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itself different from the language of non-literature. A linguistically weaker, semiotic view would be to define literature in terms of a greater density of semantic information, achieved through the additive interplay of a hierarchy of coexistent semiotic, including linguistic, codes. The linguistically weakest view would be purely sociological: literature is whatever a certain group of people conventionally regard as literature. Pratt's task has been to argue for one of the linguistically weaker theories. To her, the difference between literature and non-literature lies, not in the language but in the use of language. And the use of language, say Pratt, is best approached through speech-act analysis. Pratt's vigorous and tightly-argued book is therefore worth close attention, whether one reads it to agree or to disagree with. In this wider perspective it presents the case for one of the possible approaches to the definition of literature.

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Teun A. van Dijk. *Text and context: explorations in the semantics and pragmatics of discourse.* (Longman linguistics library, 21.) London: Longman, 1977. Pp. xvii + 261.

Van Dijk's book is an investigation of what makes a text count as connected and coherent. He investigates connectedness between pairs of sentences, looking both at the relationships which exist when there is an overt connective and those which may be found when there is not. He argues that such pairwise relationships do not fully account for textual coherence, and so also develops a notion of macro-structure, a hierarchical information structure which is used to explicate more global aspects of textual coherence. Approximately two thirds of the book is devoted to developing a semantic account of these phenomena, using concepts taken from formal semantics. The remainder of the book offers an essentially

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parallel account of the pragmatic aspects of connection and coherence, drawing on concepts taken from the theory of action.

The book is timely because of its effort to use theoretical concepts to explicate discourse phenomena. It has all too often been the case that theoretical work on discourse analysis has not been addressed to problems that interest the linguist, while empirical work has been so underformalized that we find it hard to draw out predictions for new cases. Clearly one of the most pressing tasks for the field of discourse analysis is to develop theoretical concepts which are both sufficiently related to observations and sufficiently precise to permit us to make predictions about new phenomena. As the history of phonology and syntax has shown, the development of such concepts stimulates the discovery of interesting facts, even of facts which in turn require the revision of the original theory.

Just because van Dijk's aims in writing this book are so commendable, it is regrettable that its execution is so poor. The author introduces theoretical terms, but does not integrate them into a theory from which deductions can be drawn; he brings in many terms without full comprehension of their meaning; his citations are so slack that the reader cannot determine which conclusions are the author's and which have been taken from other sources.

The most serious shortcoming of the book is its lack of deductive structure. Introducing abstract ideas does not in itself result in any progress towards a theory; rather, progress is made only as we are able to build a logical structure of abstract ideas which allows us to elucidate complex phenomena and which guides further investigation by suggesting hypotheses. Van Dijk's book introduces a vast number of abstract concepts, but makes very little progress in assembling them into such a structure. Formal definitions for concepts are proposed without serious attention to demonstrating their relation to linguistic data or to other concepts; the reader is left with no understanding of why a term was defined in one way rather than another. Although our knowledge of what phenomena exist in discourse is far from complete, the book makes no attempt to point out what future observations might tend to confirm or disconfirm the proposals it presents. No effort is made to identify which theoretical constructs fall out as subcases of other more general proposals; which constructs have no application to the problem at hand, though they may be useful elsewhere in linguistics; which constructs are simply too vague or problematic to have explanatory power. For example, after macrostructures are introduced in Chapter 5, the reader might wonder to what extent the theory of macrostructures subsumes the account of linear connectedness developed earlier in the book. This question is not taken up. Similarly, the author does not inquire whether the aims of the speaker, discussed in the second part of the book, might not govern the level of detail in the text, which is only vaguely explained in the first part.

I would like to take up two additional examples in more detail. A number of scholars have pointed out that the notion of 'sufficient condition' is relevant to an

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account of when we say that A causes B. Von Wright (1971) states that A can be said to be a cause of B if it in itself is a sufficient condition of B, or if it 'when "added" to a given constellation of circumstances . . . turns this constellation into a sufficient condition' of B (56): he credits Ernest Nagel with a similar observation. This generalization explains the unacceptability of sentences like (1).

(1) John had a flat tyre, because he went to Paris.

(1) is unacceptable because going to Paris is not a sufficient condition for having a flat tyre, but a mishap such as driving over a nail is in itself a sufficient condition, regardless of whether one was going to Paris or not. Van Dijk discusses this sentence (75), shortly after defining 'q is a necessary consequence of p', which is essentially equivalent to von Wright's 'p is a sufficient condition of q'. Van Dijk makes no effort to use the definition he has just stated to explain why (1) is unacceptable. Instead, he introduces the new idea that causes and consequences must be related, and related 'at the same level of information'. This idea of 'level of information' is not defined precisely or applied in any further examples. In the conclusion of this section, which summarizes the satisfaction and connectedness conditions for actual conditionals, the idea of 'necessary consequence' is put on equivalent footing with the ideas of 'probable consequence' and 'possible consequence'. Likewise, the concepts of necessary, probable, and possible condition are put on equivalent footing. The reader is left wondering why van Dijk distinguished three types of consequences and three types of conditions, if he did not find these distinctions to correspond to any pattern in the data he is trying to explicate.

The discussion of the topic-comment distinction in Chapter 4 provides a similar case. Earlier in the book (46–47), the author has noted that the presence of identical referents in two sentences is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for them to count as related; if they are not related, they cannot be put together into a coherent discourse. We can see that this is true by considering examples like (2) and (3).

(2) Yesterday it was raining. We stayed inside.
(3) Canada is a large country. Many large countries are south of the equator. During an equinox, the sun is directly overhead at the equator.

(2) is coherent, even though the second sentence does not refer to anything referred to in the first. (3), on the other hand, is incoherent, even though each sentence refers to something in the sentence before. To explain the incoherence of passages like (3), van Dijk posits a semantic macrostructure, a hierarchical structure of propositions which represent the information content of the passage at different levels of generality. The problem with (3) is related to the fact that we cannot make any generalizations about the information in it. Van Dijk's

discussion of examples like (2) and (3) suggests two hypotheses. First, one might guess that a definition of 'the topic of a sentence' along the lines of 'an expression which refers to something which has been mentioned before' will have little application in explaining the coherence of texts. For instance, an explanation of why (2) is coherent cannot depend on the concept of topic, defined in this way, since the second sentence would according to this criterion have no topic. This concept of topic might of course be relevant to other linguistic problems, such as pronominalization or word order within the sentence. A second hypothesis is that this concept of the topic of a sentence will not turn out to have any close relationship to the propositions in the macrostructure, which do form the basis of an explanation of coherence. Van Dijk does not bring out either of these connections in his discussion of the topic-comment distinction. Rather, most of the section is devoted to setting out preliminaries to a definition of 'the topic of a sentence' along the lines just mentioned: 'Any expression in a sentence which denotes something denoted before is assigned topic function, whereas the other expressions are assigned comment function' (122). He then attempts to associate propositions with the expressions that this definition assigns topic and comment function to. It is not surprising that this attempt is not entirely successful; one of van Dijk's sources (Dahl, 1976), has argued that phrases cannot in general be associated with propositions in a semantic representation, and as noted above, discussion elsewhere in the book would tend to support this view. Van Dijk concludes the section by saying 'It is not easy to draw unambiguous conclusions from these observations'. Thus the entire section makes little contribution towards deciding what theoretical concepts are needed to explain textual coherence.

Many theoretical terms are used incorrectly in the book. For example, the term 'epistemically non-accessible world' is used throughout Chapter 3 to refer to a possible world which is compatible with what we know about our own world, but which we do not know to be identical with our own world. On a more standard definition of accessibility (see Hintikka, 1962: 46), this term would refer to a world which we know to be incompatible with the world we are in. Van Dijk's epistemically non-accessible worlds are thus accessible worlds according to common usage. If van Dijk intended to introduce a new meaning for this term, he should have made this clear. Similarly, the following sentence occurs on page 122: 'These bound elements may denote objects, but also properties, relations, facts, or possibly functions'. Since any given function can be defined as a relation, what could the author have in mind here?

Van Dijk has been extremely careless about citing other authors. Typically, he ends a paragraph or section with a footnote referring readers to other works which have discussed related topics; he does not, however, give references for particular conclusions or definitions he has used. When this practice makes it difficult for the reader to attribute original ideas to their authors, it must surely be viewed as unscholarly. For example, the sections on actual conditionals and on

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causality (68–76, 170–172) make use of a tree notation for describing the causal relationships in possible courses of events. Such a tree is exemplified in Figure 1.

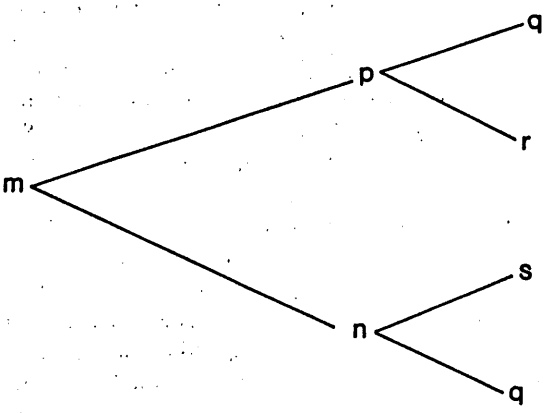

Figure 1

Each node represents a set of propositions describing a possible state of the world. The horizontal dimension of the tree represents time; a path through the tree thus represents a possible course of events. Using this notation, it is possible to define notions such as 'necessary condition' or 'necessary consequence'. For example, state p is a necessary condition for q if q anywhere in the tree can be reached only by going through a p-node. In Figure 1, p is not a necessary condition for q since the instance of q on the bottom right can be reached from the root of the tree without going through a p-node. The tree notation, as well as the basic ideas about how to define causal relations on it, appear to have been taken from von Wright (1971, also possibly 1974). Van Dijk does not list these works in the bibliography; the most recent reference he gives for von Wright only prefigures this formalism, while the earlier references (1957 and 1963) do not use it at all. A critical reader will regret the omission of these references for a number of reasons. If one was seriously interested in the semantics of causal sentences, one would want to know where to look for a discussion of what assumptions are built into the tree apparatus, which van Dijk does not provide. The tree notation is not universally accepted; rather, it represents a hypothesis about the theory of causality which many philosophers dispute. Kim's (1973) review of von Wright (1971) points to the tree notation as an interesting innovation, saying that it 'enables von Wright to explain necessity, sufficiency and related concepts in a very intuitive manner' and that 'with its help some hitherto unnoticed aspects of these concepts are brought to light'. On the other hand, Davidson (1967)

disputes the assumption made in the tree apparatus that actions are properly described as an ordered pair of initial state and final state.

A second reason that a reference to von Wright will be missed is that van Dijk has extended von Wright's set of definitions on the trees, and in doing so has introduced a number of unclarities and at least one error. In von Wright, the tree ends with the states of affairs that are being considered as consequences; this means that a 'condition' is always a condition for an endstate of the system. Van Dijk, on the other hand, attempts to define similar notions on subtrees which bear an undefined relationship to larger trees whose endstates are not defined. In defining '*q* is a necessary consequence of *p*', he says 'a necessary consequence *q* is true in any world following a *p*-world in all subtrees' (76). On this definition, *q* is a necessary consequence of *p* only if it obtains for all time after *p* represented in the tree. Thus the stoplight turning red would not be a necessary consequence of my pushing the button at the crosswalk: Since the tree can include the later state in which the light is green again, *The light is red* is not true in all states of affairs following my pushing the button. Von Wright's formulation of what should be equivalent, '*p* is a sufficient condition for *q*', does not have this problem, since the tree would stop at the states in which the light is red and we would not have any reason to consider later states of affairs. Needless to say, any reader who was puzzled by van Dijk's formulation would want to be aware of von Wright's original discussion.

A similar case of improper citation can be found on pages 117–118 in conjunction with van Dijk's discussion of how the topic-comment distinction is related to cognition. A footnote on the first sentence cites Dahl (1976) for 'a linguistic point of view' on the same issues. After reading this footnote, the reader would have no idea that Dahl also discusses the issues from a cognitive point of view; in fact, however, an idea Dahl puts forward in summarizing what we can learn from Chafe (1974) is taken over almost exactly on the next page, without either further reference to Dahl, or reference to Chafe. In van Dijk we find:

> Cognitively, the 'topicalization' of certain phrases is probably a process whereby knowledge of certain individuals is 'foregrounded', i.e. taken from long-term memory stores to some working memory, in which the established information may be combined with the incoming new information.

In Dahl:

> When an addressee interprets a certain utterance, he makes use of a number of concepts, generic or individual. Some of these concepts may be present in his consciousness already (they are stored in his short-term memory or whatever corresponds to 'consciousness'), some must be activated, i.e. retrieved from some deeper place in his mind (such as his long-term memory). In making the utterance, the speaker makes a hypothesis about what concepts must be activated and what concepts are already present.

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Dahl goes on to label the former set of concepts 'offstage' concepts and the latter 'onstage' concepts, in order to distinguish this distinction from other, incompatible notions of 'topic' and 'comment' which have appeared in the literature.

It is of course impossible for the reviewer to determine what percentage of the conclusions which appear without references in this book can be traced to other authors. At best, however, van Dijk has done himself a disservice by being so careless. Once a reader has uncovered a number of instances in which an idea should properly be attributed elsewhere, he may not easily give van Dijk credit for whatever insights are his own.

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R. E. Keller, *The German language* (The great languages. General editor L. R. Palmer), London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1978. Pp. xiv+649.

This work, the latest in the series 'The great languages', replaces the volume by Priebsch and Collinson, which first appeared in 1934, ran to six editions, and was widely used for nearly forty years by readers whom a reviewer of the time identified as the honours student and the intelligent amateur. Priebsch and Collinson wrote before Bloomfieldian structuralism was first applied to historical German phonology, and although Collinson was better versed than most Germanists of his generation in the techniques of linguistic description, their book never caught up with modern developments in linguistics. Keller has now provided not only the honours student and the intelligent amateur, but the specialist too, with a compre-

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