Linguistic Descriptions of Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to provide a linguistic description of the discourse. The aim of the study is a theoretical description of discourse in linguistics, the current provisions of linguistics in relation to discourse. It also defines the concept of discourse in linguistics, clarification of its nature and relation to the related category of "text"; discourse is analyzed as a wide research field in the system of modern scientific knowledge; critical analysis of the philosophical, methodological, psychological and sociological foundations of discourse analysis; description of categories, approaches and organization of discourse.

Keywords: Linguistic description, theoretical description, discourse in linguistics, nature and relation, critical analysis, scientific knowledge, sociological foundations.

The concept of discourse arose in connection with the exit of linguistic research beyond the limits of the sentence - into the field of superphrasal syntax. Therefore, from the point of view of linguistics, a discourse is, first of all, a complex unit consisting of a sequence of sentences that are in a semantic connection.

The search for typical discourse structures comparable to typical sentence structures has not yet led to significant theoretical generalizations due to the extreme complexity and exceptional multidimensionality of the phenomenon behind this term. But the term "discourse" is quite firmly fixed in linguistics, almost replacing the synonymous concept of "text of coherent speech", and even stepped over its boundaries, being widely used, for example, in philosophy, sociology and political science, in cultural studies, in works on psychoanalysis, etc. .

Exploring discourse, linguistics does not at all depart from its main object - language. "Discourse is a new feature in the appearance of Language, as it appeared to us by the end of the 20th century" (Stepanova, 1996:71). In the

image of discourse, the language turned to the linguist with its unusually complex dynamic side, which requires the search for new approaches and methods that are different from the traditional ones. This explains the relevance of the topic we have chosen.

In speech activity, the discourse looks like a unit belonging to the highest level of the language, consisting of sentences related in meaning. All syntactic-semantic processes characteristic of the levels of words and sentences are conditioned by the structure of the whole discourse as a relatively independent linguistic unit of a higher order. Discourse, however, differs from the lower units of language in that, as a rule, it is not reproduced like phonemes and morphemes, but is created in speech. However, the same can be said about the units of the sentence level, and about the words produced in speech.

At the same time, the facts of the independence of discourse as a linguistic unit are also empirically obvious: linguistic consciousness operates with a fairly extensive set of entire discourses, including works of

folklore, which have the property of regular reproducibility in speech (full or partial) - a property common to all linguistic units. At the same time, it can be assumed that discourse, like other units of the language system, is capable of having its own variants and allovariants, and, consequently, of having a certain structural and systemic significance, although the proper meaning of discourse may differ from the latter.

Discourse also has its own ethnolinguistic specificity, similar to the specificity of other units (phonemes and morphemes, words and sentences). This fact is largely recognized by translation theorists (Text and Translation, 1977), who claim that the true unit of translation is the whole text, and not a word or even a sentence. The discourse must be translated as a whole. Only in trivial cases does the discourse allow word-by-word and phrase-by-phrase translation, which is an exception to the general pattern. Ethno-specific elements regularly participate in the construction of the discourse, always complicating the translation procedure, having no equivalents or analogues in the target language, including in grammatical, lexical and stylistic terms. In addition, the discourses of different languages, as a rule, differ in terms of their own, "external" form - they cannot be translated without taking into account their linguistic and cultural context.

So, among the properties that allow us to speak of discourse as a specific unit of a higher-level language, we can indicate the following:

discourse in its structure differs from all other units of the given language from which it is built;

discourse has the ability to function as a whole, regular reproducibility (full or partial) in a given language.

the discourse of one language is translated into another language as a whole unit, while not only lexical gaps are possible, but also stylistic gaps, i.e. the absence of an appropriate style in the target language, which requires resorting to stylistic transposition;

discourse has linguistic and ethno-linguistic specificity in the poetic aspect, which consists not only in the rhythm and metrics of poetic works and their rhymed organization; this includes linguo-stylistic and linguo-cultural moments that manifest themselves at the level of discourse, as well as specific genre characteristics and different usage of discursive models in different linguistic cultures;

discourse has structural specificity in a given language as a model of a certain situation and, therefore, in the system it can correspond to a certain linguistic "stemma" with a complex structure, which has a matrix systemic significance.

All of these points require a detailed description. Of particular interest in presenting the structure of discourse, of course, are the parameters of its internal (proper) form - what carriers of meaning it is directly built from, and how the whole discourse affects its components in a semantic sense, creating specific semantic modulations, which are then fixed in the form of the meanings of its lexical and phrasal elements.

In the conceptual representations of the text of connected speech, among many concepts, such as the integrity and coherence of the text (Leontiev, 1975), discontinuity of the text (Zhinkin, 1982), semantic completeness (auto-semanticism) (Leontiev, 1969), integration and completeness (Galperin, 1980) are distinguished , integral design (Zvegintsev, 1980), etc. All these concepts, one way or another, are related to each other, generalizing in the categories of continuity / discreteness (Gausenblas, 1978) and completeness / incompleteness of discourse, considered taking into account the mutual complementarity of the planes of expression and content.

Discourse continuity is a relative concept. Formally speaking, any discourse is discrete, since it consists of expressions produced by separate portions, quanta, in the course of speech activity. One can speak of continuity here only conditionally, taking into account, for example, the continuity of certain parameters in the deployment of discourse or certain regularities in their alternation. Speaking about the coherence of a text, this continuity is usually meant as an agreement between the parts of the whole in the formal (morpho-syntactic) and semantic planes.

The identification and systematization of the means of semantic connection between the statements of the text led to the statement of the

repetition of semantic components in any coherent text (Sevbo, 1969; Gak, 1979) and to the hypothesis of their own structural patterns in the formation of superphrasal units (paragraphs, complex wholes).

Further research in this direction showed that such regularities do exist. They are evidenced by the nature of the action of the means of semantic repetition, i.e. recurring (often in different formal expressions) semantic elements in discourse (repetition of a word, pronominal anaphora, synonymy, hyperonymy, metonymy, etc.).

The anaphoric properties of pronouns as means of interphrasal communication were discovered by Lucien Tenier, according to which pronominal words "are semantically empty in the dictionary and become complete as soon as they enter into an anaphoric connection with another word in the text - an antecedent or a semantic source that tells them its meaning: I have seen Alfred, he is fine. An anaphoric word can establish a semantic connection between two constructions that are not in direct syntactic connection: I have seen Alfred, he was fine" (Tenière, 1959:88). It was Tenier who first showed how personal pronouns are involved in creating a coherent discourse on the example of a whole text - La Fontaine's fable ("La Cigale et la Fourmi"). Note that just this fragment was omitted in the Russian translation of L. Tenier's book "Fundamentals of Structural Syntax" (1988).

Different means of semantic repetition have different strengths and ranges of action and serve not only as signals of connection, but also as signals of the semantic separation of statements, i.e. accompany the division of discourse into hierarchically ordered units (Borbotko, 1981). Semantic repetition usually accompanies the logical coherence of the text, but can also be observed in phrases that are not logically related to each other.

The idea of the logical-communicative coherence of the text has found its rather important generalization in terms of the so-called actual division of the utterance into "theme" and "rheme".

The text defines the thematic and rhematic components of each sentence, then the nature of the connection between them, creating a thematic progression; the elements of the latter are three types of the simplest chains: thematic (topic - topic), rhematic (rheme) and mixed (topic-rheme). Combinations of such chains form various configurations of thematic progression, including parallel and serial linking of statements, which organizes sentences into larger units: paragraphs, chapters, whole text (Daneš, 1970). An attempt to establish a "vertical" hierarchy in the actual division of the text was made, in particular, by L.A. Chernyakhovskaya (1983), who used the terms hypertheme for the whole text, defining the relationship between them as a relationship of the type of logical inference or consequence.

Works on "actual articulation" are characterized by the fact that, being empirically correct in determining the topic and rheme, they weakly differentiate some essential semantic moments, in particular, the "new" identified from the situation is mixed with the "new" introduced by the speaker. Among the various interpretations of the actual articulation, the following stand out:

a) logical-semantic interpretation, indicating the connection between the original semantic basis (theme) and the purpose of the statement, or its actual predicate (rheme), which is emphasized by the speaker intonation;

b) communicative interpretation, indicating the connection that the speaker establishes between the "given" (known) and "new" for the listener (Leontiev, 1981).

The various logical-semantic relationships between natural language utterances remain little explored in their application to specific discourses. Semantic and logical metalanguages created in the works of semiotics have a limited scope in relation to the material of natural language, which is noted by some authors (Galmich, 1977:9). The laws of logical reasoning do not cover all the laws of the construction of ordinary speech, and the researcher has no choice but to attribute the latter to the mysterious "deep" structure (Anscombre, Ducrot, 1979). Semiotic constructions in the field of modal logic (Greimas, 1979) continue to be in a state of constructs. The desire to connect the categories of presupposition with the

semantic implicitness of the language-object encounters, as the authors themselves note, "the stubborn resistance of the linguistic material" (Adam, 1976:204).

Text linguistics, exploring the manifestations of the semantic connection of statements in repetitions of words and pronominal anaphora, pays much less attention to the functions of allied operators, which are usually referred to only as "signals of syntactic chaining", which are largely optional.

This opinion is quite widespread, probably due to the fact that the omission of conjunctions in a number of cases does not change, at first glance, the essence of the logical-semantic connection between statements; although a closer comparison of allied ties and non-union shows that this is far from being the case. There are works specially devoted to the functions of syntactic unions and allied expressions in the organization of the text, the authors of which, along with unions, also explore the semantics of particles, modal words and some adverbs as indicators of intratextual communication (Pfütze, 1978; Dressler, 1978; Nikolaeva, 1982).

The desire to bring the semantics of conjunctions only under well-known logical relations does not contribute to significant success. There is another possibility: taking into account the achievements of logic, go from the language itself, comprehending its own logic. A certain step forward in this regard was the work of Patrick Charodeau, who, exploring the mechanism of interphrase communication through conjunctions and comparing them with logical connectors, comes to the conclusion about their significant mismatch (Charodeau, 1978: 279-357).

The category of text coherence is usually compared with the category of integrity, sometimes called "coherence" (Troshina, 1982). But, if we follow the principle of dichotomy, then it is obvious that coherence must be opposed primarily to incoherence, the fragmentation of discourse, and already on the basis of this opposition it is legitimate to speak of integrity, which can only be determined on a coherent text and, in turn, participates in the opposition wholeness / fragmentation. The degree of integrity of the text depends on how the content of each of its components depends on the content of others. The smaller the depth of this interdependence, the higher the degree of fragmentation of the text. The limiting case of fragmentation includes such texts in which, while maintaining coherence due to the concatenation of adjacent statements, there is no common semantic core, for example, chain or mosaic texts (Smirnov, 1948). Note that the division of discourse has a certain psycho-physiological foundation. Studies show that discourse is naturally segmented into substructures, the volume of which in units of perception, as a rule, does not exceed the volume of a person's working memory. Approximately at the level of a sequence of 7-9 elementary (monopredicate) statements, almost any discourse is divided into relatively autonomous complex components as part of a larger semantic whole (Burvikova (Zarubina), 1981; Borbotko, 1981).

The whole text can be further considered in terms of its structural completeness/incompleteness. Speaking about the structuredness, or structuredness, of a discourse, we thereby imply its unity, the hierarchical ordering of all the substructures contained in it. At the level of structure, it is also possible to take into account the degree of density (compactness) and dismemberment of the whole: the same meaning can be expressed with a minimum of means - compactly, compressed, and dismemberment, expanded, which makes it possible to compare language constructions in terms of their content capacity. Of the two synonymous constructions, obviously, the one that conveys approximately the same content with less volume in terms of expression will be more capacious. Structural incompleteness does not affect the integrity of the discourse: a truncated structure presupposes an adequate reconstruction of its textual gaps (Markovin, 1984), varying from unconscious, automatic in the case of stereotypical structures to requiring a certain mental effort and elements of creative imagination when comprehending a non-trivial, for example, literary text.

Based on the foregoing, we come to the following conclusions. It is necessary to distinguish the concept of discourse as a process of speech and thought activity from the concept of text as its result, fixed in writing. The text traditionally serves as language material for the linguist. It can be built according to the laws not of language, but of some other human activity.

Discourse as the highest-level unit of language, being a linguistic model of a certain situation, has structural specificity, and also, like all other linguistic units, ethno-linguistic specificity. In the system, discourse can correspond to a certain linguistic "stemma" that has a matrix significance.

The moments of discreteness and continuity in the construction of discourse are concretized in terms of structural integrity, completeness, coherence, etc. Existing descriptions of discourse in terms of lexico-syntactic and logical coherence do not give a complete picture of the principles of formation of discursive structures.

Traditional descriptions of discourse in semiotics, both purely pragmatic, equating the meaning of the statement with its situational use, and purely semantic, replacing linguistic phenomena with a model of extralinguistic reality, can be characterized as incomplete, tearing off the semantic side of discourse from the linguistic form.

The syntactic form of discourse has a sense-generating ability. The phenomena of semantic divergence and convergence of linguistic units - words and statements - turn out to be the effects of the syntactic (contextual) discourse matrix. The description of these phenomena was first outlined in the distributive discourse analysis developed by Z. Harris.

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