AN APPROACH TO DISCOURSE CLASSIFICATION

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Abstract

The main goal in teaching/learning a language is to use it in actual communication. That is why the new approaches which have recently appeared in the teaching methodology are not a fashion but a necessity. The change of outlook in the teaching/learning process must be seen in the new relationships between teacher and student, student and student and student and material. Each student has his/her own experience which he/she wants to share with the others. Hence the necessity to bring in class materials which the students might relate their experiences to and which can trigger genuine communication. The primary function of a language being effective communication it means that the students must interact in class in the solving of different tasks they are assigned. In this context the educational discourse should be reconsidered in the knowledge transfer, the student being placed at the core of the construction and reconstruction of meaning in class interaction.

Keywords: *discourse, educational, interaction, locutor, knowledge, communication.*

Sophie Moirand (1990) distinguishes two types of speech in language teaching: a homogenous one, based on the transmission of knowledge on what happens in the classroom, in response to questions such as: *who, what, what, who, how, where, with what effect*, with emphasis on the relations between the interlocutors - teachers/students and on the utterances made in a specific context. "*Eminently prescriptive, even when it describes or narrates the objects of knowledge, this discourse has all the traits, apparently, of the normative discourse of the normative grammar from which differs only in that it uses a behavioral norm, which lists the behaviors, the practices to be followed or avoided in a language class* "(V. Dospinescu, 1998). The other one marked by intertextuality heterogeneous perididactic, as V. Dospinescu calls it, is a discourse about what happens in the classroom, reminiscent of language teaching, a language of education about education. The teaching language has to do with teaching and learning strategies, theories of education,

specialized language when discussing/ evaluating a classroom activity, so about the pedagogical discourse. O. Reboul distinguishes between five types of classroom discourses: the *challenging discourse* aimed at activating the students by presenting ideas, notions, concepts, etc. so that, by developing and stimulating their thinking to induce denial, fighting back through identifying new theoretical and practical solutions (Reboul, 1984); the *innovative discourse* which involves presenting new ideas and information, unknown to students, a discourse that requires, on behalf of the teacher creativity and originality stemming from critical approaches of methods, techniques, strategies, of textbooks used in class; *the functional discourse*, refers to the effectiveness of the information presented, "*a discourse, while aspiring to accuracy, objectivity and effectiveness, {...} provides reaching the two major goals of education, the power of man over nature and power of society over man*" (V. Dospinescu, 1998); *the humanist discourse* concerns the formation and development of the child's personality through knowledge; *the official discourse* puts forward a requirement, a decision , etc. on the formal framework to regulate educational institutions.

This type of discourse has elements that are found in all five types of classroom discourses, a fact noted in "*the recurrence of the keywords, a certain ritualization of expression (...) the movement in the argumentative movement or the rhetoric of persuasion*" (V. Dospinescu , 1998).

Widdowson (1981), Chafe (2001), approach the discourse *as text, as language in use* concentrating the object of interest on the linguistic constructions that go beyond the sentence, which, in structural linguistics, is the end of linguistic analysis (Bakhtin, M., 1979). The discourse analysis starts from the grammar of

the text, the text linguistics, the transfrastic linguistics, in an approach influenced by structuralism. In this approach, the text is considered a set of sentences characterized by *consistency, cohesion, intentionality, acceptability,* the subject of analysis being precisely these characteristics of the text and how they are updated by linguistic structures.

Mills (1997) analyzes the discourse *as a "group of individualized statements"* or as Beaugarde & Dressler (1981) approach it, an *"amount of texts mutually relevant"*. Such an approach reminds us of gender analysis examining how a text or several texts corresponds/correspond to the principles, to the rules of a community of discourse.

The idea of intention in discourse, and mainly in the educational discourse, is recurrent in many studies as the transfer of information, the communication of knowledge, is associated with the text that the locutor, the teacher, has in mind when he conveys a message.

Widdowson (2007) approaches the *discourse as a communicative intention*: *"We can refer to this complex communicative intentions as the discourse underlying the text and it primarily motivates its production"*. This approach highlights the pragmatic character of communication, the discourse analysis being separated from that of the text (including the scheme analysis for textual organizing of themes, that is the syntactic and semantic aspects) representing all the intentions of the enunciator/sender and that what the enunciatar/recipient of the text understood. Discourse analysis, essentially pragmatic in this case seeks to determine the communicative intent, what the enunciator does in and through the text that he conveys and how it is received by the enunciatar/recipient.

The discourse *as general domain of human verbal interaction* concerns the negotiation of meaning as well as how the discourse reconstructs the reality. This approach underlines the communicative character of the language with a focus on analysing the dialogue, the conversation. The discourse being the individual fulfilment of speaking, it combines the elements of vocabulary,

the formal side, resulting, considering the type of combination, in a content materialized in a text.

The oral didactic discourse for training in language teaching is an institutionalized discourse. This type of discourse has on the one hand an interactive dialogue character, inter-relational and of interdiscursivity when targeting the classroom activities, the transfer of knowledge, and on the other hand a monologue character based on intertextuality when targeting at theoretical and scientific speeches. This type of specialized didactic discourse is aimed at teaching and learning activity through the transfer of knowledge/information to form language skills needed to communicate in a foreign language. The oral discourse is a *demanding discourse,* as Odile Challe states, by which the teacher/enuntiator "calls for" the student' s involvement in the dialogue using the plural, first person personal pronoun, "we", or the impersonal "on" in French, this way , a closeness to the student/enunciatar is achieved, involving him in the educational act by inviting the enunciatar to participate in the exchange of ideas, to adhere to the enunciator's discourse. The cooperation sought by the teacher aims, besides activating the student's participation within the meaning of the discourse and obtaining a feedback, to "place" the notions that he has set as objectives of teaching. In the written discourse, which has an abstract character, the enunciatar is set in a contemplative position, the unilateral flow of information misses his reaction. The distance between the teacher and the student increases in the written discourse, the dialogue disappears, producing only enunciator produce only assertive , authoritarian statements, transferring knowledge, the enunciatar being in the position of taking notes.

The language elements in discourse are chosen from the perspective of the enunciator and what is communicated, is achieved through a selection of the means by which the information delivered. A special place in the oral discourse is played especially by the discourse in the language class. The complexity of transmitting information and knowledge by the teacher is done through descriptive discourses, by presenting the

elements of vocabulary, language (grammar), phonetic, related to pronunciation (points of articulation of sounds, vocal tract anatomy), etc. in the context, but also to develop skills to communicate knowledge, to transform it in discursive skills. Of course, theoretically and ideally it would be the didactic discourse to be the same for all teachers. In reality there are a number of issues related not only to the teacher's personality, which makes the discourse differ. For example a young teacher' discourse will be different from that of an experienced teacher. The reality of the class is also an element of diversity of the didactic discourse which, generally is a programmed one. Here comes into play the improvisation, the creativity, the imagination of the teacher in adapting or adopting a sequence, given the student's needs. The teacher, an actor by definition, will know the roles he assumes to adapt, to adjust to the requirements of the class. The teacher, director, through appropriate strategies and techniques, has the ability to manipulate the student involving the students in situations of communication to produce a discourse in a foreign language, inviting them to participate actively in solving tasks. This permanent/ on-going invitation during the lesson is done by encouraging students through positive or negative feedback or followed by adequate explanations, that is, using the reward- a positive feedback (praise, assessment, marks, good grades), or "penalty"- negative feedback (assessment , bad grades).

In a foreign language class the discourse involves both form and content , being in turn form of communication and object of study leading to the metalinguistic function of the discourse by the explanations provided by the teacher to explain the content and/or form, the semantic scale ensuring the compliance of information content with the linguistic signs, a discourse determinism.

In a paradigmatic distribution, as stated V. Dospinescu, in the expression didactic discourse there are to be found the following types of discourse*: the discourse specific to each subject matter, the discourses on behalf of a subject, the* *discourses that show an intent of pedagogical nature, the educational discourses* which constituted the foundation of the construction of French language teaching.

The educational/didactic discourse, as the assembly of processes through which the exchange of information and meanings between teachers and students are in an educational situation is achieved, involves two components, the interactional one and the discursive one. Whatever the form of the didactic discourse, all of them are based on the same denominator, namely communication. Communication characterizes both the scientific, the academic, the prepedagogic discourses and the pedagogic discourse, as well.

The scientific discourse is addressed to a person who is initiated, the relationship destinator-recipient has the role of mutual information. The discursive processes aimed at the formal aspect of the discourse by using the pronoun (first person personal, plural) or the impersonal form ("*on*" in French, "*it is said*" a form of passive voice, "*they say*" in English). In this type of discourse we can not talk about interaction, *the scientific discourse and the prepedagogic one project the profile of some recipients "in power" (a reader of a scientific discourse, respectively, a student).* (V. Dospinescu, 1998). The scientific discourse, a discourse primarily theoretical, argumentative, having the main role to inform and persuade may become the classroom discourse only after a processing activity, of shaping in the teaching framework of the scientific content.

The academic discourse is the first type of discourse that moulds in a teaching framework the scientific knowledge in order to be transmitted to students. This discourse involves the student as an interlocutor as a recipient of the information transmitted by the transmitter (teacher). V.Dospinescu (1998) retains two types of enunciators in the person of the university professor: one who reproduces somebody else's scientific discourse without intervening in the way of working on processing the pedagogical information."*He generally, calls upon a pure and hard science, which makes little use of the pedagogical*

reflection. Here, the teacher's voice risks to be stiffled by the researcher's voice." (V. Dospinescu, 1998). Following the rigorous scientific character in the transmission of information this enunciator simply reproduces the message of the man of science forgetting that the receiver is the student.

The other is an enunciator on many more voices, polyphonic as Bakhtin calls him. *"... This discourse being conceived as the crossroads of several utterances, it is inevitable synthetic but not necessarily eclectic. This synthesis, which is a form developed by the teacher, ensures the anonymity of knowledge"*. He customizes the discourse, reformulates it ensuring its pedagogical character, being aware that addresses the student. V. Dospinescu referring to the two types of enunciators shows *that "the first sets in pedagogical mold scientific knowledge, the second sets in mold the teaching forms themselves staff themselves governing the transmission of scientific knowledge"* (V. Dospinescu, 1998).

The prepedagogic discourse is a relay discourse, a discourse mediator between the academic teaching and the practical activity in the classroom. V. Dospinescu considers *it a linking discourse between the theoretical discourse and the situational one.* The prepedagogic discourse falls under the three 'courts': the university, whose role is the methodical formation of the teachers by teaching the subject, the methodists, from preuniversity education, themselves career teachers, who elaborate teaching materials, according to the official guidelines for the educational establishment which imposes the system and the norm, and teachers, who, based on the knowledge acquired in university, on training and specialization courses, build their own discourse through the work of design and ordering of content and the type of lessons. By appealing to other areas of knowledge such as education, psychology, sociology, etc. this type of discourse, student-centered, acquires interdisciplinary values.

The pedagogical discourse is primarily a declarative discourse, interactive through the continuous teacher-student dialogue, programmed by the requirement to prepare the lesson, unpredictable, given the interlocutor student's

reactions that can lead to improvisation on a creative background on behalf of the teacher. The classroom turned into the stage on which the actors are the teacher (who assumes the role of director too) and the students, discursive forms are produced that aim to maintain communication. The teacher continually adjusts his speech explaining, repeating, rephrasing, etc. to ensure the transmission of and storing information. In doing so he makes use of a whole range of semiotic codes from natural language and continuing with suggestive gestures, didactic material support such as images, charts, drawings, films, etc. supporting his oral discourse, amplifying it. In the oral pedagogical discourse the teacher uses the paradiscourse as well as a variety of gestures (body language) in the process of transmitting knowledge. The student on the other hand, involved in this discourse, reacts demanding explanations, asking questions to clarify meanings, to check the accuracy of understanding. The repetition, rephrasing, resuming sequences belong not only to the teacher's discourse but also the student's who interprets the contents taught in order to be learned. In the same sphere of the didactic discourse we mention the **utilitarian and documentation discourses**. For the **utilitarian discourse** the mark is a need for information of a lecturer for personal reasons and interests in order to learn *"how to employ, to assemble, to use, etc"*. We can talk of a possible external tension created before the act of reading itself, the stress relief occurring due to finding out the answer to the question *"How?"*.

The documentation discourses aim also at obtaining information; they are partial readings, texts *motivating, strongly marked by the presence paradiscourse: a list of abbreviations, tables of contents, indexes, appendices, tables, schemes, a certain manner of organization and sequencing of content, various commissioning pages, etc. all these semiotic forms being meant to guide the reading, marking the most direct ways for obtaining information.* (V. Dospinescu, 1998). The documentation discourses are rooted in the need for knowledge on behalf of the reader/teacher to learn and then to use the information in other cognitive contexts.

The didactic discourses "recipe-type" that V. Dospinescu states that he has discovered in the magazine LFDM, and that could be called "recipe- type " is generally used in the guidance that the teacher gives in the classroom to solve certain tasks or by monitoring student work. The teacher uses statements that appeal to the forms of the present indefinite in which the subject appears in the first person plural involving both the enunciator and the enuciatar or makes use of the infinitive where the guidace is duplicated by obligation towards the enunaiatar, the student or the use of modal verbs (Shall/Will + verb) which can express, depending on the intentions of the enunciator/the teacher permission, prohibition, obligation.

The narrative, descriptive, expository discourses.

R. Bouchard (1990) speaks of three types of text, which in fact, correspond to three types of discourses: narrative, descriptive and expository. The text /**the narrative discourse** expresses events located in time, is characterized by the use of verbs that express the logical development of the action, a number of connectors /temporal linkers, resuming, at the beginning of the sentence, an element that is known (expressed as a noun) using a pronoun. The text/**the descriptive discourse**, to which the reference points are the elements arranged in space is characterized by the appearance of nouns that refer to/denominate the element, the chosen entity for presentation/ description and its constituent elements, connectors referring to space and the central theme decomposed into its components located by demonstrative, possessive determiners, etc. The text/**expository discourse** characterized by the logic of the ideas espressed, makes use of numerous lexical reiterations, the use of nomination as a propositional substitution procedure, and of the syntactic and lexical connectors or logical connections, self-evident, between sentences.

In practice these types of didactic discourse are together in a text, the amount varies depending on the communication situation, the intention that enunciator has to say, to declare something with the intention to cause certain effects on the enunciatar - emotion, embarrassment , pleasure, etc. In the classroom the teacher skilfully handles these types of discourse by building an alternative tension, internal/external, the aim being the transmission of knowledge. We should mention, however, that the description is indispensable in a discourse. We can imagine a description without a narrative but not vice versa.

The argumentative discourse

Overall the argumentative discourse aims to support a point of view, opposing those who have a contrary opinion. This type of discourse has two dominant features: *the persuasive function and the polemic function.*

- *the persuasive function* consists in the transmitter's endeavour to convince the interlocutor of the justice of his views by appealing to his feelings or his reason, to win his adhesion.

- *the polemic function* implies holding to ridicule by the transmitter those who do not accept his opinion.

In the educational discourse the *polemic function* is excluded education teacher as epistemic authority – the master of the theme- seeks to influence the listener/student reasoning, in order to convince him in order to obtain his cooperation in the process of re/ structuring of the representations in the acquisition of new knowledge. The pre-existing cognitive structures of the interlocutor does not provide support for polemic debate, but rather they are used as a basis for acquiring knowledge as a result of the transformations of the representations by argumentation and persuasion. In the didactic discourse the epistemic authority of the teacher aims to create certain convictions, beliefs, while the deontic authority, which tracks the logical and structural aspects of the forms of normative thinking concerns the means of conviction, of persuasion. "*As I conceive it, the argumentation considers the interlocutor not as an object to be manipulated, but as an alter ego to whom we propose to share our vision. Acting upon him means to modify various of his representations that we suspect him of, highlighting certain aspects of things, obscuring others, presuming new ones, and all this with the help of an appropriate scheme* "(Grize 1990).

We withhold from this definition of the argumentation the lack of compulsion on behalf of the enunciator, of his vision, on a statement, situation, thesis, the enunciatar being invited *to share*, to agree with the views presented. Trying to solve a question or a problem through discussion, by invoking constructive arguments to influence, the party seeks the change of his representations offering him the cooperation in finding the solution. However, in the educational discourse the interlocutor/the teacher, with his epistemic authority, aims at creating certain moods and convictions directing / manipulating the student to acquire a likely truth.

In building the argumentative dicourse, the logical connectors provide the structuring of ideas considering the topic of the discourse by listing, ordering and determining relationships between objects - the *schematic function* of argumentation involving the *semantic level* of discourse (Grize, 1990). The educational discourse, being an explanatory discourse should provide justifying arguments to support the topic presented - the *justification function*, involving the *logic level* of the discourse (Grize, 1990) These connectors - conjunctions, adverbs, prepositions, interjections, expressions and phrases, verbs and phrasal verbs, organize the argumentative discourse - the *organizing function* involving the *syntactic level* of the relations established between the elements of discourse or the discursive sequences (Grize, 1990). As examples of the above we mention:

- connectors placing/introducing the thesis: *in my opinion, I will show that*;
- connectors linking the arguments to the thesis that support them: *therefore, so, because, as*;
- connectors introducing arguments (justifying*): because, in fact, evidence of how, given that, in*;
- connectors placing/introducing the first argument: *first, first of all, to begin with, it should be recalled, that first remark refers to, to start from*;
- connectors, introducing the following arguments*: second of all, in addition, further on ,just as, on the one hand ... on the other hand, not only ... but also*;
- connectors introducing/placing the last argument: *finally, to finish, , last,*

- connectors linking arguments between them: *and,, but, or*;
- connectors introducing the conclusion: *so in conclusion, to conclude, all things considered, all in all , to sum up, therefore, that is why, well*

From the point of view of the relationship between the discursive sequences that bind them, the connectors can be:

- analogy: *and, also, that is , like, as if, that reminds of, let's remember*;
- example or illustration: *for example, for instance, namely, let's consider*;
- explanation: *that is, in other words, I mean, , actually*;
- disjunctive: *or, except that, that excludes, unlike, opposed*;
- opposition, backup, rectification, rejection: *but, or, yet, however, instead, on the contrary, nevertheless, yet, in fact, in reality, while, instead, no, what contradicts, what prohibits*;
- concession: *even if, however, let's admit, yet, despite, though, even though*;
- causality: because, given that, since, therefore, that is why;
- consequence: *so, therefore, as a result, implying that, which sends us to, out of fear*;

The organisation of the argumentative discourse is considering the alternative use of logical and argumentative connectors which ensure its balance and its conceptual unity. In the didactic discourse, the orderly presentation of arguments supports the consistency and the success of clear and explicit knowledge presentation. The drama knowledge acquisition, that occurs in the classroom, takes place with the support of the explanatory means based on arguments, to explain meanings, to sustain understanding and learning. Perhaps, the polemical function of argumentation might be found in the teaching approach against ignorance, an initiative that aims to plant some cognitive values and beliefs.

CONCLUSIONS

The didactic discourse takes place in the classroom where the teaching/learning activities engage the students interactively with the teacher

and with each other. It is a dialogue-based type of discourse in which the teacher's knowledge on different subjects is actively assimilated by the students. The didactic, also called educational discourse contains/ finds support in other types of discourses because the knowledge transfer involves explanation, argumentation, repetition, definition, explanatory sequences, and so on. The educational discourse involves the intention both on behalf of the teacher, to convey information, and subsequently knowledge, and the students whose intentions of learning are the expectancies they have during a class activity. The didactic discourse is a discourse through which the knowledge is reformulated from the teacher's point of view, also the provider of communicative activities in agreement with the students' awareness. In any teaching activity, and, of course, in the didactic communication, the discourse is centered on the student as the beneficiary of the educational act. A really effective educational discourse should favour the reception and the comprehension of the information fed by the teacher.

Acknowledgement

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