A TEXT ANALYSIS OF “THE 2007 COMMENCEMENT SPEECH BY BILL GATES AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY” AND “THE 2014 COMMENCEMENT SPEECH BY BILL AND MELINDA GATES AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY” ON THE DE BEAUGRANDE FRAMEWORK


M.A. Minor Program Thesis

Major: English Linguistics
Code: 60220201

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PART A: INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale of the study

When someone forms a text they are often concerned with their text’s effect in practice; hence, there have been a number of theories that assist one in creating a successful text. As an English linguistics researcher, the thesis writer realizes that the framework by De Beaugrande (1981) is a reliable foundation on which she is able to analyze a text, which significantly contributes to her Master’s degree accomplishment. In addition, that theory eventually helps the thesis writer improve the capability of producing and evaluate invaluable texts in her teaching career and devotes to the study of text linguistics in particular as well as English as an international language in general. De Beaugrande and Dressler suggest “Seven Standards of Textuality” (cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality) and hypothesized that, if any one of them was not met, the text would not be communicative. Undoubtedly, those seven criteria considerably contribute to the success of a text in general and two speeches in particular - The 2007 commencement speech by Bill Gates at Harvard University and The 2014 commencement speech by Bill and Melinda Gates at Stanford University. They are considered to be the most profound, inspirational speeches at graduation ceremonies presented by Bill Gates – one of the world’s leading individuals. Accordingly, the thesis writer felt the necessity to conduct a study in respect of seven standards of textuality and employ theoretical background to shed light on the reputation of The 2007 commencement speech by Bill Gates at Harvard University and The 2014 commencement speech by Bill and Melinda Gates at Stanford University.

2. Aims of the study

This study is designed to provide readers with crucial knowledge about seven essential standards of textuality suggested by De Beaugrande. In addition, the research will study how a specific text fulfills seven characteristics of text
linguistics. The selected text to be explored is two well-known commencement speeches by Bill Gates at Harvard University in 2007 and at Stanford in 2014. This research is expected to be useful for those who are interested in producing a powerful and interactive text and an impressive commencement speech based on seven standards of textuality.

3. Research question

In order for the aforementioned aims to be achieved, the research attempts to answer the following question: How do the two commencement speeches addressed by Bill Gates in 2007 and 2014 fulfill the standards of textuality in the De Beaugrande framework?

4. Scope of the study

It is a common knowledge that there are numerous factors that make a speech memorable such as non-verbal language, the tone of voice, the idea, the cadence of the words and the rhythm of the sentences and so forth. However, this thesis provides a very modest analysis on the success of two commencement speeches by Bill Gates in 2007 and 2014, respectively, by employing De Beaugrande framework. Since cohesion and coherence, which have been priorly discussed in detail by many researchers, may require a more elaborate and extensive study, the scope of this MA thesis is narrowed down to five instead of seven standards of textuality, which are intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality.

This study is conducted with the hope that the readers will have a thorough grasp of De Beaugrande framework which is concerned with seven criteria of textuality. Practically, the thesis may assist someone to a certain extent in preparing and delivering a persuasive speech to record considerable achievements in society.

5. Design of the study

The thesis, which reports the different stages of the study and its results, is expected to consist of the following parts according to requirements of an M.A. thesis:
Part A: Introduction
This part includes the rationale, aims of the study, research question, and scope of the study as well as the structure of the thesis.

Part B: Development

Chapter I: Theoretical Background. This chapter deals with the theoretical background that inspires the thesis. This chapter provides some related studies as well as the thorough literature review of five standards of textuality in which each of those criteria will be discussed in detail.

Chapter II: Methodology. This chapter discusses the research approach, research methods of the study. Moreover, this chapter provides information about data collection procedure.

Chapter III: The analysis of two speeches on De Beaugrande framework. This chapter analyzes the collected data then withdraws the final conclusions of the thesis. Further discussion on findings will be presented as well as the personal interpretations and comments from the thesis writer.

Part C: Conclusion
The last part presents the summary of the thesis by providing answers to the research questions presented. Finally, the thesis writer will review the limitations of this study and make suggestions for further research.
PART B: DEVELOPMENT
CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The literature review of the thesis is the compilation of written and published knowledge on the topic of De Beaugrande framework regarding some standards of textuality. The review is drawn from previous studies done by famous linguists and prior linguistic scholars.

1. Text

1.1. Definition of a text

As Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, p.3) stated, a text is a “naturally occurring manifestation of language, i.e. as a communicative language event in a context. The surface text is the set of expressions actually used; these expressions make some knowledge explicit, while other knowledge remains implicit, though still applied during processing.”

Werlich (1976, p.23) defined that “a text is an extended structure of syntactic units [i.e. text as super-sentence] such as words, groups, and clauses and textual units that is marked by both coherence among the elements and completion ...” He also distinguished between “a text” and “a non-text” which consists of random sequences of linguistic units such as sentences, paragraphs, or sections in any temporal and/or spatial extension.

Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.1-2) claimed that “text” is a term “used in linguistics to refer to any passage - spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole [...] A text is a unit of language in use. It is not a grammatical unit, like a clause or a sentence; and it is not defined by its size [...] A text is best regarded as a semantic unit; a unit not of form but of meaning.”

In another definition presented by Fowler (1991, p.59), a text is “made up of sentences, but there exist separate principles of text-construction, beyond the rules for making sentences.”
Text linguists generally agree that text is the natural domain of language, but they still differ in their perspectives of what constitutes a text. This variance is mainly due to the different methods of observations of different linguists, and as such, the definition of text is not yet concrete.

A text contains meaning which is open to interpretation and most discussions of “text” revolve around interpretation of “texts”, rather than a definition of the term itself. However the word “text” is exploited in linguistics to imply that the words, phrases, lines or sentences of which it consists have not been arranged this way by chance, but have been produced by a person and with certain kinds of intentions as stated in Halliday and Hasan (1976). A text may be prose or verse, dialogue or monologue. It may be anything from a single proverb to a whole play, from a momentary cry for help to an all-day discussion on a committee. That is, geographical length is not important for a text, for example:
- a single word: “DANGER” on a warning sign.
- a stretch of language even though not a sentence: “NO SMOKING” printed on a wall.
- plays or novels: *Hamlet, Great Expectations*, etc.

A text is a unit of language in use. It is not a lexico-grammatical unit like a clause or a sentence, and it is not defined by size. We cannot mathematically count that a text has two or three or how many sentences. A text does not consist of sentences. It is realized by, or encoded in sentences.

A text is best regarded as a semantic unit, a unit not of form but of meaning. Thus it is related to a clause or sentences not by size but by realization, the coding of one symbolic system in another.

Nowadays, readers and critics alike use the word “text” to signify any piece of written or spoken discourse, especially when they want to avoid giving value judgments such as “literary” or categorizing something, such as calling it a “novel”. Therefore, text is seen as a neutral term.
The thesis writer is in favor of the definition by De Beaugrande & Dressler (1981, p.3) in which a text “... will be defined as a communicative occurrence which meets seven standards of textuality”. The seven standards referred to are cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality.

1.2. Some major features of a text

A text is a stretch of language which seems appropriately coherent in actual use. That is, the text “coheres” in its real-world context, semantically and pragmatically, and it is also internally or linguistically coherent. Quirk et al. (1985, p.1423) mentioned some features of a text in their work “A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language” as the following:

- Text is defined as language in use, i.e. in terms of function and situation
- Text is internally structured
- A text must display a “cohesive harmony” and logics (make sense with respect to the outer world)
- The basic unit of a text: sentence
- No structural patterns as in sentences (e.g. an interrogative sentence but not an interrogative text)
- A text – unlike sentence – is not a grammatical unit but rather a semantic and even a pragmatic one

2. Texture versus Text

According to definitions of text, particularly that of Halliday and Hasan (1976), it can be inferred that there must be, beyond the intuitive level, a linguistic distinction (at least in principle) between a text and non-text, and that distinction is based upon meaning. A text makes sense, whereas a non-text may be nonsensical. The difference lies in the presence (or absence) of what is called “texture”.

Texture – the quality that makes a text “hang together” as a text – is a key focus of investigation in discourse analysis. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.2) say that “texture is the property that distinguishes text from non-text. Texture is what holds
clauses of a text together to give them unity.” According to two linguists, texture involves the interaction of two components: *coherence* or the text’s relationship to its extra-textual context (the social and cultural context of its occurrence, and *cohesion*, the way the elements within a text bind it together as a “unified whole”). The result of the interaction of these two dimensions is a piece of language which is using linguistic resources in a meaningful way within a situational and cultural context.

The concept of texture is entirely appropriate to express the property of “being a text”. This characteristic of a text distinguishes it from something that is not a text. The fact that a text functions as a unity with respect to its environment derives from this “texture”. If a passage of English containing more than one sentence is perceived as a text, there will be certain linguistic features present in the passage which can be identified as contributing to its total unity and giving it texture.

For example, if we find the following instructions in the cooking book:

> “Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof dish.”

It is clear that “them” in the second sentence refers back to the “six cooking apples” of the first sentence. This anaphoric function of *them* gives cohesion to the two sentences, so that we interpret them as a whole; the two sentences together constitute a text. So it is the texture which makes these two sentences a text.

3. Standards of textuality

3.1. Definition of textuality

In their *Introduction to Textlinguistics* (1981) de Beaugrande and Dressler attempt to provide an answer to the issue of textuality. They state that: “[...] a language is a virtual system of available options not yet in use, the text is an actual system in which options have been taken from their repertoires and utilized in a particular structure (relationship between or among elements). This utilization is carried out via procedures of actualization” (1981, p.35). This definition is similar to the thesis writer’s point of view in the way that it stresses the fact...
that a text is a singular realization of a particular discourse, and any text production is conditioned by its immediate nonverbal context. In other words, any speaker makes his linguistic choice based on non-linguistic circumstances.

De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, p.3) also state that any text is a communicative occurrence that is supposed to meet certain standards of textuality in order to be communicative (non-communicative occurrences are treated as non-texts by them). It is not fully explicit in their discussion whether partially communicative occurrences (e.g. messages directed for particular receivers, as for instance gang graffiti) could be regarded as texts. They enlist seven standards of textuality: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality. They call them after Searle (1969, p.33) constitutive principles of textual communication, for the reason that: “(...) [t]hey define and create the form of behaviour identifiable as textual communicating, and if they are defied, that form of behaviour will break down” (De Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981, p.11). They also adopt Searle’s notion of regulative principles (i.e. the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness) that are not so much as to define, as to control textual communication. The thesis writer will briefly describe their textuality standards, or to use a more appropriate expression: “the principles of communication”, for even though the constitutive principles of textual communication are also called by the authors “standards of textuality”, their concepts evidently transcend the notion of text and it seems that at least some of them should rather be researched as contextual processes influencing text composition.

3.2. Criteria of textuality

Text has been defined as a communicative occurrence or event which meets seven standards of textuality. Linguists confirm that if any of these standards of textuality is not to have been satisfied, the text will not be communicative. Due to the aforementioned scope of the study, in this part, the author will examine five broad characteristics of texts which combine to produce the complex property
REFERENCES


**Online sources:**


