RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN OVERVIEW STUDY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN LANGUAGE.

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Manuscript Info	Abstract
Manuscript History Received: 13 February 2017 Final Accepted: 14 March 2017 Published: April 2017 *Key words:-* Discourse analysis, spoken discourse, written discourse, text, communication	This paper deals with illustrating in detail discourse analysis concentrating on the basic principles and mechanisms upon which it functions. The study is an attempt to illustrate theoretically what basically discourse is how it is used in language analysis as means of showing the structure and the message of various spoken and written texts. The study reveals that discourse analysis is widely used in the analysis of both written and spoken piece of language showing mainly all related linguistic components and structure of that piece, and the message or purpose for which it is used in various communicative situations.

Introduction:-

For many years, 'discourse' has been a fashionable term. In scientific texts and debates, it is used indiscriminately, often without being defined. The concept has become vague, either meaning almost nothing, or being used with more precise, but rather different, meanings in different contexts. But, in many cases, underlying the word 'discourse' is the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life, familiar examples being 'medical discourse' and 'political discourse'. 'Discourse analysis' is the analysis of these patterns. The current paper attempts at clarifying this aspect of language starting with the scope of definition, i.e. what discourse analysis is moving to the basic principles and other related issues concerned with it. The paper discusses in detail the data and the material that discourse is concerned with providing some theoretical backgrounds including some related studies which show how certain passages can be analyzed according to the principles and tools of discourse analysis. The paper ends with a conclusion and cited references.

Definition of Discourse Analysis:-

Van Dijk (1997) states that discourse analysis was founded in the 1960s at the same time with the emergence of other disciplines in the humanitarian and social sciences. Later on, discourse analysis started to be more systematic and there were new trends towards the study of discourse analysis. Riley(1985) explains that it is somehow a new emerged discipline and, therefore, there is no doubt that when discussing issues about discourse we can find certain ambiguities, inconsistencies and to a certain extent some contradictions. It can be argued that such difficulties are due to lack of precision concerning the definition of some of the basic concepts on the one hand and due to the inadequacy of the analytical tools which are used on the other hand. Stubbs (1983, p.1) states that "we cannot restrict our view of meaning and information to matters of logic as many linguists have tried to do". In fact, there are many factors which interact to determine the acceptability and appropriateness of utterances used in different social contexts; not only their logic or their truth values. The most frequent definition of discourse is "language above the sentence" (ibid). But such overlap or ambiguity can be avoided according to Leech (1983, p. 38) when there is a

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distinction between two major approaches: 1.The formal approach where discourse is defined as a unit of language beyond the sentences. 2. The functional approach where discourse is deemed as a language use. So, discourse refers to a form of language use including, for instance, public speeches or more generally to spoken language or ways of speaking (Van Dijk, 1997). Accordingly "discourse is part of complex social events because individuals use language to communicate their feelings, ideas, or believes to others; that is, to interact.

Yule (2006, p. 142) defines discourse analysis as "language beyond the sentence and so the analysis of discourse is typically concerned with the study of language in texts and conversation". He shows that language users make sense of what they read in texts and understand what speakers mean despite what they say. Users of language can also recognize connected as opposed to jumbled or incoherent discourse, and successfully take part in that complex activity called conversation. All of this is taken to be known as discourse analysis.

The distinction between spoken and written discourse is also discussed by Van Dijk (1995) who states that there are several types of discourse studies that can be distinguished as in the following: the distinction between talk and text.

Text analysis tends to deal more often with abstract structure of written discourse as fixed objects, whereas the study of talk focuses on more dynamic aspects of interaction. The first will be more inspired by linguist and the latter rather by social sciences. Another distinction that he states is entirely based on discourse type of genres; many discourse analysts focus on conversation whereas others prefer to study news, advertising or political discourse. What is really significance concerning such elaborations of discourse analysis is that it examines a certain discourse e.g. legal discourse, medical discourse and so on. In general, the main focus of the definition of discourse will be on the spoken one which may specifically be defined as Spoken discourse is the ongoing, situated interpretation of a speaker's communicative intentions, of which the addressee's expected and actual reactions are an integral part. The creation of discourse is thus a joint endeavor, involving the active cooperation of all the participants. The textual record, on which this constructive activity is based, in conjunction with the invocation of a relevant context, is constituted not only by the verbal content of the utterances produced, but also by non-verbal signals (Cornish, 2006).

Data Analysis:-
Discourse analysis can be conducted on any set of data that involves spoken situations and written texts. Consequently, it involves naturalistic materials, interviews, speeches, focus groups and various texts. Widdowson (2007) has pointed out that a 'text' can be smaller than a sentence. He observes that the label LADIES, for instance, on the door of a public lavatory is a text, as is the letter P which is used in Britain to indicate a space for parking cars. A single word or a letter cannot have 'structure above the sentence'. So what makes these complete texts? Widdowson's answer is that in the contexts he is concerned with, each of them is intended to convey a complete message which entirely depends on the context in which it is used or expressed.

Crystal (2003) considers texts, whether spoken or written, a defining feature of a branch of linguistics named text linguistics and, accordingly, there is a distinction between text which is the material of text linguistics and discourse which is the material of discourse analysis. Texts are seen as linguistic units with communicative functions characterized by such concepts as cohesion and coherence. But for some scholars, texts are viewed as a physical process whereas discourse as a dynamic process. In fact, any piece of language is identified as a text as soon as it is recognized that it has been produced for a communicative purpose. Although not all texts extend beyond a sentence, many of them do: travel guides, information leaflets, newspapers articles, interviews, speeches, reports and so on. Users of language have intentions or communicative purposes when they produce texts: he clarifies this point by stating that people produce texts to get a message across, to express ideas and beliefs, to explain something to get other people to do a certain things or to think in a certain way and so on. The complex communicative purposes can be referred to as the discourse that underlies the text and motivates its production in the first place (Widdowson, 2007). In a communicative event or conversation, its beginning and its end maybe well-defined but what about a long parliamentary debate that may go on for days, or a debate on an issue on the newspaper which appears in a series of editions. So, we need to distinguish between simple and compound discourse or between discourses and discourse complexes. Discourse analysts may focus on one aspect, dimension of text or talk, or even on one general class/ type of discourse, like media discourse. Each of these dimensions has its characteristics. Discourse analyst may start with the verbal aspects of an utterance, working down to the deeper levels of form, meaning and action after which it is possible to start with focusing on the communicative and interactional dimensions (Van Dike, 1997). Beaugrande & Dressler (1981) defined text as a communicative event that must satisfy the following criteria: 1. Cohesion: it refers to the realization of meaning through grammatical elements like personal pronouns,

conjunctions and demonstratives. 2.Coherence: it refers to the decoding of a text depending on the sense it makes to its readers 3.Intentionality: it is entirely related to the attitude and purpose of the speaker or writer 4.Acceptability: it is concerned with the ability of the hearer or reader to assess the relevance or usefulness of a given text 5.Informativity: it refers to the quantity and quality of new or expected information 6.Situationality: it points to the fact that the situation in which the text is produced plays a crucial role in the production and reception of the message. 7. Intertextuality: it means that a text is always related to some preceding text or text varieties.

The Use of Discourse Analysis:-
In a more general sense, discourse can be taken to refer to various uses and levels as far as the use of language is concerned as explained by Bloor & Bloor (2013):

1. It refers to all the phenomena of symbolic interaction and communication between people. 2. To indicate simply spoken interaction.3.in contrast with text, it refers to actual written or spoken data, and discourse refers to the whole act of communication involving production and comprehension, not necessarily entirely verbal. 4. It is used to refer to the general communication that takes place in specific institutional contexts. For example, we can talk about the discourse of science, legal discourse and so on. 5. It is used to mean a particular text (written or spoken) as lectures, sermon or treaties. Text analysis tends to deal more often with abstract structure of written discourse as fixed objects, whereas the study of talk focuses on more dynamic aspects of interaction. The first will be more inspired by linguist and the latter rather by social sciences. Another distinction that he states is entirely based on discourse type of genres; many discourse analysts focus on conversation whereas others prefer to study news, advertising or political discourse. What is really significance concerning such elaborations of discourse analysis is that it examines a certain discourse e.g. legal discourse, medical discourse and so on. The meaning of an utterance or a string of utterances is a function of the discourse in which it occurs. Discourse analysis takes into account the whole communicative event including all conditions and functions which enable its taking place (ibid). However, discourse should tackle certain issues which are considered the core if a better analysis is to be achieved.

For instance, it has to take into account how speakers say one thing but may mean another and how hearers perform long strings of interpretation on any utterance they hear; how they make sense of what they hear even if it is odd by brining to bear on it all possible knowledge and interpretation (Stubbs, 1983).

Conclusion:-
Discourse analysis is one of the most important means by which language is analyzed objectively and comprehensively. In the most general sense, discourse analysis refers to the way spoken and written language are used in various communicative events so as to have an efficient understanding of the used piece of language. Discourse analysis utilizes various levels of language tools to achieve the required aims. It uses all the linguistic levels of language when analyzing a given piece of language. Consequently, it is considered an efficient means used in the analysis of language in an objective way that leaves no doubts about what such a piece of language intends to convey.

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