CHAPTER 1

Discourse: Meaning & Implications

People talk a great deal about language nowadays, as if they had suddenly discovered that they had been talking for thousands and thousands of years. Now they are trying to discover what talking means.

E. Ionesco.

Discourse, as understood in linguistics\(^1\), is used to describe an extended stretch of language, beyond the boundaries of the sentence. The implication is that as in a sentence, there is internal structure (subject, verb, object, or complement), elements beyond the sentence also contain similar structures\(^2\). Discourse analysis is, thus, not just an understanding of how sentences string together but also the way they exhibit properties which reflect

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\(^1\) The terms ‘discourse’ and ‘discourse analysis are used differently by cultural and literary theorists like Wittgenstein (1963), Volosinov (1973), Foucault (1987), and many others. Though they, too, focus on structural units above the level of the sentence, but they take it beyond its simple linguistic analysis into issues like power relations and the production of knowledge. Such an analysis could be a useful area of investigation for a scholar in literary theories. I shall be concerned here only with how linguistics looks at discourse and discourse analysis. For more details on how the terms have been used in different disciplines, see Mills (2004).

\(^2\) This is especially how Sinclair and Coulthard (1977); Coulthard (1977, 1999, 1994), Brazil \textit{et al} (1980), Coulthard and Montgomery (1981), Hoey (1983) look at discourse. It is worth noting that most of them were associated with English language research at Birmingham University. It was there that theoretical framework for discourse analysis was evolved. “The Birmingham description is located within the major British linguistic framework of the time which derived its theoretical basis from Halliday’s classic article ‘Categories of the theory of grammar’—there was no existing linguistic description of interaction, let alone a linguistic theory of interaction, and the procedure adopted was to analogize from existing grammatical theory” (Coulthard 1985: 120; emphasis in original).
organisation, coherence, rhetorical force, thematic focus etc of a piece of conversation\(^3\) or written text. David Crystal defines discourse as a continuous "stretch of language larger than a sentence often constituting a coherent unit"\(^4\). He contrasts 'discourse' within linguistics to the use of the term 'text' and says:

Discourse analysis focuses on the structure of naturally occurring spoken language, as found in such 'discourses' as conversation, interviews, commentaries and speeches. Text analysis focuses on the structure of written language, as found in such 'texts' as essays, notices, road signs and chapters. But this distinction is not clear-cut, and there have been many other uses of these labels. In particular, 'discourse' and 'text' can be used in a much broader sense to include all language units with a definable communicative function, whether spoken or written. Some scholars talk about 'spoken or written discourse', others about 'spoken or written text'.\(^5\) *Emphasis in original*

Spoken discourse, especially conversation, poses the greatest problems in terms of analysis due to its apparently unstructured nature. The number of interlocutors may vary and the use of non-verbal expressions can

\(^3\) For more details, see, among others, Hoey (1983), Brown and Yule (1983).
add to the difficulty of its analysis. The use of taking turns and the real possibility of interruptions and interjections of discourse can also add to the difficulty of analysis.

Sinclair and Coulthard\textsuperscript{6} suggest a three tier approach, beginning-middle-end, to focus on the distinct 'moves' that take place in discourse, be they 'question-answer-comment' as in a classroom environment, or command-acknowledgment-polite formality, as occurs in a shop, between the client and the shopkeeper. What is more, there is no need for the moves to be verbal as a grunt of approval or a mere 'uh' – 'huh' may also serve as a 'move' in many cases.

One spoken discourse feature is the listener-response-behaviour, also known as backchannel. Backchannels are the brief verbal responses that a listener uses while another individual is talking, such as 'OK', 'Yeah', 'Oh', 'Wow' etc.\textsuperscript{7} These markers function at the discourse level and not the sentence level and clearly achieve different purposes during conversation—whether the participants agree with each other, should continue conversation, the change of topic and so on\textsuperscript{8}. Michael Hoey states:

\textsuperscript{7} The listener responses could be nonverbal also, for example, head-nods.
\textsuperscript{8} See below for a detailed description of the different types of discourse markers.
Conversation involves an interaction between two or more people in which each contributor may produce more than one utterance and each contribution builds (normally) upon the previous contributions either directly or indirectly. We know immediately if, for example, the subject-matter of a conversation changes and will comment on it appropriately if it appears to have been for ulterior motives or because of some misunderstanding. Similarly, in writing, sentence bunch into conventional units called paragraphs, paragraphs into chapters, and chapters into books. In short, in our everyday speech and writing, the sentence is a small cog in a normally much larger machine.9

In practical terms, discourse centres on the actual operation of language beyond the restrictions of grammar, focusing on those devices which chunk speech (or writing) into functional segments. Its overriding focus is on context and on the behavioural patterns that structure the social functions of a language, above and beyond the level of a sentence:

The point is...that we must escape from the idea that understanding discourse is a question of interpreting sentences, whether on their own or in combination. Discourse occurs in realization of linguistic rules in the act of making sense and this inevitably involves an engagement with the language user's cognitive and experiential

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reality. Sentences are artificial constructs which are detached from such reality by definition and so have nothing to do with discourse. The term ‘discourse’ became a popular term in the 1950s as a reaction to traditional linguistics (structural linguistics) concentrating on, as mentioned above, language use rather on the formal properties of the sentence. European and American sociolinguistics in 1960s has focused on the development of linguistic models that describe how people produce and use language:

The work began in 1970 as a research project to investigate the structure of verbal interaction in classrooms, and from the beginning the aim was to anchor this study within the discipline of linguistics and to use tried linguistic techniques on new idea. In the 1960s and 1970s, it has been applied by English teachers to the systematic analysis of the error patterns of second language learners’ spoken and written texts. According to Cazden, the principal focus of discourse analysis in education during 1970s and 1980s has been on instances of face-to-face talk between care-givers and children as key moments in language socialization. According to Stubbs the term reality. Sentences are artificial constructs which are detached from such reality by definition and so have nothing to do with discourse. The term ‘discourse’ became a popular term in the 1950s as a reaction to traditional linguistics (structural linguistics) concentrating on, as mentioned above, language use rather on the formal properties of the sentence. European and American sociolinguistics in 1960s has focused on the development of linguistic models that describe how people produce and use language:

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discourse analysis can be found in the context of a large number of sciences such as linguistics, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, politics etc. It refers to organization of language or the clause to study larger linguistic units such as spoken and written texts\textsuperscript{13}.

In written discourse, the writer constructs the text and provides it with a more formal and coherent structure, often through the use of various linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical devices. A discourse analysis of written texts focuses on making explicit those implicit norms and rules which produce language in that context, and the way the writer packages the quantum of information that he/she has to convey:

The writer has something he wishes to convey to an absent addressee. This addressee, he assumes, will have certain kinds of knowledge in common with himself: knowledge, for example, of linguistic rules, of the conditions that have to be met for the performance of illocutionary acts, and knowledge too of the universe of reality to which he intends to refer. The writer will also assume that his addressee will be sufficiently curious to learn what he has to say to co-operate in its conveyance. But...he has to decide what information he needs to provide, and how he must provide it, in order to get his message across. ...The act of writing is the enactment of an exchange, with the writer taking on the roles of both interlocutors.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} Widdowson, 1984, p. 48.
Written texts have to be taken as messages which are coded in their visual medium and must be possessed of cohesion in the same way as one finds in spoken discourse\textsuperscript{15}. Cohesion, according to Halliday and Hasan, actually depends on general process of semantic interfering by language users who make sense not only out of texts but out of sentences and words as well. Cohesive devices do not themselves create meaning, but they are clues to find meanings which underlie surface utterances\textsuperscript{16}.

**Cohesive Devices or Discourse Markers**

Cohesive devices are the different types of words and expressions which link various parts of a text together. These markers include pronouns\textsuperscript{17}, expressions like ‘however’, ‘nevertheless’, etc which bind the text together and “give us some insight into how writers structure what they want to say, and may be crucial factors in our judgments on whether something is well-

\textsuperscript{15} Considering writing as ‘text’ and speech as ‘discourse’ points to the fact that there is a lot of confusion in the use of the term ‘discourse’. For instance, Michael Stubbs (1983) treats ‘text’ and ‘discourse’ as synonymous, but David Crystal (1987) treats them differently. In the regard, Sara Mills (2004: 1) makes this important observation: “The term ‘discourse’ has become currency in a variety of disciplines: critical theory, sociology, linguistics, philosophy, social psychology and many other fields, so much so that it is frequently left undefined, as if its usage was simply common knowledge. It is used widely in analysing literary and non-literary texts and it is often employed to signal a certain theoretical sophistication in ways which are vague and sometimes obsfuscatory.”


\textsuperscript{17} They are also called *deictic expressions.* “Deictic expressions are typically pronouns, demonstratives (“this/that,” “these/those”), certain time and place adverbs (e.g., “here and now”), some verbs of motion (e.g., “come/go”), and even tenses.” (Evelyn Hatch. *Discourse and Language Education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 210.). See also, Morio Chimomo and Robert L. Roseberry. *The Power of Discourse: An Introduction to Discourse Analysis.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998.
written or not". Baker looks at cohesion as a "network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which provide links between various parts of a text. These relations or ties organize and, to some extent create text, for instance by requiring the reader to interpret words and expressions by reference to other words and expressions in the surrounding sentences and paragraphs. Cohesion is a surface relation; it connects together the actual words or expressions that we can see or hear."

In relation to speech, markers have been defined by Erickson, "as contextual coordinates: postural changes during interaction. They have indexical functions and act as contextual coordinates within which an utterance is produced and designed to be interpreted." They allow speakers to construct and integrate multiple planes and dimensions of an emergent reality. It is out of such processes that coherent discourse emerges and a marker becomes compatible with the meanings of the surrounding discourse. Coherence is not in the language that texts use but in how people interpret and make sense of what they read and hear:

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They try to arrive at an interpretation which is in line with their experience of the way the world is. Indeed, our ability to make sense of what we read is probably only a small part of that general ability we have to make sense of what we perceive or experience in the world.  

During conversation the speaker-hearer continually interpret each others speech not by looking at what they say linguistically. The meaning is arrived at by interpreting each other’s intensions as is evident from this example:

A: The phone’s ringing.

B: I’m in the bath.

A: OK.

On the face of it, this dialogue does not have any links between the three utterances because no surface cohesive devices have been used to relate the three. Since it is a piece of conversation, the two speakers seem to know what exactly they are saying. The missing links if provided as the surface level would make things easier as is shown below:

A: The phone’s ringing. (Could you take it?)

B: (I'm sorry, I can't take it because) I'm in the bath.

A: OK. (I'll take it myself)\(^{23}\)

The parenthetical expressions are missing propositional links which help the interlocutors create a coherent discourse.

The following discourse markers are used mostly in spoken discourse and help to establish relationships between various constituents of discourse.

'Oh': Marker of Information Management

'Oh' is traditionally viewed as an exclamation or interjection. When used alone, without the syntactic support of a sentence, it is said to indicate strong emotional states, e.g., surprise, fear, or pain. Oxford English dictionary illustrates 'oh' as exclamation; for instance, 'Oh! I cannot stand it.'

'Oh' can initiate utterances followed by a brief pause:

'Oh, well they came yesterday.'

or with no pause preceding the rest of the tone unit:

\(^{23}\) These three utterances have to be taken as illocutionary acts in order to understand the relationship between them. For details on this see, Widdowson 1978, chapter 2.
‘Does he like drama? Oh may be he is too young.’

‘Oh’ also occurs as speakers’ shift, their orientation to information. A very similar view of ‘oh’ is given by Heritage who views it as a particle used to propose that its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation, or awareness. Speakers shift orientation during a conversation, not only do they respond effectively to what is said but as they replace one information unit with another, as they recognise old information which has become conversationally relevant, and as they receive new information to integrate into an already present knowledge base. All of these are information management tasks in which ‘oh’ has a role and especially oh marks two information handling tasks—old information recognition and new information receipt.

‘Oh’ in repairs

Repair is a speech activity during which speakers locate and replace a prior information unit. Repairs achieve information transitions anaphorically.

forcing speakers to adjust their orientation to what has been said before they respond to it in upcoming talk. Initiation and completion of repair show a speaker/hearer division of responsibility for information management, self-initiation. The completion of repair shows speakers’ sensitivity to their own production of discourse. Other initiation and completion of repair show hearers’ sensitivity to their reception of discourse.

We can use ‘oh’ as a request for clarification—for instance, ‘oh you mean outside’. Elaboration requests are also prefaced by ‘oh’. It also displays a speaker’s receipt of information (partial or complete) at the same time it solicits further information.

‘Oh’ often marks the recognition of familiar information; and also marks speaker’s receipt of new information. It can be used as back-channel that alternates with other signals of hearer attention. Such signals often occur at division of turn-taking responsibilities in the exchange structure. ‘Oh’ is also used when speakers display shifts in expressive orientation. It occurs whenever speakers strengthen their reactions to what is being said: ‘Oh God’, ‘Oh yes’, ‘Oh no’. ‘Oh’ displays still another aspect of participation framework: Speaker/hearer alignment toward each other,
because ‘oh’ makes their assumptions about each other’s subjective orientations toward information.

Finally, conversation requires a delicate balance between the satisfaction of one’s own needs and the satisfaction of other’s needs—a reciprocal social need and ‘oh’ maintains this satisfaction.

To summarise, ‘oh’ is a marker of information management: speakers and hearers manage the flow of information produced and received during discourse orientation.

**Well: marker of response**

Like ‘Oh’, the use of ‘well’ is not based on a semantic meaning or grammatical status. It sometimes is a noun, an adverb, or a degree word. It has been also labelled as interjection, filler, particle, hesitator and initiator.

Sacks, Schegoloff and Jefferson observe that ‘well’ often begins turns. At different levels of conversational organisation ‘well’ (along with ‘Okay’ and ‘so’) is used as pre-closing-device, offering its
recipient a chance to reinstate an earlier or unexpected topic or to reopen another round of talks\textsuperscript{25}.

'Well' also figures in particular discoursal modes. Lakoff observes that 'well' prefaces responses that are insufficient answers to question\textsuperscript{26}. Pomerantz finds that 'well' prefaces disagreements alternating in this environment with 'Yes'\textsuperscript{27}. Owen adds that 'well' can precede an answer in which presupposition of a prior question is cancelled, as well as non-compliance with a request, or rejection of an offer\textsuperscript{28}. Wooten shows that 'well' precedes parent's responses to their children's requests more often when those responses reject rather than grant the requests\textsuperscript{29}. Thus 'well' signals moves that are in some way dispreferred. Furthermore, 'well' functions in the participation framework of discourse, as opposed to 'oh' which functions to organise the information state. To be specific, 'well' is a response marker which anchors its user in an interaction when an upcoming

\textsuperscript{28} M.H. Owen. \textit{Apologies and Remedial Interchanges}. Hague Mouton, 1983.
contribution is not fully consonant with prior coherence options. This function displays a speaker in a particular participation status—respondent.

Use of ‘well’ with answers is sensitive to the linguistic form of the prior question. Answers are marked with ‘well’ more frequently after wh-questions than after Yes-No questions. In wh-questions adverbials (who, what, where, when, etc) target what information will be needed to complete an unfinished proposition. Wh-questions differ from Yes-No because they open up a set of choices for the speaker, allowing for selection among a range of options. Thus use of ‘well’ with answers is influenced by a question form and implants a speaker in a turn initiation.

‘Well’ works as an interactional resource through which speakers manage some of the complex participation frameworks created by multiparty conversations. Besides, requests for clarification and for elaboration can be prefaced by ‘well’.

One of the central tasks of everyday talk is the accomplishment of conversational coherence. Although structures, meanings and actions function in an integrated manner as jointly managed resources for the production and interpretation of coherence, but use of ‘well’ is also one
device used by speakers in their attempts to build coherence. 'Well' anchors the speaker into a conversation precisely at those points where upcoming coherence is not guaranteed. 'Well' shows the speaker's aliveness to the need to accomplish coherence.

To sum up 'well' is used for a general discourse function because it has no inherent semantic meaning like 'oh'. The main difference is that 'well' marks responses at an interactional level, and 'oh' marks responses at a cognitive level.

**Discourse Connectives: and, but, or**

'And', but', 'or' is a different set of markers, as analysis of this set of markers proceed somewhat differently. These markers form a set of discourse connectives, and they have both ideational and pragmatic functions.

**And: building a text**

'And' has two roles in talk: it coordinates idea units and continues a speaker's action. It is the most frequently used mode of connection. 'And' can work at different levels even within the same discourse. It is a discourse

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30 These markers are not restricted to speech; they are used in writing also for achieving cohesion and coherence.
coordinator. The presence of ‘and’ signals the speaker’s identification of an upcoming unit, which coordinates the structure of some prior unit. ‘And’ marks different kinds of units at different levels of discourse structure.

**Continuing an action**

‘And’ is a marker of speaker-continuation. The information presented in a talk is often packaged into interactional units. Jefferson has stated that particular linguistic devices are often devised to ease the task. The use of ‘and’ is one such device. Information is interactionally packaged through the use of ‘and’. It marks a speaker’s definition of what is being said as a continuation of his/her prior talk. It is in this sense that ‘and’ is a structural coordinator of ideas which has a pragmatic effect as a discourse marker.

To summarise ‘and’ has two uses: firstly, it is a structural device for building text. Secondly, it has a pragmatic effect as a marker of continuation in interaction. Thus, content of ideas and actions are contextual parameters which work with ‘and’ to organise ideas and integrate text.

Halliday and Hasan’s view of ‘and’ as a cohesive tie and texture creating device contribute additive meaning by typing an upcoming
preposition to a prior proposition and marking its dependency to a prior proposition for interpretation. But like other cohesive devices 'and' reflects the semantic content of a text. It is this reflective quality that leads towards a multiple meaning view of 'and'.

**But: a contrastive marker**

Although 'but' is a discourse coordinator like 'and', it has a very different pragmatic effect. This effect is based on its contrastive meaning. 'But' does not coordinate functional units unless there is some contrastive relationship in either their ideational or interactional content.

It is used as a marker of speaker-return under several interactional circumstances. This function allows 'but' to be a point-making device with additional expressive and interactional expressive and interactional corollaries. The speaker-return from referential contrast can be best differentiated by considering two discourse markers which are more specialised than 'but' for these functions: 'anyway' and 'however'. It is interchangeable with both of these markers, although they are not interchangeable with each other—replacing one for the other produces a meaning change in the discourse. In fact, 'but' sometimes conveys both the

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referential contrast marked by 'however' and the functional contrast marked by 'anyway'.

**But: interactional precedence**

'But' is used not only to show referential contrasts, it allows us to reinforce our previous points in a situation. Another interactional circumstance under which a speaker can return to a point with 'but' is when that point is being defended against a challenge.

It is also used to present points which have been interrupted or misunderstood. In such circumstances, initiation with 'but' leads to uncooperative turn entries which do not allow a prior speaker to reach a possible completion point. So the uncooperative placement of turns initiated with 'but' shows speakers' placement of their own utterances in the conversation taking precedence over their interactional consideration of others' utterances. Thus the use of 'but' reflects the interactional precedence of making one's own point, when such a point has been interrupted, misunderstood or challenged, and when such a point is the object of a speaker commitment, i.e., a marked expressive stance. 'But' is a
marker of speaker-return, which gains expressive overlays as a point-making device.

**Or: option marker**

'Or', a coordinator like 'and' and 'but' is used as an option marker in discourse. It differs from 'and' and 'but' not only in meaning, but because it is more hearer directed. 'And' marks speaker's continuation, 'but' a speaker's return to a point, 'or' marks a speaker's provision of options to a hearer. More specifically, 'or' offers inclusive options to a hearer, or provides hearers a two way choice between accepting only one member of a disjunct. This means 'or' is exclusive—only one member of disjunct can hold. 'Or' is also inclusive—either one member or both members of the disjunct can hold.

Thus 'or' is fundamentally different from 'and' and 'but', because it is not a marker of a speaker's action toward his own talk, but a speaker's effort to elicit from a hearer a stance toward an idea unit, or to gain a response of some kind. 'Or' thus prompts the exchange of responsibility for the maintenance of conversation.
So and because: markers of cause and result

'So' and 'because' are complements both structurally and semantically and have grammatical properties which contribute to their discourse use. They are grammatical signals of main and subordinate clauses respectively, and this grammatical difference is reflected in their discourse use—'because' is a marker of subordinate idea units, and 'so' is complementary marker of main idea units. It is important to define subordinate and main in discourse. The material which is functionally and referentially dependent on a larger textual unit of talk is subordinate in this sense. However, what is subordinate in one particular structure need not be subordinate within another, because discourse is often multi-structured. In this way, subordinate material is never unimportant in a discourse. 'So' and 'because' mark a transition between main and subordinate levels of structure in discourse.

'Because' and 'so' have semantic meanings, realised at both sentence and discourse levels. 'Because' conveys a meaning of 'cause' and 'so' conveys a meaning of result. 'So' instructs the hearer to recover a conclusion (an inference, a claim) which has already been presented or which is already known. Van Dijik suggests that 'because' focuses attention
on the interdependencies of facts, whereas the use of sentence initial ‘so’ and ‘therefore’ is typically used to denote the referential relations.

‘Because’ and ‘so’ mark not only the idea structures of texts, but as the relationships between ideas and speaker/hearer inferences based on those ideas, as well as the relationships between speaker’s stated motives and actions. Discourse is coherent because of systematic relationships among different components of talk, in which discourse markers ‘because’ and ‘so’ have their functions.

**So: participation transition**

The elliptical meaning of ‘so’ helps to account for its use at potential participation transitions that is, ‘so’ indicates that a speaker has reached a point in the presentation of his/her ideas at which a hearer can infer what would come next even if it is not explicitly stated. The joint accessibility of unstated information makes it possible for either speaker or hearer to move on to a new topic of talk. Thus it is ‘so’ which paves the way for a potential participation transition.

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It is important to note that 'so' and 'and' share a pragmatic effect of speaker-continuation, but 'so' differs from 'and' because of its function in participation transitions. 'So' marks speaker continuation as an alternative to participant change in potential transition location in talk. This function contrasts sharply with that of 'and', which is used when continuing is the preferred option.

**Temporal adverbs: now and then**

Discourse like events in the world proceeds forward in time. 'Now' and 'then' are two markers whose deictic meaning influences their use on several different discourse planes. Deictic elements relate an utterance to its person, space, and time coordinates. 'Now' and 'then' are time deictics because they convey a relationship between the time at which a proposition is assumed to be true, and the time at which it is presented in an utterance. In other words, 'now' and 'then' are deictic because their meaning depends on a parameter of the speech situation-time of speaking.

Jacobson has presented the same propositional content:

a. Sue teaches linguistics now
b. Sue taught linguistics then.
These have different reference times because they establish different time periods. In (a) it is true during a period overlapping with the speaking time and in (b) it is true during a period prior to the speaking time. It is this “shift in reference time, which indicates that ‘now’ and ‘then’ are time deictics”.

**Now: progression of ideas and comparisons**

‘Now’ occurs in discourse in which the speaker progresses through a cumulative series of subordinate units. Vasconcellos has argued that this marker reveals “a progression from speaker-centered focus to hearer-centered focus”\(^3\). It is routinely used in all sorts of comparisons. The comparisons can be between two different times or between locations rather than times. It marks comparisons in some topics, which are tacitly defined as disputable—the conversation which raises the possibility of disagreement. Disagreement is a particular mode of comparison, because it juxtaposes what the speaker claims with what the hearer claims. When ‘now’ occurs with an option about a disputable topic, it is displaying the speaker’s recognition of interpersonal differences about the topic.

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According to Goffman “opinions are immutable to either confirmation or
disconfirmation from others. Thus opinions can be as little confirmed as
disconfirmed”\textsuperscript{35}. This means that opinions are inherently disputable: they
implicate a comparison between ‘my view’ and ‘another’s view’. And
‘now’ indicates speaker’s progression through the discourse time of
comparison. Repeated use of ‘now’ is a source with which a speaker can
emphasize the sequential nature of a discourse. It also marks talk toward
which the speaker is shifting orientation and through which a speaker is
inviting a hearer to adjust with the participation framework.

**Proximal time deixis and now**

‘Now’ is a proximal deictic as it locates an utterance in an ego-centred
space, i.e., a space dominated by the producer, rather than the receiver of an
utterance:

Temporal, or time, deixis, refers to time relative to the time of
speaking. English, for example, uses ‘now’ versus ‘then’,
‘yesterday’, ‘today’, and ‘tomorrow’. However, languages differ in
how many deictic day names are included. According to Levinson
(1983), Chinantec, an Amerindian language, has four days each of

‘today’; Hindi has the same word used for both ‘tomorrow’ and ‘yesterday’.  

**Then: Speaker/hearer succession**

‘Then’ indicates temporal succession between prior and upcoming talk. Its main difference from ‘now’ is the direction of the discourse which it marks—‘now’ points forward in discourse time and ‘then’ points backward. Another difference is that ‘now’ focuses on how the speaker’s own discourse follows the speaker’s own prior talk; ‘then’ on the other hand, focuses on how the speaker’s discourse follows either party’s prior talk. Another difference between ‘now’ and ‘then’ is that ‘then’ can be either deictic or anaphoric. As a deictic ‘then’ marks reference time; but as an anaphor, ‘then’ marks the temporal relation between two linguistic events, thus displaying temporal connections between events internal to the discourse. ‘Then’ is used at the simultaneous juncture between two coinciding units of talk, and marks the succession in the discourse from one topic to another. In this way, two different event times are marked by then: initial ‘then’ marks successive event time, and final ‘then’ marks

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36 Hatch 1992, p. 217. It is interesting to note that Kashmiri has many temporal deixes—az (today), pagah (tomorrow), raath (yesterday), otra (the day before), kaelket (the day after) etc.
coteminous event time. According to Halliday and Hasan, “all anaphors are cohesive ties which connect prior and upcoming talk”\(^3^7\).

**Information and Participation: \textit{Y' know} and \textit{I mean}**

‘\textit{Y' know}’ and ‘\textit{I mean}’ are two markers whose literal meanings directly influence their discourse use. ‘\textit{Y' know}’ marks transitions in information state which are relevant for participation frameworks, and ‘\textit{I mean}’ marks speaker orientation toward his/her own talk, i.e., modification of ideas and intentions. Both markers also have uses which are less directly related to their literal meanings. ‘\textit{Y' know}’ gains attention from the hearer to open an interactive focus on speaker provided information and ‘\textit{I mean}’ maintains attention on the speaker. These markers are considered together not only because use of both is based on semantic meaning, but also because their functions are complementary and because both are socially sanctioned.

‘\textit{Y' know}’ functions with the information state of talk. Information states are formed as participants’ knowledge and meta-knowledge about how the world is redistributed through talk, as different bits of information become more or less salient and as knowledge about information becomes more or less certain. Information states have pragmatic relevance and it is

through verbal interaction that information state transitions are negotiated and displayed and 'Y'know' has its own role in it. In this way 'Y'know' is a marker of meta-knowledge about what is generally known. Hamilton has found that "'Y'know' is a device through which speakers appeal to general understanding. It induces a hearer to act as an information recipient and thereby attest to that knowledge. It has the complementary function of ratifying the speaker as an information provider—one whose provision of information is contingent upon hearer reception"38.

In sum, 'Y' know' is used to reach situation in the meta-knowledge matrix, or in other words, to create a situation in which the speaker knows about knowledge which is shared with the hearer.

'Y know' marks the general consensual truths, which speakers assume their hearers share through their co-membership in the same culture, society or group. It is used as a marker of general truths with formulaic expressions of such truths. Sometimes, a consensual truth is presented as a tautology. Although tautologies are often formulaic ways of conveying general truths—e.g. war is war—and 'Y know' is also used with tautologies.

‘Y’ know’ as a marker of consensual truths occurs with general descriptions, when speakers often use general descriptions to support more specific claims and to gain their hearers’ endorsement of such claims. It is also used with general statement to show that his own situation is not just a single, isolated case, but a typical instance of a more pervasive and broader generalization—for example, ‘Y’ know’ when you get older, you just don’t keep socialising anymore’.

‘Y’ know’ allows a speaker to check on how the discourse is creating an interactional progression. In doing so, ‘Y’ know’ functions both informationally and interactionally. It allows a hearer to affirm the receipt of information and it displays the ways in which particular participant roles are undergoing gradual transitions throughout the discourse and helps in creating a particular kind of exchange structure.

‘Y’ know’ occurs when hearer is invited to share the information transfer being accomplished through a narrative discourse. The interactional effect of ‘Y’ know’ in narratives differs because it enlists the hearer not just as an information recipient but also as a particular kind of participant to the story telling (an audience).
I mean: marker of speaker orientation

The literal meaning of the expression 'I mean' influences its function in participation framework of discourse—I mean marks a speaker's upcoming modification of the meaning of his/her own prior talk. The modification marked by 'I mean' include both expansions of ideas and explanations of intention. This orientation displayed by speakers' leads to interactional relevance.

In Bateson’s framework, "'I mean' is meta-communicative. 'I mean' has to do not just with semantic meaning, but with speaker's modification and hence own interpretation of that meaning"39.

'I mean' has a remedial function. It prefaces explanation of intention particularly when the intended force of an action is deemed to have been missed by a recipient, e.g., because it was too indirect for appropriate uptake.

'I mean' also clarifies misinterpreted intention and thus helps to reestablish the mood of the interaction as a whole. 'I mean' is also used to reestablish the tone of a discourse. It is marking an orientation through

which a speaker recommitts himself/herself to a prior claim when its interactional reception has disrupted its intended effect. In this way, 'I mean' is used remedially.

'I mean' is a member of a larger set of meta-linguistic expressions such as 'let me tell you', 'let me put it this way', 'what we call', 'so called' and 'in other words'. These expressions are also discourse markers, and form a functional set, as they all focus on the language used in speech situations.

Lyons points out, "even utterances that seem to be purely meta-linguistic involve other concerns, for example, it also involves phatic concerns trying to prevent a communication breakdown and connotative concerns—one speaker is making an appeal to another"40.

In sum, use of 'Y know' can be interpreted as overdependence on the hearer and use of 'I mean' can be interpreted as over-involvement with the self. And for these reasons these markers are stigmatised.

To conclude analysis of discourse markers is a part of a more general analysis of discourse coherence—how speakers and hearers jointly integrate

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forms, meanings and actions to make an overall sense and to produce the full communicative force of the expressions used as discourse markers. Simultaneously, without considering discourse markers in a variety of discourse locations we would not be able to see what meaning and context contribute together.

**Fumbles, back channels and other useful gambits**

Fumbles is a very broad category of expressions that is used to plug in any gap at any point in the conversation. These expressions do not convey information, but they are very important for a smooth development of conversation, since they allow time for the speaker to formulate his thoughts before speaking. Some of the most common types of fumbles are:

- **Starters**: ‘Well’, ‘Well now’, ‘oh well’, ‘let me explain’, ‘I mean what I want to say is that’.
- **Underscorers**: ‘I tell you’, ‘the fact is’, ‘the point is’, ‘it is just that’.
- **Cajolers**: ‘See’, ‘just think’, ‘don’t forget that’, ‘you must admit’.

**Backchannels**

According to Stenstrom, backchannels are used by “listeners to manifest their attention to the speaker”\(^4\). They consist of vocalisations such as ‘mm’

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or short words such as ‘Yeah, no’, ‘right’, ‘sure’, ‘ah’, ‘yes’, ‘I see’, ‘really’, ‘that is right’, ‘oh God’, ‘dear’, ‘good heavens’, ‘excellent’ etc. Backchannels can be also used by listeners as a way to avoid taking the turn when this opportunity is given. Furthermore, certain gambits can also prove useful. Some examples of hedges are: ‘actually’, ‘generally’, ‘kind of’, ‘may’, ‘perhaps’, ‘rather’, ‘slightly’, ‘usually’ and tag questions.

**Implications of Discourse Analysis for language teaching/learning**

The introduction of discourse analysis into the classroom can add a new frame to the understanding of language and its use[^42], and can give the teacher new tools to cater for a student’s needs. If we consider that comprehension and understanding are the primary concerns behind most forms of communication, be they written or oral, formal or informal, then our focus as teachers should be centred on ensuring that our students acquire the skills necessary for such comprehension.^[43]

[^42]: ‘Use’ is not the same as ‘usage’. The former involves the use of language in sociolinguistic contexts and the latter refers to grammatical structure of the language. For a detailed discussion on these terms see, among others, Widdowson (1979), Coulthard (1985) and Mills (2004).

[^43]: Canale (1983) includes “discourse competence” as one of the areas in his definition of communicative competence. *Discourse competence* is “concerned with cohesion and coherence in the structure of texts; it therefore includes knowledge about the organization of different speech events and the interpretive rules for relating form to function.” (Coulthard 1985, p. 147.)
Teachers can focus on the cohesive devices of discourse and more specifically on discourse markers as a useful tool to enable students to make logical connections and coherent stretches of both written and spoken discourse. Besides, when analysing discourse, a certain amount of procedures are activated within the listener/reader, which facilitate its interpretation. The listener/reader will search for coherence and meaning, within the linguistic and contextual knowledge of the language and the situation as well as in the conceptual and formal schemata at his disposal. In this way, the goal behind any communicative interaction is to get the message across, and there can be no doubt that a coherent message will prove a more effective and efficient one.

Language teaching that aims to prepare non-native speakers (NNSs) for specific genres needs to be based on description of the language really used rather than idealised version of it. Findings from observation of (NNSs) indicate that there is a place in instruction for making fuller turns to facilitate interaction. Classroom discussion is an important part of many

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44 This has been a major concern of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which emerged as a reaction to grammatical syllabuses in the 1970s of the last century when Dell Hymes (1972) proposed the description of communicative competence as the real goal of linguistics. This was taken up by Wilkins (1972) and his team working on a project with the Council of Europe at Strasburg. The Notional-functional syllabus proposed by Wilkins (1973) is designed around the functions and notions that language is used to achieve during interaction.
courses of academic study. Lectures may involve question/answer interludes, and many courses involve tutorials and seminar type events. Discussion based classes and question-answer sessions within lectures demand a high level of oral proficiency in participants. This demand is one which (NNSs) may feel themselves ill-prepared to meet. The literature indicates that it is discourse deficiency which tends to prevent (NSSs) from participating fully and appropriately in discussions.

The need for appropriate instructional materials used in target situations has been stressed. For discussion skills, the language focus generally centres on conversational functions. The language presented in instructional materials ought to focus on starting turns and marking intent. Such formulas have been variously termed in language description: for example, Edmondson uses the term ‘gambits’. McKenna talks of ‘meta-linguistic phrases’ and Burton uses the term ‘meta-statements’ for devices which forewarn the listener of the purpose of entries and Schifrin calls them ‘discourse markers’. Conversational gambits and certain expressions of the turn-taking system are necessary if the speakers wish to sound natural. Most learners of foreign languages find it difficult to speak and think of what to say next simultaneously. They actually manage to compose their own
speech after using a lot of thinking time. This creates many gaps in their talk which cause embarrassment to themselves and nuisance to others. Often they try to fill in these gaps by using linguistic devices from their mother tongue, which can be annoying to listeners. Using conversational gambits and certain expressions can help learners improve the naturalness of their speech to a great extent.

The idea of conversation is very closely related to the interactional use of the language. This function is expressive of speaker social relations and attitudes to one another. In teaching lot of emphasis may be placed on the interactional use of the language. Students may be taught how to use language to convey some content, provide or ask for information. It has to be recognised that the interactional use of the language is the primary aspect of the language. And in interactional language face-to-face checking is a crucial source for the speaker: for example, the cooperative listener will often nod or produce one of a battery of 'fillers'\(^\text{45}\) whose function is to reassure the speaker that the hearer understands the message adequately. One of the most striking differences between transcripts of speech and

\(^{45}\) Linguistic fillers are sounds and words that are spoken to fill up gaps in utterances. Different languages have different filler sounds. In English most common filler sounds are 'er', 'um'.
written texts is the density of signals from speaker to hearer about how to take the message and from hearer to speaker indicating whether or not the message has been adequately received and understood. It is this constant checking and reassurance which minimises the risk of misunderstanding in face-to-face conversation spoken language.

The success in communication is not so dependent on linguistic accuracy, but also involves the pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors. These aspects of language-use are far more complex than the linguistic ones. It is necessary for learners to know that a lot of conventions of their mother language can be transferred in the foreign language which they are learning.

There is also egocentric aspect involved in knowing how to use the language of conversational discourse. Knowledge of how to initiate a piece of conversation or function within it gives learners of a foreign language confidence, which is absolutely essential for communication. When people do not know how to start a conversation or make their contributions to one that is already being carried out, they feel trapped in other’s talking. They feel forced to respond to their co-speakers questions without being able to formulate their own questions, or to wait passively for others to start the conversation.
Teaching learners how to manage the conversation and teaching them discourse markers will help them considerably in conversational patterns. The ultimate benefit of it can encourage greater involvement of the foreign language speaker in conversational discourses that can consequently result in his/her overall progress in the foreign language naturally. Besides, discourse analysis encourages the articulation and commodification of new, unprecedented modes of expression. There is a need for the study, analysis and critique of hybrid written forms (e.g. newspaper formats that emulate TV sound bites.), electronic genres (e.g., email, home-pages), and creolised intertercultural and interlingual communication.

Similarly, there are several potential applications of the matrix principle to language learning. If a student has produced an unbalanced text, for example, a comparison of two points of view with the weight of arguments loaded to one side, one way of showing what is missing can be to draw a simple matrix based on his or her text and show how some of the cells are empty and shallow.

Second implication relates to what might be termed the problem of inconsistent or overconsistent perspective. If a student tells a story in simple time sequence but jumps from one perspective to another or sticks
unhelpfully to only one perspective, then he or she can be shown with the help of a matrix what other alternatives were available.

A more positive implication of matrix analysis for language learning lies in the development of logical and critical thinking. If students are given empty cells, they can be invited to consider what type of discourse material might need to be supplied to fill the cells and its implications can lead to the soundness of the writer’s argument.

The most important and perhaps the most obvious implication for language learning lies in the development of writing skills. Students can be given a matrix with brief notes in each cell and invited to write a complete text. The effect would be not only to test and develop the syntactic and lexical skills, but also to give practice in the skill of organising a text.

**Appropriacy of Appropriateness in Discourse**

The concept of ‘appropriateness’ in discourse presents a view that varieties of language differ in appropriateness for different purposes and different situations. It centres around the concept of aroundness. Theories of appropriateness underpin controversial policies on the teaching of standard English and the development of competence based view of language
education. The concept of appropriateness has been prominent in recent discussions of the teaching of English in schools, and of prevocational education as well as in language awareness programmes and materials. The following extract is a good example of how appropriateness of discourse figures in the Coax Report:

The notion of appropriateness to situation, topic, purpose, and language mode, and the fact that inappropriate language use can be a source of humour—(either intentional or unintentional)—may give the impression that the speaker or writer is pompous or inept or impertinent, or rude. Pupils should learn Standard English which is the language of wide social communication, and is particularly to be required in public, and formal settings. Teaching should cover discussions of the situations in which and purposes for which people might choose to use non-standard varieties rather than standard English, e.g. in speech with friends, in a local team or group, in television advertising, folk songs, poetry, dialogue in novels or plays.

Appropriateness is the corner stone of the Report’s policy on the teaching of a language. The overriding aim of the English curriculum, according to the Report, is to enable all pupils to develop to the full their ability to use and understand English in order to maximise the contribution of English to “the personal development of the individual child” and
"preparation for the adult world". The Coax Report suggests that it is possible, and its argument rests upon the concept of appropriateness that different varieties of English are appropriate for different contexts and purposes, and all varieties have the legitimacy of being appropriate for some contexts and purposes. Speech communities are characterised by well defined varieties clearly distributed among contexts and purpose, so that what is appropriate or inappropriate is a clear cut matter for all of us and also ascribes legitimacy to each and every variety as appropriate in some contexts. The report proposes that the capacity should be developed to speak and write appropriately and to assess the speech and writing of others in terms of appropriateness. In pursuit of these objectives teachers should aim to extend the range of discourses.

**Conclusion**

Discourse and discourse analysis had their hey days during the 1970s of the last century and people began analysing different types of the texts through the various devices which their respective authors used to achieve cohesion and coherence. Not only that, linguists turned their attention to identifying the special features which different types of texts contained and which made them distinct from one another. The result was a quick growth of
discourse types in different fields. Today, we talk of ‘discourse of medicine’, ‘discourse of education’, ‘discourse of news media’ etc in order to show how language is used differently in these different fields. Legal discourse has also been shown as having some distinctive features which makes its study all the more relevant and interesting. What feature the legal language manifests and how does legal English differ from all other Englishes would form the core of our discussion in the chapter that follows.

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46 For details on this issue, see Chimombo and Rosebury (1998).