TWO COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS[1]

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ABSTRACT

Two broad approaches to the study of discourse analysis are compared and contrasted, one deriving primarily from issues based in sociolinguistics and the other deriving from the concerns of psycholinguistics and cognitive science. The general concerns governing each are sketched, along with relevant examples illustrating the types of problems each deals with. It is suggested that while the two approaches can be viewed as generally complementing each other rather than being in conflict, there are areas of potential overlap and intersection.

1. INTRODUCTION

The student of discourse analysis faces at the outset two major challenges when undertaking any research project. First is the simple fact that there is an enormous variety of types of discourse available to be studied, ranging from written to oral, from very casual conversations to highly elaborate monologues or narratives, with just about any imaginable topic, and with an enormous variety of what seem to many to be genre-specific constraints and conditions. Clearly, one cannot simply study 'discourse'; rather, a choice must be made as to the type(s) to be studied, and the issues to be addressed within that (or those) types.

The second challenge is a methodological one: just what kinds of methods can appropriately be brought to bear on the study of discourse? In general, there have been two basic answers to this question. The first, and probably both the best-known and most extensively pursued, is the one in which discourse is studied from a sociolinguistic perspective, using the sociological and ethnomethodological techniques familiar from both sociol-

ogy and anthropology. Here, attention is directed primarily to an under-standing of the organization of discourse in terms of such familiar socio-logical notions as relative power of participants, turn-taking conventions, opening and closing sequences, topic negotiation, and the like. The factors which play explanatory roles in such approaches are typically sociological in nature and as such seem to be part of the social conventions we implic-itly know, share and observe when we engage in language use. The second approach, which springs chiefly from the cognitive sciences and psycholin-guistics, deals less with the roles played by sociological factors, although these are certainly acknowledged as important, than with those cognitive factors which derive from our shared mental architecture and which shape the form of discourse. In this approach, focus is often on the contributions to the organization and structure of discourse of such factors as memory constraints, lexical access, processing principles and strategies, informa-tion distribution and management, and the like.

The goal of the present paper is to characterize in somewhat more de-tail these two complementary approaches to discourse analysis and, since the psycholinguistic approach is less well represented in the literature of the field, to exemplify the sorts of concerns and issues it addresses with specific examples and case studies. In the next section, we offer a brief characterization of the sociologically based approach to the study of dis-course, along with typical examples to provide clarification. We then turn to a discussion of the psycholinguistically based approach, where specific examples are discussed in some detail in order to illustrate the types of concerns which form the focus of such studies. The final section concludes that both approaches have important contributions to make to our under-standing of the nature of discourse, and that rather than being in conflict, the two approaches in large measure can be seen to complement one an-other.

2. SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Perhaps the most familiar approach to discourse analysis is that which focuses on the nature and organization of oral conversations, a tradition represented, for example, in the work of Blakemore (1988), Schiffrin (1988, 1994), Stubbs (1983), Tannen (1984), and many others. Conversations oc-cupy center stage in this research, and the strategies which participants employ as they initiate, advance, restructure, redirect, and close their so-cial interactions are often dealt with in considerable detail. It is not surprising, given such an orientation, that conversational analysis tends to

focus on the variables associated with the participants themselves, including, *inter alia*, age, sex, social status (real or perceived), relative power, degree of familiarity, and social environment. These factors and others are found to play significant roles in ways in which conversations evolve, including the ways in which participants take turns, control topics, guide the thread of developing themes, change the subject, and close conversations.

The work of Tannen (1984) provides a classic example of this approach to discourse analysis. In this rich and detailed presentation, Tannen analyzed an extended set of conversations taped at a Thanksgiving Day dinner party, involving several participants. While the participants knew they were being taped, they were close enough friends that the recording appeared not to trouble them. Once she had transcribed and analyzed the entire session, she focused attention on such factors as the relative contributions of the various participants, the types of turn-taking exhibited, and the ways in which conversational topics were introduced and manipulated. Tannen demonstrated the importance of the participants' mutual interrelations, shared knowledge, and degree of familiarity with one another in the ways the conversation evolved. Her analysis was directed at precisely those sociological and sociolinguistic variables which are so crucial in this particular sort of research.

One variable which has received considerable attention within sociolinguistics is that of the role of gender in language use. While the study of sex differences in language has a long, and often tarnished tradition (e.g., Cameron 1992: 42ff), it was the work of R. Lakoff (1975) which brought the political issues associated with sex differences in language to the attention of the linguistics community at large. While pioneering, Lakoff's work has also been criticized for promulgating a view that there are two types of language, the neutral version and a deviant version used by women, a stereotype not very different from that which Lakoff herself attacked (Cameron 1992: 44). The value of Lakoff's early work, however, lay in the fact that she called attention to specific aspects of what she called 'women's language', including the claim that women use less forceful language than men, revealed in women's use of more approval-seeking tag questions and more uncertain rising intonations, etc., in contrast to men's more forceful use of, e.g., swearing and abrupt speech. This perspective, which Cameron (1992) has labeled a 'folklinguistic' view of sex differences in language, not only maintains that men and women talk differently, but that women constitute a deviation from the (male) norm.

With the appearance of her book, researchers quickly turned their attention to various of Lakoff's claims, including other pioneering scholars such as Kramarae (1978) and Spender (1980). The latter opined that we tend to have different expectations for male and female language including, for example, the assumptions that women speak longer than men and employ more tag questions and interruptions. Early investigations following up on the anecdotal evidence offered by Lakoff tended initially to support her observations. Fishman (1980), for example, found that women used certain types of hedges five time more often than men, although when she examined the function of this use she found that the hedges tended to be concentrated at just those points where the women unsuccessfully attempted to initiate a topic change.

The accuracy of folklinguistic stereotypes about women's language have however been widely challenged. Swacker (1975), for example, found that men took on the average five times longer than women to provide oral descriptions of pictures. In their influential analysis of 150 hours of courtroom data, O'Barr and Atkins (1980) found that stereotypic 'women's features' of language did not correlate with the gender of the speaker, but rather with relative powerlessness. Individuals with higher social status and more courtroom experience (i.e., judges, lawyers) exhibited features of powerful language, regardless of gender, whereas those persons with lower status and less courtroom experience, namely witnesses, showed significantly more instances of hesitations, hedges, tag questions, lack of confidence, hypercorrect grammar and the other familiar 'low power' characteristics so often stereotypically associated with women. They concluded, *contra* Lakoff (1975), that the use of hedges, tags, emphatic forms, and 'empty' adjectives was governed more by social status and experience than by the sex of the speaker (see also, e.g., Cutler & Scott 1990, Dubois & Crouch 1975). While the O'Barr and Atkins' research has been widely cited, there is nevertheless other research which fails to confirm their results. Woods (1989), for example, found that men tended to take and hold the floor in conversations more than women regardless of whether they held a dominant or subordinate position in the situation. Similarly, Leet-Pellegrini (1980) argued that males tend to dominate and claim for themselves broad (and often unjustified) expertise in conversations while women gravitate toward more supportive roles.

In their analysis of the role of gender, Maltz and Borker (1982) examined a large body of research dealing male-female differences in language use and function and argued that there are certain basic characteristics associated with women's language and others associated with men's.

Women, they noted, tend to ask more questions, do more work in maintaining social interactions, use more positive minimal responses ('mm hmm' etc.), use silence as a response to an interruption, and use more personal pronouns, while men are more likely to interrupt, challenge their partner's utterances, ignore comments from other speakers, keep control of conversational topics, and make use of more direct declarations of fact or opinions. They point out that while most explanations of these differences have focused on the role of social power, such that men's language reflects their dominance in society, or on conversational roles defined by sex-role, they propose an alternative explanation, namely that the differences between men's and women's language use depends on their membership in quite different and distinct subcultures (see also Coates 1993, Ch. 7). The differences in subculture, they argue, result in differences between men's and women's understandings of and attitudes toward the rules for engaging in and interpreting friendly conversation. They note that boys and girls tend to acquire their social and interactive skills primarily in the context of their own sex, with a result that boys and girls tend to play differently and interact differently. While boys tend to adopt longer games with dominance and assertion playing important roles, girls tend to be less interested in who is dominant and more in the social interactions and relationships. This, it is suggested, leads to the result that women's conversation is largely interactional, with a considerable amount of conversational resources devoted to maintenance of social networks, while men's conversation tends to be assertive and competitive, with an eye to the negotiation and maintenance of status.

Maltz and Borker argue that since men and women possess different conversational rules, it is not surprising that they miscommunicate in many areas. For example, men might see the function of a question as a request for information while women might interpret that same question as a device for conversational maintenance. Similarly, women's positive responses ('yes, mm hmmm') as listeners might be intended to communicate something like 'yes, I am listening to you' while men might take that same utterance to signal agreement. Their view, then, is that different subcultures in which men and women find themselves define their views and shape their attitudes about conversational interaction.

While there have been a number of studies arguing that men (or women) tend to use more tag questions, more words, etc., more recent studies have focused on the functions served by the use of such structures, and the contexts in which they are used, in both men's and women's language. The aim here is to move beyond the superficiality of, e.g., just

counting relative frequencies of structures and instead to ask how those structures are used, and if they are used differently by men and women. Holmes (1984), for example, found that women tend to use more facilitating tag questions, those which have a positive politeness function and which express solidarity with the addressee. In her more extensive recent work, Holmes (1993) examined tag questions, relative verbosity, and a variety of other factors, using an extensive discourse corpus of about 60,000 words. Having found, in the speech of New Zealand women, tags used for a variety of specific politeness functions as well as to strengthen assertions, she refuted Lakoff's (1975) claim that women's tags function primarily to avoid commitment (e.g., as hedges). Similar detailed research has also focused on the role of gender in such areas as interruptions, topic control, and wordiness (see, e.g., James & Clarke 1993).

This research reflects the more recent trend in the area of the study of language and gender to examine the often subtle and complex functions to which structures are put, rather than relying on either folklinguistic stereotypes or superficial differences in gross frequencies without attention to function. In short, the evolving research in this area is becoming much more sensitive to the context in which language is used, with the result that inconsistencies found in much of the earlier research are often attributed to the neglect of the social contexts in which the language was used, a failure which can potentially blur the relevant factors and can result in incorrect conclusions (see James & Drakich 1993).

Moreover, as Maltz and Borker (1982) noted, language differences associated with gender have sometimes been confounded with those associated with relative power. Power is revealed in discourse in terms of such factors as who controls topics and directions within conversation, perhaps as a function of the status of the participants. As Lakoff (1990) demonstrates time and again, power is a very crucial factor in conversation. For example, in legal or medical situations, power clearly resides in a lawyer, judge, doctor, etc., and the protocols of the particular situation (trail, medical examination, etc.) tend to imbue the more powerful individual with particular 'rights' in directing the conversation, even if the 'non-expert' (witness, patient, etc.) may have far more investment in the outcome of the discussion than the holder of power. The fact that men tend to exercise more power than women in certain public situations might naturally lead to the conclusion that it is gender rather than relative power which is the relevant variable. The truth is probably that both factors play both independent and interacting roles in the ways we use language.

While gender and power are clearly two important social factors involved in conversational analysis, recent research from a sociolinguistic perspective has also turned its attention to the influence of 'context' on conversation. Duranti and Goodwin (1992), for example, argue that when the notion of context is extended to encompass not only linguistic but also social, cultural, and even ritual aspects, a better understanding can be achieved of the constraints on the roles played by individuals within conversations. Duranti (1992), for example, examines the role of cultural context in his assessment of the Samoan language of respect, while Lindstrom (1992) undertakes an analysis of the contextual contributions of both culture, that of the Vanuatu of Tanna Island, and social ritual, that of conflict resolution, as factors governing how individuals interact in conversations of very special sorts.

Within the same sociological tradition, but differing somewhat from conversational analysis, we find the complementary field of the ethnography of speaking (e.g., Duranti 1988), with its emphasis on Hymes' (1972) notion of 'communicative competence', i.e., that knowledge which conversational participants both need and display as they engage in successful communication. Such research places considerable importance on the ways in which speaking and communicating actually contribute to the structuring of society and of peoples' lives within that social fabric.

It should be apparent from the brief sampling of research on discourse within the sociolinguistics context that such work has been eclectic in its exploitation of the research methodologies and theoretical insights from a large number of neighboring disciplines, including of course sociology, but also cultural anthropology, social psychology, a variety of cross-cultural studies, and ethnomethodology. Such influences have not only informed the sociolinguistic study of discourse but have also broadened and deepened the work.

In her recent *Approaches to Discourse*, Schiffrin (1994), characterized six different versions of discourse analysis, which she labels the speech act, interactional sociolinguistic, ethnography of communication, pragmatic, conversation analysis, and variationist approaches. While each of these approaches has its own origins and orientations, there are nevertheless numerous overlaps, as Schiffrin is quick to point out. Some derive primarily from philosophic concerns, such as the speech act version, while others have their origins in ethnography or sociolinguistics. However, none of these approaches, with the possible exception of certain of the variationist studies of Labov and his followers, approach the study of discourse from a cognitivist perspective. Even here, while statistical methods familiar from

psychology are often used to analyze elicited 'texts', experimental methods are only infrequently employed. It is evident then that one important approach to the study of discourse, that which derives from psycholinguistic concerns about the nature of language representation and process, has largely been excluded from the more conventional expositions of the field, although this tendency appears now to be changing at least to the extent that experimental methodologies are coming to play a more important role.

At this point, we now turn to a more specific discussion of a rather different approach to the study of discourse, one deriving from the concerns central to the psycholinguistic study of language.

3. PSYCHOLINGUISTIC APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In contrast to the sociolinguistically oriented studies of discourse, approaches deriving from a typically cognitivist, experimental, or psycholinguistic perspective tend to focus on the contributions made to the organization and structure of discourse by cognitive and processing factors. A certain view of functionalism also plays an important role in such approaches to the extent that attempts are made to determine not only what functional distinctions are important in language use, but also how those distinctions are coded within the morphosyntax of a language. Thus, attention within this context may be addressed to determining the discourse conditions which, for example, govern the use of pronouns rather than full NPs, control the distribution of given and new information, or determine which member of a set of 'stylistic variants' might be used in a particular situation.

Theoretical input to discourse research in the psycholinguistic framework derives from a host of sources including experimental psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, formal and functional linguistic theory, and typology. Accordingly, particular research contributions are often eclectic in flavor, drawing upon numerous sources. A useful illustration of the importance of diversity of input to a particular issue can be found in the train of research dealing with foreground and background information in discourse. In their pioneering work, Hopper (1979) and Hopper and Thompson (1980) addressed the nature of transitivity and its function in coding foreground information in discourse, seminal work which provided the impetus for a series of further studies focusing on the role of transitivity features in discourse grounding. Tomlin (1985) and Wang (1994), for example, explored the notion from a psycholinguistic perspective, while

Givón (1987) examined the topic from a typological perspective, with data from a variety of languages. Functional, typological, and psycholinguistic threads have all contributed to the complex tapestry of the grounding studies, and our understanding of discourse grounding is clearly enriched by the diverse contributions.

Similarly, research dealing with the nature and distribution of given and new information has, over the past twenty years, relied heavily on the pioneering work of Clark and Haviland (1977), who argued for the importance of processing considerations in an understanding of information distribution. Subsequent research elaborated the notions of given and new information from pragmatic and linguistic perspectives (e.g., Prince 1981, Brown & Yule 1983, Ariel 1985), providing sharper definitions of types of given information and clearer understandings of the uses in discourse to which the different types are put. Psycholinguistic considerations entered the picture as early as Clark and Haviland's (1974) initial proposals, while experimental studies of the role and bridging functions played by given information (e.g., Smyth, Prideaux, & Hogan 1979, Smyth 1988) have helped illuminate the constraints imposed by working memory on the function and time decay of given information within discourse.

These two brief examples reveal how our understanding of the organization and structure of discourse can be extended by exploiting theoretical insights from a variety of neighboring disciplines. At the same time, they also suggest that within the psycholinguistic framework being considered here, a variety of methodologies can be profitably exploited. The psycholinguistic approach to the study of discourse, while focusing on the structures used, their functions, and their sources in processing and representational factors constraints by our mental architecture, tends to exploit a variety of methodologies.

Not only are (both oral and written) texts often used as data, but in addition, data are also garnered from experiments using a wide variety of methodologies. The virtues and advantages of experimental methodologies for the study of language, along with their potential disadvantages, have been widely discussed throughout the psycholinguistics literature and are rehearsed in virtually every textbook dealing with the subject. However, further advantages of experimental methodologies often reveal themselves in unexpected ways. For example, in many of the early discussions concerning the role of gender in the types of language used in discourse, including both folklinguistic views as well as some influential research discussed above (e.g., Lakoff 1975), it was often asserted that men and women differ in their use of various linguistic features (e.g., tag ques-

tions, hedges, pauses, amount of wordiness, etc.), often with little support-
ing evidence. In such early studies, one factor often not taken into account
was that of the *topic* of the discussion.[2]

It should be immediately clear that both men and women will tend to
have a greater interest in some topics than others. If this is so, and if there
are also power imbalances in participants, it should not be surprising to
find that those individuals with less interest in a given topic might be less
verbose than those whose interest in the topic is far stronger. In short, the
topic of a conversation or narrative should be expected to play an impor-
tant role in determining which participants are more active and which are
less involved, more hesitant. Yet in much of the early research reporting on
the differences between women's and men's language, the topic of the
conversation on which the results are based was often ignored.

In an experimental context, the topic of a discourse can be strictly con-
trolled, as Chafe and his colleagues demonstrated in the pear stories
studies (Chafe 1980). Here, all subjects saw the same short film and then
provided narratives describing what they saw. In a series of studies using
a similar technique, participants individually watched a short film clip and
then provided a short narrative description to both a friend and to a
stranger (Prideaux & Hogan in press a). In that study, it was found that
there was no difference between males and females in terms of such fac-
tors of the frequency of pauses, hesitations, hedges, tag questions, or any
of the other 'women's language' characteristics. That is, once the topic
was deliberately selected to be fixed and neutral, men and women tended
to behave in much the same way with respect to these features in their oral
narratives.[3] The one sociological factor in that study which did make a
difference was that of relative familiarity of addressee. When speaking to
a friend, a narrator tended to be somewhat more verbose than when
speaking to a stranger, with same-sex dyads (male to male friend or fe-

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[2] This shortcoming has, of course, been given much more serious attention by
those sociolinguists interested in probing more deeply into the subtle
contextual aspects governing language use.

[3] One might, with hindsight, argue that no such differences should have been
expected in such a study for the use of, for example, tag questions since the
major male-female difference is that women use tags in a more facilitative
function than do men and in the present task there is no functional demand
for such a usage. At the same time, none of the other stereotypically female
factors was found to be statistically significant either. There was, however, a
great deal of individual difference among both men and women in the use of
all these features.

male to female friend) being the most loquacious, and with males being slightly wordier than females. While the major thrust of the study was to examine the relative strengths of certain hypothesized cognitive factors in the organization of discourse, the present small example reveals that such a methodology is also of value for examining at least selected sociolinguistic features as well. Clearly the lexical choices involved in the various narratives might also constitute a fertile arena for exploring potential male-female differences in language use.

While the above studies tended to exploit experimental methodologies, other empirical methods, such as studies of the frequencies of various structures within written texts, have also proved extremely useful. In fact, the study of written texts, along with transcriptions of oral texts, such as narratives, sermons, political speeches, and the like, can provide considerable insight into the sorts of processing principles which participate in the structuring of discourse. Moreover, while psycholinguistic studies of discourse benefit from methodological insights from a variety of sources, they also benefit from the insights and proposals found in theoretical linguistics. It is to a discussion of two such notions, namely markedness and closure, that the remainder of this section is devoted.

The notion of markedness has assumed an important position in linguistic theory for decades (see, e.g., Andersen 1989), dating back at least to the theoretical insights of the Prague School. It has found expression in phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, and its function has been addressed in terms of language acquisition (children tend to learn unmarked forms first) and language processing (unmarked forms are assumed to be relatively easier to process than marked forms). In general, markedness theory suggests that when alternative expressions are available, the unmarked form will tend to be more canonical in form, have a wider distribution range, and be more frequent that its marked counterpart. For example, in Itagaki (1994), we find a series of studies on Japanese comprehension, translation, and acquisition which reveal that markedness plays a significant role in both processing and acquisition, with the unmarked structures both easier to process and more frequent than their marked counterparts.

From a psycholinguistic and functional perspective, the obvious and immediate question is: what is the communicative purpose, the discourse function, of the markedness distinction? And some attempts have been made to address this question. For example, in a non-experimental study, Gundel, Houlihan, and Sanders (1988) suggested that unmarked structures have a higher communicative value to the speaker, since they are easier to

produce, while marked structures have higher communicative value to the hearer. While no empirical evidence was adduced in support of this proposal, a line of argument was advanced in which iconicity plays a central role. In considering sentences containing a main and subordinate clause, such as:

(1) a. After it snowed, classes were canceled.

     b. Classes were canceled after it snowed.

Gundel et al. claimed that (1a) was the unmarked member since it was iconic. Others, however, (e.g., Clark & Clark 1977, Givón 1987) have argued that the factor of syntactic clause order determines markedness in such pairs, with the unmarked member having the order of main clause - subordinate clause (MC+SC); this appears to be the generally prevailing view concerning markedness for such structures. Under the assumption that the order MC+SC is unmarked and SC+MC is marked, it is clearly the case that marked structures can be non-iconic as well. Sentence (1a) would be marked but iconic, while (1b) would unmarked but non-iconic.

The question still remains, however, as to the discourse function of marked structures. One proposal, offered by Fox (1987) is that marked structures might serve to delimit thematic boundaries in a discourse, a view also supported by Givón (1987). Fox offered text data from English and Tagalog as evidence for the proposal, with the written paragraph taken as the operational definition of a thematic unit. In a similar vein, Prideaux (1989) examined three written texts, again using paragraph boundaries as indications of thematic shifts. Attention here was directed specifically to complex sentences containing subordinate adverbial clauses, such as those in (1). In only one of the texts, the most informal and oral of the three examined, did the marked forms show up significantly more often than the unmarked forms in paragraph initial position. The canons and conventions governing written paragraphs are, however, notoriously flexible and may be a function of style, genre, rhythm, or any number of other imaginable factors. For this reason, an extensive study was undertaken of both oral and written narratives, collected under controlled conditions, and with the same topic in each.

This experimental study (Prideaux & Hogan 1993) had participants watch a short film clip and then provide a narrative description of what they had seen, either in an oral form to a specified addressee or in a written version. Forty oral narratives were collected (20 male and 20 female), and 32 written narratives (16 male and 16 female). All narrated the same scene. Independent judges analyzed the events in the film clip and deter-

mined where each episode began. With this event analysis, it was possible to examine each narrative description and find, in each, the first mention of each episode. All instances of marked and unmarked complex structures were tabulated, along with an indication of where they had appeared in each episode. It was found that in both the oral and written narratives, the marked structures (SC+MC) occurred statistically far more frequently at the beginning of a thematic unit (episode) than an unmarked structure; similarly, the unmarked structure (MC+SC) tended to occur far more frequently within an episode than did a marked structure. This study provided further evidence in support of the hypothesis that one major function of marked structures is to code a change in thematic unit. In this study, however, there was no dependence on the canons of paragraphing, since episodes and thematic units were independently determined from the content of the scene being described.

To bring the study full circle, a further text analysis study was undertaken on marked structures (Prideaux & Hogan in press b). Instead of using the paragraph as the indicator of a new thematic unit, however, an even stronger break was selected for this purpose—the chapter. In two separate novels, the first sentence of each chapter was analyzed in term of markedness, and to serve as controls, the first sentence of the third paragraph and the second of the fourth paragraph were also assessed for their markedness status. In both books, marked structures appeared chapter-initial significantly more often than in either of the other two positions, while unmarked structures appeared significantly more often in non-chapter initial positions. Such a result supports the hypothesis that a important function of marked structures is to code the beginning of a new discourse unit, and at the same time it casts into doubt the reliability of the paragraph boundary as a consistent indicator of a new thematic unit.

Of course, it might be argued that such a result, while supporting the general hypothesis, is in fact only a function of English, in spite of Fox's (1987) supporting evidence from both English and Tagalog. In order to test the hypothesis even further, the same study was carried out for Mandarin Chinese, using the same film clip. The results were identical: marked structures tended to be found at the beginning of a thematic unit while unmarked structures tended to occur internally. The studies reported in Itagaki (1994), involving comprehension, translation, and first and second language acquisition, also support this conclusion for Japanese. It would appear, then, that one important function of marked structures is to code thematic shifts in discourse, and while the data base clearly needs to be extended to further languages, the direction of the conclusion is clear.

However, the question remains as to why marked structures should have this function. Why, for example, should the results not go in just the other direction, with unmarked structures coding the onset of a new thematic unit? One reason might be that it is at the onset of new thematic units where major background reorientation is required and preposed adverbial phrases or clauses seem to serve this scene-setting or reorienting function. Thus, a marked structure with an initial adverbial phrase or clause of time, location, or the like might appear to be a natural device for encoding the requisite semantic redirection.

From a processing point of view, a further possible answer also suggests itself: if a marked structure is non-canonical and non-prototypical, it should be less expected. And a less expected structure might indeed have a kind of 'surprise value', with a higher processing cost involving more resources (as Givón 1987 suggested) and, as a consequence, it might inhibit the processing. Such a break in processing would be quite useful at a thematic boundary, since it would provide a natural place for the speaker (or hearer) to complete and close off the mental representation for that particular discourse unit and at the same time initiate a transition to a new unit. From this perspective, the thematic boundary would serve an important 'chunking' function, simultaneously serving as the locus of semantic closure for one thematic unit and the opening point for a new unit.

Closure is, of course, one processing principle with a great deal of empirical support from the domain of sentence processing (see, e.g., Kimball 1970, Frazier 1979, Prideaux & Baker 1986, among others). It has been shown time and again, for example, that sentences such as (2a), in which the relative clause is attached to the final NP and is therefore non-interrupting, are far more frequent and are easier to process than those such as (2b), in which the relative clause interrupts the main clause, thereby inhibiting closure.

(2) a.   The shopkeeper frightened the dog that stole the bone.

     b.   The dog that stole the bone frightened the shopkeeper.

It should not be surprising that a principle of closure, which operates in sentence comprehension and production, would also be operative, at a somewhat higher level, in discourse. That is, we have an intuitive sense of when some particular part of a discourse is completed, and we know when we can take our own turn. We recognize when a tale is finished and (usually) when a joke is completed. It should not be surprising to find similar mechanisms at work at the sentence and discourse levels.

These two examples are intended to illustrate the sorts of issues and methodologies used in the psycholinguistic approach to the study of discourse. From them we can see that the focus of attention in such studies is typically on linguistically relevant and theoretically central issues, such as markedness, as well as on the structures used and the functions those structures code. Moreover, processing considerations play an important role in such an approach, given the tacit assumption of most psycholinguists that issues of processing cannot be profitably divorced from the study of language.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The central goal of the present paper was to distinguish and illustrate the differences between the two broad approaches to the study of discourse which have for convenience been labeled here as sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic. If the exercise has been successful, it might be concluded that the two approaches do not exist in a state of conflict and confrontation, but rather they can be considered to constitute complementary enterprises, each with its own set of priorities and concerns. While this happy conclusion appears to be generally true, a state of peaceful co-existence may not be entirely faithful to the facts, but instead may be something of an oversimplification. It is, for example, arguable that social factors cluster at one end of a continuum and cognitive and processing principles cluster at the other, while somewhere toward the center resides the potential for interactions and overlaps between the two apparently distinct types. It is at least in principle possible that some factors which are assumed to be sociological in nature might in fact be cognitively rather than socially based. For example, I have argued elsewhere that what Leech (1983) called 'textual rhetoric' is in fact not a function of rhetorical planning at all, but rather derives from principles of language processing. As he formulates it, Leech's 'textual rhetoric' deals with, among other factors, the ways in which speakers position subordinate clauses and organize other constituents within a sentence. He seems to take the view that such organization is structured according to the canons of text organization and flow, rather like classical rhetorical principles might suggest. In contrast to this position, but dealing with the same overt phenomena, I suggested that such organization is governed by processing factors, namely the principles of given and new information distribution and of closure, principles deriving from our cognitive architecture, over which we have no conscious control, rather than from socially established conventions (Prideaux 1991).

The recognition of a potential overlap and conflict between some socio-logically based and cognitively based principles does not, however, lead to confusion but instead invites a closer and more subtle examination of those areas of overlap. Moreover, it does not preclude the possibility that one convenient way to distinguish between the two approaches is to recognize that the sociological perspective tends to address those factors which can to a large extent be consciously manipulated by the language users, while the psycholinguistic approach tends to focus on those factors which are by and large not under the speaker's (or hearer's) conscious, deliberate con-trol. A further example of an area of overlap might be found in the analysis of the role of politeness in the organization of a conversation. It is a com-monplace observation that participants deliberately adopt certain forms of speech, levels of politeness, and even lexical items and structures, as a function of their mutual recognition of the level of formality and politeness of the particular conversation. Thus, two intimate friends may select lexi-cal items and forms and draw upon their common knowledge in a way which might be entirely inappropriate for two strangers. These choices are clearly made by the participants on the basis of their knowledge of the norms of polite conversation, etc., which are clearly a matter of cultural and social conventions.

The selection of such choices is, from a psycholinguistic perspective, less interesting than the question of how, if at all, the politeness levels interact with and affect the types of structures used. Why, it might be asked, do the more polite forms in languages time and time again turn out to be longer and more elaborated, while the less polite, more intimate forms tend to be shorter? In addressing the issue, the psycholinguist might focus on the fact that longer, more complex structures consume relatively more processing resources than shorter forms, while the sociolinguist might speak in terms of how we distance ourselves from the propositional content of our utter-ances by the buffering action of indirect speech acts or elaborated forms. It is not only conceivable but probably even should be expected that the two complementary approaches to the issue can only result in a greater under-standing both of the phenomenon itself and of the principles being brought to bear on it.

Regardless of how this particular issue may ultimately be sorted out, it seems clear that each of the discourse frameworks has a great deal to of-fer. Moreover, the present exposition highlights the fact that the psy-cholinguistic approach, with its healthy borrowing from functionalism, cognitive science, theoretical linguistics and typology, opens important av-enues of investigation and areas of focus, and the sociolinguistic approach,

with its importations from sociology, cultural anthropology and social psychology, constitute two vibrant and mutually supportive complementary approaches to the study of the nature and organization of discourse.

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