

## **EPISODES AS UNITS OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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## EPISODES AS UNITS OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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**1. Units of discourse analysis.** One of the tasks of a sound theory of discourse is to explicate the analytical units postulated in the abstract description of textual structures at various levels. In addition to the usual morphophonemic, syntactic, semantic or pragmatic units or categories of sentence grammars, the theory of discourse has introduced new notions, such as 'coherence', 'cohesion', 'topic', or 'theme'--explicated in so-called 'macrostructures', whereas the analysis of conversation makes use of such notions as 'turn' or 'move'.

Thus, more or less at a 'meso-level' in between the unit of a clause or sentence on the one hand, and the unit of a text, discourse, or conversation as a whole, the notion of 'paragraph' or 'episode' has recently been discussed in various branches of discourse analysis (Chafe 1980, Longacre 1979, Hinds 1979). Roughly speaking, paragraphs or episodes are characterized as coherent sequences of sentences of a discourse, linguistically marked for beginning and/or end, and further defined in terms of some kind of 'thematic unity'--for instance, in terms of identical participants, time, location or global event or action.

In this paper I would like to contribute to a further definition of the notion of paragraph or episode, and will thereby focus on their semantic properties. It is argued here that an explicit account of these notions also requires a characterization in terms of semantic macrostructures, of which the various 'surface manifestations' often function as typical paragraph or episode markers.

For the sake of theoretical clarity, I make a distinction between the notion of 'paragraph' and the notion of 'episode'. An episode is properly a semantic unit, whereas a paragraph is the surface manifestation or the expression of such an

episode. Since I would like to pay attention especially to semantic issues, the discussion is mainly about episodes, rather than about paragraphs and their grammatical properties (as have been studied by Longacre 1979, Hinds 1979, and others).

Although this paper has a predominantly 'structuralistic' nature, the assumption that episodes are semantic units raises the possibility that they also have psychological relevance, as units in a cognitive model of discourse processing. Recent work in that area seems to suggest, indeed, that episode-like units have processing relevance in reading, representation, and memorization of discourse (see, for example, Black and Bower 1979; Haberlandt, Berian, and Sandson 1980). It is briefly shown at the end of this paper that my linguistic semantic observations may indeed be relevant for a cognitive discourse model.

Before I begin my discussion, a methodological remark is in order. There has been considerable controversy--mostly outside discourse analysis or text grammar, and often directed against these--about the linguistic and in particular the grammatical status of postulated discourse categories or units. In order to keep linguistics and especially grammar nice and clean, not only have many linguists preferred to remain within the seemingly safe boundaries of the sentence, but at the same time they have tried to discredit as linguistically or grammatically 'foreign' most of the specific units, categories, or levels used in various kinds of discourse analysis, admitting these at most to a theory of language use, to pragmatics, to rhetoric, or to other theories or disciplines outside their scope of responsibility.

The style of the last sentence suggests that I do not share that opinion. It is certainly true that many properties of discourse cannot and should not be accounted for in the format of a linguistic grammar; for example, rhetorical or narrative structures require separate--but integrated--treatment. Yet, many other discourse phenomena are properly linguistic or even 'grammatical', that is, they can be fully accounted for in terms of the usual levels, categories, or units that are familiar in the account of sentences. This does not mean, of course, as some have suggested, that therefore a linguistic theory of discourse can safely be reduced to that of a theory of sentences (plus some theory of language use, a pragmatic or a cognitive model). New notions and specific phenomena, such as coherence, macrostructure, or episode, are certainly necessary, but they can be described in terms of familiar theoretical notions.

Although I do think that linguistics and grammar have specific tasks and hence theories of their own, I would like to suggest more generally that the boundaries between 'grammar' and other linguistic theories, or between linguistic accounts of language and language use, and psychological or sociological ones, are not and should not be too sharp. In a general functional approach to language (Dik 1978, Givón 1979a, 1979b) which is

now a central paradigm in linguistics, it is stressed that on the one hand units, categories, rules, and structures at one level of analysis are systematically linked with those at other levels, and that on the other hand, all these 'linguistic' structures are functionally linked (both ways: determining and depending on) to the cognitive and social processing and use of language in communicative interaction. Thus, properties of the sentence--morphophonemic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic--appear also to have functions within the discourse (Givón 1979b). The same holds for a theory of the episode. Some properties of episodes can conveniently be formulated within a linguistic and even a grammatical framework; others need additional or alternative description in cognitive, interactional, and social terms. If attention is focused on the first, it should be kept in mind that the theory is essentially partial, and that the interdependencies with the cognitive and social processes and functions are an indispensable further explanation of the 'grammatical' structures of a more abstract account of episodes in discourse.

**2. Intuitive notions of 'episode'.** The notion of episode occurs not only in a theory of discourse, but also in everyday discourse. We speak about an 'episode' of our life, an 'episode' during a party, an 'episode' in the history of a country, or about episodes in stories about such episodes. In this sense an episode is first of all conceived of as a part of a whole, having a beginning and an end, and hence defined in temporal terms. Next, both the part and the whole mostly involve sequences of events or actions. And finally, the episode should somehow be 'unified' and have some relative independence: we can identify it and distinguish it from other episodes. Thus, a war can be an episode in the history of a country, a battle an episode in a war, and some brave action of a group of soldiers an episode during the battle. Apparently, the 'unifying' aspect of such sequences of events or actions conceptually appears in global event or action notions, such as 'war', 'battle', 'attack', and so on, as well as in the identity of the participants of such events and actions (a country, armies, groups of soldiers, individual persons, etc.), and finally, in the temporal identification of beginning and end.

This intuitive notion of episode corresponds to the notion of episode in a story or account of such actions and events: one speaks about an episode in a novel or in a history textbook, and the meaning of that notion is similar to its corresponding world episode: a sequence of sentences (or of propositions expressed by such sentences) denoting such an episode, hence with marked beginning and end and some conceptual unity. It is this intuitive notion that has been taken over in the theory of discourse. In this paper, then, I try to explicate this theoretical notion, and investigate whether it can be applied also to other discourse types, that is, not only to event or action discourse such as stories.

**3. The semantics of episodes.** Since episodes are taken to be semantic units of discourse, one must be able to define them in semantic terms, for example, in terms of propositions. I will indeed so do, and characterize an episode of a discourse as a specific 'sequence of propositions'. Just like the discourse as a whole, such a sequence must be coherent according to the usual conditions of textual coherence (van Dijk 1972, 1977). That is, the respective propositions should denote facts in some possible world, or related possible worlds, that are--for example, conditionally--related. Besides this so-called local coherence, the sequence should be globally coherent, that is, be subsumed under some more global macroproposition (van Dijk 1972, 1977, 1980). Such a macroproposition explicates the overall unity of a discourse sequence as it is intuitively known under such notions as 'theme', 'topic', or 'gist'. Macropropositions are derived from sequences of (local, textually expressed) propositions of a discourse by means of some kind of semantic mapping rules, so-called macrorules, which delete, generalize, or 'construct' local information into more general, more abstract or overall concepts.

These macrorules are recursive, so that one may have several layers of macroproposition sequences, together forming the macrostructure of a discourse. Such a macrostructure can typically be expressed by (individually varying) summaries of a discourse. Macrorules not only have textual propositions as input, but since much of the information of a text is implicit for pragmatic reasons also need information from the 'knowledge' and 'belief' sets of language users, for example, from frames or scripts which organize this knowledge according to criteria of stereotypical usage. By definition, a macroproposition features a central predicate and a number of participants, denoting either an important or global property, event, or action and central participants in a discourse. The textual 'basis' of each macroproposition, thus, is a sequence of propositions of the discourse. It is precisely this sequence which we call an 'episode'. In other words, an episode is a sequence of propositions of a discourse that can be subsumed by a macroproposition.

Because macrorules operate recursively, and we therefore may have macropropositions at several levels of generality, there may also be episodes of varying length or scope in a discourse. Theoretically, even the discourse as a whole, as a limiting case, is an episode. The overall 'unity' we intuitively postulated for world episodes and discourse episodes is precisely defined by the subsuming macroproposition(s). The beginning and end of an episodic sequence are then theoretically defined in terms of propositions which can be subsumed by the same macroproposition, whereas the previous and the following proposition of, respectively, the first and the last proposition of an episodic sequence should be subsumed by another macroproposition.

Further on, I show that these 'breaking points' are interestingly marked by linguistic (and other) means.

Although there may be episodes of varying length or scope in a discourse, it might be more relevant to restrict the notion of an episode to those sequences which have some specific further properties, intuitively characterized in terms of 'importance'. That is, perhaps lowest level macropropositions do not always define what is intuitively called a discourse episode, so that only higher level and sometimes nonreducible macropropositions subsume textual episodes. It must be seen, therefore, whether there are additional constraints on the identification of episodes.

The theoretical relevance of the notion of episode first of all lies in the fact that we now have a text-base unit corresponding to the earlier notion of macroproposition, that is, the sequence of propositions from which the macroproposition is derived. Secondly, one may assume that this textual unit has cognitive and linguistic properties. As the theory predicts and as has been confirmed in descriptive analysis (Chafe 1980, Longacre 1979, Hinds 1979, and the analysis to be given further on in this paper), the following grammatical 'signals' may be expected for the beginning of episodes:

1. pauses and hesitation phenomena (fillers, repetition) in spoken discourse;
2. paragraph indentations in written discourse;
3. time change markers: *in the meantime, the next day, etc.* and tense changes;
4. place change markers: *in Amsterdam, in the other room;*
5. 'cast' change markers: introduction of new individuals (often with indefinite articles) or reintroduction of 'old' ones (with full noun phrases instead of pronouns);
6. possible word introducing or changing predicates (*tell, believe, dream, etc.*);
7. introduction of predicates that cannot be subsumed under the same (macro-) predicate, and/or which do not fit the same script or frame;
8. change of perspective markers, by different 'observing' participants or differences in time /aspect morphology of the verb, (free) (in-)direct style.

Such markers signal the beginning of a new episode and hence at the same time the end of a previous one. In other words, as soon as there is a change of time and place (a scene), a different cast of participants, and a different global event or action now being initiated--according to scriptal or frame-like world knowledge about the components of such events or actions<sup>a</sup>--one may assume that there is a beginning of a new episode. It goes without saying that such markers play an important role in a cognitive model for the strategies of discourse

comprehension in which the language user has to derive a macroproposition from the propositions in the text.

In the foregoing I have assumed that perhaps not every macroproposition would qualify as a good candidate for defining episodes. In a story about a party, the sequence of events and actions that constitute the beginning of the story, and which can be subsumed under such macropropositions as 'I was invited to Peter's party', or 'I left', or 'I arrived at Peter's party', would not usually be qualified as episodes. Of course, the theoretical notion of an episode could have wider application, but I prefer to explicate an intuitively relevant concept. On the other hand, one does speak of an episode, both in the discourse and in the denoted world, if I get drunk at the party, or if as a consequence of getting drunk I have a car accident afterwards. In that case, the episode seems to have a specific, e. g. narrative, function in the discourse. In my example, for instance, it would be the interestingness criterion defining the Complication category of a story. The initial macropropositions would also have a function, e. g. that of a Setting, but they rather define the theoretical correlate of an episode, like a scene or background of other episodes, such as place, time, participants, and so on.

In addition, it seems that in order to be able to really define and identify a sequence, the global events or actions should not, as such, be stereotypical or normal—according to our world knowledge and beliefs. And finally, those global actions or events that are only preparations for or components of more global and interesting actions and events, should also not be identified as episodes. 'Leaving to go to a party' is not a goal on its own but part of a higher level action (going to a party and participating in it). Getting drunk or having an accident, however, is not stereotypical and hence may be qualified as episodic. It follows that those macropropositions have episodic nature (i.e. define a textual episode) which are not stereotypical according to scripts or frames, which cannot be subsumed by higher level macropropositions, and which have a specific function in the discourse as a whole. In other words, episodes typically require global goals of participants, or actions and events that frustrate, thwart, or menace the realization of such goals, so-called 'incidents'. Thus, studying psychology may be a global goal in my life and hence the sequence of events or actions defined by it may be an 'episode' of my life, whereas the incident of flunking an exam or being seduced by my teacher may be an episode within this more general episode: this holds both for world episodes and for the episodes in the discourses about them.

We now have a number of specific semantic criteria--and some brief suggestions for surface manifestations of these constituting the episode markers--for the identification of episodes in a discourse. Yet, just as intuitive episodes are usually distinguished especially in event and action sequences, it seems that especially

event or action discourses , e. g. stories , have episodes. How about other discourse types?

I am going to show that 'news stories' also have episodic structure: they are about (locally, nationally, or internationally) important events, feature important participants, are not stereotypical or only in part predictable , and can be identified in time and place.

Similarly, in history textbooks , parts of the discourse may be episodes because they are about important historical events and actions of a country or of the world: that is, actions or events that have broad social, economical, political, or cultural consequences , and which are characterized by the same cast of participants and limited in time and place.

Whether poems , advertisements , psychological theories , or concert programs have 'episodes' of this kind, however, remains to be seen. These certainly have (functional) 'parts', but they are not necessarily defined in terms of a global event or action, a cast of participants, or identical time or location parameters. Further research is necessary to see whether episode-like units can or should be identified for these and other discourse types. So my observations provisionally hold only for the large class of event and action discourses, of which the set of stories is only a subset.

**4. Analysis of an example: A news story.** To make the theoretical remarks of the previous sections more concrete , let us analyze a text sample in terms of episodic structure. I have chosen a news story from *Newsweek* about the American foreign policy in Latin America after the election of Reagan as president. This article (see Appendix) is mainly about the various opinions , both in the United States and in Latin America , about this assumed foreign policy. This means that one cannot simply analyze the text in terms of events and actions , but rather should also account for different 'opinions' . Since , however, different participants , different opinions , and different 'locations' are involved, an episodic analysis seems possible.

Table 1 lists . the episodes , with the sentences which are part of them and the respective segmentation criteria. Since there may be several layers of macrostructure, one may also distinguish different episodes, which are given in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. In this way the total number of episodes drops from 39 to 22 and to 13. The latter 13 episodes seem to correspond with the 13 nonreducible macropropositions of the text. Macropropositions 1 and 2 are, as usual in news stories, the more general 'summaries' , highest in the macrostructure, of which the other macropropositions are specifications.

At the level of surface structure one may observe that these 13 macropropositions and their episodes correspond more or less .with the 11 paragraphs of the text.

Table 1. Episode segmentation of 'A new team's Latin test' .

Episode: lines	Sentences	Segmentation criteria
1: 4-7	Nowhere... Latin America	General thematic introduction: USA
2: 7-8	And nowhere... passion	General thematic introduction: LA
3: 8-11	Many governments... White House	Specification: attitude LA governments
4: 11-15	In Chile... friends	Specification: attitude Government Chile
5: 15-20	and on a tour... found it	Specification: La capi- tals /Rockefeller (USA)
6: 21-23	Most human-rights... region	Specification: HR actin vista
7: 24-27	Leaders in Cuba... Washington.	Specification: LA left countries
8: 27- 31	But for R. administra- tion .... on the list	Reagan administration policy
9: 31- 35	'The most... policy'	Specification: statements Kirkpatrick
10: 36-43	<i>Traditional wisdom...</i> K . herself.	R's policymakers: the team
11: 43-51	Kirkpatrick... practices	Kirkpatrick : presentation and policy
12: 52-54	Reagan's... governments	Reagan's traditional policy
13: 55-57	'For four... Buenos	Official opinion Argentina Aires'
14: 57-68	'That will end. ..respect'	Opinion Kirkpatrick: better relations , respect
15: 69- 72	Among the Carter... liberalize	Opinion Carter supporters in LA
16: 72-76	Said Eduardo... every- where	Specification : Opinion Brazilian C. supporter
17:76-92	Kirkpatrick... C.'s HR- policy.	Opinions K.: realistic HR policy
18: 93- 97	<i>Green Light... Meza</i>	Foreign ministries in LA : Bolivia policy USA?
19: 97-104	'It would be... from us'	Opinion Bolivian diplomat in Exile
20: 104-110	Reagan aides... nations'	Opinion aides , K. about Bolivia
21:111-113	The real test... Carib- bean	General statement : policy in Caribbean
22: 113-120	The problems. . .Belize	K's opinion about Carib- bean
23:120-121	Some LA officials ... activist.	Opinion LA officials about Reagan

Table 1. Continued.

Episode: lines	Sentences	Segmentation criteria
24: 122-124	The presidents... region	Specification : Opinion presidents M. and
25: 124-129	And one analyst... America	Opinion analyst in Rio about anti-communism
26:129-132	But.. .them	Opinion Kirkpatrick: help against communism
27:133-136	<i>Fourth Place...</i> sales	General statement : how does R. help?
28:136-144 29: 145-151	'Our whole... demili- The R. administration... conditions	K's opinion: sell arms tarize.' General statement : will R . help unfriendly nations ?
30: 151-155	We must... United States	Opinion K .: only under strict conditions
31:156-157	Moderating influence ... controversial	General statement : this is controversial
32:157-171	Some analysts... Soviet Union	Specification: opinion some analysts
33:172-174	Similarly... Cuba	General statement : policy about Cuba
34: 174-177	Some LA experts... Havana	Specification: opinion LA experts
35:177-182	On the basis... Third World	Opinion <i>Newsweek</i> : un- likely
36: 183-188 37:188-191	Some LA's worry... "People... diplomat	Attitude in LA exists Opinion LA diplomat
38: 191-199	But Kirkpatrick... big way	Opinion K : democratic regimes get help
39: 199- 204	Such talk... action	Evaluation <i>Newsweek</i>

Table 2. Second level episodes in 'A new team's Latin test'.

Episode 2: lines	Segmentation criteria
1: 4-7	General summary statement: USA foreign policy change in LA
2: 7-8	General summary statement : reactions in LA to R's election
3: 8- 20	LA governments : relief
4: 21-27	Human rights activists' opinion: severe setback
5: 27- 35	Insiders R's policy: priorities already set
6: 36- 39	R's transition team at work on LA policy
7: 39- 48	Kirkpatrick important member of the team
8: 48- 68	Opinion K: traditional policy , better relations with LA
9: 69- 76	Opinion Carter supporters in LA : less pressure on conservative regimes
10: 77- 92	Opinion K.: more realistic human rights policy than Carter's
11: 93-104	Foreign ministries: what will happen with Bolivia, recognition?
12: 104-110	Reagan aides: different criteria for recognition
13: 111-120	R's policy in Caribbean: against unrest
14: 120-129	LA's reaction: crusade against communism will be Dangerous
15: 129-132	K's opinion: we are going to help regimes against Communism
16: 133-155	R's policy: sell arms, but not to leftist countries
17: 156-171	Carter's help is moderating policy in Nicaragua
18: 172-177	Plea to continue good relation with Cuba
19: 177-182	Reagan will have different policy towards Cuba
20: 183-191	LA's worries about help to democratic regimes
21: 191-199	Kirkpatrick denies this: we will nurture democracies
22: 199-204	Opinion Newsweek: reassurance, but how from thought to action?

Table 3. Third level episodes in 'A new team's Latin test'.

Episode 3: lines	Segmentation criteria
1: 4- 7	General summary statement : USA foreign policy change in LA
2: 7- 8	General summary statements: reactions in LA to R's election
3: 8-20	LA governments : relief
4: 21-27	Human rights activists' opinion: severe setback
5: 27- 48	R's LA team for LA policy, with Kirkpatrick as important member
6: 48-68	K's opinion: traditional policy, better relations with LA
7: 69-92	Opinions about human rights policies of Carter and Reagan
8: 93-110	Policy towards Bolivia: recognition by R
9:111-132	Policy in Caribbean: against communism
10:133-155	Help by selling arms
11:156-182	No moderating help for leftist regimes like Nicaragua and Cuba
12:183-199	Democratic countries will be helped
13:199- 204	<i>Newsweek's</i> evaluation

But what are the semantic properties which define the episodes on these respective levels? Let us examine the first (most detailed) level first (see Table 1). A first criterion for segmentation appears to be level of description: the first sentences express rather general (macro-) propositions, which summarize the text as a whole. They are so-called thematic sentences, often appearing at the beginning of newspaper articles. In dailies they are sometimes printed in bold characters (as the 'lead' of the story). So, the general theme is 'Change in US foreign policy towards Latin America after Reagan's election as president'. Then, the subsidiary main theme is: 'Various reactions to this policy in Latin America'. From there on, the general structure of the article is as follows: some topic from Reagan's Latin American policy is mentioned (mostly through the mouth of his adviser Kirkpatrick), and then the reactions (opinions, fears, etc.) to this point both by left wing (pro Carter) officials and right wing (pro Reagan) officials, mostly conservative governments.'

The relatively large number of episodes for this short text comes from this recurrent switch between a policy statement by Reagan's aides and reactions from various people in Latin America, or vice versa. In between are found the general statements of the *Newsweek* journalists, introducing a new theme or new aspect of a theme (mostly policy points). So, if level of description is a first distinguishing criterion--because the

statements cannot be reduced to the same macrostructure (i.e. have different participants , etc. from the subsequent sentences) , we must have a change of level as a mark for the next episode. That is, we change from the general theme 'change of policy' to the more specific 'consequences of this change'.

Similarly, in the third episode , we now get the various specifications: who is reacting how? So, we first go down to the collective group of (conservative) governments , then find a specification of the reaction in Chile, then a statement by Rockefeller in Argentina. In other words , we first witness a change of participants : we go either from a general set to a member, or change between members of different sets (representatives of Carter vs. those of Reagan, left wing vs. right wing Latin American officials). This also means in our text changes in the local scene of the respective opinions being given: the various countries are passed in review. The episode change markers in many of these episodes are simply the first noun phrases (sentence topics) of the sentences : *Many governments, In Chile, Most human-rights activists, Leaders in Cuba, etc.* These may be subjects, often indicating the semantic agent, or complementizers of place or time. A further indication are the connectives: differences in opinion may be introduced with *but*: *But for Reagan Administration insiders to be...* (line 27). Another typically journalistic device is not to first introduce the next speaker or opinion , but to introduce it with a direct quotation, followed by name or function or group of the speaker. Finally, we have the usual bold printed headings, indicating new main themes, as well as the paragraph indentations , as indications of episode change.

We now have, for this kind of text, the following episode (and hence episode change) criteria:

- (a) Level of description (general vs. particular)
- (b) Major participant(s): Reagan camp, Carter camp, Latin American left , Latin American right , *Newsweek*
- (c) Place (in this text hardly time: all present)
- (d) Different main themes about Latin American policy
- (e) Contrasting, conflicting opinions about these themes

Also we see what kind of coherence is at work here. Besides the usual type of conditional relations between actions or events (X says p and therefore Y says q) , we witness various functional relationships between sentences or between episodes (and hence between macropropositions) : we have many Specification relations : a sentence or episode specifies or gives an Example of a more general point. This Specification may be a specification of a theme , a specification of a country (location) , or a specification from group to members of the group. Furthermore, we have already observed that Contrast plays an important role: several spokesmen give their conflicting opinions about the respective policy items. More specifically, the Contrast may take

the form of Counterargument. Not only do the two respective camps try to counterargue each other's opinions , but also the reporters of *Newsweek* try to formulate (rather moderate) counterarguments, or at least doubts about several policy points.

Now , if we analyze the further reduction of episodes- -that is, episodes with a larger scope , as pictured in Tables 2 and 3-- which of the criteria mentioned earlier remain, and which should be relaxed? First of all, the General-Specific dimension, that is, the level of description, remains: very general statements cannot be reduced nontrivially (that is, if they are not reduced to themselves, as highest macropropositions) and subsumed under another macroproposition with their more specific subsequent episodes. However, we may abstract from the most particular participants: instead of talking about a Chilean official, we may just segment an episode with respect to 'Chile' or 'Chilean government' as participant. The same holds for the respective pro-Carter groups in Latin America. In this text, this leaves us with the various groups with different opinions in the respective countries.

Next, we still have the respective main themes of Reagan's Latin American policy: better relations with conservative regimes, more realistic human rights policy, opposition to communist regimes , encouragement of 'young democracies' , etc. Again, the different groups and different or even conflicting opinions seem to be the main criteria for the establishment of episode boundaries at this higher (or more embracing) level of episode structure. The scene change is from the United States to some Latin American countries , and the participant change is from one camp to the other.

As a provisional conclusion, we may assume that this kind of newspaper or weekly articles about (foreign) policy is episodically organized according to the following dimensions: (1) main tenets of the policy; (2) opinions of those who endorse the policy; (3) opinions of those who are against it; (4) groups of people who are affected by the policy (positively or negatively) , and their respective contrasting opinions; (5) in relation to these: the varying locations of the respective groups or people. This kind of article, typical for weeklies such as *Newsweek*, is merely a review of various opinions. It does not give an independent critical analysis; it gives little background and few facts or good arguments , or historically motivated sketches of prospects. This means that there are few historical explanations (background) and hence few past tensed episodes; nor are there prospects or predictions , and hence future tensed episodes (there is, however, some hint of these in the last sentence of the article, and the passage beginning with line 133) ; the only future tense passages are those which are about the plans of the Reagan camp , but *Newsweek* itself hardly mentions its own predictions.

Similarly, in this example, the functional Contrast relations between the episodes hold between the respective opinions of the two camps, but not between these opinions, on the one hand, and critical opinions of the reporters, on the other. The weekly just reports in a more or less 'balanced' way, what the United States government's or the president's policy will be, and the global consequences of this in the respective countries, where the consequences are given in terms of opinions of officials. The article does not investigate the more important possible consequences for the social and political situation of the various peoples of Latin America, let alone give a critical evaluation of the new president in terms of these social values and norms (will the degree of suffering of more people be higher?) .

This very brief and superficial characterization of a typical American weekly article also can be deduced from its episodic structures, because the kind of themes, the kind of groups of participants, the kind of functional relations (contrast between conflicting parties rather than critical counterarguments against opinions), and the role of the opinions of the reporters themselves, give a different overall picture of the episodes and their connections from the one that is presented when other participant groups, other time aspects (past, for instance), other type of opinions (criticism), etc. are given.

Most important for this analysis, however, is the fact that for rather 'static' text types also, such as policy reports in weeklies, an episodic analysis makes sense. Such an analysis specifies how macropropositions are realized in the text itself, how episodes can be unified during comprehension, how episodes and hence the (sub-)theme can change, how further organization can be assigned to the text base (e. g. by unity of place, time, participant, theme), and what kind of episode, and hence macro-proposition, changes are explicitly marked in the text (new paragraphs, headings, sentence topic, etc.).

**5. Some implications for a cognitive model.** The theoretical linguistic analysis of episodes which I have given here may have interesting implications for a cognitive model of discourse processing. Black and Bower (1979) have already shown that story statements tend to cluster in episodes and that such chunking has cognitive relevance: if we add propositions to an episode, this 'total load' does not affect recall of other episodes. Similarly, if we add unimportant propositions to an episode, this in general enhances memory for the important episode propositions. And Haberlandt, Berian, and Sandson (1980) have shown that episodes are a 'macrounit' of discourse; the encoding load at the boundaries of an episode is higher than at other nodes of a story schema. In ongoing experimental research in Amsterdam (see, for example, den Uyl and van Oostendorp 1980), it was also discovered that at the beginning of one-episode stories, the comprehension time for first sentences is significantly higher

than for other sentences of the episode (say, 800 milliseconds vs. 600 milliseconds). The explanation for this phenomenon seems obvious: the reader not only must understand the sentence, but also needs to actualize relevant world knowledge, e. g. frames or scripts, which may stay 'active' in the comprehension of the next sentences. Also, as has been shown in detail in my work with Kintsch (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978; van Dijk and Kintsch 1977, 1982), the first sentence is strategically used to derive a macroproposition. This macroproposition remains in Short Term Memory for the rest of the interpretation of the same episode. As soon as propositions are interpreted that no longer fit that macroproposition, a new macroproposition is set up.

The various linguistic markers I mentioned earlier serve as strategic data for this change of macroproposition, aid hence of episode : as soon as the cast of participants, time, place, circumstances, and (global) event or action seem to change, a new macroproposition can or should be formed, and these semantic changes are often expressed in surface structure: paragraph indentation, pauses, macroconnectives, full noun phrases (cf. Marslen-Wilson, Levy, and Tyler 1981).

Against this experimental and theoretical background, the episode has several cognitive functions:

- (a) As an additional unit in the organization of textual sequences of propositions, it assigns further 'chunking' possibilities, i.e. further organization, to the text, which in general allows more structured representation in memory and especially better recall.
- (b) Episodes are the textual manifestation of macropropositions; properly marked, they therefore strategically allow an easier derivation of macropropositions and hence allow better and faster understanding of the text as a whole, as well as better retrieval and recall.
- (c) Episodes may be associated with various textual and cognitive functions, e. g. narrative categories of a story, or as the bearers of 'interestingness' or 'importance' for certain text segments, and maybe--for certain discourse types--of pragmatic functions : the Conclusion of an argument or the Coda of a story may indicate what general practical inference should be drawn, or what should be known, believed, done.
- (d) Episodes may be the 'locus' for local coherence strategies: coherence relations between facts, the (re-)identification of referents by means of pronouns, the possibility to keep place or time indications implicit, may take place within the boundaries of an episode: language users therefore need to search for the relevant information not in the full preceding discourse representation in memory, but only in the representation of the current episode.

Of course, further theoretical and experimental work is necessary to specify and test these assumptions. Earlier work, however, suggests that discourse chunks such as episodes do indeed have relevant cognitive properties in terms of short-term memory interpretation; long-term memory representation, retrieval, and recall; hierarchical differences between important and less important information; the application of macrostructure formation strategies; the application of local coherence strategies and their corresponding information searches in memory; and the further organization of the discourse in terms of functional categories.

**6. Conclusions.** Episodes appear to be linguistically and psychologically relevant units of discourse structure and processing. They are taken *as semantic* units, which can be defined as sequences of propositions of a text base which can be subsumed under a macroproposition. In surface structure they are expressed by sequences of sentences which usually correspond with paragraphs, and signaled by various phonetic, morphological, lexical, and syntactic means. Semantically, they can be identified in terms of (changes of) global predicate, denoting a global event or action, a specific cast of participants, and time and place coordinates. Discourse episodes are taken to denote world episodes, that is, sequences of events or actions of some participants in some specific period. In general, both for world episodes and for discourse episodes, we constrain the identification of episodes to those propositions (or actions) that are important, interesting, or 'incidents'--that is, not stereotypical or normal. This means that especially the higher level macropropositions which have a specific function, e. g. narrative or pragmatic, cover episodes in a text.

In a cognitive model, episodes appear to function mainly as further organizers of the text base in short-term processing and long-term representation, allowing the strategic derivation and application of a macroproposition, and restricted information search in local coherence strategies, as well as better recall due to this more elaborate organization of the discourse.

In addition to earlier linguistic work on episodes, we now have a somewhat better insight into their semantic and cognitive status. However, much additional work is necessary. First, more work is necessary regarding episode markers in surface structures. Second, we should try to be more explicit about which macropropositions can be singled out as episode subsuming. Third, the internal organization of episodes needs further attention, for example, its 'development'. Fourth, the correspondence between episodes and functions or categories of stereotypical discourse schemata should be further investigated. Finally, the corresponding cognitive properties need further empirical research. In general, it remains to be seen whether the notion of episode is also relevant for other discourse types and not only for action or event discourse.

APPENDIX

DIPLMACY

**A New Team's Latin Test**

Nowhere will U.S. foreign policy change more abruptly—or radically—during the Reagan Administration than in Latin America. And nowhere did the American election arouse greater passion. Many governments in the region have breathed a sigh of relief at the prospect of Ronald Reagan in the White House. In Chile last week Interior Minister Sergio Fernandez happily predicted that “the new United States Government will treat its friends as true friends,” and on a tour of several Latin American capitals, Chase Manhattan Bank chairman David Rockefeller told smiling audiences that Reagan would be a realistic President, that he would “deal with the world as he found it.”

Most human-rights activists in Latin America viewed the election as a severe setback for democracy in the region, and leaders in Cuba and Nicaragua worried that Reagan's landslide victory would preclude any chance of improvement in bilateral relations with Washington. But for Reagan Administration insiders-to-be, priorities are already being shaped, and rebuilding links with conservative regimes is high on the list. “The most important issue is to repair relations in the region,” vows Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, Reagan's top adviser and designated spokesman on Latin American policy.

**Traditional Wisdom:** The Reagan transition team is already at work putting together a task force to refine Latin American policy. Among the group's likely members: Georgetown University's Roger Fontaine, Pedro San Juan of the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank, and Kirkpatrick herself. Kirkpatrick, a 53-year-old professor of government at Georgetown—and a lifelong Democrat—is expected to play a key role on the transition task force and in the new Republican government itself. “The Reagan Administration,” she said last week, “will have higher regard for traditional wisdom and traditional practices.”

Reagan's foreign policy will almost certainly be “traditional” in the way it treats many of the region's military governments. “For four years we have been treated as an enemy by the United States,” says one official in Buenos Aires. “That will end in January.” Kirkpatrick concurs, and accuses the Carter Administration of causing the “rapid deterioration” of relations with all the nations of Latin America. During Reagan's Administration, she says, the emphasis will be on bilateral relations and reciprocity. “We treated the Mexican Government outrageously in our negotiations on the natural-gas contracts,” Kirkpatrick



Chase's Rockefeller with Argentina's President Jorge Videla: A return to 'realism'?

contends. “Above all, we should treat them with more respect.”

Among the Carter Administration's supporters in Latin America, the greatest fear is that more “respect” will mean less pressure on regimes to liberalize. Said Eduardo Seabra Fagundes, president of the Brazilian Lawyers' Association, “Reagan's election will certainly have negative effects everywhere.” Kirkpatrick denies that. “We want a human-rights policy that is realistic and focuses on reasonably attainable goals such as the protection of personal and legal rights,” she says. Calling Carter policies “more offensive than effective,” Reagan's adviser maintained that future policy will involve a more flexible definition of human

rights. “Carter's policy was concerned only with violations of human rights that derive from governments and no other sources—terrorists, for instance,” she argues. “What this has meant in practical terms is that any government that has forcibly attempted to suppress terrorism and guerrilla action has tended to run afoul of the Carter human-rights policy.”

**Green Light:** Foreign ministries in Latin America are watching attentively to see how Reagan handles one policy choice: whether or not to recognize the Bolivian regime of Gen. Luis Garcia Meza. “It would be like a flashing green light to every itchy Latin American general who has ever dreamed of mounting a coup,” warns one Bolivian diplomat in exile. “It's a way of saying, ‘If you overthrow a constitutional government, you will not hear any complaints from us.’” Reagan aides see it differently, and think that diplomatic recognition is inevitable. “I would not make conformity to democratic practices a condition of our continued relations with Bolivia,” says Kirkpatrick. “We do not do that with most other nations.”

The real test of Reagan's Latin American policy, however, will probably come in Central America and the Caribbean. “The problems in Central America must be dealt with immediately,” Kirkpatrick says. In addition to the “near-civil war” in El Salvador and the growing insurgency in Guatemala, she sees the danger of unrest and violence in Costa Rica, Honduras and Belize. Some Latin American officials worry that Reagan will be too much of an activist. The presidents of both Mexico and Panama recently issued warnings against U.S. intervention in the region. And one analyst in Rio de Janeiro warns that “the United States is likely to find itself isolated if it seeks to carry out a crusade against what

Kirkpatrick: A vow to repair relations

Phyllis McNamee—Newsweek



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Michel Philippot—Sygma

Violent death in El Salvador. Under Reagan, a 'flexible' definition of human rights

it sees as the spread of Communism in Central America." But, retorts Kirkpatrick, "all the countries seem to be quite vulnerable [to Communism] and we are going to have to help them."  
**Fourth Place:** Just how the Reagan Administration intends to help is unclear. Almost certainly, it will lift Carter's 1977 ban on arms sales. "Our whole military-sales and training-assistance policy is overdue for review," says Kirkpatrick. "The amount of arms acquired in Latin America is at a higher level than ever while the United States has simply fallen to fourth place as a supplier behind France, West Germany and the Soviet Union. That's not progress toward demilitarization."  
 The Reagan Administration is expected

to be much less enthusiastic—and perhaps downright opposed—to aiding nations that it considers "unfriendly." Reagan will have to decide soon after taking office whether to help Nicaragua—and if so, on what conditions. "We must have guarantees about where the aid will go," says Kirkpatrick. "It should not be used to assist in the consolidation of power in a one-party state that is hostile to the United States."  
**Moderating Influence:** That attitude is certain to prove controversial. Some analysts say the Carter Administration's offer of \$75 million in aid is exerting a moderating influence on Nicaragua's Sandinista leaders. They argue that given the Nicaraguan Government's massive economic problems and the destruction left behind

by the former regime of President Anastasio Somoza Debayle, Managua is going to need help from the outside world. If Reagan vetoes aid, they maintain, it would only serve to alienate the Sandinista leadership further—and probably force Nicaragua to move closer to Fidel Castro's Cuba or the Soviet Union.

Similarly, the incoming Reagan Administration will have to clarify its stance toward Cuba. Some Latin American experts are urging the Reagan team to continue Carter's tentative efforts to improve relations with Havana. On the basis of current readings, that is unlikely. Reagan can be expected to end any modest good-neighbor policies put in place under Carter and to take a tougher line against Cuba's military and diplomatic activity in the Third World.  
 Some Latin Americans worry that the Reagan Administration will get so caught up in its new realpolitik that it will not do enough to reinforce democracy in those countries of Latin America where it now exists. "People like President Jaime Roldos of Ecuador are going to be looking over their shoulder from now on," predicts one Latin diplomat. But Kirkpatrick adamantly denies that the incoming Administration will be lax in supporting democratic regimes like the recently restored ones in Peru and Ecuador. "You will see very great efforts by us to nurture democracies in the region," she insists. "That will involve both moral and economic support—and in a very big way." Such talk is bound to reassure Washington's friends in the hemisphere—but it remains to be seen just how quickly and effectively the incoming Reagan Administration can translate such thoughts into action.

DOUGLAS RAMSEY in Washington with LARRY ROHTER in Rio de Janeiro

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