

Papers from the  
**EIGHTH  
SCANDINAVIAN  
CONFERENCE**

of  
Linguistics  
**I**

Edited by Ole Togeby

Københavns Universitet  
Institut for Nordisk Filologi  
Njalsgade 80  
DK 2300  
Danmark

Ole Tøgeby  
Københavns Universitet

# PENTAGRAMMATICAL TEXT THEORY

In this paper I will outline a theory of texts which includes a theory of text functions, text factors, text requirements, text aspects and text components; one appropriate name for this theory is pragmatic text theory, but I want to distinguish between different pragmatic text theories, and therefore I have chosen to call it pentagrammatical text theory. This paper will explain why.

## External relations outside the text

According to this theory a text will be seen as an event, not as a sequence of sentences following certain rules for coherence and cohesion. This means that a text, like an utterance, is something that happens at a certain time at a certain place (or at many places at the same time). Texts are always parts of communicative situations, and a description of the factors involved in the communicative situation comprises the first part of the description of the text.

Five factors influence the text in any given situation: the **SENDER** of the text, the **TOPIC** of the text, the **RECEIVER** of the text, the **CHANNEL** through which the text is sent and the **LANGUAGE** in which the text is formulated. The relation between the text and a factor is a relation of reciprocal determination. Persons are senders only if they produce texts, and sequences of sentences are texts only if they are sent by a sender. And so on for topic, receiver, channel and language. *Channel* is defined as the technical and social arrangement which makes the

communication of texts possible. A classroom is a channel, just as much as a tv set.

With regard to situation texts have several functions, one corresponding to each factor. A text is an **EXPRESSION** of the senders intention, it is a **STATEMENT** about the topic, it is **INFORMATION** for the receiver, **CONTACT** through the channel, and **USE** of the language. Every text always has all of these functions simultaneously. But in some texts one or two functions can dominate, and in other texts one or two different functions can dominate. Thus a theory of genres can be constructed on the basis of function domination. In a normal narrative text the statement function dominates, and in a set of instructions the information function is dominant, graffiti can be defined as a text using an irregular channel and thus the contact function is the dominant one, and in a definition in a dictionary the use function is dominant. Finally, poetry is defined as a text with a dominating expression function.

Texts are not brute facts but social events which are constituted by the rules shared by the participants in the communicative situation. So the next step describing text is the description of the types of rules or requirements which should be met if the sequence of sentences shall count as a text in a particular situation. In relation to the five factors and five functions different requirements are to be met. As expressions of the sender's intention the text has to be **SINCERE**, as a statement about a topic it has to be **TRUE**, as information for the receiver it has to be **RELEVANT**, as contact through the channel it has to be **REGULAR**, and as use of the language a text has to be **CORRECT**.

If a sequence of sentences as an expression of the sender's intention is not sincere, it will not count as a full blown text in the situation. And if insincerity becomes the rule and not the exception, the language will not serve a community of people.

The best illustration of this point is the story about Peter and the wolf. Peter was a shepherd and he was bored wandering all alone with the sheep. So he called as loud as he could: *The wolf is coming*, and all the villagers came along to protect the sheep, but Peter said: *There is no wolf. I just needed some fun*. Peter still watched the sheep, and once again he shouted: *The wolf is coming*, and once again the villagers ran to where he was, and they became very angry when they heard that there was no wolf. Then the wolf came, and Peter cried: *The wolf is coming*, but no villager believed that there was any danger, so many of the sheep were eaten by the wolf.

If the principle of sincerity of the senders expression is not met, communication will break down.

The principle of sincerity includes 1) that the senders are honest, 2) that they are competent as senders of a text of the given sort, 3) and that they are reliable. In the classic rhetoric this is referred to as *ethos*.

As a statement about the topic the text has to be true. It means 1) that what the text states about the topic must correspond to reality, 2) that all parts of the topic ought to be mentioned, 3) that there are no contradictions in the text, and 4) that the matter is viewed from as many perspectives as possible. In short this principle can be called *COHERENCE*.

As information for the receiver the text must be relevant, which means 1) that the text must be understandable for the receiver i.e. that the point of departure is something known by the receiver, 2) that it must be informative for the given receiver, i.e. it states something new and unknown for the receiver, and 3) that the information must be interesting for the receiver, i.e. has some connection with the receiver's interests.

As a contact through the channel the text has to be regular and appropriate for the situation, i.e. 1) in the right place, 2) at the right time, 3) in a form which can pass through the channel, and 4) with presuppositions corresponding to the social roles which the sender and

the receiver actually possess.

Finally, as use of the language the text must be correct, i.e. 1) acceptable in the speech community, 2) in accord with the grammatical rules described in the grammar 3) with correct spelling according to the authorized orthography of the language, and 4) unambiguous. In short this principle can be called *COHESION*.

Thus the external relations of the text are A) the factors determining the text and themselves determined by the text: sender, topic, receiver, channel and language, B) the functions of the text corresponding to each factor, coexisting and more or less dominant: expression, statement, information, contact and use, C) the requirements relating to each function defined as the condition to be met if the sequence of sentences shall count as a text in the particular situation: sincerity, truth, relevance, regularity and correctness.

Four authors have influenced this theory, Jürgen Habermas, Roman Jakobson, H.P. Grice and John Searle. Habermas<sup>1)</sup> argues for a theory of universal pragmatics in which four requirements of universal character are found to be conditions without which no communication is possible, viz. sincerity, truth, regularity and understandability. The concept of requirement is familiar from the work of Grice and Searle<sup>2)</sup>, who discuss respectively 4 maxims or conversational rules, viz. the rule of quantity (understandability and informativity), quality (truth), and manner (understandability) and relation (relevance), and four conditions for the happiness of speech acts, viz. propositional content rule, preparatory rule, sincerity

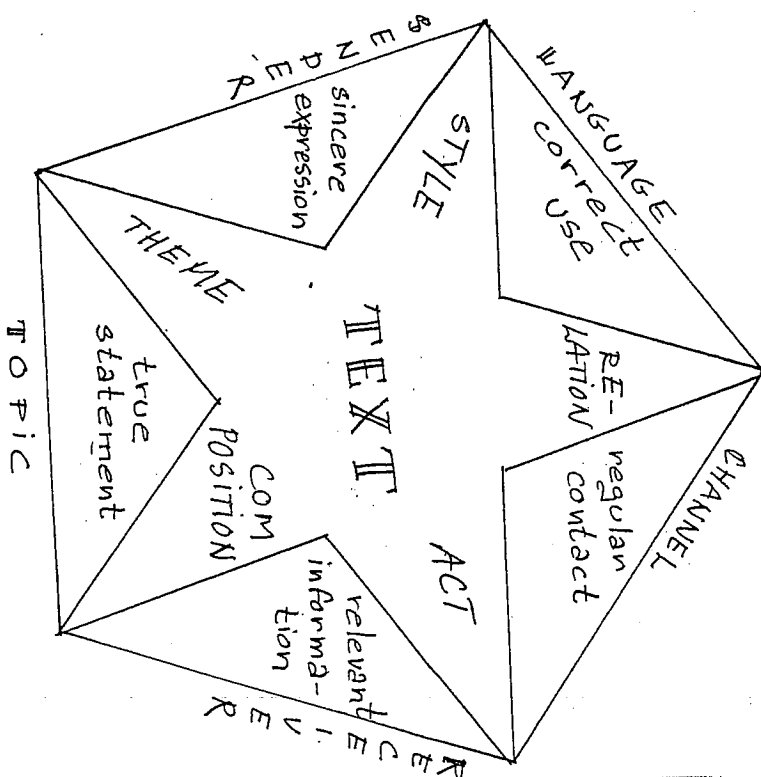
1) Jürgen Habermas: *Was heisst Universalpragmatik?* in Karl-Otto Apel: *Theorie-Diskussion. Sprachpragmatik und Philosophie*, 1976, Frankfurt am Main.

2) H.P. Grice: *Logic and Conversation* in Peter Cole & Jerry Morgan: *Syntax and Semantics. Vol. 3. Speech Acts*, 1975, Academic Press, and John R. Searle: *Speech Acts*, 1969, London.

rule, and essential rule. Jacobson <sup>3)</sup> has outlined a theory of language functions with 6 factors and 6 corresponding functions: addresser: emotive; context: referential; addressee: conative; contact: phatic; code: metalingual; and as the sixth function: poetic function of the message in relation to the message itself.

I have chosen not to regard the poetic function as a function, primarily because no requirement corresponds to this function; to be poetic or aesthetic is not a condition for textuality and it is difficult to conceive of the message itself as a factor determining the message. On the other hand, I have chosen more functions than the four functions corresponding to the four requirements from Habermas, Grice and Searle. Habermas lacks the requirement of relevance, which Grice mentions in three versions: understandability, informativity (quantity) and relevance (relation). Habermas and Searle mention the requirement of sincerity, and both Grice and Habermas mention the concept of truth.

Among these possibilities I have chosen five factors, functions and requirements as most exclusive categorization of the field. And the whole theory can be illustrated by a pentagrammatical diagram as follows:



Internal relations within the text

A text can be defined both by its external and its internal relations. As a whole, a text can be seen as having many aspects, i.e. qualities that can not be localized to any one part of the text, but which can be found in any part of the text. The aspect of the text which relates to the sender and the topic is the THEME of the text, which is constituted by the ISOTOPY of the words in the text.

By the word 'isotopy' from Greimas<sup>4)</sup>, I mean the common and therefore dominating semantic components of the words in the text. Every word has

3) Roman Jakobson: Closing Statements. Linguistics and poetics in T.A. Seabrock: Style in Language, 1960 M.I.T. Press.

4) A.J. Greimas: Sémiotique structurale, 1966, Paris.

certain meaning components that remain constant in all contexts, e.g. 'at great measure' in the word *high*, and additional alternating meaning components that are selected in different contexts, e.g. 'acoustic' as opposed to 'social' in *high tone* and *high-ranking officers*. The meaning components of the word, which, because of their similarity with components in other words, dominate over the competing components of the same word, are called the isotopy of the text.

In relation to the topic and the receiver the text can be seen as COMPOSITION based on HIERARCHY and CONNECTION. In relation to the receiver and the channel, the text can be seen as an ACT, based on the principle of CONSTITUENCY, i.e. agreement among the participants as to the definition of the situation. The aspect defined by the channel and the language is called RELATION, based on the principle of CONFIGURITY of the text and its context, i.e. the social relation of the partners in the communication must continue in the text, perhaps be changed in the text, and then continued after the text process is finished. As an act the text defines a relation unique for the text, as a relation the text confirms a social relation which exists before and after the text. Finally, in relation to the language and the sender the text can be seen as STYLE, based on the principle of CONGRUENCE, i.e. markers of the same choice of style must be found throughout the text.

In opposition to aspects, COMPONENTS can be defined as parts of the text which relate to the five functions and which can be localized in the text. Components are the picture in the text of the external factors of the situation.

The picture of the sender in the text can, according to the tradition of literary criticism, be called the narrator, and sincerity can then be defined as similarity or congruence between sender and narrator. In the text the narrator component can be found in connection with the IMPLICATURES, i.e. the propositions which can be

expected to be true in accordance with the principle of relevance.

If I say: *My father was sober yesterday*, it can be expected that I mean that you know that my father normally isn't sober, otherwise it would not be informative to tell you that he was. But it is not an implication or presupposition of the sentence, because I can cancel the information by saying: *My father was sober yesterday - as all the other days*. Grice has called this phenomenon *implicature* in contrast to *implication*.

All the information implicated by the text forms the picture of the sender in the text and is part of the narrator.

Take another example: every negated sentence in the text will be indicative of what the sender thinks that the receiver does not know. Normally it is more natural to say: *the whale is not a fish* than to say: *the cat is not a fish*, because some senders could believe that their receivers thought that whales are fish, but no sender ever would think that the receivers thought that cats are fish; they eat fish.

A good example is the candidate taking an examination, who says to the examiner while the coexaminer is listening: we didn't agree on this examination question. Nothing untrue is said, but much is implicated.

The picture of the topic in the text is the MOTIF of the text, the immediate matters with which the text is concerned, in opposition to the theme, which is the deep-structure semantic opposition within the text. The motif is constituted by the schemes, scripts and frames used in the text. In classical rhetoric there was a concept of *topos*, which was the common places where one could find ideas relating to a given case. The motif of a text is the *topoi* of the text. In Platons *Symposium* the motif of the text is the god or daimon Eros, but the theme is the psychology of having, lacking and desiring. The *topoi* used in *Symposium* are a person (Eros), his parents, his qualities, his acts, on the surface structure of the text, which deals with the concept of urge in the deep structure.

The picture in the text of the receiver is called the addressee, the one for whom the text is intended. If the receiver is not congruent with the addressee of the text, the intended receiver, it can be very difficult for the receiver to understand the text at all. But if the receiver is not congruent with the addressee, and it is marked in the text that it is the intention of the sender that this is so, then we are dealing with a fictional text. One of the most fictional things in fictional texts is the addressee. The text often begins by mentioning persons who are not known to the actual receivers of the text, the receivers have to identify themselves with some of the persons in the fiction, and thus is the very act of fictionality.

The addressee is often found in the presuppositions of the text. The presuppositions of the text are the propositions implied by the text which do not count as a premise for a subsequent conclusion. In normal declarative sentences the presuppositions are the implications which are not negated by an inserted negation.

The sentence *when have you stopped beating your wife?* implies 1) that you have stopped beating your wife, 2) that you have beaten her, and 3) that you have a wife. But none of these propositions can be used as an premise for a subsequent conclusion; it is odd to say: *I stopped beating my wife four weeks ago, therefore I am not a male chauvinist pig!* *therefore I am married.* The only natural conclusion to the sentence is taking what it asserts (*four weeks ago*) as the premise: *therefore you can find no blue marks on her.* If the sentence is negated: *I have not stopped beating my wife four weeks ago* all the implications still hold true. So 1), 2) and 3) are all presuppositions.

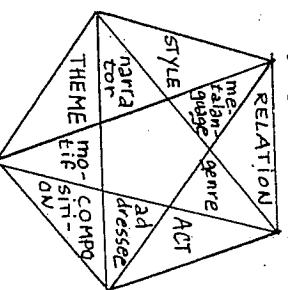
If the sequence of sentences counts as a text in the situation at hand, all the presuppositions of the text are accepted as true and known by the receiver, and for this reason the addressee, the picture in the text of the receiver, is found in the presuppositions. In Piatos *Symposion* Sokrates says to Agathon: *Do you still maintain*

*that Eros is beautiful?* This question presupposes that Agathon had previously asserted that Eros was beautiful. If Sokrates is taken as the sender, this text presupposes something about the receiver, Agathon, and thus makes a picture of Agathon in the text.

The picture of the channel in the text is called the genre. It is often found in the beginning of the text, in the text base. In the first two or three sentences of any text the receiver can make out the genre of the text as a frame for understanding the following parts of the text. A letter is signaled by the opening formulas, *Dear Sir* ... and a fairy tale is signalled by *Once upon a time*...

Finally, the picture of the language in the text is found in the metalanguage of the text. Metalanguage is found more often than expected, in the title, *novel* is a metalinguistic signal of how the language in the text is to be understood, and when words are defined with a view to the rest of the text you can also call this metalinguistic.

The internal relations within the text are the aspects relating to two neighboring functions and factors in the particular situation: the theme, the composition, the act, the relation and the style of the text; and the components, which are parts of the text forming pictures in the text of the factors of the situation: narrator, motif, addressee, genre and metalanguage. It can again be illustrated by a pentagram<sup>5)</sup>:



5) Jeg vil gerne takke Carol Henriksen for at have rettet mit engelsk.