

Miššiková, G., Mačura, M. (eds) (2006) *Proceedings. 1st Nitra Conference on Discourse Studies*. Nitra: Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University. 153 pp.

On 20 March 2006 the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, held the *1st Nitra Conference on Discourse Studies*, thus starting “a new tradition in organizing open forums and discussion panels on recent trends in linguistics” (p. 2).

The first volume of the series entitled *Proceedings* consists of two parts. Section A includes eighteen contributions, all of which focus on linguistic research of discourse, pragmatics and everyday communication. The volume concludes with Section B containing three reviews.

The conference was opened by László Komlósi from the University of Pécs in Hungary. His paper emphasizes the importance of discourse studies and their status within modern linguistics. In the second part he deals with the character and components of lexicon and its features that play a key role in meaning construction. In connection with set expressions he discusses the issues of stability and structuring of concepts, and conceptual integration. In the following analysis of rhetoric constructions he illustrates what features “help assign conceptual and meaning structures to set expressions” (p. 11).

Several papers by researchers and university teachers from Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary are concerned with the analysis of written discourse.

Adam from the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University in Brno (MU), presented some results of his long-term research into Functional Sentence Perspective, which he explores within biblical texts. His contribution is concerned with the role of context, namely the question of retrievability and irretrievability from the immediately relevant context.

Another guest from the Faculty of Education MU, Dontcheva-Navratilova, whose research is aimed at diplomatic discourse, analyses a corpus of UNESCO resolutions with the primary focus on the hierarchical organization of textual hyperthemes as important factors contributing to the perception of text coherence.

The paper by Sedláčková from the host department (HD) discusses the issue of the contextual role of syntax within the text analysis and emphasizes that any analysis has to take into account the impact of syntactic structures on text since there is a close relation between the form and the meaning.

Cohesion, another central issue of discourse analysis, is explored by Hůlková from MU. She analyses samples of academic prose with focus on connective

elements as devices that largely contribute to textual cohesion. At this stage the author's research is aimed at the semantic categories of contrast/concession and result/inference, particularly their occurrence within individual paragraphs.

Discourse analysis in translation studies is of interest to Gadušová and Gromová from the HD. In their paper they emphasize the socio-cultural content of communication which places a lot of constraints on the translation process. Prior to translation, the translator has to realize what type of text he is dealing with and be aware of its specific features in both the source and target languages.

Approximately the same number of papers presented at the conference was devoted to the analysis of spoken discourse. The paper by Beňuš from the HD focuses on speech disfluencies, such as *um* and *uh*, which in his view can convey a wide variety of intentional and unintentional communicative messages. Contrary to a common belief that filled pauses signal a preparation of a dishonest answer, the data described show a correlation more with truthful than with deceptive speech. Another interesting finding is related to gender, since the survey reveals that males use filled pauses more than females.

The issue of politeness is discussed in several papers. Ferenčík from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Prešov in Slovakia investigates politeness strategies in the discourse of mass media. He is particularly interested in interruptive behaviour which does not necessarily have to be viewed as negative or impolite. The samples taken from an open-line radio phone-in programme illustrate such interruptions which “display active co-participation by being turn-constructurally and interpersonally supportive” (p. 47).

Miššiková from the HD explores the Politeness Principle and its manifestation in the discourse of the talk show. Her paper focuses on the interplay of politeness and interaction in this type of discourse represented in her research by the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. The analysis aimed at the politeness strategies used by the host is supported by a number of examples which illustrate the individual specific maxims of Politeness Principle.

The paper by Telbisz, a guest from the University of Pécs in Hungary, is also concerned with linguistic politeness, which among other means can be expressed by indirectness. Taking into account various implicature theories the author analyses question forms used as indirect requests. He comes to the conclusion that the indirect interpretation is *default* whereas the *genuine question interpretation* needs a particular context to hold.

Povolná from MU presents the results of her research into interactive discourse items (e.g. *you know*, *I mean*, *you see*) as a means of establishing the coherence of spoken discourse. The paper is based on the analysis of three different genres of spoken English – two private (face-to-face and telephone conversation) and

one public (public radio discussion) with focus on the functions the interactive discourse items perform in these genres.

Spoken language is of interest to Mačura, a member of the HD. His research is concerned with expectations in communication as “one of the key elements in determining the overall communication success and behaviour of interlocutors” (p. 97). He analyzes a number of conversational contexts in order to examine the issue of expectations from various angles and consequently creates his own categorization of this phenomenon.

The remaining contributions deal with discourse analysis of various other types of discourse. The highly interesting area of internet communication is explored by Kašíčková from the Technical University in Liberec. Her paper presents some findings of her research aimed at the ways of addressing on the Internet Relay Chat. The form of address is seen as crucial since in this type of communication it is “one of the few, if not the only, mutually known features participants of chat can rely on and draw from when chatting” (p. 72). The analysis explores conversational techniques (related to address forms) employed by representatives of three different age groups since it is the age of the participants that influences the choice of address forms considerably.

Welnitzová from the HD discusses the pragmatic aspects of discourse in consecutive interpreting. This type of discourse needs to be viewed as a complex whole comprising the verbal as well as non-verbal systems. The main part of her paper is concerned with the most characteristic non-verbal components such as intonation, voice quality and gestures.

Another member of the HD, Hornáčková-Klapičová, deals with the issue of standard language and mainly the process of its codification. By means of comparison of the pragmatic and non-pragmatic approaches she presents the current views on language change.

Ciprianová, also from the HD, explores the ways of creating humorous effect in cartoons published in the American newspaper *The Washington Post*. She stresses the role of verbal as well as non-verbal components together with the socio-cultural knowledge all being crucial in understanding humour.

The intercultural aspect in the teaching discourse is discussed by Trnková from the Faculty of Education at the University of Trnava. In her paper she emphasizes the importance of realizing and understanding the cultural and social aspects in the foreign language acquisition. The paper presents some of the findings of the author’s survey carried out among Slovak children about their relationship towards Slovak culture.

Lencho, one of the American lecturers at the HD, provides a highly interesting analysis of the discourse of short answers taken from American

college course student evaluations. The samples analysed are related to his own course in linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. He compares the students' school evaluations as well as commercially situated evaluations (on special American websites, e.g. RMP - RateMyProfessor.com). The primary focus is on the occurrence and character of the *face-threatening acts* as opposed to the *face reinforcing/raising acts* identified in the samples. His paper not only provides a set of interesting findings concerning student evaluations, but also a valuable insight into the world of the US university life.

As mentioned above, the volume is concluded with Section B, which comprises three reviews, two written by Miššíková and one by Mačura. The volume *English for Central Europe: Interdisciplinary Saxon-Czech Perspective* is the first of the series of monographs entitled *REAL Studies* (i.e. Research in English and Applied Linguistics) (cf. Schmied, Haase, and Povolná 2007, review in the present volume). The collection of papers by Czech and German/Saxon university teachers and researchers is the outcome of co-operation between a number of Czech and German university departments. The second review by Miššíková recommends Widdowson's book concerned with discourse analysis – *Text, Context, Pretext*. Widdowson's clear explanations and illustrative examples of the most difficult issues in the field of pragmatics, discourse analysis, linguistics and corpus linguistics make the book perfectly suitable both for scholars and students. Mačura recommends Mac Neil's DVD *Do you speak American?* which presents contemporary American English with focus on the accents and regional dialects. The set of three DVDs contains samples of speech by various speakers together with authentic interviews with linguists as well as ordinary speakers of the language from each linguistically distinct geographical area. Apart from the dialects, the author also discusses several other related issues, such as the descriptive and prescriptive approach to language, the jargon of several pastime groups that he met (e.g. surfers, bikers, skateboarders), computer generated language and language recognition software.

In conclusion it remains to be stated that the volume presents an inspiring collection of papers dealing with issues related to pragmatic and discourse research. The volume thus gives the reader the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the outcomes of current research into discourse analysis and offers a remarkable insight into the recent trends in linguistics.

Renata Jančaříková