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Viewpoint and Perspective in Discourse

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Abstract

This study tries to show that how viewpoint functions in discourse. As it will be clarified, it is highly related to the intention of the speaker/writer, and as a result, the orientation (s)he adopts in the discourse. Deictic markers function as discourse markers to fix and anchor time, place, agent, and other discursive elements. In this way, the viewpoint adopted by the enunciator/utterer is determined. Different types of viewpoint, then, are introduced and exemplified. Its relation with perspective is also examined.

Keywords: Discourse, Viewpoint, Types of Viewpoint, Perspective, Enunciator/Utterer, Enunciatee/Utteree, Intentionality, Orientationality

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1- Viewpoint and Perspective

Once facing with terms such as **viewpoint** and perspective, one might dream up of different definitions, since in narratology, semiotics and cognitive semantics on one hand, and in different schools of thought on the other hand, these concepts are used with different interpretations and even different terms. Presenting a profile of their history needs a more room. However, this paper reviews some notable theories of perspective and viewpoint.

Sometimes, point of view and perspective are used interchangeabley. But Todorov uses vision as a more genral term encompassing concepts like *point de vu* (point of view), focus, judgement and so on. Some scholars even use focalization in a way that it seems identifiable with point of view. Deciding to foreground some narrative program or the action of the protagonist, Propp also shows the perspective of the discourse. His decision is to punish the traitor in order to foreground the action of the main character.

Langacker (1987, esp. pp. 120-132), in chapter 3, "cognitive abilities", suggests that the perspective taken in construing a scene is important for the semantic and grammatical structure. He includes figure/ground, viewpoint, deixis and subjectivity/objectivity within perspective. Langacker says that viewpoint is definable in terms of "vantage point" and "orientation".

Leonard Talmy (2000), to explain cognition, tries to study the conceptual structure of mind. He suggests that this structure consists of two systems: conceptual content system, and conceptual structuring system. The latter itself comprises several schematic systems: 1) configurational system, 2) perspectival system, 3) attention system, and 4) force-dynamics system. Attention and perspectival systems might be considered to be counterparts of the terms such as perspective, viewpoint, focus and focalization, etc in a more systematic cognitive framework. Talmy, for example, divides the perspectival system into perspectival location – which is usually called deixis – perspectival point or or deictic center.

In this paper, perspective and viewpoint are used with an interpretation similar to cognitive approach of Langacker. Therefore, perspective is organization of information in the narrative processing system through a certain viewpoint. In other words, the viewpoint of the actant or discoursal agent directs and drives forward the perspective of the discourse. Without this viewpoint, perspectivization is impossible. As far as a discourse based on a viewpoint drives the discoursal operations or narrative variants or programs into background and foreground other narrative programs, perspectivization is done. Here, also a minor modification is done based on the Paris School of Semantique: viewpoint needs the presence of an observer, and

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perspecrive is the relationship between enunciator/narrator with enunciatee/audience. It, thus, encompasses the whole text.

2- Intentionality of Viewpoint

The key point about viewpoint is that it is orientational. It is, thus, orientated. Undoubtedly, orientationality of viewpoint is about the path of one's gaze or attention towards something or somebody as the target of his/her look. This orientationality makes no sense unless it is intentional. Pierre Ouellet (1992, p. 106) believes that an "origin", a "target", and a path from the former to the latter must be taken into account in studying the viewpoint. Jacques Fontanille considers viewpoint as an operation "which, on one side, affects the informer, and on the other side, affects the observer, linking them together, and making the process of cognition into effect between them" (1981, p. 81). John Saeed, in clarifying the cognitive notions of perspective, which consists of viewpoint and focus, also puts emphasis on the role the observer: "This notion of perspective is a reflection of the importance cognitivists attach to the role of the observer in scenes; in particular, the selection of the observer's viewpoint and the choice of elements to focus on" (1997, p. 328).

Based on the aforementioned definition, two situational factors of origin and target of cognition are at work intentionally. This intentionality might be interpreted as a monopolistic relation with three functions of limiting, choosing and cognition. The set of these factors renders a viewpoint cognitive. The reason for cognitivitity of this process is that from among all possible things, the gaze or attention is focused upon one of them and takes it as its target. It should be reminded that the starting point is a perceptual act. Ronald Langacker, as a cognitivist linguist, defines perspective, which includes viewpoint and focus, as an aspect of construal, in terms of such factors as vantage point, orientation, and subjectivity/objectivity (1991, p. 551).

3- The Function of Deictic Markers in Discursive Viewpoint

Perceptual and cognitive elements are always linked together through deictic markers. Actualizing the precise chronotope of perceptual elements, they are, in fact, manifesting the cognitive load. This load may be regarded as a regulator, which anchor and fix dynamic perceptual elements in linguistic products. In the sentence:

Ali will come to Tehran tomorrow.

the agent marker "Ali", the temporal marker "tomorrow", and the spatial marker "Tehran" are anchors, which turn the dynamic and unfixed process of "coming" into a cognitive act with identifiable agent, time and place. This kind of identification is the very material form

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of the process of "coming". It should be emphasized that this cognitive operation emerges in discourse, which controls linguistic forms. And this control may be in terms of the viewpoint of the enunciator/ utterer, who at the end as responsible programmer of the dynamism of discourse, paves the way for the actualization of deictic markers. In the aforementioned example, it is clear that the viewpoint of the utterer is determined in the slot called the target of "Ali", based on the linguistic element of the verb of "coming". In other words, the target of Ali is where the utterer is present and it is from his/her viewpoint that any linguistic constituent-order is actualized. Michael Halliday and Christian M. Matthiessen, considering theme-rheme structure, show that it is the speaker/writer who "is selecting the desired Theme" (2004, p. 66). As they further say, thematic resourse enables "the message to be structures in whatever way the speaker or writer wants" (*Ibid., p.71).* Theme is the psychological subject, which "is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context" (*Ibid., p.64)*. Rheme is "the remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed …." (*Ibid.)*.

Actually, the combination of the perceptual aspect (the act of "coming") and the deictic aspect (Ali, tomorrow, Tehran) forms a viewpoint, which is exclusively determined by the point of enunciation/ utterance through which the act of "coming" takes form. The perceptual and deictic elements, and viewpoint reflect the scene in which, the perspective of "Ali's coming to Tehran" is constituted. This perspective is seen through the viewpoint of the utterer. There is a spatial distance between the origin, Ali, and the target, utterer, and the standpoint of the utterer is in the slot of the target, hence a **closed viewpoint**. This is due to the fact that Ali moves to the place of the utterer or to his/her slot.

But in the following sentence:

Ali will go to Tehran tomorrow.

there is no duality of the presence, since the utterer is in the slot of Ali or where he is standing. In this case, the utterer who is not in the slot of the target, cannot control Ali's arriving there. The utterer has no control over the target, hence an **open viewpoint**. What Ali confronts with in Tehran is, thus, a process, which is in no way under the control of the utterer.

Now, consider the following sentence:

Ali will go to Tehran to find his fortune.

in this utterance, Ali's "going" to Tehran is accompanied with prosperity, which is neither agentive, nor a spatial nor a temporal marker, but is an emotive marker emphasizing the difference between the current process with the previous one. While the viewpoint in previous utterances was such that the target was out of

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the sight of the observer, in last utterance, Ali is focused on as an internal element. Ronald Langacker (1987) distinguishes them in terms of "external viewpoint" and "internal viewpoint". It seems that the viewpoint also penetrates inside Ali; it is concentrated on his prosperity which is an individual and emotional affair.

4- Phenomenology of Viewpoint

The question of viewpoint is concretely interlinked with Husserl's phenomenological argument about "intentionality". In his terms, intentionality has a dual meaning: "It emerges as the relation between appearance and what appears, or as the relation between cognition with what appears with its own manner and conditions on the one hand, and with whatever simply appears on the other hand" (E. Husserl, 1964, p. 41). Pondering carefully, it is recognizable that Husserl differentiates between appearance and what appears, and between what appears under control and under certain conditions, and what simply appears. It leads to both qualitative and quantitative arguments. Intentionality, thus, has a basis called distance, which is between the expectation of appearance and what appears. For example:

Ali will go to Tehran to find happiness with all his might.

happiness, here, has no defined limitation, and since it is not actualized yet, both appearance and non-appearance are at work. Therefore, viewpoint is, from this respect, related to intentionality, which is directed at happiness. Since there is no information about the quality and conditions of appearance of this happiness, there seems to be the viewpoint, which leads to an open horizon thatcan only be quantitative.

In fact, there is a distance between what Ali aims at (happiness) and what will be gained. Due to this fact, Ali's happiness might be considered highly relative and even incomplete. Ali, thus, goes for it with all his might, which is undefined and conditioned with time, place, agent, etc. It is recognizable that the viewpoint of the above sentence refers to the totality of Ali's might by the word "all", and as a result, a kind of aggrandizement gets dominant over the process of his movement, hence an **exaggerated viewpoint**. Notwithstanding, perspective remains unchanged because happiness still holds for the last utterance.

It might be discernable that the viewpoint links "Ali's going to Tehran" and "his getting happy". It could be defined as the relation between the premise and the result, and the necessary and the necessitated. In other words, viewpoint conditions Ali's happiness with "going to Tehran". It implies that Ali's going to Tehran is happening; that is undoubtedly it happens, unless an unexpected event changes conditions. Hence, the viewpoint of going to Tehran is actual, while the viewpoint for happiness is totally virtual, because "Ali's going to

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Tehran" is close, concrete and actualizing, but his happiness is distant, unknown and non-concrete.

Closeness and distance are two important features of viewpoint. While close (actual) viewpoint is almost certainly actualized, distant (virtual) one is far from the threshold of actualizing. Viewpoint is, therefore, related to the discursive "intension" and "extension" indirectly (J. Fountanille & Cl. Zilberberg, 1998). As viewpoint gets closer to the threshold of actualization, waiting gets increasingly diminished, or it gets shorter. Here, there is an "intensive" viewpoint. As viewpoint gets further from the threshold of actualization, waiting time increases. It is an "extensive" viewpoint. The former is, thus, based on actuality and the latter based on virtuality.

Now, the question is: what is the relation between viewpoint and "all Ali's might" going to be exerted in Tehran? It should be confessed that this viewpoint refers to all potentials that Ali uses to gain happiness. In fact, it is by using those potentials that Ali in a temporal process, walks in the path of happiness. This viewpoint is, thus, based on taking avail of the present potentials, which is neither completely intensive nor totally extensive; hence a **middle, equilibrant viewpoint.**

5- The Relation of Viewpoint with Perspective

Saussure says that "viewpoint, which is the ground-stone of cognition, is a relation in which something is related to something else; it is certainly causal or semantic: the purpose is not setting up a complex of features of something, rather setting up features that (rightly or wrongly) something has so that it can be the material cause of something else or its mental meaning" (F. Gobert, 2001, pp. 486-7).

Greimas and Courtés view viewpoint as a complex of tactics, which the enunciator/utterer uses to diversify textual process. This brings about different readings of a story (1993, p. 284). In this definition, also, viewpoint is concerned with intentionality, which can be defined as the diversity of processes and multitude of readings. To diversify, the utterer has no choice but to decide between topics to be presented and directing them toward some specific target. Discursive diversity implies constructing different discursive forms such as narrative, descriptive, argumentative, emotional, aesthetic and so on and so forth. These are actualized through such tactics as discursive connecting (I, here, now), discursive disconnecting (he/she, somewhere else, another time), interactional relation, contrast, discursive challenges, different positionings of discursive elements, part and whole relations, etc.

When speaking about viewpoint, its comparison with perspective is not negligible. In fact, while a viewer/observer is necessarily present in a viewpoint, perspective is based upon the relation of enunciator/utterer with enunciate/utteree.

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Gérard Genette says perspective is a tactic by which "organization of narrative information" is possible (1972, p. 184). In fact, enunciator can convey more or less information to the reader, directly or indirectly, and therefore, goes farther or closer to what he is telling about. Due to this fact, it is organized information, which, in Génette terms, does not imply a filter, but it refers to the position of every effective element in the story. Greimas and Courtés suggest that perspective is an activity through which enunciator, when organizing the syntagmatic system in a story, chooses the proper narrative program (1993, p. 274). Due to this fact, in a story about a robbery, the narrative program of the robber, or the narrative program of the robbed person is in the perspective. In the same manner, in police fictions, it is based on the decision of the enunciator that the reader will be in the perspective of the inspector of the file, the criminal, the victim, or the witness of the murder.

In addition, in a viewpoint, the presence of a witness or observer is necessary, and in this respect, it differs from perspective, which tends to miss both the observer and the essence of seeing. Another important difference is that perspectivizing implies one single view, while diverse viewpoints might be at work. These viewpoints could be in contrast or in competition. Therefore, a pespectivized world is a mono-modal one; i.e. its different modes are banished in order to form a single viewpoit. This highly weakens the position of the visual subject of perspectivizing, in a way that it gets lost and what gets importance and substitutes it is a cognitive element that attracts the attention of the enunciator. In a viewpoint, however, it is the visual subject who is in direct communication with the cognitive element. For any intentionality or orientality, the discursive system is governed by a certain attitude or tactic of the visual subject or agent, who has a discursive position.

What cognitive process is perspective? Realist, objective, illusionist, or mental? Panofski's opinion is useful: "It is not wrong if the history of perspectivizing is considered to be both the victorious domination of the realist meaning, which is based on distancing and objectifying, and the victorious domination of human desire to power, which rejects any distance or objectivity that implies the stability of the external world or the development of the system of selfishness" (E. Panofski, 1975, p. 182). It is perhaps based on this view that Jacques Fontanille, in the framework of the epistemological theory of discourse, says that perspective is "a realist process, where the totally equal unification of the observer (visual subject) and the cognitive element (informer) is never possible" (1989, p. 69). Accordingly, the singleness of the cognitive element is relative

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rather than absolute, for what seems to be single is just one aspect. In the same manner, the singleness of the visual process of the observer is relative too, for the visual competence of the observer is in no way in complete correspondence with the "maximal cognition" of the enunciator, who doesn't have the current viewpoint. It should, therefore, be confessed that as for perspective, there is a more or less homogeneous space.

The most significant relation between perspective and viewpoint is that participation and juxtaposition of several viewpoints, however, forms one single perspective. For this reason, co-occurrence of two visual and cognitive elements in a perspective seems to be impossible. If juxtaposition of several viewpoints alongside each other and constituting one perspective is plausible, then, it suggests that viewpoint is a cognitive element of enunciative, rather than textual realm. In other words, viewpoint should not be included in the world of the form of expression, but it is an activity in the sphere of the form of the content. For based on the definitions of text and discourse, text is like a cloth over the body of discourse and enunciation. Therefore, text works in the realm of signifiers, while discourse is in the realm of signifieds. Viewpoint works within the world of discourse, i.e. the system of signifieds.

Although somelinguists believe that viewpoint is a process formally organizing syntactic elements, semioticians insist that meaning, first and foremost, generates the world of discourse, and just its realization takes place in text. Therefore, the fundamental role of viewpoints controlling the orientality of discourse, and securing its intentionality, is to impose their own meanings on the world of the text and its syntactic system. There is, thus, no way, but to accept that viewpoint is part of the world of discourse and therefore the world of meaning. Consider the following example:

Ali lent his car to Hasan.

Hasan borrowed Ali's car.

In the former, it is Ali's viewpoint that forces into the syntactic system, and this tends to constitute a signified based on interaction, sympathy, and generosity. In the latter, it is Hasan's viewpoint that forces into the world of discourse and as result, its syntactic system.

In fact, in the first utterance, the origin of the discourse is Ali, being represented as agent; the target is Hasan, who is represented as patient. What relates Ali and Hasan, orientating the whole process, is the act of lending, which is the intention of the cognitive element of the viewpoint.

In the second utterance, positioning the origin and the end change, and this change represents Hasan as agent and Ali as patient. Though lending is signifying sympathy and generosity, borrowing, on the other hand, in referring to the signified as the need of the borrower. The reason for the difference of

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signifieds is to be found in the change of viewpoint. In the latter, the discourse and its syntactic system are constituted from the viewpoint of Hasan. The very change of viewpoint forms two different perspectives. Thus, perspectivizing the discursive process is governed by the modulation of the viewpoint, the arrangement of discursive elements, and their functions in the discourse. As a result, perspective in the former is based on the act of lending, but in the latter, it is modulated based on the act of borrowing. In fact, change and transposition of discursive elements, and the origin and the end changes perspective.

6-Typology of Viewpoint

Going beyond simple utterances, and adopting a discursive view in wider dimensions (e.g. about literary genre), modulation of viewpoint is governed by tactics constituting the typology of viewpoint. Jacques Fontanille in ***Sémiotique et literature*** (1998, pp. 50-55) studies types of viewpoint in terms of tactics used in discourse, as follows:

A- Global (*Englobant*) Viewpoint Based on Consensus

It is based on far distance from visual elements, the principle of generalization, and enumerativity. In such a tactic, thus, the primacy is to external elements, which are evaluated in terms of their homogeneity and totality. Experssive elements such as having a look at, looking through light, turning around one's eyes, put in the bosom of one's eyes, are in the service of this kind of tactic. In the following example, "I" somehow includes all kinds of the dead, and as a result, proves its globality:

I have all the dead:
The dead of the birds who sing,
And are silent,
The dead of the most beautiful animals
On the earth and in the water,
The dead of the humans,
Bad or good. (Ahamd Shāmlu, 1997, p. 402).

B- Serial (Cumulative) Viewpoint

It is a kind of cognitive viewpoint, which passes by different modes of something or a situation one by one. It might, therefore, be called cumulative viewpoint, which is itself based on a kind of succession or sequence of views formed by juxtaposition of several viewpoints.

The house, when you left it,
Curtains dropped down.
Books, when you sold them,
The shelf was taken mortgage by termites.

But what odds and ends,
Out of discarded things,
Were left in the corners of rooms and parts of shelves;
Like the little cracked hands,

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Which no longer accompanied you.

And the smell of communication that didn't want to leave the house. (*Ibid.,* p. 125-6).

C- Selective Viewpoint

It is based on the selecting the best mode of something or some situation. Having such a mode stops the search, for the viewpoint aimed at the best example, which is in a way representing all other modes, and can be taken as the complete typical example. Selecting means considering one mode as the best and the most complete one, preferring it to other modes, and even disregarding and rejecting these other modes. In the following example, the enunciator introduces us a better example out of the world of fruits ("pomegranate"):

I went back home; my mother asked:

From bazaar, did you buy any fruit?

- Wherever was it possible to give infinite fruits in a basket?

- I replied that from the market you can buy good pomegranates.

- I tried a pomegranate.

Its expansion spilled over the basket. (Sohrāb Sepehri, 1989, p. 370).

D- Particularist Viewpoint

It has no respect for any global viewpoint or great sets. In other words, a part of something is isolated and scrutinized highly carefully and meticulously. This process is so particularistic and narrow that makes this viewpoint distinctive.

Over the ridge of the pool,

The blood of the child filled with the (fish-)scales of loneliness of life.

Then, a thorn

Scratched his leg.

The irritation of the body annihilated over the grasses. (*Ibid.*, p. 346).

In the above example, the enunciator selects "the ridge of the pool" among all tokens of civilization, "the child's leg" among all his presence, and "the thorn" among all natural elements.

E & F- Parallel and Competitive Viewpoints

Two other kinds of viewpoints, i.e. parallel and competitive, can be added to those aforementioned viewpoints. The former combines two or more elements having identical properties together, without foregrounding one and backgrounding the other.

What refreshing water!

What a limpid river!

What a pure higher-lands people!

Their springs may be running; their cows may be full of milk! (*Ibid.*, p. 346)

As we see, the viewpoint of the enunciator can represent several elements in a parallel fashion, without foregrounding or backgrounding any

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one of them. Here, the concurrence of and equal presence of different elements are evidenced.

In a competitive viewpoint, two or more elements struggle against each other to overcome the other one, as if each one is going to glow with pride or to weaken the other one. Elements have no equal presence, but compete for priority.

Out of the human being you are,
So many stories can be made by me
If only concerns for bread and butter leave any room. (*Ibid.,* p. 346).

In the above example, as it is obvious, "making stories" and "concerns for bread" are two elements in struggle: the latter impedes making stories, and it seems as a competing element, which threats the "ability" of the enunciator.

Ronald Langacker (1991) puts these two last cognitive processes under the title of profiling. John Saeed "describes this process of assigning prominence to certain elements of a scene as profiling, …" (1997, p. 329).

7- Conclusion

Here, it was tried to show that how viewpoint functions in discourse. As it was clarified, it is highly related to the intention of the speaker/writer, and as a result, the orientation (s)he adopts in the discourse. Deictic markers also function as discourse markers to fix and anchor time, place, agent, and other discursive elements, which determine the viewpoint adopted by the enunciator/utterer. It should be emphasized that one responsible for determining above-mentioned discursive elements, and viewpoint as well, is enunciator or utterer who is one of the key elements for functioning the discourse. As a result, viewpoint is a cognitive process.

Different types of viewpoint, then, were introduced and exemplified: closed versus open; exaggerated; and global, serial (cumulative), selective, particularist, parallel, and competitive viewpoints. The relation of viewpoint with perspective was also examined, and it was suggested that different viewpoints are possible within one instance of discourse, but each particular instance has just one single perspective.

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زاویهٔ دید و دید در گفتمان

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در این پژوهش تلاش ما بر این است تا عملکرد زاویهٔ دید در گفتمان را مشخص کنیم. همان‌گونه که نشان داده خواهد شد، زاویهٔ دید ارتباط زیادی با نیت گفته پرداز/ نویسنده، و درنتیجه ارتباط زیادی با جهت‌گیری او در گفتمان دارد. بر این اساس، زاویهٔ دیدی که گفته‌پرداز برمی‌گزیند مشخص می‌شود. نشانگرهای اشاری به عنوان نشانگرهای گفتمانی برای تثبیت زمان، مکان، کنشگر و دیگر عناصر گفتمانی عمل می‌کند. سپس انواع مختلف زاویهٔ دید در گفتمان که عبارتند از زاویهٔ دید کل‌گرا، جزگرا، انباشت‌گرا و گزینشی معرفی و نمونه‌هایی از آنها ارائه خواهد شد. همچنین رابطهٔ زاویهٔ دید با دید نیز مورد بررسی قرار خواهد گرفت.

واژگان کلیدی: گفتمان، زاویهٔ دید، انواع دید، گفته‌پرداز، گفته‌خوان، هدف، جهت

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