

A SKETCH OF CURRENT WORK ON DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN GREAT BRITAIN

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This article aims to delimit the field of Discourse Analysis (DA) by summarizing the scope of academic interest, describing several research orientations and isolating some basic assumptions and focal points.

The general question raised refers to the role that syntactic, semantic and pragmatic information plays in guiding processes of text production and interpretation. Different research trends are presented and their proposals on the above-mentioned issue are critically examined.

1. Introduction

In the past few decades linguists have been arguing for the need of expanding the domain of linguistic analysis to include both discourse and pragmatic factors. The work carried out within this framework exemplified the variety of ways in which linguistic forms are affected in discourse contexts, suggesting that linguistic variation can only be explained by an assessment of discourse and pragmatic concepts and principles.

The analysis of discourse soon became an expanding enterprise. Today Discourse Analysis is a domain of inquiry with a broad appeal and interdisciplinary character. However, it has not become so internally differentiated so as to lose its common core.

The principle underlying this work states that features of extra-sentential real life can explain language usage. The belief is that by studying language that has been actually uttered in context, we can find answers to questions that have not been solved by formal accounts of sentential structure. Discourse Analysts stress that the correct characterization of syntactic phenomena can only be achieved at the text level.

But is there any «correct» characterization of the relations between discourse and syntax and if so what this may possibly be? One can take a number of different strands with regard to this question.

1. Syntax should be examined autonomously.
2. Discourse could be used by the analyst as an ancillary methodological tool which will enable him/her to gain insight into the characterization of syntactic phenomena.
3. The very statement of syntactic regularities is incomplete without explicit reference to discourse. The extreme version of this view leads even to the very denial of syntax as a separate phenomenon advocating that all syntax should be reduced to discourse factors.

The contemporary work carried out within Discourse Analysis is predicated upon

the third strand. It is a recurrent theme in the relevant literature that the discourse into which particular sentences are fitted contributes significantly to the forms that those sentences actually take and that the language user, be he speaker, hearer, or narrator is highly sensitive to discourse and contextual factors.

Underlying this unified focus on language use, a number of different approaches can be discerned with regard to the way actual language can be examined. Each one attempts to describe regularities that can be found in the ways speakers and writers, hearers and readers use language and try to state the principles that underlie them. Disagreement exists, however, in the explanations proposed, the means used for uncovering the postulated regularities and the characterization of the data.

An attempt to squeeze all the research carried out within Discourse Analysis (hereafter DA) within the confines of a short paper would be neither possible nor desirable. Such is the wealth and breadth of the current work on DA that even a summary of the various trends could not be very useful either. What is really the point is not to give simple summaries but rather to offer a conceptual organization of the mass of the material: some framework for fitting in the various pieces and different research orientations. An additional terminological remark should be inserted here. We will use the term «Discourse Analysis» throughout this paper to refer to the research field that focuses on texts, both spoken and written ones. The term «Text linguistics» will be used as a variant, although it has been mainly associated with formal approaches to texts proposed by German scholars.

It is our goal to present in this paper a sketch of the main work on DA carried out within Great Britain with the aim to be flexible enough to accommodate other minor-range work. We found it useful to locate broad schools of thought and sketch their guiding principles as a kind of prototypes around which small range variations in focus may cluster.

The main principle along which distinctions are to be drawn is the one relating to the research design. We believe and hope to show that the way the data are collected is not a minor methodological problem but indeed a significant one. The issue is central, for it influences not only how to answer questions but also what questions to ask in the first place. The initial selection of a data type affects the range of phenomena one has to answer as well as the claims to make.

It needs to be further emphasized that it is probably difficult to write a review of research within a field that could be fair to all the different methodological trends. One necessarily imposes his/her own organizational principles and themes. Someone in sympathy with a particular research orientation is almost bound to give less attention or even misunderstand those coming from a different one.

2. Spoken Discourse

2.1. Theoretical considerations

The majority of work on spoken discourse builds on Grice's theory on the maxims guiding people in the course of their conversational exchanges. The main work on this area has been conducted by G. Brown and G. Yule at the Linguistics Department of Edinburgh University. Important insights into spoken conversational patterns can also be found in Levinson (University of Cambridge) and G. Leech's research (University of Lancaster).

Brown and Yule carried out a number of projects on both spoken and written text. They built their work on research conducted previously in the Linguistics Department by Halliday and Hasan when both were working at Edinburgh. Currently, such work is carried out by a number of researchers working in various interdisciplinary departments.

The main contribution of Brown and Yule's work lies first of all in the methodology they advocate. They raise a wide range of theoretical and methodological questions important to Discourse Analysis-including the relation and the significance of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The major problem in the analysis of spoken discourse is that any piece of spoken discourse is necessarily a fragment. An adequate examination of the factors that influence the information structure of a text would have to include considerations of the participants' personal views, their social groups, the larger society and culture. All these aspects, however, although important cannot be accessed to in most cases by an analyst. What is needed in such instances is a constrained situation type. To this purpose, stories on pictures that have been constructed by the analyst him/herself can offer such a limited situation so that information at any point within a text can be relatively constrained.

Yule has conducted a lot of research on the relation between givenness and intonation, i.e. the way in which given information is realized through pitch level and pitch movement.

He emphasizes in his work the inadequacies of the strict dichotomy of information into given vs new and instead proposes a further refinement into new information, given information that is currently in focus and given information displaced, i.e. out of the immediate focus. Within such framework, descriptions of information within a text should not be applied in a static way within a text but take into account the speaker's intentions, since it is him/her after all who determines the status to be assigned to the information s/he delivers.

J. Miller (my main supervisor) has also conducted extensive research on spoken language, collecting samples from adults and children speakers of Scottish-English and examining the way various constructions (cleft, pseudo-clefts etc.) function in providing structure and organization in spoken discourse. He places major emphasis on the need for examining spoken language on its own right. The results of this work demonstrated that although spoken language is typically used in discourse that lacks forethought and organisational preparation, it displays a certain complexity of syntax and has a wide range of syntactic devices (except for stress and pitch) for textual organization.

I am also informed by my supervisor that research on children's spoken language is currently conducted in the Human Communication Center that is being set up at the University of Edinburgh and where J. Miller works closely with Sanford (from Glasgow University). This work is now under way but is has not appeared yet in a formal way.

Similar work is conducted in Ireland by Milroy who investigates issues related to prescriptivism, language standardization and educational achievement.

2.2. The Ethnomethodological framework

Essential work has been conducted on spoken discourse by Levinson who closely follows the ethnomethodological tradition.

A main issue in a description is to determine which descriptive approach adequately

characterizes the use of grammatical constructions. Both Leech and Levinson opt for the pragmatic description. By pragmatic description, I mean principles of various kinds which derive the uses and interpretation of linguistic objects from other more general and non-linguistic principles. In such a description, the properties of linguistic objects are describable as non-arbitrary, following usually from some sociolinguistic principles.

Leech's proposal is to supplement the Gricean Cooperative Principle with a number of other principles (The Tact Maxim etc.), which lead to his view of Pragmatics as a system of interacting principles.

Levinson in cooperation with the anthropologist P. Brown has conducted research on a number of languages and try to explain the use of certain constructions by postulating sociolinguistic principles. They propose the Politeness principle as a first-order, over-arching concept, that can account for the appearance of many surface level constructions. Politeness focuses on the addressee's point of view. Interrogative intonation, indirect speech acts and some tag questions can be explained through the Politeness Principle. Politeness need not be conceived of as opposite to Face-Saving Principle, (formulated by Lakoff, University of Berkeley), which focuses on the speaker's perspective mainly. Rather, both can be considered as phenomena operating simultaneously in interaction. We will not discuss this topic further, since one can refer to Sifianu's Ph.D (Reading University, 1987) for discussion on the Politeness Principle with regard to English and Greek.

With regard to the actual way instances of real spoken discourse can be examined, two basic research methodologies can be distinguished in Great Britain.

The first one follows closely the ethnomethodological paradigm, as it was sketched by work conducted in the U.S.A. by Sacks and Schlegoff in the mid-seventies. The majority of this work, which is sociolinguistically oriented, is carried out by Levinson in Great Britain and it is proposed in a rather vehement way in his book «Pragmatics» (1983 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Ethnomethodologists focus their attention on sequences of utterances uttered by people in everyday conversations. A key part of their approach is to attend to the way the local organization of talk is accomplished by the interactants. Examination of the turn-taking system is the main issue, and the more specific questions asked are the following ones:

- a. How are turns allocated?
- b. How are topics created and changed?
- c. How do small range areas, such as pre-invitations, pre-requests, and pre-announcements are performed?
- d. What are the techniques used by the current speaker to select the next speaker?
- e. How does a speaker indicate the termination of his/her talk?
- f. How are interruptions signalled?

What Conversational Analysts in this tradition offer is an elaborate taxonomy of slots which can be filled by a certain kind of utterances- fillers. Such fillers are distinguished into preferred and dispreferred fillers for any particular case of use. The main distinguishing principle is the emphasis put to capture sequential expectations created by the use of utterances. Ethnomethodologists try to account for the meaning of the utterances by identifying their sequential positions within a conversation. Instead of positing general principles and inferential mechanisms at work, they suggest that the accomplishment of communication is the result of local rules based on the turn-by-turn cooperation.

In the last few years, a considerable amount of research has been directed to particles, which offered a new perspective on considerations of meaning. The undertaken research attempted to formulate the semantic and pragmatic conditions governing the use of particles in conversation and text. This brief section sums up some of the results.

It was found that there are two kinds of architectures that particles assist in building up: a textual and an interactive one. It was realised that a description of particles in terms of grammar can not capture their function and that functional aspects—social and psychological—underlying causes have to be brought in.

Research on particles is an inquiry into a topic that was obliterated by traditional descriptive grammarians; this research was made possible through the tools that text linguists could offer. So, Owen (1981) demonstrated the way that «well» functions in relation to conversational units. Working with the Ethnomethodologic framework, Goldberg (1982) in her Ph.D thesis at the University of Cambridge examined the way particles function in relation to topic shifts, preclosings, closings and changes of focus. She argues that some particles («you know», for example) can be used by the speaker as topic-tracking devices with the aim to clarify those topics that are on the main-line of a story or argument and to set them off from less-important information. In this sense, particles perform functions which in written language are performed mainly by subordination, relativization and pronominalisation.

Comparable work has been carried out in the U.S.A. by Schiffrin, Schourup and Östmann (Åbo Akademi) among others. (For a presentation of different approaches to particles, see *Journal of Pragmatics* 10).

2.3. The «Ethnography of communication» tradition

The principal problem that guides work within DA can be stated as follows:

How does an utterance come to be interpreted? And moreover, how do we choose among various interpretations? Is there any principled way on which to base our choice?

A brand of research centered around the Birmingham group of Sinclair and Coulthand addresses the problem of meaning and tries to clarify resources of utterance interpretation. In this work, recurrent patterns of dialogue are examined as they are conducted within institutional settings such as classrooms. This work has been applied to other settings (interview situations, doctor-patient exchanges or lectures) and has been expanding. So, McTear (Ulster Polytechnic) in his Ph.D. at Edinburgh University adopted this framework to study the development of communicative competence as it is illustrated in the interactions between children and their mothers and/or friends.

The main work on interactions within institutional settings is carried out by Stubbs in the Department of Education at the University of London. Stubbs works with a synthesis of Sinclair-Coulthand's framework with that Labov and Fanshel used to explain the mechanisms underlying a patient-doctor exchange.

Great importance is attributed to the role of the social context in the interpretation process. The context provides the analyst and indeed the participants in an interaction with prescribed *social roles*, which crucially affect the way the interpretation process is carried out. Given that a particular utterance can be interpreted in a variety of ways, it seems wise to choose just that interpretation which is consonant with the kind of relations between the interlocutors; in this way, within the classroom environment the social roles established between the participants help us interpret a student's question as

a request and the teacher's one as an order. Thus, according to this view, a classroom or an interview or a lecture constitute a frame, a situation which is characterized by relatively well-defined boundaries and by a set of expected behaviours manifested within these boundaries. The importance of this work lies in that it presented Discourse Analysts and Educationalists in particular, with some crucial theoretical questions about communicative competence and the nature of classroom discourse.

The main conclusion is that coherence in discourse lies not between utterances but between actions. To understand the connections between interlocutors' turns, one should look not only at the words said but also at what is done, that is to examine the structure that underlies an interactional exchange. What is done is significant not at the level at which speech acts are identified such as assertions, promises, questions etc. but rather at a deeper level where characterizations such as challenges, defences and retreats are appropriate. Those characterizations are related to the negotiation of status between participants.

What this work offered was a new insight into classroom interaction which was far beyond ungrounding coding on pre-specified categories that characterizes much of the educationally-oriented literature on this topic (Flanders 1970). There was a critical lack of basic, direct ethnographic data on school classrooms.

This methodological framework is based on the basic premises of the «ethnography of communication» formulated by Hymes (University of Virginia U.S.A.). The ethnography of communication studies the speech and actions of people in social groups. It studies everyday life in ordinary places where people gather to live and work and calls these places «speech communities». It tries to discover patterns of communication that have functional significance to those people, that is, what they need to know in order to participate in *socially appropriate* ways in these interactions.

The criteria against which this work is carried out can be stated in the manner of the following injunctions:

1. The analysis must be able to cover the data and handle all the organizationally relevant features in it.
2. The structure described must be the actual one, as it is enacted by the participants. The analyst has to approach the people, live with them and come to know their ways of interaction and modes of speaking.
3. The recording must be planned carefully so as to capture all aspects of what is said without intruding and altering in a significant degree the situation at hand.

The linguistic analysis of classroom discourse shed light on the structure of the everyday lessons and revealed the nature of the communicative competence of teachers and students. Lessons are characterized by the simultaneous process of learning the content of lessons as well as learning *how to do* lessons. Appropriate participation into them requires a considerable amount of not only academic but social knowledge as well; the children have to learn to listen, waiting for the appropriate cue for getting a turn in a group and show off their knowledge. More importantly, they have to acquire appropriate interactional styles for orally displaying their knowledge and they have to develop ways of decontextualizing this knowledge. In essence, they have to learn situationally appropriate ways both of interpreting and responding to teacher's talk as well as of presenting their own contributions so as to be in accord with the teacher's stereotypes of what constitutes appropriate participation in classroom events.

For a well-presented approach to this subject, the reader can turn to Mehan's

research. The main work on this area has been conducted in the U.S.A. with C. Cazden (Harvard University), D. Hymes (University of Virginia), S. Florio and E. Erickson (Michigan University), S. Brice Heath (Stanford University) and S. Philips (University of Arizona). A research project in this area was conducted by S. Heath over a period of ten years on two working-class communities in the U.S.A. This work succeeds impressively in illustrating the way the cultural context affects linguistic performance.

The importance of this work lies far beyond the specific situations it examines. Its main contribution lies in that it was able to demonstrate many of the inadequacies of the traditional speech-act theory. Although the speech-act theory seems to propose a conception of language as social action, it has largely ignored actual language usage and has worked mainly on fabricated examples, with no reference to authentic discourse. It has ignored the fact that people do not enter a conversation as *tabulae rasae* but carry with them a considerable stock of background knowledge of social conventions and roles.

A further drawback of speech-act theory is its stress on the determinacy of speech-acts. We could admit that conventionalization applies to speech acts but to a certain degree only. Speech acts in many cases cannot be assigned a clear-cut interpretation and in such cases contextual and social considerations play a facilitative role.

The main objection one could raise with regard to the adequacy of Sinclair's methodological framework relates to the adequacy of this system to capture the richness of a verbal interaction. The heart of the system is the 3-part turn structure, which consists of an *initiation*, a *reply* and an *evaluation*. In our view, a conversational interaction is a complex event with interlocking relations between many levels: relations exist both on a horizontal plane between sequenced utterances and on a vertical one between surface utterances and deeper levels related to rules of interpretation.

The problem is whether we could restrict the whole of the classroom discourse to just three acts only. Problems exist too with those utterances that can not be given a clear label and thus, fall somehow in the margins.

2.4. DA and spoken language teaching

Coulthand and Brazil presented the practical applications of some aspects of their research in a number of books. The aim was to present explicitly the ways in which their model could be applicable to the analysis of the interaction carried out within classrooms. Of great significance is Brazil's work on the use of intonation; language teachers and materials either tend to ignore intonation or to treat it in an unsystematic way. Brazil's discussion could provide a more rigorously organized basis for the understanding and teaching of intonation.

A significant work carried out with regard to the ways DA could most valuably applied to language teaching and learning is the one carried out by G. Brown and G. Yule while both were at Edinburgh University (Linguistics Department).

Brown proposes a different research orientation than the ones presented so far. It follows closely the methodology initiated by Chafe at Berkeley University. Its main characteristic is its experimental character. A specific task is presented to a number of different subjects. The procedure requires that Discourse Analysts give great importance to the nature of the constructed stimulus; films and specifically drawn picture-sequences depicting a story are the materials most often used. The linguist has then to

examine the way different people linguistically render the non-verbal stimulus.

It is our view that this experimental design can adequately tackle questions to which different ones were not able to answer. Having control over the content of the text, the Discourse Analyst can attend to the actual way people draw on the linguistic resources to provide structure and organization in their texts. S/he can trace the way the use of specific linguistic means bears on evaluations of a text's quality.

This framework can be profitably used for the teaching of spoken and written language both for children and second language learners, as Brown showed with her work with Edinburgh schoolchildren. The importance of this work lies not only in the kinds of suggestions given but in the fact that they are presented in the kind of detail that can be helpful to teachers. All the specific proposals are fitted into an explicit framework on the relations between spoken and written language and their different communicative values and sociolinguistic functions. The focus of the work is first of all to offer the teacher a range of assessment procedures for diagnosing pupils' problems and subsequently to suggest ways in which a teacher can help in difficulties involving communication through language. Brown and Yule worked with 14-17 year-old Scottish pupils. Their interest was focused mainly on spoken language produced by those pupils who were identified as lagging behind in a class.

Two main language functions were found:

- a. The «listener-oriented» interactional one which gives importance to conveying politeness, cooperativeness and sociability through the use of language
- b. and the «message-oriented» transactional one which has the function of getting people to do things.

Spoken and written language can serve both functions but to a different degree. Whereas written language is primary transactional, spoken language is mainly used for interactional purposes and it is performed in short turns. Speaking in long turns is quite demanding for both children and foreigners let alone native speakers. The essential difficulty of it lies in the fact that the speaker has to coordinate both oral and literate strategies during speaking. Against the real time limitations, s/he has to structure his/her contribution, to establish inter-sentential bridging, and help resolve any indeterminacy that could hinder the hearer in his/her interpretation process.

Brown gives a number of useful tasks that could prove of great help to the classroom teachers but also guides them about the most fruitful way to proceed when examining children's texts. The most significant contribution made lies in the fact it clearly illustrated through use of experimental techniques that the speaker's ability to control the use of language is not a all-or-non-phenomenon but is greatly affected by the nature of the task.

The specific tasks used to elicit language which can be placed onto a scale of ascending difficulty fall under the following next categories:

1. Tasks involving static relationships (giving instructions for drawing a diagram, giving instructions for arranging a set of objects, giving route directions).
2. Tasks involving dynamic relationships (telling a story shown in cartoon pictures, giving an eye-witness account of a car-crash, recounting how a piece of equipment actually works). All these tasks involve dynamic relationships, that is characters appearing and disappearing (and thus they should be referentially identified), action shifting to different locations and/or time period etc. To be successful in such a task, a language user needs to have a high degree of control over

using the linguistic resources to provide structure in his/her text and facilitate the hearer/reader in his/her interpretation process.

3. Tasks involving relationships (presenting an opinion on a given topic, discuss some current issue etc.). The speaker is asked to create an argumentative task aimed at justifying or refuting a given opinion. The construction of such texts is extremely demanding, since the perlocutionary effect intended is not simply to communicate clearly a certain point of view but mainly to use language to *convince* the hearer of the validity and plausibility of the view proposed.

Needless to stress the significance and impact of this work. The teacher was offered a range of ideas based on solid linguistic theory on the way texts, be them spoken and written, should be examined. It was clearly illustrated how a pupil's performance should be assessed and how the teacher can help the pupil to improve his/her performance.

In a similar vein and with a much stressed sociolinguistic component is also the work conducted by S. Romaine in Edinburgh and reported in a number of publications.

Work on L2 language syllabus design has explicitly been profited by the expansion of the level of linguistic analysis to sequences of utterances and context considerations.

Except for this stress on communicative syllabuses however, explicit work on specific topics within actual texts written by foreigners is somewhat rare. Such work was indeed undertaken by Alan Davies and his team of the Department of Applied Linguistics, Edinburgh University but some way back (in the seventies). Research on Second language learning that draws explicitly on DA is currently undertaken in the U.S.A. and examines issues such as tense alternation in texts, reference establishment, use and understanding of speech acts (invitations, compliments) in conversation etc. The major research on this area is done by N. Wolfson (School of Education, University of Pennsylvania) and E. Hatch (University of Southern California).

3. Discourse Analysis and Literary Text

A number of well-known British linguists (Leech, Short, Widdowson) demonstrated that the study of language and literature could be profitably integrated. In this section instead of reiterating their well known claims, we would rather try to sketch much more recent approaches to literary texts. This work is mainly carried out at the Universities of Nottingham and Birmingham, with major exponents R. Carter, D. Burton, J. Sinclair and M. Stubbs (the latter at the Department of Education, University of London).

The major guiding principles of this work can be stated as follows:

1. Any division between literary language and other kinds of language is not only artificial but indeed a harmful one.
2. Literary language can be better conceived of as existing along a gradation, with some texts thought of as more «literary» than others.
3. There is nothing intrinsic to language that can be called literary. There are, of course, words and syntactic constructions which are recognised to be literary, but such items of themselves in abstracto do not constitute literariness.

The central impulse of this work is due to Carter who put it forward in his Ph.D thesis (*Towards a theory of Discourse Stylistics* (1979) University of Birmingham) and in a number of books and articles where he explores the possibility of replacing *stylistics* as the study of style by *Discourse Stylistics*. The use of the term discourse in itself implies a

need for enlarging the scope of the enquiry to include a number of additional factors.

The method of analysis proposed is primary linguistic; attention is paid to the linguistic structure of the texts. Carter stresses that Stylistics must enlarge its concern for the language of literature by acknowledging that a literary work generates both an extra-linguistic context as well as a context of conventions which give rise to meaning. In fact, Carter attributes great importance to Todorov's (1973) view that a particular type of discourse is defined by a list of rules which it must obey. A sonnet, for example, is characterized by extra limitations on its meter and rhyme. So, according to this view, literature is a context too and therefore due consideration should be given to the operation of the particular conventions of the genre in which the language is cast and which can crucially determine the meaning of the text. It follows from this position that there are as many styles as there are discourse types. Carter moved towards the recognition that it is not so much «style» as «styles» that should be the object of the study. It is not the case that the literary artist does not have the choice of making his/her own meaning. What is rather proposed is that the «constitutive» rules (a term used by Searle) or conventions restrict to an important degree the set of elements available for combining utterances.

Another misunderstanding he tried to clear was the issue related to the norm. His basic point is that stylistic facts cannot be adequately explained by reference to a single norm. It would be more appropriate to operate with a series of norms than with any single level of expectation. Norms are associated with any of the necessary poles within a text: the pole of grammar, the pole of lexis, the pole of conventions. In carrying out the actual analyses of literary texts, the norms for conversation, as provided by the Gricean principles, are a workable basis that can be profitably used.

While acknowledging the significance of the work carried out by Jacobson, Carter finally adopts as his theoretical framework a synthesis of Jacobson's system with that of Hymes' model. Hymes' main contribution lies within the «ethnography of communication» (clarified in the section on «spoken discourse»). His model is applicable to cases of interpersonal and intercultural communication and is characterized by a socio-cultural orientation.

The elements that determine the interpretation process according to this model are:

1. the participants of the interaction
2. the setting, the place of the interaction
3. the participants' ends
4. the channel used
5. the key (paralinguistic features)
6. the genre and norms of the interaction.

Establishing links with previous sections, we could say that DA can offer illuminating insights with regard to the relation between conversational and literary discourse. It is by now well established that clear-cut distinctions are no longer either desirable nor useful. Oral conversation and literary discourse have more in common than what had been thought. Tannen in a number of publications convincingly demonstrated that it is better to talk about oral and literary strategies which can be employed in both spoken and written texts. While oral strategies make maximal use of context, literate ones depend on lexicalization to establish coherence. This work has been carried out under the direction of Prof. Chafe at Berkeley University.

So in essence we are dealing with a continuum of language usage. It is our view,

however, that still the two ends of the continuum exhibit differences and that we should be more cautious when we use terms such as «the poetics of talk». It is these differences after all in language usage that make a work essentially literary.

3.1. DA and Literature teaching

Closely related with the above sketched theoretical issues on literature are the didactic ones. Teaching literature both at school and universities was found to be based on a very inadequate ground. Attempts are now made towards developing a more systematic account of the didactic principles of literary studies.

It is stressed that what is necessary is a very precise formulation of the principles, the starting points, the aims and the intermediary stages of a literary curriculum. We should be able to specify what the students should know and be able to do and by what methods this can be done.

The major proponents of this work are R. Carter and M. Stubbs. Both start by attacking the widely-held conception of literature and its teaching in total isolation from language and communication. The programs should be integrated. Literature teaching should be inserted into a wider framework within which one can work on a variety of texts. An advertisement could be compared with a poem, a novel with an everyday story or a fairytale or children's stories. Only within a wider communicative framework such comparisons are not only meaningful but indeed helpful to reveal the underlying mechanisms that give rise to coherent and cohesive texts.

With regard to the way the analyses should be carried out, specific principles are delimited. What is needed is a *description* of the texts at hand. Rather than selecting from a text only those excerpts that support the analyst's intuitions, what is needed is to gain insight into general principles, rules, phenomena and problems. Such a description would be possible and desirable only if it is based on a theory, so that the categories and units proposed are not invented ad hoc but are defined in a more general way.

Stubbs proposes a number of activities that students should undertake with regard to a literary text. Drawing from a number of experiments conducted by Kintsch and VanDijk on text recall, he concentrates on the importance of writing summaries of literary texts. One could possibly object to the significance and novelty of these proposals, since many of these activities already form part of the everyday school curriculum. What Stubbs offers, however, is a principled overall framework which gives meaning and rationale to individual activities. A number of questions have to be asked and answered by the teacher. What is a summary? Do summaries consist of sentences, of utterances or of propositions? What makes a summary better than another one? To adequately answer these questions, one has to be aware of the subtle distinctions of the units of linguistic analysis as well as of work on the structure of discourse. With regard to this point, work carried out mainly in the U.S.A. on the foreground and background information within a text is particularly useful. (Tomlin, Thompson, Chafe, Polanyi, Hopper among others).

4. Vocabulary and DA

Work on vocabulary has come of age in the last decade as attested by the publication of several works entirely devoted to this subject. The range of topics that are

examined is wide and it is both theoretically and pedagogically oriented. Researchers such as Stubbs, McCarthy and Carter concentrate on issues related to lexicology and lexicography, to the role of lexis in discourse, and to the significance of vocabulary teaching for both first and second language development.

The major lexical semantic theory upon which this work is based is that of semantic fields. The Humboldt-Trier-Wiesgerber conception of semantic fields, however, has been criticized repeatedly on the grounds of vagueness and subjectivity. In this section, we will try to formulate their ideas clearly and propose our objections to them which stem from the use of different theory to account for lexical meaning.

Stubbs' main principle is that the understanding of the vocabulary should be based on a theory of language variation. Work-usage should be examined both from a linguistic as well as sociolinguistic point of view; social context plays an important role both for determining the choice among variables and for guiding the interpretation process.

Having established that, he proceeds with his more specific proposal. Stubbs tries to elucidate the principles underlying the organization of the vocabulary. He starts from the basic assumption that meaning is a relational property of the language in the sense that words have no absolute value but are defined in relation to other words. His proposal is that an adequate understanding of the structure of the vocabulary can be achieved with the distinction he proposes between *core* and *non-core* vocabulary. Such a distinction has an intuitive appeal. An important part of native speakers' linguistic competence is the ability to recognize that some words are «ordinary», whereas others are rare, foreign or regional. The main characteristic of the core vocabulary is its pragmatic neutrality. The core vocabulary is pragmatically neutral in the sense that it conveys no information with regard to the situation of the utterance; it does not give any indication of the field or the tenor of the discourse; it is not restricted either to formal or to casual or slang usage. It should not be envisaged, however, as consisting of an unstructured list of words; the core vocabulary is a unified whole. While we agree for a crude intuitive demarcation of vocabulary items, such a distinction would, however, face critical problems. When it comes to actually drawing these boundaries between core and non-core vocabulary, difficulties will arise. Such a distinction, moreover, does not accord to technical vocabulary. Words that can be otherwise thought of as non-core, in technical texts they would constitute the core vocabulary.

It is incontrovertible that certain lexical items have an almost «fixed» relationship with a certain field or topic. Carter concentrates on this point by examining lexis in relation to register. Discussions on the notion of «register» have tended to centre on register as language that is appropriate to particular communicative situations. Carter's aim is to explore a further dimension to the subject by examining the way the notion of register might be made to fit with work on the text linguistics. Carter builds his accounts on vocabulary on a relatively-little known work conducted by Winter (Hatfield Polytechnic) and expanded by Hoey.

Winter is interested in written discourse and specifically in clausal relations.

According to Winter, a clausal relation should be viewed as a cognitive process that comes into operation the moment any two sentences are placed together for the purpose of communication with the hearer/reader.

Winter divides clausal relations into two broad classes — the Logical Sequence and the Matching relations. In the first case we are concerned with the significance of a time/space sequence, whereas in the second one with comparisons of what is true.

Winter's main point is that what provides a limit to the number of ways in which we interpret sentences in sequence is a closed system of vocabulary items which connect clauses or sentences.

He proposes a distinction between three types of vocabulary items:

1. a closed system consisting of the subordinators
2. a class consisting of the connectors
3. the class that consists of nouns, verbs and adjectives.

The main function of the class 3 items is to give rise to anticipation effects within a text. Anticipation is a case of prediction of the type of information to come in the next sentences of a paragraph. In fact, this issue has received a great deal of attention. As we will show, during text processing background knowledge creates expectations which play an important role in the actual text interpretation process. What is now further emphasized is that words to an important degree constrain those around them; we expect certain words to follow certain others. This is a fact that Oller exploits in his «grammar of expectancy» (Oller and Richards 1973, Oller and Streiff 1975).

Especially interesting in the area of the relations between lexis and discourse is the study undertaken by Francis as part of her MA thesis (University of Birmingham). She concentrates on argumentative texts and examines the way certain nouns which she calls Anaphoric (A) nouns («accusation», «acknowledgement», «admission», etc.) function. Francis through a detailed empirical analysis of actual texts exemplified the crucial role that A-nouns play for the organization of a text. A-nouns work as structural signposts that the writer uses to enable the reader to grasp the outlines of his argument more efficiently. When they tend to occur paragraph initially, they also act as organisational devices used to achieve topic shift while maintaining topical cohesion and coherence and as such they function as paragraph connectors.

Some A-nouns have a specific anaphoric function. Such nouns refer back to and label a preceding *stretch* of discourse; by doing that, they represent the position shared so far by both reader and writer; they «encapsulate», according to Francis, this position in such a way as to provide a frame of reference towards which subsequent discourse can be oriented. By labelling a preceding stretch of discourse, they integrate it with the ongoing argument.

Like all aspects of lexical cohesion, A-nouns have important educational implications; they may well play a useful role in the teaching of reading and writing strategies.

We usually tend to take for granted the relations between the non-linear nature of information and the way this information is linguistically realized in texts. Research on lexical cohesion explicitly sketches the way the writer negotiated his/her way through the text and the effect this has on the pragmatic organization of the text itself.

This view relates crucially to the teaching of reading strategies too. It points the need for certain strategies such as perceiving the overall structure of the message, developing the ability to predict and guess from context and skimming and scanning for information.

Parallel with these mainly theoretical concerns, pedagogically oriented research has been examining the advantages of the application of work on lexical semantics in first and second language teaching. Such work has been carried out at the University of Birmingham under the direction of Prof. J. Sinclair.

Interest in the syntagmatic aspects of the lexicon has led Nattinger (1980) to propose that vocabulary teaching should shift its focus from words alone to a variety of multi-

word lexical phenomena that are a central part of everyday communication.

Cliches, idioms and generally routinized speech are frozen lexical patterns in the sense that the meaning of the whole cannot be derived from the meaning of the individual constituents. Nattinger suggests that a syllabus aimed to enhance the communicative competence of L2 learners should incorporate the study of such prefabricated speech. (For the great use of prefabricated speech in Greek and Turkish, see Tannen and Öztekin, 1981).

Paradigmatic aspects of lexis have also found to have direct applications. Channell (1981) suggests ways of incorporating semantic insights from field theory and componential analysis into vocabulary teaching. Rudska (1981, 1985) uses grids and matrices as a way of representing word relations for pedagogical purposes.

The work sketched above relies on the theory of semantic fields. There is, however, a great deal of disagreement about the character and size of semantic fields. Researchers agree that a semantic field is a collection of related words, but how large a collection and how the items are related is in dispute. By all accounts, they are large and complex entities.

Although these are clear issues there is no discussion included in the reviewed literature on the possible limitations of the theory of semantic fields.

Such theory could easily apply to discourse related to technical vocabulary. Undergraduates at Edinburgh University asked to work with semantic field theory could easily display sense relations between items within texts referring to musical instruments or to ski-equipment. The task proved difficult however in ordinary texts which did not include any reference to a specialized area.

1. What are lexical items, first of all?
2. On what criteria should one include groups of words for examination when s/he is supposed to do lexical semantics?
3. And with regard to the pedagogic side of the work, what is the relation between description, theory and application? More specifically, what is the role of the pedagogically-oriented work? To apply linguistics or to choose among those linguistic models that can be effectively used within the classroom?

Our point is that the application of the theory of semantic fields depends on having asked and answered such kinds of questions. More specifically, the applicability of semantic field theory depends on the possibility of defining the boundaries of word meaning. But do such strict boundaries exist? In the case of semantic field theory, a word meaning is represented as a list of semantic features; if an object or event satisfies all the features in the list, the word can be used to refer to it. Fillmore (1975) dubs it as the checklist approach to word meaning.

It is our view that if any theory of semantics has the potentiality for practical application, this should be a theory capable of incorporating a prototypes-and-frames-based semantics, which emphasizes the vagueness and variability of semantic boundaries and the cognitive importance of frames of experience in the interpretation process. Such an approach can adequately account for cases of interpersonal as well as intercultural variability. Psychologists (Rosch 1978), sociologists (Goffman 1974), linguistic anthropologists (Berlin and Kay), computational linguists (Minsky, Schank and Abelson), semanticists (Fillmore) and cognitive psychologists (Sanford and Garrold 1985) used concepts that can be of great use to applied linguists such as frame, schema, scenario, prototype and script.

According to them, the formation of prototypes, «ideal» instances of a particular category is one of the cognitive processes enabling one to grasp the diversity of the world with his/her mind. For each lexicalized category, people in a certain culture have a prototypical example, a kind of mental representation, which is used as a kind of yardstick to decide whether or not a particular object can be referred to by means of the lexical item in question. Deviations from the prototype can easily be accommodated by this framework. But if deviations are far too great, the word can no longer be used appropriately. Thus, the non-existence of sharp boundaries between the conceptual area covered by related words in a particular lexical field is no longer a problem. The main focus of semantic fields theorists was to determine those boundaries, which turn out to be subject to strong interpersonal variation.

Words are not independent entities. They are related both to other words as well as to the extralinguistic reality too. The verb *to buy* evokes a *scene* which consists of two people in the roles of the buyer and seller, the means by which the interchange is conducted (use of money) and the goods to be bought. This constitutes the prototypical scene around which variations exist. People construct such prototypical scenes in order to lighten the cognitive burden of processing the magnitude of the social reality in the same way they use «prototypes» to handle the objects and events. What, then, is a good word? In our view, this question points to examining the appropriateness conditions in the use of a given word within a text and this can be most fruitfully examined within the proposed framework. It is our view that the prototypes-based semantics can be used for the teaching of word-meaning and bring far better results than any other semantic theory.

5. DA and Childrens' texts

It has long been assumed that literacy is a necessary part of socialization in industrial societies and an educational good for all. It plays an important role in enabling the individual to play productive roles within society and enriching his/her experience. But despite these agreed points, it is a wide-held view that levels of literacy are far below the desirable.

Professional journals and the popular press continually address the issue of 'literacy crisis'. Literacy has become at once a contentious social and educational issue, a continuing concern for parents and teachers, and the focal point of a range of interdisciplinary inquiries. As a result, a surge of studies focusing on literacy and literacy crisis has emerged, which explore themes such as the role of literacy in social development, the cultural and economic values of literacy, the effect of literacy on cognitive processes as well as more practical issues.

The educational debate over literacy, however, was mainly focused on reading. Only in the last few years has there been a growing concern with failing standards and achievements in students' *writing*. Major inadequacies were found in existing models for the teaching of writing and a new conceptualization of writing and writing pedagogy was proposed.

The main work of childrens' writing was initially undertaken by educationalists and psychologists who did not offer any significant theoretical and practical insight. The scene changed only in the last four or five years when linguists started to focus their attention on children's writing by attending to the way children provide structure and

organization in their texts and so they offered a new and unexplored perspective.

J. Martin (University of Sydney), in his Ph.D (Essex University) and through a number of publications traced the development of cohesion in children's texts, adopting Halliday's and Hasan's scheme. Recent work by J. Harris and J. Wilkinson, (Sheffield Polytechnic) proposes a number of different approaches that could help in capturing important points in children's texts. I will not refer in any great depth to these issues at this stage. These inadequacies, however, are mentioned in much detail in my M. Phil. thesis at the University of Cambridge where a linguistic approach was undertaken to texts written by English-speaking adults and children. My main point is that the above-mentioned work lacks a clearly-expressed theory that could eluminate the analyses undertaken. Fundamental questions such as the following ones are never raised:

- a. What is cohesion?
- b. What is coherence?
- c. How important is to examine children's texts?
- d. Can children's texts help linguists to understand the nature of the mechanisms underlying the organisation of a text?

Such questions were never posed due to the lack of independency that characterizes research on children's language.

It is our own view that children's texts are not just illuminating but indeed necessary to text-linguists. They are undeveloped texts and as such they offer us the opportunity to disentangle many mechanisms at work that give rise to coherent and cohesive texts. Of course, there is the possibility that we take undeveloped texts from adults too. The essential thing that we should bear in mind is that we adopt a different stance to interpret these adult texts. Starting from the assumption that the Cooperativeness Principle is at work, we tend to interpret possible violations of maxims by the writer as aiming to stylistic effects. We start from the assumption that coherence can be found on a deeper level, one related to the speaker's/writer's intentions. In fact, hearers/readers by inferring those intentions and by relying on general cooperative principles can find the underlying coherence of which a text seems lacking on a superficial level. Such assumptions can not be made, however, for the children's texts and this is the reason we stress that they should be used as tools by text-linguists to understand the essential nature of the text-building processes.

6. Language Processing

6.1. Work related to text-interpretation

Recently, the field of language processing has been characterized by the appearance of a number of new theoretical proposals which by drawing from a range of different fields increased the collaboration between scholars in areas such as Linguistics, Artificial Intelligence, Cognitive Science and Psychology. This wealth of information, although desirable, has a serious shortcoming. The validity of our choices could be affected if we are not informed of the range and background of all closely-related theories.

Given this situation, in this section instead of giving a simple presentation of this work, I concentrate on some questions which in my view are the fundamental and the much-focused-upon ones; by investigating the way they are answered, I was able to divide the contemporary language-processing work into several somewhat rough divisions.

The questions are the following ones:

1. What are the significant claims each theory makes?
2. What are the controversial points?
3. How does it account for the way the text interpretation process is carried out?
4. What role does it attribute to semantic and pragmatic principles during text interpretation?

A major goal of the recent work in language interpretation is to provide an adequate theory of natural language processing, one that could provide a characterization of the relationships both within and between sentences which are computed by the language user and the processes by which they are computed. It is becoming clear from the accounts given that the meaning is underdetermined by the information that grammar gives. If this is so, then some other mechanism should be brought into play to construct what is missing; this is the point where Pragmatics enters the area of natural language interpretation. A central point in this work is that in accounting for coherence phenomena, an important role should be attributed to inference.

Two different views have been proposed with regard to the nature of the inferential processes at work.

Sperber and Wilson (1986) propose a modified form of traditional deductive logic. According to them, utterance interpretation is a matter of hypothesis formation and evaluation, with deductive inference playing a central role in both processes.

Moore (University of Cambridge) proposed that inductive inference can give the more appropriate model to linguists who wish to answer this problem. This proposal is further validated by experiments conducted specifically to test the relation between discourse processes and reasoning. These experiments have been conducted by McGonigle and Chalmers (University of Edinburgh) who indicated through their work the valuable insights that psychology can offer with regard to the nature of the cognitive processes that are involved in giving solutions to inference problems. The results of the experiments they conducted with children, adults and non-human primates led them to argue for the significance of prelogical forms of encoding. They argue that when processing an argument certain premises can be mapped onto spatial representation so that factors extrinsic to logic and language which precede linguistic competence can account for the way connectivity within a text is established.

Johnson-Laird (University of Cambridge, Applied Psychology Unit) argues that a unitary account of coherence can be given through the notion of «mental models». According to him, one function of discourse is to get the listener/reader to synthesize a model of the situation described. A discourse will be coherent if it enables a single model to be constructed.

Although our own view is in favor of the need for the notion of discourse models, we would raise some objections to Johnson — Laird's approach since it does not give a clear account of the exact nature of mental models, on which he builds his theory.

In a more experimentally oriented work, K. Stenning (University of Edinburgh) attempts to capture the processes by which models of simple texts are constructed. According to his work, the construction of discourse/text representations is greatly facilitated through the deployment of particles.

The ease with which such models are constructed was found to be closely related to the way information is presented. Supply of further information in the form of inferences affects the speed of text processing. Stenning observed in his experimental work

processing delays due to inferences required to be drawn in order for currently processed information to be integrated into a model of a text.

6.2. Solving indeterminacy in discourse: the case of anaphora and particles

A problem that has moved into the foreground of research in discourse and one that is significant in the accounts of coherence is that of anaphora resolution.

The most current work on this area within Great Britain is that of R. Kempson (School of Oriental languages, London University). Kempson finds that Relevance Theory can adequately account for this phenomenon.

Two issues are needed to be taken into account to understand her point. The first is her reliance on the psychological framework proposed by Fodor and especially his argument in support of the language of thought hypothesis. The other is the rejection of a truth-conditional account of the meaning of sentences and the shift to Pragmatics to account for utterance-interpretation.

Kempson's argument runs as follows:

She postulates two levels of representation - the incomplete and the complete propositional form, named respectively LF and LF'.

A set of construction rules provide a mapping from the surface structure of a sentence onto a Logical Form LF. LF is an incomplete expression of the language of thought; it can be characterized as an incomplete representation since it contains expressions which are not completely specified. These are called meta-variables; there are place-holders for the value to be assigned at a later stage.

A set of projection rules which combine with the construction rules provide a mapping onto LF', which is a predicate calculus formula containing no anaphors and no unbound variables.

All anaphoric expressions according to this account are meta-variables whose value is not provided by the grammar but by the operation of pragmatic processes.

Blakemore used Relevance Theory to account for the meaning of some discourse particles («and», «moreover», «therefore», etc.). According to her analysis, these particles do not form part of the Logical form, but rather act as instructions given by the writer with the aim of maximizing relevance.

Given that the speaker wishes his/her communication to succeed, s/he tries to make the utterances as easily understood as possible. He might even indicate to the hearer/-reader a context, according to which to interpret a given utterance. Particles guide the interpretation process by constraining the hearer's choice of context, thus ensuring correct context selection at minimal processing cost.

Relevance Theory has been criticized among others about its lack to take into account the social context which inevitably plays an important role for the assignment of interpretation to an utterance. Moreover, its acceptability is restricted to those in favor of the «Modularity» hypothesis. We will not concentrate on more specific issues here; in a subsequent section the opposing views will be presented.

6.3. Temporal anaphora in discourse

In the last few years there has been a considerable growth of interest in the temporal structure of texts (mainly narrative texts). Since this area is being examined in my Ph.D thesis in relation to Greek language, I will briefly sketch the major work carried out.

Within the domain of temporal anaphora, the main questions posited are related to issues referring to:

- a. the exact nature of the differences between perfective and imperfective aspect
- b. the different ways in which tenses and temporal adverbs contribute to the interpretation of utterances and discourse
- c. the number and the nature of reference points
- d. the role to which information based on the syntax and information drawn through inference processes contributes to an understanding of temporal anaphora.

H. Kamp (1981) then at the University of London was the first who dealt with these issues from a discourse perspective. The main characteristic of his theory is the postulation of a Discourse Representation Structure which mediates the syntax of sentences in a discourse and their model theoretic interpretation. The necessity of the existence of such a device is justified by reference to the fact that DRS makes it possible to give an account of the semantic properties of sequences of utterances, including a statement of informational dependencies among constituents of a discourse in the cases of pronominal and temporal anaphora.

More recent work on the topic is concerned with specifying the rules for constructing the DRS. The procedure is to a degree syntax-driven but still pragmatic notions are taken into account.

Recently, Co Vet (1968) argued that some of the basic assumptions of Kamp had to be reconsidered. One of them concerns Kamp's proposal that the simple past entails that the discourse event is punctual. Co Vet along with other researchers (Bartsch, for example) argued for the necessity of introducing time-intervals.

A further reformulation was made to the notion of Reference Time (RT), which is now examined from the perspective of a whole text. RT still plays an important role but is no longer regarded as a moment at which the speaker places himself psychologically; it is rather conceived of as a time interval established by a tense. This new definition of RT proved quite useful in that it facilitated the interpretation of the temporal structure of the text.

Lo Cascio (1986) also put forward a model of temporal anaphora which makes use of binding rules according to those proposed by Chomsky in GB theory.

It is not our intention to provide more detailed information of this work, which is mainly carried out outside Great Britain (University of Amsterdam). We would stress, however, that current research on language processing can be very useful in understanding the phenomenon of temporal anaphora.

6.4. Using Contextual Information during text processing: Against Modularity Hypothesis

A brief mention will be made in this section of the work which is involved in language processing and attempts to access the contribution of syntactic, semantic and contextual information during this process.

It has to be stressed right from the beginning that the focus of this work is not text oriented. It is our view, however, that DA could profitably draw from it.

The most-known research is conducted by Marlsen and Tyler (Department of Experimental Psychology, Cambridge University) and by Steedman and Altmann (Uni-

versity of Edinburgh). The major characteristic of both works is the reservation they express about the claims that the Modularity hypothesis makes with regard to language processing.

The goal of language processing theories is to give a detailed account of the operations and the principles governing the processor.

The fundamental claim of the Modularity hypothesis (Fodor, 1983) is that language processing, that is the mapping from the speech signal onto a level of interpretation, involves a dichotomy between kinds of mental processes.

A modular «input system» operates initially to deliver as rapidly as possible a linguistic representation which is the input to a second kind of process, called «central process». This one relates the output of the modular input system to general knowledge. Thus, the proponents of this hypothesis regard as essential that we explicitly draw the boundaries between the language input module (and thus all specifically linguistic processing) below the level of semantic representation. Both Wilson and Altmann stress that language processing is an interactive process which does not separate modules but it rather involves relations between them.

Wilson and Tyler argue against the necessity of postulating any intermediate level between input and discourse representations. The psycholinguistic experiments they carried out did not support the dichotomy between the use of syntactic and non-syntactic information, which is the central claim of the Modularity hypothesis. Instead it was found that the representation of discourse-models which is a semantic task, is as fast as the representation of the Logical Form whose construction requires only domain-specific linguistic knowledge.

Altmann and Steedman argue that discourse-related strategies (referential success, referential failure, given/new information) are crucially involved in the resolution of local syntactic ambiguities. The issue with which they deal is an empirical one; one has to determine whether just one kind of information is used during the resolution process or whether information stemming from different domains works together.

According to a syntactically-oriented approach, at an initial stage what is accessed to is syntactic information which proposes a single analysis. Alternative analyses will be attempted only when the initial analysis proves inconsistent with the context. (Frazier 1987 is a major proponent of this approach).

Contrary to this, Altmann and Steedman argue that it is the discourse as well as non-linguistic principles that govern the operation of the sentence processor and predict the analysis to be assigned when ambiguous input is encountered.

This area of work is a very recently-formulated one. It is further research that will elucidate the validity of the claims made.

One has to say, however, that models of language processing that rely on the use of a single kind of information alone face several challenges. It is our view that a discourse-based approach can offer more satisfactory answers to issues related to language processing. As evidence for that we will point to the work carried mainly in the U.S.A. at Yale University on the computational aspects of discourse processing. Schank, Minsky and Abelson among others convincingly illustrated the role that frame conceptions play in the domain of natural language and text understanding (see Metzger (1980) for a helpful review). According to this approach, text understanding is in some instances nothing but a process of fitting a text into a pre-existent conceptual framework (schema or script) which in turn activates expectations on the part of the listener/reader and guides the whole interpretation process.

7. Towards a conclusion

Discourse Analysis is a vast and evolving field characterized by a certain degree of ambiguity. Many of its basic notions are used in a vague way or are still difficult to define.

We tried in this paper to delimit the area of DA by summarising the scope of academic interest, describing several research orientations and isolating some basic assumptions and principal points.

Since a review of research is a work that inevitably involves much of personal judgement, I will finish off this paper by outlining my own position with regard to the essential issue relating to the status of DA within the field of Linguistics and more specifically to the contribution that DA can make to explaining linguistic phenomena.

It is beyond doubt that discourse plays an important role in capturing the way linguistic forms function. It is, however, quite a strong claim to propose the reduction of all syntax to discourse considerations and propound claims that the very statement of syntactic regularities cannot be otherwise accounted for but only through discourse. We would rather subscribe to a «middle-ground» approach according to which contextual considerations play an important role for the processes of language production and interpretation. As a result, the characterization of linguistic constructions with regard to their function in discourse situations is not only important but it also offers valuable insights. Assessment of discourse and pragmatic principles can offer a facilitative tool to the analyst in explaining otherwise baffling facts of language usage.

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