oranges.

Entailment: *Pete bought fruit.*

- The difference between an entailment and a presupposition is that the entailment does not have to be true if the claim is denied.

Implicature

- **Conventional**:

    He is an Englishman; he is therefore brave.

- **Conversational**:

    A: Did you already buy fruit?

    B: Of course, the oranges are already in the refrigerator

- The conversational implicature is the following:

    I decided what kind of fruit to buy.

    b. You know that I buy oranges every week.

    c. I have done even more than you requested; I have already put the fruit in the refrigerator

Connotation

- Is the associations that a word evokes.

 Why the following example is confusing?

A father and a son are sitting in a car. They are in a serious accident. The father is killed on impact and the son is taken to the hospital in critical condition. As the victim is wheeled into the operating room, the surgeon exclaims: 'Oh no, I can't operate. That's my son!'

Wrap-up

Discourse studies reveal the underlying mechanisms that shape our communication, demonstrating how context, implicit meanings, and perspectives influence our interpretation of texts. By understanding these principles, we gain deeper insights into how language functions and how it can be used to convey nuanced meanings.