

Task-Based Analysis of Target Discourse in Media Weather Forecasts

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Outline of Presentation

Overview of the study

Identification of Subtasks

Results of Corpus Analysis

Linguistic Structures

Prototypical Discourse

Comparison to LT materials

Summary



Overview: Goals

1. Identify contextualized language and use
2. Identify discourse structures and patterns
3. Build a prototypical discourse
4. Comparison with LT materials



Overview: Sampling

Radio $N=138$

- AM
- FM

Television $N=164$

- Local 1
- Local 2
- National

- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening



Identification of Subtasks

What is a Target Task?

- Target Task: the real-world communicative activities identified in the first stage of a task-based needs analysis (Long, 2005, 2015)

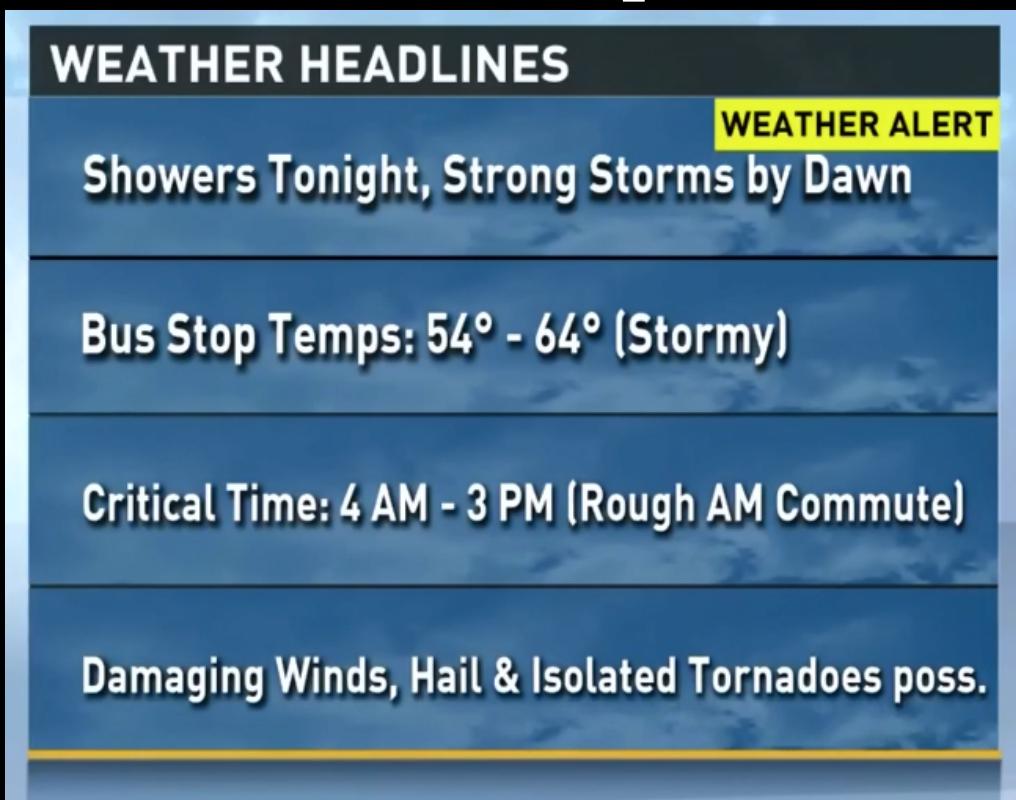
Understanding a Weather Report

What is a Subtask?

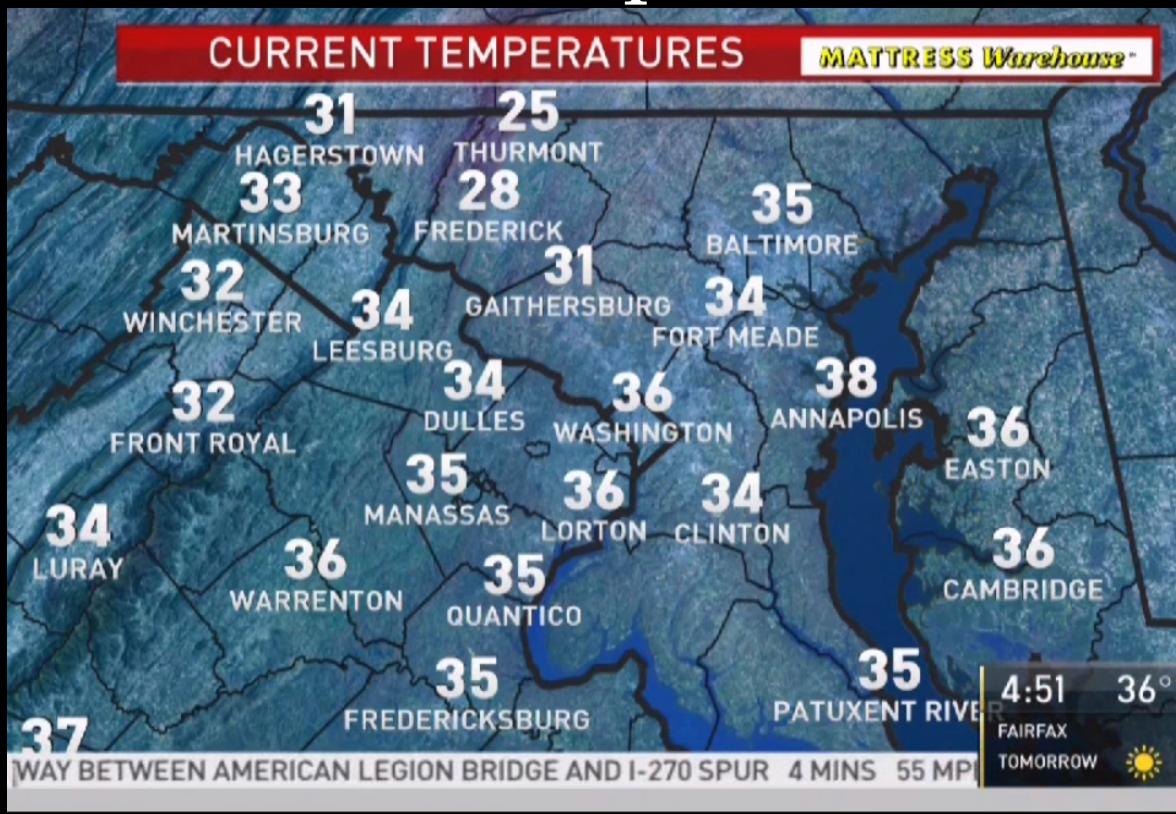
- Subtask: “a differentiated process which, while having a number of steps and an outcome, is dependent on or part of another major target task” (Gilabert, 2005, p. 184)



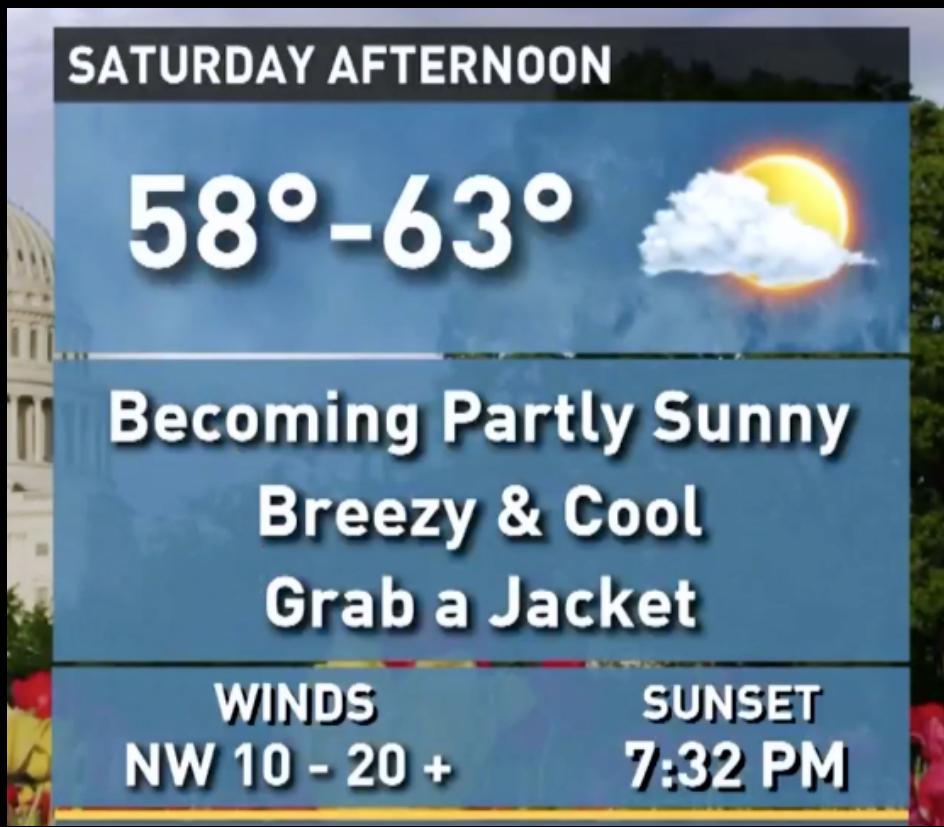
Subtask Examples: Headlines



Subtask Example: Current Weather



Subtask Example: Outlook



Subtask Example: Extended Outlook



Technical and Subtechnical Lexis

Technical

- sleet
- thunderstorm
- wind chills
- wind gusts
- gust (v)
- Nor'easter

*Snow becoming heavy at times overnight, mixing with **sleet** and rain south and east of Baltimore.*

*May get a few isolated **thunderstorms** the rest of the afternoon.*

*Cloudy, windy, cold Friday, a few light showers in the afternoon, highs around 50, **wind chills** around 40.*

*But it is blustery out there uh tracking **wind gusts** right now anywhere from about 20 to 30 miles an hour.*

*Sunny skies with a breezy west wind near 30 miles an hours **gusting**.*

*A powerful **Nor'easter** moving into far northern New England but the gusty winds remain across our area.*



Technical and Subtechnical Lexis

Subtechnical

- front
- accumulation
- system
- freezing
- sprinkle
- pressure

*But after a cold **front** goes by, snow showers could come back into the picture, Saturday night and into Sunday morning.*

***a warm/cold front**

Accumulations of a foot or more possible in the northern suburbs.

*Lots of unsettled weather with our storm **system** over New England.*

*Down to the mid 30s in Baltimore, but our northern suburbs may get close to **freezing** by early tomorrow.*

*A passing shower or **sprinkle** at times on Saturday, still warmer though.*

*High **pressure** though will come in from the west and produce a lot of sunshine for us tomorrow.*



Collocation

showers (638 cluster tokens)

- **some showers** (117), **snow showers** (68), **rain showers** (54), and **scattered showers** (31)
- **showers around** (30)

rain (579 cluster tokens)

- **some rain** (65), **heavy rain** (49), and **light rain** (34)
- **rain showers** (54)

Collocations of frequent vocabulary items at 5% of cluster token frequency



Collocation

chance (236 cluster tokens)

- ***better chance*** (24), ***another chance*** (14), ***best chance*** (14), and ***slight chance*** (12)
- ***chance for*** (140), ***chance of*** (53)

front (90 cluster tokens)

- ***cold front*** (29) and ***warm front*** (26)

Collocations of frequent vocabulary items at 5% of cluster token frequency



Language Structures

Ellipsis

- NP Ellipsis [We, you] *May get a few isolated **thunderstorms** the rest of the afternoon.*
- VP Ellipsis *Accumulations* of a foot or more [are, will be] possible in the northern suburbs.
- NP+VP Ellipsis [There is, we have] *Lots of unsettled weather with our storm **system** over New England.*
- Total for Radio (138/138): 48.97%
- Total for TV (159/164): 38.39% *Excluding National (139/139)



Language Structures

- 1 WTERP weather
- 2 Increasing clouds and **breezy** today
- 3 Highs in the mid 60s
- 4 Cloudy, showers possible late tonight
- 5 Lows around 40
- 6 Sunny and 64 downtown
- 7 60 on TV hill
- 8 Winds north, northwest at 14
- 9 I'm John Doe
- 10 WTERP news radio



Language Structures

- 1 WTERP weather
- 2 [We'll see] Increasing clouds and [it'll be] **breezy** today
- 3 Highs['re] in the mid 60s
- 4 [It will be] Cloudy, showers [are] possible late tonight
- 5 Lows [will be] around 40
- 6 [It will be] Sunny and 64 downtown
- 7 [It is] 60 on TV hill
- 8 Winds [are] north, northwest at 14
- 9 I'm John Doe
- 10 WTERP news radio



Prototypical Radio Discourse

- 1 WTERP morning weather
- 2 We have clear skies right now
- 3 With temperatures in the mid 60s
- 4 Clouds increase, rain showers possible later tonight
- 5 Lows around 40 with windchills dropping into the 20s
- 6 Right now 60 degrees downtown
- 7 60 at the broadcast center
- 8 Winds south, southeast at 15
- 9 I'm John Doe
- 10 For WTERP news radio



Comparison to LT Materials

- 1 And here is today's weather
It'll be a cold start with temperatures as low as 3 degrees celsius until
- 2 about mid morning
There'll also be some heavy rain, especially in the west, so don't forget to
- 3 take your umbrella with you if you're going out this morning
By lunchtime things should be looking up and there'll be some sunshine in
- 4 the early afternoon in most parts, with temperatures reaching 10 degrees
celsius by late afternoon
It'll be a warm, dry evening with much higher temperatures than the cold
- 5 nights we've been having over the last week
- 6 And the good news is the warm weather is going to last for the weekend
Saturday'll be warm and dry with highs of 15 degrees and Sunday should
- 7 be even hotter with highs of 21 degrees in the afternoon
It looks like summer's finally on its way so get out and make the most of
- 8 the spring sunshine while you can



Summary

- Clear identification
 - Subtasks and discourse patterns in weather reporting
- Wide use of structural ellipsis
- Development a corpus to identify
 - Technical and subtechnical vocabulary
 - Collocations of frequent weather-related words
- Construction of a prototypical discourse
- Comparison of LT materials



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References

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Thank You!



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