

LOGICAL THOUGHT IN CRITICAL READING

Prof Dr. H. Gerzymisch

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem

We are interested in the problem whether and how we (anyone) can read a text for its logic. In other words how can we determine whether a text makes sense, i.e. whether it is coherent. Our basic assumption is the elements of a text (e.g. sentences, paragraphs) may

- be explicitly or implicitly related to one another (=coherent)
- be incompatible with one another (=incoherent)
- not have anything to do with each other but do not exclude each other (=a-coherent).

A text is not coherent (= non-coherent) when it is incoherent or a-coherent.



1.2 DATA AND PHENOMENA

- We are here not interested in texts which are coherently structured and therefore easy to understand. We are interested in texts that are not coherent.
- There are numerous examples for non-coherent texts, e.g. in Alice in Wonderland or Morgenstern's gallows songs or other nonsense texts. The non-coherence in these texts is intended to be easily identified and causes amusement.
- Instead, we are interested in academic texts which suggest models or theoretical approaches as coherent theories while – if read critically – they are not coherent at all.
- Another interesting phenomenon in this context is the phenomenon that different readers (of basically the same linguistic competence) may come to different judgments about the coherence of the same text. How can this be explained?



1.3 OBJECTIVE, DIFFERENTIATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

- We will attempt to provide solutions for these problems by introducing a coherence-based reading procedure, which can be acquired with relative ease. The methodology of monitoring a reader's comprehension process is explicitly action-oriented and sufficiently transparent to account for different readings at different times and/or by different people.
- With this objective in mind, we will begin by describing some presupposed communication parameters and will roughly outline the concept of coherence in its aspective and holistic dimensions before we discuss the procedure of establishing aspective coherence. The problem of holistic coherence will not be dealt with here.



2 THEORETICAL PRE-REQUISITES

2.1 Communicative Context & Parameters

2.1.1 Situation Type, Time & Place

- We assume that an author offers to a reader a message (= rheme of the message) related to a specific theme (of the message). This takes place within in a situative framework with the following parameters: Situation type, Place, Time, the Communicative Partners and their general Stock of Knowledge as well as their Interest in the given communication.
- The situation type is a holistic pattern of action within a given time and place. It may involve other ,static' parameters, e.g. types of objects and people and ,dynamic' parameters which describe phases of action patterns relevant for the situation.



2.1.2 COMMUNICATIVE PARTNERS: AUTHOR & READER

- An essential presupposition is that the parameters describing the Knowledge Levels of author and reader are not described from the point of view of an external observer (Theta-point of view) but with the understanding of the author's and/or reader's actual knowledge level in a given situation. This implies that none of the communicative partners actually knows what information the other really has and can only hypothesize about the information level of the other.
- The knowledge levels of both communicative partners are therefore assumptions about the knowledge level of the other partner. This means that the information levels of author and reader may be different. It also means that the assumed information levels may be incorrect (assumptions). This is an important distinction.
- The Interest parameter limits the Knowledge Level parameter and focuses on what is of immediate interest in a given situation from an author's and reader's point of view. The basic assumption here is that the reader hypothesizes that the author has knowledge/information that interests her and that the author assumes that what she knows is not yet known but of interest to the reader. The interest levels of author and reader may be different. They may also change in the course of the communication.



2.2 THE TEXT

2.2.1 The Text (Author's Perspective)

- Before having read the text, a reader cannot know whether the text makes sense to him/her or not. Sense continuity (= coherence) can thus not be a pre-requisite for a reader to accept a linguistic form as text (from a reader's perspective).
- Coherence analysis therefore begins only after a text is accepted as such. A definition of text from a reader's perspective therefore has to be rendered independently of its (subsequently established) coherence. A nonsense text can also be accepted as text.
- The conditions upon which a reader can accept a text as such are that 1) a reader has the necessary knowledge and interest profile in the text topic and 2) applies the standard reading procedure as specified.
- A linguistic form therefore is a text (from a reader's perspective) when he/she believes that an author produced this linguistic form as a message (rheme) related to a given topic or theme.
- Important: The reader does not need to make an objective or intersubjectively verifiable decision whether something is a text or not. Important is only that she acts upon the above assumptions. Then it is possible to understand the text as a whole.
- Since the reader has no possibility of comparing what she understood with what the author intended, she depends on the internal coherence of the text to guide and monitor her understanding.



3 ESTABLISHING COHERENCE: MONITORED READING

- Understanding a text (Reader's perspective): We can say that a reader has understood a text if he/she has read and processed it systematically in its linear form (abiding by the standard reading procedure) from text topic through the various chapters and paragraphs of chapters down to the individual sentences. The results of this monitored reading can be visualized by semantic networks – in linear or synchroptic forms. Semantic networks include inferences.
- The methodology has been exemplified elsewhere (e.g. in Gerzymisch/Mudersbach 1998) and is therefore not repeated here.
- Exactly how a concrete reader processes the information cognitively, does not concern us here.
- We concentrate on the reader's concrete monitoring results after she read and understood the text and wants to comment on it.
- Note: a reader may make assumptions about the author, however, her understanding of the text is not dependent upon a reconstruction of the author's intention. She establishes the text as a coherent whole on her own by controlling and monitoring her reading and understanding. This is particularly important when trying to understand and interpret literary works since it avoids the notorious question of whether an author has indeed 'meant' what the reader interprets. For the author-independent understanding of a text, the question of establishing coherence by monitored reading is therefore very important.
- Coherence & Difference



MONITORED READING: A TOP-DOWN – BOTTOM-UP PROCEDURE

- Establishing coherence and thus securing the understanding of a text is considered to be a ‚Lesehandlung‘ (active reading) and needs to be monitored on several levels of the text: chapters, paragraphs and sentences (cf. separate chart).
- The action of monitored reading begins in top-down direction from title to the first chapter to the first paragraph to the first sentence. The titles are understood as themes of the subsequent subordinate levels. The reader’s task is to establish these titles as reference points (arguments) or more complex units in the information structure of the text.
- The sentence-by-sentence reading begins and ends with a paragraph or a chapter. This bottom- up process of understanding controls and monitors the coherence analysis as well as its little noticed opposition: the analysis of differences. Since two sub-units (e.g. two subsequent passages or paragraphs) differ from each other in some way (this was the reason for the author to break the flow of the text). While a difference is implied with respect to the preceding entity, there is also something in common relative to the super-ordinated entity, i.e. while there may be difference between two paragraphs, there may be shared elements between them with respect to the (sub)title of the chapter. Since they are related to each other within the chapter, there is also coherence between them.
- Coherence Types



3.1 COHERENCE AND DIFFERENCE

- In order to perform monitored reading we need to clarify the interdependence of coherence and difference.
- Coherence and Difference are complementary concepts. Coherent is what the reader can link to what was said before or which follows from what was said before. ‚What was said before’ can relate to the same level (e.g. to the same theme of the preceding sentence) or to elements on a higher level (e.g. the title or subtitle of a paragraph or chapter). The progression of information builds up by the new, by what is different (= Difference) from what was said before, i.e. by something rhematic.
- While there is, for example mostly difference in the titles of various chapters of a book (i.e. on the same level), there is also coherence with respect to the text title (topic) as a whole. For sentences the same principle applies: while there is difference between various utterance rhemes, there is coherence with respect to the paragraph or chapter.
- This general principle of a continuous theme-rheme organization of texts implies a hierarchical order of the different levels of a text (cf. graph). The underlying principle operating on the various text levels is an interplay between theme and rheme or in other words between a linkage to the preceding information and its continuation, i.e. to what comes next.



COHERENCE SIGNALS

- Put into practice, the theme-rheme principle requires 1) linguistic means by which information can be interconnected, i.e. linkage elements (in their function as thematic units) 2) progressive elements which carry the actual information (in their function as rhematic units). While the thematic units contain coherence-building elements, the rhematic units are made up of information-conveying elements. They alternate in texts and must be understood as coherence versus difference-signaling units by the reader in the process of monitored reading. For example, if information is repeated in the course of the text, the author may indicate this by e.g. ‚in other words’ but it may also just be implied that the reader identifies the redundancy without any such signal. If an author intentionally does not want to link an information to what has been said before, she may start a new paragraph, which indicates that there is a new theme. Texts are full of such ‚scouting signals’ which mark the way and tell the reader that she is or is not on the ‚right’ track.
- Monitored reading presupposes that a reader is aware of the interplay of coherence-establishing and difference-conveying elements when securing understanding of the text. Basically, a reader has two reasons for doubts about what she has understood:
 - she either does not recognize the linkage to what was said before or
 - she does not recognize the new, continuing information.



COHERENCE AND DIFFERENCE ON TEXT LEVELS

We differentiate the levels of message, chapter; paragraph, and sentence:.

- **Theme units (coherence building)**
utterance theme chapter theme paragraph theme sentence theme
- **Rheme units (signaling difference)**
Utterance rheme chapter rheme paragraph rheme sentence rheme
- Of thematic quality are (on each level) those units which interconnect with the next higher level. Only the sentence theme relates to a preceding unit of the same level.
- Aside from their informational quality, thematic and rhematic units therefore also differ in their structural position: While coherence-establishing thematic units provide links to preceding units on the same or super-ordinated level, information-conveying rhematic units operate on the same level (chapter or paragraphs).



COHERENCE AND DIFFERENCE ON TEXT LEVELS

- All coherence types (sentence, paragraph, chapter) share the following characteristic feature:
- From a unit E 2 a relation (direct, hypothetical, per aspect) is established to a preceding unit E 1 (of the same or a higher level).
- For all difference relations (sentence, paragraph, chapter) the following holds:
- Emanating from a unit E 2 a difference (a contrast, an opposition or simply a change to something different) is established to a preceding unit (or complex) of the same level (chapter to chapter).



3.2 COHERENCE TYPES

3.2.1 Sentence-internal coherence

- The connectedness of the parts of a sentence is grammatically and semantically presupposed and is therefore not discussed here.



3.2.2 TRANSPHRASTIC (LOCAL) COHERENCE

- The sentence-related coherence is defined for two sentences following each other:
- S 2 is coherent with S 1 when an argument in S 2 is linked to an argument in S 1 by an identity hypothesis.
- This type of coherence presupposes the analysis of the sentence with the RELATEX method in combination with either one of the following hypotheses:
 - HYP 0 = direct identity or anaphoric reference
 - HYP 1 = the hypothesis that G' is synonymous with G
 - HYP 2 = the hypothesis that G'' and G have the same extension or
 - HYP 3 = the hypothesis that G'' has something factual to do with the G (e.g. is part of
- him or in a fixed relationship with him, such as the relationship of a semantic role and a relator.
- The types of hypotheses can be extended by hermeneutic interpretations which are not further developed here.



3.2.2 TRANSPHRASTIC (LOCAL) COHERENCE

- The identity hypothesis does not have to be reduced to the identity relationships and hypotheses between arguments although this is the strongest criterion. Coherence between sentences can also be established if a reader – independently of the arguments – decides that two sentences (or text parts) may be connected with each other by a common aspect (aspective coherence).
- Important is that a reader is aware of the kind of hypothesis she uses when establishing coherence because the kind of hypothesis that is necessary to establish coherence determines the degree of individuality in understanding a text and whether this understanding can be intersubjectively made transparent.

3.2.3 COHERENCE BETWEEN PARAGRAPH AND THEME OF CHAPTER



- Coherence between a paragraph of a text or chapter and the chapter theme exists when a text part of a chapter is aspectively coherent with a text part in chapter theme.
- Coherence between a chapter and a title exists if a reader can establish aspective coherence between the theme of a chapter and the text theme.

4 ADEQUACY & ADDED VALUE: APPLICATION





5 REFERENCE

Mudersbach, Klaus (2004): „Kohärenz und Textverstehen in der Lesersicht. Oder: Wie prüft man die Stimmigkeit von Texten beim Lesen?“

In: Juliane House/Werner Koller/Klaus Schubert (2004): Neue Perspektiven in der Übersetzungs- und Dolmetschwissenschaft.

Festschrift für Heidrun Gerzymisch zum 60. Geburtstag. 249-271.

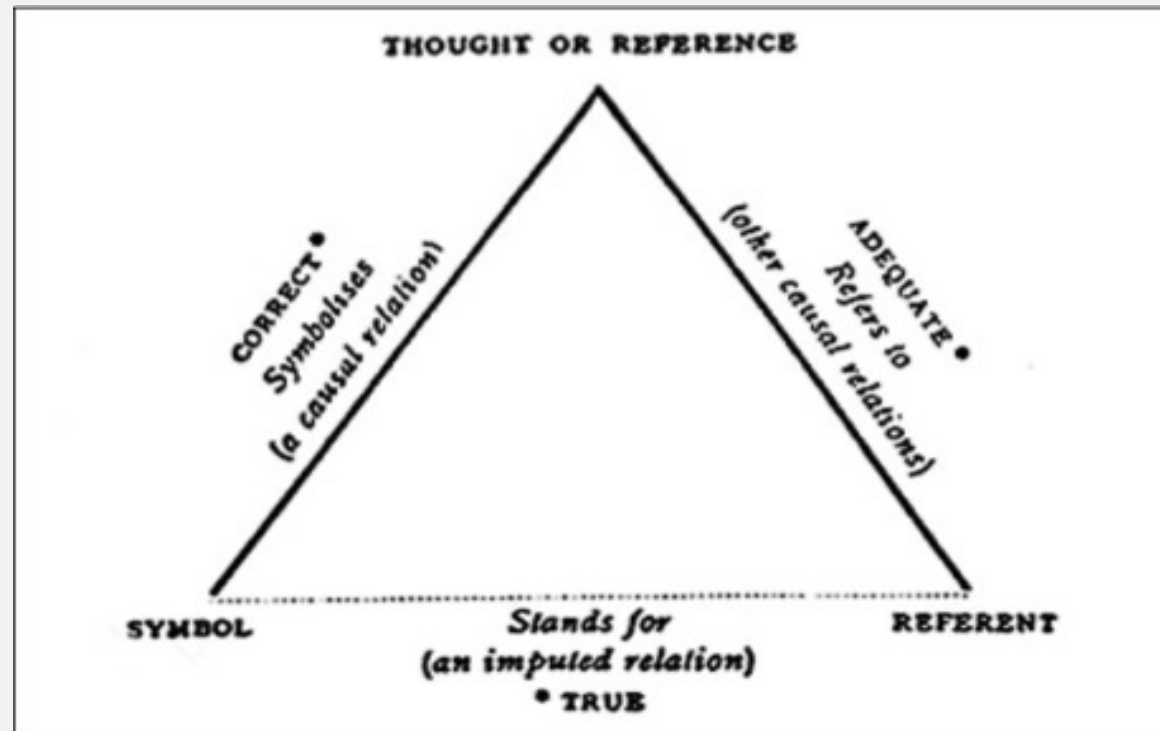


CRITICAL READING: THE OGDEN/RICHARDS EXAMPLE

- 1. The text
Between a thought and a symbol causal relations hold. When we speak, the symbolism we employ is caused partly by the reference we are making and partly by social and psychological factors – the purpose for which we are making the reference, the proposed effect of our symbols on other persons, and our own attitude. When we hear what is said, the symbols both cause us to perform an act of reference and to assume an attitude which will, according to circumstances, be more or less similar to the act and the attitude of the speaker.
- Between the Thought and the Referent there is also a relation; more or less direct (as when we think about or attend to a coloured surface we see), or indirect (as when we ,think of‘ or ,refer to‘ Napoleon), in which case there may be a very long chain of sign-situations intervening between the act and its referent: word – historian – contemporary record – eye-witness – referent (Napoleon).
- Between the Symbol and the Referent there is no relevant relation other than the indirect one, which consists in its being used by someone to stand for a referent. Symbol and Referent, that is to say, are not connected directly (and when, for grammatical reasons, we imply such a relation, it will merely be an imputed, as opposed to a real, relation) but only indirectly round the two sides of the triangle.



CRITICAL READING: THE OGDEN/RICHARDS EXAMPLE





CRITICAL READING: THE OGDEN/RICHARDS EXAMPLE

2. Understanding the text (Critical Reading)

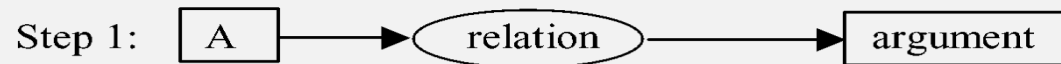
Critically read the text and graph

1. Analyse the text (and graph)
 - I. Which elements are concepts/arguments
 - II. Which elements are relations
2. Depict the relations as R_n , Index 1 – n = valency. Relations consist of a relator (=verbal complex), which has a certain valency (n) and n (a number of) arguments. This will yield a linear structure
3. Represent the structure graphically or in a linear fashion.
4. Re-Arrange the linear structure to a synchronous-optical structure: for each argument in a text all relations in that text are identified.

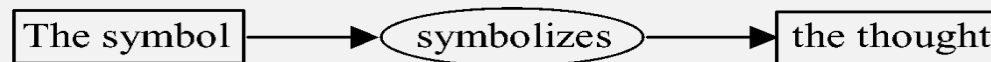


CRITICAL READING: THE OGDEN/RICHARDS EXAMPLE

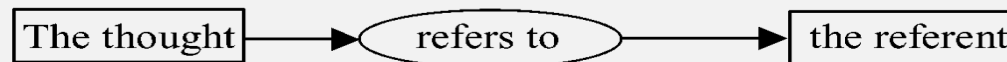
5 Application to the Ogden/Richards example



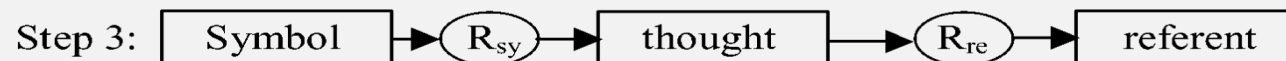
Step 2: R_{sy}^2 (symbol, thought)



R_{re}^2 (thought, referent)



This yields the structure RE+F $\langle\langle$ symbol, thought, referent $\rangle\rangle$, $\langle R_{sy}^2, R_{re}^2 \rangle\rangle$



Problem: what is conceived as a relation (the relation of referring to something) is transformed into an object (reference).