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Discourse Analysis
Higher Studies- P.hd
Why Formal Links are not Enough?

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Chapter three : Why Formal Links are not Enough

Introduction

It is important to note that although the formal links reinforce the unity of discourse, they cannot, in their own create it. Let's examine the following sentences:

Task 11

1-It's a mystery to me, how the conjuror sawed that woman in half.

2-Well, Jane was the woman he did it to. **So** presumably **she** must know.

3-Well, Jane was the woman he did it to. So presumably she must be Japanese.

These sentences are packed with cohesive devices, but do not create unity by them. When we replace the third sentence with another we could come up with a situation in which they do, but not by virtue of **so**, **she** but because some other information about the context. The formal links are(so, she) but it is not clear how they make the sequence sensible.

Formal links are not enough to account for our feeling that a stretch of language is discourse. They are neither necessary nor sufficient, and in brief spoken exchanges, it is quite common to come across sentences that are almost entirely bare of them. **Formal links are features creating a link between sentences and enabling them to have a unity. They are regarded as aspects having a place in coherent and meaningful interpretation**

Task12

In the following example, there are four possible answer to the sentence:

-The window is open.

1-Go back to sleep, will you?

Someone wakes up at midnight and tries to awaken his roommate and inform him that the window is open. But his roommate tells him to go back to sleep.

2-Don't worry.

It is early morning and the wife says to her husband the window is open but he, half awakened , answering: don't worry.

3- My job's staking boxes, mate.

We can imagine that there are two workers who work in the same place (factory\store). One of them ask the second one that ‘the widow is open’. Here the answer of the addressee implies that he was busy with staking the boxes not being a guard.

4. By Jove, Holmes! It was the gardener!

Here the detective Holmes suspects that the gardener is the one left the window open.

3.2 Language Functions

To look behind the literal, formal meaning of what is said or written, and to consider what the sender of a message intends to achieve with it, to try to understand is **language function**.

Examine the following stretch of speech:

‘ Sorry, love. I saw you were home. There’s a cat stuck under the gate at number 67’.

Despite the absence of the formal links (repetition, ellipsis, substitution etc.) between the clauses, but they are understood. A way of understanding this is to look at the literal, formal meaning of what is said or written, and to consider what the sender of a message intends to achieve with it, to try to understand its function.

3.3 The Classification of Macro-functions

The functions of language are:

- Maintaining social relationship
- To send and receiving information.
- To tell other people your thoughts and communicate feelings.

Cook argues that language has numerous functions beyond transmitting information. While language’s referential function is crucial in adult and public settings, it is not the only or first function of language in human life. In infant and parent relationships, the referential function often takes a subordinate role, and even in adult intercourse, language has many more functions beyond information transmission.

The Elements of Communication according to Jakobson (1960) which developed by Hymes (1962) are:

- 1) **The addresser** : The person who originates the message. This is usually the same as the person who is sending the message , but not always, as in the case of messengers, spokes people , and town criers.

- 2) **The addressee:** The person to whom the message is addressed. This is usually the person who receives the message, but not necessarily so as in the case of intercepted letters, bugged telephone calls, and eaves dropping.
- 3) **The channel :** The medium through which the message travels: sound waves, marks on paper, telephone wires, word processor screens.
- 4) **The message form:** The particular grammatical and lexical choices of the message.
- 5) **The topic:** The information carried in the message. Basically, what the message is about.
- 6) **The code:** The language or dialect, for example, Swedish, Yorkshire, English, Semaphore, British Sign Language, Japanese.
- 7) **The setting :** The social or physical context.
- 8)

Macro function are then established, each focusing on one element:

1-The emotive function: communicating the inner states and emotions of the addresser ('Oh no!' , 'fantastic' , 'Ugh!' , and swear words are used as exclamations).

2- The directive function: seeking to affect the behaviour of the addressee. Such as ('please help me!' , 'shut up!' , 'I'm warning you!').

3- The phatic function: opening the channel or checking that it is working, either for social reasons ('Hello' , 'Lovely weather') or for practical reasons ('Can you hear me' , ' Are you still there?' , Can you read my writing?')

4- The poetic function: in which the particular form chosen is the essence of the message. It means using language for ADVERTISING , Puns etc.

5- The referential function: carrying information.

6- The metalinguistic function: focusing attention upon the code itself, to clarify it or renegotiate it. ('What does this word mean?' , ' "will" and "shall" mean the same nowadays' .The purpose that we use language for now has a metalinguistic function.

7- The contextual function: creating a particular kind of communication.

('Right' Let's start the lecture' , 'It's just a game').

Task 14/ What are the functions of the following?

1-Dear Sir or Madam...

2-Fred Astaire's dead.

3-Workers of the World, Unite!

4-What do you mean by this?

5-You make me sick.

6-Well, I'll be damned!

7-The court is now in session.

8-Here's Miss Julie.

3.4 Functional Development

The following interesting classification could be regarded as functional evolution in each human individual:

- **Expressive function** instinctive reactions to the environment.
- **Directive function** the crying baby is express though her cry is not a language but through controlling these cries and producing them at will she can influence the behaviour of her parents.
- **Phatic function** begins very early , chuckling, gurgling, babbling ٭
- **Poetic function** when young children latch on a phrase and repeat endlessly without covering any information.
- **Referential function** gains its importance at later stages.
- **Meta linguistics function** comes later during school years.
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3.5 Mico-functions and functional language teaching

If we accept Jakobson's and Hymes', or any similar, categorization of language into a small number of macro-functions, we might then go on to subdivide each function and specify more delicate categories, or micro-functions. A breakdown of the directive function.

Directive function

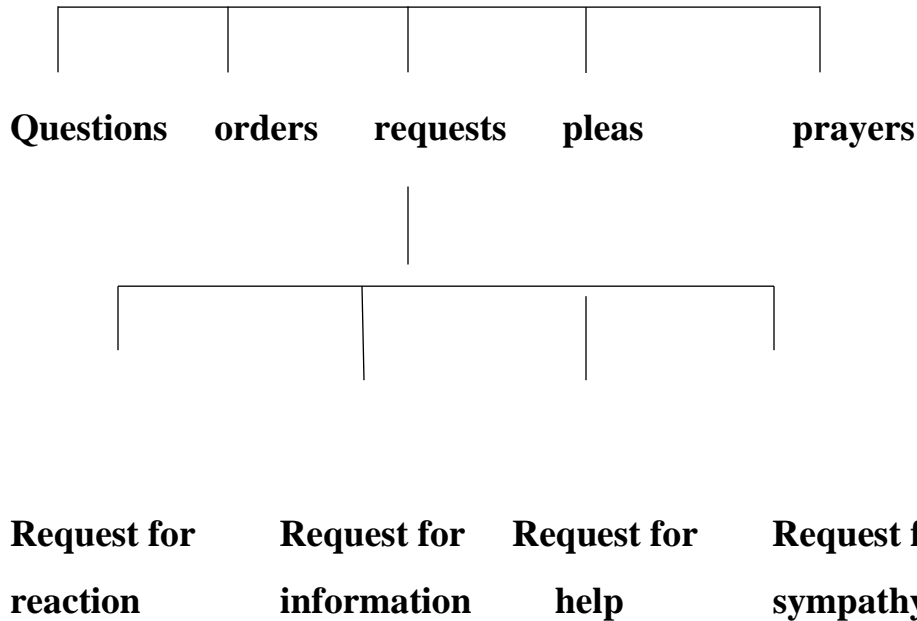


Figure (1) A Break-down of Directive Function

Figure (1) consists of a division and re-division of six macro-functions, resulting in a long list of narrowly defined functions. This list serves as the basis for functional language courses, connecting functional courses and functional approaches to linguistics, rather than just for fashion. Functional courses are set out to list the purposes for which the students wish to use the language and then to teach them how to do so.

3.6 Functional Analysis and Coherence

The concept of **language function** can help understanding the ties between utterances in discourse. It is what binds these utterances together even in the absence of formal links, allowing us to perceive a unique unity in language. If we can understand the function of utterances, we will be able to perceive a unity of a different kind.

Thus, the sentence ‘the window is open’ can have many different functions depending on **who** says it , **to whom**, and in **what situation**. When said by a wife to husband, or a headmaster to students, or Sherlock Holmes to Dr. Watson.

The window is open. —————> Don’t worry.
 (Expression of Anxiety)————> (Reassurance)



- ✓ There might be some sequencing to functions i.e., some order in the way they follow another:

-Request → refusal

-Plea → offer

- ✓ There might be a discourse constructed by a single speaker.

Lady: Sorry, love. I saw you were home. There is a cat stuck under the gate..

(apology) (explanation) (request)

- ✓ Another problem with this procedure is that not functions can be neatly labeled nor there is one to one correspondence between single utterance and a single function. It is quite usual for an utterance to perform more than one function.
- ✓ Meaning varies with context. Out of context, a sentence has **time and place-free meaning**. An utterance within a context may have many meanings, which, although connected to the context-free sentence meaning, can be extremely varied. Semantic meaning is (the fixed context-free meaning), while pragmatic meaning (take on in a particular context and between particular people). The function of an utterance must be established pragmatically.

Why there is divergence of form and function, of semantics and pragmatics.