

A framework for discourse analysis: The components of a discourse, from a tagmemic viewpoint

VERN S. POYTHRESS

Introduction

People have been analyzing discourses, in some sense, for as long as they have been speaking. They have done so without the help of linguists, literary critics, or their theories. But a theoretical framework can still perform a service in making explicit what is normally implicit. In this paper, I will attempt to build a framework for classifying and cataloguing everything that goes on in the production and comprehension of discourses. With minor modifications, the same framework should also be applicable to nonverbal human behavior. It will thus be of interest to semioticians as well as literary theorists, though its roots are primarily in linguistics.

Any number of linguists and literary theorists have preceded me in such theory-building. Each presents his own individually tailored list of elements, aspects, components, strata, layers, levels, or facets that together make a discourse what it is. What is the use of still another list?

My list or framework aims at three things: completeness, expandability, and justifiability. First, let me discuss completeness. Some of the existing theories choose to concentrate on only certain facets of the life and structure of discourses: those facets of interest to a certain speciality or amenable to formal analysis. In particular, linguists frequently concentrate on sentence structure, ignoring narrative structures, characterization, metaphor, and other distinctly literary concerns. Conversely, literary analysts seldom make much of grammar or phonology. In my analysis I intend to encompass both literary and more linguistic specialties.

My second aim is expandability or flexibility. A linguistic theory can aim in at least two directions. It can build an oversimplified but highly formalized and explicit model (the direction chosen for generative models), or it can sacrifice some formality in order to encompass — without exhausting — more complexities and nuances of discourse. A theory can

strive for the rigor obtainable in a 'reduction' of the phenomena to a model with a minimum postulate system; or it can strive for the sensitivity obtainable in a multiplication of perspectives. I choose the latter course.

This involves several sacrifices. The first, of course, is the sacrifice of rigor and transparency in definitions. A second, more subtle sacrifice is the sacrifice of nonredundancy. My categories applied to a particular discourse often result in multiple redundancy. If one is to miss nothing, one must provide a category for it even when most of the time the category is redundant. For example, I am convinced that there is a theoretical distinction in English between a phonological word, typically marked by a single major stress, and a grammatical word, marked by its properties of morphological closure and distribution with respect to other lexical items. ('Of the house' with a single stress on 'house' is a single phonological word, but three grammatical words.) Yet often phonological words and grammatical words are coterminous. In such cases the distinction is 'redundant'. Redundancy increases as one tries to introduce finer distinctions between, say, 'deep' and 'surface' grammar or function versus filler.

A third, related sacrifice involved in this procedure is the sacrifice of any claim to exhaustiveness at *any* point. For one thing, I choose not to analyze further such things as the psychological, sociological, economic, and political aspects of discourses. Instead, I have some general categories to remind me that these aspects are there. Such categories could be subdivided and thereby expanded to one's heart's content, if the need arose. But I would say more. I think that almost any one of the categories or subdivisions of my framework could be found, upon further analysis, to have the potential for ramifying and subdividing almost indefinitely.

In return for such 'sacrifices', I hope to unfold a theoretical framework that can remain flexibly open to the enormous variety and complexity that a literary or poetic word can display on the discourse level.

Finally, along with completeness and expandability I aim for justifiability. By that I mean that I intend my 'list' of categories or aspects of discourse to be theoretically motivated and justified rather than produced *ad hoc*. A number of existing frameworks succeed fairly well, I think, in achieving the goals of completeness and expandability. Their deficiency, then, is that they are not easily 'justifiable'. They are frameworks composed to some extent of odds and ends. A person adds items to a list of aspects of discourse, until the list seems to be complete.

A simple example of this type of thing is found in Roland Barthes (1974: 17–20). Barthes tells us that in any literary work meaning depends on the interplay of five 'codes'. These are the proairetic code (typically, actions of the characters of a narrative), the hermeneutic code (puzzles set by and answered by the speaker or author), the cultural codes (any appeal to

knowledge from the culture shared by speaker and listener), the connotative codes (themes like wealth, death, femininity), and the symbolic field (ideas around which a work is constructed). Among them, these five cover a remarkable amount of territory (though the linguist will miss any explicit mention of phonology or grammar). But — why these? And only these? And what are the differences between them? (Barthes is particularly unenlightening on the difference between the connotative and symbolic codes.)

But one sees the full dimensions of the problem only when one contemplates a more complex classification, such as the framework of Wilbur Pickering (1977). Pickering classifies what goes on in discourse analysis in terms of five major categories: hierarchy, cohesion, prominence, style, and strategy. Each of these is in turn subdivided in what seems to be an *ad hoc* manner. Hierarchy deals with constituent structure, taxis (parataxis and hypotaxis), and span. Cohesion deals with grammatical agreement, phoric reference, conjunctions, lexical association, and given information. And so on. Pickering has woven together all that he could learn from Halliday, Gleason, Pike, Beekman and Callow, Longacre, and Grimes. In the process, he has presumably left out very little of interest to linguists (though some of the literary critic's interests may be slighted). Pickering's subdividing process and his explicitness enable him to escape some of Barthes's problems of vagueness and undefinedness in the differences between his categories. But Pickering's framework and other such *ad hoc* frameworks still do not escape several major difficulties.

The first difficulty is the one I have already mentioned with respect to Barthes: why these and only these categories? The exact choice is not 'motivated' except by pragmatic considerations. Other difficulties stem from this lack of 'motivation'. Lack of theoretical justification frequently leads to 'messiness' about the boundary between one category and another. If a general category is partly a matter of *ad hoc* collection, how does one know when to add another member to the collection?

Moreover, when categories have been formulated partly in an *ad hoc* manner, a gnawing suspicion arises. What if the categories are not complete? What if we are missing other important aspects of discourse *because* these aspects are not listed? Is the 'system' blinding us by teaching us only to look for what we are already familiar with? Because of the redundancy in most discourses, those aspects of a discourse that are not listed explicitly can usually be quite easily subsumed under those already listed. The nearer the list comes to actual completeness, the more danger exists that any neglected aspects of discourses will continue to be ignored, because the more possibilities exist for subsuming these additional aspects

under those already listed. Thus any *ad hoc* framework worth its salt will tend illusorily to confirm its own completeness.

I intend, then, that my own framework should not be constructed *ad hoc*, out of bits and pieces from everyone else's theories. Rather, my framework is to be 'justifiable'; that is, the different categories and subdivisions are to be motivated by deeper general principles. This is still no guarantee that no important aspects of discourse structure are left out. The framework will probably succeed no better than the 'deeper general principles' allow. If the principles are inadequate or reductionistic, so will the resulting framework be. It is therefore a good check to see whether such a framework indeed includes, somewhere within it, room for the kinds of phenomena categorized by the existing *ad hoc* frameworks.

The conscious appeal to deeper general principles as I build a framework results in a further payoff. The principles that I appeal to are not rooted in *verbal* behavior alone. Hence, the framework for analysis that I develop should, in theory, be applicable to all types of human behavior. Potentially, it is a means of semiotic analysis, not merely linguistic analysis. I confine myself to verbal behavior primarily because I think that it is easier to get a grip on the phenomena and to develop detailed illustrations in this area first.

Discourse in relation to a larger context of human behavior: meaning, impact and significance

I choose to operate within the tradition and 'philosophical atmosphere' of tagmemic theory. I do so not only because of my greater familiarity with tagmemics, but because the long-standing interest of tagmemics in discourse and in larger contexts of human behavior makes it a promising tool for bringing together linguistic, literary, and semiotic interests.

Following Pike's postulates (K. Pike 1976), I start with the fundamental principle that *people* exist and are involved in language and discourse from the beginning. In particular, the theorist is involved in his own theory. His own human freedom stands behind his observation, selection, and emphasis of some things rather than others. For some time, Pike has emphasized the validity, even the necessity, of a multiplicity of perspectives. Theorists, as people, bring to their observation of language different perspectives.

Now, Pike analyzes language in terms of three 'modes': the feature mode, the manifestation mode, and the distribution mode (1967). The fluidity and multivocal character of these 'modes', as described in 1967, has limited their usefulness. I shall therefore use the more precise

vocabulary of particle, wave, and field occurring in Pike's more recent works (Pike and Pike 1977: 5; 1976: 122–124). People are free to observe and analyze language and discourse in three ways. First, they can use a 'particle', or static perspective, in which human behavior is split up into recognizable 'chunks' with definite boundaries. Second, they can use a 'wave' or dynamic perspective, in which human behavior is viewed as a continuously flowing process with certain peaks and transitions between peaks. Third, they can use a 'field' or relational perspective, in which human behavior consists of relations sustained with elements in a number of dimensions. These three perspectives, as perspectives used by people, will be my starting point. From them I will develop and 'motivate' all the other distinctions I use in the analysis of discourse. But because these perspectives are my *starting* point, they themselves have a certain *ad hoc* character from the standpoint of my explanation. The apparently *ad hoc* character could be removed only by basing the perspectives themselves on some still deeper starting point.

What happens now when an analyst views a discourse from the standpoint of each of the three perspectives? From the static perspective, the discourse as a whole is a 'chunk' distinguishable from its context. It is an emic unit of human behavior (Pike 1967: 37–72). It is, say, a monologue bounded on both sides by silence or utterances of other speakers. Both linguistics and literary criticism are usually occupied primarily with a closer analysis of different aspects of discourse within this single large-scale perspective. Hence, I will be primarily occupied with a further breakdown of a discourse viewed as an isolatable unit.

Second, from the dynamic perspective, a discourse is an instrument in a process of communication and change. A discourse is in motion. The speaker is responding to a past history, perhaps involving previous conversations or exchanges with the same listener or listeners. He produces the discourse word by word, sentence by sentence. In oral conversation, he may improvise as he goes, anticipating reactions, modifying his direction in response to indications of puzzlement, approval, and the like from his audience. His own thoughts may become clearer as he tries to express them. Similarly, the audience's impression grows, shifts, and twists as the discourse progresses. In a situation of face-to-face contact, the audience may respond with questions, objections, refusals, counterarguments, or lack of attention. This shifting flux of understanding has been the domain primarily of existentialist hermeneutics.

Third, from the relational perspective, the same discourse owes its significance to a complex of relations to a whole culture. The culture molds its structure and in turn the structure of the discourse molds the

culture (cf. Mukařovský 1970). On the literary level, the discourse may belong to an established genre of oral or written literature. Once produced, it also makes its contribution to the culture's impression of the (emic) limits of the genre. Of course, a discourse can be assessed not only in terms of its relation to literary genre, but in relation to linguistics, politics, psychology, sociology, economics, religion, what have you.

In short, a discourse can be viewed as a fixed whole (static), as a human process (dynamic), or as a system defined in relation to culture (relational). These three perspectives influence how we assess the discourse itself in terms of its import. A discourse has meaning (static), impact (dynamic), and significance (relational). When we speak of 'meaning', we tend to think of the discourse as a whole, with process and cultural setting only in the background. 'Impact' has in view primarily the process of communication. And 'significance', as defined by Hirsch in opposition to 'meaning', has to do primarily with the question of the *relation* of the discourse to a broader or narrower literary, historical, economic, etc. context (Hirsch 1967: 8). But the difference between meaning, impact, and significance is in some sense a difference in emphasis. Here I already indicate my distance from Hirsch. He appears to think that, in principle, a perfect separation between 'meaning' and 'significance' is possible. I do not think that one can so much as talk about one without touching on the other. One cannot discuss anything without relating it in some sense to one's own situation and experience. On the other hand, I agree with Hirsch's main point that a rough-and-ready distinction between what the speaker intended and what listeners may derive is possible. We are dealing here with three sides of the same triangle — or better, three modes of existence of the same phenomenon of import. (See Figure 1.)

These and other distinctions I will illustrate using the passage Mark 4: 30–32 from the New Testament.

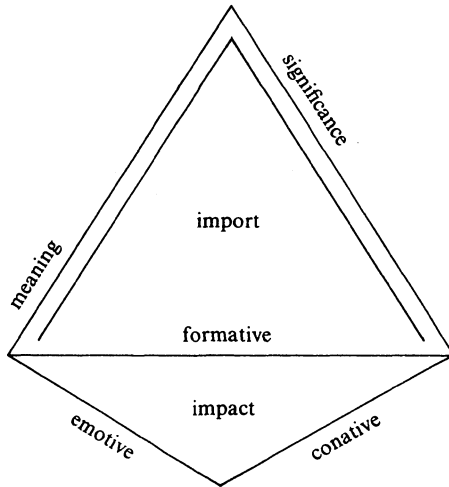
³⁰And he said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?' ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

I will use this passage not only because it relates to my own special interest in New Testament study, but because it is well known, it is of manageable size, yet it is of sufficient complexity to illustrate adequately most of the distinctions that I introduce.

Mark 4: 30–32, in its original historical context, has 'meaning'. It uses a story of the growth of a mustard seed to illustrate the manner of the

coming of the kingdom of God. As a mustard seed grows from an insignificant beginning into a huge tree, so it is for the kingdom of God. The kingdom begins in insignificance but in the end manifests cosmic dimensions. That is the 'meaning' of Mark 4: 30–32 reduced to the bare bones.

Import as meaning, impact, and significance



Alternative display of total import

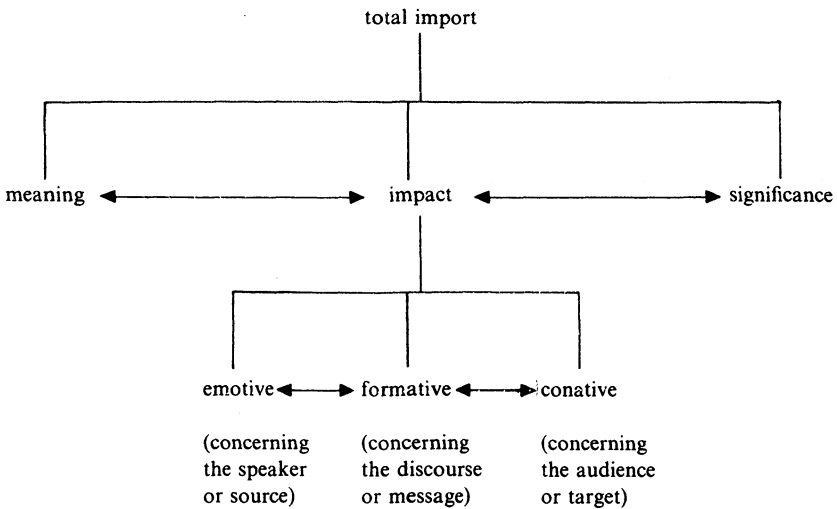


Figure 1.

Now, what about the 'impact' of Mark 4: 30–32? To ascertain impact, look at Mark 4: 30–32 in terms of a dynamic process where Mark the evangelist communicates to his readers. The 'meaning' as I have already described it does not disappear. But it is seen in a somewhat different light. One person is making known to another the nature of the kingdom of God, and he is doing so for certain purposes (in order, perhaps, to encourage them under persecution as they look at their own insignificance).

Finally, what is the 'significance' of Mark 4: 30–32? 'Significance' comprises not only the relation of Mark 4: 30–32 to the first century but its relation to all sorts of things in our own time: politics, other religious beliefs, and so on.

Meaning, impact, and significance in this sense form three different emphases, three different kinds of interest, three illuminations of the whole discourse. But if any one approach is pursued far enough and deep enough, it inevitably encompasses the emphases distinctive to the other two approaches.

The whole matter of multiplicity of perspectives and the participation of the interpreter or theorist in the choice of perspectives is, moreover, relevant to literary criticism on a much broader scale. Interpretation of literature without any presuppositions is impossible (Bultmann 1961: 289–296). Interpretation without selection of some perspective or perspectives from which to view the discourse is impossible. (This accounts for some long-standing differences in linguistic theory and literary theory, as well as differences in the manner of interpreting a particular text like Mark 4.)

A full-orbed approach to discourse analysis will take this potential multiplicity of perspectives into account. It will, in principle, be capable of providing the analyst with means for approaching the discourse in any of the ways that it might be approached by others with differing presuppositions and perspectives. What others may uncover from the discourse is relevant to assessing its significance. At the same time, the analyst is interested in the unique role of the speaker of the discourse and his historical and cultural setting. He must be able to distance himself enough from his individual experience to take the speaker's emic point of view and not merely his own parochial etic point of view (cf. Pike 1967: 37–72, on emic and etic).

I will not make any further distinctions concerning the relational perspective on discourse (including 'significance'). The area is enormously complex. But one could, I suspect, escape *ad hoc* subdivisions only by invoking some sort of metaphysics of society and culture.

Discourse as process: speaker, discourse, and audience

A further distinction can be made respecting the dynamics of discourse. The most obvious element in the process of communication is the discourse itself. But behind the discourse stands a source setting communication in motion. And in 'front' of the discourse stands a 'target' to which the discourse proceeds. The immediate source may be a phonograph record, a tape recording, or a printed book. But behind each of these stands a person (a speaker) as the ultimate source. Similarly, the immediate target may be a microphone, a tape, or a xerox copy; the ultimate intended target is a person or persons.

The static, dynamic, and relational perspectives can be brought to bear on the process of communication. The process itself is something dynamic. The dynamic perspective will naturally focus on the discourse itself. I have in mind a discourse not as it might exist in a person's memory or on paper, but as it is in the very process of being transmitted. The static perspective, on the other hand, will naturally focus on the stable components in communication. The most obvious of these is the speaker or source. The relational perspective, finally, will focus naturally on the situational context into which the speaker sends his communication. The audience, or target, is a most important part of this situation, but only a part. Indeed, even when the audience is asleep or there is no audience (soliloquy), there can still be a speaker, a discourse, and a situation.

At any rate, we will in general have a source, a discourse, and a target in communication (the last of these as part of a larger situation). Source, discourse, and target correspond to Jakobson's terms addresser, message, and addressee (1960: 353). The process of communication can be viewed from the standpoint of any of these three. It is at this point that psychology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and sociology have most of their interface with discourse analysis. Social sciences are interested in how the individual (psychology) and the group situation (sociology) influence what goes on at both the sending and the receiving ends of communication. If we wish, we can define 'discourse analysis' broadly enough to encompass the analysis of everything — or everything deemed relevant — going on with the speaker and the audience. But, typically, we tend to confine ourselves to the influence that these factors have on the discourse itself. The dynamic process from source to discourse to target influences the structure of the discourse itself. It projects itself into or reflects itself on the discourse.

Earlier, I argued that the three large-scale views of discourse as static chunk, as process, and as system of relations resulted in three approaches to impact. One may look for emotive impact (what the speaker indicates

about his own attitudes), conative impact (what responses the discourse is trying to produce in the audience), and formative impact (what the discourse conveys by its own inherent force and structure). Emotive, formative, and conative impact are, as it were, the imprints on the discourse of the dynamics of speaker–audience–interaction. The three kinds of impact (emotive, formative, conative) are what the discourse indicates about each of the components (speaker, discourse, audience) in that interaction. The terminology ‘emotive’ and ‘conative’ at this point is Jakobson’s (1960: 357), but my term ‘formative’ encompasses his ‘referential’, ‘metalingual’, ‘phatic’, and ‘poetic’. (See Figure 1). The emotive, formative, and conative aspects of discourse correlate closely with authorial intention, illocutionary force, and perlocutionary force, respectively (cf. Austin 1962: 94–163).

How does this threefold distinction of emotive, formative, and conative impact apply to Mark 4: 30–32? The formative impact has to do with the message of Mark 4: 30–32 when speaker and audience are put into the background. Mark 4: 30–32 announces that the kingdom of God is like the growth of a mustard seed.

Second, emotive impact views the whole discourse in terms of what it indicates about the author. The author thought that this was worth saying and worth knowing. He affirmed that he believed this is what Jesus said when he was on earth. In the light of the rest of the Gospel of Mark, we can infer that he thought this information to be relevant to his audience because they were those who gave, or ought to give, their allegiance to this same Jesus now risen from the dead.

For conative impact, we look at the same passage in terms of the audience (readers). Were they Roman Christians suffering persecution? Is this passage meant to assure them that they will triumph even though at present they seem insignificant (like the mustard seed)?

Using these three perspectives, as in the preceding section, I do not believe that I am discussing here three perfectly separable entities, but three interpenetrating approaches to the complexities of human behavior that a discourse involves. The speaker or audience may come into special focus in connection with certain kinds of discourse features: speaker evaluations, performatives, and audience feedback (Grimes 1975: 61–64, 71–81). But the speaker and the audience are constantly involved in interpreting and evaluating the discourse content, even when this interpretation remains predominantly implicit. Every subunit of the discourse, as well as the discourse as a whole, can be analyzed from the standpoint of emotive or conative impact (cf. Poythress 1979: 120–129).

This is also an appropriate place to notice certain kinds of multivocality common in literary discourse. Robert Scholes speaks of ‘duplicity’ when there occurs ambiguity or multiplication in speakers, audiences, and

'worlds' about which one is speaking (Scholes 1974: 27–31). The narrator in the novel is not identical with the author; neither are the putative addressees of this narrator necessarily identical with the actual reading audience. For that matter, neither is the 'world' of the fictional story identical with the 'real world'. The author's voice is heard 'behind' the narrator, the real audience 'overhears' what is said to the putative audience, and the author says something about the 'real world' indirectly, by means of his imaginary world. But the mappings between these two (or perhaps more) levels are typically not one-to-one. Part of the task of 'impact' analysis, as I see it, is to explore these 'mappings' or relationships between the different 'voices', 'ears', and 'worlds' articulated in a discourse.

The same concerns can be carried over to the somewhat more prosaic concerns usually involved in nonfiction. Any quoted or borrowed material in a discourse represents, in some attenuated sense, a double voice. There is the voice of the speaker and the voice of the one from whom he borrowed or quoted his material. There is also a double 'ear' or audience. There is the audience addressed by the present speaker, and there is the audience addressed by the 'voice' from whom he borrowed. If, moreover, the quoting, borrowing, and even vague influence extends through several stages of tradition, each stage has its speakers and its audiences (Poythress 1979). This phenomenon clearly occurs in the Gospels, and in Mark 4: 30–32 in particular. Jesus speaks simultaneously of two 'worlds', the world of mustard and the world of the kingdom of God. Mark's voice, as well as the voice of any intermediaries between Jesus and Mark (the Apostle Peter?), is superimposed on the voice of Jesus. Mark's audience (Roman Christians?) is superimposed on Jesus's audience of Palestinian Jews. At every point where several voices, several worlds, or several audiences come together, one must be prepared to ask in principle what each is articulating and what each is understanding.

The peculiarity of fiction is that both speaker and audience (or author and readers) know that the putative 'world' to which the discourse refers is an imaginary one. Yet the discourse, by means of this imaginary world, says something indirectly about the 'real world'. The 'duplicity' of worlds has a natural tendency to generate some degree of duplicity of speakers and audiences, in a manner fundamentally dissimilar to that involved in quoted speech.

Meaning as unital, hierarchical, and contextual

Now I come to a closer examination of the discourse itself. The analyst can view the discourse in terms of the static, dynamic, and relational

perspectives. In the static perspective, the discourse appears as a *unit*. Parts and aspects of the discourse will also be treated as units. In the dynamic perspective, the discourse appears primarily as embeddings of parts in wholes, nuclei in larger nuclei. That is, the discourse appears as *hierarchy*. In the relational perspective, the discourse appears primarily as a system deriving meaning from *context*. Unit, hierarchy, and context here have the sense that they bear in Pike (Pike and Pike 1977: 1–4). We can describe meaning in terms of any one of these three approaches. *Unital* meaning is then meaning residing in the structural whole that a discourse is. *Hierarchical* meaning is meaning viewed as the contribution that all smaller parts together make to the larger whole — especially any prominent smaller parts. *Contextual* meaning is meaning residing in the relations that the discourse bears to its immediate context or contexts. (See Figure 2.) These are three correlative approaches, any one of which could, in principle, cover the whole field of discussion.

We can, moreover, ‘intersect’ any of these three perspectives — unital, hierarchical, and contextual — with earlier perspectives (found in the preceding section) concerning speaker, discourse, and audience. We can look at unit, hierarchy, and context from the speaker’s point of view, the audience’s point of view, or (the more normal approach) with the discourse itself in focus and the speaker and audience only in the background.

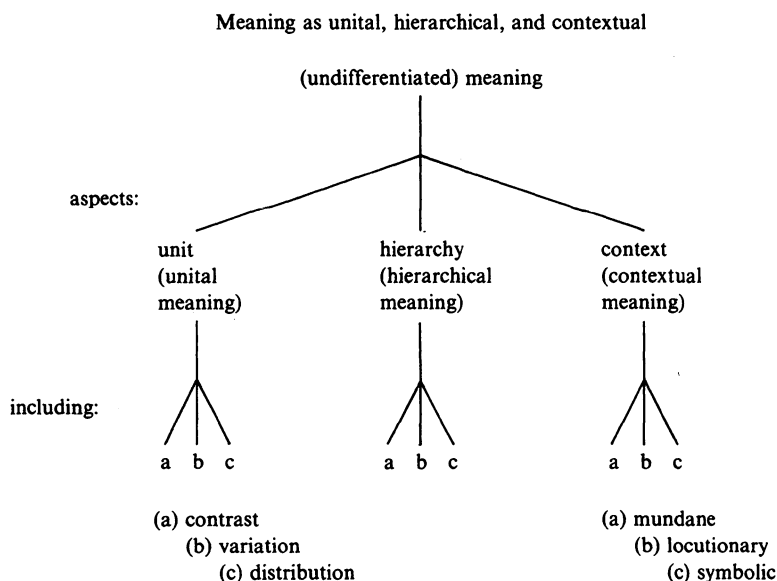


Figure 2.

Rough hierarchical structure in Mark 4: 30–32

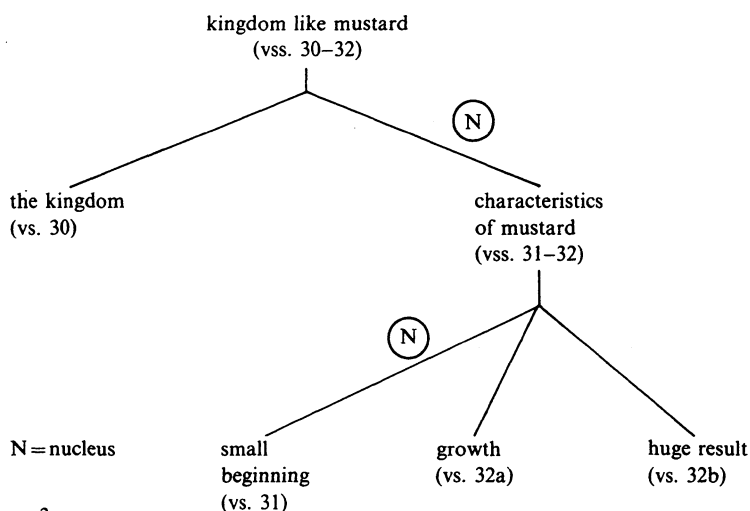


Figure 3.

A more exact delineation of the difference between an approach in terms of units, in terms of hierarchy, and in terms of context must await some further subdivision of each of these aspects. For the moment, the example of Mark 4: 30–32 says (mainly) that the kingdom of God has small, practically invisible beginnings but a glorious end, like the growth of a mustard seed. As a hierarchy, Mark 4: 30–32 ‘constructs’ this meaning out of the contributions of several parts. For instance, vs. 30 introduces the topic of the kingdom of God and indicates that what is to follow will be related to that topic parabolically. Vs. 31 contributes the emphasis on the small beginning of the mustard plant. Vs. 32 adds the growth and the huge result. The contributions of these pieces are related hierarchically, as in Figure 3.

Finally, as a system in a context, Mark 4: 30–32 receives its meaning from the bringing together of the resources of the system of language (the grammar and words like ‘kingdom’, ‘mustard’, and ‘grow’), the system of plant life (what happens to mustard), and the system of God’s dealings with men (the kingdom of God active in the world).

Unit described by contrast, variation, and distribution

According to K. Pike (1976: 113), a unit is fully described only when its contrast, variation, and distribution have been specified. Contrast, vari-

ation, and distribution are ways of viewing *units* in terms of the static, dynamic, and relational viewpoints respectively. Hence this triad is also theoretically motivated by my starting point.

The categories of contrast, variation, and distribution have so far been most fruitfully applied to the areas of phonology (E. Pike 1976) and grammar (Pike and Pike 1977). Thus the phoneme /p/ in English may be described in terms of its contrast with other phonemes (continuants and the stops /b/, /t/, /k/, etc.), in terms of its variation (aspirated or unaspirated, more or less tense or lax), and in terms of its distribution ($\pm C_1 + /p/ \pm C_2 + V$ in syllable premargins with $C_1 = /s/$, $C_2 = /r/$, $/l/$; $V \pm C_3 + /p/ \pm C_1$ in syllable postmargins with $C_3 = /m/$, $/r/$, $/l/$, $/s/$).

The whole of Mark 4: 30–32 can also be viewed in terms of contrast, variation, and distribution. The passage's teaching about the kingdom of God *contrasts* with various things that *could* have been said about the kingdom (or about some other topic) but were not said. The passage also has *variation*, in the sense that it leaves certain vaguenesses. It does not say everything about the kingdom of God that it could. What Mark 4: 30–32 says is compatible with situations in which the kingdom of God might take a *range* of forms. It is compatible with a number of different possible detailed 'histories' of the kingdom of God. Finally, Mark 4: 30–32 is distributed in a larger linear verbal context, most obviously the context of the rest of the gospel of Mark. A somewhat narrower context is the context of Jesus's other sayings and parables about the kingdom of God. Those other sayings contribute to the coloring of this particular parable.

Context analyzed as mundane context, locutionary context, and symbolic context

Contexts of a discourse, I believe, are of three types. First, there is the context about which the discourse is speaking and to which it refers: the mundane context. Mark 4: 30–32 speaks of the kingdom of God and of mustard.

Second, there is the context in which the discourse, as speech act, occurs: the 'locutionary' context. I am speaking here of the 'channel' over which communication occurs, and the actual activity on that 'channel'. It is convenient to include the discourse itself in this context. This corresponds rather closely to what Jakobson (1960: 357) has labeled the 'phatic' and 'poetic' aspects of communication. In Saussure's terminology, it is *parole*. In order to use Mark 4: 30–32 as an example, I must be more precise. Am I thinking of Jesus speaking this parable (in Aramaic?)

to this Jewish audience, Mark writing to (say) Roman Christians in Greek, or the modern translator (say the RSV committee) writing to the English-speaking community? Do I have in mind Mark 4: 30–32 on the written page, or read orally in the church? Each of these has a rather different locutionary context. The locutionary context comprises, in each case, the immediate circumstances and medium in which the parable is communicated. And at the center of this context will be the actual words as they are uttered in all their individuality.

Third, there is the context of the language system or code in which the discourse is uttered. This I will call the 'symbolic' context. It corresponds to Saussure's term *langue* and Jakobson's term 'code'. The language (English, Greek, or some specialized artificial language) is a system in terms of which any particular utterance is construed. In this sense the utterance of discourse derives its meaning from the system as a whole. Interpretation and analysis of a particular discourse must therefore, for completeness, consider that discourse in relation to, and as a manifestation of, the language system as a whole. On the other hand, the meaning of a particular discourse is obviously not an undifferentiated 'meaning' of the system as a whole, but the meaning of a particular selection of elements, in a particular locutionary context, *from* the system as a whole. In the case of Mark 4: 30–32 in Greek, the symbolic context is the language system of Koine Greek. More particularly, it is a style of written Koine influenced by the Septuagint and Semitic background. The symbolic context for Mark 4: 30–32 in the Revised Standard Version is an ecclesiastically conditioned written style of American English. Attention to style and dialect belongs under the heading of symbolic context.

The threefold division into mundane, locutionary, and symbolic context has at least some oblique relation to my original distinction between the static, dynamic, and relational perspectives. In some sense the mundane context is the constant, and thus 'static', factor in communication. A discourse may, of course, refer to and discuss actions, changes, and movements as well as 'things'. But the discourse remains free to discuss them in various orders, to discuss briefly or at length, to discuss in relation to this or to that. In relation, therefore, to the actual flow of the discourse, the topics, themes, and referents are a constant factor. In contrast to this, the channel and the actual messages that flow across it relate closely to the more dynamic aspects of the discourse. And the symbolic context designates the system of relations that the discourse, as language, sustains to the whole of the language.

But the distinction between mundane, locutionary, and symbolic context is on a different level from the earlier distinction between meaning, impact, and significance (second section above). With my broad view of

'meaning', meaning is formed from the interaction of all three of the contexts — mundane, locutionary, and symbolic. On the other hand, mundane, locutionary, and symbolic contexts are *not* as broad as the full cultural context that is relevant for assessing 'significance'. In the mundane context we consider not the whole world, but only the 'world' to which the discourse refers. In the locutionary context we consider (directly) not the speaker and the audience and their understandings, but the channel and substance of communication between them. In the symbolic context we consider not all the 'codes' of cultures (as in Barthes 1967, 1974), but that particular verbal code that the discourse utilizes.

If it seems expedient, the locutionary context can be further subdivided. (See Figure 4.) Metaphorically speaking, one may consider the 'channel' of communication in terms of (a) its composition or substance, (b) the signal it carries, and (c) its cross-sectional width. In the case of written material, the 'composition' is paper and ink, together with some kind of

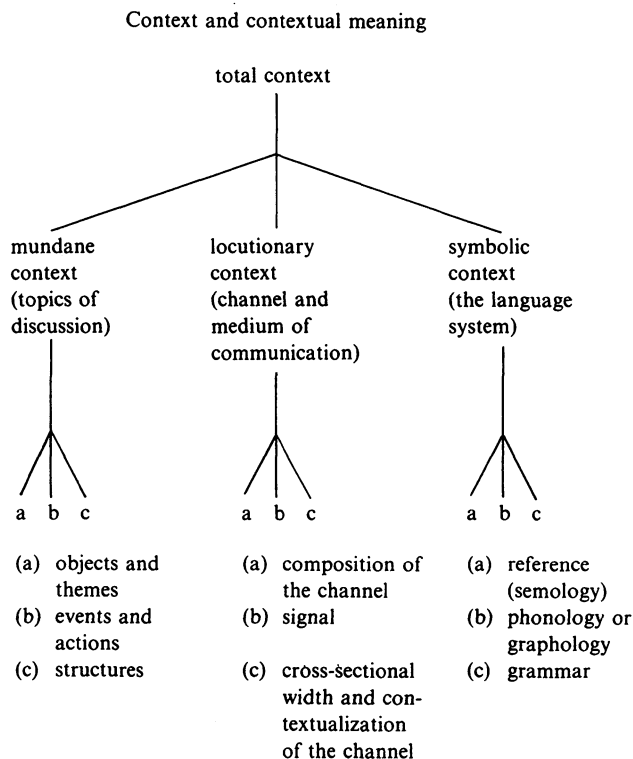


Figure 4.

printing process at the source and reflected light at the target end. The 'signal carried' is the particular series of letters, words, sentences, etc., considered not merely as graphic signs, but as a coherent message, as discourse. The 'cross-sectional width' is the format of the page: size, arrangement of lines, illustrations, binding, etc. In oral discourse the cross-sectional width may include gestures, facial expressions, and other nonverbal features of considerable importance. In fact, the signal can shift from one part of the cross section to another, as when gestures replace words (see Pike 1967: 25–36). My use of the word 'discourse' up to this point could easily conceal this interlocking of the verbal and nonverbal in human behavior. It would, therefore, perhaps be wiser to substitute the word 'message' for the word 'discourse' in the entire discussion above, in order to give nonverbal aspects of communication their full due. But the words 'message' and 'communication' still select out certain types of human behavior from the whole spectrum. Manufacturing, eating, playing, and artistically creating are activities that, though they often involve communication, are nevertheless richer than communication. A certain narrowing is inevitable in order to focus on language. The question is how far we narrow, whether we exclude nonverbal communication or not. In the remainder of my discussion I will focus on those verbal discourses where nonverbal communication makes only a slight contribution.

I have now included within my enumeration each of the six aspects of communication delineated by Jakobson (1960: 357), though I have not arrived at my distinctions in the same way he did. Jakobson's 'emotive' and 'conative' correspond, as I have noted, to my 'emotive impact' and 'conative impact' (third section above). Jakobson's 'referential' and 'metalingual' correspond to my 'mundane context' and 'symbolic context'. Jakobson's 'phatic' and 'poetic' correspond, at least roughly, to my distinction between the composition of the channel (phatic) and its signal (poetic).

Language as a system of reference, phonology, and grammar

The symbolic context, as I have said, consists in the language system (*langue*) that the discourse utilizes and draws on. Language as a system has three interlocking but semi-independent and distinguishable subsystems, namely phonology, grammar, and semantics (semology). Linguists, of course, disagree on the precise points of division between these systems. Some stratificationalists want to multiply the number of subsystems beyond three. Others have wanted to exclude semantics from linguistics proper. In keeping with the tagmemic framework that I have

chosen, I retain the traditional three subsystems. Following Pike (Pike and Pike 1977: 3), I call the third system 'reference', in order to reinforce the point that 'meaning' in a comprehensive sense is a product of the utilization and interaction of all three systems, not simply the referential system.

The difference between these three subsystems I have attempted to delineate more precisely and rigorously in a previous article (Poythress 1978). But I am persuaded that perfectly exact boundaries between the subsystems can be obtained only by drawing the boundaries in an arbitrary way. The mutual influences of the three subsystems on one another continually frustrate the attempt to draw a perfectly precise boundary. For the purposes of the present article, illustrations will suffice to delineate the distinction between reference, phonology and grammar. Grammar and phonology can exist in relative independence of reference, as in Chomsky's 'Colorless green ideas sleep furiously' and in the first stanza of Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem 'Jabberwocky':

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves/did gyre and gimble in the wabe./ All mimsy
were the borogroves,/and the mome raths outgrabe.//

Phonology with virtually no grammar or reference left can be illustrated by a string of nonsense sounds conforming to English phonological structure:

mə "striləm fə'ral//.

Referential structure, by contrast, is whatever structure is invariant under close paraphrase.

In my opinion, reference, phonology, and grammar are a kind of image within the language system itself of the three main contexts of discourse: mundane, locutionary, and symbolic. First, the referential system of language is most obviously connected to, and conditioned by, the need for talking about 'worlds' outside language, both real and imaginary. Hence it is an 'image' within language (*langue*) of mundane contexts. More precisely, the referential system is conditioned by the sum of all such mundane contexts considered significant by language users.

Second, the phonological system is heavily conditioned by the phonetic 'channel' that is the typical medium (and thus part of the locutionary context) for communication. Phonology is, if you will, the image within language of the sum of locutionary contexts, with their various constraints on the articulation, transmission, and audition of streams of sound under varying 'noise' conditions and varying degrees of access to nonverbal

channels. Phonological systems are remarkably adapted to efficiency and minimization of error, subject to such locutionary constraints.

The extent of influence of the channel on the phonological subsystem can be immediately appreciated when we notice what happens with a change of channel. In shifting to written communication, the grammatical and referential systems of English remain virtually unchanged. But phonology is transformed into graphology, whose units and boundaries (spaces and punctuation) only partially and inexactly correspond to phonological units and boundaries.

Third, the grammatical system of language is an 'image' within language of the symbolic context (the total language system) itself. In what way? Just as the language system provides a 'code' mediating between the need to talk about 'worlds' and a phonetic medium, so grammar provides a 'code' consisting of structure mediating between the referential system and the phonological system.

In subdividing the symbolic context or symbolic system into phonological, grammatical, and referential subsystems, I am operating with language in particular, in distinction from other semiotic systems. It is a challenging task to try to extend this threefold division to other semiotic systems. One would proceed in a similar way to what I have done. One would delineate a locutionary context or 'channel': ink on paper, paint on canvas, building materials (for architecture), media for sculpture, etc. One would delineate a mundane context: aesthetic matters, foods (for Barthes's restaurant menus), the human figure in social interaction (for clothing), etc. When 'projected' into the symbolic context consisting of the actual semiotic system, the locutionary contexts produce as their 'image' a system of forms, very like what Saussure meant by 'signifiers' (*signifiants*). The mundane context, likewise, produces a system of referents very like Saussure's 'signifieds' (*signifiés*). But in a tagmemic version of semiotics, unlike many versions, I would suppose that there would be an intermediate system of 'grammatical' units not always identical with either of the other two systems.¹ According to Pike's theory of the form-meaning composite, none of these subsystems could be cleanly separated from the others (K. Pike 1976).

This whole area of nonverbal semiotics deserves more attention than I can give to it in this article. I return now to the phenomena of verbal language.

I have just delineated some possible subdivisions of the locutionary and symbolic contexts. I would tentatively suggest that the mundane context might also be subdivided. This subdivision might take place in a number of ways, depending on one's metaphysical views. If one attempts to arrive at an emic point of view, a view like that the discourse itself assumes, the

results will naturally vary with the discourse and cultural setting of the speaker and audience. This is one possible approach. Another is to apply once again the static, dynamic, and relational perspectives to the mundane context. In a rough way, one may distinguish thereby between static entities (objects and their abstract analogues, themes), dynamic entities (events and actions), and relational entities (structures). (See Figure 4.) My distinction between objects (static) and events (dynamic) roughly parallels that in Grimes (participants and props versus events; 1975: 35–50) and in Beekman and Callow (1974: 64, n.1; cf. Nida 1964: 62). My starting point, however, is the mundane context rather than its lexical realization in discourse.

I mention this possible subdivision because I think that it may help to illumine Roland Barthes's distinctions among five 'codes' (1974: 17–20). His proairetic code, or code of actions, clearly concerns itself primarily with the 'dynamic entities' in the mundane context. Somewhat less obviously, his connotative codes and cultural codes appear to me to be concerned, respectively, with the abstract static entities, and the relational entities in the mundane context. Barthes's remaining two codes, the 'symbolic field' and the 'hermeneutic code', or code of puzzles, I will discuss in a sequel article.² Both are tied up with the locutionary context and the broader matters concerning the speaker–audience axis. The hermeneutical code, in particular, concerns the fact that *speaker* conceals, hints at, and reveals information to the *audience*. Thus Roland Barthes's distinctions can be largely subsumed under the distinctions that I have made in the different types of discourse context.

Recapitulation

I have been able to subdivide and distinguish aspects of discourse again and again by application of the three perspectives with which I started: the static perspective, the dynamic perspective, and the relational perspective. (See the summary, Table 1.) The perspectives, of course, have been used in a somewhat different way every time a new subdivision has been added. But I still hope that the repeated return to these perspectives may serve as a theoretical justification for the subdivisions that I have selected. I have thereby avoided producing an *ad hoc* list subject to supplementation by elements or aspects of discourse still neglected. On the other hand, my list is subject to further subdivision adding finer distinctions to those I have already made. And finer distinctions can be produced by 'intersecting' in some way any two of the categories in Table 1. Thus the speaker's point of view (represented by emotive impact) can be 'intersected' with the

Table 1. *Summary of subdivisions of total import*

- I. Meaning: the discourse as a unified behavioral whole (S)
 - A. Unital meaning: discourse as a verbal unit (S)
 - 1. Contrast: distinguished from other units (S)
 - 2. Variation: having vagueness or range of meaning (D)
 - 3. Distribution: residing in a larger immediate context of verbal meaning (R)
 - B. Hierarchical meaning: discourse as parts within wholes (D)
(See the sequel article.)
 - C. Contextual meaning: discourse as elements from a system of meaning (R)
 - 1. Mundane context: the referents of the discourse (S)
 - 2. Locutionary context: the medium of the discourse (D)
 - 3. Symbolic context: the 'code' or language system used (R)
- II. Impact: the discourse as a process (D)
 - A. Emotive impact: using the speaker's viewpoint (D)
 - B. Formative impact: using the discourse viewpoint (S)
 - C. Conative impact: using the audience's viewpoint (R)
- III. Significance: the discourse in relation to the body of knowledge and life (R)

S correlates with the static perspective

D correlates with the dynamic perspective

R correlates with the relational perspective

phonological system. In this connection we focus on the speaker's (emic) perception of the phonological system that he is using, and his perception of the relation of that system to his discourse.

One crucial area deserves some further attention: the area of hierarchy. What, for example, is the hierarchical structure of Mark 4: 30–32? How is Mark 4: 30–32 as a whole composed of smaller units? How do these units contribute to the totality of meaning? These questions are exceedingly complex. But linguists interested in discourse analysis have paid considerable attention to them, so there is much to be said in detail. Hence I intend to devote a sequel article entirely to the matter of hierarchy.

Notes

1. It should be noted that unlike many semioticians and the earlier Pike (1967: 92), I do not use the word 'grammar' to designate syntagmatic or syntagmemic constructions of any kind. Constructions in which parts form larger wholes are one form of hierarchy. Phonology and reference, as well as grammar, have hierarchical manifestations (K. Pike 1976; Pike and Pike 1977: 3–4). Rather, 'grammar' designates a semiotic subsystem interlocking with referential and phonological/graphological subsystems, but semi-independent of them. A 'grammar' of painting would consist of a system of regularities specifiable at least in part in a manner invariant under changes in the subject of paintings and under changes in the medium (water color, acrylic, oil, ink; canvas or paper). Systematic regularities characteristic of a particular medium would make up an

analogue to the phonological system. Systematic regularities characteristic of particular types of subject would make up an analogue to the referential system of language.

2. To appear in *Semiotica*, Volume 40.

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Vern S. Poythress (b. 1946) is assistant professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His principal research interests are discourse analysis, philosophy of language, hermeneutics, and New Testament studies. He has published *Philosophy, Science and the Sovereignty of God* (1976), in addition to the articles cited above.