

Introduction

Discourse is a general term used in pragmatics to refer to **language that has been produced as the result of an act of communication**. In another words, it stands for **a stretch of language which is unified, meaningful and purposive**.

Example: *conversations, interviews, compositions etc.*

Discourse can be both **spoken and written**. The study of spoken and written discourse is called discourse analysis.

1.Spoken and written language language

Spoken language is the primary form of linguistic communication. Spoken language takes **no visual form**.

Some different types of speech might be:

- Telephone calls (business or private)
- Service counters (shops, tickets, offices)
- Interviews (jobs, journalistic in official setting etc.)

Written language is the secondary medium of communication. Written language is visible, written or printed.

2.Differences between Spoken and written discourse

1. Grammatical Intricacy

Written discourse is more structurally complex and more elaborate than spoken discourse.

◦ Sentences in spoken discourse are **short and simple**, whereas they are **longer and more complex** in written discourse.

Embedded sentences is more of a written discourse characteristic which means having clauses in the sentence.

2. Lexical Density

□ Lexical density: The ratio of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) to grammatical or function words (pronouns, prepositions, articles) within a clause.

Spoken discourse is less lexically dense than written discourse. Content words tend to be spread out over a number of clauses, whereas they seem to be tightly packed into individual clauses.

Spoken language is less dense for the purpose of enabling the listener to understand the information/message easily.

- In spoken language, it is **rare to find more than two pre-modifying adjectives**, and there is a strong tendency to structure the short chunks of speech so that **only one predicate** is attached to a given referent at a time **as in it's a biggish cat= tabby + with torn ears.**
- In spoken language, the speaker typically uses a lot of **rather generalized vocabulary**, **for example,-a lot of, thing, got, nice, do, stuff, place, etc.**

3.Nominalisation

Nominalization: Presenting actions and events as nouns rather than as verbs.

- a. **Written discourse has a high level of nominalization:** i.e. more nouns than verbs.
- b. Written discourse tends to have longer noun groups than spoken discourse.

4.Explicitness

Writing is more explicit than speech. This is because in written discourse, we lack body language and gestures.

This is not absolute as it depends on the purpose of text.

A writer/speaker can state something explicitly or infer it **depending on how direct they want to be and what they want their listener/ reader to understand.**

e.g. a poem is not necessarily explicit and a university lecture is most likely going to explicit even though it is spoken.

5. Contextualisation

Contextualisation: The knowledge of context needed to interpret a text. It is closely tied to explicitness.

Writing is more decontextualised than speech: Speech is more attached to context than writing because speech depends on a shared situation and background for interpretation.

- In spoken language, there is a **kind of approximate between the speaker and the listener.**
- The speaker tries to establish and **maintain role relationship with the listener.**
- In chat about **the immediate environment**, the speaker may rely on, for example, **gaze direction to supply a referent.** (looking at the rain) **frightful isn't it?** The speaker may replace or refine expressions as he/she goes along **for example, this man +this chap she was going out with.**

Spoken language **occurs in some context of situation and faces direct reaction of the listener.**

6. Spontaneity

- Spoken discourse lacks organization and is ungrammatical because it is spontaneous, whereas written discourse is organized and grammatical.
- Spoken discourse contains more uncompleted (fragments) and reformulated sentences
- Topics can be changed in the middle.
- Speakers may overlap and interrupt each other.

Spoken discourse is organised, but it is organised differently from written discourse.

- When we change the topic, there is an indication (e.g. By the way...etc) which means that we are aware that there is a structure that we should follow, so change is not made haphazardly. Speakers signal change.
- When we interrupt, we use expressions like “ I don’t mean to interrupt but...” which expresses an apology. This shows that we are aware of the system. Usually, there is a structure, but it is not written anywhere. People follow it, and when they don’t, it is marked.
- When overlapping occurs, usually one of the participants stops.

7. Repetition, Hesitation, and Redundancy

- Spoken discourse contains more repetition, hesitations, and redundancy because it is produced in real time (i.e. on the spot).
- Spoken discourse has many pauses and fillers, such as „hhh“, „er“ and „you know“ so that speakers give themselves time to think about what they want to say.

- In spoken language, the speaker frequently **repeats the same syntactic form several times over that is repetitions and hesitations being involved in spoken.**
- The speaker may produce **a large number of prefabricated fillers**, such as, **well, em, I think, you know, of course and soon.**

3.Characteristics

There are several characteristics that are unique to each type of discourse and several reasons why a person might favor one form of delivery over the other.

Positive characteristics of oral discourse:

- Meaning is **supported by nonverbal communication** ,extra-linguistic elements. These elements naturally contribute to spoken language and make it lively. While speaking, the speaker has available to him/her the full range of **'voice quality' efforts** such as tone and intonation.
- In a face to face interaction, the interlocutor **can reformulate his/her language** according to the situation or taking into consideration the reaction shown by the other interlocutor.
- It can be **done spur of the moment**
- Spoken language is only **interactional**.
- The **audience is known** to the one delivering the message
- Spoken language contains interactive markers and planning 'fillers' and thus makes communication effective.
- More **personable** and involves a shared situation between speaker and listener
- The **pace of communication is generally determined by the speaker**

Negative characteristics of oral discourse:

- It does not maintain strict grammatical rules. So, **grammatical mistakes** are occurred often.
- It is **devoid of the transactional function of the language.**
- is often **less planned and contains less structure**
- Words are often not given as much **consideration before they are spoken**
- Once delivered, **it cannot be changed or taken back.** Spoken language cannot be checked, changed or reformulated if it is once uttered.
- The **receiver of information must listen to the whole** speech or presentation **at once** in order to get full meaning
- Oral information is **only permanent if it is continuously passed from one person to the next.** It is the primary form of language. So, it is non-visible and it has no written document to prove.

Positive characteristics of written discourse:

- More precise as words can be thought through and carefully chosen
- Once written, words can still be changed or rearranged in order to make communication more precise
- There is a tendency to use larger words and more complex sentences to make the message more interesting

- Writing can happen over a period of time with much consideration given to the message and its delivery
- The receiver can spread reading out over a period of time so as to give full attention to meaning
- Writing is a permanent record of information
- Punctuation, word and sentence order are important for understanding of a written text.
- Written language is usually richly organized

Negative characteristics of written discourse:

- The pace of communication is determined by the reader or receiver of information
- The audience for written discourse is not always known
- The meaning might be supported by visual graphics, but there are no nonverbal communication cues to read
- It is less personable and can be very one-sided