

The roles of (written) text and anaphor-type distribution in the construction of discourse*

FRANCIS CORNISH

Abstract

The aim of this article is to demonstrate, using two attested texts (newspaper articles), how the reader creates discourse on the basis of the many and varied types of textual cues supplied by the writer, in terms of a relevant context. It also aims to show how the different distributions of anaphor types in given texts correlate with the discourse function of the segment in which the anaphor occurs (and particularly with the [sub]genre of the text involved).

After drawing a distinction between the complementary dimensions of text and discourse, the article outlines a particular approach to discourse anaphora which emphasizes the roles of the type of anaphoric expression chosen, its combination with the predicator and other features of the anaphoric predication, and the kind of coherence or discourse relation in terms of which that predication is indicated as needing to be integrated with a given discourse context.

Finally, two attested example texts are analyzed in terms of their discourse structure and of the ways in which the anaphoric and cohesive relations signaled help to structure the discourse derivable from them. Here, I try to show how the process of establishing the referents of given anaphors involves the modification of existing discourse representations, as a function both of the content of the anaphoric predication and its mode of integration with the discourse context of which these representations are part.

Keywords: anaphora; text; discourse; cohesion; coherence; context.

1. Introduction

My aim in this article is to demonstrate, using two attested texts (newspaper articles), how the reader creates discourse on the basis of the many and