

ASPECT AND REFERENCE IN TEXT PASSAGES: *MODES OF DISCOURSE*, BY
CARLOTA S. SMITH

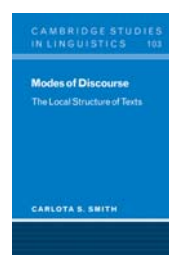
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Modes of Discourse: The Local Structure of Texts.

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1. Aspect and reference in text passages

Carlota Smith shows by way of nominal reference and verbal aspect a new approach to texts that sets the foundations of a linguistics of discourse. Passages are intermediate units, linguistically defined by their discourse modes, between the sentences they are made of and the texts they make up.

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2. Publisher description for *Modes of discourse* by Carlota S. Smith

In studying discourse, the problem for the linguist is to find a fruitful level of analysis. Carlota Smith offers a new approach with this study of discourse passages, units of several sentences or more. She introduces the key idea of the 'Discourse Mode', identifying five modes: Narrative, Description, Report, Information, Argument. These are realized at the level of the passage, and cut across genre lines. Smith shows that the modes, intuitively recognizable as distinct, have linguistic correlates that differentiate them. She analyzes the properties that distinguish each mode, focusing on grammatical rather than lexical information. The book also examines linguistically-based features that appear in passages of all five modes: topic and focus, variation in syntactic structure, and subjectivity, or point of view.

3. From the Introduction

“This book is a partial answer to the question: what can close linguistic analysis bring to the understanding of discourse? Discourse studies have focused on pragmatic factors such as genre expectations, discourse coherence relations, and inference. In part this has been a natural reaction to earlier, rather unsuccessful attempts to apply the techniques of linguistic analysis beyond the sentence. The current emphasis also follows from increased understanding of the area of pragmatics, and of the role of context in language use and interpretation. It has sometimes seemed, though, that nothing at all is conveyed by linguistic forms, while everything is due to pragmatics or lexical content. I attempt to right the balance here, at least in part. I propose a local level of discourse, the Discourse Mode, which has linguistic properties and discourse meaning. I posit five modes: Narrative, Report, Descriptive, Information, and Argument. The Discourse Modes are classes of discourse passages, defined by the entities they introduce into the universe of discourse and their principle of progression. The discourse entities are essentially aspectual. They include the familiar Events and States, and some less-familiar categories. The Discourse Modes grew out of my work on aspect and tense.”

http://www.cambridge.org/servlet/file/store6/item2469170/version1/item_9780521781695_excerpt.pdf

4. Table of contents

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5. From In Memoriam Carlota S. Smith

Carlota Shipman Smith (1934-2007) worked on temporal aspect in English, French, Russian, Mandarin, and Navajo; she was a member of the Navajo Language Academy. Through her “modes” or “different genres of discourse (e.g., narratives vs. reports vs. descriptions)”, she “sought to bring the analytic tools of linguistics to the humanistic study of literature”. “Carlota led an exemplary life, a life well-lived until her final hours. A life that will be well-remembered.” (Richard Meier, Obituary and Remarks, http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/linguistics/_files/html/carlota.html.)

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