

ASPECT AND REFERENCE IN TEXT PASSAGES: *MODES OF DISCOURSE*, BY
CARLOTA S. SMITH

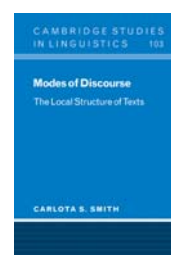
Smith, Carlota. 2003.

Modes of Discourse: The Local Structure of Texts.

Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

336 pages. ISBN:9780521120623

<http://www.cambridge.org/es/knowledge/isbn/item2703425/Modes%20of%20Discourse/>



Contents

- 1 Aspect and reference in text passages 154
- 2 Publisher description for *Modes of discourse* by Carlota S. Smith 155
- 3 From the Introduction 155
- 4 Table of contents 156
- 5 From In Memoriam Carlota S. Smith 157

1. Aspect and reference in text passages

Carlota Smith shows by way of nominal reference and verbal aspect a new approach to texts that sets the foundations of a linguistics of discourse. Passages are intermediate units, linguistically defined by their discourse modes, between the sentences they are made of and the texts they make up.

Book notice: Smith, Carlota. 2003. *Modes of Discourse: The Local Structure of Texts*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Círculo de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación 54, 154-157.

<http://www.ucm.es/info/circulo/no54/smith.pdf>

© *Círculo de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación (clac)*

Universidad Complutense de Madrid. ISSN 1576-4737. <http://www.ucm.es/info/circulo>

2. Publisher description for *Modes of discourse* by Carlota S. Smith

In studying discourse, the problem for the linguist is to find a fruitful level of analysis. Carlota Smith offers a new approach with this study of discourse passages, units of several sentences or more. She introduces the key idea of the 'Discourse Mode', identifying five modes: Narrative, Description, Report, Information, Argument. These are realized at the level of the passage, and cut across genre lines. Smith shows that the modes, intuitively recognizable as distinct, have linguistic correlates that differentiate them. She analyzes the properties that distinguish each mode, focusing on grammatical rather than lexical information. The book also examines linguistically-based features that appear in passages of all five modes: topic and focus, variation in syntactic structure, and subjectivity, or point of view.

3. From the Introduction

“This book is a partial answer to the question: what can close linguistic analysis bring to the understanding of discourse? Discourse studies have focused on pragmatic factors such as genre expectations, discourse coherence relations, and inference. In part this has been a natural reaction to earlier, rather unsuccessful attempts to apply the techniques of linguistic analysis beyond the sentence. The current emphasis also follows from increased understanding of the area of pragmatics, and of the role of context in language use and interpretation. It has sometimes seemed, though, that nothing at all is conveyed by linguistic forms, while everything is due to pragmatics or lexical content. I attempt to right the balance here, at least in part. I propose a local level of discourse, the Discourse Mode, which has linguistic properties and discourse meaning. I posit five modes: Narrative, Report, Descriptive, Information, and Argument. The Discourse Modes are classes of discourse passages, defined by the entities they introduce into the universe of discourse and their principle of progression. The discourse entities are essentially aspectual. They include the familiar Events and States, and some less-familiar categories. The Discourse Modes grew out of my work on aspect and tense.”

http://www.cambridge.org/servlet/file/store6/item2469170/version1/item_9780521781695_excerpt.pdf

4. Table of contents

Preface

Introduction 1

Part I. Discourse Structure

1 The study of discourse 7

1.1 Discourse Modes 8

1.2 Approaches to the study of texts 9

1.3 Overview of key ideas 12

1.4 Conclusion 19

2 Introduction to the Discourse Modes 22

2.1 The entities introduced in texts 23

2.2 Text progression in the temporal modes 25

2.3 Text progression in the atemporal modes 31

2.4 Foreground and background in text passages 34

2.5 Rhetorical and linguistic background 38

3 Text representation and understanding 49

3.1 The pragmatic background for discourse interpretation 49

3.2 Types of inference 51

3.3 Mental models and representations 55

3.4 The analysis of text passages in Discourse Representation Theory 56

Part II Linguistic analysis of the discourse modes

4 Aspectual information: the entities introduced in discourse 67

4.1 Aspectual categories 67

4.2 General Statives 72

4.3 Abstract Entities 74

4.4 Linguistic correlates of situation entities 75

4.5 Aspectual information in Discourse Representation Structures 82

5 Temporal and spatial progression 92

5.1 Sentences in context: patterns of tense interpretation 92

5.2 Introduction to the temporal system of English 99

5.3 Tense interpretation in Discourse Representation Theory 105

5.4 Spatial information in language 115

5.5 Features of temporal expressions 118

6 Referring expressions in discourse 123

6.1 Atemporal text progression and Primary Referents 123

6.2 Referring expressions 132

6.3 The familiarity status of referring expressions 141

6.4 Referring expressions and Discourse Representation Theory 149

Part III Surface presentational factors

7 Subjectivity in texts 155

7.1 Responsibility for subjectivity 156

7.2 Expressions of communication 159

7.3 Contents of mind 162

7.4 Evaluative and evidential subjectivity 163

7.5 Perception and perspectival sentences 169

7.6 Formalizing the interpretation of subjectivity 175

7.7 Summary and conclusion 183

8	The contribution of surface presentation	185
8.1	Presentational factors	187
8.2	The topic–comment partition	188
8.3	The Focus–Background partition	201
8.4	Dual partitioning and the representation of topic and focus	209
8.5	Conclusion	212
9	Non-canonical structures and presentation	213
9.1	Non-canonical constructions	214
9.2	Argument constructions	215
9.3	Non-argument preposing: Adjuncts	228
9.4	Multi-clause sentences	233
9.5	Paragraphs	236
9.6	Presentational information in Discourse Representation Structure	238
Part IV Discourse modes and their context		
10	Information in text passages	243
10.1	The Discourse Modes	243
10.2	Multiple analyses of text passages	247
10.3	Formalization in Discourse Representation Structures	254
11	Discourse structure and Discourse Modes	258
11.1	Organizing principles of texts	258
11.2	Discourse relations	260
11.3	Discourse Modes and text structure	265
11.4	Conclusion	266
Appendix A: The Texts 267		
Appendix B: Glossary 286		
References 294		
General index 314		
Index of names 318		

5. From In Memoriam Carlota S. Smith

Carlota Shipman Smith (1934-2007) worked on temporal aspect in English, French, Russian, Mandarin, and Navajo; she was a member of the Navajo Language Academy. Through her “modes” or “different genres of discourse (e.g., narratives vs. reports vs. descriptions)”, she “sought to bring the analytic tools of linguistics to the humanistic study of literature”. “Carlota led an exemplary life, a life well-lived until her final hours. A life that will be well-remembered.” (Richard Meier, Obituary and Remarks, http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/linguistics/_files/html/carlota.html.)

Published: May 31, 2013