

Main Aspects of Discourse Research in Modern Linguistics

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Abstract: This article discusses the fundamental issues surrounding the study of discourse in contemporary linguistics. The term "discourse" was first introduced into linguistic theory during the structuralism era in the 1950s. French scholar Émile Benveniste, in developing the theory of speech, used the word "discours" to refer to "spoken works that arise every time we speak." In 1952, American scholar Z. Harris published an article on "discourse analysis," focusing on sequences of utterances and text segments larger than sentences. These two renowned scholars laid the foundation for a persistent challenge in modern linguistics, which is the identical representation of different objects of study associated with the term "discourse." The initial ambiguity of the term has led to an expansion of its semantics. Traditionally, discourse was associated with ordered written or, more often, spoken communication of individual subjects. However, as discourse analysis developed, the semantic scope of the concept "discourse" significantly broadened to include both linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic processes. In a broader sense, discourse represents the unity of linguistic practice and extralinguistic factors necessary for understanding texts.

Keywords: Discourse structure, speech activity, concept of consciousness, speech flow, cognitive process, modern linguistics, discourse analysis.

Introduction

The introduction of the term "discourse" into linguistics occurred in the 1950s, during the period of structuralism. The French scientist Emile Benveniste, while developing a theory of speech, used the word "discourse" and understood it as "a work of speech that occurs every time we speak." [3, p.11]. In 1952, the American scientist Z. Harris published an article "Discourse Analysis", in which he stated that the object of study is a sequence of sentences that includes a longer fragment of text [27, p. 24]. These two famous scientists established the tradition of using one term for different objects of study, and today the attempt to understand and interpret this term remains one of the main problems of modern linguistics.

Discourse research as discipline

The study of discourse as a discipline (discourse analysis) began about twenty years later, in the 1970s, thanks to the work of T. van Dijk, W. Dressler, J. Grimes, W. Schiff and other linguists. The initial diversity of meanings of the term determined the further expansion of its meaning. Initially, discourse was associated with the written and oral performances of individual subjects. With the development of discourse analysis, the semantic content of the concept of "discourse" expanded significantly and began to include not only linguistic, but also non-linguistic semiotic processes. Discourse (derived from the French "discours", English "discourse", Latin "discursus" - "action, speech, conversation, reflection") is a set of language practice and extralinguistic factors necessary for understanding the text [18].

Currently, speech is an interdisciplinary field of knowledge: speech theory is developing in text linguistics, computational linguistics, psycholinguistics, semiotics, rhetoric, literary studies, cultural studies, sociology, philosophy, ethnology, theory and practice of translation, political science, law, and many others. other fields. There are well-known and successful discursive research centers in the

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United States. In particular, the University of California at Santa Barbara (S. Thompson, Y. Shef, M. Mithun, P. Clancy, etc.), US University. These include the University of California at Los Angeles (E. Schegloff), the University of Oregon at Eugene (T. Givon, R. Tomlin, D. Payne), as well as the University of Amsterdam in Europe (T. van Dijk).

Discourse research has attracted the attention of many foreign and domestic researchers, and authors began to approach this concept from different scientific positions.

Definitions of discourse

Understanding discourse and awareness of its essence largely depends on the methodology chosen by the researcher to analyze a particular phenomenon. Below we can see how the discourse presents different concepts to different scholars:

1. For Michel Foucault, discourse is a “fragment of history,” a set of statements characteristic of a certain period [25, p. 119].
2. According to Tanya A. van Dijk, discourse is “a complex communicative event that includes a social context” [9, p. 112, 122].
3. Natalya Arutunova considers discourse “speech built into life” [2, p. 133–135].
4. And Elena Kubryakova interprets discourse as “a cognitive process associated with the production of real speech” [17, p. 160].
5. Grigory Slyshkin sees in discourse the basis for the formation of linguocultural concepts, and he, in turn, comes to the opinion that “discourse is an object, and a concept is a means of analysis” [20, p. 35–39].
6. Valentin Karasik considers discourse “a text adapted to the real situation of communication” [14, p. 7-18].
7. For some linguists, such as Ivan Ilyin and Yuri Borev, discourse is synonymous with the concept of “style” [12, p. 73–75; 5, p. 80]. One can cite concepts associated with this and a number of other similar discourses.

These definitions show that discourse can be viewed from different perspectives. On the one hand, discourse is considered as a form of speech embedded in a communicative situation. For T. A. van Dyck, discourse is a flow of speech, a language in continuous movement, including a historical period, individual and social characteristics of the speaker, and a communicative situation [23]. He draws attention to the fact that discourse is a dynamic process and activity. However, unlike discourse, speech has a systemic structure and includes the concepts of type, genre and style. Discourse is considered speech because it includes purposeful social action, including the interaction of people and the mechanisms of their consciousness (cognitive processes) [2, p. 133–135].

On the other hand, the term "discourse" is often associated with the concept of "text". This is due to the fact that historically the concept of “discourse” includes both written and oral speech. However, discourse is mainly viewed as a dynamic process, and text as a statistical product. T. A. van Dijk argues that discourse is real oral speech, and text is the abstract grammatical structure of a spoken sentence [24]. Text is a written expression of language, the integrity of a literary work, including the title and various supra-phrase units, combined with various types of communication, a literary work that has clear goals and a pragmatic orientation [18]. Discourse includes various types of actualizations of the text, considered from the point of view of cognitive processes, including aspects related to non-linguistic factors such as pragmatics, sociocultural characteristics, psychological aspects, etc. Since discourse includes the concepts of consciousness and perception, it has wider semantic range than the text [19, p. 98].

Anna Ivanovna Varshavskaya introduced the important concept of “discourse-text”, while she interpreted discourse as a process of linguistic thinking, and text as its result or product [6].



Valentin Vasilyevich Bogdanov considers discourse and text to be two sides of speech. Speech cannot always be converted into text, and not every text can be expressed orally [4, p. 4–5]. Thus, discourse in a broad sense is understood as speech activity, which also represents linguistic material presented in oral or written form. In the 1970s, European linguistics tried to distinguish between the concepts of “text” and “discourse”, including the category of “situation”. Discourse is considered as “text + situation”, and the text is accordingly defined as “non-situational speech”.

Some linguists view discourse as an interactive form of oral communication, as opposed to text, which is usually attributed to a single author. In this respect, the concept of “discourse” is close to the concept of “dialogue” since both assume the existence of two interacting roles - the speaker and the receptive listener. Discourse and dialogue can be spontaneous, dynamic and at the same time purposeful. However, these terms are not identical, since dialogue is often contrasted with monologue, and discourse usually includes both monologue and dialogue. The concepts of “speech”, “text” and “dialogue” are currently enriched with many meanings and are considered as types of discourse.

Considering that the concept of “discourse” entered linguistics during the period of structuralism, it is appropriate to highlight the components of speech and determine its structure.

In the structure of discourse, various levels of analysis can be distinguished:

1. *Microstructure* (local structure) is the division of discourse into minimal components such as phrases and sentences.
2. *Macrostructure* (global structure) - division into larger components, such as episodes in a story, paragraphs in an article, or groups of lines in dialogue.

Thematic, referential, temporal, and final connections can be observed between these parts. The boundaries between them are manifested in different ways, for example, by pauses in spoken speech, graphic accents in written speech, the use of task words, etc.

In addition to macrostructure, some researchers identify concepts such as a superstructure (superstructure) of a standard scheme, capable of creating certain discourses (Teney A. van Dijk); hyper structure - the relationship of discourse with other texts and speech, as well as with external discursive and social practices (V.B. Kashkin); and meta structure - these include the connections of the text with the communicator’s own discursive practice, his feelings, mental state and other aspects (V.B. Kashkin) [15, p. 86].

The structure of discourse presupposes the existence of two opposing roles - the speaker (or addressee) and the listener (or addressee). According to the definition of Valentin Zakharovich Demyankov, the elements of discourse are the presented events, their participants, realizing information and “non-events,” for example, events related to events; background explaining events; assessment of event participants; consists of information connecting discourse with events [10, p. 5].

Description of discourse in modern linguistics

In modern linguistics, the issue of discourse classification remains unresolved. Discourses can be classified according to the way information is presented in oral and written forms. In addition, it should be noted that the least studied type of discourse is mental (cognitive) discourse or internal discourse, which has its own characteristics. Internal/cognitive discourse differs in that during the activity one person plays the role of both speaker and listener. Despite the use of language, cognitive discourse “leaves no visible traces of linguistic activity” [16, p. 4-5].

There is also the concept of electronic discourse, which includes “live journals”, online communication, reality shows and other forms of virtual communication [8, p. 53-56]. Electronic discourse combines the features of oral and written discourse. As oral speech, it is distinguished by spontaneity and informality, and as written speech, it uses a graphical method of recording information [16, p. 8-11].

According to Pavel Vasilyevich Zernetsky, according to the level of complexity of the space affecting speech, discourse can be divided into elementary and combined discourse [11, p. 59-64].



Understanding discourse as a higher unit than text and dialogue allows us to distinguish between monological and dialogic discourses. Additional differences between types of discourse are usually highlighted through the concept of genre. Based on the type of information carrier, various types of modern discourse can be distinguished, such as radio broadcasts, printed materials, telephone conversations, electronic correspondence, online chats, etc. [16].

Sociolinguistics distinguishes between personal and institutional types of discourse. Vladimir Ilyich Karasik uses the terms “person-oriented” and “status-oriented” [14]. During a personal conversation, the participants in the dialogue get to know each other well and establish sincere, open, and trusting relationships. This type of discourse can be divided into every day and existential types of communication. Everyday discourse is characterized by dialogism or a special abbreviated code of communication, in which people understand each other perfectly and the communicative situation is self-evident. This type of discourse is characterized by spontaneity (spontaneity, involuntariness, suddenness), strong situational dependence, obvious subjectivity, logic, and structure of statements. The uniqueness of existential discourse lies not in the description of specific things, but in the attempt to reveal the inner world of a person based on literary language. Existential communication is predominantly monologue and is expressed in artistic, philosophical, and psychological texts [22, p. 52].

Institutional or status-oriented discourse is a form of oral communication between representatives of social groups or institutions. Depending on the existing state institutions, such discourses may include political, diplomatic, administrative, legal, military, pedagogical, religious, sports, scientific, medical, mass information, journalistic and others. 6-7; 13, p. 1402]. Each of these types of discourse is characterized by its own characteristics, goals, and participants in communication. Because social institutions are constantly evolving, the list of such discourses may vary across studies. For example, as Jürgen Habermas [26] has suggested, there is a distinction between practical, critical, and ethical discourses. In addition, several studies are conducted on such types of discourse as urban, restaurant and advertising discourse (based on the works of Elena Anisimova and Mikhail Deryabin) [1]. Nowadays, the list of types of discourse is expanding, including fashion and modeling business, television, and advertising, show business and show politics, glamor, etc. (according to research by Tatyana Ostrovskaya and Zarina Khachmarova). [19, p. 102]. It should be noted that additions and changes are constantly being made to this list, and the types of discourse continue to expand.

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