Meeting II
What is discourse Analysis?

Siti Mukminatun

What is discourse analysis?

- DA examines how stretches of language, considered their full textual, social, and psychological context, become meaningful and unified for the users. (Cook, 1989: ix).

- The discipline devoted to the investigation of the relationship between form and function in verbal communication. (Rankema, 2004 p. 1)

- The study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used. (Mc Chairty, p.5)

What is discourse analysis?

- It is a rapidly expanding field, providing insights into the problems and processes of language use an language learning, and is therefore of great importance to language teachers.

- Traditionally, language teaching has concentrated on pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

- Discourse analysis can draw attention to the skills needed to put this knowledge into action and to achieve successful communication.

- Knowing what is supposed to make a sentence correct, and where that sentence ends, though it may be important and worth teaching and learning, is clearly not enough

Task 1

A. This box contains, on average, 100 large Plain Paper Clips. "Applied Linguistics" is therefore not the same as "Linguistics". The tea's as hot as it could be. This is Willie Worm. Just send 12 Guinness 'cool token' bottle tops.

B. Playback. Raymond Chandler. Penguin Books in association with Hamish Hamilton. To Jean and Helga, without whom his book could never have been written. One. The voice on the telephone seemed to be sharp and peremptory, but I didn't hear too well what it said-partly because I was only half awake and partly because I was holding the receiver upside down.

C. See also examples from (Nunan, 1993: 1-3)

Problem 1

1. Why have teachers and students of language concentrated so exclusively upon the production of correct sentences if that is not enough to communicate?

2. If it is not rules of sentence that enable us to be meaningful and to perceive meaning, then what is it?

Sentence Study in language teaching and linguistics

- Different teachers and different learners might have different answers.

- Teachers of mother tongue⟶students already have communicative skills, what they need is to learn and demonstrate literacy.

- Foreign language teachers⟶their students already know how to communicate and interact in their own language; what they need in the foreign language are formal skills and knowledge – pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar which will provide the basis for communicating and interacting.

- Even if the sentences analyzed in linguistics are abstractions are abstractions, which sometimes sound very odd, they are still the best material for language study, because they isolate it from its context.

Discourse and the sentence

- There are two different kinds of language as potential objects for study:

1. one abstracted in order to teach language or literacy, or to study how the rules of language work, and

2. Another which has been used to communicate something, and is felt to be coherent (and may, or may not happen to correspond to a correct sentence or a series of correct sentences.

❖ This latter kind of language-language in use, for communication-is called discourse.

❖ And the search for what gives discourse coherence is discourse analysis.

Discourse and the sentence

- Discourse may be composed of one or more well-formed grammatical sentences-and indeed it often is-but it does not have to be. It can have grammatical mistakes in it, and often does.

- Discourse treats the rules of grammar as a resource, conforming to them when it needs to, but departing from them when it does not.

- What matters is not its conformity to rules, but the fact that it communicates and is recognized by its receivers as coherent.

Discourse vs Text

- The term 'discourse' has become currency in a variety of disciplines: critical theory, sociology, philosophy, social psychology, and many other fields.

- It is widely used in analyzing literary and non-literary texts

Definition

- Discourse

  a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit, such as a sermon, argument, joke or narrative (Crystal: 1992: 25)

- Text

  a piece of naturally occurring spoken, written, or signed discourse identified for purposes of analysis. It is often a language unit with a definable communicative function, such as a conversation, a poster (Crystal, 1992: 72)

10

Definition

- Text

  a technical term to refer to the verbal record of a communicative act. (Brown & Yule 1983a:6)

- Discourse

  language in use, for communication (Cook 1989: 6)

- Text

  a stretch of language interpreted formally, without context. (Cook 1989: 158)

Definition

- Hawthorn, 1992

  1. A text may be written while discourse is spoken.

  2. A text may be non interactive whereas a discourse is interactive.

  3. A text may be short or long whereas a discourse implies a certain length

  4. A text must be possessed of surface cohesion whereas a discourse must be possessed of a deeper coherence.

12

Definition

- Nunan

Text refers to any written record of a communicative event. The event may involve

1. oral language (for ex, sermon, a casual conversation, a shopping transaction) or

2. written language (for ex, a poem, a newspaper advertisement, a wall poster, a shopping list, a novel)

Discourse refers to the interpretation of the communicative event in context.

Pro and Con

- Some writers think that the terms seem to be used almost interchangeably.
- Others think that discourse refers to language in context.
- However, all seem to agree that both text and discourse need to be defined in terms of meaning and that coherent texts/pieces of discourse are those that form a meaningful whole.
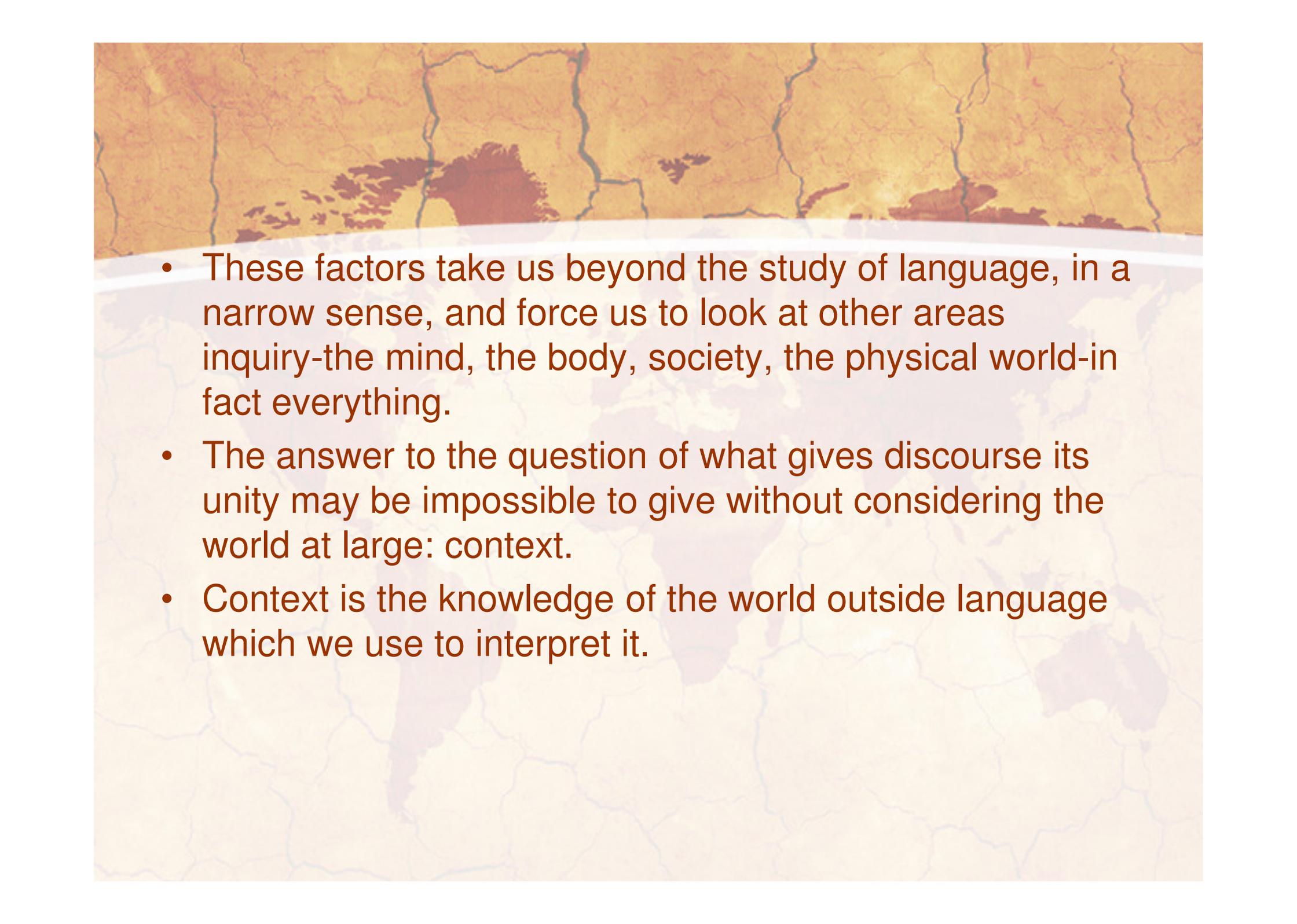
14

Claims and assumption

1. 'Text' and 'Discourse' are interchangeable. Others argue that discourse is a language in action while a text is the written record of that interaction.

2. Discourse analysis involves the study of language in use.

3. A text or piece of discourse consists of more than one sentence and the sentences combine to form a meaningful whole.
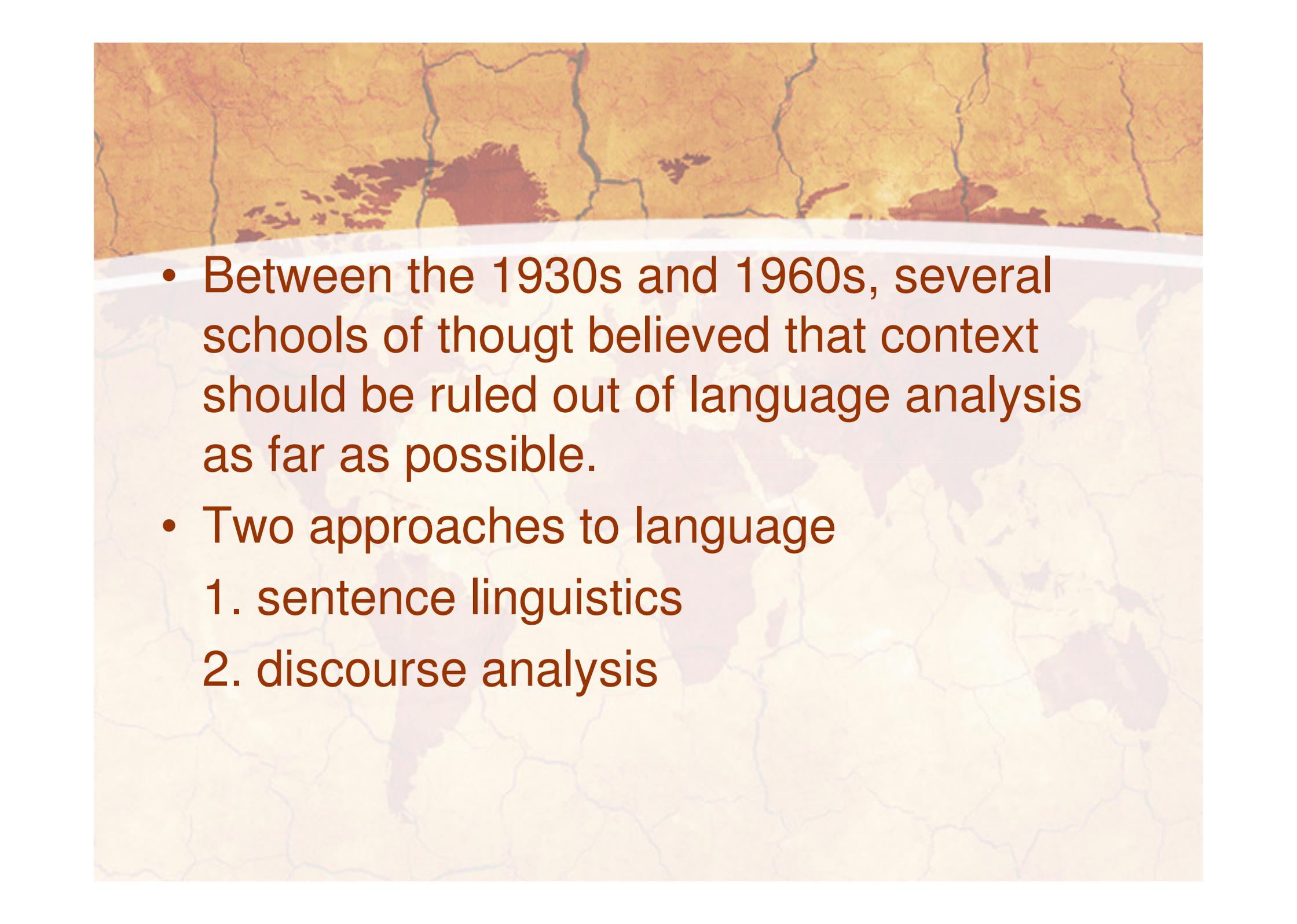
15

Language in and out of context

- When we receive a linguistic message, we pay attention to many other factors apart from the language itself.

- Face to face
  1. what they are doing with their face, eyes, and body while speaking
  2. the quality of the voice

- Written
  1. handwriting typography
  2. in an expensive book or scrap of paper

We are also influenced by the situation in which we receive message by our cultural ad social relationship with   participants, by what we know and what we assume the sender knows.

16

- These factors take us beyond the study of language, in a narrow sense, and force us to look at other areas inquiry-the mind, the body, society, the physical world-in fact everything.

- The answer to the question of what gives discourse its unity may be impossible to give without considering the world at large: context.

- Context is the knowledge of the world outside language which we use to interpret it.

Context

❖ The situation giving rise to the discourse

1. Linguistic context : the language that surrounds or accompanies the piece of discourse under analysis.

2. Non-linguistic context

includes (a) the type of communication event (for example, joke, story, lecture, greeting, conversation),

(b) the topic : the purpose of the event; (c) the setting, including location, time of day, season of year and physical aspects of the situation (e.g. size of room, arrangement of furniture; (d) the participants and the relationships between them; and (e) the background knowledge and assumptions underlying the communication event.

- Between the 1930s and 1960s, several schools of thougt believed that context should be ruled out of language analysis as far as possible.
- Two approaches to language

  1. sentence linguistics
  2. discourse analysis

Two approaches to langauge

Sentence linguistics (data)	Discourse analysis (data)
isolated sentence grammatically well-formed without context invented or idealized	any stretch of language felt to be unified achieving meaning in context observed

Task 2

- What is meant by the relationship between form and function?

- Is it really necessary to have a separate discipline for the investigation of this relationship?

Answer 1

(1) A : <u>Say, there's a good movie playing tonight</u>.

B : <u>Actually, I have to study.</u>

A : Too bad.

B : Yes, I'm sorry

A : Well, I guess I don't need to ask you if you want me to pick you up.

In this fragment, the form statement has the function of an invitation (A[1]) and a refusal thereof (B[1]). A's statement of regret shows that this interpretation is not mere conjecture.

Answer 1

(2) Queen Victoria's famous words "We are not amused" (Cutting, 2002)

- Syntax : the way the words relate to each other, without taking into account the world outside; it includes grammar, and does not consider who said it whom, where, when, or why.

- "we" is NP subject of sentence containing a first person plural pronoun, "are" the main verb agreeing with "we", "not" is a negative marker, "amused" an adjective complement

Analysis

- Semantics: the study of what the words mean by themselves, out of context, as they are in a dictionary. Semanticists would not consider the contextual background about Queen Victoria and her courtiers, or why she said this.

- We: the person speaking, "are": state not action, "amused" is synonymous with entertained.

analysis

- Victoria had been in a prolonged depression, caused by the death of her husband Albert, and her courtiers knew this, and that her words were a response to a joke which they had just made. Analysts would infer that the Queen's intention was to stop them trying to make her laugh and lit her out of the depression, and that her statement implies a reminder that she has to be respected as Queen.

Answer 2

- The investigation of the relation between form and function requires contribution from different disciplines such as linguistics, literature, rhetoric, stylistics and pragmatics as well as other fields concerned with verbal communication such as communication science, psychology, sociology, and philosophy.

- Discourse phenomena cannot be studied adequately from just one of these perspectives.

- Discourse analysis serves as an inter-or multidiscline that enables different research schools to have the necessary interaction so that specific contribution can be made to research into the relationship between form and function in verbal communication.

A brief historical overview

- It grew out of work in different disciplines in the 1960s and early 1970s, including linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology and sociology.

- Discourse analysts study language in use: written texts of all kinds, and spoken data, from conversation to highly institutionalized forms of talk.

- At a time when linguistics was largely concerned with the analysis of single sentences, Zellig Harris published a paper with the title 'Discourse analysis' (Harris 1952).

- Harris was interested in the distribution of linguis**tic** elements-in extended texts, and the links between the text and its social situation, though his paper is a far cry from the discourse analysis we are used to nowadays.

A brief historical overview

- In the 1960s, Dell Hymes provided a sociological perspective with the study of speech in its social context (e.g. Hymes 1964).

- The linguistic philosophers *such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975) were also influential in th*e study of language as social action, reflected in speech-act theory and the formulation of conversational maxims, alongside the emergence of pragmatics, which is the study of meaning in context (see Levinson 1983; Leech 1983).

A brief historical overview (British)

- British discourse analysis was greatly influenced by

  1. M. **A.** K. Halliday's functional approach to language (e.g. Halliday 1973), which in turn has connections with the Prague School of linguists. Halliday's framework emphasizes the social functions of language and the thematic and informational structure of speech and writing.

  2. Also important in Britain were Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) at the University of Birmingham, who developed a model for the description of teacher-pupil talk, based on a hierarchy of discourse units.

A brief historical overview (America)

- American discourse analysis has been dominated by work within the ethnomethodological tradition, which emphasizes the research method of close observation of groups of people communicating in natural setting. It examines types of speech event such as storytelling, greeting rituals and verbal duels in different cultural and social settings.

- Also relevant to the development of discourse analysis as a whole is the work of text grammarians, working mostly with written language. Text grammarians see texts as language elements strung together in relationships with one another that can be defined. Linguists such as Van Dijk (1972), De Beaugrande (1980), Halliday and Hasan (1976) have made a significant impact in this area.

30

A brief historical overview

- Discourse analysis has grown into a wide-ranging and heterogeneous discipline which finds its unity in the description of language above the sentence and an interest in the contexts and cultural influences which affect language in use.

31

Spoken vs written language

- Halliday

  Writing emerged in societies as a result of cultural changes which created new communicative need.

- Written language does, in fact, perform a similar range of broad functions to those performed by spoken language, that is, to get things done, to provide information, and to entertain.

- The context in written language is different from that in spoken language.

Spoken vs. written language

- Halliday suggests written language is used for;
  1. **action**; public signs, product labels, television and radio guides, bills, menus, telephone directories, ballot papers, computer manuals)
  2. **information**; newspaper, current affairs magazines, advertisements, political pamphlets
  3. **entertainment**; comic strips, fiction books, poetry and drama, newspaper features, film subtitles.
- These different purposes will be reflected in the characteristics of the texts themselves.
- Letters have different characteristics from newspaper editiorials, which have different characteristics from poems, and so on.

33

Grammar

- Linguistically, written language tends to consist of clauses that are internally complex.

- In spoken language, the complexity exists in the ways in which clauses are joined together.

34

Lexical density

- Differ in the ratio of content words to grammatical or function words.
- Content words; nouns and verbs
- Grammatical words; preposition, pronouns, and articles.
- Lexical density: the number of lexical or content words per clause.
- The density of written language is also reinforced by the tendency to create nouns from verbs.
- The process of turning verbs into nouns : grammatical metaphor.

35

Situation

- With written language, the situation must be inferred from the text.

- The words must carry all of the shades of meaning which can be conveyed by spoken language by non-verbal behavior.

- There is no opportunity for the readers to signal that they do not understand.

- Written language is more packed with information than spoken language.

The Function of Language

- Discourse analysis is the analysis of language use.

- It cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs.

- Linguists may concentrate on determining the formal properties of a language,

- While the discourse analysists is commited to an investigation of what that language is used for.

The Function of Language

- Transactional

  language serves in the expression of content

- Interactional

  language serves in the expression of social relations and personal attitudes.

Transactional View

- Language is used to convey factual or propositional information.

- Message oriented

- Thus, it is important that the recipient gets the informative detail correct.

- There will be unfortunate (even disastrous) consequences in the real world if the message is not properly understood by the recipient.

- The speaker should make what he says (or writes) clear.

Examples

- ❖ A policeman gives directions to a traveler
- ❖ Doctor tells a nurse how to administer medicine to a patient
- ❖ A householder puts in a insurance claim
- ❖ A shop assistant explains the relative merits of two types of knitting wool
- ❖ A scientist describes an experiment

Interactional View

- A great deal of everyday human interaction is characterized by the primarily interpersonal rather than the primarily transactional use of language

- The use of language to negotiate role-relationships, peer-solidarity, the exchange of turns in a conversation, the saving of face of both speaker and hearer.

Example

- When two strangers are standing shivering at a bus-stop in an icy wind and one turns to the other and says "My goodness, it's cold".

- It is difficult to suppose that the primary intention of the speaker is to convey information.

- It seems reasonable to suggest that the speaker is indicating a readiness to be friendly and to talk.

- The weather is of course the most quoted example of this in British English.

conclusion

- Written language is in general used for primarily transactional purposes
- It is possible to find written genres whose purpose is not primarily to inform but to maintain social relationships- 'thank you' letters, love letters, games of consequences, etc.