

EL4252 Honours Year Session 13 (Final)

1. A statement of goal again for this module:

- ❖ an attempt to come to terms with (ie analyse, characterise, theorise about) **interactional discourse** as a highly complex phenomenon
- ❖ an attempt to evaluate the appropriateness and adequacy of a number of frameworks in dealing with interactional discourse

2. Because interactional discourse is a highly complex entity, it is doubtful that any single framework can fully account for all aspects of the discourse. The choice of which aspect to emphasise will depend on the aim and interest of the researcher, and therefore can be described as being 'subjective' in some sense.

Our earlier attempt to contextualise discourse relied heavily on the systemic-functional distinction between *field*, *tenor* and *mode*: each with linguistic, structural and discourse consequences.

Consider too the structure of the ICE corpus.

Spoken Texts (300)	Dialogues (180)	Private (100)		<i>face-to-face conversations</i> (90) <i>telephone conversations</i> (10)
		Public (80)		classroom lessons (20) broadcast discussions (20) broadcast interviews (10) parliamentary debates (10) legal cross-examinations (10) business transactions (10)
	Monologues (100)	Unscripted (70)		spontaneous commentaries (20) unscripted speeches: lectures (30) demonstrations (10) legal presentations (10)
		Scripted (30)		broadcast talks (20) non-broadcast speeches (10)
	Mixed (20)			broadcast news (20)
Written Texts (200)	Non-printed (50)	Non-professional writing (20)		untimed student essays (10) student examination scripts (10)
		Correspondence (30)		social letters (15) business letters (15)
	Printed (150)	Informational writing (100)	Academic writing (40)	humanities (10) social sciences (10) natural sciences (10) technology (10)
			Popular writing (40)	humanities (10) social sciences (10) natural sciences (10) technology (10)
		Reportage (20)	press news reports (20)	
		Instructional writing (20)	administrative/regulatory (10) skills/hobbies (10)	
		Persuasive writing (10)	press editorials (10)	
	Creative writing (20)	novels/stories (20)		

What is the basis of the ICE segmentation?

In the course of the module we have looked at:

- ✓ (informal, spoken) conversation characterised by equal relations, free flow of topics – including ‘talk cock’ sessions, arguments
- ✓ narratives
- ✓ recipes
- ✓ spoken economic encounters
- ✓ teaching encounters
- ✓ spoken courtroom encounters
- ✓ spoken parliamentary encounters
- ✓ ‘literary’ of complex discourse levels – literary/dramatic dialogue, film scripts, dialogue in the media (chat shows, etc.)

3. As a quick and convenient alternative, we can also consider Jakobson’s linguistic functions, and try to see how the various frameworks emphasise particular aspects of the context.

An addresser sends a message to an addressee; the message uses a code (usually a language familiar to both addresser and addressee); the message has a context (or ‘referent’) and is transmitted through a contact (a medium, such as live speech, a telephone, or writing).

- ✓ *An addresser might represent him/herself but might also take on particular social roles. The same might be said of the addressee. This is a part of TENOR.*
- ✓ *The code represents a semiotic system. Language is an important semiotic system, but this exists together with other semiotic systems (paralinguistic, kinesic, proxemic, vestimentary, musical, etc.) This is a part of MODE. (The issue of **multi-modality** is currently in fashion in certain research circles.)*
- ✓ *The label ‘context’ is misleading to us, and it might be best to substitute it with the term ‘reference’; this makes it clear that it is related to the notion of FIELD.*
- ✓ *Contact is akin to MODE.*

CONTEXT (=REFERENCE)
ADDRESSER → MESSAGE → ADDRESSEE
CONTACT
CODE

Let us revisit the frameworks and consider them in terms of (i) descriptive adequacy and (ii) capability for yielding insights on interactional discourse

(a) Overall context, genre

- ✓ Provides us with the ‘bigger picture’, the ‘grand scheme of things’ and prevents us from ‘missing the wood for the trees’. Reinforces the point that all discourse is **culturally situated**.
- ✓ Not all genres have been described. Some have cast doubt as to whether all genres can be described in terms of a GSP (generic structure potential). This should not prevent us from making close links between formal structures and genre (cf. statements like: ‘scientific discourse employs more passivisation’, ‘formal contexts call for additional face work’, ‘informal conversation is evidenced by the use of slang and core lexis’)

(b) Exchange structure: structural, functional perspective [focus on MESSAGE and CODE]

- ✓ A general system that can be employed on various types of interactional discourse.
- ✓ The advantage can be seen as a disadvantage: is it too general to be of use to specific kinds of discourse?
- ✓ There appears to be some correlation between the ‘neatness’ of the analysis and the kind of discourse.
- ✓ Analysis can reveal various patterns.

(c) Gricean pragmatics: socio-psychological and cognitive perspective [focus on ADDRESSER or ADDRESSEE]

- ✓ Focus on individual intention and goals
- ✓ Isolates co-operation and politeness/face as major assumptions within the context of culture.

We did not discuss this in detail, but these Gricean concepts are useful:

- ✓ non-natural meaning
- ✓ implicature v. inference
- ✓ saying v. implicating
- ✓ violation, opting out, flouting (exploitation) of maxims

Additionally, these concepts from speech-act theory might be useful:

- ✓ direct v. indirect speech acts; literal v. non-literal speech acts (cf. Halliday's notion of *grammatical metaphor* and congruent v. non-congruent or marked v. unmarked forms)
- ✓ locution, illocution and perlocution
- ✓ categories of speech acts (Searle: representatives, directives, commissives, expressive and declarations)

4. Operationalisation issues.

- ✓ How do you begin the analysis?
- ✓ What do you analyse?
- ✓ How do you draw together the details to form a meaningful conclusion?
- ✓ Quantitative v qualitative?
- ✓ Depth or breadth?

5. Examination format

- ✓ The examination will take on an open-book format. You may bring in as much material as you wish. Be warned though that it is very difficult to go through your material if you bring a voluminous amount, or if they are not well organised. It might be a good idea to restrict yourself to a file or a folder. You might also like to bring along a dictionary.
- ✓ The exam will last two hours.
- ✓ There will only be three questions to answer. (Read ALL the questions before attempting any.)
- ✓ The exam will focus on the textual analysis. You will be asked to focus on specific aspects of analysis and to base your analysis on the data provided (there will be three texts; each text will not be more than one A4 side). You may use any of these texts to answer the questions; you **may** repeat texts in the exam.
- ✓ Each question carries the same weight. Please divide your time equally. Dividing 120 minutes into 3 gives you 40 minutes for each question.
- ✓ In all of this, I am very aware that there is limited amount of time and that reading through the texts will take some time. I will therefore **not** be very concerned about your answer being exhaustive or being of the right length. In fact, the more clearly focused your answer is, the more you will be rewarded. I also intend to reward unconventional answers, particularly if these lead to greater insights into the frameworks employed or the texts analysed. In fact, you will only be given **two pages** to answer each question.
- ✓ This means that you are **not expected to go through all the data (unless you want to)**. It is not a problem spending all your energies on three lines from a text. In fact, this might be encouraged, particularly if you are going for depth rather than breadth.

The exam is on **Friday, 1.xii.17** in the afternoon (2.30 to 4.30 pm). The venue is **to be confirmed**.

[6. Exercises using the exam format \(click to read: copies will be made for class\).](#)

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