

Introduction to Prominence

Elements of discourse coherence

- Fundamental condition for talk: mutual understanding.
- Speakers must co-ordinate what they mutually know.
- Utterances, being related to different frameworks, would never have the same meaning.

- Participants manage to meet accepted standards of relevance and politeness
- Co-operation
- Gap: conversation differentials

- Discourse coherence: in conversation, responsibility of all the participants.
(difference with other discourse types)

ELEMENTS OF DISCOURSE COHERENCE

- Alignment
- Language about language
- Feedback
- Intonation

ALIGNMENT

- Coherent conversation: participants pursue their goals co-operatively, not individually.

- Alignment: successive utterances function to clarify and construct the orientation of both speaker and hearer to a particular topic.

Sacks: “recipient design”.

Sensitivity to the particular
others who are the co-
participants.

e.g. checking that the
message received is correct

Showing extent of shared
knowledge (phone
number).

- Re-opening of topic after digression
- Reformulation

- Turn-taking system: example of conversational alignment in action.
 - Requires monitoring for upcoming transition relevance places.
(difference in other types of discourse)

- Employment of ‘interactive signals’ (well, anyway, you see). They determine the status of previous utterance in relation to the present one.

Schiffrin: Discourse markers

Stenström: discourse signals.

FUNCTIONS OF DISCOURSE SIGNALS

- To take, keep or yield the turn
- To 'communicate' with the listener
- To structure the message

FEEDBACK

- Conversation: result of cooperative effort.
- Speakers rely on hearer feedback
- Input of speaker and hearer
- Allen and Guy (1974) : four levels

- 1) Complete feedback
- 2) Responses from hearer to support what is being said.(mmm, laughter)
- 3) More substantial structures (oh good, that was lucky)

- 4) speakers coordinate what they mutually know
- Failure to have feedback may make speakers reformulate, etc.

- Schiffrin: discourse markers contribute to the structural unity,(...) and interactional coherence of discourse
- (example)

INTONATION

- Discourse intonation

Prominence

Tone

Key/ Termination