Discourse: Russian and Foreign Viewpoint on its Definition and Discourse Analysis

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Abstract: The presented article is dedicated to discourse studies, namely the issue of discourse definition. It touches upon the most notable approaches and various interpretations given by Russian and foreign scholars and methods applied in discourse studies. Examined differences in explanation of this concept show the versatility and uniqueness of such linguistic phenomenon as discourse which is understood as the text in a situation of real communication. The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of using its results in university courses on the theory of discourse, sociolinguistics, text linguistics, psycholinguistics, in the practice of teaching English.

Key words: Discourse · Methods of Discourse Studies · Discourse Analysis · Approach · Component

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary linguistics there is a recently formed tendency to study a person's real speech and process of its comprehension in a recipient's mind. In the view of shifting linguistics priorities, the term discourse is stepping up. Nevertheless, the term is accepted by a number of anthropocentric sciences on the borderline with linguistics (psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, philosophy, literature studies, history, etc.). There is no definite and commonly accepted definition of discourse in the modern stage of language studies. The lack of one definition has brought about a numerous of interpretations of discourse understanding, its methods and various approaches.

The definition of such a category as discourse supposes some ideology orientation, its own viewpoint on linguistic analysis [1]. Hence, within the study it is considered to be rational to review approaches of the well-known Russian and foreign scholars.

Today the discourse definition is as ambiguous as understanding of language, society, ideology; however, one should note that the most ambiguous and hardly defined terms become one of the most widely spread and popular. One of the leading scholars in the field of studies Teun Adrianus van Dijk examines the term from different angles. The linguist presumes that in the broad sense it is a complex communicative phenomenon proceeding between sender, recipient (observer, etc.) during an act of communication in a definite time, space and other context. The act of communication can be oral or written, have verbal or non-verbal components (for instance, everyday communication with a friend, dialogue between a doctor and a patient, reading a newspaper) [1]. In the narrow sense discourse is perceived as a text or conversation. In this aspect the term denotes completed or extending product of an act of communication or speech result that is interpreted by recipients, *i.e.* discourse is generally a written or oral, verbal product of a communicative act [1]. The most noticeable fact is that the scholar gives a wide range of methods in discourse studies depending on targets, nature of the objects, interests and qualifications of scholars and others aspects of the context being researched. In works alike there can be found overlap of theories, observation methods, description and analysis and their practical application. Hence, it is possible to distinguish the following ways of studying discourse structures and strategies:

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- Grammatical (phonological, syntactical, lexical, semantic analysis);
- Pragmatic analysis of speech and communicative acts;
- Rhetorical analysis;
- Stylistic analysis;
- Specific (genre, etc), structure (stories, news, parliament debates, lectures, advertisements and commercials, etc) analysis;
- Conversation analysis;
- Semiotic analysis of audio-visual material and other multimodal discourse characteristics and their interaction [1].

It is possible to mark out a number of alternative ways of work with information in every kind of study, for instance, formal or functional types of analysis that have variations themselves in different theories, scientific areas and schools within each scientific discipline. Apart from mentioned analytical approaches of research in discourse area, they make use of general methods of sociological sciences such as involved observation, ethnography and experiments.

Besides, the ways of discourse studies enumerated above widely use psychological methods of laboratory and field experiments for distinguishing mental characteristics that have an impact on producing and comprehension of discourse.

Coming back to discourse definition issues, it is necessary to consider interpretation of the phenomena by next linguist Debora Shiffrin who defines term discourse pointing out three main approaches. The first approach brought about by formal-oriented linguistics explains discourse as "language above the sentence or above the clause" [2]. Therefore, discourse is considered to be two or more sentences connected by meaning. The second one gives the functional definition of discourse as any language in use: "the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use" [2]. The approach presumes that discourse function analysis is conditioned by language function studies in wide sociocultural context. In this case both ethic and emic approaches can be appropriate. The first analyzes it sorting out a range of functions corresponding discourse forms with any function, the former has a full variety of definite discourse forms to be studied.

D. Schiffrin suggests the third approach stressing form and function interaction: discourse utterances [2]. According to the definition, discourse is not supposed to be a simple set of isolated units of the language structure "larger than sentence" but integration of functionally organized, contextualized units of language usage.

One should note other approaches that look upon discourse issue from different point of view.

M. Stubbs distinguishes three main characteristics of discourse: 1) regarding formal way it is a unite predominating a sentence; 2) in content plane discourse is bound with language usage in social context; 3) in organization sense discourse is interactive, i.e. interlocutory [3]. Hence, the research of language constitutions predominating a sentence infers analysis of social context conditions.

P. Seriot marks out eight definitions of discourse term: 1) equivalent to speech term (by F. de Saussure), *i.e.* any definite utterance; 2) a unite predominating a phrase; 3) utterance influences on a recipient regarding its situation; 4) conversation as a main type of utterance; 5) speech from a sender perspective that is contrast to narration without considering such a perspective (by E. Benveniste); 6) usage of language units and their realization in speech; 7) socially or ideologically limited type of utterance, for instance, feminist discourse; 8) theoretical construction dedicated to study text production conditions [4].

V.G. Kostomarov and N.D. Burvikova set two opposing each other definitions of discourse. First of all, it is a process of text unfolding in recipient's mind and secondly, it is a result of text comprehension when the understanding sense coincides with a sender's intention [5]. This interpretation corresponds to logical philosophical tradition according to which both discourse and intuition knowledge are opposed to each other, i.e. knowledge got in discussion and as a stroke of genius.

It is noteworthy to distinguish two types of research dedicating to discourse: cognitive-discursive and communicative-discursive [6]. This type of opposed approaches comes to popular difference between semantics and pragmatics of a sign. In this interpretation, discourse semantics can be defined as the whole of intentions and propositional sets in conversation and discourse pragmatics-as expression of relevant intentions and sets.

Having generalized various interpretations of discourse in native and foreign linguistics, scholar V.I. Chernyavskaya brings it to two main types: 1) a certain communicative event being fixed in written texts and speech producing in definite communicative space cognitively and typologically conditioned; 2) corpus of thematically related texts [7].

Cultural-semantic understanding of discourse is given in "Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary" where discourse is described as textual unity together with extralinguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological and etc. factors.

Discourse is the central aspect of human life "in language", the thing that B.M. Gasparov denotes as linguistic existence: "Every act of language usage-whether it's a work of high value or a fleeting remark in the dialogue-is a part of continuously moving stream of human experience. In this part, it incorporates and reflects the unique set of circumstances in which and for which it was created". The circumstances include: 1) communicative intentions of the author; 2) relation of the author and recipients; 3) all kinds of "circumstances", relevant and casual; 4) common ideological features and stylistic atmosphere of epoch in general and the particular environment and specific individuals that communication is directly or indirectly addressed to, in particular; 5) genre and style features of both the message and communicative situation in which it is included and 6) a lot of associations with previous experience which are in the center of linguistic action [8]. Consequently, the human experience organically includes ethnocultural patterns of behavior that are implemented consciously and unconsciously, have diverse expression in speech and crystallize in the form of inner meaning and meaningful units of language.

Discourse analysis is carried out from different perspectives, but all discourse researchers have the following basic assumptions:

- Static pattern of the language is too simple and does not correspond to its nature;
- Dynamic pattern of the language should be based on communication- *i.e.* on joint activities of people who try to express their feelings, ideas and experience or influence on each other;
- Communication takes place in communicative situations that should be considered in the cultural context;
- The central role in any communicative situation belongs to people, not to the means of communication;
- Communication includes before-communicative and post-communicative stages;
- The text as a product of communication has several dimensions, the most important of which are the generation and interpretation of the text [9].

Discourse is a phenomenon of intermediate range between speech, communication, language behavior, on the one hand and fixed text remaining in the "bottom line" of communication, on the other hand.

From the standpoint of linguistics of speech, discourse is the process of living verbalized communication, characterized by a variety of deviations from the canonical written speech.

V.I. Karasik in his monograph "Linguistic Circle: personality, concepts, discourse" has a number of definitions to the given term: "communicative situation, including communicants' perception (communication partners) and making text in the process of communication" [10]. "Discourse is a broader concept than the text. Discourse is both a process of linguistic activity and its result (= text)" [11]. "The word discourse refers to an integral speech reproduction in the diversity of its cognitive-communicative functions" [12]. "The text taken in event-driven perspective; speech considered as a purposeful social impact, as a component involved in the interaction of people and the mechanisms of their consciousness" [13]. "Discourse, in its essence, just a way to convey information rather than a means of its accumulation and multiplication; discourse is not an information-carrying medium" [14]. "Under discourse we understand verbalized cogitative speech activity which includes not only the linguistic but also extra-linguistic components". "We consider the text as a basic unit of discourse" [15]. "Discourse is the unity and interaction of text and extralinguistic conditions and also means of its realization" [16]. "Central integrative unit of speech activity which is reflected in its information track-oral/written text is discourse" [17] [9].

In its turn, Y.S. Stepanov in his work "New realism" mentions: "The term "discourse" (Fr. discours, Engl. discourse) was widely used in the early 1970s, firstly in the meaning which was relevant to Russian linguistics-"functional style" (of speech or language). The reason that the term "functional style" took another one-"discourse" is in the peculiarities of national linguistic schools but not in the subject" [18]. "Discourse is a language within the language" but presented as a special social given. Discourse does not really exist in the form of its "grammar" and "vocabulary" as simply the language does. Discourse exists primarily and mainly in the texts, but in those which have special grammar, vocabulary, special rules of word usage and syntax, special semantics-ultimately-a special world. Discourse has its own rules of synonymous substitutions, the rules of validity, its etiquette. This is "possible (alternative) world" in the full sense of the logical philosophical term. Each discourse is "one of the possible worlds". The phenomenon of the discourse, its

possibility is the proof of the thesis "Language is the house of spirit" and, to a certain extent, the thesis "Language is the house of reality" [18].

Chan Kim Bao in his arguments, relying not only on the methodology of the European modern linguistics, but also on the philosophical and methodological principles inherent the eastern school, said: "discourse is the text in action. The text is understood as yin, discourse as yang. They obey the law of interpenetration. It means that the text has the elements of discourse and discourse has the elements of the text…" [19]. "Yin-yang" concept proposes the solution of the issue of discourse in close connection with the text as two opposite sides of the same essence. It takes into account all the linguistic and extralinguistic factors involved in organization and functioning of the text as a means of verbal communication.

The structure of discourse consists of two components: linguistic (yin), which constitutes the systematic language units: word-form and sentence and extralinguistic (yang), which composes situational, pragmatic, socio-cultural, psychological and other factors [19].

Discourse is characterized by the categories of actual division, presupposition, subjective modality and communicative act. "Textual and discursive categories with all their differences have two unified characteristics: extensionality (space) organization and linearity (time) of component occurrence in the speech" [19].

Thus, the above definitions are valid and reflect one of the characteristic aspects of such a phenomenon as discourse. However, it should be mentioned that the same definition of discourse is understood differently in surveys of authors. Obviously, this difference comes not from the considered phenomenon, but on the position and understanding of the term "discourse" by authors. The differences in interpretation of the term indicate the versatility and uniqueness of such linguistic phenomenon as discourse.

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