

Discourse Analysis



2- The co-operative principle

The philosopher Paul Grice described that:

1- In most conversational exchanges, participants are co-operating with each other.

2- Conversational partners are expected to obey four maxims.

The Cooperative Principle.

“Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged”

The cooperative principle has four rules or maxims that people involved in conversations tend to respect:

- 1. The maxim of quality**
- 2. The maxim of quantity**
- 3. The maxim of relevance**
- 4. The maxim of manner**

1

The maxim of quantity (Say just as much as is necessary)

- Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.**
- Do not make the contribution more informative than is required.**

Example

- ◆ **A: Sit down at the newly painted table.**
- ◆ This referring expression contains information that may be useful to identify the referent. However:
- ◆ Under the assumption that A is being cooperative, we might expect that the property of “being newly painted” is being chosen for a purpose.

2

The maxim of quality (Tell the truth)

- ◆ **Do not say what you believe to be false.**
- ◆ **Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.**

Example

A: Where's the nearest supermarket?

B: I think there's one round the corner, but I'm not from these parts.

We do feel a general “obligation” to tell the truth, and if we're uncertain, we indicate that this is the case.

3

**The maxim of relation
relevance (Stick to the point)**

**Make your contributions
relevant.**

Example

A (to a foreigner she's only just met): So where are you from?

B: Louwesveg 1, 1066 EA, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Europe

Probably, B could've just said: Amsterdam.

Clearly, B is giving more information than necessary

Much of this information is completely irrelevant, since the exchange is clearly not intended to go into that level of detail.

(hence, violating Quantity)

4

The maxim of manner (Be clear)

- ◆ **Avoid obscurity.**
- ◆ **Avoid ambiguity.**
- ◆ **Be brief.**
- ◆ **Be orderly.**

Example

A: So sir, do you agree with the new law on hunting?

B: Not entirely disagreeable, as I must confess myself not to be, I find certain, shall we say, solecisms in said law.

1


- ◆ **Mum: *Did you finish your homework?***
- ◆ **Pat: *I finished my algebra.***
- ◆ **Mum: *Well, get busy and finish your English, too!***

- ◆ **The child did not say that her English homework is not done, nor did she imply it.**
- ◆ **Nevertheless her mother is entitled to draw this conclusion, based on the combination of what the child actually said and the cooperative principle.**

3

- ◆ *Dear Colleague,*
- ◆ *Dr John Jones has asked me to write a letter on his behalf. Let me say that Dr Jones is unfailingly polite, is neatly dressed at all times, and is always on time for his classes.*
- ◆ *Yours sincerely,*
- ◆ *Prof. H.P. Smith*
- ◆ **The person reading this letter assumes that all the relevant information will be included; so the maxims of quantity and relevance lead one to suspect that this is the best that the professor can say.**

Grice observed the difference between “what is said” and “what is meant” to show that people actually do follow these maxims in conversation.



We might encounter some conversational exchanges where the co-operative principle **may not be in operation**

HEDGES

- Words or phrases used to indicate that we are not not really sure that what we're saying is sufficiently correct or complete.
- Expressions which sound a note of caution.
- They display awareness on the speaker's part that he may be violating one of the maxims of conversation.

Violating the maxim of quality

- ◆ A: Excuse me, do you know what time the shops close?
- ◆ B: As far as I know, they close at 7, but I'm not from around here.

We're often in situations where we can't guarantee that the information we impart is in fact true.

This leads to potential violations of the Quality maxim.

Violating the maxim of quantity

- ◆ I don't know if you know this already, but the shops close at 7, so you might want to hurry up.
- ◆ To cut a long story short, she decided she would leave for Hawaii.

In these situations, we are in a position where:

- We're not sure the interlocutor knows something already (which would make our contribution “extra” or “unnecessary”)
- So we have to acknowledge this, but still make sure the background information is in place.

Violating the maxim of relevance

- ◆ Oh, by the way, did you notice he's not wearing a wedding ring anymore?
- ◆ This may sound silly, but did you come here on your own?

- Here too, the speaker displays an awareness that what she is saying may be irrelevant (or already known).
- However, there are scenarios where speakers do make remarks which are otherwise unconnected to the conversation.

Violating the maxim of Manner

- ◆ Sorry, but I find this a little difficult to describe...
- ◆ I don't know if this is at all clear, but I do believe the man burst in through the window.


And here, the speaker seems to be aware of his contribution being confused, or verging on obscurity, thus potentially violating Manner.

HEDGES

- ◆ As far as I know...
- ◆ To cut a long story short
- ◆ By the way
- ◆ I don't know if this is clear

WHAT HEDGES SHOW US

- ◆ Ultimately, speakers' use of hedges suggests that Grice's maxims are on the right track:
- ◆ When the maxims are violated – usually for some purpose – the speaker indicates that she is aware of this.



Which maxim(s) is/are violated, and what does that violation actually communicate?

1

- ◆ Editor: *I'm considering hiring X as a writer. What can you tell me about X?*
- ◆ Writing teacher: *X has good handwriting, and always comes to class on time.*

The teacher is violating the maxim of **Quantity** (not giving enough information) and the maxim of **Relevance** (giving irrelevant information)

- This strategy generally communicates, “I have nothing good to say about X as a writer”; that is, “Anything *relevant* I could say would not be in X’s favor”

2

- ◆ Juliet: *I'd like to visit Benvolio. Where does he live?*
- ◆ Romeo: *Somewhere near the palace.*

Romeo is violating the maxim of **Quantity**.

because his response doesn't give Juliet enough information for her to visit Benvolio

Implicatures

- ◆ APPARENT VIOLATION OF THE MAXIMS IS THE KEY TO THE NOTION OF CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE!!

Implicatures

- ◆ Basic assumption in conversation: Unless otherwise indicated, the participants are adhering to the cooperative principle and the maxims
- ◆ Charlene: I hope you brought the bread and the cheese
- ◆ Dexter: Ah, I brought the bread.

Implicatures

- ◆ Speakers communicate meaning via **implicatures**.
- ◆ listeners recognize the communicated meanings via **inference**

Implicatures

- ◆ A: are you coming to the part tonight?
- ◆ B: I've got an exam tomorrow.
- ◆ B's response contains an **implicature** concerning tonight's activities and that is not simply a statement about tomorrow's activities.

Understanding implications rely
on some **background knowledge**

Last week he had been unable to control the class


He is a teacher and he is not very happy

It was unfair of the math teacher to leave him in charge.

He is a schoolboy

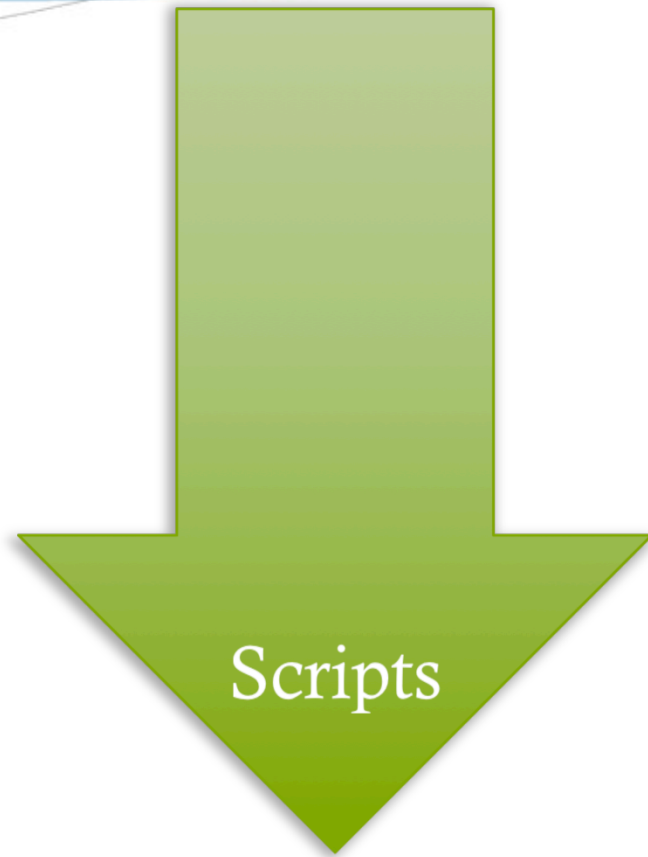
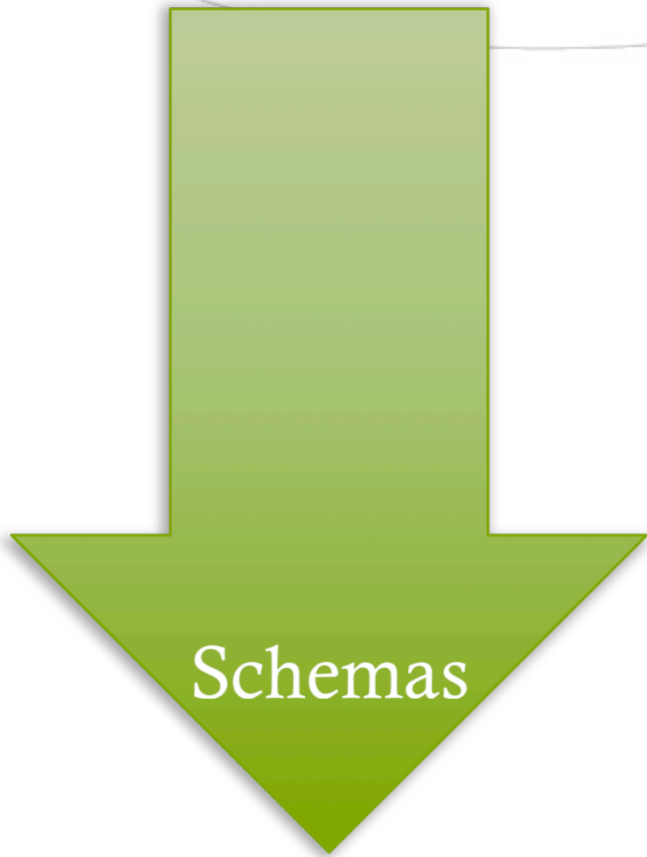
After all, it is not a normal part of a janitor's duties

How we “build” interpretations of what we read by using
a lot more information than is presented in the words
on the page



We create what the text is about,
based on our expectations of what
normally happens.

background knowledge



Schema

- ◆ A conventional knowledge structure that exists in memory.
- ◆ We used our conventional knowledge of a classroom or “ a classroom schema” to analyze the previous example.
- ◆ We have man schemas that are used in the interpretation of what we experience.
- ◆ E.g. “ supermarket schema”

Scripts

- ◆ A dynamic schema
- ◆ contain information on event sequences.
- ◆ E.g. “ going to the dentist” + “ going to the movies”
- ◆ Scripts help explain that expectations play an important role in understanding discourse. When we hear a situation being described, we expect that certain events take place.

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Therefore, Our understanding of what we read is not only based on what we see on the page (language structures), but also on other things that we have in mind(knowledge structure).

- ◆ <http://www.google.com.sa/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDIOFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.philadelphia.edu.jo%2Facademics%2Fknofal%2Fuploads%2Fh1.ppt&ei=RND1UoTFOIuS7AbjgYGwDw&usg=AFQjCNHlmTHsib-6dYhp3qNcccVK-JAfhg>
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