

## The Concept of Discourse in Modern Linguistics

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**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the definition of the concept of discourse in linguistics through the prism of different approaches, identifying the features of each. Four approaches were chosen to consider the concept of discourse: communicative, structural-syntactic, structural-stylistic and socio-pragmatic. As a result of the study of these approaches, it was revealed that one side of the discourse is addressed to pragmatics, to typical situations of communication, the other to the processes occurring in the minds of the participants in communication, and the third to the text itself. This gave reason to believe that discourse can be considered both as a process and as a result in the form of a fixed text.

**Keywords:** concept of discourse, text, communicative approach, structural-syntactic approach, structural-stylistic approach, socio-pragmatic approach, extralinguistic factors.

### INTRODUCTION

Raising the question of the dynamism of the term "discourse" in terms of its semantic variation is quite legitimate, since in recent decades it has become the most frequently used in the linguistic field. And it is possible that this was facilitated by the lack of a clear and generally recognized definition of discourse, covering all cases of its use. At present, the functional-communicative approach considers discourse as the most important form of everyday life practice of a person and defines it as a complex communicative phenomenon that includes, in addition to the text, extralinguistic factors (knowledge of the world, opinions, attitudes, goals of the addressee) necessary for understanding the text.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The definition of the concept of "discourse" causes significant difficulties due to the fact that it turned out to be in demand within a number of scientific disciplines, such as linguistics, anthropology, literary criticism, ethnography, sociology, sociolinguistics, philosophy, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and some other. And it is quite natural that the ambiguity of the term "discourse" and its use in various fields of humanitarian knowledge give rise to different approaches to the interpretation of the meaning and essence of this concept. Nevertheless, it can be said that, thanks to the efforts of scientists from various fields, discourse theory is currently taking shape as an independent interdisciplinary field, reflecting the general trend towards integration in the development of modern science.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Even before the advent of the modern theory of discourse, which began to take shape as an independent field of science only in the mid-1960s, there were attempts to define this term. The word *discours* has the most "old" meaning in French and means dialogical speech. Already in the 19th century, this term was polysemous: in the Dictionary of the German Language by Jakob Wilhelm Grim "Deutsches Woerterbuch" of 1860, the following semantic parameters of the term "discourse" are indicated:

- 1) dialogue, conversation;
- 2) speech, lecture. This approach was typical during the formation of the theory of discourse in the framework of numerous studies, called text linguistics. This was the period when linguistics went beyond the study of an isolated statement (sentence) and moved on to the analysis of a syntagmatic chain of statements that form a text, the constitutive properties of which are completeness, integrity, coherence, etc. Interest in studying the text was due to the desire to consider language as an integral means of communication, to study more deeply the connections of language with various aspects of human activity, realized through the text. The intensive development of text linguistics as a science of the essence, prerequisites and conditions of human communication marked a turn from the linguistics of language to the linguistics of speech, and caused increased attention to the act of communication.

From the very beginning, within the framework of studies studying the organization of the text of connected speech, there was a controversy related to the terminological definition of the object of study, as well as the very field of linguistics that studies the text. The term “linguistics of text”, which originally appeared, seems to many scientists not entirely successful, and in some linguistic works the text of coherent speech is called discourse. The polysemy of the term “discourse” is recorded in the “Concise Dictionary of Text Linguistics Terms” by T.M. Nikolaeva:

“Discourse is a multi-valued term of text linguistics, used by a number of authors in meanings that are almost homonymous. The most important of them:

- 1) connected text;
- 2) oral-colloquial form of the text;
- 3) dialogue;
- 4) a group of statements related to each other in meaning;
- 5) a speech work as a given – written or oral” [1, p. 467].

In modern linguistics, discourse is interpreted ambiguously. There are several approaches to the definition of discourse.

1. Communicative (functional) approach: discourse as verbal communication (speech, use, functioning of the language), either as a dialogue, or as a conversation, that is, a type of dialogical statement, or as a speech from the position of the speaker, as opposed to a narrative that does not take into account such a position. Within the framework of the communicative approach, the term "discourse" is interpreted as "a certain sign structure, which is made discourse by its subject, object, place, time, circumstances of creation (production)" [3, p. 5].
2. Structural-syntactic approach: discourse as a text fragment, that is, education above the sentence level (superphrasal unity, complex syntactic whole, paragraph). Discourse is understood as two or more sentences that are in a semantic relationship with each other, while connectivity is considered as one of the main features of discourse.
3. Structural-stylistic approach: discourse as a non-textual organization of colloquial speech, characterized by fuzzy division into parts, dominance of associative links, spontaneity, situationality, high contextuality, stylistic specificity.
4. Socio-pragmatic approach: discourse as a text immersed in a situation of communication, in life, either as a social or ideologically limited type of statements, or as a “language in a language”, but presented as a special social entity that has its own texts.

The point of view of Y.S. Stepanov, who connects discourse with the concepts of an alternative world, fact and causality. Stepanov also gives a broad linguo-philosophical interpretation of discourse as a “language in a language”, presented as a special social entity. At the same time, discourse cannot be reduced to style, grammar or lexicon as simply language. It “exists, first of all, and mainly in texts, but those that are followed by a special grammar, a special lexicon, special rules of word usage and syntax, a special semantics, and, ultimately, a special world” [6, p. 45]. Although Stepanov also talks about the existence of discourse in texts, his vision of discourse as a special, possible world takes discourse far beyond the text.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, summarizing the above definitions of the concept of "discourse", it can be argued that this term, as it is understood in modern linguistics, is close in meaning to the concept of "text", however, it emphasizes the dynamic nature of linguistic communication unfolding in time; in contrast, the text is conceived primarily as a static object, the result of linguistic activity. Some researchers interpret discourse as simultaneously including two components: both the dynamic process of linguistic activity inscribed in its social context, and its result (that is, the text); this is the preferred understanding.

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