

MACRO - AND MICRO - COHESIVE DEVICES IN THAI EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

Peansiri Vongvipanond

0. INTRODUCTION

The failure of a sentence grammar to describe and explain many syntactic phenomena, such as co-reference across sentences, ellipsis, some sentential adverbs and certain non-basic sentence structures, has led quite a number of linguists to look beyond the boundary of a sentence. Once they leave the realm of sentence, these linguists find themselves in a different territory, the geography of which is not readily comprehensible. They recognize the landscape as consisting of the components they are familiar with, namely the sentences. Some of these sentences appear normal while some others appear almost abnormal. In addition, there seem to be more than one territory beyond the border of sentence. Some find themselves in the land of dialogues and some in the land of texts. Their reports show that the difference involves not only the number of speakers but also the planning, or the lack of planning, in the organization of sentences. Those who have been studying dialogues focus their attention on interactive processes and communicative effects. They call the object of their study discourse. Those who have been looking at texts pay attention to the structural properties of the text, an extension of their earlier preoccupation with sentence structure. Some members of the latter group refer to the object of their study as text but there are those who use the term discourse. Whatever terminological preference one may have, the term "discourse analysis" has come to be accepted to refer to the study of linguistic units which are at a higher level than sentences or clauses.

Those who have engaged themselves in the exploration and investigation of discourse of all types

seem to agree that, unlike sentences, discourses are very elusive. An extensive study of sentences in a language can usually yield a rather satisfactory inventory of sentence patterns or even a set of phrase structure rules which can account for the structure of sentences in that language. However, an extensive study of discourses does not enable one to arrive at even a tentative sketch of discourse patterns. A set of discourse structure rules which should enable one to determine whether a particular piece of language is a discourse seems to be an unattainable goal. The notion of "grammaticality" or even "acceptability" seems almost inapplicable to discourse. Beaugrande (1985:48) went so far as to state that :-

"The distinction between a text and a non-text therefore cannot be determined by formal definition; it can only be explored as a gradation of human attitudes, actions and reactions.....The text is distinguished by its "textuality", based not only on cohesion and coherence but also on intentionality, situationality, intertextuality and informativity."

This is a rather extreme opinion on the well-formedness of a discourse or text, an opinion which should distress language teachers especially.

The purpose of this paper is to present a more moderate view of discourse. It will be shown that there is a great deal of structural similarity between sentence and discourse in Thai, a language in which there exists no orthographic notation to mark sentence boundary (Vongvipanond 1981). Very frequently, unless one has been trained to be syntactically sophisticated, one has to rely on the dependency relation, or the "cohesion", of constituents

of a sentence to identify its boundary, just as one would have to do in trying to determine discourse boundary. Thai is a topic prominent language (Ekniyom 1981), so structural dependencies among sentence constituents are rather loose and variable, especially sentences which occur in a discourse. This loose and variable cohesion is found similarly in sentences as well as in discourses, at least in expository discourses.

1. DISCOURSE AS A LINGUISTIC UNIT

The definition of language as a system of symbols, which consists of form, or sound image, and meaning has been a well accepted notion in linguistics. De Saussure (1959) is usually credited for propagating this notion. Quite frequently, however, symbols are interpreted as words, or lexemes. However, it is obvious that communication is not possible with lexemes alone. Lexemes have to be grouped into symbols of higher level, called constructions. With the exclusion of the speaker's intent and the listener's choice of interpretation, the meaning of these higher - level symbols is derived from the meaning of each symbol and its relations. This is what underlies the model of semantic interpretation as proposed by Katz and Postal (1964). In this paper, we will adopt the term " linguistic unit " to refer to these linguistic symbols, whether they are a single lexeme or a construction.

The concepts of the linguistic unit and a hierarchy have been schematized in a very detailed manner in the tagmemic framework, such as in the work of Pike and Pike (1977). However, for our present purposes, we will recognize only three levels of linguistic units: lexeme, sentence, and discourse. Through this distinction of linguistic units into three levels, we hope to show the structural and functional parallelism between sentence and discourse.

Semantically, a lexeme represents a semantic concept, which can be defined as a part or portion of conceptualized or perceived reality. Functionally, a lexeme serves as an identifying label and building block, or constituent at the lowest level of a linguistic construction. There are four types of lexeme: nominal elements; verbal elements; relators; and grammatical qualifiers. Nominal elements include lexemes which are usually classed as nouns, pronouns, some adverbs, nominalized verb phrases and nominalized sen-

tences. Verbal elements include verbs, modal auxiliaries, adjectives and adverbs. Relators include conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs and discourse connectors. Grammatical qualifiers include markers for nouns to denote number, person, gender, or definiteness, tense and aspect markers for verbs and prepositions, or markers of case relations between noun phrases and a verb.

A sentence is a construction and a formal representation of a proposition. A proposition is a semantic notion and it can be defined as a unit of information which provides a comment about a topic. To represent this unit of information, a sentence is made up of a predicate, to represent the comment, and a nominal phrase, to represent the topic. Sentences can vary according to the types of their predicate. There are three types of predicate: verbal, nominal and sentential. Through compounding and embedding processes, sentences can be more complex constructions.

A discourse is also a linguistic unit which is well defined both semantically and structurally. Semantically, a discourse is an account about a theme, which can be an animate or inanimate object, an event, a phenomenon, an issue, etc. An account is structurally manifested as a set of sentences; therefore, a discourse is usually defined almost unanimously (Halliday and Hasan 1976, Pike and Pike 1977, Longacre 1983, Werth 1984, and Fillmore 1985) as a non - random set of cohesive and coherent sentences. Cohesion and coherence are semantic as well as structural properties of a discourse. According to Longacre (1983), discourses can be semantically as well as structurally classified into four main types, on the basis of two main criteria, namely agent orientation and contingent succession. The four main types of discourse are narrative, procedural, behavioral and expository discourses, as shown in Diagram 1.

	CONTINGENT SUCCESSION	AGENT ORIENTATION
NARRATIVE	+	+
PROCEDURAL	+	-
BEHAVIORAL	-	+
EXPOSITORY	-	-

Diagram 1: Types of discourses

The above definitions should leave no doubt as to the status of a discourse as a well defined linguistic unit.

2. COHERENCE AND COHESION

The notions of coherence and cohesion are both semantic and syntactic. Semantically, coherence is the effect of the fact that all the propositions within a discourse contribute a piece of information to the

theme of the discourse. The study of expository discourse in Thai reveals that structurally, coherence is achieved through the lexemic network.

The lexemic network is the use of selected sets of lexemes, or identifying labels for some portions of conceptualized reality. For example, the use of the following two sets of terms in a discourse on "the change in lottery language", a part of an article on lottery language written by Naruemon Charoenma.

SET 1

phasăahŭay	= lottery language	kham	= word
khwammāay	= meaning	hŭay	= lottery
kĭawkhôn	= to refer to	chăy	= to use

SET 2

adĭit	= past	pătcuban	= present
kaanplianplēēŋ	= change		
lêək	= to become obsolete		

Semantically, cohesion is the various relations of all the propositions included in a discourse. In Thai expository discourse, cohesion is structurally manifested through ellipsis, anaphoric chains, overt linkages of sentences which represent these propositions and the choice of sentence structure to represent different points of empathy.

Ellipsis is the omission of certain constituents of a sentence since the referent of the omitted constituents is known or is given information and can usually be co - interpreted with some constituents in preceding or following sentences, or can be inferred through situational contexts.

An anaphoric chain consists of various types of anaphor or pro-form such as personal pronouns, demonstrative nominal phrases, synonyms, and repetition of certain constituents.

Overt linkages include various types of relators or connectors, such as conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs and discourse connectors.

Point of empathy is the standpoint which the speaker or author of a discourse chooses in structuring the information he or she wants to present. The following two sentences have the same meaning except for the difference in the author's choice of point of empathy. They both mean that the dictionary defines the term "money" as a legal tender of debt. The structural difference between these two sentences reflects the difference in the point of empathy chosen by the different authors of the discourses from which the sentences have been taken. Sentence (a) is people-oriented and the indefinite "we" is used as the subject of the sentence. The definition of the word is, in this sentence, to be obtained by an act of looking it up in a dictionary. Sentence (b), is theme-oriented and the dictionary, or *pôtcaanúkrom*, is used as the subject and the definition is given by the dictionary, rather than obtained by people who use the dictionary.

A. [kham wâa nən] thâa (raw) duu taam
 word that money if we look according to
 pótcaanánúkrom cà? dây [khwaammăay wâa
 dictionary will get definition that
 wátthù? thîi chamrá? nîi dây taam kòtmăay]
 object which pay debt can according to law

"As for the word "money", if we look it up in a dictionary, we will obtain the definition that it is a legal tender of debt."

B. [kham wâa nən] pótcaanánúkrom hây [khwaammăay
 word that money dictionary give definition
 wâa wátthù? thîi chamrá? nîi dây taam
 that object which pay debt can according to
 kòtmăay }
 law

"As for the word "money", the dictionary defines it as a legal tender of debt."

Coherence and cohesion are both requisites for all discourses. It is possible to have a discourse which is coherent but is not cohesive. Short notes taken by secretaries, students' lecture notes and drafts of answers to exam questions can be coherent discourses, since under usual circumstances these notes and drafts often focus on a particular issue or topic. These are not well - formed discourses. They are but 'a set of' sentences sharing the same topic which are not held together by cohesive devices. Likewise, one can randomly pick the first sentence of the first ten pages of a novel and add the most possible cohesive devices to link all the selected sentences. It is not difficult to imagine how incoherent these well - connected sentences can be. There is an extremely slim chance for these randomly selected sentences to be interpreted as a discourse despite all the cohesive devices which are used to link them together.

3. MACRO - AND MICRO - COHESIVE DEVICES

The discussion presented above supports the notion that discourse is a semantically and structurally well defined linguistic unit. Now we turn to a question

for which no satisfactory answer has been provided. Is discourse a well defined construction like the sentence? Before we answer that question we need to know what the properties of a well - defined construction are. Fillmore (1985) provided one of the best answers though he employed the term "text" instead of "linguistic unit" or "construction" in his work to refer inclusively to all types of linguistic unit, including constructions like sentence or discourse. He differentiated three dimensions of relations for all units of linguistic form: intertextual relations, extratextual relations and intratextual relations. Intertextual relations exist between a given unit, or in our case a construction, and other units. These relations can be of the alternative type or the associative type. Through the relations of alternativity, a functional class or category of units or construction can be established. Through the relations of association, one can see the repertory or linguistic domain to which a unit belongs. Extratextually, there are relations between a unit and the world within which a unit is produced and the world which it represents.

It is the intratextual, or intra - unit, relations which are of interest and relevant to the question we are dealing with. Fillmore recognized two types of intra-

textual relations within a linguistic unit: those between the constituents and their superordinate units and those between and among constituents within the same unit (Fillmore 1985:12).

If a discourse is to be considered a well-defined construction, it must structurally exhibit these two types of relations. First, we need to consider these relations. It is obvious that they are all included in what we call cohesion. However, since there are two types of relation, the part-whole relations between constituents and their containing units and the sister-sister relations between and among co-constituents, we must be able to differentiate cohesive relations within a discourse into two corresponding types. Our study of cohesive devices in Thai expository discourse shows that it is possible to differentiate two types of cohesive devices. These will be called macro-cohesive devices and micro-cohesive devices. Macro-cohesive devices are overt manifestations of the part-whole relations. Through these devices, we can identify the function of a sentence, or in most cases a set of sentences, in a discourse. Micro-cohesive devices manifest the sister-sister relations of sentences within the same discourse. They are inter-sentential cohesive devices with a scope of operation that covers adjacent sentences. Macro-cohesive devices, on the other hand, operate at the discourse level.

In Thai expository discourse, macro-cohesive devices include the choice of sentence structure which reflects the author's or speaker's point of empathy, or his or her informational structuring decision, and overt linkages which apply at the discourse level. Micro-cohesive devices include ellipsis, anaphoric chains, and overt linkages which operate inter-sententially. As a consequence of this differentiation between macro and micro-cohesive devices, overt linkages need to be divided into two groups: discourse linkages and intersentential linkages.

a. Macro-cohesive devices

As proposed above, there are two types of macro-cohesive devices: choice of sentence structure to reflect points of empathy and discourse linkages.

In Thai expository discourse, there seem to be

two main choices of informational structuring or point of empathy; people-oriented and theme-oriented. When a people-oriented point of empathy is chosen, there are three alternatives. First, the speaker can speak from the seemingly objective point of view of the indefinite "we" or "they". Secondly, he or she can sound more committed, and thus subjective, by using the "I" point of empathy. Thirdly, a speaker can combine both alternatives, which enables him or her to differentiate the different functions of the different parts of the discourse. As for the theme-oriented point of empathy, information about the theme of the discourse is presented directly to the listeners or readers, and not through the eyes of either the objective "we" or the subjective "I". Certainly, it is also possible to combine the theme-oriented point of view with one or all the alternatives of the people-oriented point of empathy. Of the nineteen articles which we studied, three are predominantly "we" oriented, eight are predominantly theme-oriented, the remaining eight exhibit combinations of points of view, which can be a combination of two points of empathy, either the theme-oriented and the "I" point of views (one article) or the theme-oriented and the "we" point of views (one article). It can also be a combination of three points of empathy (six articles).

As for discourse linkages, these can occur as section titles and discourse connectors which link sets of sentences. Section titles are not all discourse linkages, those which explicitly tell what the informational functions of a set of sentences are; for example, *bòtnam* "introduction", *phuumlǎn* "background", *bòt?aphípraay* "discussion", *sarup* "conclusion", etc. Certainly, discourse connectors serve the same purpose of telling what the functions of a set of sentences are. Discourse connectors in Thai expository discourse include conjunctive adverbs and fixed phrases, which in most cases contain a demonstrative word, either *nii* or *nán*, referring to the information conveyed in the preceding or following sets of sentences. The following are some examples:

daŋtòɔpɔyní i

dûayhèetkhântônñí i

= as follows

(lit. like what follows)

= therefore

(lit. with the above reasons)

phróʔchanán

= therefore

(lit. because of that)

daŋnán

= therefore

(lit. according to that)

naythamnoŋdiawkan

= likewise

(lit. in the same manner)

naythaantronkhâam

= on the contrary

(lit. in the opposite direction)

klâawkhæu

= that is

(lit. to say the same thing)

klâawʔiikyàaŋnèŋ

= in other words

(lit. to say it in another manner)

tɔɔntôn

= at first

(lit. first part)

tòomaa

= Next

(lit. continue)

b. Micro - cohesive devices

There are three types of micro - cohesive devices: ellipsis, anaphora and sentence connectors. All of them serve to show intersentential relations between and among sentences which are constituents of the same discourse. These are logical relations of the "and, but, or" type as well as adjacency relations, which are needed to ensure the co-interpretation of ellipsis and anaphora and their antecedents.

Ellipsis is a prominent syntactic trait of a topic prominent language, according to the typology proposed by Li and Thompson (1976). The consequence is a substantial number of subjectless sentences and objectless transitive sentences. The following is an excerpt from an article entitled " The problem of Ban Chiang Civilization " written by Dr. Sud Saengwichian. The ellipsis is marked by a zero and its interpretation.

tòomaa	mii	faràn	càak	sathăanthûut	nay	prathêetthay
later	exist	foreigner	from	embassy	in	Thailand

phróp	môo	khŷan	sŷi	danklàaw	nŷi	khên
discover	pot	paint	color	as-said	this	up

(0=faràn)	koʔ	təuntēen	(0=faràn)	nampay	phrêelăay
foreigner	so	excited	foreigner	take	publicize

"Later, foreigners from embassies in Thailand came across these painted pottery. So they were excited about it and they displayed it to the public."

Anaphora in Thai expository discourses can be either *personal pronouns*, *repetition of the same nominal phrase*, wholly or partially, and *demonstrative phrases*. The most frequently used anaphor is the repetition of the same nominal phrase. Our analysis corresponds to the findings by Praphapom Maneerote (1986) in that the instances of ellipsis greatly outnumber the

use of anaphora.

Sentence connectors include conjunctions, and conjunctive adverbs, which quite frequently are combined. The following are examples of these linkages or connectors. Notice that some of them designate logical relations as discourse connectors discussed earlier. The difference is in the scope of their linkage.

l'è?

t'èè

r'èè

c'èè

k'è?

= and

= but

= or

= so

= all - purpose connector (Vongvipanond 1986)

It is possible that the same conjunctive adverbs can function both as discourse connectors and sentence connectors; this depends also on the scope of their linkage.

To summarise, we have argued that a discourse is a well-defined construction because it exhibits the two intra-unit relations, the part-whole relations and the sister-sister relations, as proposed by Fillmore (1985), which are manifested through the use of macro-cohesive devices and micro cohesive devices, respectively. Macro-cohesive devices serve to indicate the function of a sentence or a set of sentences within the discourse within which they are contained. These relations in a discourse, though semantic in nature, are comparable to structural relations of sentential constituents. As for micro-cohesive devices, they serve to show the dependency relations of sentences which make up a discourse and these relations are comparable to structural relations at the phrasal level.

4. DISCOURSE BOUNDARY

We are all used to having a set of phrase structure rules or an inventory of sentence patterns which enable us to identify a sentence, even in a language of which we are not native speakers. As a consequence, we cannot help but ask also for discourse patterns and discourse structure rules. However, sentence boundaries are not always distinct and clear for all languages. For subject-prominent languages, in which there usually are overt devices to mark syntactic functions and relations in terms of grammatical agreements, we can seek formal criteria to determine sentence boundaries. Languages of the Indo - European family are languages of this type. Since the sentence boundary is easily identified, there is available an orthographic system, known as punctuation marks, in the writing tradition of the language. However, when one looks at oral texts of the unplanned type in these languages, one can see that the sentence

boundary is not as easily discernible. Unplanned speeches in subject - prominent languages tend to be more like discourses in topic prominent languages, as a consequence of ellipses of information which can be interpreted or inferred from the context. There are frequent instances of what teachers of writing call run - on sentences and fragments.

However, when it comes to a topic prominent language like Thai, the situation is different. Run - ons and fragments are common. The first problem we came across as we began our analysis of expository discourse in Thai was how to identify the sentence boundary. Members of the team differed in their decision even after a set of working criteria was set. The working criteria are the following:

- A sentence must have a predicate, which can be either verbal, nominal or sentential, and a verbal predicate can be either a single verb or a serial verb,
- All noun phrases, with or without preceding prepositions, have to be assigned as co - constituents of a particular predicate,
- A sentence with an overt embedding marker is considered a nominalized clause and thus treated as stated in b,
- All adverbs must be assigned as modifiers to a predicate or sentence.
- Sentence connectors determine the scope of compound and complex sentences while discourse connectors are considered adverbs.

The most problematic decision concerns subjectless sentences. According to the above working criteria they are considered independent sentences, unless they are linked to other sentences by some connectors. The following are examples of subjectless sentences. Notice that the absence of the subjects does tempt one to consider the sentences constituents of the sentences which contain the antecedent for the missing subject.

phanmáay lăay chanít khên yùu năanên
 plant many kind grow Pres. densely

(0=phanmáay) kòohâykàet rômṇaw
 plant create shade

(0=rômṇaw) mii khwaamchûmchûn
 shade have moisture

(0=rômṇaw) mò? pen thîiyùu?aasăy
 shade suit be habitat

"Many kinds of tree grow (there) densely, creating
 shade with moisture and thus provide^{ing} and appropriate
 habitat."

(Ecology in Sunthornphuu's Poetry by Wiphut Sophawong)

A complex sentence construction is deliberately used in the English translation to highlight the difference between the two languages. All the propositions are incorporated into one sentence construction, with all the constituents clearly marked syntactically in English. In Thai there are no such structural means. One sees only the adjacency of these sentences, the structure of which is affected and influenced by this adjacency, which makes ellipsis possible. The difficulty in locating the boundary of sentences, especially compound sentences is comparable to the difficulty in locating the boundary of most discourses, especially when one takes into consideration the fact that discourse constituents can be either a single sentence or a set of sentences and a discourse can also be compounded and embedded within another discourse. It should be clear that this difficulty reflects a structural parallelism between sentences in topic - prominent languages and discourses in general. In other words, as far as boundary is concerned, discourses simply behave like sentences in topic-prominent languages discourse. As much as we cannot easily predict the structure of compound and complex sentences, especially in topic prominent languages with their heavy ellipses and serial verb phrases, we cannot predict the structure of a discourse, and discourse boundaries

can be determined only on the semantic nature of discourse.

5. CONCLUSION

We have shown that discourse, in particular expository discourse, is a well - defined linguistic unit with semantic and structural coherence and cohesion. We have also shown that discourse can be considered a well - defined construction because there are structural or formal devices, called macro - cohesive devices and micro - cohesive devices, to mark both the part - whole relations between discourse and its constituents and the sister - sister relations between and among co - constituents within the same discourse. However, like compound and complex sentences in topic - prominent languages, a discourse boundary can only be determined through an agreed - upon set of working criteria. Paragraphing is in fact an informal attempt to overtly mark the boundary of a discourse. However, opinions easily differ as to whether and where one should start or end a paragraph. What one learns in expository writing classes is in actuality a prescribed set of discourse structure rules. The analysis of essays written by students in our data simply shows that these rules, being prescribed, are learned with difficulty and not always with success.

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