Course Meetings

Class time: Mon/Wed 1:15-3:05pm
Class location: 80-113

Instructor: Hannah Rohde
Office: Margaret Jacks Hall, room 030-C
Email: rohde@stanford.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday, after class or by appointment

What’s this course all about?

People use language in context, yet linguistic models of language structure and processing tend to focus on language in isolation, all else being equal. The focus of this course is on charting what it means for all else not to be equal in order to better understand how language works in larger discourse contexts. We will consider the organization of language above the sentence-level, considering a variety of cross-sentence discourse phenomena (coreference, ellipsis, information structure) and the types of models that have been proposed to capture cross-sentence relationships (coherence, discourse markers, conversational organization). We will explore a variety of approaches and discuss their theoretical assumptions, methodological tools, and empirical strengths and weaknesses.

What kinds of discourse will we be looking at?

That is in part up to you. Everyone is asked to select one reference discourse for use during the quarter. A reference discourse may include any corpus with linguistic content—consider written texts, recorded conversations, a movie transcript, a blog, an IM chat, twitter posts, or any other linguistic material. You may also be interested in focusing on data from a particular population—children, second language learners, individuals with impaired speech, etc. The linguistics department has access to many corpora (http://linguistics.stanford.edu/department-resources/corpora/), and feel free to consult me or other students about other datasets.

As noted on the course schedule below, discussion of readings will frequently be accompanied by data discussions. Given that week’s topic, we will report on the behavior of a particular phenomenon in our respective reference discourses. The data discussions are intended to make the readings more concrete and to allow you to test whether purported generalizations hold up across different genres/contexts/speakers. Your final project may use your reference discourse, but it need not.

Format
Seminar discussion, with a mix of instructor-led and student-led presentations of readings and data.

Responsibilities
Besides staying up to speed with readings and arriving with general questions/commentary, each student will be expected to: (1) participate in data discussions of reference corpora, (2) lead one day’s discussion, (3) refute one day’s discussion, and (4) develop a study or study proposal to be described in (4a) a one-page abstract to be submitted by May 11 and (4b) a final paper to be submitted by June 6.

Readings
There is no textbook. All readings will be available at http://coursework.stanford.edu/
Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Component</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Reporting on reference discourse</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Leading a class discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Refuting a class discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Abstract (due in class Wednesday May 11)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Paper (due by noon Monday June 6)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Leading/Refuting discussion
It will be useful if discussion leaders give a brief overview of the reading by placing the readings in context, and then continue the discussion with relevant questions/issues of interest. To facilitate the discussion, the leader is to bring a handout to be distributed at the beginning of class (please bring sufficient copies). The handout should highlight the main issues to be discussed, as well as the main points of the articles and their connections to prior readings, where relevant. (Think of the handout as an outline to draw on rather than a text to be read in class.)

For refuting a class discussion, the goal is to find some data/genre/population/etc. where the generalizations and assumptions laid out in the reading are called into question. For example, consider bringing samples from naturally-occurring or constructed discourse that do not fit easily into the model(s) being described or reporting on research that has tested relevant findings in alternative contexts.

Final project
For the final project, you are invited to explore some issue relevant to discourse-level phenomena by conducting a preliminary study or by developing a proposal for an experiment. The paper should motivate the topic you will be addressing (including a review of the relevant literature), describe your hypotheses and methods, and consider the implications of your (predicted) results. Ideally, you will collect and analyze some initial data, which you can then discuss in your paper. Students are encouraged, but not obliged, to collaborate with other students. A one-page (~500 word) abstract, including references, is due May 11.

SCHEDULE (readings and reference discourse findings to be discussed on day listed)

I. Introduction to Discourse Analysis
Mon March 28  Introduction, course goals, defining discourse
Wed March 30  What is discourse?
  Reference discourse: bring examples of any of Brown & Yule’s generalizations (a-j)
Mon April 4  Semantics vs. Pragmatics
  Reference discourse: bring examples of implicated meaning
Wed April 6  Computational tools
  Bring a laptop, if you have one
II. Role of Context in Interpretation

Ambiguity in Reference

Mon April 11  
Centering theory, Coherence


Reference discourse: report on recoverability of pronouns’ antecedents

Wed April 13  
Coherence, Bilingualism


It’s how you say it (or don’t say it)

Mon April 18  
Information structure


Reference discourse: label given/new & sentence position (are subjects always old?)

Wed April 20  
Ellipsis

Kertz, L. (*submitted*). Verb phrase ellipsis: The view from information structure.

Reference discourse: elided verb phrases & their antecedents

III. Representation of Discourse Structure

Coherence relations

Mon April 25  
Local & global coherence


Reference discourse: label relations (pick a model from this week or previous week)

Wed April 27  
Discourse trees vs. graphs


Discourse Markers

Mon May 2  
What are discourse markers?


Reference discourse: label one marker (relation) to see how it is used (or not used)

Wed May 4  
Do discourse markers always help?

IV. Conversational Organization

Conversation as joint action

Mon May 9 Coordination between speakers


Reference discourse: alignment of referring expressions over the course of a discourse

Wed May 11 Cooperativeness or consistency


***Final project abstract due in class***

Turn-taking

Mon May 16 Information flow in conversation


Reference discourse: length of turns/units at different points in discourse

Wed May 18 Turn-taking across cultures and online


V. “Well” that about wraps it up

Mon May 23 no class

Wed May 25 “Well” as a discourse marker


Reference discourse: annotate uses of “well” (agreement/disagreement/other)

Mon May 30 no class

Wed June 1 Discussion of final projects

Mon June 6 ***Final project paper due by noon***

Notice to students with disabilities

Students with documented disabilities: Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class must initiate the request with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. The DRC is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone 723-1066; TDD 725-1067). See http://www.stanford.edu/group/DRC/ for more information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic, Readings to discuss</th>
<th>Bring to class (RD = reference discourse)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 28</td>
<td><em>Introductions, course goals</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 4</td>
<td><em>Semantics vs. Pragmatics</em> Green 1989, Noveck 2008</td>
<td>RD: examples of implicated meaning</td>
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<td>April 6</td>
<td><em>Computational tools</em></td>
<td>Laptop, if you have one</td>
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<td><strong>Ambiguity in Reference</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11</td>
<td><em>Centering theory, Coherence</em> Miltsakaki 2002, Hobbs 1979</td>
<td>RD: pronouns &amp; their antecedents</td>
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<td>April 13</td>
<td><em>Coherence, Bilingualism</em> Sorace et al. 2009, Rohde et al. 2007</td>
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<td><strong>It’s how you say it (or don’t say it)</strong></td>
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<td>April 20</td>
<td><em>Ellipsis</em> Kertz submitted</td>
<td>RD: elided verb phrases &amp; their antecedents</td>
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<td>April 25</td>
<td><em>Local &amp; global coherence</em> Kehler 2004, Polanyi 1988</td>
<td>RD: label relations (pick a model)</td>
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<td>April 27</td>
<td><em>Discourse trees vs. graphs</em> Wolf &amp; Gibson 2005</td>
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<td>May 2</td>
<td><em>What are discourse markers?</em> Fraser 1999, Blakemore 1989</td>
<td>RD: label one marker/relation</td>
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<td>May 4</td>
<td><em>Expert/non-expert readers</em> Kamalski et al. 2008, project topic discussion</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
<td><em>Coordination between speakers</em> Holtgraves 2002, Clark 1985</td>
<td>RD: alignment in referring expressions</td>
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<td>May 11</td>
<td><em>Cooperativeness or consistency</em> Garrod &amp; Pickering 2004, Shintel &amp; Keysar 2007</td>
<td><strong>Final project abstract due in class</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Turn-taking</strong></td>
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<td><em>Turn-taking across cultures and online</em> Stivers et al. 2009, Baron 2010</td>
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<td><strong>V. “Well” that about wraps it up</strong></td>
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<td>May 25</td>
<td><em>“well” as a discourse marker</em> Blakemore 2002, Watts 1989</td>
<td>RD: “well” as agreement/disagreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1</td>
<td><em>Discussion of final projects</em></td>
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**Final project paper due by noon on June 6**