FACOLTÀ DI STUDI UMANISTICI

Lingue e Comunicazione

Lingue e culture per la mediazione linguistica

Lingua Inglese 2

LESSON 7

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The negotiation of meaning (adapted from Widdowson 2007, Ch. 6)

Communication: 2 kinds of knowledge

- Schematic knowledge -> the ideational & interpersonal schemata which structure people's socio-cultural reality -> provides us w a set of default assumptions
- Systemic knowledge -> knowledge of what is encoded in the language system

Schemata help us interpret but do not determine our interpretation

Communicative convergence

Communication: negotiating some type of common agreement between the parties in an interaction

P1 formulates a message by drawing on systemic and schematic knowledge

P2 brings similar knowledge to allow interpretation

There must be some convergence between the two in order to have effective communication

- How much communication < measure of correspondence
- Issues < items of lg outside P2 knowledge, ideational framework P2 does not know, interpersonal convention P2 is unfamiliar w
- If immediate reciprocal interaction of conversation -> online meaning negotiation
- Written language: P1 should anticipate possible problems for P2
- P2 “free of the need to take part in the co-construction of conversation”

- The parties negotiate a measure of convergence
- Previous shared knowledge between P1 & P2
- The closer, the easier
- Degree regulated by the purpose of communication
- Always partial convergence -> the discourse we derive from texts is always indeterminate and partial

Negotiating convergence

- Cooperation in negotiating a convergence: decoding the same meaning as codified by the sender
- Diverse pragmatic meanings to be negotiated as well

❑ GRICE'S COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE:

1. The quantity maxim 2. the quality maxim

3. The relation maxim 4. the manner relation

- Maxims parties will subscribe to + purpose

The quantity maxim

- Do not provide more, or less, information than is necessary
- The least effort principle in communication: we use as much lg as we need to make the required contextual connection
- No need to provide info if it is already shared knowledge
- Mistake: underestimation or overestimation of contextual knowledge

- This leads to over-textualization (redundant, pointless, verbose) or under-textualization (obscure)
- Difference on the basis of the genre considered -> legal texts v. public notices (keep off the grass)
- Application must depend on context & purpose
- People may choose not to apply it deliberately
- CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURES: flouting the maxim (ex. pp. 58-59)

The quality maxim

- Be truthful and do not say things you know to be false
- Flouting the maxim to add extra meaning + creativity, to create an extra effect such as irony, metaphors and other figurative lg.
- Conventional appropriateness & diverse genres (obituary)

The relation maxim

- Make what you say relevant to the topic or purpose of the communication
- Compliance w this maxim is well represented by adjacency pairs
- Cooperative mood (p. 61) -> significance over and above apparent meaning

The manner maxim

- Be clear, avoid ambiguity and obscurity
- Hymes's feasibility
- Unintentional violations -> comical consequences
- Intentional violations -> to produce ambiguity

- These maxims are to be considered as ground rules to negotiate some degree of agreed convergence

- Condition: give & take on both sides -> each party has to concede some ground of their own
- Individual reality, sense of self, personal territory of identity = territorial imperative v cooperative imperative
- Not just meaning but human relations as well
- Implicatures project a personal stance, point of view
- Assertion of the self v manipulation of the other – to persuade and control opinion

Critical Discourse Analysis

- Words are tactically effective in regulating the position of self in relation to the other
- Communication means control & persuasion to acceptance
- Writing to get the addressee think or feel in a certain way
- Terms of reference: the prime minister – Tony Blair -> different words w the same referent -> why varying? Quantity maxim (avoiding repetition)

- Why not referential ***he***? -> a matter of respect, deferential recognition, familiarity (Mr Blair, Tony) -> quality maxim
- The head of Her Majesty's government -> quantity maxim or maxim of manner (irony, respect)
- WHAT MOTIVATES one use or another? -> diverse grammatical structures & lexical items to express the same concept, attitude, personal evaluation, point of view -> diverse connotations

- What words mean by convention (as reported in a dictionary) v what people mean by them on a particular occasion
- choices are normally motivated by the persuasive purpose
- Widdowson 70-71 – CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis – the use (and abuse) of language for the exercise of socio-political power -> through texts writers build/communicate ideology and social belief

- Discourses are genres, institutionalized modes of thinking and social practice.
- Writers belong to a discourse community, they are socially constructed spokespersons.
- They are analysts investigating into the role played by schematic knowledge but these schemata refer more to socio-political values and beliefs, to ideational and ideological representations of reality, w cultural & political constructs of the world
- CDA reveals the innocent language user the ideological influences that may be unconsciously subscribing to

Implicatures

- Newspaper article: *an army of refugees*
- Metaphor, avoidance of the quality maxim
- Army: meaning, positive & negative attitude
- Grammar: passive v active voices, yes/no agent

Text analysis

- From Hymes's communicative competence: possible, feasible, appropriate, performed
- CORPUS: vast quantities of text to be electronically analyzed
- Establish the relative frequency of occurrence of words and structures
- norm of usage & the manner maxim
- Frequency, range (distribution in diverse domains of use -> genre markers)

- Collocation: certain items collocate (come together w, accompany) other items
- Lexical items, formulaic phrases, idiomatic expressions
- Concordance “displays the occurrences of a particular word in lines of text so that one can see at a glance where co-textual combinations recur” (Widdowson 81)
- Semantic prosody: positive or negative semantic prosody