Course Syllabus

Course description
This course provides an introduction to how discourse and dialogue are processed, both by humans and by machines. Discourse here is defined as the study of the organization of language above the sentence level, but also as any manifestation of language in context. Dialogue is defined as an instance of language that involves interaction between two or more people. The course will provide an overview of the phenomena included in the study of discourse and dialogue, from linguistic, psycholinguistic and computational points of view. Students will read original and recent work in these areas, and will be encouraged to collect, analyze and process their own data. Some of the topics to be covered include: coherence relations, cohesion, pronoun interpretation, turn-taking, speech act assignment and discourse markers.

Course structure and evaluation
Topics will be introduced by the instructor, but students will be in charge of presenting readings. Presentations can be individual or in pairs. The schedule of presentations will be decided at the beginning of the semester. There will be four assignments, and a final paper. The paper can be theoretical (compare and contrast different theories, discuss a particular approach to discourse and dialogue processing), or practical (research and implement a computational system).

Topics and required readings
The following list is subject to change, depending on students' interests. They are suggestions, and students are encouraged to consult other readings, especially when preparing for a presentation. Readings are available on-line (click on the link), or from Fr. Annett Eblinger (II.35.107).

1. INTRODUCTION


2. DISCOURSE DATA


3. ISSUES IN DISCOURSE

3.1 Pragmatics & Speech acts


3.2 Cohesion & Anaphora


3.3 Discourse structure & Coherence relations


3.4 Discourse markers


3.5 Information structure


3.6 Genre and register


3.7 Grounding and accommodation


4. ISSUES IN DIALOGUE

4.1 Dialogic vs. monologic discourse, politeness


4.2 Conversation analysis

4.3 Intonation


5. DIALOGUE AND DISCOURSE SYSTEMS

5.1 Tutoring systems


5.2 Conversational agents


5.3 Database interfaces


5.4 Essay scoring


5.5 Summarization
6. OTHER POSSIBLE TOPICS

6.1 Forensic linguistics


6.2 Education


6.3 Power, Ideology, Gender & Critical Discourse Analysis


6.4 Discourse across cultures