

# Text linguistics

Science



TEXT LINGUISTICS Structure As a science of text, text linguistics describes or explains among different types of text the: \* Shared features \* Distinct features Text linguistics is the study of how texts function in human interaction. Beaugrande and Dressler define a text as a “communicative occurrence which meets seven standards of textuality” – Cohesion, Coherence, Intentionality, Acceptability, Informativity, Situationality and Intertextuality, without any of which the text will not be communicative.

Non-communicative texts are treated as non-texts. [4] [edit] Cohesion Surface texts are the exact words that people see or hear. Cohesion concerns the ways in which the components of the surface text are connected within a sequence. Grammatical forms and conventions are adhered to by surface components and therefore cohesion rests upon grammatical dependencies. The grammatical dependencies in surface texts are major signals for sorting out meanings and uses.

Cohesion encompasses all of the functions that can be used to signal relations among surface elements. “| SLOWCARS HELD UP| ”| Such a text can be divided up into various dependencies. Someone might construe it as a notice about ‘slow cars’ that are ‘held up’, so that conclusions could be drawn about the need to drive fast to avoid being held up. However, it is more likely for one to divide the text into ‘slow’ and ‘cars held up’, so that drivers will drive slowly to avoid accidents or take alternative routes to avoid being caught in the slow traffic.

A science of text should explain how ambiguities such as this are possible, as well as how they are precluded or resolved without much difficulty. For efficient communication to take place there must be interaction between

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cohesion and other standards of textuality because the surface alone is not decisive. [edit] Coherence Coherence concerns the ways in which concepts and relations, which underlie the surface text, are linked, relevant and used, to achieve efficient communication. A concept is a cognitive content which can be retrieved or triggered with a high degree of consistency in the mind \* Relations are the links between concepts within a text, with each link identified with the concept that it connects to Surface texts may not always express relations explicitly therefore people supply as many relations as are needed to make sense out of any particular text. In the example of the road sign ‘ SLOW CARS HELD UP’, ‘ cars’ is an object concept and ‘ held up’ an action concept, and the ‘ cars’ are the link to ‘ held up’.

Therefore, ‘ slow’ is more likely to be interpreted as a motion than as the speed at which cars are travelling. Types of relations include: I. Causality “| Itsy Bitsy spider climbing up the spout. Down came the rain and washed the spider out| ”| The event of ‘ raining’ causes the event of ‘ washing the spider out’ because it creates the necessary conditions for the latter; without the rain, the spider will not be washed out. II. Enablement “| Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall| ”| The action of sitting on the wall created the sufficient but not necessary conditions for the action of falling down.

Sitting on a wall makes it possible but not obligatory for falling down to occur. III. Reason “| Jack shall have but a penny a day because he can’t work any faster| ”| In contrast to the rain which causes Itsy Bitsy spider to be washed out, the slow working does not actually cause or enable the low

wage. Instead, the low wage is a reasonable outcome; ‘reason’ is used to term actions that occur as a rational response to a previous event. IV.

Purpose “| Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard to get her poor dog a bone| ”| In contrast to Humpty Dumpty’s action of sitting on the wall which enables the action of falling down, there is a plan involved here; Humpty Dumpty did not sit on the wall so that it could fall down but Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard so that she could get a bone. ‘Purpose’ is used to term events that are planned to be made possible via a previous event. V. Time ‘Cause’, ‘Enablement’ and ‘Reason’ have forward directionality with the earlier event causing, enabling or providing reason for the later event. Purpose’, however, has a backward directionality as the later event provides the purpose for the earlier event. More than just a feature of texts, coherence is also the outcome of cognitive processes among text users. The nearness and proximity of events in a text will trigger operations which recover or create coherence relations. “| The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts; The Knave of Hearts, he stole the tarts; The King of Hearts, called for the tarts| ”| In the explicit text, there is a set of actions (making, stealing and calling); the only relations presented are the agent and the affected entity of each action.

However, a text receiver is likely to assume that the locations of all three events are close to one another as well as occur in a continuous and relatively short time frame. One might also assume that the actions are meant to signal the attributes of the agents; the Queen is skilled in cooking, the Knave is dishonest and the King is authoritative. As such, coherence encompasses inferencing based on one’s knowledge. For a text to make

sense, there has to be interaction between one's accumulated knowledge and the text-presented knowledge.

Therefore, a science of texts is probabilistic instead of deterministic, that is, inferences by users of any particular text will be similar most of the time instead of all of the time. Most text users have a common core of cognitive composition, engagement and process such that their interpretations of texts through 'sensing' are similar to what text senders intend them to be. Without cohesion and coherence, communication would be slowed down and could break down altogether. Cohesion and coherence are text-centred notions, designating operations directed at the text materials. [edit]

#### Intentionality

Intentionality concerns the text producer's attitude and intentions as the text producer uses cohesion and coherence to attain a goal specified in a plan. Without cohesion and coherence, intended goals may not be achieved due to a breakdown of communication. However, depending on the conditions and situations in which the text is used, the goal may still be attained even when cohesion and coherence are not upheld. "| Want I carry you on my back? | "| Even though cohesion is not maintained in this example, the text producer still succeeds in achieving the goal of finding out if the text receiver wanted a piggyback. edit] Acceptability Acceptability concerns the text receiver's attitude that the text should constitute useful or relevant details or information such that it is worth accepting. Text type, the desirability of goals and the political and sociocultural setting, as well as cohesion and coherence are important in influencing the acceptability of a text. Text producers often speculate on the receiver's attitude of acceptability and

present texts that maximizes the probability that the receivers will respond as desired by the producers.

For example, texts that are open to a wide range of interpretations, such as ‘Call us before you dig. You may not be able to afterwards’, require more inferences about the related consequences. This is more effective than an explicit version of the message that informs receivers the full consequences of digging without calling because receivers are left with a large amount of uncertainty as to the consequences that could result; this plays to the risk averseness of people. [edit] Informativity Informativity concerns the extent to which the contents of a text are already known or expected as compared to unknown or unexpected.

No matter how expected or predictable content may be, a text will always be informative at least to a certain degree due to unforeseen variability. The processing of highly informative text demands greater cognitive ability but at the same time is more interesting. The level of informativity should not exceed a point such that the text becomes too complicated and communication is endangered. Conversely, the level of informativity should also not be so low that it results in boredom and the rejection of the text. [edit] Situationality Situationality concerns the factors which make a text relevant to a situation of occurrence.

The situation in which a text is exchanged influences the comprehension of the text. There may be different interpretations with the road sign “| SLOWCARS HELD UP| ”| However, the most likely interpretation of the text is obvious because the situation in which the text is presented provides the context which influences how text receivers interpret the text. The group of <https://assignbuster.com/text-linguistics/>

receivers (motorists) who are required to provide a particular action will find it more reasonable to assume that ‘slow’ requires them to slow down rather than referring to the speed of the cars that are ahead.

Pedestrians can tell easily that the text is not directed towards them because varying their speeds is inconsequential and irrelevant to the situation. In this way, the situation decides the sense and use of the text. Situationality can affect the means of cohesion; less cohesive text may be more appropriate than more cohesive text depending on the situation. If the road sign was ‘Motorists should reduce their speed and proceed slowly because the vehicles ahead are held up by road works, therefore proceeding at too high a speed may result in an accident’, every possible doubt of intended receivers and intention would be removed.

However, motorists only have a very short amount of time and attention to focus on and react to road signs. Therefore, in such a case, economical use of text is much more effective and appropriate than a fully cohesive text. [edit] Intertextuality Intertextuality concerns the factors which make the utilization of one text dependent upon knowledge of one or more previously encountered text.

If a text receiver does not have prior knowledge of a relevant text, communication may break down because the understanding of the current text is obscured. Texts such as parodies, rebuttals, forums and classes in school, the text producer has to refer to prior texts while the text receivers have to have knowledge of the prior texts for communication to be efficient or even occur. In other text types such as puns, for example ‘Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana’, there is no need to refer to any other text.