Syllabus for LING 234
Discourse
Spring 2011

Course Meetings

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

Instructor: Hannah Rohde

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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

Course Component	% of Final Grade
Class participation	
- Reporting on reference discourse	10%
- Leading a class discussion	20%
- Refuting a class discussion	10%
Final project	
- Abstract (due in class Wednesday May 11)	10%
- Paper (due by noon Monday June 6)	40%

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 *Introductions, course goals, defining discourse*

Wed March 30 *What is discourse?*

> Brown, G. & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse Analysis.* Preface & Ch 1.

> Halliday, M. A. K. & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English.* Ch 1.

> <u>Reference discourse</u>: bring examples of any of Brown & Yule's generalizations (a-j)

Mon April 4 *Semantics vs. Pragmatics*

> Green, G. M. (1996). *Pragmatics and Natural Language Understanding.* Ch 4 & 5.

> Noveck, I. A. & Reboul, A. (2008). Experimental pragmatics: A Gricean turn in the study of language. *TRENDS in CogSci*, 12, 425-431.

> <u>Reference discourse</u>: 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*

Miltsakaki, E. (2002). Towards an aposynthesis of topic continuity and intra-sentential anaphora. *Computational Linguistics*, 28, 319-355.

Hobbs, J. (1979). Coherence and coreference. *Cognitive Science*, 3, 67-90.

Reference discourse: report on recoverability of pronouns' antecedents

Wed April 13 *Coherence, Bilingualism*

Rohde, H., Kehler, A. & Elman, J. L. (2007). Pronoun Interpretation as a Side Effect of Discourse Coherence. Proceedings of the 29th Annual CogSci Conference.

Sorace, A., Serratrice, L. Filiaci, F. & Baldo, M. (2009). Discourse conditions on subject pronoun realization: linguistic intuitions of older bilingual children. *Lingua*, 119, 460-477.

It's how you say it (or don't say it)

Mon April 18 *Information structure*

Prince, E.F. (1992). The ZPG letter: subjects, definiteness, and information-status. In Thompson, S. and Mann, W., eds. *Discourse description: diverse analyses of a fund raising text.* pp. 295-325.

Ward, G., & Birner, B. (2004). Information structure and non-canonical syntax. In L. R. Horn & G. Ward (Eds.), *The Handbook of Pragmatics.* pp. 153-174.

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*

Kehler, A. (2004). Discourse coherence. In L. R. Horn & G. Ward (Eds.), *The Handbook of Pragmatics.* pp. 241-265.

Polanyi, L. (1988). A formal model of the structure of discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 12, 601-638.

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

Wed April 27 *Discourse trees vs. graphs*

Wolf, F. & Gibson, E. (2005). Representing discourse coherence: A corpus-based analysis. *Computational Linguistics*, 31, 249-288.

Discourse Markers

Mon May 2 *What are discourse markers?*

Fraser, B. (1999). What are discourse markers? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 931-952.

Blakemore, D. (1989). Denial and Contrast: A Relevance Theoretic Analysis of "But". *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 12(1), 15-37.

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

Wed May 4 *Do discourse markers always help?*

Kamalski, J., Sanders, T., & Lentz, L. (2008). Coherence Marking, Prior Knowledge, & Comprehension of Informative & Persuasive Texts: Sorting Things Out. *Discourse Processes*, 45, 323-345.

IV. Conversational Organization

Conversation as joint action
Mon May 9 *Coordination between speakers*

> Holtgraves, T. M. (2002). *Language as social action: Social psychology and language use.* Ch4.

> Clark, H. H. (1985). Language use and language users. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology (3rd ed.).* pp. 179-231.

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

Wed May 11 *Cooperativeness or consistency*

> Garrod, S. & Pickering, M. J. (2004). Why is conversation so easy? *TRENDS in CogSci*, 8, 8-11.

> Shintel, H. & Keysar, B. (2007). You Said It Before and You'll Say It Again: Expectations of Consistency in Communication. Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 33(2), 357-369.

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

Turn-taking
Mon May 16 *Information flow in conversation*

> Chafe, W. (1987). Cognitive constraints on information flow. In R. Tomlin (Ed) *Coherence and Grounding in Discourse.* pp 21-51.

> Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50, 696-735.

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

Wed May 18 *Turn-taking across cultures and online*

> Stivers, T., Enfield, N. J., Brown, P., Englert, C., Hayashi, M., Heinemann, T., Hoymann, G., Rossano, F., de Ruiter, J. P., Yoon, K., Levinson, S. C. (2009). Universals and cultural variation in turn-taking in conversation. *PNAS*, 106(26), 10587-10592.

> Baron, N. (2010). Discourse Structures in Instant Messaging: The Case of Utterance Breaks. *Language@Internet*, 7.

V. "Well" that about wraps it up

Mon May 23 no class

Wed May 25 *"Well" as a discourse marker*

> Blakemore, D. (2002). "Well". *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Markers.* pp128-148.

> Watts, R. (1989). Taking the pitcher to the "well": native speakers' perception of their use of discourse markers in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 13, 203-237.

> 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.

Schedule in brief

	Topic, Readings to discuss	Bring to class (RD = *reference discourse*)
I. Introduction to Discourse		
March 28	*Introductions, course goals*	
March 30	*What is discourse?* Brown & Yule 1983, Halliday 1976	RD: examples of any of B&Y (a-j) (p.15-17)
April 4	*Semantics vs. Pragmatics* Green 1989, Noveck 2008	RD: examples of implicated meaning
April 6	*Computational tools*	Laptop, if you have one
II. Role of Context in Interpretation		
	Ambiguity in Reference	
April 11	*Centering theory, Coherence* Miltsakaki 2002, Hobbs 1979	RD: pronouns & their antecedents
April 13	*Coherence, Bilingualism* Sorace et al. 2009, Rohde et al. 2007	
	It's how you say it (or don't say it)	
April 18	*Information structure* Prince 1992, Ward & Birner 2004	RD: label given/new & sentence position
April 20	*Ellipsis* Kertz *submitted*	RD: elided verb phrases & their antecedents
III. Representation of Discourse Structure		
	Coherence relations	
April 25	*Local & global coherence* Kehler 2004, Polanyi 1988	RD: label relations (pick a model)
April 27	*Discourse trees vs. graphs* Wolf & Gibson 2005	
	Discourse Markers	
May 2	*What are discourse markers?* Fraser 1999, Blakemore 1989	RD: label one marker/relation
May 4	*Expert/non-expert readers* Kamalski et al. 2008, project topic discussion	
IV. Conversational Organization		
	Conversation as joint action	
May 9	*Coordination between speakers* Holtgraves 2002, Clark 1985	RD: alignment in referring expressions
May 11	*Cooperativeness or consistency* Garrod & Pickering 2004, Shintel & Keysar 2007	****Final project abstract due in class****
	Turn-taking	
May 16	*Information flow in conversation* Chafe 1987, Sacks et al. 1974	RD: length of turns/units
May 18	*Turn-taking across cultures and online* Stivers et al. 2009, Baron 2010	
V. "Well" that about wraps it up		
May 25	*"well" as a discourse marker* Blakemore 2002, Watts 1989	RD: "well" as agreement/disagreement
June 1	*Discussion of final projects*	

Final project paper due by noon on June 6