

A TENTATIVE MAP OF DISCOURSE STUDIES AND THEIR PLACE IN LINGUISTICS

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Text studies versus Discourse studies

In this paper I want to look at a range of approaches to discourse analysis with a view not to describing any of them in detail but to seeing how they relate to each other in the discipline. Surveys are a necessary evil at best; they inevitably offend by simplification and omission and sometimes by distortion as well. Despite my best endeavours, this survey is unlikely to be any exception. By way of compensation the latter part of the paper attempts a tentative characterisation of the place of discourse studies within linguistics in general and seeks to suggest why there are differences in focus between such studies; if this part of the paper offends, it will at least offend by commission.

Discourse analysis has become over the past few years one of the growth areas of modern linguistics. As a result there is now far more being written every year than any person could possibly read. In estimates prepared for an inter-University working party on a computerised bibliography of ESP and Discourse Analysis, Hoey & de Escorcía reported that in 1981 an estimated 5,000 papers and 200 books were published on discourse. A consequence of this growth has been a parallel growth in terminological distinctions, reflected most schismatically perhaps in the two labels given to the subdiscipline(s) we study – discourse analysis and textlinguistics.

Depending on whom we read, we study *discourse* or *text* (or both, sometimes indiscriminately), and this discourse, or text, has *structure* or *texture* (or neither, or both). If it has structure, it may have *macro-structure* and *microstructure* or *deep structure* and *surface structure* (defined differently by each discourse/text linguist who uses them) or none of these. The structure may be a natural extension of an existing

sentence-based model or discontinuous (or somewhere between the two). The model of discourse/text used may be a top-down or bottom-up model (or both simultaneously).

Some of the distinctions that appear to separate linguists are not worth retaining. To take the crucial example of the terms *text* and *discourse*, almost every linguist uses these labels to make a different distinction. Edmondson (1981) quotes approvingly Widdowson's (1973a) distinction between *text* made up of sentences in combination and *discourse* made up of use of sentences. But in his PhD thesis of the same year Widdowson (1973b) distinguishes between *text* made up of sentences and having the property of cohesion and *discourse* made up of utterances and having the property of coherence. By 1978, however, he is treating discourse as made up of sentences and having the property of both cohesion and coherence, and text is nowhere to be seen. It is not unreasonable to feel that if Widdowson is not consistent in the use of his own distinction it is not to be expected that those who follow him should be. What is surprising, however, is that there is not even agreement about the evaluation to be placed on the objects of study distinguished. For example, Edmondson uses Widdowson's original distinction in a way designed to suggest that text studies are less valuable than discourse studies. Criper and Widdowson (1975), on the other hand, describe the relationship between text and discourse in a way that makes it clear that text analysis is valuable.

I have argued elsewhere (Hoey, 1984) that *text-discourse* distinctions are not only inconsistent among themselves but also untenable. While the invalidity of all such distinctions cannot be taken on trust, the question can still be asked: why do linguists persist in wanting to talk about text and discourse as two separate things? One reason I suggest is that the distinction reflects a basic difference of emphasis. We can broadly and crudely divide discourse/text studies into two camps – those who examine linguistic data in terms of the semantic relations holding between the parts of it and those who examine the data in terms of the speech acts that comprise it and their relationships.

Let me briefly gloss these two categories of study. In the first, I place all work that takes sentences as linguistic objects for study in their own right and seeks to relate them either in terms of a general set of semantic categories (e.g. cause-effect) or in terms of quasi-gram-

matical or functional categories (e.g. topic-restriction). In the second category, I place all work that takes sentences as products of actions performed by speakers or writers with the view of affecting in some way the conduct, attitudes, or beliefs of one or more hearers or speakers.

Semantic/syntactic studies of dialogue

Before we start placing linguists under these two headings, several further divisions can usefully be made, the first being between monologue studies and dialogue studies (see diagram 1)

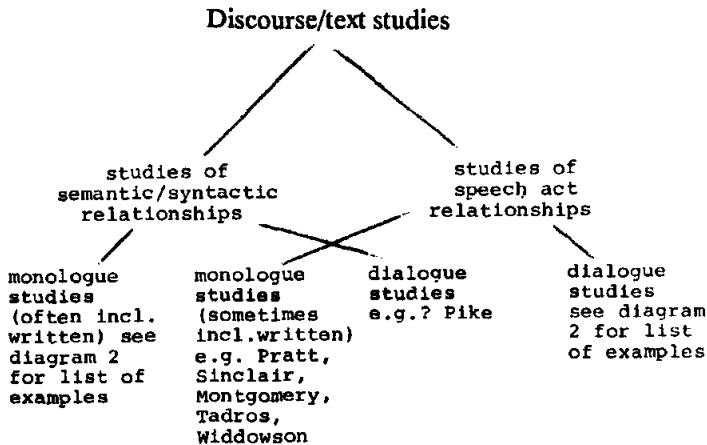


Diagram 1

As soon as this secondary distinction is made, certain absences become apparent. We have a relative scarcity of speech act discourse/text analysts who have concerned themselves with monologue and an almost total lack of semantic/syntactic discourse/text analysts who have concerned themselves with dialogue. (Forgive the cumbersome-ness of some of these labels; I am attempting to preserve a

neutral stance in the matter of disputed terminology). Possibly the only candidate for inclusion in the latter category is Pike. As long ago as the midfifties (2nd ed. 1967) Pike posited a syntactic succession from morpheme to conversation-series moving on the way through a variety of speculative levels (equivalent to ranks in systemic theory). He also noted that linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours are necessarily stitched together. As part of his evidence for this he considers a simple exchange in a street structured in terms of functional slots – *greeting, request, reply* and *sign-off*, showing how each slot can be filled with a variety of linguistic material or non-linguistic behaviour. Although the slots he posits for this exchange look like speech act labels, the tag-memic framework within which they appear is not 'act' orientated and gives as much attention to form as to function.

Apart from Pike, whose suggestions are in any case speculative, there has been little interest in considering dialogue from a syntactic/semantic perspective. Baumert (1977) on question-answer structures is a rare exception, but his data are inauthentic and his conclusions uninteresting.

Speech act studies of monologue

Rather more movement is evident in the other direction. Widdowson (1978) for example sees the writing process as a double development – a propositional development achieving cohesion and an illocutionary development achieving coherence – and seeks to show how one can progress from single acts to large discourse units. There is much here of interest, although the cohesion/coherence distinction as formulated is difficult to maintain. Winter (1974) for example shows that repetition, which Widdowson would handle under cohesion, may signal correction, yet this may also be signalled by 'however', for Widdowson an illocutionary marker.

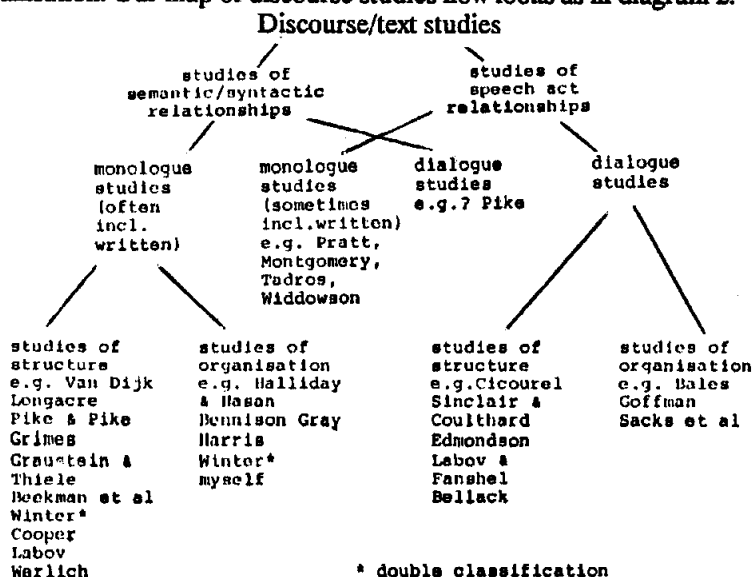
While Widdowson builds on previous work by speech act discourse analysis, his observations and definitions are not directly drawn from the work of any one group of them. Pratt (1977) on the other hand builds directly on the work of Austin (1962), Grice (1975) and Scarle (1969, 1976), the philosophers most directly associated with speech act theory, and attempts to synthesise their insights with those of Labov &

Waletzky (1967; also Labov, 1972) with a view to providing stylistically interesting accounts of such novels as *Moll Flanders* and *Tristram Shandy*.

Tadros (1981) and Montgomery (1977) derive their accounts of monologue from the dialogue model of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Tadros (1981) is concerned to describe the interactive commitments made by an author to his/her readers in the course of producing the text. The account is avowedly structural and centred round the concept of language as an act; the relationship of Tadros' description to that of Sinclair and Coulthard is best regarded however as analogical, and there are clear indications of influence by discourse analysts from the other side of the diagrammatic fence (cf. also, Tadros 1976). Although Montgomery (1977) has been similarly influenced, his work on the structure of lectures is much more directly derived from the Sinclair/Coulthard model. We turn now, therefore, to consideration of this and other dialogue models.

Studies of dialogue organisation

At this point we must make a further distinction between discourse/text linguists, namely between those who have posited structure in discourse and those who have merely sought to account for organisation. Our map of discourse studies now looks as in diagram 2:



Sinclair & Coulthard (1985) characterise a structural description as one in which the descriptive system is finite, in which all the data are describable, the descriptive apparatus is precisely relatable to the data, and there is at least one impossible combination of symbols. Structural description in short is description which allows one to make predictive statements about data. Applied strictly, such criteria would result in the placing of a number of linguists who would claim to be describing structure in the columns labelled 'studies of organisation'. Bellack et al (1966), for example, have claims to describing structure, in that interaction is described in terms of four moves – structuring, soliciting, responding and reacting; but Coulthard (1977) describes their work as non-structural because the descriptive apparatus is not precisely relatable to the data. For the purposes of categorisation, however, I have treated aspirations to describing structure on lines broadly compatible with those laid down by Sinclair & Coulthard as sufficient grounds for placing linguists in the 'structure' columns of my diagram.

Sacks and his colleagues (Sacks 1972a, b, Sacks et al. 1974, Schegloff 1968, 1972, Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, Schegloff et al. 1977, Jefferson, 1972, 1973, 1974, Jefferson & Schenkein, 1978) would not claim to be describing structure in the sense just given. They are interested in social interaction and are therefore concerned not with accounting for all the data but with making observations on turn-taking and the existence of such adjacency pairs as *question-answer* and *offer-accept* or *refusal*. Goffman (1967, 1971, 1975, 1976)'s interest in conversation analysis is likewise sociological. He treats conversation as for example a means of maintaining one's own and others' face, and his frames are not structural in the strict sense. But he and Sacks et al have been very influential despite their descriptions being non-structural, as is witnessed by the numerous references that continue to be made to their work.

Studies of dialogue structure

Structural descriptions of dialogue are many, though perhaps not particularly varied. The list I have given in the appropriate column of diagram 2 is intended to be representative but is of necessity highly selective. Space prohibits, however, detailed consideration of even this

selection. I leave therefore the work of Cicourel (1975, 1978) and Edmondson (1981) without comment, noting only that Cicourel (1975, 1978) shows a greater awareness than many of the need to accommodate logical reasoning within a model that takes account of the local conditions of interaction; in this he offers a possible bridge between the two types of description separated in our diagram. Edmondson's work shares some features with Sinclair & Coulthard's and can therefore, given the survey function of this paper, be regarded as represented in the brief account of their work that follows.

Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) argue that discourse can be analysed using a model derived from the Halliday (1961)'s original 'scale and category' proposals for grammatical theory. Within a separate level of discourse, distinct from that of syntax or phonology, they propose ranks (e.g. exchange, move) each of which is analysable in terms of its exponents from the rank below, except for the lowest rank, the act, which is by definition not available for structural description. So, for example, a particular exchange might be (and often is) made up of three moves – an initiating move, a responding move and a follow-up move. These moves in turn will each have a structure in terms of one or more acts; quite often a move may be made up of a single act, rather as a nominal group may consist of a single word.

Sinclair and Coulthard's exchange model, which builds upon an SSRC report (Sinclair et al 1972) on language in the classroom, has also been applied with modifications to doctor-patient interviews, committee meetings (Mead 1980), media discussions (Pearce 1973) and casual conversation (Burton 1978). Modifications are also proposed by Coulthard & Brazil (1979), Burton (1980) and various contributors to Coulthard & Montgomery (1981a). This model is at its strongest when handling interactions in which both parties are collaborating towards a common end and at its least effective when it handles extended contributions to a discourse; the latter it treats unrevealingly as a series of 'inform' acts. Montgomery (1977, summarised in Coulthard & Montgomery, 1981) attempts to deal with this problem by borrowing from Winter (1977) to give greater precision to the succession of informs and by adopting syntactic criteria for the identification of members: the consequence is however a theoretical hybrid. Montgomery's work is further discussed in Hart (1983)

Labov and Fanshel (1977) see structure in terms very different from those of Sinclair and Coulthard:

In some ways, [the] many-layered structure [of utterances and actions] is quite similar to the hierarchical organisation of a grammar, but we do not see conversation as a linguistic form. We have come to understand conversation as a means that people use to deal with one another (Labov & Fanshel 1977:30).

Their analysis involves expanding actual utterances with the help of cues such as tempo, intonation and fluency, and the use of shared knowledge of both a local and a general kind. The result is stimulating but difficult to replicate with confidence: it is also only marginally structural in Sinclair & Coulthard's terms. For more detailed discussion of their work, see George (1983).

Studies of monologue structure

We must now turn to the other side of our diagram and consider the discourse/text linguists who have concerned themselves with monologue. Here again we find some linguists attempting structural descriptions of monologue and some contenting themselves with non-structural descriptions, and as before our selection can aspire to be no more than indicative of the range.

Of the structural description, Longacre's has passed through two rather separate stages. In the earlier version (Longacre 1968) the facts of discourse are handled exclusively as surface phenomena; in the later, the notion of deep structure is introduced, at first only to account for the possibility of discrepancies between logical relation and linguistic manifestation (Ballard et al 1971; Longacre 1972a), but subsequently as an intrinsic part of the whole discourse theory (Longacre 1976, 1979, 1982). In both versions, it is assumed that discourse and paragraph can be handled as the next levels up in a tagmemic description. (Levels in tagmemic theory are more or less equivalent to ranks in systemic theory.) In other words, the structure of a paragraph can be represented as a tagmemic formula in much the same way as is allowed for at every other level; the tagmemes of a paragraph may be ex-

pounded by sentences or by embedded paragraphs. Likewise a discourse's tagmemes may be expounded by paragraphs or embedded discourses. Thus Longacre accounts for the complexity and length of much monologue in terms both of hierarchy of levels and multiple embedding. There is no important difference between this position and that of K. Pike & E.G. Pike (1977), though the latter are also interested in developing discourse exercises that highlight features of monologue not picked up by a structural approach.

In Longacre (1978), all this is retained but a parallel hierarchy in the deep structure is additionally proposed. This consists of a predicate calculus, in which cases combine in case frames to structure propositions, and a propositional calculus, in which propositions combine in a variety of semantic relations, to form deep-structure paragraphs. These in turn combine, in the case of the narrative genre, to form plot, which maps only indirectly into the surface structure of a narrative (first proposed in Longacre 1972b). Grimes (1975) offers a description of discourse broadly similar to this in many respects and is therefore not discussed separately here.

Van Dijk (1972, 1977) adopts a contrasting approach though he shares with Longacre the distinction between deep structure and surface structure (somewhat differently defined). He sees the task of a text linguist as that of drawing up a text-grammar to account simultaneously for whatever was previously covered by generative sentence-grammars and for all those features that combine to make a text coherent. For Van Dijk, a text-grammar (or T-grammar) should on the one hand 'formulate the rules and conditions... for the well-formed concatenation of pairs [etc] of sentences in a linearly ordered sequence,' (Van Dijk 1972:11) and on the other describe the macrostructures of texts (controlling macro-propositions of a semantic or logico-semantic nature). This should be done among other means by formulating the rules for forming and transforming macrostructures, and for relating them to sentential structures. A comparison of Van Dijk's treatment of cohesion/coherence with that of de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) and of Halliday and Hasan (1976) can be found in Merlini (1983).

Very different from the above but sharing many features with each other are Graustein and Thiele (1979, 1980, 1981), Beekman and

his colleagues (Beekman, 1970a, 1970b; K. Callow, 1970; Beekman and Callow, 1974; Beekman et al., 1981), Werlich (1976), and Winter (1968, 1974, 1979, 1982). What they share is a belief that monologues can be characterised in terms of semantic relations such as cause-effect, contrast, and general-particular between clauses/sentences, though their labels for such relations vary. For Graustein and Thiele, and for Beekman and associates, texts are organised in terms of multiple nesting of relations; this hierarchical nesting constitutes the semantic structure of the text. Werlich appears to share this view, though he gives less emphasis to the multiple embedding; he even calls the relations 'text structures'.

Winter is arguably misplaced in the structure column despite his obvious similarity with the linguists just mentioned. The first linguist to recognise the importance of semantic relations (which he terms 'clause relations'), Winter has always given greater attention to the means whereby such relations are signalled than have the other linguists discussed. Correspondingly he has offered fewer explicit statements about the overall structure of discourse, though those he has made suggest he would be in broad agreement with the hierarchical view but with a greater emphasis on the structuring properties of certain larger relations, most notably the Problem-Solution relation. Winter regrets the tendency to separate discourse/text studies from grammatical studies (see particularly Winter 1982) and emphasises the importance of rooting the semantic relations identified in a discourse/text in the grammar of the clause. Winter's work is further discussed in Hoey (1983).

Monologue organisation: relevant work and an alternative metaphor

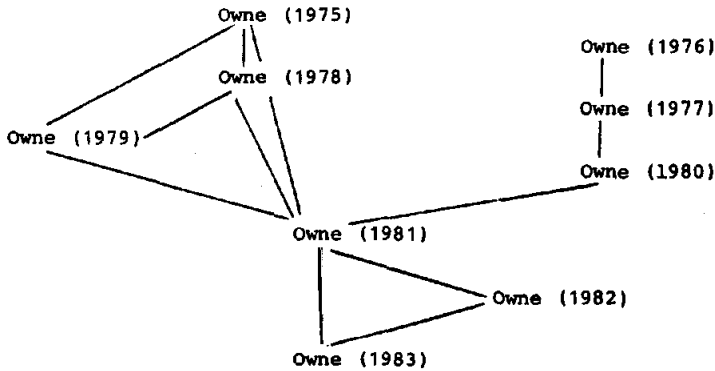
A feature common to many of the structural descriptions we have considered has been their derivation from existing models of language. Sinclair and Coulthard's exchange structure model was an extension of Halliday (1961)'s scale and category grammar. Longacre's work on discourse builds on Pike's (1954-9) and his own (1964) tagmemic grammar. Grimes and Longacre also derive aspects of their discourse theories from case grammar (e.g. Fillmore 1968). Van Dijk reacts

against the obsession with the sentence characteristic of transformation-generative grammar but largely adopts its aims and terminology.

The explanation for this could be that discourse/text is structured a way directly parallel to the way the sentence is structured. It could on the other hand be that the linguists mentioned have all taken the descriptive system they were most familiar with as a metaphor for the description of discourse. Even the handling of discourse/text in terms of multiple embedding has its parallel in syntactic theory. Nor is it only the linguists concerned with discourse structure that have taken syntax as their metaphor. Harris (1952a, b), for example, makes no claim to provide a structural description of discourse in the sense in which we have been using the term but his descriptive procedures are directly derived from the structuralist grammar of which he was himself a leading proponent (e.g. Harris, 1946).

Although clearly the metaphor of grammar has proved a fruitful one, it is not the only one possible. Winter (1974, 1977), Gray (1977a, b), Hoey (1979, 1982, 1983), Widdowson (1979) and Edmondson (1981) all use the metaphor of dialogue to explain the structure/organisation of monologue, with varying degrees of awareness that it is a metaphor. Even this metaphor, though, is only drawn from another aspect of discourse.

If it is legitimate to take as a metaphor for the study of discourse something smaller than a discourse, it might also be helpful to take as a metaphor something larger than a discourse – a collection of discourses as represented by an academic bibliography. Consider for a moment the academic oeuvre of a fictitious academic, Alfred F. Owne. Owne has published a paper, monograph, or book every year since 1975 (he is a model academic) on a variety of subjects. Being a reasonably level-headed man, he only refers back to his earlier work where it is genuinely relevant. Consequently not every one of his publications is referred to every time. This means that if we want to trace the connections between the various works he has produced, we can do so by drawing a line between each work and the earlier works he refers to, in which case we might arrive at the picture shown in diagram 3:

**Diagram 3**

From such a diagram, we might note that certain works (e.g. Owne 1981) are clearly of central importance in Owne's development in that they appear to bring together certain strands of work. Others (most notably Owne 1976) might be regarded as relatively peripheral. However we interpret points of the diagram, we would not be unreasonable in regarding it as representing the organisation in some way of Owne's texts, the network of relationships existing between the packages of information he had produced.

But sentences are also packages of information. It is at least worth considering therefore whether monologue may not be organised on the lines of a bibliographical network with cross-referencing between adjacent and non-adjacent sentences; the equivalent of a citation at sentence level would be cohesive link. Such a metaphor would deny structure to monologue but by way of compensation would argue for their having extremely complex (and therefore potentially rich) organisations.

I take this to be compatible with the view held by Halliday and Hasan (1976), who, while not denying the existence of macro-structures, claim that text has the property of texture created in great part by cohesive ties which are semantic in nature. Just how complex such a texture can be is shown in Hoey (1983); for further discussion of Halliday and Hasan's work, see Merlini (1983).

Halliday and Hasan's examples are all drawn from written monologues. But the cohesive ties are in reality no respecters of boundaries. Cohesion can occur

(a) within sentences, e.g.,

Peter went red because he knew he had been silly;

(b) across sentences, e.g.,

Peter went red. He knew he had been silly;
(from E. Blyton's *Bertie's New Braces*) and

(c) across contributions to an exchange, e.g.

A: Peter's gone red.

B: He knows he's been silly.

What is more, the same is true of the clause relations described by Winter and others. The relation of *reason* between the two statements about Peter in the examples given above remains constant throughout all the syntactic and other changes made. This, though, leaves us with a problem. If cohesion and clause relations operate equally well within the sentence and across contributions to an interchange, how does description based on such features of discourse fit in with other aspects of linguistic description?

I suggest language (and its study) may be represented as in diagram 4:

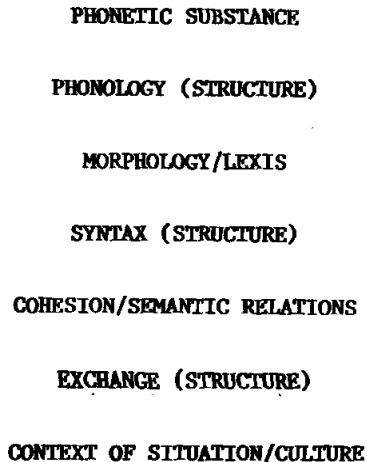


Diagram 4

What this diagram is intended to convey is the claim that language is triply structured. We are heavily constrained in the choices we make at the phonological, syntactic, and exchange levels, and if we choose to deviate from the structural principles operating at these levels in a particular language it will be immediately noticed and our intelligibility will probably be threatened. One half of discourse/text studies is concerned with the last of these structures, the exchange structure. Just as phonological structure can only be studied with constant reference to the phonetic substance, so also exchange structure can only be studied with constant reference to the immediate non-linguistic context. It is natural therefore that attempts to account for exchange should concentrate on speech as action rather than as object. This area of study represents the 'discourse' half of the psychological division posited earlier.

The structural systems do not provide us with the creativity we need; rather they provide us with the framework without which creativity could not exist. The creative choices are made in the areas between the structures, labelled on the diagram morphology/lexis and cohesion/semantic relations. Attempts to provide structural descriptions of the processes or meanings of word-formation have all foundered on the wealth of idiosyncrasy and exception to be found there. I would argue that attempts to provide structural descriptions of monologue are similarly fated. We feel less constrained in these areas. New words, or new uses of old words, are readily found and, if useful, as readily accepted. Similarly new patterns of organisation (was ever a novel 'structured' like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* before?) are created and accepted without demur. If we choose to deviate from the organisational principles operating in these areas in a language it may or may not be noticed; unless the deviance is extreme or persistent it will not normally threaten intelligibility. Again, just as morphology/lexis overlap with phonology on the one hand and with syntax (e.g. in the case of idioms) on the other, so likewise cohesion/semantic relations, as we have seen, overlap with syntactic and exchange structures.

What then of the written discourse — the letter, the novel or the academic paper? Interestingly the written discourse relates to the exchange in the same way that the written word relates to phonology — through the process of being read. The reader in reacting to the dis-

course creates and completes the exchange much in the way that he/she creates and completes the phonological realisation when the discourse is read aloud, and just as spelling (in alphabetic languages) reflects indirectly the phonology of the language, so also a written monologue will retain signs of its ultimate place in an exchange. Clearly, though, the incompleteness of the exchange before such reader reaction will lead researchers to the treatment of the (written) monologue as syntactic/semantic object. Study of this area is broadly characterisable as the 'text' half of the psychological division.

Conclusions

I have attempted in this paper to sketch a tentative map of discourse studies in such a way as to suggest an explanation of the division of suprasentential research into text and discourse studies. It will, I hope, have become apparent that I value work on both sides of the divide; equally it will, I hope, be clear that I see no reason why the divide should continue indefinitely. In so far as exchanges are governed by the organising principles of cohesion and 'clause' relations, then there is room for their explanation by 'text' (i.e. semantic/syntactic) means. Likewise in so far as monologues are part of exchanges, or, in the case of written monologues, await realisation as exchanges with particular readers, then there is room for their description in 'discourse' (i.e. speech act) terms. For myself, I have for a while now used *discourse* exclusively to cover both areas and types of study. Whether, though, we retain the terminological distinction or not, we should look to learn from each other and bridge the divide. Our monologues must become exchanges.

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