



# The Creative Launcher

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## Understanding “Discourse Analysis”

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### Abstract

The term Discourse Analysis has come to be used with a wide range of meanings which cover a wide range of activities. It is used to describe activities at the intersection of disciplines as diverse as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, philosophical linguistics and computational linguistics. Scholars working centrally in these different disciplines tend to concentrate on different aspects of discourse. Sociolinguistics are particularly concerned with the structure of social interaction manifested in conversation with generalizing across ‘real’ instances of language in use, and typically work with transcribed spoken data.

**Keywords:** Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Discourse, Comprehension

Psycholinguistics is particularly concerned with issues related to language comprehension. They typically employ a tight methodology derived from experimental psychology, which investigates problems of comprehension in short constructed texts or sequences of written sentences. Philosophical linguistics and formal linguistics are particularly concerned with semantic relationships between constructed pairs of sentences and their syntactic realizations. They are concerned too, with relations between sentences and the world in terms of whether or not sentences are used to make statements which can be assigned truth-values. They typically investigate such relationships between constructed sentences attributed to archetypal speakers addressing archetypal hearers in (minimally specified) archetypal contexts. Computational linguists working in this field are particularly concerned with producing models of discourse processing and are constrained, by their methodology, to working with short texts constructed in highly limited context.

Discourse analysis is referred to a variety of different approaches to the study of texts, which have developed from different theoretical traditions and diverse disciplinary locations. Strictly speaking, there is no single ‘discourse analysis, but many different styles of analysis that all lay claim to the name. The term ‘discourse’ is used to refer to all forms of talk and

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texts, whether it be naturally occurring conversations, or written texts of any kind. Translators are interested in texts in their own right, rather than seeing them as a means of 'getting at' some reality which is deceived to be behind the discourse – whether social, psychological or material. Their focus clearly marks 'translators out from some other social scientists, whose concern with language is generally limited to finding out what really happened' or what an individual's attitude to the thing really is. Instead of seeing discourse as a pathway to some other reality, translators are interested in the content and organization of texts. Discourse Analysis takes language to be constructive. Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that the metaphor of construction highlights three facts of approach. Firstly, it draws attention to the fact that discourse is built or manufactured out of pre-existing linguistic resources:

Language and linguistic practices offer sediment of systems of terms, narrative forms, metaphors and common places from which a particular account can be assembled. (POTTER ET AL; 1990)

Secondly, the metaphor illuminates the fact that the 'assembly' of an account involves choice or selection from a number of different possibilities. It is possible to describe even the simplest of phenomena in a multiplicity of different ways. Any particular description will depend upon the orientation of the speaker and writer.

Finally, the notion of construction emphasizes the fact that we deal with the world in terms of constructions, not in a somehow 'direct' or unmediated way; in a real sense, texts of various kinds construct our world. The constructive use of language is a taken-for-granted aspect of social life.

Before adopting the process of discourse analysis, it is very important to do the analysis of the text which the translator has taken up to equate it in TL from SL. And for the analysis of the text, the intention of the text is to be known which often represents the SL writer's attitude to the subject matter, along with the intention of the translator which is identical with that of the author of the SL text.

It is also important to know the text style before proceeding with the analysis of the text. Text style may be narrative that is a dynamic sequence of events where the emphasis is on the verbs plus verb-nouns or phrasal verbs, descriptive which is static, with emphasis on linking verbs, adjectives, adjectival nouns, discussion form as a treatment of ideas with emphasis on abstract nouns (concepts), verbs of thought, mental activity, logical arrangement and connections or as a dialogue with emphasis on collocations and phaticisms.

Most writers on translation theory agree that before embarking upon any translation the translator should analyze the text comprehensively, since this appears to be the only way of ensuring that the SL has been wholly and correctly understood. Various proposals have been put forward as to how such an analysis should be carried out and how particular translation problems might best be dealt with. These tend, however, to be based on modules of text analysis which have been developed in other fields of study, such as that of literary studies, of technical text, or even in the field of theology.

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Translation-oriented text analysis should not only ensure full comprehension and correct interpretation of the text or explain its linguistic and textual structures and their relationship with the system and norms of the SL. It should also provide a reliable foundation for each and every decision which the translator has to make in a particular translation process. For this purpose, it must be integrated into an overall concept of translation that will serve as a permanent frame of reference for the translator.

There are various factors affecting and governing the process of ‘Discourse Analysis’ such as coherence which means the more cohesive, the more formalized a text, the more information, as a unit, affords the translator. The difference in the translator’s role in regard to reader-based versus text-based shifts of coherence can be seen as that of two types of medical practice. For reader-based shifts, the translator is in the position of the practitioners of preventive medicines : his role is to foresee the possibilities of “damage” to interpretation in the TL and to apply means to minimize them; titles as titles in the translated text is not required if the SL text title adequately describes the content, and is brief; punctuation as it is an essential aspect of discourse analysis, since it gives a semantic indication of the relationship between sentences and clauses, which may vary according to the languages. Cohesion is a feature of textuality and another factor influencing the process of discourse analysis as it is concerned with the relationship between the underlying meaning of SL and TL utterances and the respective surface structures (linguistic forms) used to convey these meanings.

Factors like readership and setting also affects the analysis of the text. as though for readership, level of education, class and age of the readers can be determined, thereby helping the proper translation of text. In the same way setting helps out the translator to find out the purpose of translating the text – whether for the same or a different type of TL readership, perhaps with less knowledge of the topic or the culture, or a particular standard of linguistic education. The quality of the writing is the step ahead in the analysis of the text, as this, along with the authority of the text, serves as the critical factors in the choice of translation method. The quality of writing has to be judged in relation to the author’s intention and/or requirements of the subject matter. The text has to be well written i.e. the manner is an important as the matter because the right word in the right place minimize redundancy.

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