b. Form and Function

Discourse analysis is an umbrella of all those studies within Applied linguistics which focus on units/stretches of language beyond the sentence level. The analysis of **discourse** is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs. While some linguists may concentrate on determining the formal properties of a language, the discourse analyst is committed to an investigation of what that language is used for. While the formal approach has a long tradition, manifested in innumerable volumes of grammar, the functional approach is less well documented. Attempts to provide even a general set of labels for the principal functions of language have resulted in vague, and often confusing, terminology. We will adopt only two terms to describe the major functions of language and emphasize that this division is an analytic convenience. It would be unlikely that, on any occasion, a natural language utterance would be used to fulfill only one function, to the total exclusion of the other. That function which language serves in the expression of 'content' we will describe as **transactional**, and that function involved in expressing social relations and personal attitudes we will describe as **interactional**. Our distinction, 'transactional / interactional', stands in general correspondence to the functional dichotomies – 'representative / expressive', found in Bühler (1934), 'referential / emotive' (Jakobson, 1960), 'ideational / interpersonal' (Halliday, 1970b) and 'descriptive / social-expressive' (Lyons, 1977).

TRANSACTIONAL FUNCTION

(Expression of Content)

- Use language to convey factual or propositional information.
- What primarily the speaker has in mind in to transmit information/knowledge.
- The language used is *message oriented*.
- Linguists, philosophers of language, and psycholinguists are the most concerned scholars with this function.

Examples:

- A policeman gives directions to a traveller.
- A doctor tells a nurse how to administer medicines to a patient.
- A scientist describes an experiment.

INTERACTIONAL FUNCTION

(Expressing social relations and personal attitudes)

- Use language to establish and maintain social relationships.
- What primarily the speaker has in mind is to open a conversation/ to be friendly/ to end a conversation.
- Sociologists, sociolinguists, and anthropologists are the most concerned scholars with this function.

Examples:

- Two strangers are standing at the bus station when it is snowing

A: My goodness, it is so cold today.

The topic of *weather* is the most quoted example of interactional function in British English (and many other languages)

DISCUSSION

Discourse analysis is not concerned only with the grammatical form of an utterance; it is rather concerned with *how participants interpret each other's grammar appropriately and how the dialogue between participants is coherent*.

As far as the above examples are concerned, in the examples of the policeman, the doctor and the scientist it is clear that the speaker's main intention is to give/transmit information to the hearer, which means that a transactional function is performed here. Yet, in the example of the bus station the speaker's main intention was not to ask for information nor to give information; it was rather to be friendly and open a conversation by breaking the ice and get involved in a weather conversation.

At the grammatical level and considering the form of examples above, it can be said that the provided examples are being presented either in a form of a statement, suggestion, affirmation, declaration, etc. however, when it comes to consider the same examples beyond the grammatical level, it can be said that the same examples may have different functions.

3