Summary and Development of Textual Context Theory

Zhi-Yi YIN

Bohai University, Jinzhou, Liaoning, China
melinda1995@qq.com
Corresponding author

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Abstract. In linguistics, context has developed a dynamic context from a static language context (context) with the development of contextual theory in three fields: linguistics, new criticism and stylistics. I. A. Richards used the theory when context entered the field of literary studies, opening the situational context of the author and the reader of the text and the cognitive context of psychology reading level. The theory of new criticism also promotes language context. Three basic forms of textual context of linguistic context, situational context (including cultural context) and cognitive context have been formed. The study of stylistics has inherited linguistics and literature research, which has further enriched the study of contextual theory, especially in situational context. Although the development of cognitive context is weak, it has shown a parallel trend of development with situational context.

Introduction

Combining the linguistic and stylistic contextual theories, it is necessary for us to inherit the textual context research of I. A. Richards and the new critical context to make text context theory further develop. The following test will try to sum up and reflect from the three aspects of the "text context theory".

The Interrelationship between Text and Context

With regard to the relationship between text and context, the statements of linguists M.A.K. Halliday & R. Hasan was exclusively concerned with the relationship between the text and context. They believe that the context and text are the same phenomenon and the only difference is the distance where we observe. If the context is "climate", then the text is "weather" and the text is an "example" of context. Relationship between the two is a creation of mutual: On the one hand, contextual variables work together to generate text, and on the other hand, text also creates a new text world which is also a new context.[1]

There is no "text" concept in the field of linguistics, but the form of written expression, including text, is known as "discourse". "Text" and "discourse" have quite similar characteristics which are both named "text" in English. But linguistics and literary research have different views on "text": Linguistics only treat "text" as a written form of communicative discourse, and, in fact, the study of discourse is still the study of communicative discourse. Based on this, the relationship between discourse and context cannot be applied directly to text and context. Besides, the context of the text is more complicated than the context of the discourse. If the context of the text is created in general, the text also creates the context without being defined, and is bound to bring about the confusion of the contextual concept.

Here, we will see the uniqueness between context of text and the context of discourse & text.

First of all, do an analogy to regard the text as a whole. According to R. Hasan's context factor ternary (discourse range, tone and way) to distinguish, the text "discourse" is obviously different from the contextual factors of general communicative discourse: The speakers and listeners of the text "discourse" are the authors, the publishing industry and the readers, where the readers and the publishing industry have been in a state of changing, except the authors. The keynote of text
"discourse", that is, the role of the participants, is becoming more complicated than discourse communication because of the ever-changing readers. However, in the mode of discourse, the text is not as diverse as the discourse of communication and the written language is the only way. In addition, "discourse" activities of the “author - text - reader” have no timeliness. Readers are far away from authors, even if the author is hidden, the text becomes a dialogue with readers. Therefore, this "discourse" activity is more persistent, although the author of the text of the context has been set; the context of each reader has no changes in different times. Thus the context of the text "discourse" is constantly changing and permanently infinite.

In the second place, text presents a fragment of the discourse from the inside of the text: each description of the fragment is a fresh discourse event, where the scene, characters, dialogue, behavior and so on, are the event factors of the context. The text creates its context for each segment. This context is always in the text, but it can also be extended to the outside context of the text through the reader's reading experience.

Therefore, we can have a conclusion of the relationship between the text and context from the above two points.

The first, the text exists in the context and it cannot be divorced from the context of its generation, reading and interpretation. Not only is the creation of the author carried out in a certain context, but the text as an objective existence also exists in the context of the text and the reading of the text is the process of the reconstruction of various context factors.

Secondly, the text creates many contexts of discourse events, that is, the internal text context. The external context of the text can exist independently from the text, but the internal context cannot be understood outside the text. Once the internal context stays out of the text, it will lose the source of life. Just as metaphor left the context and became cliché. There is indeed a mutual relationship between the text and the context based on two aspects where the internal context relies on the text and the text cannot leave the external context. But the text creation of the internal context is conditional and the context of the text ontological role is unconditional, therefore it can be seen that "context creates text" is still the most essential relationship between them. In reality, text and context are closely related. Once the text is drawn from the context, its meaning is lost. [2]

We have naturally divided the textual context into two levels from the above statement: The whole text (or external) context and snippets of text (or internal) context. In addition, K. Koffka also distinguishes two other contexts in its Gestalt psychology. One is external, objective and geographical context, and other is internal, subjective, behavioral context.[3] The text context can also be divided into two levels which are objective and subjective from the perspective of psychological perception, and that is the distinction between situational context and cognitive context.

Two Characteristics of Textual Context

For the text, the context has two characteristics.

Dynamic

The concept of context is to correct the bias of formalism linguistics. Formalist linguistics analyze the language from a static macro-way and commit to the system structure and grammar rules of language while turning a blind eye on the specific dynamics of linguistic phenomena. The concept of context is a reversal of this static and rigorous research approach and dynamic nature naturally becomes its main feature. Linguist VanDijk even believes that "the first feature of the context is its dynamics."[4] While context is analyzed more in static in the field of literary studies and its dynamic has not been fully explored yet.

The dynamic of context is mainly embodied in the process of "contextualization". Linguists J.J. Gumperz and J. Cook-Gumperz find in the study of context that context is not given by the participants of language communication in advance, but is constructed together by the two sides in the communication process. This process of co-construction is called "contextualization".

Similarly, the text context is not given in advance and immutable, but is constructed together by
the participants of the text. We must also bring ourselves together into this other situation. Only in this way can we achieve the meaning of self-entered.[5] Literary research separates the context of authors, the context of the work and the context of the readers, and do further analysis respectively, which is a static way of dealing with textual context. This approach is helpful to our research, but the dynamic construction of the text context should be paid more attention.

J.J. Gumperz and J. Cook-Gumperz also believe that the process of "contextualization" is constructed by a set of steps which relate various contextual cues to the background knowledge of the participants.[6] When the text is generated, the external context infiltrates the contextual information and constituting the text and the way of storing information is the cue which connect context in text. People who are in different contexts may find different cues when they are facing the same text, so, the cognitive context is also different which is opened by text.

In fact, the process of text "contextualization" is not only the process of reading for readers, but also the process of meaning generation. Every time the text is read, the context is unique. E.D. Hirsch believes that the interpreter’s goal is to set the author's horison hypothetically and exclude his occasional association carefully.[7] The whole process is like an arbitrary point on the circumference to another arbitrary point and the route is not consistent. That is to say that each reader has different inner experience when they see different things in the text and the ultimate feeling is different.

Relevance

The relevant theory of cognitive pragmatics confirms the close relationship between relevance and context well: Relevance helps to achieve contextual effects and correlation and contextual effect is proportional. Any association has a context and any context cannot also leave the association to structure itself.

Context in English is from Latin "contextus" which means "weaving together". This is the best illustration of contextual relevance. Weaving is a process of crisscross in a flat surface and continuous expansion. Weaving has no center point but innumerable nodes. Context is such a process of formation and existence; these nodes are the cue of the text in literary text and we call it the "point of association" to distinguish the definition in linguistics. The horizontal lines braiding the context are contextual and contextual information and vertical line is a variety of knowledge background and memory opened by the reader through the point of contact of the text. Every reader has different point of association so the contextual networks they weave are colorful and have different styles as well.

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References