Driss Ablali and Guy Achard-Bayle, *French theories on text and discourse*, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2023, 292 p.

French theories on discourse, text, and meaning-making have long exercised a decisive influence on linguistic thought, both within Europe and beyond. Their contribution is, however, marked by a well-known paradox: conceptual richness has often been accompanied by theoretical and methodological fragmentation. Approaches associated with text linguistics, enunciation, argumentation, semiotics, pragmatics, and stylistics developed in parallel rather than through sustained dialogue. At the same time, the broader internationalization of linguistics has tended to foreground Anglo-American frameworks – cognitive linguistics, systemic functional linguistics, critical discourse analysis, corpus-based approaches – whose epistemological premises differ considerably from those of the French tradition. It is in this context that *French Theories on Text and Discourse*, edited by Driss Ablali and Guy Achard-Bayle, assumes particular significance. Bringing together thirteen chapters by leading scholars who collectively represent the major currents of French research on text and discourse, the volume offers a panoramic and up-to-date account of how French linguistics conceptualizes text and discourse today, while reassessing its intellectual lineage. Published as Volume 473 of the *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, it appears at a particularly opportune moment, as renewed interest in discourse, textuality, and meaning-making across linguistics, semiotics, literary studies, and cognitive sciences renders a systematic re-examination of the French tradition both timely and necessary.

The editorial introduction provides more than a simple overview: it establishes the conceptual and historical frame within which the chapters can be read coherently. Ablali and Achard-Bayle revisit the long-standing oppositions – *langue/parole, texte/discours* – that have structured French linguistic reflection since Saussure. While acknowledging their heuristic value, they argue that these binaries can no longer be maintained in their strict form, particularly in light of recent developments such as the publication of Saussure's manuscripts and the evolution of discourse-oriented paradigms from Benveniste and Hjelmslev to the *École française de l'analyse du discours*. Rather than discarding these distinctions, the editors propose to reconceptualize them as continua – or, in their terms, as "family resemblances" – drawing on Wittgenstein to highlight their fluid and overlapping boundaries. Text and discourse thus emerge not as mutually exclusive categories but as partially

co-constituted conceptual territories. This theoretical repositioning enables the editors to articulate a unified problematic: how linguistic meaning is produced at the intersection of structural organization, discursive operations, and the situated conditions in which texts and discourses circulate and are interpreted. It also challenges the entrenched view that structural and discursive analyses belong to separate epistemological universes, a belief that has long contributed to the fragmentation of French linguistic thought. Within this reframed landscape, the volume's three parts – *Text-discourse links*; *Text epistemologies*; *Epistemologies of discourse and beyond* – appear as mutually illuminating rather than disparate, offering complementary perspectives on how linguistic forms and discursive practices interact in the production and reception-interpretation of meaning.

Jean-Michel Adam opens Part I with his chapter "Micro-level, meso-level and macro-level of textual structuring and complexity", offering a finely structured synthesis of how texts organize meaning across distinct strata. Working at the intersection of text linguistics, discourse analysis, and functional models, Adam distinguishes three levels of textual organization and their linking procedures. At the micro-level, he analyzes intra- and inter-phrasal relations, focusing on anaphora, lexical recurrence, connectives, implicit meaning, enunciative transitions, and discourse-act chaining. The meso-level concerns paragraphing and the distribution of macro-propositions, while the macro-level addresses global coherence, thematic networks, and the structuration of discursive action. A key contribution is his articulation of linear progression with the networked effects produced by isotopies, reference chains, repetitions, and morpho-syntactic or phonetic parallelisms. By foregrounding these forms of semantic connectivity, Adam shows how textual meaning arises from the interplay of cohesive, rhetorical, and enunciative constraints. His step-by-step analysis of a 1940 French Resistance political poster, presented with its historical English translation, illustrates how even a brief public appeal activates complex operations across all three structural levels and shapes its argumentative and enunciative force. The chapter's strength lies in its integrative ambition: Adam consolidates decades of theoretical and analytical work – his own and that of the French text-linguistic tradition – while adapting it to contemporary discourse studies. Yet conceptually dense and best suited to readers already familiar with these models, it provides a rigorous and flexible methodological toolkit for examining textual complexity. It stands as a clear example of how multi-level analysis can illuminate meaning-making in politically and historically situated discourse.

In "Framing adverbials as markers of discourse organization", Michel Charolles examines a specific class of *preposed prepositional*

phrases (PPs) whose detached position enables them to open discursive frames extending beyond the host sentence. Defined as adverbials introducing spatial, temporal, causal, conditional or epistemic parameters, these framing units prospectively determine the interpretive domain within which subsequent discourse is processed. Charolles contrasts them with connectives, which encode rhetorical assemblages and operate retrospectively; framing adverbials instead contribute to referential and circumstantial assemblages, shaping the progression and segmentation of information. Drawing on examples from scientific and technical discourse, Charolles shows how framing adverbials generate informational groupings through processes of segmentation and integration. His diagrams make visible the nesting, overlap, and closure of frames as new adverbials are introduced. Although rooted in the French text-linguistic tradition, his account displays clear functional affinities with approaches that assign an organizing role to clause-initial position – such as the Hallidayan concept of Theme – while remaining theoretically distinct. Charolles then demonstrates that framing mechanisms also operate in narrative texts, through analyses of passages from Madame Bovary. Temporal NPs such as *from that moment, one morning, that evening,* and *one day* structure narrative progression by opening and closing successive frames that organize the unfolding of episodes. Overall, the chapter offers a compelling demonstration of how framing adverbials function as key operators of textual organization, structuring coherence across genres.

In "Text, discourse, cognition", Guy Achard-Bayle offers a conceptually rich examination of how text linguistics, discourse analysis, and cognitive linguistics can be set in dialogue while preserving the analytical specificity of each field. Drawing on the Prague structuralist tradition, he insists on maintaining the text as a metalinguistic object – a macro-syntactic and functional unit that should not be absorbed into either discourse or cognition. The chapter is structured around two axes, *Text–Discourse* (T–D) and *Text–Cognition* (T–C), through which Achard-Bayle retraces the epistemological foundations of contemporary textual theory. In the T–D axis, he revisits the distinction using the works of Martin, Adam, and neo-Prague theorists, highlighting how cohesion, theme, actualization, and communicative dynamics articulate the relation between text and discourse. Rather than endorsing views that subsume text under discourse, he warns against this conceptual assimilation, arguing that textual structures depend on discursive processes but are not reducible to them. The T–C axis situates text linguistics in relation to cognitive linguistics, engaging with mental and conceptual spaces and blending theories developed by Lakoff, Johnson, Fauconnier, and Turner. Here Achard-Bayle introduces his notion of dual integration,

distinguishing syntactic-semantic integration (predicative attachment) from conceptual integration (emergent meaning through projection). Literary and dialogic examples illustrate how these integrations may converge or diverge. Although theoretically rigorous and at times dense, the chapter provides a compelling framework that positions the text as a crucial interface between structure, discourse, and cognition, thereby reinforcing the volume's broader interdisciplinary aims.

In "From discourse analysis to analysis of discourses", Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni redirects attention from the text as an object to the diversity of situated discursive practices. She proposes a typology grounded in two major oppositions: oral *vs* written and monologic *vs* interactive. These axes are treated not as scalar dimensions but as categorical distinctions, intended to organize the heterogeneous field of discourse types. Oral discourse is defined as multimodal, co-constructed, and sequentially structured, while written discourse is described as planned, autonomous, and monomodal – even as the author acknowledges that hybrid genres increasingly blur these distinctions. A central methodological concern in the chapter is the analytical limitation of relying solely on transcripts to study interaction. Kerbrat-Orecchioni argues that transcription often fails to capture prosodic, gestural, and spatial features essential to interpretation. To address this, she calls for an eclectic analytical approach, drawing from pragmatics, conversation analysis, sociolinguistics, and text linguistics. Her examples from political debates demonstrate how meaning emerges from the interplay of linguistic forms and contextual cues. The chapter's strength lies in grounding discourse analysis in situated communicative practices and in articulating a set of categories that remain central to understanding interaction. At the same time, the typological framework – while conceptually clarifying – may underestimate the prevalence of intermediate or hybrid forms, particularly in digitally mediated genres that mobilize diverse semiotic affordances such as emojis, typographic emphasis, layout, or interactive turn-taking. Nonetheless, the chapter offers a lucid and methodologically robust contribution that complements the volume's broader effort to integrate structural, pragmatic, and contextual perspectives.

Alain Rabatel, in his chapter "Enunciator position, positioning and posture", offers a nuanced and theoretically rich examination of how speakers construct, negotiate, and transform viewpoints in discourse. Drawing on enunciation theory, he distinguishes between the primary enunciator (E1), responsible for the utterance, and secondary enunciators (E2), whose viewpoints may be quoted, evoked, inferred, or implicitly embedded. This differentiation allows Rabatel to trace fine-grained degrees of responsibility, showing how speakers may appropriate, mitigate, or reframe the perspectives of others. A particularly insightful contribution is his discussion of auto-dialogic

versus hetero-dialogic repositioning. Through meticulous linguistic analysis, he demonstrates how seemingly minimal variations – modal adverbs, evidential markers, evaluative lexicon – shift stance and reorient argumentative force. While Rabatel anchors his analysis firmly within the French enunciative tradition, the chapter engages only indirectly with adjacent approaches – such as stance studies, appraisal theory, or Anglo-American pragmatics – which might have offered productive points of comparison and further highlighted the distinctiveness of his model. The chapter culminates in an account of enunciative postures, understood as broader configurations of concordance or discordance between E1 and E2. Overall, Rabatel provides a rigorous and conceptually powerful framework that significantly enriches enunciation theory. His chapter equips discourse analysts with precise tools for examining voice, stance, and responsibility – key dimensions for understanding how contemporary discourses orchestrate and negotiate points of view.

Opening the second part of the volume, François Rastier proposes a significant rethinking of textual segmentation by challenging the stability traditionally attributed to linguistic units. Instead of treating units as fixed entities aligned with grammatical boundaries, he introduces *dissipative units*: dynamic configurations that arise, shift, and dissolve within the unfolding of semiosis. These configurations result from the interplay between *forms* and *grounds*, from semantic and expressive features, and from the rhythmic and isotopic processes that structure textual meaning. In this framework, meaning is not located in discrete segments but in the transformations that link one configuration to another. A central contribution of the chapter is Rastier's redefinition of the *passage*. Far from being a fixed or pre-delimited segment, the passage is conceived as a relational zone produced through *scanning*, that is, through the interpretive identification of co-occurring expressive and semantic elements. Passages can vary in length, overlap, or recur across different parts of a text, revealing how segmentation is always tied to interpretive activity rather than formal boundaries. Rastier further advances his model by elaborating a detailed typology of *intertexts* – genetic, hermeneutic, and rewriting intertexts, internal and external. This typology clarifies how passages migrate, are reinterpreted, or acquire new semantic configurations as they circulate across works, genres, and traditions. The chapter thus offers a rich methodological framework for understanding textual meaning as the product of continual transformations and interpretive reactivations. While the chapter includes numerous examples – from Flaubert to Proust – these illustrations are often dense and assume substantial prior knowledge, which may limit their effectiveness for readers seeking concrete methodological guidance.

Driss Ablali, in his chapter "Corpus semantics, the unfinished project of Greimas' Structural Semantics", revisits Greimas' foundational text to explore its latent orientation toward corpus semantics. He observes that the term *corpus* occurs frequently in *Structural Semantics*, at a time when corpus-based methodologies were not widespread in linguistics. Ablali argues that Greimas' semiotic project is implicitly structured around the triad *corpus–text–genre* and that this framework anticipates later developments in discourse-based studies of meaning. Ablali analyzes Greimas' conception of the corpus as a semiotically delimited ensemble rather than as a random collection of texts. The text, in this view, is a manifestation of broader semantic regularities that operate at the corpus level. Genre, in turn, codifies recurrent configurations that guide interpretation. While the chapter occasionally attributes a degree of methodological coherence to Greimas' work that the original text does not explicitly articulate, Ablali convincingly demonstrates that *Structural Semantics* contains an underappreciated corpus-driven dimension.

Bernard Combettes, in his chapter "Suggestions for a diachronic text linguistics", argues for integrating historical variation into studies of textual coherence and organisation. He contends that text linguistics has developed largely as a synchronic discipline and that its categories risk being anachronistically applied to earlier periods. By examining Old and Middle French texts, Combettes shows how referential mechanisms, clause structures, and descriptive sequences have evolved over time. The chapter highlights the historical variability of textual norms and reading practices. Combettes' detailed analyses of medieval narrative and descriptive passages demonstrate how shifts in linearization, hypertheme construction, and cataphoric structures reflect broader changes in communicative and cognitive conditions. His contribution underscores the need to ground textual categories in the linguistic and cultural contexts of specific periods.

Lita Lundquist, with her chapter "Forty years of text linguistics and its didactic application in teaching French as a foreign language", opens Part III, *Epistemologies of Discourse and Beyond*. She offers both a retrospective of Scandinavian text linguistics and a demonstration of its relevance for didactics. She identifies three phases in the development of text linguistics – structural, procedural, and dynamic – and shows how each contributes to an integrated model of textual competence. A distinctive feature of Lundquist's chapter is its contrastive analysis of Danish and French academic prose. She highlights differences in nominalization, syntactic organization, anaphoric patterns, and rhetorical preferences. These contrasts are not treated deterministically but as reflections of cultural habits of thought. Lundquist then applies these insights to the teaching of French as a foreign language, arguing

that learners must be trained to recognize and navigate the textual architectures characteristic of French academic writing.

Patrick Charaudeau's chapter, "A socio-communicational model of discourse", develops a comprehensive framework for understanding how discourse emerges at the intersection of linguistic organisation, communicational constraints, and social identities. He begins by identifying three core problematics of discourse analysis: defining its object of study; articulating the relationship between the speech act and the exterior conditions that shape it; and accounting for the interpretative processes through which meaning is constructed. Charaudeau then proposes a tripartite model of relevance – place of production, place of interpretation, and place of text construction – each associated with specific identities, constraints, and effects. This structure is complemented by a multi-layered typology of communication situations, ranging from broad social domains to global and specific communicative devices, which collectively impose "discursive instructions" on speakers. The chapter culminates in an analysis of individuation strategies – legitimation, credibility, and capturing – through which subjects negotiate authority, recognition, and emotional engagement. Although the chapter's strong anchoring in the French socio-semiotic tradition aligns with the aims of the volume, its limited engagement with other interaction-oriented approaches may offer fewer points of theoretical connection for readers from outside this tradition. Nonetheless, Charaudeau provides a rich and systematic theorisation that equips discourse analysts with precise tools for examining how communicative situations shape meaning, identity, and persuasive intent.

In his chapter "Discourse, discourse analysis, and discourse genres", Dominique Maingueneau offers a wide-ranging and conceptually rich reflection on the status of "discourse", the diversity of discourse-analytic approaches, and the heterogeneity of discursive regimes. He begins by unpacking the semantic and epistemological ambiguity of "discourse", showing how its uses range from broad socio-cultural formations to specific textual and interactional units. Maingueneau then traces the development of discourse analysis as a field marked by multiple trends – textual linguistics, pragmatics, ethnomethodology, rhetoric – which converge around the study of language-in-use but remain theoretically heterogeneous. A central part of the chapter concerns the heterogeneity of discourse and the distinction between conversation-based regimes and text/genre-based regimes, each shaped by different constraints and analytical priorities. Maingueneau revisits his well-known model of enunciative scenography, distinguishing enclosing scenes, generic scenes, and discursive scenographies, and illustrating how genres organise participation, roles, and communicative settings. He further extends

the discussion to digital discourse, arguing that the Web destabilizes traditional genre boundaries through hyper-genericity, modularity, and unstable textual units. Although the chapter privileges theoretical synthesis and offers comparatively few developed analytical examples, this emphasis is consistent with its conceptual ambitions. Maingueneau nevertheless provides an authoritative and integrative framework that highlights the epistemological plurality of discourse studies and illuminates how genres, regimes, and media structure discursive practices.

Ruth Amossy, in her chapter "Integrating argumentation in discourse analysis? Problems and challenges", offers a rigorous and timely re-evaluation of how argumentation can be conceptualized within French Discourse Analysis (DA). Building on the historical tension between rhetoric and DA – summarised in the abstract and reiterated in the introduction – she argues that the two traditions need not remain epistemologically separate. Amossy contrasts three major frameworks: Aristotelian rhetoric, the New Rhetoric (Perelman/ Olbrechts-Tyteca), and pragma-dialectics, showing why DA cannot simply import their normative models, which focus on evaluating the validity or soundness of arguments. Instead, she proposes Argumentation in Discourse, a descriptive approach that views argumentation as a constitutive dimension of discourse and examines how texts orient interpretation, construct values, and shape positions – even in the absence of explicit argumentative structures. Through a detailed micro-analysis of a polemical online post about the burqa, Amossy demonstrates how reasoning intertwines with affect, identity work, genre constraints, and the socio-discursive conditions of digital communication. She shows how argumentative patterns emerge through the interplay of ethos, pathos, and logos, and how polemical discourse mobilizes publics by anchoring individual reasoning in collective values. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the analyst's position and on the descriptive, non-prescriptive orientation of DA. Overall, Amossy offers an integrative framework for analyzing how discourse constructs positions, circulates values, and shapes social debate.

In his chapter "Linguistics and literature: Style in question", André Petitjean offers a historically informed and theoretically nuanced reassessment of the notion of style and its place at the interface of linguistics and literary studies. He traces the evolution of stylistics from the 1940s to the 1960s, when style was largely viewed as an expressive, intentional marker tied to authorial individuality. He then revisits the "textualist" turn of the 1960s-70s, shaped by structural semantics, semiotics and dialogic approaches, which displaced expressive models by foregrounding the linguistic, interdiscursive and social dimensions of textual organization. A

central argument of the chapter is the need for a radical rethinking of literary stylistics. Petitjean surveys a heterogeneous field – from textual genetics and discourse analysis to pragmatic and enunciative models – showing how contemporary work has moved far beyond traditional philological frameworks. He highlights style's oscillation between singularizing and generalizing poles and stresses the importance of analyzing genre, enunciation, polyphony and intertextual relations. A minor limitation is the absence of cognitive stylistics, notably Fowler's (1977) notion of mindstyle, which explores how linguistic patterns construct fictional consciousness. Such a perspective could have complemented his call for a multidimensional theory of style. Nonetheless, the chapter provides a rich roadmap for rethinking stylistics today.

Taken together, the chapters in *French Theories on Text and Discourse* provide a rich and multifaceted panorama of contemporary French linguistic thought. The volume succeeds in revealing convergences among approaches often perceived as distinct or even incompatible. Several thematic threads run consistently through the book: the interplay between local and global coherence (Adam, Charolles); the epistemological status of textual units and their historical variability (Rastier, Ablali, Combettes, Achard-Bayle); the centrality of enunciation, stance, and identity in meaning-making (Rabatel, Charaudeau); the structuring role of genre and communicative regimes (Maingueneau; Kerbrat-Orecchioni); the argumentative dimension of discourse (Amossy); and the interface between language, literature, and style (Petitjean). Lundquist's chapter further opens a didactic perspective, demonstrating how these theoretical insights can inform the teaching of French as a foreign language.

The volume is not without its tensions. The chapters vary in length, density, and methodological grounding. Some contributions – such as those by Adam, Charolles, and Combettes – offer detailed empirical analyses, whereas others, including Achard-Bayle and Charaudeau, remain primarily conceptual. Rastier's theoretical innovations, though stimulating, would benefit from more sustained empirical illustration. Ablali's re-evaluation of Greimas is persuasive, yet at times retroactively systematises positions that remain implicit in *Structural Semantics*. Petitjean's contribution, while insightful, is comparatively brief and could have engaged more directly with recent developments in stylistics. Despite these imbalances, the volume maintains a high degree of coherence thanks to the editors' framing. Their reconceptualization of traditional dichotomies as continua allows the chapters to be read within a unified perspective, revealing both the internal diversity and the latent coherence of

French approaches to text and discourse. Overall, *French Theories on Text and Discourse* offers a timely and authoritative synthesis of contemporary French linguistic thought. By combining theoretical reflection with empirical analysis, the volume provides readers with robust tools for navigating the complex landscape of textual and discursive studies. Although uneven in places, its breadth and conceptual richness make it a valuable resource for scholars of text linguistics, discourse analysis, semiotics, stylistics, and applied linguistics. It will undoubtedly stimulate further dialogue across traditions and contribute to a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and interpreted.

Maria Constantinou
University of Cyprus
constantinou-papanicolaou.maria@ucy.ac.cy