Lingua Inglese 1

Lectures 8-9

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Intertextuality

- It concerns the factors which make the utilization of one text dependent upon knowledge of one or more previously encountered texts.

- The way in which the production and reception of a given text depends upon participants' knowledge of other texts. This knowledge can be applied by a process describable in terms of mediation (the extent to which one feeds one's current beliefs and goals into the model of the communicative situation)

- Extensive mediation is illustrated by the development and use of **TEXT TYPES**, being classes of texts expected to have certain traits for certain purposes.

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Intertextuality (2)

- Reliance of a text on previously encountered samples
- It makes reference to our ability to classify texts on the basis of certain criteria
- As a social group, we hold expectations regarding specific texts: standards of communicative purposes and typical features
- Although such expectations can only be probabilistic, since no two texts are completely alike, we can predict prototypical features

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Intertextuality (3)

- Schematic expectations concern
  - Goals
  - Participant roles
  - Locutionary and illocutionary content
  - Relevant discourse strategies
  - Surface patterns at all linguistic levels
  - $\rightarrow$ These elements provide us with a standpoint of reference for analysis and help us establish the text type

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Introducing Text Types

- The role of speech acts and text communicative functions in text type identification

- The term "text type" in text linguistics refers to a number of quite distinct phenomena

- There is currently no unique or commonly accepted characterization of different possible text types

- **Text types** are global frameworks, "**classes of texts expected to have certain traits for certain purposes**"

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Text Types

- In general, text typologies are "**high/abstract level classifications**" dependent on different factors shared by groups of texts:
    a. **Contextual factors:** e.g. the main communicative purpose of the text producer (writer or speaker), social relations and roles played by participants (text producer and receiver), the spoken/written channel, topic, etc.
    b. **Cognitive factors** (extent of shared world knowledge between participants, but also mental processes closely related to purpose, i.e. perception in space/time, comprehension of concepts, etc).
    c. **Linguistic factors on the text surface**

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Text Type Identification

- First step for text identification:
  - It is reasonable to assume that text producers start out from their knowledge of a repertoire of different types of texts, and within that repertoire pick out the type that seems most appropriate to their *current needs*.
- What is *the main communicative purpose* of the text producer? What is s/he trying *to do* with his/her text?
  - *Purpose* can be thought of in terms of Searle's classification of speech acts, and the text can be viewed as a *macro-act* with an *illocutionary force* of some kind.

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Text Type Identification (2)

- For example
  - with *an assertive/representative* act, the text producer attempts to present a state of affairs as something real

  - with a *directive act,* the text producer attempts to get the receiver to bring about a state of affairs (elicit some information from him/her or get something done)
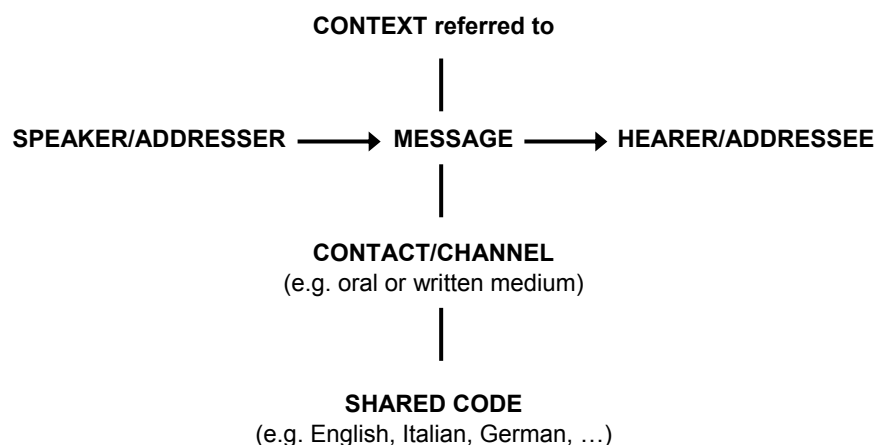
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The Purpose of the Text Producer

- The text producer's purpose is closely related to **the overall communicative function of language in the text.**
- Language serves a vast range of communicative needs. Any act of verbal communication (or text), be it oral or written, involves six basic elements. Following **Jakobson's model** (1971), each of the constitutive elements of the communicative act has a corresponding function
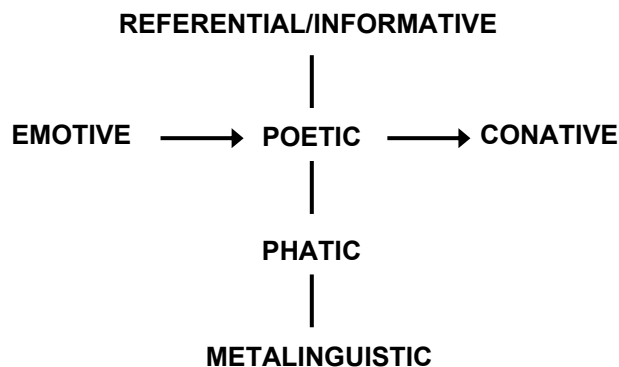
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A Basic Communication Model

CONTEXT referred to

SPEAKER/ADDRESSER ⟶ **MESSAGE** ⟶ **HEARER/ADDRESSEE**

CONTACT/CHANNEL
(e.g. oral or written medium)

SHARED CODE
(e.g. English, Italian, German, …)

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Functions of Language

REFERENTIAL/INFORMATIVE

EMOTIVE ⟶ **POETIC** ⟶ **CONATIVE**

PHATIC

METALINGUISTIC

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Language Functions

- Various functions are at play in any text. However, one function usually plays a more prominent or **dominant role** than the others.

- **EMOTIVE (OR EXPRESSIVE) FUNCTION**
  - it reflects the addresser's (or text producer) attitude to the topic of his/her discourse.
    - e.g. Lyrics, poetry, introspective (first person) narratives, biographies, love letters

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Language Functions (2)

- **CONATIVE (OR APPELATIVE) FUNCTION**
  - it reflects the aim of producing extra-linguistic effects on the *addressee* (orders, advice, requests, etc.)
    - e.g. Text written in the second person (cf. use of vocative and imperative forms)

- **POETIC FUNCTION**
  - it concerns the surface organization of the *message.* It foregrounds the decorative or aesthetic function of language (in Jakobson's words, *the message for its own sake*)
    - e.g. A great deal of literary works (esp. dadaist and surrealist poetry). The poetic function can be found even in prose texts (although in this case it may be of secondary importance)

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Language Functions (3)

- **REFERENTIAL (OR INFORMATIVE) FUNCTION**
  - it focuses on the relationship between message and the *context* of our knowledge of the external world (i.e. what the message is about, or what is being referred to)
    - e.g. Everyday speech, news reports (but also the emotive function, poetic function, etc, may be involved)

- **PHATIC FUNCTION**
  - it is centered on the *channel* used and thus on the contact between addresser and addressee.
    - e.g. Use of language to maintain a social relation through ritualized formulas such as greetings, chit-chat the weather

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Language Functions (4)

- **METALINGUISTIC FUNCTION**
  - it focuses on language speaking of itself, its purpose being to clarify the manner in which the verbal *code* is used
    - e.g. Stage directions, textbooks

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Text Type and Illocutionary Purpose

- Correlation between illocutionary purposes and communicative functions:
  - assertive/represent. act — inform./refer. function
  - directive act — conative function

- Both main illocutionary purposes and the dominant communicative function can be regarded as a help for identifying the type to which texts belong

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Text Types: Definitions and Main Features of Surface Structures

- Text types have been traditionally defined on the basis of general cognitive properties associated with modes of discourse presentation from classic rhetoric (narration, description, exposition, argumentation) (e.g. Werlich 1976)

- Text types have also been defined on the basis of strictly linguistic, text-internal criteria, i.e. similarities in the use of highly frequent co-occurring lexical and syntactic features (Biber, 1989)

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Text Types: Definitions and Main Features of Surface Structures (2)

- Following Werlich (1976), the term **text type** refers to an abstract concept or idealized norm, which corresponds to the language user's competence of the rules for the structuring of the text at a deep level. He distinguishes 5 idealized types:

  - **Description**
  - **Narration**
  - **Exposition**
  - **Argumentation**
  - **Instruction**

- Can you identify text types for texts 1 to 7?

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Description

- *Main illocutionary purpose*: the text producer of **DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS** intends to represent and convey a mental picture of a scene to the receiver (with objects, people, situations) as perceived in space. Indeed, from a cognitive point of view, descriptive texts are linked with the mental process of <u>perception in space</u>

- *The dominant communicative* function is usually **referential/informative** (but also **emotive** – in subjective description …)

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Basic Divisions within the Descriptive Text Type

- ❑ Descriptive texts vary from general to detailed and from objective (technical description) to subjective (impressionistic description)
- ❑ Objective descriptions record objectively verifiable data (frequently supported by diagrams, illustrations, etc.), while subjective descriptions often give expression to the writer's personal attitudes, feelings and the like.
- Working with text 1
  - Which linguistic features tell us that this is a descriptive text?
  - Is it an example of subjective or objective description?

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Typical Features of Descriptive Text Type

- Informal register is usually associated with subjective text type divisions, while formal register is frequent in objective text type divisions and technical or specialized vocabulary.

- Formal register usually includes
    - Impersonal constructions (*it is important that …*)
    - Passives (*it is commonly held that …*)
    - Nominalizations (nouns in *-ment*, *-tion*, *-ness*, etc.)
    - Avoidance of imperatives, direct questions, first and second person personal pronouns, and contractions
    - Avoidance of colloquial vocabulary and idioms

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Examples of Typical Features of Descriptive Text Surface Structures

- They often make use of the verb *to be to* describe states of affairs
- They make use of quality attributing adjectives and spatial prepositions and adverbs
- They may use comparisons to help us picture the scene
- They often employ your five senses – how something feels, smells, looks, sounds and tastes (esp. subjective description)

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Narration

- *Main illocutionary purpose*: the text producer of **NARRATIVE TEXT** intends to convey to the receiver knowledge about events (factual or conceptual phenomena) as they happen in time. Narrative texts are related to the mental process of <u>perception in time</u>

- *The dominant communicative function* is usually **referential/informative**

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Basic Divisions within the Narrative Text Type

- Distinction can be drawn on the basis of
  - structure of the narrative sequence:
    - chronological ordering of events/actions
    - order of importance
    - cause-to-effect sequences
    - general to particular, …
  - subjective or objective point of view of the sequence (the latter is also called "report")

- Working with text 2
  - Which linguistic features tell us that this is a narrative text?
  - Is it narration from an objective or subjective point of view?

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Typical Features of Narrative Text Surface Structures

❑ they typically exhibit action verbs (e.g. flow, eat, etc.) or verbs of change of state in the past

❑ as they are intimately connected with time, the elements of this type of text cohere by means of temporal conjunctions (e.g. when) and adverbs:

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Typical Features of Narrative Text Surface Structures (2)

- reference to a fixed point of time
  - *two years ago, the day before yesterday, last night today, at 9 o'clock, tomorrow, next month, …*
- reference to an indefinite point of time
  - *first, then, next, finally (*infine*), afterwards, eventually (*alla fine*), later, once, lately, shortly, son, just, since, …*
- reference to a brief moment of time
  - *at once, in no time, in a minute …*
- reference to a time span
  - *in the morning, in May, in spring, in 1999, in the year 2007, …*
  - *on Sunday, on that day, on the morning of 4 July, on that occasion …*
- reference to frequency :
  - *once a week, twice a month, three times a day, every other day, each winter, daily, yearly, fortnightly …*
- indefinite frequency
  - *constantly, often, usually, sometimes, seldom, now and again, never, from time to time, once in a while, regularly …*

Exposition

- *Main illocutionary purpose*: the text producer of **EXPOSITORY TEXTS** intends to explain and clarify concepts that make up the receiver's encyclopedic knowledge. This text type is related to the mental process of comprehension of concepts either through a more detailed analysis or through synthesis

- The *dominant communicative function* of expository texts is the **referential/informative** function
- The participants (text producer and receiver) are usually an expert and a non-specialist receiver, who wants to know more about a given topic

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Exposition (2)

- Basic divisions within expository texts:
  - Differences are possible depending on the analytic or synthetic quality of the exposition, and on the subjective-objective point of view
  - Analytic exposition: expository essays are examples of subjective exposition, while definitions and explications are examples of objective exposition.
  - Synthetic exposition: summary
- Working with texts 3 and 4
  - Which linguistic features tell us that these are expository texts?

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Typical Features of Expository Text Surface Structure

- Provide info in a clear way
- The verb *to be* is often used to identify a phenomenon
- Frequent recourse to a specialized vocabulary
- Frequent use of the following:

  - **Illustrative expressions**: *namely, that is, that is to say, thus, so for example, e.g., i.e., for instance*

  - **Expressions introducing a more detailed section**: *especially, mainly, particularly*

  - **Expressions introducing topic transition**: *as for, with reference to, with regard to, with respect to, as far as X is concerned*

  - **Additive expressions**: *moreover, furthermore, also, in addition*

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Argumentation

- Argumentative texts focus on the evaluation of relations between concepts
- They are used to promote acceptance of certain ideas as true or false, or positive vs negative
- The text producer expresses an opinion and investigates its relation to opposing opinions
- Judging is the related mental process
- Main illocutionary purpose: persuade the receiver of the validity of a given opinion
- Dominant communicative function: **conative**

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Basic Divisions in Argumentative Texts

- Comment is argumentation from a subjective point of view
- Scientific argumentation is characterized by an objective point of view

- Working with Text 5
  - Which linguistic features tell us that this is an argumentative text?

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Typical Features of Argumentative Text Surface Structure

- Expressions of evaluation of pros and cons, esp. through adjectives such as *correct/incorrect*, *right/wrong*, important etc., and nouns and verbs (*advantages, improve*) *and comparisons* (*better*)
- Concessive sequences introduced by connectives, such as *in spite of, nevertheless, yet, however*
- Contrastive sequences with connectives such as *but, conversely, instead, by contrast*
- Illustrative cause/effect sequences introduced by *because, in that, this is the reason why, hence* (in order to support the text producer's claims)

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Instruction

- Instructional texts are related to the mental processes of planning someone' future behavior
- Main illocutionary purpose: tell the receiver what to do → get him/her to do something
- Dominant function: **conative**

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Basic Divisions in Instructional Texts

- Subjective point of view: practical instruction often based on the writer's authority
- This is usually determined by the writer's profession or role played in society, or by experience or knowledge
- Objective point of view: directions, rules, regulations relying on a public authority outside the text producer

- Working with text 6
  - Which linguistic features tell us that this is an instructional text?

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Typical Features of Instructional Texts

- Language is direct: use of imperative forms ellipsis
- Short sentences
- Enumerative sequences
- Style: linear order; ordo naturalis

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Fuzziness of Text Type Classification

- Most of the time, text types are heterogeneous, and they do not appear as belonging to just one specific type: in a single text it is possible to find parts of narration, description and argumentation
- There is always a text type sequence which has a dominant role
  - ❑ Text 7 (genre: advertisement) is a blend of text types (instructional and argumentative)
  - ❑ Text 2 is a narrative text (story) but also includes descriptive sequences
  - ❑ In text 4, a scientific article from a medical journal/book, the dominant type is expository, but narrative sequences can be identified as well

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Guidelines for Analysis

- **Main illocutionary purpose and text communicative function**: the text is trying to tell me something (informative function) or get me to do something (conative function) etc.
- **Dominant text type and relevant sequences belonging to other subtypes**: dominant text type of text 2 is a narration from a subjective point of view, but it also contains descriptive passages.
- **External format and situation of use**: where has the text been taken from?
    - Text 4 has the form of scientific article and is addressed to a non-expert public.
- **Dominant linguistic features of surface structure**, esp. cohesion (grammatical, referential, lexical), register (formal vs. informal), visual aids.

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