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DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Jayashree Patnaik

Institute of Advanced Studies in English (IASE), Aundh, Pune, Maharashtra, India
jayashreepatnaik13@gmail.com

Abstract

A plethora of innovative pedagogical tools got invented of late enriching the episteme of English language teaching, while making the acquisition easy and comfortable for the English language learners. In the present research paper, it is studied how discourse analysis of English fictional texts can be used as a useful pedagogical tool to improve the communicative competence of English language learners. Regular practice of doing the analysis of different discourses from the texts helps the readers/learners to develop the speaking skills in English, through the acquisition of grammatical and semantic knowledge with enhanced vocabulary and specifically with socio-cultural contexts. The analyst has to move from the semantic study of the constituents of narratives, talk exchanges, structures of speech to the linguistic, cognitive, historical, social, rhetorical, psychological reasons for the distinctive forms and functions of discourse in context. Some of the textual extracts are taken here from the selected texts such as pieces of narrative and conversational discourses; and the major objective here is to prove how the different bases and modes of discourse analysis applied help the English language learner to achieve the communicative goal easily.

Keywords

Linguistic Competence, Locutionary, Illocutionary, Perlocutionary, Cooperative Principle, Politeness Principle

1. Introduction

1.1 Preliminaries

Discourse has been roughly defined as a linguistic unit larger than a sentence; and it is generally a spoken or written communication between people with meaningful exchanges and serious discussion of a particular subject. Our research work deals with the research question whether the practice of doing discourse analysis of English fictions helps the learner of English language to develop his/her communicative competence. Dell Hymes introduced the notion of communicative competence (1972), which is a rectification of Chomsky's linguistic competence (1965) based on grammaticality or "the ability to construct well formed sentences..." (Narkar 15). Hymes included "both the grammatical rules of language and the rules of appropriate use in different social contexts" (Narkar 15) to communicative competence.

Canale and Swain (1980) developed communicative competence to include the following elements:

Grammatical competence

Discourse competence

Sociolinguistic competence

Strategic competence

(Narkar 15)

But the communicative competence has to be achieved in a language from each and every dimension. And Jim Cummins (1979) talked about the two basic dimensions of language, "the social dimension (BICS) and the academic (CALP)" (Narkar 17). The table-1 given below refers to these dimensions.

Table 1: *Different Dimensions of English Language*

Sl No	Dimensions	Skills	Learning	Place of Learning	Manner of Use
1	BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills)	Langue skills needed in social dimension	Day-to-day language needed to interact socially with others	Learning takes place in cognitively undemanding environments	Ordinary talks of daily life

2	CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency)	Language proficiency and abstract thought processes needed for language learning	Listening, speaking, reading and writing about the subject area content material specialized and complex vocabulary, grammatical structures	language acquired in a formal environment	To develop cognitive skills for comparing, inferring, analyzing, synthesizing, being evaluative.
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Note: Language acquisition, communicative competence are related to both the dimensions of language.

Our research statement and hypothesis present the fact that regular practice of discourse analysis of fictional texts of English helps the English language learner to develop his/her communicative competence.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology used for this research work is dependent upon the data collected as sample extracts from selected texts to trace and judge the application of linguistic and linguistic-related theories in the different discourses, both narrative and conversational. This research work focuses on words, word orders, speech acts, expression of feelings, emotions and reflections of socio-cultural issues in the discourses. The two different approaches to discourse analysis, “descriptive” and “critical” used here are respectively with the goal “to describe how language works”(Gee 9) and “to offer deep explanations” ”(Gee 9). This research work is exploratory, explanatory and analytical. Discourse analysis is also application-oriented. But we have to refer to the theoretical framework for setting the parameters to judge the linguistic and extra-linguistic constituents of sample-extracts from the novels as per our plan outlining of the research design, to find out how the analysis helps to achieve communicative competence.

2. Theoretical Framework For Discourse Analysis

“Discourse analysis is the study of language-in-use.”(Gee 8) It works at patterns of language across the text. It examines the relationship between language and the socio-cultural context. The discourse analyst of a fiction aims to find out why there is the use of language in a certain way. “Discourse analysis considers how people manage interactions with each other.....” (Paltridge 9) There are different ways of doing discourse analysis, such as conversational analysis, narrative analysis, analysis of structures of expression, approaches

through cognitive and discursive psychology, and rhetoric and sublanguage studies. The process of doing discourse analysis is to take portions from the text, such as pieces of conversation, expression, narratives, and analyze. Structures of conversation are exhibited through adjacency pairs, turn-taking, conversational openings and closings, analysis of the beginning, middle and end. Between the utterances in a piece of conversation, there are logical, chronological, psychological links which are to be studied. There is also the analysis of the cohesive devices used, such as tense sequence (tense switch and blend), use of pronoun, textual ellipsis (missing of lexico-grammatical elements), discourse ellipsis, linking devices, deixis, and many other. The analysis of the context-oriented discourses with socio-cultural reflections includes the study of the observation of politeness in utterance, which is an attempt of the interlocutors to bridge the gap between them.

2.1 Politeness Principle

Politeness is both context-bound and culture specific; and it is related to communication development, and is also code-dependent. Paltridge refers to the three maxims of politeness proposed by Lakoff (1973). “These are ‘don’t impose’, ‘give options’ and ‘make your hearer feel good’.” (Paltridge 72). Politeness gets presented in both direct and indirect speech acts. But there are certain politeness norms which a speaker has to follow. The different forms of expressions of politeness are referential terms used by a speaker to address the hearer and also some other positive strategies like greetings, blessings and complimenting in compliance with the social factors. “The choice of address/reference terms depends on two social factors, the power-semantic and the solidarity semantic.”(Thorat 86) Greetings are “symbolic of phatic communion.” (Thorat 98). Blessings occur in “socially healthy contexts” (Thorat 104).

Table 2: Politeness Norms

Form/Strategy of Politeness	Responsible Factors	Patterns Used
Address/Referential Terms	Social : (i) Power Semantics – More powerful person uses less polite forms with an inferior and vice-versa. (ii) Solidarity Semantics : (Social Distance), Persons of same category	literal, Lexical, Referential, Social
Greetings	(i) Neutral System (Time of the Day, Arrival-Departure) (ii) Stratified System : (a) Workplace or dwelling place, (b) Interaction between man-to-man, man-to-woman, woman-to-woman, (c)	Use of certain lexical elements. (Positive strategy)

	Purpose, relationship	
Blessings	Culture	Culture specific, certain blessings are common to all culture (Positive strategy)
Complimenting	Personal and subjective assessment	Face-to-face or in-absentia manner of presentation (Positive strategy)
Compliment Response	Responsiveness	Thanking, agreeing, expressing happiness or disagreeing, rejecting

Note: Discourse analysis focuses on these politeness norms if used in the texts.

Besides the use of politeness norms there is the role of response in conversation that is a part of the cooperative principle observed during conversation.

2.2 Cooperative Principle

In conversation, every utterance is connected with the other as in a chain. There is cooperation between the interactants in the linguistic exchange. In order to maintain the cooperative principle during conversation, speakers normally observe four categories of maxims as suggested by Paul Grice. "... I call these categories Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner." (Grice 78) Maxim of Quantity suggests that the speaker has to be exactly informative, not more not less. Maxim of Quality says that the contribution has to be true. Maxim of Relation refers to the relevance. Maxim of Manner refers to clarity. Discourse includes utterances or speech acts.

2.3 Speech Acts

Every utterance in a speech act makes some kind of proposition. Structurally utterance can be declarative or interrogative or imperative. Functionally an utterance can be a question or a statement or order or request. Austin talks about utterance which accomplishes something, as performatives in contrast to the constatives which present a state of affair. He presents the three steps of speech act which are locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. Locutionary speech act is just the "act of saying something" (Austin 96), words, phrases in particular combination. Illocutionary speech act has contextual meaning or the implicative force of an utterance which Austin mentions, "performance of 'illocutionary' act...." (Austin 99). This is also associated with function or the illocutionary force. It is under the control of the speaker. Perlocutionary speech act implies the change in the mind of the hearer; and it is under the control of the hearer. As Austin says, "the perlocutionary act always includes some consequences."(107). Basing on the theory of Searle, there are

different types of speech act. As Nozar Niazi says, “Searle distinguishes between five major speech acts each constituting a host of other sub-acts which could be distinguished from each other by their felicity conditions.” (25).

Table 3: Searle’s Suggested Speech Acts

Speech Act	Function
Assertive	Asserting, Stating, Suggesting, Accusing, Criticizing, Complaining, Denying, Disagreeing, Predicting, Hypothesizing,
Commissive	Promise, Vow, Pledge, Guarantee
Directive	Request, Question, Order
Expressive	Expression of psychological states, Feelings, Attitude
Declarative	Endorse, Resign, Name, Appoint, Sentence, Nominate

Note. The analyst has to identify and study these speech acts and their uses in the discourses extracted from the texts.

2.4 Direct and Indirect Speech Act

According to Paltridge, “Sometimes when we speak we do mean exactly what we say..... Often we do, however, say things indirectly. That is, we often intend something that is quite different from the literal meaning of what we say.” (57) Depending on this notion, there are two different modes of speech act as indicated in the table below.

Table 4: Modes of Speech Act

Speech Act	Traits
Direct	direct relationship between structure and function, construction designed for the same act
Indirect	expressed by other construction (no match between structure and construction), concealed meaning, ex: verbal irony, rhetorical question, euphemism

Note .Indirectness operates at lexical, phrasal and sentence level.

3. Patterns of Discourse Analysis of Sample Extracts

Some examples of the patterns of discourse analysis of the extracts taken from the selected novels are given here; and it is to be proved how these help to improve the communicative competence of the reader/learner/analyst. We have taken here extracts from British, American, Indian novels written in English.

Sample No -1

An example of indirect speech act is taken here from the novel 2 States by an Indian novelist named Chetan Bhagat. This novel contains utterances which are culture-specific and context-bound. The novel is filled with speech situations, speech events, speech acts. In this novel the character Krish’s father does not like Kavita’s relatives. When he comes home and finds Kavita’s sister who greets him, indirectly he conveys that he does not like her and he says, “ I like your goodbye more than hello.” (69) This indirect speech act here performs the illocutionary function of sarcasm. The speaker does not ask the addressee directly to go away, but says the same indirectly. The learner comes to know here the trick of language to camouflage the negative expressions. This is also an assertive speech act.

Table 5: Effects of Analysis

Analysis of the type of discourse	Learning Acquired
Indirect speech act	Structural pattern, Grammatical use, Typical use of language with specific socio-cultural context, Literal, contextual and implicated meaning, Inferring, Interpreting, Use of indirect mode of speech act

Note: The analysis of such a kind of sample extract helps the learner to acquire language skills.

Sample No-2

An example of rhetorical question is taken here from the novel, kanthapura by an Indian novelist named Raja Rao. Here is one example of a person’s negative evaluation of the hearer’s personality that comes in the form of a rhetorical or false question, and is an assertion in the form of interrogation. He says, “Oh, go away!’ what do you know of outside world, you kitchen queen?” (54) The first part, ‘Oh, go away!’ is a directive speech act, as it is an order, and politeness principle is not observed here. In the second part, the structure is that of questioning; but it is only a remark. A rhetorical question is a false question where the person who asks the question knows the answer. There is no one-to-one relationship between the structure and function of utterance. Therefore, this is also an indirect speech act as in a direct speech act, there is one-to-one relationship between structure and function. There is also humor and sarcasm embedded in the term “Kitchen queen”.

Table 6: Effects of Analysis

Analysis of the type of discourse	Learning Acquired

Rhetorical question (Indirect Speech Act)	Structural pattern, Grammatical use, typical use of language with specific socio-cultural context, Sense the hidden meaning, Dual meaning, Irony, Contextual, literal, implicated meaning, Inferring, Directive speech act, Rhetorical question, Indirection in speech act
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Note: The learner acquires knowledge of grammaticality, structure, utterance.

Sample No-3

An example of the maintenance of cooperative principle in the talk- exchange of two characters in the novel, *Train to Pakistan* by an Indian novelist Khuswant Singh is taken here for study. The essence of cooperativeness in conversation is responsiveness. A character named Meet Singh in this novel, talks to a passenger in the train. This talk exchange is given below

‘You are reading.’

‘Yes, I am reading.’

‘What are you reading?’

‘A book.’

‘English?’

‘Yes, English.’

‘You must be educated.’

Iqbal did not comment.

‘What honourable name does your honour bear?’

‘My name is Iqbal.’

‘May your Iqbal (fame) increase.’

‘Where does your wealth reside, Babu Sahib?’

‘My poor home is in Jhelum district.’ (35)

The indigenized English here includes bilingualism and code-switching with the use of terms like ‘Babu Sahib’ and ‘Iqbal’ (fame). The form of address as ‘Babu Sahib’, a common honorific in Indian English shows the observation of politeness principle in cultural context. According to Thorat, the terms of address, honorifics “determine the relationship between the addresser and addressee in a given situation.”(85). Grice’s maxims are also followed here. There is a perfect response between the two interactants. If we go for a conversation analysis,

we find that the turn allocation is done by the first speaker Meet Singh, as he starts the conversation and asks the addressee ‘you are reading’ and the addressee takes his turn and replies. Both the interactants here make use of both grammatically complete sentences and single words for the turn-construction-units. One example is, as Meet Singh says, ‘English?’. If we study the speech acts, we find how the examples of illocutionary speech acts like ‘You are reading’ is responded by the perlocution, ‘Yes, I am reading’ in this minimal interactive unit of the conversation. The organisation of the turns in the entire conversation here follows the simple pattern suggested by Nozar Niazi as “I speak-you speak-I speak” (46) except at one point when Iqbal remained silent in response to the statement “you must be educated.”

Table 7: Effects of Analysis

Analysis of the type of discourse	Learning Acquired
A talk-exchange with maintenance of cooperative principle	Indigenized use of English language, Conversational organisation, Contextual, literal meaning with socio-cultural connection, Observation of politeness principle, Cooperative principle with the maintenance of four maxims and responsiveness in talk-exchange, Turn taking, Illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts, Grammatical use, Tense sequence

Note. The analysis of such a type of talk exchange helps the learner to learn the patterns of conversation. But many such discourses should be taken for practice.

Sample No- 4

The following narrative-extract is taken from the British novelist Jonathan Swift’s novel Gulliver’s Travels. It is extracted from the Chapter-1 of Part -1 (‘A Voyage to Lilliput’). This chapter opens with the following narrative that gives explicit information about himself and his family.

My father had a small estate in Nottinghamshire: I was the third of five sons. He sent me to Emanuel College in Cambridge at fourteen year old, where I resided three years, and applied myself close to my studies; but the charge of maintaining me, although I had a very scanty allowance, being

too great for a narrow fortune, I was bound apprentice to Mr. James Bates, an eminent surgeon in London, with whom I continued four years. (31)

In a narrative discourse, we have to find out the chronological links between the given narration, and the events narrated, whether the given narration is posterior or anterior or simultaneous to the events narrated. In the above paragraph the narration is posterior to events narrated. There is proper coherence with suitable semantic links. The study of proairetic dimension shows the connectivity of the actions; and there is also a causal relationship between the events. There is a connection between the propositions; and thereby sequences are well-maintained. The text is unambiguous, and the language code is simple, legible, with some homogeneity. The degree of narrative is high, as all the propositions supply information. According to Jan Renkema, "... narratives can tell us how people relate to each other..." (Renkema 198). This narrative presents a personal story; this is not a "non-participant narrative" (Renkema 198). This discourse orients the reader with its informative quality, being at the opening of the novel. It contains assertive speech acts. According to Nozar Niazi, "Assertives are speech acts that have a truth value which state what the speaker believes to be the case or not."(25).

Table 8: Effects of Analysis

Analysis of the type of discourse	Learning Acquired
Narrative discourse	Structural pattern, Grammatical use, (use of tense, Proposition, parts of speech etc.), contextual, literal meaning, Use of deixis, ellipsis, references, cohesion, Use of sequences, coherence, Pattern of narration, Exposition of facts through propositional sequences, Type of narrative, Assertive speech act.

Note. The learner develops the knowledge of grammar, structure, sequence, coherence, narration, exposition of facts in a narratology.

Sample No- 5

The following extract is taken from the British novelist Charlotte Bronte's novel Jane Eyre. It is taken from the last chapter of the novel.

One morning at the end of the two years, as I was writing a letter to his dictation, he came and bent over me, and said-

“Jane have you a glittering ornament round your neck?”

I had a gold watch-chain: I answered

“Yes”

“And have you a pale blue dress on?”

I had. He informed then, that for some time he had

fancied the obscurity clouding one eye was

becoming less dense; and that now he was sure of it. (522)

Here the conversation is a part of posterior narration. The speaker Jane is narrating her personal story. She is a participant. Here the narrative contains a conversation also. The event and the talk-exchange had taken place in the past. The narrator informs about the past incident, recollects the past talk-exchange between them. The protagonist-cum-narrator Jane narrates a past incident how her blind husband Rochester got back a slight vision, and at that time he tried to confirm whether it was a reality, and the talk exchange was based on it. The tense sequences work here as cohesive device for a time-reference to the past.

Table 9: Effects of Analysis

Analysis of the type of discourse	Learning Acquired
Narrative including past conversation	Structural pattern and grammar, Literal, Contextual meaning, Pattern of narration of the past event, Posterior narration, Past conversation, Chronological order, sequence, coherence, Turn-taking, Illocution and perlocution, Cooperative response, Use of tense sequence, time-reference

Note. Regular practice of the discourse analysis of such extracts would be helpful for the learner as he/she would know the techniques of narration.

Sample No- 6

A narrative analysis is done here taking an extract from the American novelist Ernest Hemingway’s novel, A Farewell to Arms. In the very beginning of the novel, the narrator narrates the following words. “At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came cholera. But it was checked in the end, only seven thousand died of it in the army.”

(4) This utterance is an assertive speech act. The narrator here presents a state of affair. Here

is an ironical statement with words ‘only’ and ‘seven thousand’. The statement also sets the serious tone of entire novel. The narrator is not a participant in the narration. This narrative functions as assertive speech act with informative qualities and tellability rendering sensational facts.

Table 10: Effects of Analysis

Analysis of the type of discourse	Learning Acquired
Narrative discourse	Structural pattern, Grammar items, Literal, contextual meaning with socio-cultural link, Use of irony principle, Dual meaning, Inferring, Chronological narration, Sequence, Coherence, One type of speech act, Non-participant narrative

Note. Analysis of such narrative discourses helps to know the techniques of narration, how to make an opening of discourse, whether it is serious or humorous.

Sample No- 7

An example of commissive speech act is taken from Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*. When the old man hooks the marlin, and is towed by the fish, he decides to stay with the fish and he says, “Fish,”..... “I’ll stay with you until I’m dead.” (34) Here the old man gives a commitment through a commissive speech act. According to Nozar Niazi, commissive speech acts, “express the intention of the speaker.” (26). This utterance is also an example of declarative speech act. “Declaratives are speech acts that change the world via their utterances.” (Niazi 27)

Table 11: Effects of Analysis

Analysis of the type of discourse	Learning Acquired
Utterance or Speech Act	Structural pattern, Grammar, Contextual, Literal meaning, Speech acts (commissive, declarative)

Note. The analysis of such an extracted discourse teaches the learner about the use of speech act, structural pattern.

4. Findings

From the observations of the effects of the discourse analysis of sample extracts from the selected novel, it is deduced that a learner develops the knowledge of lexical items, rules of syntax, morphology, grammar, coherence, understands the link of socio-cultural contexts

to interaction, and also learns the tricks or strategies to speak in the target language. The learner achieves competence in communication developing both BICS and CALP. But regular practice of the discourse analysis of many such varieties of extracts from fictional texts is a need for the purpose.

5. Conclusion

Discourse analysis of texts provides several pedagogical benefits. Due to the repeated practice of discourse analysis of several English texts, a learner gets exposed to the language. He or she learns patterns of speech in relation to culture specificity and also learns mannerism, etiquette and style of speaking. The learner gets to learn the typical manners of address, greetings, and blessings through the analysis of politeness principle and also learns to explore the communicative goals. The learner learns to understand and interpret the language better through the practice of interpretation of the textual discourse. Doing the practice of discourse analysis of texts sharpens a reader's perception of the texts as works of art. It helps to improve the analyst's creative spirit; and it helps to develop the art of writing or speaking. He or she learns the style of expressing facts. Exposure to the lexical items helps to expand the range of vocabulary. Analysis of structural elements like cohesive devices helps the analyst to develop grammatical competence. Repeated practice of discourse analysis helps to develop discourse competence, which is concerned with inter-sentential relationships, as the grammatical competence focuses on the minimal contents, that is, at the level of sentences. During discourse analysis the analyst deals with both the linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour of a discourse. It also helps to improve the socio-linguistic competence. A learner also improves the sense of interpretation of any kind of utterance, as discourse analysis deals with the psychological links of the discourses presented by the author and the characters in a text. With the development of the lexical and grammatical knowledge, the learner gets a better acquisition of language. The learner learns about the structure of a piece of conversation, patterns of utterance and response, explores the hidden beauty spots in the structural design of some text and develops the communicative competence. The learner learns the steps of conversation because of the analysis of the illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts, and the study of the observation of cooperative principle in a textual discourse. The learner develops his or her aesthetic sense and learns how to present facts through language in a very appealing manner. The learner considers the utterances in the text in terms of interlocutors's intentional and psychological status, their interpersonal relationship. In consequence, the learner learns to apply the same to the real life conversation and the naturally occurring language in the day-to-day life. The learner also

learns to make a cognitive approach to the illocutionary utterances of a speaker before getting into any kind of perlocution.

The significance of this research work is there in its contribution to the domain of English Language Teaching. But there should be more research works on discourse analysis. Our limitation is whether it is possible to go for such a kind of regular practice of discourse analysis of the texts in the classroom-teaching.

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