TEXT ORGANIZATION: THE RELEVANCE OF UNDERSTANDING IT

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RESUMO:

O trabalho tem por objetivo mostrar as aplicações pedagógicas da proposta Hoey (1979) quanto à estrutura do discurso. Parte do pressuposto que uma compreensão dessa estrutura é elemento facilitador no processo de compreensão da leitura. Os elementos marcadores das várias partes da estrutura proposta são enumerados.

The main purpose of this work is to call attention to the way texts are organized and to some aspects of the language used which efficiently sign the structures of discourse.

The analysis of discourse-structure is useful since it helps the reader to understand efficiently his reading comprehension task. The reader, being able to perceive the discourse structures and the language items which sign each of them, is able to play the psycholinguistic game proposed by Goodman (1967) and Smith (1978). According to these psycholinguists the reader will be searching for meaning, by perceiving the relationships between sentences and paragraphs instead of identifying words as isolated bits of informa

tion.

The above psycholinguistic point of view   about
the reading process is well shown through Goodman's
following quotation in which he defines:

> *"Reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game.
> It involves an interaction between thought
> and language. Efficient reading does   not
> result from precise perception and interaction
> and identification of all elements, but from
> skill in selecting the fewest,most productive
> cues necessary to produce guesses which are
> right the first time"(1)*

and through Smith's saying that (1978) *"reading is not
a matter of identifying individual letters, or   even
individual words"(2)*
... *"to read is to look for meaning and to put meaning
into short - term memory"(3)*.

There are some different approaches to   dis-
course structure analysis. There are the ones proposed
by Deyes (1982) and by Hoey (1979). According to Deyes
(1982) the text may have   INTRODUCTION - PROBLEM -
METHODS - RESULTS - DISCUSSION - CONCLUSION and   the
teaching of these structures can help the students in
their reading tasks. According to Hoey a text may have
the following structure: SITUATION - PROBLEM - SOLUTION
- EVALUATION and the teaching of it can help   the
readers to find out how language has specific means of
conveying logical relations.

After analyzing Deyes (1982) and Hoey's discourse
structures I decided to give emphasis to the discourse
structure proposed by Hoey since it seems to satisfy
the main purpose of this work.

Hence, I planned how I should teach my   students
to identify the problem - solution structure in texts
and its markers. The plan is exposed below:

On the organization of the text, the   students
should be made aware that texts generally follow   a

certain pattern of organization and that they need to
be able to identify the pattern used by the author
they are reading, since it may help them to understand
the text efficiently. They should be made aware   that
most of the texts have the introduction, the develop-
ment and the conclusion and that sometimes this   pat-
tern can be presented according to Hoey's pattern:
SITUATION - PROBLEM - SOLUTION - EVALUATION.

According to Hoey, the reader should ask himself
questions that lead him to finding each of the compo-
nents of the problem - solution - structure -   *ques-
tions technique is a theoretically viable way of ana-
lyzing discourses*[4]. He suggests that through   the
questions, *what's the situation?*, the reader can guide
his reading in order to find it. Through the question,
what's the problem?, the reader can also guide   his
reading and find the problem. The questions, *what's the
solution?* and *what's the evaluation?*, may also   guide
the reader to identify the solution and evaluation re-
spectively. According to Hoey's point of view,not only
these questions lead the reader to find out the compo-
nents of a structure but also some lexical items, verb
forms and the position of a structure within the text.

Let's observe some of the signalling marks   for
situation - problem - solution - evaluation.

I - *The Signalling of Situation in the Sample
Discourse:*

a) Position - generally the situation comes   at
the beginning of a problem solution discourse. It pro
vides a context for subsequent sentences.

b) Verb tense - the verb is in the simple   non
past form.

c) Lexical items - an anaphoric item may indicate
that an earlier sentence may be regarded as   situ-
ational.

II - *The Signalling of Problem in the Sample
Discourse:*

a) Lexical items - words such as <u>problem,solution,</u>
etc are required and many others used may give   the
reader clues to locate the problem.

III - *The Signalling of Solution in the Sample
Discourse:*

a) Lexical items - these are some words   such   as
<u>result</u>, <u>response</u>, <u>develop</u>, <u>come up with the   solution</u>,
etc, which may give the reader clues to locate   the
solution.

IV - *The Signalling of Evaluation in Sample
Discourse:*

a) Lexical items - words such as: <u>evaluate</u>, <u>for-
tunately</u>, <u>unfortunately</u>, <u>attack the solution</u>, <u>solution
was particularly important</u>, may indicate the evaluation.
Taking into account these suggested words that may in-
dicate evaluation one can see that evaluation may be
positive or negative. A negative evaluation may signal
a new problem.

After analyzing the text structure proposed   by
Hoey and having decided that it might be useful   for
reading comprehension, I feel the necessity to   point
out which steps I would follow in order to make   it
easier for the reader to identify the problem - sol-
ution - structures in a text. Keeping this in mind   I
would start by telling and explaining to the reader the
components of the structure and the relevance of ident_
ifying them. After that, I think that I would   train
him to find sentences that do not make sense in   the
context, to recognize sentences which were arranged in
the wrong way and then to find each of the   structures
involved in the problem - solution structure.

Concluding, I would say that what was   exposed

above could be tested by me or by anyone interested in
the discovery of the efficiency or inefficiency   of
teaching the identification of discourse structure and
its markers for helping the students' reading   compre-
hension tasks.

NOTES

1 K. S. GOODMAN (1970): *A Psycholinguistic Guessing
   Game.* Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.
   C. pg. 34.
2 Frank SMITH (1978). *Reading.* Cambridge University
   Press. pg.39.
3 Ib. Ibden. pg. 41.
4 Michel HOEY (1979). *Signalling in Discourse.* English
   Language Research, University of Birminghan. pg.16.

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