

On the Correlativity Between Discourse Analysis and Utterance Comprehension

BAO Mingjie^{[a],*}

^[a] Professor, School of Foreign Languages, Jiangnan University, Wuhan, Hubei, China.

* Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Discourse analysis is based on actual language materials, striving to analyze language through summarization and provide explanations for language use. By knowing the theory of discourse analysis and the correlativity between discourse analysis and utterance comprehension, readers can comprehend passages not only from the microcosm of vocabulary and grammar but also from the macrocosm of the text. Readers can analyze the structure and the central idea of the whole passage, find out the author's train of thought and improve the competence and speed of utterance comprehension.

Key words: Discourse analysis; Text; Utterance comprehension

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1. INTRODUCTION

Utterance comprehension is a complex cognitive and psychological process in which language and thinking interact, and the level of comprehension involves various aspects of knowledge and ability, such as linguistic knowledge, non-verbal knowledge, and reading skills. Reading is a communicative process in which readers acquire useful information in the form of written language. From the perspective of psycholinguistics, reading is

a process in which readers and authors communicate, influence, and transmit information to each other. And from the perspective of information theory, reading is a process in which the author codes and the reader decodes. A well-written essay shows that there is a resonance between the reader and the author. Readers understand the author's intent and get the information they need. When reading, readers are directly confronted with the text, and readers' ability to recognize and understand the structure of the text in the discourse material is positively correlated with their overall level of English reading. The stronger the readers' ability to recognize and understand the text structure, the higher their overall level of English reading will be. For non-English majors, reading skills play an important role in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. Traditional classroom teaching is mainly based on the teacher's explanation, focusing on the analysis of linguistic phenomena in terms of surface structure such as identifying word meanings, analyzing grammatical structures, and interpreting difficult sentences. In this way, students will have a clear understanding of the internal structure of each sentence, which is conducive to partial understanding of the discourse. However, this teaching method is only limited to the internal analysis of sentences, ignoring the external and internal connections between sentences, paragraphs or throughout the whole text, which affects the overall understanding of the text, and affects the improvement of students' reading ability and independent analysis ability.

2. THE EMERGENCE OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS THEORY

Since the sixties of the twentieth century, many linguists have come to realize that the analytical study of sentence levels alone is far from revealing the essence of language and linguistic communication, because linguistic

communication is not composed of infinite grammatical sentences. In the field of linguistics, traditional linguistics only takes sentence as the largest research unit, which cannot meet the needs of linguists, especially grammarians, to analyze and study linguistic bodies whose meanings are more coherent than sentences. Thus, textual linguistics, which studies textual and paragraph linguistic units, comes into being. Textual linguistics uses discourse analysis to elevate the objects of its own field of study to the level of universal linguistics. As the semantic whole of the communicative function of hyper-grammatical (and phonological) words and sentences, discourse has the characteristics of organic and dynamic.

According to linguists H.G. Widdowson and M. Coulthard (Todd, 2008), “discourse” is concerned with the use of sentences in specific situations and their communicative functions, that is, focusing on the linguistic and semantic content of general speech. Of course, content and form are inseparable, and the unity of the two in discourse is manifested as a word, a sentence, a sentence group, a natural paragraph, or even an entire article. Its “content” is characterized by the inclusion of specific context and realistic communication, which breaks the traditional static view, and the unity of language form and content is not rigid and one-to-one correspondence. Therefore, the analysis and understanding of language cannot be limited to the level of lexicography and syntactic analysis.

The study of discourse analysis has gradually focused on discourse structure and discourse understanding. Linguists have theorized about the composition and structure of discourse from a functional point of view. On the other hand, linguists are also discussing linguistic devices in conversational structures from the perspective of linguistics. Linguists seek to illustrate the role of world knowledge, common background knowledge, in understanding (Black, 2002). By making inferences about linguistic material to achieve the purpose of understanding, relevant theory is a mode of understanding based on reasoning and reasoning processes. At the micro level, it focuses on transitivity and modality, especially the study of the mode and information flow of nominative position, narration position, and principal development in the principal structure, as well as the adhesion and coherence in the principal structure. An important and often unnoticed aspect of discourse analysis is the study of specific grammatical categories from the perspective of discourse, to understand the discourse function of a grammatical category and its role in the composition of discourse, so as to organically link syntax and discourse. Utterance comprehension is an important aspect of discourse analysis research, which involves cognitive processes, cognitive strategies, the role of readers in the comprehension process, and deductive discourse strategies. A growing body of research shows

that utterance comprehension is a process, not a product, and that the reader plays an active role in comprehension and is at the center of the comprehension process. In addition to the reader’s agency, the genre, difficulty, and macro composition of the discourse also have an impact on comprehension. The ability to correctly understand the referent is an important indicator of the strength of reading ability. Studies have shown that the distance of the referent and the means of care (the same noun, pronoun or qualitative adjective) are the main factors influencing the understanding of the referent, and that in discourse, the understanding of the referent is a process of interaction between the conscious, the unconscious and the analysis.

3. APPLYING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS THEORY FOR UTTERANCE COMPREHENSION

3.1 Mastering cohesion and coherence to analyze discourse structure

Cohesion refers to the linguistic characteristics of conjunctive sentences (Jassim, 2023), and there are four kinds of means: reference, ellipsis and substitution, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. In reading, we can analyze discourse by means of cohesion.

Example: “Mary was feeling unhappy. There were several reasons for this. First, she had lost her purse. Secondly, she had just missed the last bus. Thirdly, her father had insisted that she should be back home before 10:00 p.m., and it was now 11:00. Fourthly, she had not liked the film. But just then, she remembered that she began her holidays the next day, so she felt a little better.”

In this paragraph, “this, she, her” are used to refer to the preceding words or people, “first, secondly, thirdly, fourthly” are the signals to enumerate certain types of things, “but” indicates a turning point or the opposite of the aforementioned words, and “so” leads to the above result or consequence.

Coherence is a linguistic system, a fundamental feature of discourse. It is not only related to the theme of a discourse, but also to the organization of information, forming a part of the discourse components of the semantic system. Cohesion is the coherence of the discourse itself as an entity, but the discourse also must be coherent in relation to the contextual context in which it was produced. It is possible that a passage is coherent but lacks register-coherent coherence, or it may be a passage without any cohesive sign but discursively coherent.

Example: “I bought a Ford. A car in which President Wilson rode down the Champs Elysees was black. Black English has been widely discussed. The discussion between the presidents ended last week. A week has seven days. Every day I feed my cat. Cats have four legs. The cat is on the mat. Mat has three letters.”

In this discourse, the reproduction of the word “Ford” in the first sentence is clearly a car in the second sentence, but there is no good reason for any semantic connection between the two. In addition, “Black” in the third sentence is also a reproduction of “black” in the second sentence, and there is no semantic connection between the two. The former is an adjective and the latter is a noun, referring to “black people”. “Discuss and discussion”, “last week and a week”, “days and every day”, “cat and the cat”, “the mat and Mat”, etc., are only superficial cohesion, not textual coherence.

Let’s take a look at the following conversation between husband and wife:

H: That’s the phone. (A)

W: I’m washing my hair. (B)

H: Okay! (C).

On a literal basis, these three sentences have no connection. However, from the analysis of the words, it is not difficult to see that in sentence A, the husband is asking his wife to answer the phone, in sentence B, the wife’s answer is not to describe the action, her implication is that she herself cannot answer the phone and wants her husband to answer, and in sentence C, the husband says “Okay”, indicating that he accepts his wife’s request. In this way, seemingly incoherent dialogues, without obvious signs of cohesion, are actually coherent at the speech level.

3.2 Grasping the central idea to enhance comprehension

The main purpose of reading an English article is to understand the main idea of the article and understand the author’s intentions to obtain accurate information. The main idea is a summary of the center of the text, and it also reflects the author’s intention to write. Grasping and determining the main idea of the article is the key to correctly understanding the whole text and successfully reading, and the main idea is often reflected through the topic sentence in the paragraph, so we need to know the topic sentence of the paragraph and grasp the central idea in reading.

Example: “Tropical fish are becoming increasingly popular. Varied in color, they are decorative for homes, offices, and even store windows. The raising of such fish is recommended as a relaxing hobby for people in jobs involving much tension. Many hobbyists have made money by breeding tropical fish varieties for which there is a special demand.”

Obviously, the first sentence can rule the following sentences, and none of the following sentences can summarize. But some articles do not have a topic sentence, and its central idea is contained in the sentence. For example: “The brokenhearted scientist fell ill under the strain, and died shortly afterwards with the laughter of the scientific world ringing in his ears.” In this case, the reader should look for the important content in the

paragraph. In the above example, the important content is “The scientist will die soon.” This requires readers to conduct discourse analysis and draw conclusions through their own generalizations and inductions.

3.3 Implementing correct inference to draw reasonable conclusions

Reasoning activities are at the heart of utterance comprehension, and they run through the entire process of utterance comprehension. Whether it is the comprehension of words and sentences, or the comprehension of texts, it needs to be done with the help of reasoning. Based on the specific context, on the basis of the overall understanding, inferences are made to arrive at the meaning that is not expressed in the discourse but is contained in it (Kravtchenko, 2022).

Example: “When the phone finally rang, Joe leaped from the edge of his chair and grabbed for it.” “Finally, leap, edge, and grab” are the key words that can be associated with this sentence. “Finally” implies that Joe has been waiting for some time on the call, “leaped and grabbed” indicate moving quickly, to prove the above reasoning is correct, and at the same time to suggest that Joe has a nervous and eager mood. “He sat by the edge of the chair”, a position indicates his unease and expectations. From the above key points, it can be inferred that this phone call is very important. Therefore, at the level of discourse, the meaning is coherent in the linguistic structure at all levels of the text, and reasonable judgments are made about the overall text and the author’s personal intentions, and comprehensive generalizations are made, and correct inferences are implemented to draw logical conclusions.

3.4 Applying background knowledge to understand the true meaning

Background knowledge is the sociocultural and situational factors involved in the article. Linguistic argues that background knowledge and linguistic knowledge complement each other and are inseparable aspects of the reading process. Proficiency in the use of background knowledge and linguistic knowledge is the most important manifestation of utterance comprehension ability (Tarlani-Aliabadi, 2022). The comprehensive use of background knowledge and language knowledge enables readers to overcome the strangeness in reading and understand the article along the author’s line of thought, thus ensuring the accuracy and speed of utterance comprehension.

When reading Charlotte Brontë’s famous novel *Jane Eyre*, it is only when the reader’s heart collides with Charlotte’s heart that they can truly grasp the creed she expresses in her heart—that the humblest people also have the right to love and self-actualization, the right to maintain honest nature and personal integrity, the right to be frank and outspoken, and the rights conferred by morality and religion, thus sublimating the understanding

of the text. Shakespeare's "To his love" famously said, "Shall I compare thou to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate;" If "summer's day" is understood as the "scorching summer" in the consciousness of the Chinese, it is in vain to waste a piece of Shakespeare's ingenuity, and the so-called summer's day by the British is actually a pleasant spring like summer day.

4. CONCLUSION

Discourse analysis is based on the actual linguistic material that appears, and seeks to analyze language through generalizations and explain language use. The combination of discourse analysis and situational context for the analysis of super-sentences not only makes the content of language research rich and colorful, but also makes language research practical and easy to apply. Whether it is the study of discourse generation or comprehension, the study of written or spoken language is always inseparable from the actual discourse, so it is always closely integrated with language applications such as utterance comprehension. The purpose of discourse analysis is to raise the perceptual understanding to the rational understanding, strengthen the knowledge and understanding of the essence of the text, which will help readers grasp the different structures of different language styles, help readers analyze and understand the specific structure characteristics of the discourse, and predict the

law of hierarchical development, and analyze how the author conceives, lays out, and selects materials around the theme, and through what means to express the theme idea. By interacting with various discourse styles, analyzing their structural characteristics, and understanding the different patterns of discourse development, readers can benefit from memorizing the content, as well as improving reading speed and comprehension ability.

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