
ACTS AND ACT RELATIONS

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Se muestra que si el enfoque de Widdowson sobre el discurso ha de ser consistente, debe añadirse un tercer nivel de análisis a su "texto" y "discurso". A la luz de esta discusión, se defiende la propuesta de Castaños de introducir el "acto de disertación" como una unidad de análisis. Como resultado, se obtiene un esquema de categorías analíticas básicas que comprende cuatro unidades del discurso y cuatro tipos de relación entre unidades.

It is shown that, if Widdowson's approach to discourse is to be consistent, a third level analysis must be added, to his "text" and "discourse". In the light of this discussion, Castaños's proposal to introduce a "dissertation act" as a unit of analysis is argued for. A scheme of basic analytic categories results, comprising discourse units and four unity relations.

Cet article montre que si l'approche du discours de Widdowson veut être conséquente, elle doit ajouter un troisième niveau d'analyse à son "texte" et "discours". À partir de cette discussion on défend la proposition de Castaños d'introduire l' "acte de dissertation" en tant qu'unité d'analyse. Il en résulte un schéma de catégories analytiques de base de quatre unités du discours et quatre types de relation entre les unités du discours et quatre types de relation entre les unités.

In diesem Artikel wird gezeigt, dass zu Widdowsson Modell der Diskursanalyse, wenn konsistent sein soll, eine dritte Ebene ausser "Text" und "Diskurs" hinzugefügt werden muss. Im Rahmen dieser Diskussion wird Castaños' Vorschlag, den "Dissertationsakt" als Einheit für die Diskursanalyse einzuführen, aufgenommen und vertreten. Das Ergebnis ist ein Schema analytischer Grundkategorien mit vier Einheiten und vier Beziehungstypen zwischen den Einheiten.

Approaches to discourse units

When Henry Widdowson introduced illocutionary acts in applied linguistics (1973), he called them communicative functions (of language) and followed a different approach from the ones of previous fundamental discussions of basic discourse units.

In 1950, P.F. Strawson had distinguished the sentence from the proposition by showing that different expressions can have the same referent and that the same expression can be used (in different circumstances) to refer to different entities. He implicitly defined the proposition as the association of a referent and a predicate and the sentence as a string of words. His work shows there is no one-to-one correspondence between sentences and propositions.

Austin originally proposed (1962) the concept of illocutionary act by focusing on the point of speakers' utterances. He made it clear that when people speak, they are not always concerned with making true statements about states of affairs. Their intention is often to bring about the states, as when a couple get married by pronouncing the acceptance of each other. The conclusion was that utterances cannot be analysed solely by reference to the propositions they express; what the utterances do must be taken into account.

John Searle (1969) formulated a theory that integrates and furthers Strawson's and Austin's findings. At the core of it is a three-fold distinction between sentences, propositions, and illocutionary acts. The approach to establish these concepts is essentially Strawson's. By varying the circumstances of utterance, Searle shows that the same proposition can be associated to both different sentences

and different illocutionary acts.

Both, the approach followed by Strawson and Searle and the one adopted by Austin, stem from the common interest of delimiting the realm of truth. Both are adequate for demonstrating that it does not make sense to ask whether entities other than asserted propositions are true or "false. They are, in this sense, philosophical approaches.

Widdowson's approach is linguistic: it responds to a concern about the articulation of discourse units. In 1973, he makes the following point. In some texts, sentences are linked through anaphoric and cataphoric references or the repetition of words. These links obviously contribute to textual unity. However, stretches of discourse lacking sentence links are often perceived as wholes, rather than mere collections of pieces. Therefore, there have to be units other than sentences which unite even if sentences do not. These are precisely the illocutionary acts. Furthermore, sentence, and acts can be seen as belonging in two different levels of organization ("text" and "discourse", for Widdowson).

There has not been any discussion about Widdowson's approach, although his findings have had the attention of all applied linguists. The rationale of the approach has not been made sufficiently explicit, and therefore, consistent use of it has not been guaranteed, not even in the work of Widdowson himself. What is perhaps more important, the potential of the approach remains under-exploited.

It is one of the purposes of this paper to discuss Widdowson's approach, which will involve a review of some important arguments in favour and against the separation of levels of analysis in linguistics. The concept of relative autonomy of levels will be proposed. By this it will be meant that the units of one level cannot be defined without reference to the units in other levels, but the rules of unity of any one level are independent of the rules for other levels.

Dissertation acts.

According to a thesis I propose, a fourth unit of analysis, besides the sentence, the proposition, and the illocutionary act, is needed. I call this fourth unit "dissertation act".

Dissertation acts construct or modify knowledge (or make it present). Examples of them are: observation, generalization, definition. They are not illocutionary acts, which create or modify the conditions for the (social) judgement of actions, and which include invitations, orders, and requests.

I have presented (Castaños 1983) the essence of three arguments in defense of the thesis, following, respectively, the Strawson-Searle approach, Austin's approach, and Widdowson's. I have also developed (Castaños 1982) the first defense in rigorous detail. This paper will develop the third, i.e. the one following Widdowson's approach, once, this has been discussed.

The result of my argumentation will be a scheme of basic analytic categories that can clarify certain problems of discourse analysis, mainly those related to multiple coding.

It will be shown that the four basic units of discourse analysis require four kinds of unity. This view will direct us towards a distinction which is lacking at present between acts, on the one hand, and relations between acts, on the other. An identification, an observation, and a classification are examples of acts. A deduction and an exemplification are examples of relations between acts.

Widdowson, 1973.

In 'Directions in the Teaching of Discourse' (1973), Henry Widdowson was concerned because language teachers had paid "little attention to the way sentences are used in combination to form stretches of connected discourse" (p. 89). This way of referring to discourse,

"...straddles two different, if complementary, ways of looking at language beyond the sentence. We might say that one way is to focus attention on the second part of my definition: sentences in combination, and the other to focus on the first part: the use of sentences."

(Widdowson, 1973:90)

Widdowson reviews the main works in the study of language beyond the sentence up to 1971, and groups them in two categories of sentences in combination and the use of sentences. In the first group he, of course, locates the work of Harris (1952). In the second group, Widdowson places the work of Labov (1969).

Of Harris, Widdowson tells us:

"He is thereby able to discover a patterning in the discourse in terms of chains of equivalences. What he does, then, is to reduce different message forms to make them correspond to a common code pattern."

(Widdowson, 1973:91)

This kind of study is contrasted with the one Labov pursues. Widdowson quotes:

"Sequencing rules do not operate between utterances but between the actions performed by these utterances."

(Labov, 1970:208; in Widdowson, 1973:97)

and

"The rules we need will show how things are done with words and how one interprets these utterances as actions: in other words, relating what is done to what is said and what is said to what is done."

(Labov, 1969:54-55; in Widdowson, 1973:92)

From these bases, Widdowson distinguishes text analysis from discourse analysis, the former aiming at showing

"how a text exemplifies the operation of the language code beyond the limits of the sentence" (Widdowson 1973:92), and the latter referring to "the investigation into the way sentences are put to communicative use in the performing of social actions" (Widdowson 1973:93).

Text analysis is concerned with "grammatical cohesion between sentences", and discourse analysis with "rhetorical coherence of utterances in the performance of acts of communication" (p. 96). Cohesion and coherence are exemplified with two pieces of dialogue which have become famous:

A Can you come to Edinburgh tomorrow?

B Yes, I can.

A Can you come to Edinburgh tomorrow?

B B.E.A. pilots are on strike.

(Widdowson, 1973:96)

The first exchange exemplifies cohesion: B uses an elliptical form of the sentence "Yes, I can go to Edinburgh tomorrow", which can be directly related to A's sentence. The second exchange is not cohesive, but we still recognize unity between A's intervention and B's intervention, if one is interpreted as an order and the other as a declination to act upon the order. Widdowson explains that this is so if certain relations exist between A and B. He has recourse to what Labov calls 'preconditions' of an act, and which are known in philosophy as 'felicity conditions'.

Among the preconditions of the act of ordering, we have: A must believe that B has the ability to carry out the action ordered. The coherence of the second exchange is then accounted for by the fact that each utterance focuses on this precondition (p. 97).

In sum, we have two levels of analysis, text and discourse, and to them correspond two basic categories and two sorts of unity: sentences and acts, on the one hand, and cohesion and coherence, on the other.

Widdowson, 1978.

In Teaching Language as Communication, Widdowson discusses Teaching Language as Communication. Widdowson's illocutionary act. But the scheme he now presents differs from the 1973 scheme in some interesting ways. These are:

1. Two dichotomies are introduced. One concerns aspects of performance, and the other types of meaning. The first is the dichotomy between usage and use. The second, the dichotomy between signification and value.

Usage is the manifestation of purely grammatical knowledge in decontextualised sentences or in texts which do not fulfil a communicative function. Use is the realization with language of genuine communicative behaviour (Widdowson, 1978:3-7).

Signification is the meaning sentences have by virtue of combining lexical items according to grammatical rules (Widdowson, 1978:10-11). Value, on the other hand, is the kind of meaning "which sentences and parts of sentences assume when they are put to use for communicative purposes" (*ibid.* p. 11).

The two dichotomies are related. Instances of usage have signification but do not have value. Instances of use will usually have signification, and they always have value.

2. The term 'text' no longer designates one level of analysis. There are perhaps various reasons for this. One could be the need to use the word in a pre-theoretical sense, in connection with either sentences or acts, or both. Thus, on page 52, we read:

"Which text is to be preferred, then, will depend on which one can most readily be processed by the reader as a combination of illocutionary acts which constitute an acceptable unit of communication."

(Widdowson, 1978:52)

Another reason for abandoning 'text' as a theoretical term could be the danger of associating too directly the various

dichotomies, that is, of associating text with signification and usage (and discourse with value and use). The danger would be to exclude text (and therefore, cohesion) from genuine use. And Widdowson sees the adequate link between sentences as part of use.

Unfortunately, we are not told why 'text' is no longer part of the technical framework of discourse analysis.

3. The central matter of cohesion is identified as the thematic organization of information:

"Generally speaking we can say that propositions are organized in such a way that what is known, or given, comes first 'n the sentence, and what is unknown or new, comes second".

(Widdowson, 1978:25)

(For these questions see Halliday 1970 and Leech and Svartvik, 1975, sections 410-424). Thematic organization even becomes an explanatory principle for the co-referential interpretation of anaphoric links (see Halliday and Hasan, 1976), which Widdowson had considered from the point of view of Hasan, 1968, and which was the salient feature of cohesion in Widdowson, 1973, at least from the point of view of pedagogical usefulness (see page 95). Thus:

"Note that it is because the information about the crops is given that B's reply does not need to make specific reference to them: the pronoun they takes on the value in this context of the full reference the crops."

(Widdowson, 1978:25)

4. The proposition is explicitly introduced as a unit of analysis. This is done in a simple, ingenious way. The reporting of propositions is contrasted with the reporting of sentences and the reporting of illocutionary acts. Thus, in (26), (27), and (28), which are examples from pages (22) and (23), we have, respectively, the report of: a sentence, a proposition, and an act.

(26) She said: 'My husband will return the parcel

tomorrow'.

(27) She said that her husband would return the parcel tomorrow.

(28) She promised that her husband would return the parcel tomorrow.

Unfortunately, and perhaps because of not dealing explicitly with the level of text --which could have been designated with another name, if necessary --it is not clear what level the proposition belongs to.

At some points, Widdowson follows a distinction between sentence and proposition which is similar to Strawson's. That is, a proposition is expressed with a sentence, and which proposition is expressed is something which depends on the situation of utterance. In this sense, he says:

"We may begin by pointing out that when people produce a sentence in the course of normal communicative activity they simultaneously do two things. They express a proposition of one kind or another and at the same time in expressing that proposition they perform some kind of illocutionary act."

(Widdowson, 1978:22)

We also have an example of this way of conceptualizing the proposition. On pages 10 and 11, we find that in the appropriate context, and in the following dialogue:

A: What destroyed the crops?

B: The rain.

The string 'the rain' takes on the value of the proposition 'The rain destroyed the crops'.

One would hence be tempted to say that propositions belong in the level of discourse, if we are to maintain a separation of levels. However, Widdowson also says:

If we know the dictionary meanings of the lex-

ical items and understand the syntactic relations between them then we can recognize that this sentence represents a proposition and so has meaning..."

(Widdowson, 1978:10)

and:

Sentences have meanings as instances of usage: they express propositions by combining words into structures in accordance with grammatical rules.

(Widdowson, 1978: 11)

Propositions are now associated with signification, rather than value, and they seem to belong in text, rather than discourse. This appears to be confirmed in the subheadings '2.2 Cohesion and propositional development' and '2.6.' Propositional development: achieving cohesion'.

The inconsistent associations of level the proposition has, demand for it a specific level. It needs to be clear that cohesion obtains among sentences, which is, really, Widdowson's idea:

The notion of cohesion, then, refers to the way sentences and parts of sentences combine so as to ensure that there is propositional development.

(Widdowson, 1978:26)

What is needed is either that the phrase 'propositional development' be left out of the definition of cohesion, or that the corresponding phrase 'illocutionary development' be added, so that cohesion is properly seen as a property of "sentences and parts of sentences".

What I am proposing is that the 1973 approach be followed more strictly. This, of course, does not imply a rejection of the 1978 innovations: the introduction of the use/usage and signification/value distinctions, the identification of thematic organization as the central matter of cohesion, and the introduction of the proposition as a unit of analysis. These innovations are undeniably

important.

What I mean is that the sentence, the proposition, and the illocutionary act should be assigned to three distinct levels of analysis by recognizing three different sorts of unity. These levels need not have special names. Perhaps it is better to leave 'texte' as a pre-theoretical term, as seems to be Widdowson's intention, and to use 'discourse' as a global term, to cover the three levels. After all, we can refer to them with descriptive phrases including 'sentence', 'proposition', and 'illocutionary act'. But we do need special terms for the different sorts of unity. For the reasons discussed in Castaños, 1983, I propose that they be as follows:

NIT	UNITY
sentence	cohesion
proposition	connection
illocutionary act	coherence

This view implies a notion of level which should be general, i.e. it should apply to other descriptions of language, including those of phenomena involving units below the sentence. And the notion requires justification, especially given that it has been a matter of controversy in linguistics. This will be the topic of the next section, and then we will come back to connection.

R etattve.Autonomy

The notion I wish to propose is in its most general form in accordance with a view which has been arrived at by European structuralism, notably in the work of Benveniste. However, a more detailed formulation might be objected to by some structuralists, including Benveniste. On the other hand, the notion would seem to be too for some linguists belonging to some other schools, in particular for those in the generative syntax tradition. At the same time, it will be too strong for others, mainly those in the generative semantics tradition. Finally, the notion is in disagreement with a recent view pronosed by Riley to account for degrees at discourse unity.

The notion is this: the units in one level of analysis cannot be defined without reference to other levels; however, the rules of unity for one level are independent of the rules of unity for any other level. It is necessary to expand the first part: to define an element as a unit in one level we have to refer to its being a unit in other levels or assign it to other units of other levels; it is not enough to consider it in relation to the other units in the same level. Furthermore, when defining grammatical units it is often necessary to refer to discourse units (or pragmatical units, as is becoming common, after the German usage), and vice-versa, when defining discourse units it is necessary to refer to grammatical units. Let us call this notion the relative autonomy principle.

I say the relative autonomy principle is in its most general form in accordance with European structuralism because of the following. Descriptions of levels within this school involve the application of its basic analytic procedures of segmentation and substitution. Sometimes they actually include discussions about the procedures; this is the case with Benveniste's contribution to the 9th International Congress of Linguists (Benveniste, 1964). In this work, as in other structuralist statements, we find that an element is defined by two sorts of relations, a 'double relation', Benveniste says (p. 119). On the one hand, we have the relationship of the element to other elements that are simultaneously present (syntagmatic relationship).

On the other hand, we have the relationship of the element to other elements that are mutually substitutable (paradigmatic relationship).

In short, an element would seem to be defined by its relationships with other elements of the same level -- though not necessarily in the same category. But this is not enough. Segmentation and substitution actually involve two levels. At an upper level there is the element being segmented; and at the lower level there are the elements into which it is analysed (Benveniste, 1964:119). Furthermore, if we proceed in the inverse sense, that is, if we start with an inventory of elements and make a list of their combinatorial possibilities, to see which combi-

nations are actually allowed, we have to see whether they form upper level elements or not (Benveniste, 1964:120).

To give an example, the sequence i-n-g is possible in English final position, and g-n-i is not, because -ing is a morpheme, and -gni is not. Likewise, -ing is a morpheme because it can be combined with other morphemes to produce words.

It would then seem that a more complete definition of an element adds (to the specification of the relationships with other elements of the same level) a characterization in terms of its constituent elements (in a lower level) and an indication of the (upper level) elements it can be part of (pages 120-121). This is, of course, too general. Benveniste makes it clear that there is a bottom level with elements that cannot be further analyzed: the phonetic features (p. 119). And he also says that the relationship of words to phrases is more complex than that of simple constituents (page 122). Nevertheless, the conceptualization is sufficient for our purposes. It can be visualized as follows: an element is either a terminal point or a branching point in a hierarchy; at the same time, it is a node in a system of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. This is indeed one version of the relative autonomy of levels.

Now, I say that some structuralists might object to the expanded formulation for the following reasons. Firstly, when I talk about reference to other levels, I do not necessarily mean specification of what it is part of, nor what its parts are, because I am not postulating a hierarchical structure. We cannot say that a sentence is above, or below, an illocutionary act, and therefore, we cannot say that one is part of the other, nor vice-versa. Let us remember what was said in Chapter 2: we can realize the same act with different sentences or different acts with the same sentence.

One might think that both, the structuralist objection and my reply are acceptable, simply because the structuralist is concerned with a different sort of phenomena than I am. But clearly, a more general principle ought to be preferred over a less general one. And

it should be noted that there are also problems within the structuralist's domain. Let us suppose, for example, that certain syntactic phenomena are being studied. And let us suppose that they require a definition of adjective, which in turn requires reference to semantic criteria (and/or morphological criteria). That is, the syntactic unit adjective requires the semantic (or morphological) unit adjective. This sort of reference is, clearly, not to smaller parts or bigger wholes. And the suppositions are valid, as will be argued presently.

The second reason some structuralists might object to the expanded formulation is the inclusion of discourse criteria in the definition of grammatical units. According to Saussurean precepts:

What he (the linguist) is trying to do in analysing a language is not to describe speech acts but to determine the units and rules of combination which make up the linguistic system.

(Culler 1976:30)

My formulation of the relative autonomy principle would seem to go against the idea that language is a system that has its own order, as Saussure says (Cours:43), or its own arrangement, as Baskin has translated it (Course: 22). Take propositions, for example. They are open to the same objection that Benveniste (1964:50) raises against Saussure's. use of the term 'arbitrary': the thing, reality, is involved.

All I can say in response to this - and I wish I could find a more elegant argument - is two things. Firstly, there is no grammar which manages to define the sentence without using, at least implicitly, the notion of proposition. Nor is there one which succeeds in describing types of sentences without using, at least implicitly, the notion of speech act. And there is no dictionary that can completely exclude the thing; moreover, modern dictionaries are trying to devise analogues for the so-called ostensive definition. Secondly, there are linguists with a strong structuralist inclination, such as John Lyons, who do incorporate reference to things (Lyons 1977, Chapter 7) and other pragmatic notions (Lyons 1977, Chapter 16) in

their theories. The principle that language is a system where everything hangs together, as Saussure's disciples at Paris used to say (see e.g. Meillet 1936:158 or Grammont 1933:153)—this principle can be made compatible with the findings of other schools of thought, such as analytic philosophy.

Let us now consider the question from the generative grammar perspective. For this tradition there is a clear separation of the rules that govern the various levels of grammar, and of the values with which we make judgments in each level;

Three aspects of the study of grammar essential to the linguist's investigations are syntax, semantics, and phonology. Syntax is the study of sentence construction. In specifying the syntactic component of a grammar, linguists attempt to formulate rules that generate each of the grammatical sentences of the language and none of the ungrammatical ones. Semantics, the study of meaning, explains how sentences are understood. It specifies which sentences are synonymous, which are ambiguous, which are logically contradictory, which are true by definition, which logically imply which other sentences, and so... Phonology is concerned with how expressions are spoken and pronounced'.

(Perlmutter and Soames 1979:5)

The original argument for the separation of syntax and semantics in this school is due, of course, to Noam Chomsky. It was used in the past to support a stronger separation than it warrants and which, as will be shown below, Chomsky himself would probably not endorse nowadays. Nevertheless, I think it is a valid argument, and because of its simplicity and sharpness is worth reproducing:

...the notion 'grammatical' cannot be identified with 'meaningful' or 'significant' in any semantic sense. Sentences (1) and (2) are equally nonsensical, but any speaker of English will recognize that only the former is grammatical.

(1) Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.

(2) Furiously sleep ideas green colorless.

Similarly, there is no semantic reason to prefer (3) to (5) or (4) to (6), but only (3) and (4) are grammatical sentences of English.

(3) have you a book on modern music?

(4) the book seems interesting.

(5) read you a book on modern music?

(6) the child seems sleeping.

Such examples suggest that any search for a semantically based definition of 'grammaticalness' will be futile.

(Chomsky 1957:15)

I say that the argument was used for too strong a separation because the idea that syntactic unity (grammaticalness) does not depend on semantic unity was extended to include the idea that no semantic information enters into the judgement of syntactic unity. But clearly, "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously" is grammatical because 'sleep' is a verb and occupies a verb position, 'green' is an adjective and occupies an adjective position, and so on. And adjective, verb, and so on are not purely syntactic categories. Rather, as Lyons would put it, they also have an ontological basis (Lyons 1977, sections 11.1 to 11.3).

The too strong separation was challenged in the late 60's and early 70s by George Lakoff and other linguists. He showed that not only what we could call innocent semantic information, but also belief and value, enter into the judgement of grammaticalness. He discussed, among other phenomena, the factors that intervene in saying that the question in (29) is grammatical, but the one in (30) is not (Lakoff 1971 a:331) (the identifying numbers are mine).

(29) What bit you? The dog next door.

(30) / Who bit you? The dog next door.

His conclusions are:

A grammar can be viewed as generating pairs, (PR, S), consisting of a sentence, S, which is

grammatical only relative to the presuppositions of PR. This pairing is relatively constant from speaker to speaker and does not vary directly with his factual knowledge, cultural background etc. However, if a speaker is called upon to make a judgement as to whether or not S is 'deviant' then his extralinguistic knowledge enters the picture...If the speaker's factual knowledge contradicts PR, then he may judge S to be 'deviant'.

(Lakoff 1971a:336)

As far as I can see, we have here another argument in favour of the need for semantic information in syntactic units. However, Lakoff's conclusions seem to be a little stronger. In fact, considerations like the above on what has to be known (or believed) for a sentence to be considered grammatical - but involving more complex syntactic phenomena - led Lakoff and others to a doctrine which they named generative semantics. These linguists diverged on a number of points, but:

...I think it is fair to say that there has developed in recent years a general consensus in this group that semantics plays a central role in syntax. The generative semantics position is, in essence, that syntax and semantics cannot be separated.

(Lakoff 1971b:232, footnote)

Generative semantics went to the other extreme. They aimed at identifying a proper syntactic description of a sentence, i.e. the specification of the syntactic relations between its elements, with its semantic interpretation, as is more technically explained in Lyons 1977 (section 10.5) a detailed exposition of one version of generative semantics is Lakoff 1971b, already quoted.

The problem with generative semantics is that sentences can have more than one semantic interpretation. As said earlier, the same sentence can be used to express different propositions, and vice-versa, the same proposition can be expressed with different sentences. Then, a proposition cannot account for a sentence.

Chomsky has produced some subtle arguments that show that not only whole sentences, but actually "a single formal device may have multiple interpretations". Considering (and adhering to) some views held by Jespersen 50 years before him, Chomsky contrasts the use of the indefinite plural in (31) and (32).

- (31) Beavers are mammals.
(32) Beavers built this dam.

The matter is that in (31) "we are speaking of all beavers", but not in (32) (Chomsky 1975:8).

It is not possible, then, to make grammaticality dependent upon semantic interpretation. To put it in the terminology I have used, the distinction between syntactic unity and semantic unity is genuine, or: one is independent of the other.

Now, while defending independence of levels, in the sense of the above paragraph, Chomsky has been incorporating more semantic information into syntax, and recognizing it. He has, for example, accepted the case grammar principle that:

...syntactic structure is projected from lexical properties in the sense that the argument structure of lexical items is represented explicitly at each syntactic level. Thus, the verbs *hit*, *help* and *talk to* as a lexical property, take an object to which they assign a certain semantic role and a subject to which they assign a different semantic role. By the projection principle, at every syntactic level there must appear a subject and an object in the appropriate structural configuration.

(Chomsky 1981:229)

In sum, through the various arguments and counter-arguments about the relationship between syntax and semantics in the generative grammar tradition, we see that the relative autonomy principle is plausible. Having also discussed the question from the point of view of European structuralism, one might think that there remained a con-

sideration of it from functionalism. However, in what is found about levels in this school, there is little that bears on the question. (See, e.g. Kress 1976, Chapter 5).

One would guess, from the strong reductionist tendencies of functionalism, that it would oppose the relative autonomy principle. Therefore, if one were to think about the possible view from functionalism about the principle, one would have to start with a discussion of its reductionism (which I think must be rejected (see Castaños 1983)). I shall not pursue the issue here.

Let us turn to one consideration of the question of levels in discourse analysis. In Riley 1980, four levels of discourse are distinguished: interaction, illocution, content and realisation. Riley's aim is to describe degrees of discourse unity - 1 discursality¹ is his term. He says that through the separation of levels:

...we can show that a given communicative act may be acceptable discourse at one or more of those levels but not at another or others...

(Riley 1980:202)

What we have here is again the idea that unity at one level does not imply unity at another, though perhaps more clearly expressed. However, I think that Riley's separations is too strong:

One of the conclusions to which the investigator of interaction (as understood here) is driven is that there are some rules of performance which are based not on some underlying linguistic competence but rather on the physical nature of the activity and the medium in question.

Space, time and the materials which occupy them are subject to physical rules which are inherent in their nature.

(Riley 1980:205)

Among the rules that govern interaction, Riley thinks (with others who are research colleagues of his, but not co-authors of the paper) that alternation is the most

fundamental (p. 206). This is attributed to the fact that it is almost impossible "for two acoustic messages to occupy the same acoustic space at the same time" (p. 206). In this very phrase the counter-argument to Riley's position is found. The expression 'acoustic messages' betrays his thesis. The expression is perhaps not sufficiently adequate to denote all that goes on in discourse, but it does contrast with 'acoustic signal', for example.

For a series of noises to be an element in an alteration sequence, it has to be perceived as such, it has to be perceived as constituting a 'message', even if it is not understood. I can have a conversation with a friend, or even rehearse a monologue, while I listen to a piece of music. Even more, I can have a conversation with a friend while other people are having other conversation around, in the same acoustic space at the same time. That is, physical sound has to be related to illocution, content, or at least realisation, if it is to be a turn in interaction.

As further support for the relative autonomy principle, I wish to present three related points:

1. Ambiguity is a testimony for the principle. The fact that sometimes we are not sure what proposition is being expressed with a sentence, even when we understand the sentence as such, is evidence that there is no necessary projection from the sentence level to the proposition level (nor is there one in the inverse sense). The same can be said for other level relations. We may understand the content of an utterance and not be sure of the illocutionary intention, or figure out a given speech act from the sequence of speech acts it is part of without knowing exactly what the sentence that realized it meant.

2. Error correction is possible. The fact that we can repair unity breaks at some levels from our understanding at other levels is evidence that the units in one level contain information about the other levels. Notice that this repair need not be overt. In conversation, for example, mental repair (and perhaps a brief non-verbal signal that it has occurred) is often enough.

Let us consider a possible example (a mental experiment) to illustrate the previous two points. It has a Chomskian flavour. A student of English as a foreign language produces text (33). Another produces (34).

(33) John wanted to be a pilot. But flying planes are dangerous. So he decided to become a computer analyst.

(34) The Browns used to live near the airport. But flying planes is dangerous. So they moved to another area.

Now, the teacher corrects them: instead of (33) we should have (35), and instead of (34) we should have (36).

(35) John wanted to be a pilot. But flying planes is dangerous. So he decided to become a computer analyst.

(36) The Browns used to live near the airport. But flying planes are dangerous. So they moved to another area.

The students had made a mistake which is rather common. The verb inflexion was not the correct one for the number of the subject. But, how did the teacher know this? If the problematic sentences were read in isolation, they could be taken as correct sentences.

Clearly, the correct reading is not necessary. The surface structure of the sentence does not inevitably lead us to a given proposition. We are also interpreting on the basis of discourse unity at other levels besides the sentence. It is because of them, because e.g. of the contrast introduced by 'but', that we know that the subject of the proposition expressed by the second sentence is the activity of flying planes in (33) and planes that are flying in (34). And it is because we know that these are the subjects in the propositions that we know 'flying' is the head noun of the noun phrase in (33), whereas 'planes' is the head in (34). Finally, because of this, we know that the verb form in (33) should be 'is' and in (34) it should be 'are'. Hence (35) and (36). Let

us now consider the third point.

3. Jokes often exploit divergences between different levels. On many occasions the art of a joke consists in setting the units of discourse in such a way that the rules of unity at one or more levels are surprisingly violated, while the rules at the other levels are strictly followed, as if everything was normal. This becomes clear, for example, in elephant jokes, because the person who tells the joke and the person who listens are, in a way, acting the joke. The alternation of questions and answers provides unity at the levels of illocutionary and dissertation acts (and at Riley's level of interaction, if it is to be separated from illocution). The thematic organization of sentences results in unity at the sentence level. However, the propositions are about events which cannot co-occur in the world; they exhibit disunity. Absurdity is presented in an environment of normality. That is why we laugh-if we do.

Recapitulatina, this section was motivated because in Widdowson 1973 we find the idea that one kind of unit belongs in one level which has one type of unity, though this idea is not explicitly stated. The idea can be developed into what I have called the relative autonomy principle. This has been discussed from the perspectives of European structuralism and transformational grammar, and also in connection with one discourse analysis model. It has been further supported with three observations about ambiguity, error correction, and jokes. We shall now turn to the problem of propositional unity, which is missing in Widdowson 1978. Afterwards, the distinction between illocutionary acts and dissertation acts will be considered from the point of view of the principle.

Connection

The point I wish to make is that propositional unity should not be assimilated to sentential cohesion. Let us consider an example from Widdowson 1978 (o.26) and contrast it with a modified version:

A: What did the rain do?

B: It destroyed the crops.

C: What did the rain do?

D: The crops were destroyed by the rain.

Clearly, we have the same proposition in both exchanges. The difference is in the information structure. The topic of B's answer has already appeared in A's question, whereas D's topic is not found in C's question.

A plausible criterion for propositional unity is provided by van Dijk: "if the facts are related the proposition sequence representing them is connected" (van Dijk 1981:4) This criterion can, for example, help us to analyse the following passage:

John and Rita go to the same school. The school has some beautiful stained windows. In stained glass red is very difficult to obtain. Red is at one end of the visual spectrum.

This passage is very cohesive. Its thematic organization permits a very easy flow of information. The first theme is 'John and Rita', and it has a comment which includes 'the school', which in turn becomes the second theme, and so on. But there is lack of unity, because the fact that John and Rita go to the same school has nothing to do with the fact that red is at one end of the visual spectrum.

There is, however, a problem with van Dijk's work. It goes against the relative autonomy principle. Various sorts of unity are assimilated to - confused with - connection:

Work in this area, however, first required an answer to the more fundamental question about the connection and the coherence (also called the 'cohesion') of sequences of sentences, or sequences of their (underlying) propositions...

Other coherence conditions, holding for whole sequences of propositions...

(van Dijk 1981:4)

In order to connect clauses or sentences, language

users will first construct propositions, organize these in FACTS and connect the respective FACTS.
(van Dijk 1981:8)

From the discussion of the two exchanges at the beginning of this section (between A and B, and between C and D), together with the discussion of John and Rita's passage, it not only follows that connection must not be assimilated to cohesion, but also that the converse is true as well: cohesion must not be assimilated to connection. More generally, from the previous section on relative autonomy, it follows that connection must be genuinely distinct from other sorts of unity, and that these cannot be reduced to it. But perhaps another line of argument taking van Dijk's proposal in its own terms is necessary.

It cannot be denied that often the aim of a discourse is to establish that two facts are connected - or that they are not! An author may, for example, wish to show that smoking often produces cancer. Or another may wish that dictation does not necessarily improve spelling. It can neither be denied that the reader's belief that the facts are connected (or disconnected) can be modified by such a discourse. Furthermore, whether or not the discourse succeeds in establishing the (dis)connection of facts depends largely on its own cogency. Therefore, discourse unity, or at least some sorts of it, is (are), in some sense and at least in some cases, prior to fact connection. Hence, it cannot be a general principle that the ultimate criterion for discourse unity is fact connection. All we can say is that connection is one sort of unity.

Four things have been done in this chapter so far: 1. Widdowson's 1973 approach has been made explicit. 2. It has been shown that this approach is not strictly followed in Widdowson 1978 (though this work presents some very important innovations). 3. The relative autonomy principle has been presented and discussed. 4. Connection, i.e. propositional unity, has been isolated.

In this way, Widdowson's approach to the establishment of discourse analysis categories has been developed and shown to be possible and necessary. I will now consider dissertation acts from the point of view of the relations

among them.

Acts and Relationships.

Relationships between dissertation acts have always received the attention of ESP discourse analysis. They include: exemplification, deduction, contrast, paraphrase, and others. But on most occasions they have not been taken as relationships between acts (though sometimes they have been taken as relationships between sentences). They have been taken together with, as co-hyponyms of, hypothesis, definition, generalization, observation, and so on, i.e. as acts. But acts and relationships have to be distinguished, among other things because the same act can enter into many relationships with many other acts.

The nearest applied linguistics has been to an adequate view of acts and relations are the positions reflected in two distinctions: Urganhart's paratactic/hypotactic and Trappes-Lomax's interaction/interactivity. These will be discussed.

The need to distinguish between acts and relations can be shown with the help of two texts:

(37) All human beings are mortal. Socrates is a human being. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

(38) All human beings are mortal. For example, Socrates is mortal.

The dissertation sequence in (37) could be described as: generalization, sorting, observation (any intuitive or vague meanings they are associated with are sufficient for our present purposes). The first and the last act, the generalization and the observation, are also present in (38). What is different in the two texts is the relationship between generalization and observation.

In (37) we have what would naturally be called a deduction, and in (38) we have an exemplification. But it should be insisted that these are the relationships between the generalization and the observation, which as such have not changed from (37) to (38). With most present coding

systems, 'therefore, Socrates is mortal' might be registered as the deduction. In fact, the analyst would hesitate between deduction and observation, thus being exposed to unreliability.

Needless to say, the facts reported in (37) are not meant to be different from the facts reported in (38), nor is the connection between them. What is different is the dissertation about the facts (or perhaps with the facts). It might be argued that the presence of the proposition expressed by the middle sentence in (37) justifies seeing the contrast between the two texts in terms of connection. But this view is easily shown to be inadequate, with the help of (39), which also contains the said proposition:

(39) All humans beings are mortal. For example, Socrates, who is human, is mortal.

The distinction between acts and relationships provides the basis for the solution of an important problem in dissertation analysis. There are often good reasons (and good intuitions) for wishing to single code the units into which a text is divided, i.e. to assign one label to each unit. But there are also good points in favour of multiple coding. And there are no criteria for deciding in favour of one or the other.

The distinction allows a parallel coding of two dimensions, the acts and the relationships. Along one dimension, that of acts, it is possible (and I think desirable) to demand single coding. Along the other dimension, that of relations, it is justifiable to have multiple coding; an act will enter into relationship not only with one other act, but possibly with many more.

The need for the distinction is exemplified in an experimental comparison between two mddes of classroom interaction which was carried out by a team of which I was a member. One part of the analysis of our data consisted in coding dissertation acts and relationships, but we had not distinguished them. We found it particularly difficult to code the following extract from a student working in a pair:

Yes,/I don't think the creatures have creativity/be-
 cause if they would have creativity, they all the
 they will changing his way to do the things,/and they
 eVery year are doing the same the same the same./So I
 don't think it's creativity./And the man all the
 years and even all day he is changing his way to act
 and his way to build and everything and um um...
 (Long et al. 1976:147)

In the discussion of the limitations our system had, we
 say:

Instead of the simple one-to-one coding we have de-
 scribed, intervention 240 could be analysed something
 as follows:

Having already decided that they are going to micro-
 classify according to + or -creativity:

230: OK. So what do you think about creativity?
 the pair of students now divide the problem into two
 parts:'the creatures', and 'the man'. Next, the anal-
 ysis of the first part, 'the creatures', is introduc-
 ed by advancing the conclusion, in the form of a hy-
 pothesis, that the creatures are -creative

'I don't think the creatures have creativity.'
 o
 o
 o

The proof that animals are not +creative is carried
 out not by providing direct evidence but by showing
 the logical implications of the hypothesis

'If they would have creativity, they all th they
 will changing his way to do things.'
 and then comparing these against evidence,
 '...and...'

making the comparison with evidence being provided in
 the form of the observation...

(Long et al. 1976:151)

Clearly, we needed multiple coding of the relationships
 - the introduction, logical implications, comparison, con-
 clusion. But we did not need multiple coding of the acts -
 hypotheses and observations. Our main problem was, then,
 that we did not distinguish relationships from acts.

Let us now consider Urquhart's model, which almost reflects the view needed. He divides 'inter-sentential' relationships into two basic types, paratactic (or non-subordinating) and hypotactic (or subordinating) (Widdowson and Urquhart 1976:40). But then two acts, statement and assertion, are distinguished as relationships:

In the case of hypotactic relationships, a basic distinction is drawn between Statements declarative utterances which the author considers will be accepted by his audience without further question, and Assertions, which are always followed by supporting material designed to win acceptance for the Assertion.

(Widdowson and Urquhart 1976:40)

A class of acts is defined as the relationship an act has with its following act. Immediately afterwards we find the inverse confusion; a relationship is seen as an element in a sequence of acts:

Hypotactic relationships are:

I. Statement+Explanation:

e.g. 'The car stopped. The brakes jammed'.

I I. Assertion+Substantiation:

e.g. 'This convenient technique is highly inefficient. In normal practice it is usual for more than 40% of the nitrogen to reach the plants'.

III. Assertion+Exemplification:

e.g. 'They are also superior in aesthetic sense: for instance, they discriminate colours better than boys'.

(Widdowson and Urquhart 1976:40)

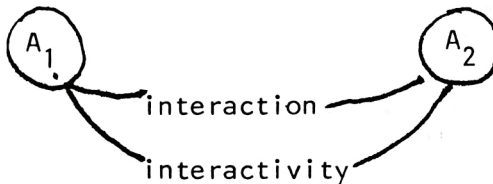
The problem is that statements and assertions are not properly seen as entering into the relationships of explanation, substantiation, and exemplification. Rather, these relationships are seen as acts that follow statements and assertions. What is needed is something like:

Explanation: Statement-observation,

though, in the light of the contrast we had at the begin-

ning of this section between the deduction and the exemplification, the question is somewhat more complex.

Hugh Trappes-Lomax, in his sociolinguistics lectures at the University of Edinburgh during the academic year 1977-78, had a clearer view of the distinction between acts and relationships. He distinguished two sorts of relationships between illocutionary acts. He called them 'interactive link' and 'interactivity link'. He liked to represent his view with simple diagrams like the following one, where A_1 and A_2 are speech acts:



He said that inter-action obtained between people and inter-activity obtained between the activities performed in discourse. The point can be illustrated with the distinction between requests, for information and questions (See Castaños 1983). Other examples are not difficult to find. In fact, many have already been provided in the literature, although they have not been seen in the same way. Consider the following situation. Charlie is writing a piece of music. Sandy arrives and after greeting Charlie says:

(40) It's hot in here...

Charlie replies with (41), and at the same time, goes to the window and opens it.

(41) Yes, it is.

The traditional analysis would be that (40) does not provide information, because it is really a request for Charlie to open the window. (Of course, it could be something stronger, such as a reproach for not having the window open, depending on intonation, on the relationship between Charlie and Sandy, and other factors). On this a-

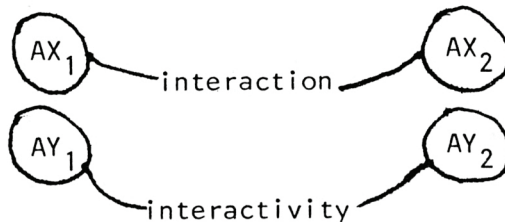
analysis, (41) would be linked to (40) as an agreement to satisfy the request, or something like that.

Trappes-Lomax would, I think, reply that (40) does not stop having information because it is a request, and that (41) is a confirmation of that information, at the same time that it is the agreement to satisfy the request. Either of the following modifications to our situation will make this clear:

1. After (41), Charlie adds: "I hadn't noticed; my mind was completely absorbed. (Me still opens window).
2. It is a third person, Sally, who utters (41). (Charlie still opens the window).

It can be said that in the original situation (40) only makes a certain information present, whereas in modification 1 it actually provides the information. It can also be said that in the original situation (41) is an agreement to satisfy a request, whereas in modification 2 it is an adherence to the request (or reproach). But in the three situations (41) confirms (40).

The problem with Trappes-Lomax's position is that it is not in accordance with Widdowson's 1973 approach. The diagram to represent different sorts of links should include different sorts of acts:



Going back to our situations, (40) is used to realize an observation, besides the request. (41) is also used to realize an observation, in fact the same one; this observation is realized at the same time that the agreement, or the adherence, is realized. Between these two observations in (40) and (41) there is a relationship of confirmation. This obtains besides, and independently of, the relation-

ship between request and agreement, or between request and adherence to the request.

To end this discussion, I prefer to retain 'coherence', rather than replace it with 'interaction', for two reasons. Firstly, Widdowson's term is already well established. Secondly, 'interaction' should be better left as a pre-theoretical term to cover a whole area of discourse, which includes illocution and conversational management, rather than be turned into a precise theoretical term to designate a specific kind of relationship.

As for the other term, I prefer to use 'consistency', to show that it is in the same conceptual space as 'coherence', but denotes a distinct sort of link. And also to keep mnemonic association with dissertation.

Summary

This article: began with a discussion of Widdowson's 1973 'Directions in the teaching of discourse'. It was shown that the approach followed here was to characterize a level of analysis as containing specific units and rules of unity. We then proceeded to examine, in the light of this approach, Widdowson's 1978 Teaching Language as Communication. It was shown that the introduction of a unit of analysis, the proposition, had not been accompanied by the introduction of its own rules of unity.

The question of levels was considered in more detail. The relative autonomy principle was discussed from the point of view of European structural linguistics, of generative grammar, and discourse analysis. The principle states that the units in one level cannot be defined without making reference to the units in other levels, but the rules of unity for one level are independent from the rules of other levels.

It was shown that propositions can have rules of their own. Van Dijk's term 'connection' was adopted for this sort of unity, but his view was modified in order to be in accordance with the relative autonomy principle. In this way Widdowson's 1978 model is added, so that it be

in accordance with Widdowson's 1973 approach.

Finally, to be consistent with the approach, it was shown that dissertation acts have their own sort of relationships, just as the units at other levels do. It was said that the two, acts and relationships, have not been properly distinguished. The discussion of this showed, in the beginning, that these relationships are different from connection, and at the end, that they are different from coherence. A critical consideration was involved of the works of Urquhart and Trappes-Lomax. The latter was seen as an antecedent of my view.

January 1986.

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