

Discourse analysis as a semiotic endeavor*

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Two decades ago, discourse analysis was an esoteric area of research, existing only on the fringes of established scholarship. Today, discourse analysis is being carried out by researchers in a wide range of disciplines, including linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, computer science, folkloristics, education, etc. Just in the past few years there has been an outpouring of books and articles on discourse analysis, and there are even a couple of journals devoted exclusively to the topic. Furthermore, university courses in discourse analysis are now far from being a rarity.

By some measures, then, discourse analysis has finally arrived. However, it does not take much probing to discover that the status of discourse analysis remains precarious, and that it is far from being firmly entrenched as a viable area of scholarship. Symptomatic of this precarious status is the fact that the increase in quantity of research has not been matched by an increase in quality.

The very fact that discourse analysis is carried out by researchers in diverse disciplines cannot help but diffuse research efforts. Lacking is any sort of consensus on the goals and methodology of discourse analysis. There is not even agreement on the term 'discourse analysis'; I am using the term here in the widest possible sense. It encompasses what some researchers prefer to call 'text analysis', as well as more specialized studies such as 'narratology'.

Undoubtedly, some of its practitioners regard discourse analysis only as a set of tools useful for the analysis of texts within their own disciplines, for the purpose of achieving goals specific to their disciplines. For example, a folklorist could use discourse analysis to analyze myths and folktales; a historian, to analyze historical discourse; and so on. However, if the tools vary with the type of material being analyzed, then it is

* Floyd Merrell, *A Semiotic Theory of Texts* (= Approaches to Semiotics 70). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1985.

inevitable that these tools will gradually be incorporated into the respective disciplines utilizing them. 'Discourse analysis' would then not refer to a separate and distinct area of scholarship.

Other objections can be made to such a conception of discourse analysis. For one, not all disciplines include texts as objects of investigation — none of the physical sciences studies discourse. Although all the sciences produce discourse — technical papers, textbooks, etc. — concerning their subject matter, none of these disciplines has a tradition of studying these texts. However, a paper in biophysics, say, is just as amenable to discourse analysis — and just as important to study — as is a short story.

Even if we exclude the problem of texts without a tradition of analysis within their disciplines, there would be a major disadvantage to viewing each discipline as responsible for studying its own texts. Consider, for example, the disciplines of literary criticism and folkloristics. Each studies texts that share many features; for example, the folktale and the short story are both instances of narrative discourse. However, the two disciplines erect rigid boundaries between the types of texts they study. Each discipline, generally speaking, is eager to exclude the other's texts from its domain. In folkloristics, much effort is devoted to developing criteria for distinguishing folklore from 'fakelore'; one requirement often imposed is that the material be transmitted orally and not through the medium of writing. In literary study much is made of the distinction between literature and non-literature. To a certain extent, distinctions between folklore and literature are arbitrary and not based on intrinsic textual features.

Let me hasten to add that each discipline has the right to consider texts from its own perspective. However, there is a place for a general study of discourse which would consider the whole range of texts, with no restrictions as to subject matter, esthetic value, or medium (oral or written). All these texts would be studied from the common perspective of texts as texts, and not as a source of knowledge about a particular subject. The term 'discourse analysis' can refer to such a general study. Its central aim can be characterized as the description of texts as an end in itself.

Note that the statement that texts are studied as ends in themselves does not necessarily imply that texts are abstracted from their setting in space and time and from the producer and receiver. The complete description of discourse will include not just the text, but also the complete situational context. Such a broader inquiry should be firmly anchored to the description of the text itself — a task which should have priority over the study of the context; otherwise, one risks crossing the boundary between discourse analysis and other disciplines, such as

psychology, sociology, etc. Note that some researchers would deny that the text itself can be adequately described without taking the context into account; this, however, is a controversial claim that is far from firmly established.

A description of a text will delineate its constituent parts and specify their interrelations. The description should be explicit, complete, and internally consistent. Each text is not regarded as *sui generis*, for that would entail the development of ad hoc categories for its description. Discourse analysis should have at its center a theory of discourse that specifies categories of text constituents and types of their interrelation for all texts. If the theory is adequate, then any newly encountered text can be adequately described using this fixed set of categories and relations.

Although presumably all texts share features of 'textness', not all texts are compositionally identical, even in abstract terms. Rather, there are distinct types of texts; hence, there is the need for a rational, comprehensive typology of texts. Existing classifications of texts either are not complete or overlap in various ways.

If the above very general conception of discourse analysis would be acceptable to a core of researchers, much progress could be made in establishing discourse analysis as a viable area of scholarship. However, the considerations up to this point do not establish the exact status of discourse analysis. It clearly should be seen as more than a loose collection of techniques that differ from discipline to discipline. The following options still remain: discourse analysis could be considered as (1) an interdisciplinary field; (2) a separate discipline, on a par with, say, folkloristics, linguistics, psychology, etc.; or (3) a part (or subfield) of an existing discipline.

The conception of discourse analysis as an interdisciplinary area would not be much of an improvement over its conception as a set of techniques or tools of analysis that vary from discipline to discipline. As for the other two options, discourse analysis is at present too fragmented to be considered seriously as an autonomous discipline. Realistically, then, the best that can be defended at the present is a conception of discourse analysis as part of an already existing discipline. This option would have the advantage of not making it necessary to construct a theory totally *ab ovo* and in isolation from all the other disciplines. The question, then, is what preexisting theoretical framework can naturally be extended to encompass discourse.

In terms of actual past practices, two different disciplines have been proposed as encompassing discourse analysis: linguistics and semiotics. The recent publication of Merrell's *A Semiotic Theory of Texts* provides the occasion for a discussion of the relative merits of linguistics and

semiotics as the encompassing discipline for discourse studies. Like Merrell, I will argue for semiotics as the best choice as 'patron' for a general study of discourse.

Before proceeding further, one issue merits discussion. It may seem chimerical to propose incorporating discourse analysis into semiotics, with the aim of bringing cohesion to the area of discourse studies. Semiotics itself is currently racked by some of the same problems affecting discourse analysis. It likewise embraces a wide range of techniques and approaches, with practitioners drawn from many different disciplines. There is no consensus as to the status of semiotics — whether it is an autonomous discipline, an interdisciplinary study, or a 'metadiscipline'. However, each area can benefit the other — semiotics itself might gain coherence if discourse analysis could be shown to be essentially a semiotic endeavor.

However, the notion of discourse cannot integrate all aspects of semiotics; in fact, it probably serves to reinforce a bifurcation of semiotic phenomena into that which is bound up with human language and that which is not so bound up. The broader question of the unity of semiotics is well beyond the scope of this paper.

Merrell's book can be only the starting point for a discussion of the relative merits of semiotics and linguistics as the patron of discourse analysis. For one, Merrell does not find it necessary to survey existing work in discourse analysis (p. 1). All he offers is a few pages of discussion of the literature, with the aim of showing the inadequacy of linguistics as a basis for the analysis of texts.

The brevity of Merrell's discussion is not the only shortcoming. Although Merrell's book has a 1985 copyright, the most recent references date from the mid-1970s. Perhaps this indicates a long delay between completion of the manuscript and its publication. As a consequence, Merrell fails to take into account the burgeoning of discourse studies in the past decade.

Merrell's failure to be absolutely current need not be a major weakness. The quality of work in discourse analysis is extremely variable, and no major breakthroughs have occurred recently. Also, sufficient material published by the mid-1970s exists to form the basis for an informed discussion of the issues. However, Merrell's bibliography does not include all of these relevant works. His list of references is quite eclectic, but there are surprisingly few works in semiotics or discourse analysis. Perhaps the largest single category is the philosophy of science.

The greatest shortcoming in Merrell's discussion is not its brevity or lack of topicality; it is the quality of his remarks. He repeatedly makes statements that cause one to question how well he understands the

literature. For example: 'Harris (1952) and the "discourse analysts" describe a text as a long sentence constructed by means of connectors' (p. 3). This statement does not at all characterize Harris's approach. Later in the book Merrell refers to the grammatical transformation 'from the active to the passive tense' (p. 156).

Of course, part of the problem may be very loose and careless expression on Merrell's part. For example, consider Merrell's reference to Barthes's (1967: 11) proposal to invert Saussure's view that linguistics is a part of semiology. Merrell phrases this as Barthes's 'presupposing linguistics to be the stepmother of "semiology"' (p. 3). The term 'stepmother' in this context suggests the sense of one who fails to give proper care or attention, which is certainly not what Barthes intended.

In talking about linguistic approaches to text analysis, Merrell fails to differentiate between approaches that strictly apply linguistics and approaches that make only an analogical use of some notions from linguistics. Thus, he more or less lumps together the work of linguists such as Harris and Halliday with that of the French Structuralists, among whom he includes Todorov, Greimas, Bremond, and Barthes. He sweepingly characterizes the work of the French Structuralists as postulating 'a formal homology between texts and sentences, and then [subjecting] their corpus of study to descriptive methods common to structural linguistics' (p. 2).

In short, Merrell does not begin to indicate the range of issues involved in assessing the role of linguistics in discourse analysis. Nevertheless, the basic position he takes is congruent with one which I believe to be essentially correct. He draws a distinction between text and language; as he phrases it, 'Language is the medium, it is not the text' (p. 5). Although texts are necessarily constructed by means of language, texts cannot be analyzed in the same way a linguist analyzes a set of sentences (p. 6). He sees a linguistic approach as reducing a text to language.

Merrell's approach to text analysis, which he proposes as an alternative to the linguistic approach, is one he characterizes as 'extralinguistic'. By 'extralinguistic' he means 'cognitive', and he identifies this with semiotics. The justification for this equation is the view, attributed to Peirce, that thoughts are signs (p. 9). A few remarks about Peirce is about the extent of Merrell's discussion of semiotics.

I will comment later in more detail on the exact conception Merrell has of a semiotic approach to discourse analysis. I first want to explore the issue of the relative merits of linguistics and semiotics as the patron of discourse analysis — a crucial issue which Merrell's discussion does not adequately treat.

At first glance, neither linguistics nor semiotics would seem adequate to

serve as the discipline devoted to the analysis of discourse. A text is generally thought of as consisting of a sequence of sentences. However, by consensus the sentence is the largest unit of grammatical analysis. As for semiotics, the key concept is the sign, which in language generally corresponds to the single word. Let us consider each of these issues in turn.

Bloomfield's classic book *Language* gives the standard argument for the sentence as the maximum unit of linguistic analysis. Bloomfield (1933: 170) defines the sentence as 'an independent form, not included in any larger (complex) linguistic form ...'. That is, there is no syntactic construction that unites two or more sentences into a larger form. The sentence, on the other hand, is related to smaller units by constituency, the composition of larger units out of smaller ones. For a discussion of the linguistic notion of syntactic construction, with numerous references to the literature, see Matthews (1981: 1-25).

The text is thus not a grammatical unit on a par with the sentence. No prominent linguist interested in the analysis of texts has ever tried to argue otherwise. Zellig Harris (1961: vii), for instance, has conceded that 'Exact linguistic analysis does not go beyond the limits of the sentence; the stringent demands of its procedures are not satisfied by the relation between one sentence and its neighbors ...'. The method of discourse analysis developed by Harris sees the global structure of a text as a recurrence of constituents, 'where a constituent, for language, is a segment of a sentence resulting from any grammatical analysis of the sentence' (Harris 1963: 7).

Harris's work does have some interesting aspects, but these are outweighed by its shortcomings, which have kept his approach from being influential. A critique of Harris's approach to discourse analysis, however, would take us too far afield. Suffice it to say that his representation of a text's structure as a unique sequence of equivalence classes of constituents offers little insight into general principles of text construction and does nothing to further the development of a text typology.

M. A. K. Halliday is another linguist who has concerned himself with discourse. The fullest exposition of his approach is in a book written in collaboration with Ruqaiya Hasan. The authors begin by disclaiming that the text is a grammatical unit. 'A text is not something that is like a sentence, only bigger; it is something that differs from a sentence in kind' (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 2). Consequently, 'we shall not expect to find the same kind of *structural* integration among the parts of a text as we find among the parts of a sentence or clause. The unity of a text is a unity of a different kind' (1976: 2).

Rather than claiming to analyze text structure, Halliday and Hasan

deal with 'texture', which is a matter of various devices of 'cohesion'. Cohesion occurs when the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent upon that of another element in the same discourse. Halliday and Hasan recognize five categories of cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.

Reference includes anaphora, deixis, etc. Substitution refers to the use of elements such as *one* or *does*, which substitute for a preceding noun or verb, respectively — e.g., 'My axe is too blunt. I must get a sharper one'. There are several types of ellipsis; all have in common the fact that the clause or sentence has an empty structural slot that can be filled with material occurring elsewhere in the text — e.g., 'Joan brought some carnations, and Catherine some sweet peas'. Under 'conjunction' Halliday and Hasan posit four basic types of semantic relation that can hold between a clause or sentence and some preceding clause or sentence: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. All of these relations are signaled by explicit connectives; for example, the additive relation is signaled by *and*, *furthermore*, *likewise*, etc. As for lexical cohesion, it can be a matter of reiteration (including the occurrence of words in a subordinate–superordinate relationship) or collocation (the occurrence of words that often co-occur, such as *dish–eat*, *king–queen*, etc.).

With the exception of lexical cohesion, all of these varieties of cohesion have been rather extensively studied by a number of linguists. Since they all involve elements that occur in a clause or sentence, where they play a definite grammatical role, their investigation seems best regarded as part of the study of syntax. This is particularly the case where such elements occur in clauses and the element they depend on is found in another clause that forms part of the same sentence. For example, in 'The girl entered the room, and she smiled at everyone', the antecedent of the pronoun *she* is *the girl*, occurring in the first conjoint of the sentence.

Despite the fact that the phenomena of anaphora, ellipsis, etc. can be investigated within the boundary of a single (multi-clause) sentence, or in at most two contiguous sentences, many linguists label such investigations 'discourse analysis'. A recent example is the book *Discourse Semantics*, by the linguist Pieter Seuren (1985). Seuren claims that his book is concerned with discourse-dependent linguistic interpretation; but nowhere in the 500-plus pages of the book does he cite a single instance of actual discourse. This fact is not surprising once it becomes evident that Seuren's real goal is to develop a grammatical theory that is a form of generative semantics (1985: 26). It is true that Seuren deals with various forms of anaphora, etc.; but he typically cites single sentences as examples, or at most, two-sentence sequences that he has patently made up.

It is confusing to have such linguistic treatments of anaphora, ellipsis,

etc. labeled as instances of discourse analysis. If the expression 'discourse analysis' is to have any coherent, well-defined sense, it should not be used to refer simply to what is essentially a logical extension of grammar.

As for Halliday and Hasan, they do not explicitly label their work 'discourse analysis', but they make clear in the very first paragraph that their book is concerned with texts. Yet the bulk of their book is devoted to the phenomena of anaphora, ellipsis, substitution, etc., each being the subject of a separate chapter. Each chapter includes numerous examples, but these generally consist of no more than two sequential sentences, and sometimes just one. Only in a few instances does the material come from actual texts.

In the final chapter of their book Halliday and Hasan do briefly analyze seven actual texts, representing a range of text types. However, most are fragments of much longer texts; for instance, one consists of seven sentences from *Alice in Wonderland*; another, twelve sentences from Yeats's autobiography; yet another, a short section of dramatic dialogue from a play by J. B. Priestley. The one complete text is a fourteen-stanza sonnet by John Wain.

It will be recalled that Halliday and Hasan do not pretend to analyze structure, but only texture. The results of their analysis of each text are presented in a tabular form, with the following information presented for each sentence of the text: the number of 'ties' (i.e., relations between the cohesive item and the item presupposed by it); the cohesive item; its type (e.g., reference, ellipsis, etc., with various sub-types recognized); the presupposed item; and the distance between the cohesive item and the presupposed one.

It takes Halliday and Hasan about seven pages to explain their scheme for coding the types of cohesion, a fact which suggests the complexity of their tabular arrays. One glance will not convey any overall sense of the cohesion of the text. And when one imagines the whole text of, say, *Alice in Wonderland* subjected to such an analysis, the result is bound to be a mass of data so overwhelming as to be practically useless.

In short, even considering the aims of their analyses — of texture, not structure; and a means, not an end — the results are not very satisfactory. (Possible ends mentioned by the authors include the teaching of composition, stylistics, etc.)

Halliday and Hasan do note that cohesion is only one component of texture. Other components include the theme systems within sentences (analysis into theme-rheme) and the structure of discourse, by which they mean 'the larger structure that is a property of the forms of discourse themselves: the structure that is inherent in such concepts as narrative, prayer, folk-ballad, formal correspondence, sonnet, operating instruc-

tions, television drama and the like' (1976: 326–327). Halliday and Hasan devote only a few paragraphs to the notion of a global text structure.

It seems somewhat perverse for Halliday and Hasan to include global text structure as one aspect of texture — usually structure and texture are opposed, or at least clearly differentiated (cf. Sebeok 1974: vii). A representation of a text's global structure will necessarily abstract from the particularities of a given text. An analysis of cohesion, along the lines proposed by Halliday and Hasan, can attend to those features that a structural analysis must either bypass or generalize.

I would argue that analysis of global structure should be the primary object of the study of discourse, with the study of cohesion subordinate to that study. It does not make sense to have text analyses along the line of Halliday and Hasan pursued independently of approaches which focus on global structure. The results achieved by Halliday and Hasan cannot simply be tacked on to another researcher's analysis of global structure. As we have seen, the analysis of texture can yield a mass of data, much of it not really relevant to the interpretation of the text. This is the consequence of an analysis of texture totally unconstrained by structure.

Obviously, I have not even begun to offer an adequate survey of the range of linguistic approaches to discourse analysis. But by concentrating on Harris and Halliday, both outstanding linguists, I have tried to show what linguistics can accomplish with its best foot forward. The fact that their forays into discourse analysis fall far short of an adequate description of texts should serve as a testimonial to the inadequacy of linguistic theory as the primary basis for discourse analysis.

Before turning to a consideration of the suitability of semiotics to serve as the 'patron' of discourse analysis, let us briefly consider one putative exception to the assertion that no prominent linguist has rejected the sentence as the maximum unit of syntactic analysis. In his *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev (1961: 16) asserts that 'The objects of interest to linguistic theory are texts. The aim of linguistic theory is to provide a procedural method by means of which a given text can be comprehended through a self-consistent and exhaustive description'. Later, Hjelmslev formulates his principle of exhaustive description, which implies 'that the analysis must move from the invariants that have the greatest extension conceivable to the invariants that have the least extension conceivable ...' (1961: 97). Thus, in his conception, 'The systematics of the study of literature and of general science ... find their natural place within the framework of linguistic theory' (1961: 98).

Hjelmslev's is a sweeping vision of linguistics. Unfortunately, he offers no details or supporting analyses of units of text larger than the sentence.

Moreover, on closer inspection his notion of text is not without ambiguity, and even bizarreness.

First, Hjelmslev seems to suggest that the text is the starting point of linguistic analysis because it is an empirical given. However, in the context of his suggestion that the study of literature finds a place within linguistic theory, Hjelmslev talks about the procedure in which 'the larger textual parts must be further partitioned into productions of single authors, works, chapters, paragraphs, and the like ...' (1961: 98–99). But such a conglomeration of authors, works, etc. into one 'super' text is not a given. Published anthologies, it is true, may bring together different works of one author, or works by different authors; newspapers and magazines contain a mixture of texts. But the separation of such texts is clearly indicated, and it requires no act of analysis to separate them. In any case, isolating a text for analysis should be considered a pre-analytic step.

Hjelmslev, it becomes obvious, is not simply talking about a long text, but one of 'unrestricted extension' (1961: 98). Hjelmslev asserts that

If the text is unrestricted, i.e., capable of being prolonged through constant addition of further parts, as will be the case for a living language taken as text, it will be possible to register an unrestricted number of sentences.... Sooner or later in the course of the deduction, however, there comes a point at which the number of inventoried entities becomes restricted.... As a matter of fact, if there were no restricted inventories, linguistic theory could not hope to reach its goal, which is to make possible a simple and exhaustive description of the system behind the text. (1961: 42)

Hjelmslev identifies *system* with *language*, and *text* with *process*. It would thus seem that Hjelmslev's conception of text is not that different from Saussure's conception of *parole*.

A true science of discourse must view the text not as process, but as a system in its own right — or, more precisely, as a structure actualizing some of the potentials of a system distinct from the language system. From such a perspective, Hjelmslev's conception of text analysis is inadequate. However, as we will shortly see, some other ideas of his can provide the point of departure for the development of a semiotic science of texts.

Let us turn now to a consideration of the possibility of semiotics providing the base for discourse analysis. As a point of departure, let us reconsider the notion of text, which from a linguistic perspective is most naturally seen as a concatenation of sentences. (This is true even for the majority of linguists who reject the notion of the text as a grammatical unit.) However, the unity that is a text is more than the sum of the

sentences that constitute it. A good statement of a more viable conception of the text is as follows: 'A text is best regarded as a *semantic* unit: a unit not of form but of meaning. Thus it is related to a clause or sentence not by size but by *realization*, the coding of one symbolic system in another'. This quotation comes from the book by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 2) that we considered earlier. As we saw, their book does not really develop this notion of the text; their concept of cohesion and their analyses focus on the sequence of sentences that realize a text. Otherwise, they would not register the direction and distance of cohesive ties; e.g., they say a tie is immediate if the presupposed item is found in a contiguous sentence (1976: 339).

Halliday and Hasan's conception of the text as realized by sentences, not composed of sentences, can accommodate texts that are only one sentence long, such as proverbs (e.g., 'A stitch in time saves nine'). However, they note that, empirically speaking, most texts consist of multiple sentences. In a revealing statement, they note that 'If every text consisted of only one sentence, we should not need to go beyond the category of structure to explain the internal cohesiveness of a text', where by *structure* they mean syntactic structure (1976: 7). This position is untenable, insofar as it implies that the structure of, say, proverbs is equivalent to the syntactic structure of the sentences that manifest them. For an example of a structural analysis of one-sentence texts, see Sebeok's (1974: 1-13) study of Cheremis dream portents.

One-sentence texts other than folklore genres mentioned in passing by Halliday and Hasan include advertising slogans, public notices, etc. One example they cite is *No Smoking*. However, it could be argued that a public notice such as *No Smoking* tacitly contains an instance of what Halliday and Hasan call 'exophoric reference', where information required for interpreting the text is found outside the text itself, in the physical setting (the 'context of situation'). And with respect to exophoric reference, Halliday and Hasan assert that it is not cohesive 'since it does not bind the two elements together into a text' (1976: 18).

It is the conception of text as a semantic unit that most readily suggests that discourse analysis is properly a semiotic endeavor. However, the main stumbling block is the almost universal conception of semiotics as the science of signs, with signs equated with words in the sphere of human language.

As various commentators have pointed out, the two leading figures in modern semiotics, Saussure and Peirce, focus on individual words in their discussion of human language. (This is perhaps inevitable if one's perspective is the general notion of sign, for most signifying systems other than language proper lack a syntax.) For instance, Watt (1984: 102) notes that

both Saussure and Peirce were primarily concerned with the varieties and subtleties of signification of *single entities*, whether words or things; their chief contributions were therefore to the deep understanding of lexicons (sets of signifying elements). What is largely missing from their accounts is syntax.... (1982: 102; cf. also Benveniste 1969a: 2, 1969b: 134)

Particularly relevant to our present concern is Watt's judgment that 'Understanding the individual significations of a poem's words must indeed be aided by repairing to Peirce; understanding the poem's structures will probably not be' (1982: 103).

Observations such as Watt's do not deny that discourse of any type exemplifies the phenomenon of signification. What they demonstrate is that the basis for a semiotics of discourse cannot be found ready-made in the writings of either Peirce or Saussure. They also imply that if semiotics is to be able to accommodate discourse, it must transcend the sign.

Benveniste (1969b: 134-135) has reached essentially the same conclusion:

La sémiologie de la langue a été bloquée, paradoxalement, par l'instrument même qui l'a créée: le signe. On ne pouvait écarter l'idée du signe linguistique sans supprimer le caractère le plus important de la langue; on ne pouvait non plus l'étendre au discours entier sans contredire sa définition comme unité minimale.

Benveniste concludes that it is necessary to go beyond the Saussurean notion of the sign. The first step would be to recognize two modes of meaning in language: the 'semantic' and the 'semiotic'. The semiotic mode pertains to the linguistic sign, in the Saussurean sense. The semantic mode pertains to the meaning produced in discourse. This distinction is said to open the way to a 'translinguistic' analysis of texts.

At first glance, Benveniste's proposals would appear to correspond closely to the position being argued here, aside from some obvious differences in choice of terminology. For Benveniste, *semiologie* is a general term, with *semiotics* and *semantics* being subdivisions. We, in contrast, are using *semiotics* as a general term, and not proposing any terminological distinction between the modes of meaning in words and discourse. Also, it is not clear how Benveniste intends the term *translinguistics* to be understood. Barthes (1967: 11) used this term in the context of suggesting that 'Semiology is therefore perhaps destined to be absorbed into a *translinguistics* ...'.

On closer examination, Benveniste's proposal fails to provide a satisfactory basis for incorporating discourse analysis into semiotics. To see the justification for this judgment, we must examine some of the reasoning

that led Benveniste to make his distinction between the semantic and the semiotic modes of meaning.

In a footnote Benveniste (1969b: 133) indicates that this distinction results from the analysis presented earlier in his paper on 'The levels of linguistic analysis' (Benveniste 1971). There Benveniste (who is primarily a linguist) presents a case for regarding the sentence as the maximum unit of linguistic analysis. The sentence can be analyzed into constituent units, but it cannot itself form a part of a larger unit. This is a familiar argument, but Benveniste's discussion has a somewhat different slant. He claims that this status of the sentence results from its being a predicative statement or proposition 'which does not constitute a class of distinctive units. That is why the proposition cannot enter as a part into a totality of a higher rank. A statement can only precede or follow another statement in a consecutive relationship' (1971: 109).

Benveniste goes on to refer to the sentence as 'an undefined creation of limitless variety' and as 'the very life of human speech in action' (1971: 110). Thus it is clear that, for Benveniste, *discourse* is more or less equivalent to Saussure's notion of *parole* (and Hjelmslev's notion of process). Benveniste does not recognize the text as a unit distinct from a concatenation of sentences.

Benveniste's notion of a semantic mode of meaning actually pertains to the individual sentence. He sees the sentence as fundamentally different from other linguistic entities not only because it is not a constituent of a larger whole, but also because of its relation to its constituent parts. According to Benveniste,

The sentence is realized in words, but the words are not simply segments of it. A sentence constitutes a whole which is not reducible to the sum of its parts; the meaning inherent in this whole is distributed over the ensemble of its constituents. The word is a constituent of a sentence; it brings about its signification; but it does not necessarily appear in the sentence with the meaning it has as an autonomous unit. (1971: 105)

Benveniste does not introduce the distinction between the semiotic and the semantic modes of meaning in the paper on linguistic levels; but the same discussion on the 'global' nature of sentential meaning can be found in the paper that does make the distinction. For example, it is evident in Benveniste's assertion that '*Du signe a la phrase il n'y a pas transition, ni par syntagmation ni autrement. Un hiatus les sépare*' (1969a: 134).

Benveniste fails to elaborate on the gap between the word and the sentence, except to allude to the fact that the meaning of words in isolation is a generalization from their contextual meanings — what they

mean in the particular sentences in which they occur. Also, he might have in mind idiomatic expressions and figurative meanings. Consider an idiom such as *kick the bucket*, meaning 'to die'. This expression cannot be correctly interpreted by adding the meanings of *kick* and *the bucket*. Whatever the problems in interpreting sentences as a function of their constituent words, these should be regarded as linguistic problems, and not a matter of discourse analysis.

A reader encountering the sentence 'He kicked the bucket' in a short story will have to do more than interpret this sentence correctly (as meaning 'he died'). He will have to integrate it into the narrative structure. He has to see how this piece of information functions in the story itself.

If Benveniste were asserting that between the sentence and the text there is no transition, then his position would be congruent with the one adopted here. However, he says nothing about the relation between the meaning of a sentence and the meaning of the text it enters into (forms a part of). The implication seems to be that it is of the same nature, or is merely additive. Thus Benveniste has not mapped out a place for discourse analysis within semiotics. Whatever the merits of his view of the relation between words and the semantic interpretation of the sentence, it clearly cannot accommodate the analysis of the underlying structure of discourse.

A rationale for incorporating discourse analysis within semiotics can, however, be found in the work of Hjelmslev. This assertion may be surprising, given the earlier rejection of Hjelmslev's claim that the text is the object of linguistic inquiry. On closer inspection, we saw that Hjelmslev's notion of text proved to be equivalent to the language itself, though as manifested in use (process) rather than as potential (system).

Our earlier discussion of Hjelmslev was restricted to a brief look at his conception of natural (human) language as the unique object of linguistic theory. However, toward the end of his *Prolegomena* he offers some seminal suggestions for broadening his theory to encompass any 'semiotic' — i.e., any structure analogous to a human language. Here, as Hjelmslev (1961: 107) acknowledges, he is following in Saussure's footsteps, though with some crucial differences.

Hjelmslev's basic requirement for a semiotic is that its exhaustive description will require operating with two planes — a plane of expression and a plane of content — which are united by a relation of solidarity (i.e., a relation of mutual implication: expression implies content and vice versa). This relation between the plane of expression and the plane of content is called the 'semiotic relation' (Hjelmslev 1959).

This requirement for a semiotic is very general and can be met by a wide range of systems; for example, Hjelmslev notes that the game of chess qualifies. The comparison of language with chess is one that occurs several times in Saussure (1965). At one point, Saussure notes that '*Une partie d'échecs est comme une réalisation artificielle de ce que la langue nous présente sous une forme naturelle*' (1965: 125). It is the emphasis Saussure gives to his distinction between form and substance that makes the similarity between chess and language so salient. The values of the chess pieces depend on their internal relations, just as those of linguistic terms do. Whether the pieces are made of wood or ivory is immaterial, since it pertains to substance and not form (1965: 43).

Hjelmslev retains Saussure's distinction between form and substance, but he subordinates it to his distinction between the planes of content and expression — a distinction which itself derives from Saussure's two faces of the sign — the signifier (*signifiant*) and signified (*signifié*). Hjelmslev notes (1959: 173) that the terms *form* and *substance*, as used by Saussure, admit of a general application. In general terms, the distinction is a matter of abstraction: form is abstract in relation to substance; and in this sense all scientific analysis is an analysis of form, not substance. On the other hand, the distinction between expression and content is alone applicable to the semiotic sphere.

The expression-content distinction can indeed be applied to chess. Each chess piece (entity of expression) has a particular significance. However, as Hjelmslev (1961: 113) notes, the relation between the two planes is 'conformal'; that is, there is a one-to-one relation between the entities of one plane and those of another. Each chess piece has a particular meaning, and each meaning is expressed by just one chess piece. In such cases, it is not necessary to postulate two planes; such structures are most simply described as monoplanar. Hjelmslev proposes calling them *symbol systems*.

Semiotic systems, in contrast, are coplanar. Also, the entities of a semiotic system (signs), unlike symbols, can be further analyzed into 'figurae' — minimal elements of linguistic analysis that are parts of signs, but not signs themselves. *Figurae* can be established for each plane. For the plane of expression, the *figurae* are phonemes; for the plane of content, they are semantic components. Consider, for example, the English word *boy*. Its expression *figurae* can be represented by the letters *b*, *o*, and *y*. The content *figurae* can be represented by 'young', 'human', and 'he'. Hjelmslev stresses that the elements from one plane are not susceptible of a one-to-one matching with elements on the other plane; that is, language is *not* constructed in the following way (cf. Hjelmslev 1970):

‘young’	–	‘human’	–	‘he’
b	–	o	–	y

Rather, the relation between the entities in the two planes is as follows:

‘young–human–he’
⏟
boy

It is the concept of *figurae* and the possibility of analyses such as the above that led Hjelmslev to reject the notion that language is primarily a system of signs. Rather, he says, languages are, by their internal structure, ‘first and foremost ... systems of *figurae* that can be used to construct signs’ (1961: 47). It is this consideration that can justify Hjelmslev’s replacement of Saussure’s notions of signifier and signified (the two faces of the sign) with the notions of plane of expression and plane of content. This aspect of Hjelmslev’s work can help us surmount the problem (posed earlier) of semiotics being closely identified with the sign. If we identify semiotics with the initial analysis of objects into a plane of expression and a plane of content that are connected by the semiotic relation, then we do not have to worry if the text as a whole, or any of its subparts, is or is not appropriately called a sign.

Incidentally, this aspect of Hjelmslev’s theory throws an interesting light on those of Benveniste’s proposals for a semiology of language that we considered earlier. Unlike Hjelmslev, Benveniste’s (1971: 101) point of departure remains the view that language is an organic system of signs. He identifies signs with words, but thinks it inappropriate to call sentences or larger segments ‘signs’. For this reason, he posits two modes of meaning — semiotic for that of signs (individual words) and semantic for that of sentences (occurring in discourse). However, the relation between the sentence and its meaning, as seen by Benveniste, would seem to be quite similar, if not identical, to that which Hjelmslev posits between the expression and content of a single sign, such as *boy* in the above analysis. In other words, Benveniste’s distinction between the semiotic and the semantic modes of meaning collapses.

Hjelmslev’s conception of a semiotic cannot in itself accommodate discourse analysis. The basis for a semiotics of discourse can be found, however, in his notion of a ‘connotative semiotic’. This is a semiotic whose plane of expression is itself a semiotic. Hjelmslev illustrates this notion by noting that various parts of a text can be composed in different styles, different tones (angry, joyful, etc.), different vernaculars (various

jargons, etc.), different national languages, etc. (1961: 115). This notion of connotation has been characterized by Barthes (1967: 91) as follows:

As for the signified of connotation, its character is at once general, global and diffuse; it is, if you like, a fragment of ideology: the sum of the messages in French refers, for instance, to the signified 'French'; a book can refer to the signified 'Literature'.

As it stands, Hjelmslev's notion of a connotative semiotic is not relevant to the analysis of text structure. However, it can be reinterpreted so as to clarify the vague notion of text as a semantic object and not a grammatical unit composed of sentences. (The following discussion elaborates upon Hendricks 1973 and 1980). This reinterpretation of a connotative semiotic can then provide the framework for an autonomous science of texts. In order to avoid confusion, we propose replacing Hjelmslev's term *connotation* with the expression *second-order signification* (for a graphic representation of the notion, see Figure 1).

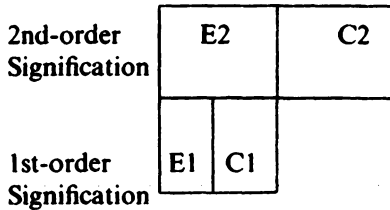


Figure 1

Any text, in the usual sense of a single finite work, can be initially analyzed into two parts — a plane of expression (E2) and a plane of content (C2) — which are united by the semiotic relation. Each plane can then be separately analyzed. We postulate that the global structure of the text is situated on the second-order plane of content (C2). The expression (E2) of this content is constituted by the sentences of the text; this sequence of sentences, in turn, can be analyzed into a plane of expression (E1) and a plane of content (C1).

At this point, we have gained as much as we can from Hjelmslev's linguistic theory. Nothing in his theory, or any other linguistic theory, is *directly* relevant to the analysis of text structure. Note that a distinction is being drawn between direct and indirect relevance. Some notions or techniques from linguistics may have an analogical application to problems of analyzing or representing text structure. Such borrowing is

legitimate, so long as one does not think that linguistics is being strictly applied to the analysis of texts.

Even the analysis of the plane of expression of the text (the first-order signification) should not be identified with the linguist's grammatical descriptions. Ideally, the study of the expression plane of a text will complement the analysis of the underlying structure; thus, an analysis of 'texture' along the lines of Halliday and Hasan is one possibility. One can also examine the textual sentences with an eye toward uncovering features that may correlate with the global structure.

It will not be necessary to start totally from scratch in analyzing the second-order plane of content. Much of the work already done on the structural analysis of narrative discourse can be interpreted in terms of the semiotic model of second-order signification.

Consider, for example, Propp's (1968) analysis of the Russian fairy tale. His analysis of the plot structure as a sequence of 'functions' is an analysis of second-order signification, and not of the sentences of the text; Propp explicitly notes that the 'choice of linguistic means' is one of the areas in which the storyteller is free to create; hence it lies outside the scope of his investigation (1968: 113).

It will be recalled that Hjelmslev requires that there not be a simple one-to-one relation between the planes of expression and content; otherwise, there is no justification for recognizing two planes. This requirement is easily met in the case of Propp's analysis, interpreted as an analysis of second-order signification. Consider, for example, the tale 'The miraculous pipe' (Afanas'ev 1973: 425). This is a relatively short tale, only about sixty sentences long (in English translation). However, Propp's representation of the structure of the tale is much shorter; it consists of only nine functions (units of plot structure), symbolized by Greek and Latin letters (1968: 129). Each of these units can be verbalized with a single sentence; for example, the function 'A' can be verbalized as 'The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family'.

Note that the lack of a direct one-to-one relation between the units of text structure and the sentences of the text is one reason why a purely linguistic approach to discourse analysis is inadequate. Some sentences of the text do not relate at all to the underlying structure (cf. Propp's non-functional components). And a single unit of plot structure can correspond to less than a sentence, a single sentence, or a series of sentences — in a totally unpredictable manner within any given text.

The semiotic relation binding the planes of content and expression is arbitrary. This accounts for the fact that one and the same story can be translated into different languages, without causing the story structure to

change. The translation affects only the first-order planes of expression and content, not the second-order plane of content.

The semiotic model we are proposing here can clarify one important detail of the working definition of *text* we proposed earlier; viz., a text does not consist of sentences, but is realized by sentences. However, in terms of Hjelmslev's model, realization (or manifestation) is an asymmetric relation that exists between strata of a single plane. The 'strata of a single plane' is a reference to the distinction between form and substance; one speaks of the form and substance of content, as well as the form and substance of expression. The relation between the two planes of expression and content — the semiotic relation — is symmetric. We should, properly speaking, refer to the sentences of a text as the 'expression' of the text structure, not the manifestation of it.

In terms of Propp's analysis of fairy tales, the functions he proposes for representing plot structure are units of form on the second-order plane of content. The manifestation in substance of these units would be the concrete acts that occur in particular Russian tales. For example, in the tale 'The miraculous pipe', the unit of form 'Villainy' is realized by the specific act of a sister murdering her brother by stabbing.

The fact that the second-order content units can be readily verbalized using the same (first-order) language that expresses the structure deserves special comment. What this indicates is that this second-order content is not, in principle, different from the (first-order) content expressible in ordinary sentences. It is not a matter of two different kinds of meaning, but of two different stages of decoding. Consider in this regard the following sentence from 'The miraculous pipe': "'Brother", [Alionushka] said, "let me pick the lice out of your hair"'. This sentence, occurring in isolation, has a (first-order) meaning that can be understood by any speaker of English. However, occurring in the story, it is part of the expression of the second-order content. Understanding this second-order content requires a further stage in decoding; the event has to be interpreted as contributing to the plot development. In terms of Propp's system, this sentence manifests (in part) the function of Trickery.

Propp's study of the Russian fairy tale has been used to sketch how a preexisting text analysis can be accommodated within the framework of our semiotic model. Of course, Propp dealt with just one particular corpus, but a number of researchers have generalized his methodology and applied it to a wide range of narrative texts, both oral and written.

One of the more prolific scholars in this regard is A. J. Greimas, who labels his work a 'semiotics of the text' (see, for instance, Greimas 1976). Not only has Greimas been productive, but also he has been able to influence a number of other researchers — e.g., the 'Groupe d'Entre-

vernes' (1979). This group sees semiotics as centrally concerned with the analysis of discourse, as opposed to linguistics, which deals with the sentence.

Greimas has not explicitly laid out a rationale for characterizing his approach as semiotic, but his work can easily be accommodated within the semiotic model sketched here. However, one minor point (which may be largely terminological) should be noted. Greimas apparently sees the need for a theory of discourse to complement the theory of narrative structure; cf. these remarks:

Des recherches ultérieures ont permis de voir un peu plus clair dans l'organisation des 'personnages du récit', d'envisager même la possibilité d'une grammaire narrative indépendante des manifestations discursives. L'organisation actorielle, au contraire, n'a été que très peu concernée par ces recherches: c'est une défaillance qui s'explique aisément par l'absence d'une théorie cohérente du discours. (Greimas 1973: 161-162)

Note first that Greimas refers to the relation between narrative structure and the language of the text as one of manifestation. In terms of the semiotic model I am proposing, the relation is not one of manifestation. However, Greimas's remarks do agree with my position that the narrative text can initially be divided into a plane of content (the locus of text structure) and a plane of expression, with each analyzable separately. What Greimas is saying is that narrative analysts have focused on the text structure, essentially ignoring the text plane of expression constituted by the sentences of the text. However, rather than refer to that study as a separate discourse analysis, I have proposed using the term 'discourse analysis' to refer to both aspects of text analysis. The two aspects can be studied separately, but not as totally independent of each other.

Actually, when Greimas refers to the study of actors, as opposed to the study of actants, he is referring to the substance of content. The 'villain' is an actant, but this role will be filled ('manifested') by a particular actor in a story. This manifestation is by means of the sentences that constitute the story. In other words, study of the substance of (second-order) content would seem to overlap with investigation of the sequence of sentences that express that content. However, I think a distinction can be made.

Although the analysis of narrative structure is relatively advanced, the narrative represents just one type of text. If discourse analysis is to become the general science of texts that it aspires to be, then it must devote equal attention to all types of text.

No existing text typology is really satisfactory; development of an adequate typology should therefore have high priority. It is reasonable to

expect that any conceivable typology will distinguish at least between narrative and expository discourse. (It may be that narrative and expository discourse will be recognized to be not text types per se, but 'modes of discourse', with a given text seen as a mixture of modes.)

Increasing attention is being paid to expository discourse, though the quantity — and quality — of work still lags behind that devoted to the narrative. Generally speaking, the researchers who work with narrative discourse do not concern themselves with expository discourse. The same holds (in reverse) for analysts of expository discourse. And to the best of my knowledge, no one has labeled an analysis of expository discourse a 'semiotic' approach.

One minor exception to the above remarks should be acknowledged. Although his major concern has been with narrative discourse, Greimas (1983) has recently analyzed Dumézil's preface to his book *Naissance d'Archanges* and an entry from Philippon's *La Cuisine provençale*. In very general terms, Greimas sees Dumézil's preface as a form of the quest for an object of value, true knowledge. He analyzes the recipe for *soupe au pistou* in terms of a series of 'narrative programs', involving the transfer of an 'object of value' (the soup). This broad characterization highlights the fact that Greimas essentially treats these expository texts as if they were narratives. However, my own efforts at analyzing expository discourse have convinced me that it differs in major ways from narrative discourse; hence, my feeling is that Greimas has forced the texts to fit his theory.

If we look at studies of expository discourse, both traditional and more modern, we find major emphasis on the paragraph as a unit of analysis. Narrative analysis, in contrast, does not deal with paragraphing — despite the fact that all printed texts are divided into paragraphs. However, the paragraph in narrative is not the same type of unit as the paragraph in expository discourse.

Some researchers see the paragraph as much more than an orthographic device; they afford it 'psychological reality' and claim that people can generally agree on where to divide an unparagraphed text into paragraphs. But even if the paragraph is a 'natural' unit of discourse, it is a unit of the linguistic expression of the text. The paragraph is seen as a sequence of interrelated sentences, and the goal of paragraph analysis is to discover the principle of unity that binds the sentences into a whole.

Traditionally, the unity of the paragraph has been explained by identifying one sentence as the thesis statement, with the remaining sentences of the paragraph seen as supporting the thesis in various ways. More linguistically oriented studies note the role of features similar to those encompassed in Halliday and Hasan's notion of cohesion. In fact, Halliday and Hasan (1976: 296) themselves note that there can be a

regular alternation between tight and loose texture, with this alternation corresponding to the division of a written text into paragraphs. However, they concede that in some writers, cohesion and paragraph structure are dissociated from each other. In such cases, the dissociation is said to have a definite semantic and rhetorical effect. Without specific analyses to examine, it is hard to evaluate Halliday and Hasan's claims, though clearly no simple equation of cohesion and paragraph structure can be made.

Analysts of the paragraph generally focus on single paragraphs and do not address the question of the overall structure of expository discourse. It may be that they tacitly assume that a text is a simple linear sequence of paragraphs, or they view the global text structure as homologous to that of the paragraph. For example, the rhetorician Christensen (1967: xii) has stated that 'If we start with the smaller units [i.e., sentences and paragraphs], the student comes to the writing of long discursive essays almost able to write'.

If such views on the paragraph and its relation to the whole text have any validity, then the semiotic model of discourse which I have sketched here is not valid for expository discourse. The paragraph pertains solely to the plane of expression, and not to the proposed (second-order) plane of content. The notion of second-order signification does not have to be evoked to account for either the paragraph or the text if it is seen as a simple chain of paragraphs.

However, my own (unpublished) research on paragraph structure has shown that paragraphs within a single expository text are not coequal units; thus, the global structure of a text cannot be seen as a simple addition of the structures of individual paragraphs. In other words, research that focuses on the paragraph cannot solve the problem of the global structure of an expository text. We therefore feel justified in postulating that this global structure, like the global structure of narrative discourse, will be situated on the second-order plane of content. The analysis of paragraphs, which complements the study of global structure, will be an analysis of the text's plane of expression.

When it comes to the question of the exact nature of the global structure of expository discourse and how it is best represented, there are no clear-cut answers. Much of what traditional rhetoric has to say about the global organization of expository discourse is epitomized in the notion of the outline. An outline presents the main ideas of the text in a summary fashion. However, the notion of 'main idea' is vague. Moreover, since the outline is generally thought of as an aid to composition, it seems oriented toward the expression side of discourse. In short, traditional approaches to the global structure of expository discourse provide only a point of departure for a more rigorous, explicit approach.

Some efforts have been made at refining the notion of outline — e.g., by the linguist Joseph Grimes (1975). The theoretical foundation of his approach is a 'formational grammar of propositions', which purports to represent the underlying semantic structure of sentences. A proposition consists of a lexical predicate, in the logical sense, and one or more arguments, which enter into relationships with the predicate that can be specified in a small number of roles (such as agent, patient, etc.). Grimes extends this framework to include what he calls 'rhetorical predicates', which take whole propositions as arguments and group them into larger complexes. It is such larger complexes that are said to be comparable to the traditional outline.

Grimes's discussion of rhetorical predicates is rather brief, and he does not provide even a sample analysis of expository discourse. However, other researchers have amplified Grimes's treatment and analyzed a number of expository texts (see, for instance, Meyer 1975; McKeown 1985). Discussion of this work is beyond the scope of this article; suffice it to say that it really does not transcend the limitations of Grimes's work, which in practice remains too oriented to the conception of a text as a sequence of sentences (see Hendricks 1977b).

It was suggested earlier that, lacking an adequate text typology, we could recognize as a minimum two major types — narrative and expository. Actually, there is a third type of discourse that clearly differs from narrative and expository discourse and is the object of investigation by a relatively homogeneous group of researchers. This third type of discourse is (informal) conversation. Its analysis originated with the sociologists Sacks and Schegloff, as an outgrowth of ethnomethodology. The circle of investigators has expanded somewhat, but the core group remains sociologists. The study of conversation remains somewhat apart from other studies of discourse, and in fact it is often referred to as *conversation analysis* rather than *discourse analysis*.

A defining feature of conversation is the periodic alternation of the roles of speaker and listener. That is, conversation is organized around 'turns' for speaking, which are usually relatively short. A basic unit of analysis is the 'adjacency pair', a pair of utterances organized around the turn. An adjacency pair consists of an utterance by the speaker and the response it elicits in the listener (when he assumes the role of speaker). Examples include greeting and response, question and answer, etc. For a general discussion of conversational analysis, see Coulthard (1977), Stubbs (1983), and Power and Dal Martello (1985).

Conversation analysts claim to be analyzing the structure of conversation; but from the perspective of the semiotic model proposed here, their analyses pertain only to the expression side of discourse. They focus on

conversation as a sequence of utterances; their analyses do not require appealing to a second-order plane of content.

Conversations often drift from topic to topic. This could be seen as evidence that conversation, while an instance of discourse, does not constitute a text in the sense of an object with a single, unified global structure. Or it may be that conversation must be analyzed as consisting of two or more texts. Note in this connection that there are clear-cut instances in which unified texts do occur within a conversation. A speaker can use his turn to tell a joke, a narrative of personal experience, etc. These texts — which in effect are extended monologues — can be extracted from the conversation and subjected to separate analysis.

We have now concluded our brief overview of the field of discourse analysis, an overview that has been offered as a partial compensation for the lack of one in Merrell's book. We are now in a better position to turn to Merrell's work and see how it fits into the semiotic framework sketched here.

The major goal of Merrell's book, as he summarizes it in the 'Post-script', is 'to establish underlying mechanisms for constructing and perceiving all texts' (p. 187). Earlier he characterized his approach as 'cognitive semiotic', defined as the study of what writers and readers do when creating and understanding texts; this is contrasted to 'descriptive semiotic', the analysis of actual texts (p. 12).

I would consider 'cognitive semiotic' to be a task for psychology or artificial intelligence, not semiotics per se. However, Merrell's discussion is more at the logical level, and does not really involve cognitive psychology. For example, Merrell uses a form of the square of opposition (in traditional logic) to account for four modes of text 'perception'. (Actually, Merrell means comprehension of texts.) The four modes are: a conscious willingness to suspend disbelief, a nonconscious unwillingness to suspend disbelief, a nonconscious willingness to suspend disbelief, and a conscious unwillingness to suspend disbelief.

Merrell posits the possibility of various transformations from one mode to another; e.g., one can be 'converted' by radical ideas from a nonconscious unwillingness to suspend disbelief to a conscious willingness to suspend disbelief. As an example, Merrell notes that 'I have talked to quite a few linguists who, after reading Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*, were irreversibly swayed by his compelling argument' (p. 97). However, if someone is really convinced by an argument, does he then only suspend disbelief, or does he have a positive belief? And would a structural linguist have approached Chomsky's book with a nonconscious unwillingness to suspend disbelief? No aspect of Merrell's discussion of modes of perception is ultimately very satisfactory.

Aside from how convincing Merrell's discussion is, the treatment of modes of comprehension lies rather far removed from the central aim of discourse analysis as proposed here. However, Merrell usually refers to the 'construction/perception' of texts; and he specifically makes reference to 'the broad "macromolecular" level where the text is constructed/perceived as a holistic entity' (p. 66). There is an asymmetry between text production and comprehension which Merrell ignores, but it can be postulated that competent readers intuitively or tacitly know what writers know, viz., basic compositional principles. It is thus possible to regard Merrell's work as relevant to the theory and practice of text description. Part of his book, in fact, is devoted to a description of two particular texts: a Borges short story and a section of Carlos Fuentes's novel *The Death of Artemio Cruz*.

In my earlier sketch of the aims of discourse analysis, I stressed that a science of discourse should deal with all types of texts. Despite some statements that he is concerned with all texts (e.g., p. 87), Merrell explicitly excludes oral texts from his inquiry (p. 38). He is even more restrictive in the type of texts he intends his theory to encompass — he repeatedly refers to 'relatively sophisticated and relatively complex' texts (e.g., pp. 41, 71). He never makes clear what criteria set such texts apart from those that are not complex. In some writers, complex, sophisticated texts are equated with literary texts; however, Merrell means in addition to include at least scientific, philosophical, and religious texts. These are more or less lumped together, since Merrell concedes that 'I have not discussed at length the differences between types of texts' (p. 187).

There are major differences among the various types of texts. Since Merrell does not deal with such differences, he has to discuss texts at a general level, that of what all ('relatively sophisticated and relatively complex') texts have in common. This common feature is said to be novelty — which Merrell uses in a semantic sense (p. 6).

Underlying the natural language of each text is a 'symbol system' which pertains to the 'macrosemantic' level of the text. At the base of the symbol system is a paradox or root metaphor. The elements of the symbol system are individual figurative statements.

Merrell clearly has a 'paradigmatic' conception of global text structure, as distinct from a 'syntagmatic' conception. Actually, the global structure of any text has both a syntagmatic and a paradigmatic aspect. The two are sometimes misleadingly referred to as temporal and spatial structure, respectively. The term *spatial* is meant to imply stasis. There is no development: the same thing (e.g., the global 'theme') recurs again and again in a text. Most analyses of global text structure have focused on the

syntagmatic; e.g., plot structure in narrative, outline structure in expository texts. Paradigmatic structure has not been ignored; in the case of narrative it is a matter of the underlying 'theme' of the narrative (see Hendricks 1977a). But this aspect is by no means as well developed as the analysis of syntagmatic organization. If Merrell could succeed in explicating the paradigmatic aspect of global text structure, he would be making a significant contribution.

Merrell's discussion of symbol systems in texts, constituting Part 1 of his book, deals exclusively with individual entities of the symbol system. These entities are words used in a figurative sense — though the figurative sense emerges from single sentences. For example, the ordinary lexical item *lion* becomes a symbol system entity when it is used metaphorically to refer to a man, as in the sentence 'The lion is roaring'.

Merrell claims that the construction/perception of such figurative sentences is not part of our ordinary linguistic ability; rather, he speaks of this as involving the 'abuse' of language in order to express 'novel artistic, scientific or other insights' (p. 7). Merrell's choice of the word *abuse* in this context is peculiar; but more substantively, many people, including linguists such as Bolinger (1968), would dispute the claim that such use is not part of our ordinary linguistic ability.

Merrell argues that the natural language in which a text is composed and the symbol system of the text pertain to two distinct levels of organization. He relates such metaphoric statements as 'The lion is roaring' to Russian semioticians' notion of a 'secondary modeling system' (p. 15). He also relates his notion of a symbol system to Hjelmslev's concept of 'connotative semiotics' (p. 38).

The notion of a 'secondary modeling system' does derive from Hjelmslev's connotative semiotics. However, the metaphoric use of words is not at all a matter of connotative semiotics in Hjelmslev's use of the term. Nor does Merrell's approach fit in with my reinterpretation of Hjelmslev's concept. Note that Merrell's suggestion of a simple one-to-one relation between 'ordinary' lexical items and 'symbolic' entities (p. 15) goes completely against the grain of the notion of a second-order plane of content that is not conformal with the plane of expression.

No real sense of the symbol system as a global entity underlying a text emerges from Merrell's discussion in Part 1. Merrell himself cautions the reader that 'It must be kept in mind that these sentences are not meant to be examples of whole "symbol systems" or of texts. They are particles of data with which to, at a microscopic level, demonstrate a more general phenomenon' (p. 38). Merrell indicates that the discussion in Part 2 will deal with the macromolecular level.

However, Part 2 deals with 'conceptual frameworks' (CFs). A CF

corresponds to the general world view held by a subculture. Examples of conceptual frameworks that Merrell cites include the Newtonian world view in science, the Renaissance view of art, the Catholic religion, etc. (p. 61). Stepping outside one conceptual framework to another is said to involve a Gestalt 'switch'. One example Merrell cites is the switch from Ptolemaic to Copernican astronomy, the social impact of which, he says, occurred over a few centuries (p. 65). At this point, it is hard to see the relevance of such a notion of conceptual framework — and the novelty of stepping out of one such framework into another — to the apprehension of the global unity of an individual text. Merrell himself never tries to bring this discussion to bear on individual scientific texts.

Clearly, the conceptual framework cannot be identified with the global paradigmatic structure of a single text. As Merrell notes, a single text is only a partial expression of a CF (p. 47). From Merrell's examples of CFs, we can see that a given CF can underlie innumerable texts.

While the CF is too broad a concept, the 'atomic' metaphoric statements Merrell discusses in Part I are too restricted, in that they cannot simply be summed to yield the underlying semantic structure, any more than the syntagmatic organization of a text can be equated with the interlinking of the sentences that express the text. Thus the global underlying structure of the individual text slips between the cracks of Merrell's discussion. (The brief discussion of two literary works sheds very little light on Merrell's theory, particularly the notion of symbol system as macrosemantic structure.) In short, Merrell has not advanced our understanding of the paradigmatic aspect of global text structure.

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