

A Discourse Analysis on Dialogues in Novels and its Implication to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This research aims at discovering the patterns of mistakes made by his students in interpreting novels' dialogues that lead to misinterpretation. Those patterns then are modified by discourse analysis. During his experience teaching critical reading class, moreover, they were still weak to comprehend the dialogues; therefore, their comprehension went wrong. Consequently, they could not connect information among sentences which are related to each other. Accordingly, the ability to link among ideas in dialogues is badly needed for students to support their arguments in analyzing text. For that reason, the researcher offers the study of discourse analysis as one of the alternative solution.

The researcher takes students of critical reading class as its research object while he uses his students' works as his research source of the data. The students' works contain misinterpretation through novels' dialogues. Then, those works are documented as the data source to observe. As this study is qualitative, the researcher turns out to be the data instrument. The researcher himself determines how the data are accomplished to observe then to interpret. They were chosen based on research purpose; that is, modifying students' misinterpretations using discourse analysis. It was carried out in order to make the analysis can be more meaningful since the researcher himself selected the data that are possible to support the research purpose; therefore, this research uses purposeful sampling.

The data shows that the students do not use discourse context in their analysis such as reference, presupposition, implicature, and inference since dialogues in the novels consist of embedded aspects which is absolutely tied with context surrounding the sentences. To overcome those problems, therefore, the researcher provides discourse analysis involving the discourse contexts that will make analysis more accurate. Moreover, discourse analysis helps students to be more critical. Thus, their reading comprehension improves significantly because they analyze from overall views.

Key words: *discourse, discourse analysis, context, reference, presupposition, implicature, inference*

A. Introduction

It is commonly believed that reading is a one way to gain knowledge and it becomes the source of knowledge. Issues on each field have been improving in seconds; therefore, it is a must for us to upgrade the newest information frequently and moreover, as the academicians, either as the university members or as the university students, on educational field. They are encouraged to respond current situation and condition around them, then, find out some alternative solutions of the problems exist.

Looking at above views, the researcher goes further to carry out a research related to critical reading. He experienced teaching his critical reading students of English Education Department of Ahmad Dahlan University in the third year in academic year 2012-2013. He taught text analysis with the novel as its media. The curriculum says that critical reading is the next level of reading subject taught in the third semester. Having given reading techniques in the first year and continuous to reading comprehension in the following year, the students are

introduced to critical reading whose material is based on extensive reading, thus, he used novel to begin with.

Moreover, students in his critical reading classes were still weak to comprehend the dialogues; therefore, their arguments in analyzing text went wrong since theirs did not base on facts. Consequently, they could not connect information among sentences which are related to each other. Sentences are both structurally and semantically connected. Accordingly, the ability to link among ideas in dialogues is badly needed for students to support their arguments in analyzing text. The researcher, therefore, tries to look for the main cause and explain the reason. Since what the researcher is going to analyze relates to discourse, he applies discourse analysis. It is carried out to help students understanding novel comprehensively. Novel is a good media for it provides rich contents and context that make analysis possible to elaborate intensely.

B. Discussion

1. Discourse analysis

The researcher starts with what Yule (1996) ever exemplifies to pragmatics and its scope. It is explained that the study of pragmatics deals with the interpretation of human action. Human interactions in daily life activities show complexity since they habitually perform signs and symbols instead of direct statements when they are communicating to each other. It is usually done for many reasons or purposes. They may make their language more polite or show their euphemisms to criticize social or political phenomena or even show their different level of social status in society. Sometimes, they just want to prove whether or not they are educated people. These issues are potential situation to stimulate conflicts or controversies because of lack information that lead to misinterpretation. Therefore, building a common understanding becomes necessary to avoid misinterpretation of the information or messages that want to deliver in either oral or written form, in consequence, misunderstanding can be prevented among them. Qualified communication will be created due to good interpretation that indicates mutual cooperation. Pragmatics, hence, takes role there to solve those problems of human communication in order that what is said or written can be communicated clearly (Yule, 1996:91).

Additionally, Yule (1996:92) also clarifies that: “To fully understand the meaning of a sentence, we must also understand the context in which it was uttered.” Say, for example, the word *ball*. It has various meanings depending on a certain context given to the ball where people will normally refer to the intended *ball* which is appropriate to what type of action associated with it. Look at the following sentences: 1) *He kicked the ball into the net.* 2) *She dribbled the ball down the court and shot a basket.* 3) *She putted the ball in from two feet away.* We may imagine *the ball* in the first sentence is a soccer ball which is round, black and white, and about nine inches in diameter while most of us will associate *the ball* in the second one as a basket ball and other people, in general, will agree to think about a golf ball in the other one. Whatever *the ball* refers to, the ball in its context is the part of the word’s core meaning which reveal from that context. Yule, once again, demonstrates that the context fills in the details and allows full understanding. In other words, the study of the contribution of context to meaning is often called pragmatics. Moreover Roy, 2000:11 states that “within discourse analysis, context can be part of the immediate, local nature of a face-to-face interaction, as well as the larger, global nature of the social and cultural situation of a society.”

2. Discourse analysis and context

Yule (1996:82-83) confirms his statement: “When it is restricted to linguistic issues, discourse analysis focuses on the record (spoken or written) of the process by which language is used in some context to express intention.” Stepping on this point, it can be said that discourse analysis speaks about context which also becomes the pragmatics concern mainly with aspects of what is unsaid or unwritten and with psychological aspects, namely, background knowledge, beliefs, and expectations. Furthermore, Yule strengthens his previous statement again that

pragmatics of discourse investigates what the speaker or writer has in mind. This means that discourse analysis constitutes the area of pragmatics which involves context to interpret between what is said and what is communicated. The recorded data then are analyzed by discourse analysis. In other words, discourse analysis is a relevant method in the study of pragmatics. Since interpretation needs context which connects to the sentences, readers particularly refer to this research are supposed to use discourse analysis when making interpretation. Additionally, Paltridge (2006:3) stresses on this relationship (between pragmatics and discourse analysis) as well. He ensures that pragmatics concerns with what people actually mean by what they utter instead of literal meaning coming along with their words. In other words, the words they utter through spoken and written interaction do not automatically present their real message or information they want to deliver. Therefore, people will switch on their knowledge to appropriately interpret the connection between the utterances and their contexts with the purpose of discovering the intended meanings which direct to acceptable actions. A discourse analysis is necessary because it takes into account to the connection between language and the context in which it is used and is concerned with the description and analysis of spoken and interactions thus, discourse analysis is also labeled as the analysis of language in use. Then, it gives us clear view that discourse analysis relates to utterance and its context while to find the actual meaning, they must pragmatically be analyzed to arrive at appropriate interpretation since pragmatics has to do with context to interpret between what is said and what is communicated or to explore what speaker or writer has in mind (Yule, 1996). In this case, the study of pragmatics meets with the area of discourse analysis. Furthermore, Paltridge backs up his thought by quoting to what Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) argue that the main purpose of discourse analysis is to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of texts and how the texts become more meaningful to their users.

Besides, Schiffrin 1994: 20-43 in Roy, 2000:11 clarifies that discourse analysis can cover two areas, form and function. If it relates to structure, the discussion is to identify and analyze utterances. Having been analyzed, the next step is finding out their patterns before determining the language rule of the utterances being analyzed. Meanwhile, if it discusses the function of the utterances, the analyst must identify and analyze the relationships between the participants and their action through the words that they are expressed based on the set of purpose.

Cutting (2002: 1-2) argues that pragmatics and discourse analysis are the approaches to studying language's relation to the contextual background features. In other words, both of them discuss the relation context, text and function as described in following example: *Queen Victoria had been in a prolonged depression, caused by the death of her husband Albert, and her courtiers knew this, and that her words were a response to a joke which they had just made.* Before starting discourse analysis, the context should be identified first such as: who the characters are, where and when the event took place, what was happening and so forth then find each relation among those aspects. By doing so, analysts would infer that the Queen's intention was to stop them trying to make her laugh and lift her out of depression and that her statement implies a reminder that she has to be respected as Queen.

3. The significance of teaching novel

As mentioned before that this research analyzes dialogues of English novels. The researcher is interested in using novel since it provides lots of examples of pragmatics issues. It can also be one of authentic reading material for students to increase both language skills, such as writing sentences, reading techniques and language mastery, such as grammar, clause structures, vocabulary, syntax, and so on. Besides, reading novel while observing linguistics phenomena is enjoyable since it stimulates them to be critical. It means that students are able to criticize literary works both precisely and proportionally based on the facts and enable them to give comments and recommendation as well whether the novel is good or not. Reading novel, thus, can be a good starting point for students to start reading habit that most of them considers reading as boring and stressful activity. In short, it is important to teach novel to students. It

does not merely demand them to finish reading novel but teach them how to analyze novel, such as discourse analysis since it enables them to think critically.

Moreover, Irvine (2008:4) supports the substance of teaching novel in the classroom. He strongly believes that students must be familiar with depth reading, thinking, interpreting, and analyzing since they are able to answer the demands of the information era today and teaching novel to them is the way out. Therefore, teachers now have responsibility to prepare and facilitate their students in elaborating novel with appropriate approaches and methods.

Moreover, still following Irvine's idea, reading is not only challenging but also complicated process. Accordingly, students must be utilized by practice inquiry, interpretation, analysis, argumentation, and empathy. It is intended to train them coping with the real complex world beyond the books and for that reason, the researcher offers the study of pragmatics along with its discourse analysis as one of the alternative solution. In conclusion, teaching novel to students with the ability to analyze it is badly needed in order to make them well-prepared in facing what goes beyond the book, namely, the real life itself which is more challenging. Therefore, skill in analyzing novel is the first stage to carry out.

4. Pragmatics and discourse context

a. Reference

Every language has the property of reference to something else for making an interpretation. It is the specific nature of the information signaled for retrieval. This information is called referential meaning and it makes cohesion (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:31). While Strawson (1950) in Brown and Yule (1983: 28) claims that "referring" is not something an expression does; it is something that someone can use an expression to do. Then, Yule (1996:17) makes the following point: *'We might best think of reference as an act in which a speaker, or writer, uses linguistic forms to enable a listener, or reader, to identify something'*. It means that reference functions to help him/her comprehend the meaning of what they listen or read so he/she is able to both identify something (speaker's goals) and know particular something (speaker's beliefs). Further, he argues that the linguistic forms of reference are called *referring expressions* such as proper nouns, definite noun phrases, indefinite noun phrases and pronouns. The use of those types is the choice of a writer or a speaker to a reader or a listener who is assumed to have the same knowledge between them. The reader or listener, therefore, has to catch the correct information as precise as the writer or listener intend by using one of the referring expressions since there is no direct relationship between someone or something and words (1996: 17-18), say, for example: *Mister Aftershave is late today*. Here, *Mister Aftershave*, of course is not a person's name but it is *vague expression* to refer to the one who comes late today. In this case, then, a reader or a listener is assumed as the partner who has already known the situation. So, he or she has to be in line with the writer or speaker. Again, Yule states that the speaker and the listener need collaboration to make the reference successful. He also says: *'A truly pragmatic view of reference allows us to see how a person can be identified via the expression'* (1996: 19).

b. Presupposition

The idea of presupposition is initiated firstly by Frege (Beaver, 1997: 11). Beaver simply clarifies that the study of presupposition concerns the attitude and knowledge of language users (1997: 13). The statement gives the researcher view that presupposition involves other aspects excluding sentences because it brings in the background knowledge, thoughts, experiences, behaves and the like between the speaker and the listener or between the writer and the reader.

It is obvious now that context is necessary to make a precise presupposition; therefore, a linguistic expression can clearly be understandable. In other words, understanding context is a key to find out certain relationships among ideas since it is aimed to direct the listener or the reader to have the same presupposition with the speaker or with the writer involving together

within a particular action. The opinion is endorsed by Frege in Beaver (1997: 13) which undoubtedly defines the presupposition as follow:

.....presuppositions are special conditions that must be met in order for a linguistic expression to have a denotation. He maintained that presuppositions constitute an unfortunate imperfection of natural language, since in an ideal language every well-formed string would denote something.

He gave examples to explain his idea as in: 1). *Whoever discovered the elliptic form of the planetary orbits died in misery.* 2). *After the separation of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark Prussia and Austria quarreled.* Then, a presupposition of the first sentence is “somebody discovered the elliptic forms of the planetary orbits” and “Schleswig-Holstein was once separated from Denmark” constitutes a presupposition for the second one. In Frege’s point of view both presuppositions do not belong to thought expressed yet they are presupposed by the two sentences.

According to Yule (1985:100) presupposition is what speaker assumes is true or known by the hearer. For example: 1). *Your brother is waiting outside for you,* it has a clear presupposition that you have a brother. 2). *When did you stop smoking cigars?* It presupposes that you used to smoke cigars and your habit in the past definitely stops now. 3). *My car is a wreck,* the speaker presupposes that I have a car. Then, we question how to guarantee that a presupposition we made is not opposed to the fact. Yule gives good suggestion:

One of the tests used to check for the presuppositions underlying sentences involves negating a sentence with a particular presupposition and considering whether the presupposition remains true (1985:100).

Following what he said, we can negate a presupposition to confirm the truth. From those examples, the negative versions will be: 1). *Your brother is not waiting outside for you.* 2). *When didn’t you stop smoking cigars?* 3). *My car is not a wreck.* Although these sentences have opposite meanings, the presuppositions underlying the three sentences, *I have a brother, You used to smoke cigars, I have a car,* stay true.

c. Implicature

The idea of implicature is introduced by Grice (1991:24). He demonstrates the technical term of implicature and its derivation to explain the origin of the term as one of the linguistic phenomena. Then, it will guide us to study it deeper. He presents more detail explanation as in the following illustration: *A* and *B* are talking about mutual friend, *C*, who is now working in a bank.

A: How C is getting on in his job?

B: Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn’t been to prison yet.

If we notice the conversation, *A* might look for what *B* was implying, suggesting, or meant by saying that *C* had not been to prison yet. *A* tried to catch the point of what *B* stated because *A* missed the information, thus, there is a gap between them. Here, *B* expected *A* to recognize the meaning behind the statement that *B* had said. *B*, of course, had implicit purpose that he wanted to share but *A* did not know exactly what *B* really implied, suggested or meant, therefore; *A* must have knowledge which is similar to *B* had. This situation may stimulate missed communication because of the lack information that *B* should have completed. In fact, *B* did not provide adequate information to his partner so the conversation will not be successful though this phenomenon normally happens.

In line with Grice, other expert, Horn (2006: 3), defines that implicature concentrates on speaker meaning. When a speaker utters, he or she delivers some information embedded in the sentences expressed. The embedded meanings bring much more information than the sentences. An addressee, then, needs to interpret the actual messages implanted in the sentences. Consequently, both the speaker and the addressee must have a well-built cooperation in order to

set up a good communication between them. If it is done, miscommunication can be avoided. In addition, Horn (2006: 13) states that implicature becomes a solution to match the gap between what is said and what is communicated. As a result, the implied meaning becomes logical as its logical consequence of making inferences.

d. Inference

As a starting point of this study, the researcher prefers to outline with the definition. According to Yule (1985: 111), it is simply defined as a piece of information which is not literally stated in the text so the information is hidden. This situation opens some possibilities to produce different inferences. It is because the inferences are drawn from the background knowledge of the addressee when interpreting the sentence. One will infer differently from others because making an inference is, of course, determined by the knowledge that one had or experienced before about a certain issue. Yule takes these following examples from Sanford and Garrod (1981) to illustrate his arguments:

A. *John was on the way to school last Friday.*

B. *He was really worried about the math lesson.*

Most readers might infer that John is probably a schoolboy while others might infer that John is walking or John is on a bus. Their background knowledge has driven them to make such inferences. No one will suggest that John is swimming or on a boat because our experiences about going to school conventionally guide us to interpret that whoever going to school, he or she, is a schoolboy or whoever on the way to school, he or she, usually goes by bus. An inference usually changes or is usually abandoned depending on what the new information following after, as in: *Last week he had been unable to control the class.* Observing the sentence, there are some possibilities. First, we might infer that John is a teacher and he is not very happy or the second one, John is probably driving a car to school. And both inferences have similar reference to John that he is a teacher. However, the inference will switch to the new sentence presented later. If other sentence is provided like this one: *It was unfair of the math teacher to leave him in charge,* the inference will be John is a schoolboy since *him* in the sentence refers to John not a teacher so the inference brings John back to his schoolboy status.

C. Research Method

Up to this point, this research belongs to qualitative research because the researcher presents the research data with words. He explores the data taken from his critical reading class in the form of documents, and then modifies them with discourse analysis, consequently, the analysis results subjective arguments. These reasons deal with what Dornyei (2007:37-38) is accounted for: "Qualitative research is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and thus the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants' views of the situation being studied." besides, this research analyzes documents (types of texts) which become one of qualitative research data.

Moreover, the researcher found the same patterns of mistakes made by his students in interpreting dialogues of English novels that lead to misinterpretation. Therefore, this research aims at discovering those patterns then modify them with discourse analysis before making generalizations from analyzing the data demonstrated in the following chapter. Since the discourse analysis is used to analyze the data, the researcher applies it as the research method. For those reasons, these findings, hence, are certainly in the scope of qualitative research.

Although this research took students' works in critical reading class as its data source, not all the data were taken. They were chosen based on research purpose; that is, modifying students' misinterpretations using discourse analysis. It was carried out in order to make the analysis can be more meaningful since the researcher himself selected the data that are possible to support the research purpose; therefore, this research uses purposeful sampling. Qualitative research typically takes smaller samples. Even if they are single cases (N=1), the research can

possibly be conducted with it. It is selected from the population purposefully certainly after the researcher does a comprehensive study before. Then he decided to choose the most credible sample based on his own observation. The reason is to make the deepest understanding in studying certain cases. That is what makes purposeful sampling different from statistical probability sampling (Patton, 2001: 45-46).

D. Findings

This step contains illustration of the researcher's findings in analyzing students' misinterpretation through dialogues of English novels. The researcher found some missing points when students interpret dialogues. Having been analyzed, they don't take into account the discourse context involving reference, presupposition, implicature, and inference. Therefore, the researcher modifies the students' misinterpretation dealing with those terms as his tools to analyze. On the analysis steps, he presents part of dialogue first then it is followed by student's analysis and the last, the researcher's point of view using discourse analysis as described in detail below.

Sample of dialogue 1

Jeff : *"Keith, chill out!!!"*

Keith : *"Don't touch me."*

Nancy : *"Well. I'm not even going to ask what that was about."*

Emily : *"He thinks he owns me. Dating him was like-I don't know, like being a pedigreed dog, or an expensive car, or something. No, I take that back, he spent more time on his car than he did on me. Anyway, I think, I think it really took him by surprise when I broke up with him. It was like his chair had just talked back to him."*

Jeff : *"He seemed pretty mad."*

Emily : *"Well, he'll have to get over it."*

Student's misinterpretation

Keith became angry with Jeff because Jeff is Emily's friend.

Discourse analysis

The conflict happened because of broken relationship between Keith and Emily coming about internal factor. This then becomes the context of situation where one blamed each other with their own reason. Keith claimed that Emily caused the problem (*"How would you know Emily? You're so busy bouncing from guy to guy, you don't even have time to look around you"*) while Emily prosecuted Keith as the guilty one (*"He thinks he owns me. Dating him was like-I don't know, like being a pedigreed dog, or an expensive car, or something. No, I take that back, he spent more time on his car than he did on me. Anyway, I think, I think it really took him by surprise when I broke up with him. It was like his chair had just talked back to him."*). Therefore, Keith was angry with Jeff because he started to contact him physically not due to Emily's friend. By doing so, Keith implied that Jeff involved himself to this conflict. Meanwhile, Jeff inferred that Keith was a bad person disturbing Emily and Nancy decided to avoid the tension (*"Well. I'm not even going to ask what that was about"*) because she presupposed that *there was a problem among their friends*. Accordingly, she did not want to make the situation getting worse.

Dialogue 2

Gale : *"Pretty dress."*

Medge : *"Well, if I end up going to the Capitol, I want to look nice, don't I?"*

Gale : *"You won't be going to the Capitol. What can you have? Five entries? I had six when I was twelve years old"*

Katniss : *"It wasn't her fault."*

Gale : “No, It’s not one’s fault. Just the way it is.”
Medge : “Good luck Katniss”
Katniss : “You too”

Student’s misinterpretation
Gale believes that it is unfair.

Discourse analysis

Gale, Medge, and Katniss belong to reference words. It can be inferred that they were discussing Gale’s performance (*Gale: “Pretty dress.” Medge: “Well, if I end up going to the Capitol, I want to look nice, don’t I?”*). Then, it presupposes that there is a destination place to go, named Capitol (*Gale: “You won’t be going to the Capitol.”*). *Gale* implied that going to Capitol was a mistake since he could do better than *Medge* did (*What can you have? Five entries? I had six when I was twelve years old”*). Meanwhile *Katniss* implied that *Medge* did not do a mistake since she just wanted to show the best no more than that (*Katniss: “It wasn’t her fault.”*). However *Gale* seemed to hide the truth to neutralize the situation; therefore he stopped debating that case (*Gale: “No, It’s not one’s fault. Just the way it is.”*). Hence, it is apparent that *Gale* tried to provide a suggestion instead of feeling unfair.

E. Conclusion

Reading is not only a receptive skill but also it demands readers to intensely communicate with the text. The sentences in dialogues cannot only grammatically be understood since they implant meanings hidden along with them. The hidden meanings bring much more information than explicitly written or stated. That is the reason why the readers need to be able to catch the implicit or unstated information brought through the sentences. The readers’ ability to break down then identify the hidden information will lead them to find the actual meaning. By doing so, the readers are expected to lessen, at least, misinformation or even avoid it, moreover, they can be critical when appreciating to novels and to other texts and are possible to give suggestion to the novels then recommend them to other readers as alternative advantageous references to read.

To realize the students’ ability in analyzing the unstated information, it is crucial for students to recognize the context surrounding the sentences. To catch what people unsaid cannot semantically be figured out since semantic meaning does not work with context, thus, pragmatic approach is badly needed to reach the context. Therefore, this research relates to pragmatics using discourse analysis as its research method. Pragmatics and the discourse context concern to reference, presupposition, implicature, and inference.

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