

Workshop Report

FRENCH DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AFLS/Birkbeck Workshop, Saturday 1 December 2001

Some 20 people gathered to hear two of the authors of FRENCH DISCOURSE ANALYSIS present ideas on the subject, the book and other supporting material.

The book is divided into two parts: COHESION, which looks at explicit processes by which sentences are linked together, and COHERENCE, which focuses on implicit links and the cultural assumptions which underlie text structure. In the workshop we looked more particularly at connectors, be they temporal or causal, in a number of texts, showing how connectors could express a particular ideological viewpoint, reinforcing authority, contributing to a “truth effect”.

We then studied “The presence of the speaker in the text”, in a newspaper editorial, and in a series of advertisements. This theme was followed by an examination of the cultural assumptions made by a writer in *Le Monde* (the article is one of the many presented in the book – page 206).

The day would not have been complete without a look at the chapter on Textual Schemata, and the idea that most texts evoke some kind of quest, a helper and an opponent. It is often fruitful to analyse texts in terms of proppian or greimasian models, where opposition and transformation are axiomatic. A detailed analysis of the goal of a text allows one to delve beneath the surface and isolate some of the ideological assumptions that underpin it.

Finally, there was some hands-on work on two parallel newspaper articles on a political theme, as well as further examination of advertisements.

By the end of the day, the meeting felt much more familiar with the techniques of analysis being suggested, and, as many practical teaching points had been aired, colleagues feel confident in introducing formally at least an element of discourse analysis into their teaching. The book is an excellent basis for a course, or part-course, but teachers agreed that each would need to provide extra, personal material so that students could apply their newly-acquired skills to different artefacts.

Penny Sewell

Birkbeck College, University of London.

M. L’Huillier, B. Martin, R. Udris, *French Discourse Analysis*, Philomel, 2000

(Philomel Productions Ltd., 1 Queen’s Gate Place Mews, London SW7 5BG)

Workshop Report

Les français des corpus

University of the West of England, Bristol, 16th February 2002

Organised by Kate Beeching (contact kate.beeching@uwe.ac.uk)

This workshop, a joint venture organised under the aegis of AFLS and SFS and supported by the French Embassy and the Centre for European Studies at UWE, invited papers on French corpora of many different types: spoken, journalistic, literary, parallel (translation) corpora and learner corpora. Our invited speaker was Sylviane Granger from the Université Catholique de Louvain, who, despite her regrets concerning the lack of corpus material easily available for French (by comparison with the relative wealth of English corpora), is evidently making great strides to remedy the situation and is currently working on a Research Project to develop a large corpus of learner French.

Fifteen 30-minute papers were presented in all, in parallel sessions, nine “Communications” and six “Présentations” of a more practical nature, in which software and applications were described or demonstrated in the computer lab. There were thirty participants from France and Ireland, as well as from Universities closer to home in Great Britain. Despite the late arrival of one speaker (due to fog over Bristol on the Saturday morning, her plane was diverted to Cardiff), the day went smoothly and was rated a great success. Participants commented particularly on the friendly atmosphere for which gatherings of AFLS members have some renown. We were delighted that our President, Professor Lodge, was able to join us and also Martin Wynne, who was able to inform us about the willingness of the Oxford Text Archive to consider including French corpora as part of its remit. I was delighted that the majority of participants were able to stay on for the Table Ronde, in which “ways forward” for French corpus collection were aired.