MOUNTAIN TOP UNIVERSITY

E-Courseware

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES,

MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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COURSE GUIDE

COURSE TITLE: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

COURSE CODE: ENG 306

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course aims at exposing students to the basic elements of conversation and the notions of adjacency pairs and preference. Students should be able to distinguish between the appropriateness of discourse, the purposefulness of discourse and the coherence of discourse. Emphasis will be placed on the distinction between linguistic competence and discourse competence, which will result in the collection and analysis of spoken and written discourse in terms of these concepts.

COURSE CONTENTS

LECTURE ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE ELEMENTS OF DISCOURSE

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Discourse analysis is the examination of language use by members of a speech community. It involves looking at both language form and language functions and includes the study of both spoken interaction and written texts. It identifies linguistic features that characterize different genres as well as social and cultural factors that aid in our interpretation and understanding of different texts and types of talk. A discourse analysis written text might include a study of topic development and cohesion across the sentences, while as analysis of spoken language might focus on these aspects plus turn-taking practices, opening and closing sequences of social encounters, or narrative structure.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, students should be able to:

1. define and explain discourse analysis
2. discuss the elements of conversation

Pre-Test

1. What do you think is the relationship between discourse and conversation?
2. What is the difference between intrapersonal and interpersonal discourse?

CONTENTS

1.1 Discourse

Over the years, people have approached the study of discourse in many different ways, which includes *Formal, Functional and Social* approaches. Some have taken a formal approach to discourse, defining it simply as 'language above the level of the clause or sentence'. Those working from this definition often try to understand the kind of rules and conventions that govern the ways we join clauses and sentences together to make texts. Others take a more functional approach, defining discourse as 'language in use'.

This definition leads to questions about how people use language to do things like make requests, issue warnings, and apologize in different kinds of situations and how we interpret what other people are trying to do when they speak or write. Social approach defines discourse as a kind of social practice. What is meant by this is that the way we use language is tied up with the way we construct different social identities and relationships and participate in different kinds of groups and institutions. It is tied up with issues of what we believe to be right and wrong, who has power over whom, and what we have to do and say to 'fit into our societies in different ways.

Although these three different approaches to discourse are often treated as separate, and are certainly associated with different historical traditions and different individual discourse analysts, the position we will be taking in this course is that good discourse analysis requires that we take into account all three of these perspectives. Instead of three separate definitions of discourse, they are better seen as three interrelated aspects of discourse. The way people use language cannot really be separated from the way it is put together, and the way people use language to show who they are and what they believe, cannot be separated from the things people are using language to do in particular situations.

1.2 Conversation

2 The basic interpersonal relationship centres on conversation, which is a form of discourse. Since most human beings spend much time on conversation, the subject has attracted the attention of scholars and researchers from diversified academic disciplines like sociology, psychology, philosophy, linguistics and others. Homby (1974) defines conversation as 'talking' while Procter (1978:241) defines it as 'informal talk in which people exchange news, feelings, and thoughts'. Schegloff (1972) on the other hand, sees conversation as 'the chaining principle' explaining that conversation sequences can be described by the formula ababa, where 'a' and 'b' are parties to the conversation. Yule (1985 108) is of the opinion that "...conversation can be described as an activity where, for the most part, two or more people take turns at speaking". These observations show that conversation can be an exchange, which takes place between two people. Richards et al (1985) describe discourse as "a general term for examples of language use, that is, language which has been produced as the result of an act of communication". From the

foregoing, words like talk, dialogue, interaction, exchange, and discourse have been put forth severally and collectively as synonyms of conversation.

1.3. Elements of Conversation

Conversation has been said to be that talk, which occurs between one or more parties. Some of the elements of conversation are discussed below:

1.3.1 Monologue

Every isolated sentence used in linguistic descriptions can be taken as a monologue. In monologue, a single person is the only participant in the talk. In literature, monologue is also referred to as soliloquy. There are times when an individual talks alone revealing his thoughts. This is also an aspect of conversation. We then have to be careful with definitions that always express conversation as a two-party affair. Onadeko (2002) prefers to call monologue "intrapersonal conversation".

1.3.2 Intrapersonal Conversation

The idea that conversation may occur 'between' one person is more or less psychological if not also spiritual rather than physical. Cognitive psychologists are of the opinion that man is a thinking, remembering, perceiving, recognising and classifying being (Neisser 1967; Chomsky 1968). This argument portrays the idea that man is more than an ordinary physical living being. He has MIND, which is a vital part of his composition and conversation. From the biblical account of creation, we understand that when God originally created man, He breathed the breath of LIFE into him. The breath made him a reasoning being with SOUL, MIND and SPIRIT. It is obvious then that a normal human being is composed of two or more personalities: the physical being and the spiritual being. When the 'physical being' holds talks with the 'spiritual being' (that is the consciousness against the sub consciousness), this is Intrapersonal Conversation. This term is preferable to monologue due to the limitations in the definition and description of monologue.

An intrapersonal interaction can only be identified by its inwardness and at times, orality. An intrapersonal talk may occur during interpersonal conversation in a very brief time. This is because much of the talk must have been done in the brain of the speaker. An intrapersonal

interaction can become interpersonal if it is written (Winter 1977 and Proacter 1988). There will then be a delayed interaction between a writer and a would be reader, who may, however, be separated by time and space. One major feature of intrapersonal conversation is that it occurs in the brain of a participant. The argument and the counter argument are conceived, and at times, perfected by the same person. It is psychological rather than physical and its rendition must be oral, which may be heard by an unfocused audience. Its existence, however, may never be known if it is not heard by another person, who may not be expected to respond to it. To this end, Davy (1969)says that intrapersonal conversation is an utterance with no expectation of a response, which an interpersonal discourse demands.

If intrapersonal conversation is oral, it must be brief. A mindless and pointless intrapersonal talk attracts negative reaction and sanction from the unfocussed audience, who may happen to listen to it. Prolonged intrapersonal talk is very popular among neurotic patients and highly disturbed persons. Intrapersonal conversations should not be written or recorded by any electronic means. If this happens, it will cease from being intrapersonal. Intrapersonal talks like personal letters, diaries and recorded tapes are no longer intrapersonal because such documentations will be read or heard by another person no matter how later or sooner it may be.

1.3.3 Interpersonal Conversation

An interpersonal conversation occurs between two or more parties (Winter 1977). When two parties are involved it could be regarded as dyadic but when it involves three parties, it is triadic. In the majority of interaction situations, two parties are believed to be more common. Berry (1987) assigns the roles +HIGHER and -HIGHER to discourse participation but Onadeko (1994, 1999) discovered a three-party talk situation and allocates +HIGHER, MIDHIGHER and –HIGHER to the roles played by magistrates, counsels and litigants respectively.

1.4 Types of Interpersonal Conversation

Interpersonal conversations are of two types: Genuine and Technical. A genuine interpersonal talk is one in which each of the participants recognises the existence and the participatory role of other participants. The first speaker produces his turn with the expectation that another participant present will respond to it and mutual interpersonal discourse will take place. Only participants of seemingly similar mental and cultural structure are able to have deep contact

and understand each other. Participants of two opposing cultures may never be able to understand each other especially if one culture is highly developed and the other is highly primitive except if they are able to exchange some mutual understanding. For instance, all highly educated people of the world share the same culture, no matter their sociocultural background, colour or language.

Genuine interpersonal conversation occurs naturally. It is interesting, enjoyment for the ears, the eyes and the spirit. It is a good source of wisdom and exchange, which cannot be found n books. It must be said in such a manner that the coparticipant is able to receive the words in order to understand how to respond to it. It brings into being relationships, and its power to respond to dead relationships is enormous. As good as naturally occurring interpersonal conversation seems, it has its shortcomings. It is a ready source of enmity; angry words could be exchanged, challenges and counter challenges could be thrown. This way, man can become a victim of communication rather communication being a means of joy and restitution.

1.5 Technical Interpersonal Conversation

Technical interpersonal conversation is typically written. It is characterised neither by the need to communicate something, to clear something, to influence someone nor to come in contact with them. It is an expression of the writer's feelings. Some writers consider themselves absolute and legitimate and the readers as relative and questionable. They use words to present their personal opinion and distantiate themselves from the outer world. However, it should be noted that no matter how personal technical interpersonal talk may be, it should be remembered that anything committed into writing is no longer personal. A reader, separated by time and space at one time or the other, would get hold of the written document, read and react to it. This is when the complete circuit of interpersonal dialogue is achieved. Technical interpersonal talk enjoys delayed reaction. The coparticipant has to wait patiently for the writer to finish writing before he can read it.

Post-Test

1. What is the difference between genuine and technical interpersonal conversation?
2. What is intrapersonal conversation?

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Onadeko, Tunde. 2002 Elements of conversation. In Sola T. Babatunde and Dele S. Adeyanju (eds.) Language, Meaning and Society: Papers in honour of Professor E. E. Adegbija, 275-293. Ilorin: Haytee Books.

LECTURE TWO

TURN-TAKING TECHNIQUES

2.0 Introduction

In conversations, participants take turns in speaking when they hold the floor. Turn, as a category, has been extensively treated in the literature. In this lesson, we shall discuss turn-taking as well as one of the turn-taking techniques, which is speakerchange.

The totality of what a participant says when he holds the discourse floor constitutes his turn. According to Schegloff (1972), before there could be conversation, there must be a chaining principle in which one participant must start to speak, stop and another must take over in sequence. It is then obvious that turn taking is the backbone of interpersonal discourse. A number of social, psychological and professional variables influence turn taking. Some of such indices are age, sex, social status and power, experience, wealth, academic achievement and personality. With these indices in play, roles are allocated to participation in conversation. Turn taking is therefore paramount in conversation and its occurrence is systematised.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, students should be able to:

1. explain the concept of turn-taking
2. describe speakerchange technique
3. practise turn-taking in classroom contexts

Pre-Test

i. What do you understand by turn-taking?

ii. What is speakerchange?

CONTENT

2.1The Concept of Turn-Taking

The totality of what a participant says when he holds the discourse floor constitutes his turn. According to Schegloff (1972), before there could be conversation, there must be a chaining principle in which one participant must start to speak, stop and another must take over in

sequence. It is then obvious that turn taking is the backbone of interpersonal discourse. A number of social, psychological and professional variables influence turn taking. Some of such indices are age, sex, social status and power, experience, wealth, academic achievement and personality. With these indices in play, roles are allocated to participation in conversation. Turn taking is therefore paramount in conversation and its occurrence is systematised. The concept of speakerchange, which is one of the techniques of turn-taking, will be discussed with copious examples of exchanges.

2.2 Turn-Taking Techniques-Speakerchange

Speakerchange is an important turntaking technique as without it interpersonal talk does not exist. It is a process through which the next speaker is accommodated in talk. Sacks et al. (1974) suggest two ways by which speakerchange may occur. First, the current speaker may select the next speaker. He may employ such devices as a question plus address terms or any of the various learning and understanding checks and signals such as 'who', 'pardon'. 'what', 'yes' 'Mr Ade', etc. He may also use some structured fillers like'uhmn' and other address formulae like a direct gaze, finger point, and such other kinesic signals, which may lead to speakerchange. The selecting turn mechanism may even include linguistic features (cohesive ties) that will refer to a specific participant and so select him as the next speaker. The pronoun YOU and its linguistic variants are often used for this purpose. Consider the exchanges below:

EXCHANGE 1

Counsel: Will you repeat what YOU said so that this honourable court can hear YOU? properly

Accused: I said I will speak the truth.

In the exchange above, a specific next speaker has been selected not only by the question but also by its directness.

Second, the next speaker may select himself if the prior speaker does not select any participant to succeed him. He might have selected a succeeding next speaker; yet another participant may believe that he has the speech right to talk next. This technique may be seen as a form of interruption, especially if the appointed speaker is not ready yet to yield the discourse floor. It may be considered an attempt at dominance in talk. Consider the following exchanges:

EXCHANGE 2

Mr Badmus: Did your father fight too?

Mrs Adams: John's father will never fight anybody

John: No, Sir. Daddy never fought with them

EXCHANGE 3

Fred's Father: My son, you must listen to the words of my mouth...

Mr Badmus: But, Sir...

Fred's Father: You listen to me. What I want to tell you, my son, is that you must not allow the police to send the son of the daughter of the sister of your father to prison.

In Exchange 2, it is clear that Mr Badmus has selected a specific next speaker, who is not allowed to serve as the true next speaker by Mrs Adams. Fred is only able to yield his own turn after Mrs Adams has satisfied herself. However, the current speaker has not actually finished his turn and has not selected a next speaker to take the floor in Exchange 3. Mr Badmus' attempt to select himself is rebuffed and rebuked. It may then be said that self-select technique is an attempt at dominance if not dominance. Fairclough (1989) accepts the two strategies suggested by Sacks et al. (1974). He then observes that if no one selects himself, especially after a slight gap and struggle in talk, the current speaker may continue. If this happens, however, turnchange has not taken place. Sacks et al. (1974) recognise that there is transition from one turn to the other, but do not believe that there can be either a gap or an overlap. This is not very true. There may be silence or a show of emotion, which may be termed confusion (Flander 1969; Onadeko 1988). Transitions from one speaker to another are not always gapless. There usually occur gaps even within a turn. It is because of this that fillers exist in talk.

Post-Test

i. Discuss some of the social, psychological and professional variables that influence turn-taking.

ii. Extensively explain speakerchange technique.

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Onadeko, Tunde. 2002 Elements of conversation. In Sola T. Babatunde and Dele S. Adeyanju (eds.) Language, Meaning and Society: Papers in honour of Professor E .E. Adegbija, 275-293. Ilorin: Haytee Books.

LECTURE THREE

TURN-TAKING TECHNIQUES: ROLE ALLOCATION

3.0 Introduction

Turn-taking, as discussed in the previous lecture, is paramount in conversation and its occurrence is systematised. Some of the techniques involved include speakerchange, which we discussed in the last lecture, role allocation, which will be examined in this lesson and repair mechanisms, which will be our focus in the next lecture.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, students should be able to:

1. define role allocation as a turn-taking technique
2. discuss the different yardsticks/variables that could be used to allocate roles to participations in talk.

Pre-Test

i.What is role allocation?

ii.What are the variables used to allocate roles to participant in talk?

CONTENT

3.1 Role Allocation

In a stratified discourse situation, roles are always allocated to each participant to modify the way the participants speak with each other. In a two party talk, +HIGHER and –HIGHER roles have been allocated to participations (Berry 1981) but in a three party talk, +HIGHER, MIDHIGHER and –HIGHER roles may be allocated (Onadeko 2002). The need for role allocation gives us the idea that the participants are not of the same status: while one tends to be superior, the other is inferior, e.g teacher/student; father/son, doctor/patient talks.

3.2 Yardsticks/Variables that Influence Role Allocation

Different variables could be used to allocate roles to participations in talk. Some of them are AGE, SEX, ACHIEVEMENT, POWER, STATUS, EDUCATION, PROFESSION, and PERSONALITY. Each index has its situational advantage. For instance, in some situations

age will determine superiority of role and in some others it may be profession. Consider a situation in which father and son are engaged in a talk at home. Father will occupy the +HIGHER role. But if the situation changes to a law court, where son is the judge and father the litigant, reversal of roles will occur. In consequence of the inequality in social setting, conversation participation cannot be unstratified. Role, therefore, is influenced by some indices, especially in the area of talk initiation, interruption, ending a talk and at times, changing of the topic.

Post-Test

1. What do you understand by +HIGHER, MIDHIGHER and –HIGHER in role allocation
2. Discuss age, sex, education and profession, as variables that influence role allocation.

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Onadeko, Tunde. 2002. Elements of conversation. In Sola T. Babatunde and Dele S. Adeyanju (eds.) Language, Meaning and Society: Papers in honour of Professor E. E. Adegbija, 275-293. Ilorin: Haytee Books.

LECTURE FOUR

MECHANISM IN CONVERSATION REPAIR

4.0 Introduction

In discourse, errors are always committed and repaired. Most often, the errors are unintended; the locutionary act of the turn may be misheard so also the illocutionary act may be misunderstood. Conversational errors include hesitation, repetition, mispronunciation and the use of discourse fillers such as 'mm', 'uhmn', 'you see', 'you know', 'I mean', etc. Fillers and gaps are highly systematic and serve a range of clear communicative functions especially in spoken language. It is only in written language that they may be considered as errors. Participants resort to repair mechanisms when they orientate to turntaking procedure or have some hitch in their speech. This may occur either in the brain-Broca's area- or the tongue, inability to smoothrun the 'tongue' with the brain.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, students should be able to:

1. Define repair
2. Discuss the mechanisms in conversation repair

Pre-Test

i. What do you think are conversation errors?

ii. Discuss slip-of-the-tongue as a conversation error.

CONTENT

4.1 Errors in Conversation

Yule (1985) argues that it is often difficult for most language speakers to get the brain and the organs of speech to function smoothly together. The resultant problems can be classified as 'tip-of-the-tongue (malapropism), 'slip-of-the-tongue' (spoonerism) and 'slip of the ear'. Tip-of-the-tongue is that speech problem in which the speaker realises that the right word he intends to use keeps on eluding him. In order to correct these inadequacies, most speakers

often resort to the use of fillers and gaps. However, some speakers, especially in informal speech situation, outrightly produce the malapropisms. Compare the two examples below:

Martha: I ...em...can't see...you see...what

The gist of ...er...the argument is...

John: You are pree to phost the letters berry soon or later

In the first example, It seems that the correct words to use are eluding Martha. She could not wait long enough to get the word out because of the fear that her interlocutor may take over the floor. She therefore gaps to give her brain the opportunity to search for the eluding words. One thing that is noteworthy is that despite the fillers and the gaps, she is able to present a full coherent sentence. This type of mistake is promoted mainly by nervousness and/tiredness. In the second example, John produces straight malapropisms. He has used 'pree' for 'free', 'phost' for 'post' and 'berry' for 'very'. This problem may be a mislearned phenomenon (in babies), show of nervousness (in an adult) and/or interference of the speaker's mother tongue (in a second language learner).

Slip-of-the-tongue is a speech problem, which involves tangled utterances like:

Fish the dry well to use (Dry the fish well to use).

Spoonerism production is a serious exhibit of nervous problem. It is often identified in the speech of some people when they believe that their co participants are of a higher status or more informed about the topic under discussion. Often time, speakers of this class resort to stuttering although they may not stutter if the interlocutor, the topic and/or the situation changes. As the discussion progresses and the speaker gains more confidence, spoonerism production is usually better managed.

Slip-of-the-ear is not an attribute of the speaker, it relates to the hearer who may mishear an utterance or some part of it. He will therefore, recognise an error that does not exist and orientate to it. It is common phenomenon in a young acquirer of a language. Toddlers for instance, may produce 'Bock, shee bio' (block, see biro) This is done in an attempt to reproduce what he believes he heard the adult speakers said. The problem is also common among 'young' second language learners. They hear the sounds that exist in their mother tongue rather than the one produced by the target language speakers. For instance, a Yoruba learner of English will believe he has heard 'tin' instead of 'thing', 'den' instead of 'then'. In order to reproduce such target words, he may end up producing some other words that may even exist in English. The basic source of the errors is that the two sounds at the initial word

position of the two words do not exist in his mother tongue. He then substitutes them with /t/ and /d/, which exist in his own language.

4.2 Ways of Correcting Errors in Conversations

There are two ways by which errors committed in conversations may be corrected. First, the repair may be made by the speaker himself-Self-repair (Schegloff et al. !977). Self-correction occurs at both internal and external spheres. It is internal, especially when the brain successfully comes up with the target correct version or its substitute after a series of fillers and gaps during which the brain's choice is being questioned. The correction is considered external if the speaker corrects himself after he has produced the undesired utterance. See the exchange below:

I'll tell her about it...Ooh, did I say her? I mean him.

The second way of repair is when a coparticipant draws attention to a speaker's error, which the speaker may not have recognised. This referred to as *other* repair. See the exchanges below:

Ken: Please call that waider over there

Kendra: Wait-er

Ken: Waiteress, sorry

In the exchanges above, Kendra shows her orientation to ken's initiation by challenging Ken's referent. Ken demonstrates his orientation to Kendra's criticism by issuing the correct referent. This is done, however, after being given the cue.

Post-Test

1. Discuss self-repair and other repair
2. Explain spoonerism and malapropism

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LECTURE FIVE

DISCOURSE AS LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT

5.0 Introduction

Speakers of a language know , in a mostly subconscious and automatic way, the sounds of their language, how these sounds may be put together to form meaningful units (morphemes and words), and how the words in the lexicon of the language of the language can in turn be joined to form sentences. This underlying knowledge of the sound system, the lexicon, and the grammatical system of the language is known as **linguistic competence**. Linguistic competence, however, is only part of what underlies a speaker's use of language as speakers know a lot more than just how to build words and sentences

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, students should be able to:

1. distinguish between linguistic competence and discourse competence and explain why this distinction is important;
2. identify the concepts in terms of which the appropriateness, purposefulness, and coherence of discourse can be analysed;
3. collect and analyse examples of spoken and written discourse in terms of these concepts; and
4. compare and contrast different types of discourse.

Pre-Test

i. Define linguistic competence.

ii. What do you understand by discourse competence?

CONTENT

5.1 Discourse and Linguistic Competence

Firstly, we know how to use language appropriately. We would not, for example say *Hi guys!* As we walk into a room to be interviewed for a job, because that kind of language is too

informal for such a situation. Secondly, we know how to use language purposefully. We know what kinds of things we can do with different language structures. Think about the different ways in which the following sentences are used:

1. You can stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom.[said by a teacher to a naughty pupil]
2. 2. I can stay in at breaktime and tidy up the classroom. [said by a pupil to a teacher]

The two sentences have similar structures and both seem to say something about the pupil's ability (through the word *can*). However, we know that while one is ordering something, 2 is offering something.

5.2 Communicative Competence

Thirdly, we know how to use language coherently, in stretches that are usually longer than single sentences. Discourse, that is, language use in real contexts, is usually appropriate, purposeful and coherent. We call the ability to use language in this way our *discourse competence*. This discourse competence, together with our linguistic (phonological, and lexical, grammatical abilities) makes up our overall *communicative competence*-our ability to communicate in language. The study of discourse and discourse competence is known as *discourse analysis.*

Consider the two cases below:

"Many people are dying as a result of cigarettes and alcohol. I appreciate that the government has raised the price on these items because it wants people to quit or consume less than they usually do. But do they? Unfortunately I drink alcohol, but I am aware that the stuff is destroying my life"

In the utterance above, the sentences are connected coherently to one another

Now consider this utterance:

"Many people are dying as a result of cigarettes and alcohol. It is a forged licence and the bookcase is falling apart. There's still a lot of copper being mined in Zambia. Cook them with four cups of brown rice".

The sentences above do not form a coherent whole, even though the syntax of each sentence is perfectly correct, and the words are all from the lexicon of English.

Post-Test

1. Explain grammatical competence.

2.Discuss communicative competence

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LECTURE SIX

THE APPROPRIATENESS OF DISCOURSE

6.0 Introduction

Both sociolinguists and discourse analysts are interested in the appropriateness of discourse. The American sociolinguist, Dell Hymes (1972) developed the idea of communicative competence, which is mostly concerned with appropriateness.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, students should be able to:

1. determine what is appropriate in discourse
2. link appropriateness to context

Pre-Test

i. What do you understand by appropriateness in discourse?
ii. What is the link between appropriateness and discourse?

CONTENT

6.1 The Appropriateness of Discourse

According to him, we have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He also acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to speak about with whom, when, where, in what manner. Communicatively competent speakers of a language thus know how to use language that is appropriate to the context.

6.2 Context and Appropriateness

But what do speakers know about context that enable them use appropriate forms of language to express appropriate meanings? Hymes again provides us with a framework for analysing context. Central to this framework is the concept of the 'speech event', defined as 'activities, or aspects of activities, that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech. Possible examples of speech events are: conversation between friends; a negotiation between employer and trade union representatives; a religious session such as church service; a university lecture; a court case; and a joke.

Post-Test

1. How does context determine appropriateness in discourse?
2. What are speech events?

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LECTURE SEVEN

CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES/FEATURES WHICH INFLUENCE LANGUAGE USE IN A SPEECH EVENT

7.0 Introduction

In discourse and conversational analysis, certain factors often influence language use depending on the context of the speech act.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, students should be able to:

1. identify contextual variables that influence language use; and
2. discuss the contextual variables.

Pre-Test

i. What are contextual variables?

ii. Discuss four variables that influence language used in a speech event.

CONTENT

7.1 Dell Hymes' Contextual Variables

Hymes (1972) identifies various contextual variables that can have an effect on language used in a speech event. These are listed as follows:

Setting

Participants

Ends

Acts

Key

Instrumentality

Norms

Genre

Topic

As can be seen from the list, we can use the acronym SPEAKING+T to help remember these contextual variables. Let us look at each in turn:

7.2 Discussion of the Variables

i. Setting

The setting relates to the physical circumstances of the speech event, such as time and place. When people go into a church, for example, they will tend to speak quietly and won't argue, shout, or swear. They will feel constrained to speak this way even if there is no church service going on at the time and they are just visiting the building. Here the setting alone affects the language used.

Some other aspects of the setting include the size of the venue and the arrangement of the furniture. Consider the difference in setting between a lecture and a small class-tutorial at university. Lectures tend to be more formal than tutorials, and this is partly because, as a general rule, the larger the venue, the formal the language. Tutorials are usually more intimate, taking place in smaller rooms, and interaction between speakers can be further encouraged if everyone sits in a semi-circle or around a large table so that they can see one another. This is very different from a lecture, where students sit in rows at quite a distance from the lecturer, who is the only person standing (usually on a raised platform or behind a lectern).

ii. Participants

Here we are interested in who takes part in the speech event and what the role relationships between the participants are. Examples of role relationships are;

lecturer-student

friend-friend

customer-shop assistant

adult-child

judge-witness

How would you change your language in these different role relationships? Consider, for example, what kind f greetings would be appropriate for each of the above role relationships in your language, and also what forms of address would be used. In English, for instance, the same person might be addressed as Mr Masango, Elias, Elly, or Teacher, depending on how he and other participants relate to one another.

iii. Ends

The ends are the general goals and the individual aims of the speech event. Thus, in a tutorial, the general goal would be to deepen the understanding of the relevant topic. As they work towards this goal, the aims of the individual students will be most likely to raise questions, discuss examples, criticize, clarify issues, etc.

iv. Acts

The individual aims just mentioned are realized by way of particular speech acts-forms of language that perform particular functions. Thus, in a tutorial, the participants might question, criticize, clarify, but will not usually insult or threaten one another.

v. Key

The key, which is similar to the concept of register, relates to the tone, manner, or spirit of the speech event or speech act. It may be friendly or hostile, cautious or incautious, humorous or serious, and so on. The key in a courtroom trial, for example, is expected to be formal and respectful, so that when a prosecuting lawyer refers to the defence he might say something like:

My lord, my learned friend for the defence is incorrect

But not

Look, my man, that idiot on the other side is talking nonsense!

vi. Instrumentality

This refers to the medium and the channel used by the participants. The medium can be speaking or writing. Compare, for example, the language used during a tutorial discussion about an assignment and the language considered appropriate when a student writes the assignment. If we analyse the medium further, we see that the written medium uses one channel, namely print, but the spoken medium can be associated with various channels, such as face+to+face, radio, film, and the telephone. A friend, who was a diplomat, describes the following little speech event that took place in a country foreign to her. When she opened the door to a man who was delivering a parcel to her, his greeting was:

Hello. This is Abdul speaking.

What he had done was to use a face-to-face channel that was appropriate to the telephone.

vii. Norms

The norms of a speech event relate to behaviour that accompanies the language, such as how loudly one should speak, how speaking turns are organized (for example, whether one is allowed to interrupt or not, and how long pauses should be). Thus, for example, isiZulu-speakers will in general expect slightly longer pauses during a conversation than English-speakers will. Some norms may vary not just from one speech event to another but from one culture to another. As a result, an English-speaker talking to an isiZulu-speaker, will sometimes think that that the latter has come to the end of a speaking turn when this is not yet

so, and when the English-speaker then takes a turn, this might seem like an interruption to the isiZulu-speaker.

viii. Genre

Language can also be appropriate to a certain genre, that is, a category of language use that has clearly identifiable typical features. Examples are sermons, riddles, praise poems, and the like. Often the speech event and the genre will coincide, as when the speech event 'sermon' follows the features of the genre 'sermon'. Sometimes, however, speech event and genre are not the same. For example, a comedian might make fun of a politician by pretending to give a political speech, using all its typical genre features, but, although the genre here would be 'political speech', the event would be 'satire'

ix. Topic

The topic is of course what is being spoken about. It will be obvious that the topic of a speech event will affect the language used, particularly with regards to vocabulary. Not all contextual variables will be relevant when we analyse the language of a particular speech event, and they are often interdependent. For example, setting can affect key, topic can affect ends. Speakers of a language have to be both grammatically correct and appropriate when they use language having contextual variables in mind.

Post-Test

1. What does the acronym SPEAKING +T stand for in speech analysis?
2. Discuss any five of Dell Hymes' contextual variables that influence language used in a speech event.

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LECTURE EIGHT

THE PURPOSEFULNESS OF DISCOURSE

8.0 Introduction

We have explained in previous lectures that for a speech event to be considered relevant and correct, it must be appropriate, purposeful and coherent. In this lecture, we shall discuss the purposefulness of discourse.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, students should be able to:

1. explain the purposefulness of discourse, and
2. link purposefulness with appropriateness in discourse.

Pre-Test

i. When is discourse said to be purposeful?

ii. What is the relationship between purposefulness and appropriateness in discourse?

CONTENT

8.1 The Purposefulness of discourse

Another characteristic of discourse or language is that it is purposeful. Consider the following sentence:

My son is a big, strong boy.

The sentence above can be interpreted in several ways, that is, given different meanings. The first kind of meaning can be called the 'semantic meaning'. This is the basic meaning of the words and the sentence, independent of context. If we can paraphrase the sentence (for example, by saying that it means 'the male child of the speaker is large, physically powerful, and not yet an adult'), or we can translate the sentence accurately into another language, we can show our understanding of the semantic meaning of the sentence. This ability, or 'semantic competence', is part of our grammatical competence as a speaker.

8.2 Semantic and Pragmatic Meanings

However, sentences are seldom used independently of a context, and when we study what they can mean in real contexts, we deal with a second kind of meaning, called 'pragmatic meaning or discourse meaning'. Let us consider three contexts in which the sentence above could be uttered.

a. During a conversation between two friends who have not seen each other for many years, the one says, Okay, so tell me a bit about this child of yours. The other answers:

My boy is a big, strong boy.

In this context, the speaker simply means to inform the hearer, and so the sentence functions here as a statement.

In another context, a man who has just bought two dozen beers from a bottle store says, I'll need someone to help me carry them to my car. The owner of the bottle store replies:

My son is a big, strong boy.

He then calls his son. In this context, the speaker means to offer help to the hearer, and so the sentence functions here as an offer.

In the third context, a woman waiting outside a shop is being bothered by two teenagers who want her to give them money. As her son comes out of the shop, she points at him and says to them:

My son is a big, strong boy.

In this context, the speaker means to warn the hearers, and so the sentence functions here as a warning.

So now we can see that while a sentence has a certain form and semantic meaning, when it is actually used as an utterance in different contexts, its pragmatic or discourse meaning--its functions—can differ. The sentence above can thus function as a statement, an offer, or a warning depending on context.

Post-Test

1. What is semantic meaning?

1. Differentiate between semantic and pragmatic/discourse meanings.

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LECTURE NINE

SPEECH ACTS

9.0 Introduction

The theory that so far offers the best explanation of how language forms and functions are linked is 'speech act theory'. This was first set out in the book *How to do things with words* (Austin 1962). In his book, J.L. Austin argued that whenever we say something, we perform, we perform, we perform a speech act, and that this has three aspects.

Objectives

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

1. explain the concept of speech acts, and
2. define locution, illocution and perlocution.

Pre-test

What does J.L Austin mean by 'How to do things with words?'

CONTENT

9.1 J.L Austin's Speech Acts Theory

The theory that so far offers the best explanation of how language forms and functions are linked is 'speech acts theory'. This was first set out in the book *How to do things with words* (Austin 1962). In his book, J.L. Austin argued that whenever we say something, we perform a speech act, and that this has three aspects.

Firstly, we utter something that has sound structure, grammatical structure, and semantic meaning. This is called a **locution.** So, if the teacher in our earlier example says:

You can stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom

She is using English sounds and grammatical structures that have the literal, semantic meaning of 'you are able to stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom'.

Secondly, when we utter something, we intend our utterance to have a communicative function, such as promising, offering, assuring, informing, or warning. This is called an **illocution**. We can see that the illocution relates to pragmatic or discourse meaning. In the sentence above, the illocution is that of an order. In the context of a teacher speaking to a pupil who has been disobedient, the sentence has the same meaning as

I order you to stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom

9.2 **Performative Sentences**

In the above, the speaker starts the sentence by explicitly naming the illocution that she intends. Such sentences are called **performative sentences,** because they name the act being performed when the sentence is uttered.

Thirdly, our main concern in discourse analysis, is to try to explain how speakers and hearers (and also readers and writers) understand one another's illocutions-in other words, how they connect the locution (form and semantic meaning) of an utterance with its illocution (function or discourse meaning). The child who hears the teacher's utterance in the example above knows that she doesn't mean 'you are able to stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom' but 'I order you to stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom', even though there is no explicit mention of ordering. How does the child know this? In terms of speech act theory, hearers can interpret speaker's illocutions because they know what contextual conditions are needed in order for an utterance to have a certain illocution. Contextual conditions can be better understood if we look at some examples of utterances that don't meet the relevant contextual conditions. Consider the following:

a. Explain the political effects of changes in the World Bank's lending policy in Africa since 1990.[said by a bank manager to her four-year old grandson]

b. Stand up![said by a shell-shocked officer to a soldier who is wounded in both legs]

Why don't sentences a and b succeed as orders?

These utterances do not succeed because one of the contextual conditions of ordering is that the hearer should be able to perform the relevant act, and this is clearly not the case here. It is also because of their (subconscious) knowledge of this condition of ability that hearers can interpret an utterance such as

You can stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom

As orders, It seems that, in English, one speech act rule is that we can order someone to do something by asserting one of the contextual conditions for ordering—that the hearer must be able to carry out the order.

In a similar way, we understand

I can stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom [said by a pupil to a teacher]

as an offer, because a contextual condition for offering is that the speaker must be able to carry out the act mentioned. Another speech act rule for English is thus that a speaker can offer to do something by asserting his or her ability to do it.

Of course. The illocution can be more directly expressed by using a performative sentence, as we saw in

I order you to stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom.

Or, for ordering, an imperative structure could be used, as in

Stay in at breaktime and tidy the classroom.

Part of our communicative competence comes from being able to link illocution (function) with locution (form). One of the difficulties that even advanced learners of a language often have is that, although they understand the words of an utterance they hear (the locution), they don't understand the speaker's purpose in saying these particular words (the illocution). Speech act theory provides us with a fairly systematic account of how forms and functions can be connected, and applied linguists have made use of research on speech acts to produce language learning materials that focus on language functions instead of just forms.

Post-Test:

1. How does context determine the meaning of speech acts?
2. Discuss with examples, the concepts of locution, illocution and perlocution.

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LECTURE TEN

CONVERSATIONAL PRINCIPLES: CO-OPERATION AND POLITENESS

1.0 Introduction

In discourse/conversation, certain norms or principles are observed. These rules define proper ways of relating with interlocutors in order not to lose face. These principles relate to co-operation and politeness.

Objectives

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

1. define co-operation;

2. explain politeness, and

3. discuss conversational implicatures.

Pre-Test

What do you understand by co-operation and politeness in conversation?

CONTENT

1.1 The Co-Operative Principle

Look at the following conversation (A and B have been talking about soccer):

A: What are you doing on Sunday?

B: Man, I'm supposed to be doing a few jobs around the house.

A: Couldn't you come with us to the match?

B: I'm afraid if I don't paint the bedrooms this Sunday, Nonhlanhlan is going to murder me.

A: okay.

There is a lot of indirectness here, but A and B clearly understand each other. This is partly because of the knowledge they share about one another, the topic, and so on, but also partly because each assumes that the other is co-operating towards a conversational goal. This, as described by Grice (1975), is the **co-operative principle**, and he suggests that when we co-operate in a conversation, we follow four rules or co-operative maxims. These maxims concern the quantity, quality, relation, and manner of our utterances:

i. **quantity**: give just the right amount of information-neither too much nor too little;

ii **quality**: do not say anything for which you lack evidence or which you know to be false;

iii **relation**: make your contribution relevant to the conversational goal; and

iv.**manner**: be clear-avoid obscurity and ambiguity

In reality, conversational partners seldom follow these maxims strictly, even when they try to follow the co-operative principle. Consider the sample conversation above. A's

conversational goal is to see whether B can go with him to the soccer match. Why, then, doesn't he just say *Come to the match with us,* instead of first asking B what he will be doing and then asking him if he couldn't go to the match? B's goal is to let A know that he can't make it, so why doesn't he just say No? Why do they seem to ignore the maxims of quantity and manner?

1.2 **Politeness principle**

The answer, of course, is that A is being polite. This politeness principle ('be polite' has also been suggested for conversation, together with politeness maxims such as *don't impose on your hearer; give your hearer options;* and *make your hearer feel good*. These maxims help ensure that speakers and hearers don't lose face, or self-esteem, and avoid embarrassment. It should be clear that politeness maxims could often clash with co-operative maxims (for example because the truth can hurt, we will sometimes lie to people, or be ambiguous or obscure in an attempt to be tactful).

In the conversation above, A doesn't want to impose on B, so, instead of inviting him directly, he first asks him what he will be doing on the relevant day. However, because he is not being as clear as possible, we could say that here he breaks the manner maxim. (On the other hand, in English, this is a common way of preparing the hearer for an invitation, so there is a good chance that B will understand this question in the way it was intended.) After B's reply, A realizes that B might not be able to accept the invitation, so he doesn't bluntly say *Come to the match with us,* but gives B an easy yes/no option by using the polite formula *Could't you...*? Here again we see a clash between a politeness maxim and the manner maxim.

1.3 **Conversational Implicatures**

B's reply (*I'm afraid if I don't paint the bedrooms this Sunday, Nonhlanhla's going to murder me*) avoids hurting A's feelings by avoiding a flat *No,* but it seems to ignore both the quantity and manner maxims as a result. But B is nevertheless being co-operative. He knows that A will understand his answer, because they share knowledge about where they are in the conversation (it is time for acceptance or refusal of the invitation), and because they also share knowledge about how long it takes to paint several bedrooms and the impossibility of simultaneously painting bedrooms and attending a soccer match. Thus B doesn't say no directly, but implicates it (communicates indirectly by relying on A's knowledge). So we see how, by violating maxims (in this case, quantity and manner), B implicates the answer *No.*

This kind of implication is known as an **implicature.** There are implications of offer and warning in the sentence above, which read

My son is a big, strong boy.

Implicatures can also be signalled by violations of other maxims, such as quality and relation. Consider a situation where A gets B to listen to a piece of music by a new jazz band, and then asks

So how do you like the Zebo Four?

B answers

Nice juice you've got me.

Does B like the music? Clearly not, but instead of saying so directly, he implicates this by changing the subject-thus, violating the relation maxim and saying something that seems to be irrelevant to A's question. However, if he believes that A knows that changing the subject is often a way of signalling a negative answer, he is still being co-operative.

Post-Test

1. Explain the four co-operative maxims.
2. Why do people violate co-operative principles
3. What are conversational implicatures?

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LECTURE ELEVEN

THE COHERENCE OF DISCOURSE

11.0 Introduction

In previous lectures, we explained that discourse must be appropriate, purposeful and coherent for it to be termed correct. In this lecture, we shall examine the coherence of discourse.

Objectives

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

1. explain cohesion, and
2. differentiate between cohesion and relational cohesion.

Pre-Test

i. What do you understand by cohesion?

ii. Differentiate between cohesion and relational cohesion.

CONTENT

11.1 The Concept of Cohesion

Discourse is also coherent; in other words, it forms a unified, meaningful whole. Part of the coherence of discourse derives from the fact that speakers can interpret each other's utterances because they understand one another's purpose. There are two concepts that help us to describe connections between clauses and sentences in discourse. These are *cohesion* and *relational coherence*. Consider the two utterances below, which we have used earlier on as examples:

a. Many people are dying as a result of cigarettes and alcohol. I appreciate that the government has raised the price on these items because it wants people to quit or consume less than they usually do. But will they? Unfortunately I drink alcohol, but I'm aware that the stuff is destroying my life. There are so many orphans today because their parents have died as a result of smoking or alcohol. People should not take their lives for granted.

b.Many people are dying as a result of cigarettes and alcohol. It's a forged license and the bookcase is falling apart. There's still a lot of copper being mined in Zambia. Cook them with four cups of brown rice.

Both a and b are grammatical, but only a is coherent. This is partly because a has the property called cohesion.

11.2 Types of Cohesion

Cohesion occurs when the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other (Halliday and Hassan 1976:4). There are five main types of cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.

i. Reference

Consider the sentence

I appreciate that the government has raised the price on these items because

It wants people to quit or consume less than they usually do.

In discourse a above, 'it' refers to 'The government' mentioned in the previous clause. 'It' presupposes an element in an earlier clause of the discourse, and so we can call the pronoun 'it' a cohesion element. The connection between 'it' and 'the government' is one of reference (both words refer to the same thing), so more specifically, it is a reference cohesion element and the connection itself is known as a reference cohesion tie.

In English, the main reference cohesion elements are:

-the personal pronouns (I, me, we, us, he, she, it, and they);

-the possessive pronouns (my, our, your, his, hers, its, and their);

-the definite article and determiners (the, these, this, that, and those); and

-the demonstrative adverbs (here, there, and then).

The category of words above are not always cohesively used. That an expression such as a pronoun and a determiner can function as a cohesion element does not mean it always does so. In the model utterance above, 'the' in 'the stuff' is cohesive because it refers to 'alcohol' but 'the' in 'the government' is not. Rather it determines which government.

ii. Substitution

In reference cohesion, the presupposing and the presupposed expressions both refer to the same thing. In substitution cohesion, the two expressions do not refer to the same thing, but they do have the same meaning, as in the last clause of sentence a above;

...than they usually do.

Here 'do' substitutes for, and has the same meaning as, 'consume' in the previous clause, and is equivalent to 'less than they usually consume'. The word 'do', as it is used here, is thus a substitution cohesion element, and the connection it makes with 'consume' is a substitution cohesion tie. In English, the verb, 'do' can substitute for verbs and verb phrases, whereas 'one' is the cohesion element that can substitute for nouns and noun phrases, as in

The president was wearing a beautiful afro print shirt. I wish I had one.

In using 'one' in the sentence above, the speaker is not referring to exactly the same shirt that the president was wearing (in which case the reference 'it' would have been used). What he wants is another, similar shirt that can be described in exactly the same words.

iii. Ellipsis Cohesion

This is very similar to substitution cohesion, the difference being that in ellipsis there is no word such as 'one' or 'do' to mark the repetition of meaning. This repetition is understood from the context, as in the third sentence of our sample discourse a above

But will they?

Here, what is understood and what could thus be added to this phrase is 'quit or consume less than they usually do'.

iv. Lexical Cohesion

This is the cohesion that results from the fact that discourses tend to contain words that relate to one another in meaning or associate with one another in a more general way. There are a number of possible meaning relations between words, including synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy. Hyponym is a word whose meaning is included in that of another word e.g

scarlet, vermillion and crimson are hyponyms of 'red'. In our sample discourse a, there are no synonyms or antonyms, but 'cigarettes' and 'alcohol' are hyponyms of 'items', alcohol is also a hyponym of 'stuff', and drink is a hyponym of 'consume'. Another type of lexical cohesion is repetition of the same word or expression (in this sample, alcohol and people) and near-repetition (dying and died)

The last type of lexical cohesion is collocation, a term that includes words that (unlike synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy) are not in a systematic semantic relation, but that nevertheless tend to associate with one another and occur with one another, as in *dying, died,* and *lives,* and *orphans* and *parents.*

v. Conjunction

This is the only type of cohesion that consistently links the meanings of clauses and sentences as wholes, expressing the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before (Halliday and Hassan 1976:227). In our sample discourse, there is one example of a conjunctive (but) that joins whole sentences as seen below:

But will they?

There are two examples of conjunctives joining clauses rather than sentences; in both cases, the conjunctive is 'because'. Conjunctives can be divided into four main groups, depending on their meanings:

-**additive** (connected by some kind of addition): and, furthermore, namely, for example, similarly;

-**adversative** (connected by an 'against expectations' relation): but, yet, however, although, rather, on the other hand, instead, in spite of;

-**causal:** therefore, thus, as a result, for this reason, because, if...then; and

-**temporal** (connected by time): then, later, after that, before, previously, while, meanwhile, finally

It is now clear from the explanation above, that one of the reasons why sample a above is coherent and can therefore be considered a piece of discourse is because it contains many elements of cohesion, unlike sample b, which is non-discourse.

11.3 Relational coherence

The examples of conjunctive cohesion identified above also signal four basic kinds of relation between clauses or sentences: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal (these can be called the 'and', 'but', 'so', and 'then' relations). This type of relation is known as 'clause relation' (whether it applies to clause or sentences). Much of the coherence perceived in written text, derives from our awareness of clause relations to discourse. When clause relational structure is relatively clear, it is said that the discourse has relatively high relational coherence. Relational coherence is a useful concept for distinguishing good from poor writing.

Post-Test

1. Discuss four types of cohesion.
2. Explain relational cohesion.

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LECTURE TWELVE

THE NOTIONS OF ADJACENCY PAIRS AND PREFERENCE

12.0 Introduction

In this lecture, we shall discuss two key terms that are related to discourse. They are adjacency pairs and the notion of preference.

Objectives

At the end of the lecture, students should be able to:

1. explain adjacency pairs, and
2. explain preference.

Pre-Test

i. Explain adjacency pairs and the notion of preference.
ii. Mention two features of adjacency pairs.

CONTENT

12.1 Adjacency Pairs

An adjacency pair is a unit of conversation that contains an exchange of one turn each by two speakers. The turns are functionally related to each other in such a fashion that the first turn requires a certain type or range of types of second turn. This is exhibited in conventional greetings, invitations, and requests e.g 'Hello-hello' in telephone conversations. Sacks (1967) observes that a conversation is a string of at least two turns. Some turns are more closely related than others. He isolates a class of sequences of turns called *adjacency pairs*. They have the following features:

a. They are two utterances long.
b. The utterances are produced successively by different speakers.
c. The utterances are ordered-the first must belong to the class of first pair parts while the second to the class of second pair parts.
d. The utterances are related, not any second pair can follow any first pair, but only an appropriate one.

e. The first pair part often selects the next speaker and always selects the next action- it thus sets up a 'transition relevance and expectation, which the next speaker fulfils. In other words, the first part of a pair predicts the occurrence of the second e.g a question-answer pair, a greeting-greeting pair.

Adjacency pair is also known as the concept of 'nextness'. It is a type of turn-taking technique.

12.2 The notion of Preference

In response to the first part of an adjacency pair, some second part responses are preferred, while some are dispreferred. Refusals of requests or invitations, for instance are nearly always dispreferred, while acceptances are preferred. See the exchanges below:

A: Why don't you come up and see me some time. (invitation)

B: I would like to. (acceptance)

A dispreferred second part is a second part of an adjacency pair that consists of a response to the first part that is generally to be avoided. They are often preferred and dispreferred seconds for a first in adjacency pairs. The production of a dispreferred second generally requires more conversational effort than a preferred second.

Post-Test

1. Mention four characteristics of adjacency pairs.
2. What are preferred and dispreferred seconds?

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