

THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

*Ibragimova Zarifa**Uzbekistan State World Languages University*

Annotation: Discourse analysis involves many aspects, such as adjacency pairs, coherence, cohesion, and so on, among which context plays an important role. The article intends to explore the role of context in discourse analysis on the basis of introducing the definition of context.

Key words: discourse analysis, context, Eliminating Ambiguity, Indicating Referents, Detecting Conversational Implicature.

For the purpose of addressing issues unique to their professions and advancing their own ideas and theories, various linguists attempt to define context from a variety of perspectives.

H. G. Widdowson defined "context" as "those features of the circumstance of real language usage that are taken as significant to meaning" when he focused his research on language meaning.¹ When Guy Cook was studying the relationship between discourse and literature, he took "context" into consideration as well. In his definition, context is just a form of knowledge the world and "the term „context“ can be used in a broad and narrow sense. In the narrow sense, it refers to (knowledge of) factors outside the text under consideration."²

As we can see, context is extremely crucial in discourse analysis. Let us try to generalize its function as follows.

A. Eliminating Ambiguity

A word, phrase, sentence, or collection of phrases is said to be ambiguous if it has more than one conceivable interpretation or meaning. Lexical and structural ambiguities are the two different types of ambiguities. The main contributors of lexical ambiguity are homonymy and polysemy. For instance, all four of the following words—right, rite, write, and wright—are pronounced [rait], although they are very distinct from one another. Let's take a closer look at the following sentence:

They passed the port at midnight.

This statement contains linguistic ambiguity. However, it is usually obvious from the context what the word "port" means, whether it refers to a seaport or a type of fortified wine.

The grammatical analysis of a sentence or phrase leads to structural ambiguity. Young men and women, for instance, might be examined as either "young men and women" (meaning both are young) or "young men and women" (i.e. only the men are young).

B. Indicating Referents

We typically replace certain noun phrases with terms like I, you, he, this, that, etc., verb phrases with words like do, can, should, etc., and adverbial phrases of time and place with words like then, there, etc. in order to avoid redundancy. In order to grasp the referents of such phrases, context is crucial. The following dialogue is written by the well-known linguist, Firth:

- Do you think he will?
-- I don't know. He might.
-- I suppose he ought to, but perhaps he feels he can't.
-- Well, his brothers have. They perhaps think he needn't.
-- Perhaps eventually he will. I think he should, and I very much hope he will.³

Without context, it is difficult to understand what the speakers are talking about because the dialogue contains an excessive amount of auxiliary verbs and modal verbs like will, might, have, can't, etc. In actuality, the verb phrase "join the army" is replaced by these auxiliary and modal verbs. This common example demonstrates the significance of context.

C. Detecting Conversational Implicature

The term conversational implicature is used by Grice to account for what a speaker can imply, suggest, or mean, as distinct from what the speaker literally says and it is deduced on the basis of the conversational meaning of words together with the context, under the guidance of the Cooperative Principle and its four maxims, i.e., Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner.

Grice also found that when people communicate with each other, they do not always adhere to the four maxims. The violation of a maxim may result in the speaker conveying, in addition to the literal meaning of his utterance, an additional meaning, which is conversational implicature. Let us look at the following example:

(The husband has just finished supper and wanted to watch TV, leaving his wife alone to clear the table and wash dishes.)

Wife: Shouldn't you help me do some housework?

Husband: I have worked for nine hours.

Superficially, the husband's answer has nothing to do with the wife's question. He violates the maxim of relevance. Actually, we must assume that the husband is adhering to the Cooperative Principle and means something more than the literal meaning. The additional meaning, namely, conversational implicature, is that he has worked for a whole day, so he is too tired to help his wife to do any housework.

References:

1. George Yule. (2000). *Pragmatics*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
2. Gillian Brown & George Yule. (2000). *Discourse Analysis*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
3. Guy Cook. (1999). *Discourse and Literature*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
4. H.G. Widdowson. (2000). *Linguistics*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2000
5. Zhang Yunfei. (2000). *An introduction to Modern English Lexicology*. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press.