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COGNITIVE INSTRUMENTS
OF INVESTIGATING COMMUNICATIVE FAILURES
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A.P. Martynyuk. Cognitive instruments of investigating communicative failures. The present paper examines the causes of communicative failures on the basis of the methodological assumption of cognitive linguists that a language unit used by the speaker in a communicative act is associated with a body of conceptual content which gives access to conceptual network of encyclopaedic knowledge and provides raw material for contextualized interpretation. The analysis reveals that communicative failures take place when: 1) the speaker's verbal utterance does not evoke any conceptual content in the mind of the interpreter as a result of a) losing its symbolic function due to the speaker's violation of lingual norms (lingual causes) or b) being out of the interpreter's focus of attention (extra-lingual causes); 2) the communicants privilege different aspects of the encyclopaedic knowledge evoked by the verbal or non-verbal utterance in some discourse context due to the difference of experience shaped by the communities of practice they are part of (lingua-cognitive causes).

Key words: communicative act, communicative failure, conceptual content, conceptual network, contextualized interpretation.

А.П. Мартынюк. Когнитивные инструменты исследования коммуникативных неудач. В статье причины коммуникативных неудач рассматриваются на методологической основе когнитивной лингвистики, где значение единицы языка, используемой в акте коммуникации, понимается как концептуальное содержание, открывающее доступ к концептуальной сети энциклопедических знаний и являющееся сырьем для контекстуальной интерпретации. Результаты исследования позволяют заключить, что коммуникативные неудачи возникают в случаях, когда языковое выражение: 1) не активирует в сознании интерпретатора никакого концептуального содержания вследствие а) утраты символической функции из-за нарушения адресантом языковых норм (лингвальные причины); б) нахождения вне фокуса внимания интерпретатора (экстралингвальные причины); 2) активирует концептуальное содержание, не соответствующее ожиданиям адресанта, из-за их принадлежности коммуникантов к разным социальным группам, что формирует их опыт на основе разных социальных и коммуникативных практик.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативный акт, коммуникативная неудача, концептуальное содержание, концептуальная сеть, контекстуальная интерпретация.

А.П. Мартинюк. Когнітивні інструменти дослідження комунікативних невдач. У статті причини комунікативних невдач розглядаються на методологічній основі когнітивної лінгвістики, де значення одиниці мови, вжитої в акті комунікації, тлумачиться як концептуальний зміст, що відкриває доступ до концептуальної мережі енциклопедичного знання і становить собою сировину для контекстуальної інтерпретації. Результати дослідження дозволяють дійти висновку, що комунікативні невдачі мають місце у випадках, коли мовний вираз: 1) не активує у свідомості інтерпретатора ніякого концептуального змісту через а) втрату символічної функції внаслідок порушення адресантом мовних норм (лінгвальні причини); б) перебування поза фокусом уваги інтерпретатора (екстралінгвальні причини); 2) активує концептуальний зміст, не відповідний очікуванням адресанта, внаслідок

належності комунікантів до різних соціальних груп, що формує їх досвід на основі різних соціальних та комунікативних практик.

Ключові слова: комунікативний акт, комунікативна невдача, концептуальний зміст, концептуальна мережа, контекстуальна інтерпретація.

1. Introduction. The present paper examines the causes of communicative failures on the basis of the cognitive model of the communicative act which proceeds from the assumption that the process of understanding of a verbal/non-verbal utterance is governed by encyclopaedic knowledge and complex cognitive mechanisms evoked by the utterance in the mind of the interpreter.

The aim of the paper is to identify the contextual parameters of a communicative act influencing the interpretation of verbal/non-verbal utterances and link them to different causes of communicative failures.

The study is based on the collection of 1000 fragments of verbal/non-verbal; interaction containing instances of communicative failures taken from American films.

2. The notion of 'communicative act' in the cognitive framework. The cognitive model of the communicative act introduced in this paper is built on the assumption that the meaning of a language unit is construed 'on line' in the act of interaction.

This view goes against the standard approach to the problem of meaning adopted in formal semantics according to which meanings of sentences can be predicted from context-independent meanings of individual words and their grammatical properties and any contextual variability of meanings can be accounted for by pragmatic rules and principles. From formal perspective semantics and pragmatics are separate disciplines with different subject matters: the former deals with the meanings encoded in words and sentences while the latter is concerned with the intentions of the speakers and the inferences of the hearers in situated language use.

An alternative approach is not new. According to W. Croft and A. Cruse [Croft, Cruse 2004: 97], it was first suggested within linguistics by T. Moore and C. Carling [Moore, Carling 1982], At present this approach is supported by a number of cognitive linguists; see for instance [Turner 1991; Fauconnier 1994; Lakoff, Sweetser 1994; Croft, Cruse 2004],

From the cognitive perspective meanings encoded in language are partial and incomplete representations of conceptual structure. Conceptual structure is thought to be multimodal, underpinned by information derived from sensory and introspective experience while semantic structure lacks this multimodality being specialised for expression via spoken or written symbols. Semantic structure is viewed as the conventional form that conceptual structure takes when encoded in language. "When we understand an utterance, we in no sense are understanding 'just what the words say'; the words themselves say nothing independent of the richly detailed knowledge and powerful cognitive processes we bring to bear" [Turner 1991: 206].

A body of conceptual content associated with a language unit used by the speaker in the act of communication is regarded as a prompt or ***purport*** [Croft, Cruse 2004: 100-101] which is defined as "some function of previous experiences of construed occurrences of the word in specific situations" which is "continually developing: every experience of the user of a word modifies the word's purport to some degree" [Croft, Cruse 2004: 101].

Purport provides raw material for ***contextualized interpretation*** [Croft, Cruse 2004: 98] of a language unit. Here the term "context" refers to all the parameters of a communicative act which can influence the construal of meaning.

Such parameters are of lingual, lingua-cognitive and extra-lingual origin.

The lingual context includes: 1) the utterance in which the language unit is used by the speaker as the immediate lingual context and 2) all the previous discourse as a broader lingual context.

The utterance refers to some referential situation making ***the existential context*** of a communicative act which also constrains the construal.

The lingua-cognitive context provides encyclopaedic knowledge which enables the communicants to interpret each other's utterances. The content and structure of the encyclopaedic knowledge is influenced by ***socio-cultural contextual parameters*** (the communicants' belonging to various ethnic, social status, professional, gender, age, territorial, interests, etc. groups which can shape experience in different ways) and ***situational contextual parameters*** (the setting of the communicative act: time and place, communicative roles which identify the type of a speech / communicative event and license the style of communicative haviour).

Extra-lingual context embraces ***psychological*** and ***physiological contextua parameters*** accounting, respectively, for the impact of psychological and physiological state of the communicants on interpretation, and also ***perceptual contextual parameters*** that highlight the role of the channels of communication the state of which can facilitate or hamper interpretation.

All these lingual, lingua-cognitive and extra-lingual contextual parameters of a communicative act provide the ingredients for the construal of meaning only becoming part of **the cognitive context** which is *a network of ontological, ethological, lingua-ethological and lingual knowledge* that comes both from the communicants' previous experience and from the immediate experience supplied by the context of the communicative act. The conceptual content associated with the language unit used in the act of communication can be interpreted only as part of this network. Every experience of the interpretation of a language unit in a communicative act modifies the construal to some degree.

3. Causes of communicative failures fall into lingual, lingua-cognitive and extra-lingual.

3.1. Lingual causes strongly constrain the construal of meaning of a lingual unit. Immediate lingual context makes intended interpretation so obvious that failure to infer it can provoke a joke:

ROSS: [sigh]....*I have to go to China.*
JOEY: ***The country?***
ROSS: ***No no, this bie vile of dishes in mv mom's break front*** (Friends)

Yet, in some cases lingual context fails to supply information enough for the successful interpretation of the utterance, in other words - lingual units fail to associate with some coherent body of knowledge. This happens when the speaker **deviates from language norms**.

One source of such deviations is *scarce* or vice verse ***redundant use of language recourses*** to build an utterance:

Rachel was at the airport meeting Ross but she saw him with another woman. She rushed back home and told everybody about it.

RACHEL: ***Airport, airport Ross, not alone, Julie, arm around her. Cramp, cramp.***

CHANDLER: ***Ok, I think she's trying to tell us something. Quick, set the verbs.*** (Friends)

The interpreter fails to make the intended inference because the speaker violates syntactic rules: Rachel is trying to build sentences without predicates.

The example below is an instance of communicative failure caused by the speaker's creating a redundant acronym where letters, as they are pronounced, sound as full words:

PENNY: *What'sAFK?*
SHELDON: *AFK. Away from keyboard.*
PENNY: ***OIC.***
SHELDON: ***What does that stand for?***
PENNY: ***Oh, I see?***
SHELDON: ***Yes, but what does it stand for?*** (The Big Bang Theory)

Another source of communicative failures is ***linguistic creativity*** realised in transforming existing lingual units or creating new ones.

The following communicative act is an example of communicative failure caused by the speaker's creating an unexpected metaphor:

Chandler was very excited as he met "the perfect woman"

CHANDLER: ***Hey, stick a fork in me, I am done***.
PHOEBE: ***Stick a fork what?***
CHANDLER: ***Like, when you 're cooking a steak***.
PHOEBE: *Oh, OK, I don't eat meat.*
CHANDLER: *Well then, how do you know when **vegetables are done?***
PHOEBE : *Well you know, you just, you eat them and you can tell**.*
CHANDLER: ***OK, then, eat me, I'm done***. (Friends)

To conclude, lingual causes of communicative failures account for the situations when 'familiar' lingual units turn into 'unfamiliar' sounds or graphic forms which lose their symbolic function since they fail to give access to any conventional knowledge.

3.2. Lingua-cognitive causes explain communicative failures resulting from the specificity of the communicants' experience influencing the content and structure of the encyclopaedic knowledge evoked by the lingual unit in the act of communication.

This specificity can be described through the notion of centrality. According to R. Langacker, the centrality relates to the degree of salience of certain aspects of conceptual content associated by the communicants with the lingual unit used in some context. The centrality will depend on: 1) how well established the conceptual content is in the memory of the communicants and also on 2) the particular lingual and extra-lingual context in which the lingual unit is embedded [Langacker 1987: 159].

In any culture during the course of their lives people participate in a variety of socio-cultural *communities of practice* [Eckert, McConnell-Ginet: 469-470]. These communities of practice can be formed on different principles: ethnicity, gender, education, social status, income, family, profession, territory, religion, friendly ties, interests like sports, fishing, diving, etc. Belonging or not belonging to such communities of practice shapes people's experience differently, influencing the degree of conventionality of their knowledge.

Conventional knowledge by definition is knowledge that is shared. Thus, experience which is characterized as non-conventional on universal or lingua-cultural level comes to be shared by the members of a particular socio-cultural community of practice within a lingua-culture. In other words, such non-conventional experience can become conventional for the members of these socio-cultural communities. And, vice versa, conventional universal or lingua-cultural experience for some reason may not be shared by representatives of some communities of practice, thus changing its status to non-conventional. The number and variety of socio-cultural communities of practice an individual can become involved in during his / her social life is only limited by his / her motives, faculties and the opportunities given by the family at birth, on the one hand, and also by the opportunities offered by the lingua-culture, on the other hand.

The experience gained from belonging to various communities of practice is schematized in the memory of the communicants by *frames*. *A frame* is understood here after Ch. Fillmore as "any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits" [Fillmore 1982: 111]. Frames relate the entities associated with a particular culturally embedded scene from human experience evoked by a verbal or non-verbal communicative means used in the act of communication.

Frames can schematize *ontological knowledge* about entities associated with language units (referents) and relations between these entities, *ethological knowledge* of ethic norms of social behavior providing stereotypic expectations of peoples' actions in a variety of social contexts and also *lingua-ethological knowledge* of general principles regulating communicative behaviour.

'Ontological – ethological / lingua-ethological' classification of knowledge does not correlate with 'static – dynamic' classification of frames since ontological concepts demonstrate both static (BUYER / SELLER) and dynamic nature (BUY). At the same time, ethological / lingua-ethological knowledge tend to be dynamic since scenarios of human social and communicative behaviour presuppose sequences of events. Thus, the term 'frame' is used here to denote a static schema and the term *''script* [Schank, Abelson 1975: 151] is employed to name a dynamic schema structuring a canonic sequence of events in some socio-cultural context.

A variety of scripts schematizing knowledge about various types of *speech (communicative) situations* are also referred to as *speech event frames* [Saville-Troike 1987]. Another possible term is *communicative event frames* since while the term 'speech event frame' refers to the schema that structures knowledge about styles and registers of language use, licensing certain lexical items and grammatical constructions and contributing to their interpretation [Evans, Green 2006: 229], the term 'communicative event frame' accentuates that this type of schema also licenses non-verbal communicative behavior appropriate in this or that situation of communication and contributes to its adequate interpretation; besides it organizes interaction licensing change of floors, length of floors, the person deixis of utterances, etc.

Ontological knowledge associates with *declarative content* of the utterance, referring to some referential situation that can be accounted for by a *proposition* while ethological and lingua-ethological knowledge associates both with declarative and *procedural content* accumulating experience of conventions of communicative behaviour involving the communicants' *pragmatic intentions* which are *non-propositional* by nature.

The most obvious cause of communicative failures connected with gaps in **ontological knowledge** comes from the difference of the communicants' level of general education which influences the content and structure of *universal knowledge.* A communicative failure may occur when a speaker, having a higher level of education, operates with notions that turn out to be unknown to the interpreter. For example:

WILSON: *Well, you are a very special man.* **Quite like Galileo.**

TIM: ***Yeah, I had his wine!***

WILSON: ***No, no, no, Tim. I'm talking about the 17th century Italian astromoner. He was ridiculed for teaching that the Earth revolves around the Sun.***

TIM: ***And he believed that?!***

WILSON: ***Tim. The Earth does revolve around the Sun.***

TIM: [Grunting] *Oh yeah yeah, sure yeah, does. It's just that we're spinning so we don't notice it.* (Home Improvement)

The personality of Galileo and the fact that the Earth rotates around the Sun is a part of conventional knowledge of universal status. So, mentioning Galileo, Wilson expects interpretation against ASTRONOMY frame. Yet, for Tim this knowledge is evidently on the periphery of his conceptual system. As a result he interprets the

utterance with respect to WINE-MAKING frame, well established in his memory, which makes the association between Galileo and a wine producer with such a name more salient.

In view of the process of Americanization of cultures taking place in the modern world, it's rather difficult to draw a demarcation line between universal and ***lingua-cultural knowledge.*** It's easier to think of such knowledge as a continuum. Yet, some instances of experience tend to be thought of as specific to a particular culture. For example, in American culture 'Lord of Rings' seems to be regarded as a part of lingua-cultural knowledge since the book is included in the must-read list of an average American high school student, which is not the case in, say, Ukrainian or Russian culture:

Ross and Chandler's friend Mike 'Gandolf Ganderson was about to arrive and they got very excited.

ROSS: *Joey, you are gonna love this guy.* ***Gandolf is like the party wizard!***

JOEY: ***Well, why do you call him Gandolf?***

ROSS: ***Gandolf the wizard.*** **[Joev is still confused]** ***Hello! Didn't you read Lord of the Rings in high school?***

JOEY: *No, I had sex in high school*. (Friends)

Another obvious cause of 'centrality misbalance' is one of the communicants (usually the speaker) having ***social-community knowledge*** in some sphere of human experience as a result of belonging to a particular network of communities of practice within his / her lingua-culture.

The following example illustrates a communicative failure resulting from the speaker's use of psychological terminology unknown to the interpreter:

WILSON: *Tim, you were doing fine when you weren't thinking about the mini cam, or the mirrors and such. You were going on instinct. You were one with the car.* ***You were Zen-like.***

TIM: ***I was Zen-like? I never met Zen. What was he like?***

WILSON: ***No no no, Tim. Zen is a state of mind***. (Home Improvement)

For Wilson who is a psychologist the notion of Zen is a part of conventional knowledge while Tim having no specialized education has no access to HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY frame and tries to interpret the utterance with respect to a more 'familiar' HUMAN RELATIONS frame thinking of Zen as a person.

The following example illustrates a communicative failure which comes from the difference in experience of the speaker and the interpreter resulting from different incomes and social statuses:

The Outlet Mall, Designer Markdowns. Grace and Kzren are shopping.

KAREN: *Lordy, lordy, look at all the freaks. Come on. Let's get out of here. There's nothing here I like.*

GRACE: *Uh-uh, uh-uh, uh-uh, no. You haven't even looked yet. Come on.* ***You got to get in there and sort through the rack.***

KAREN: ***The what?***

GRACE: ***The rack. You heard the expression "off the rack."***

KAREN: *I know the expression "Stan, hands off the rack." Ha ha ha! Bang bang! Ohh. Even in the Midwest I'm funny.* (Will and Grace)

Being a wealthy woman who buys clothes tailored for her by famous designers, Karen cannot interpret the expression 'sort though the rack', used by Grace, since she has never had the experience of spending hours sorting out racks of clothes in search of suitable things at acceptable prices.

A communicative failure can also be the result of the speaker's belonging to a relatively small and closed community united by specific kinds of ties like, for instance, being on the force and attending the same psychologist:

MARTIN: *Look, I'm sorry I cut you off like that before, I've just never gone in for that psychological mumbo-jumbo.* **Probably started back on the force when they'd make us go see The Squirrel.**

FRASIER: <u>**Who?**</u>

MARTIN: **Dr. Bergman, the department shrink. We called him "The Squirrel" 'cause guys got sent to him when they got squirrelly. He'd show you a bunch of ink-blots and ask about your toilet habits...** (Frasier)

In some communicative acts it is impossible to connect a communicative failure to a particular network of communities of practices shaping the communicants' experience since such networks are rather intricate and may include practices that are not so obvious and not so easy to trace - family background, friends, hobbies and interests, tastes, preferences in books, art, films, music, clothes, places of rest, eating habits and many other things can contribute to the content of the individual's conceptual system.

As it was mentioned before, belonging to different communities of practice tells not only on ontological knowledge concerning entities and relations between entities, but also on ethological knowledge of ethic norms of social behavior. For example:

Joey and Michael's House – Joey and Michael

JOEY: *Hey, Michael.* **Who was that girl last night?**

MICHAEL*:* <u>***I wasn't with a girl.***</u>

JOEY: **No, the one I brought home. I can never remember her name.** (Joey)

Michael cannot interpret Joey's question because Joey goes beyond stereotypical expectations of ethic behavior: in a situation when people bring their girlfriends to their homes they are not expected to learn their girlfriends' names from the housemates.

Communicative failures caused by gaps in lingua-ethological knowledge embrace the cases of violations of stereotypic expectations of certain traits of communicative behaviour. These expectations are governed by: universal principles of interpersonal rhetoric (first of all, the so-called maximes of Cooperative Principle [Grice 1975] and Politeness Principle [Leech 1983]), Relevance Principles [Sperber, Wilson 1995] and accommodation strategies [Giles et al. 1991],

Even though universal principles of communication are idealized norms and individuals routinely violate them "despite such violations, however, they still

assume each other's cooperative intent. The maximes are idealized norms whose routine violations are strategies which allow people to mean more than they say" (Schiffrin 1994: 105).

It should be stressed that ethological and lingua-ethological experience influencing interpretation is interlaced. Thus, a communicative failure often results from the interlocutors' violating both ethic norms of politeness and lingua-ethic Politeness Principle. Responsibility for the failure lies on the communicant, violating the conventions:

Joey is having a meeting with the executive producer:

LAUREN: *Anyway, you'll do great. And we just got the first script, and it's amazing. There's some twists in here that'll blow your mind.*

JOEY: *Oh really, can I take it?*

[Joey picks up the script]

LAUREN: *Uh, just keep it between us because you 're the first one to see it.*

JOEY: ***Is that because I'm the sexiest cast member?***

LAUREN: ***No. it's because you sot vour germs on it and I don't want it back***.
(Joey)

Joey asks Lauren a question within ASKING FOR A COMPLIMENT – PAYING A COMPLIMENT script choosing a jocular mode of communication and expecting her to react to it with a jocular compliment licensed by the Principle of Politeness. Instead, Lauren offends him giving her answer within ASKING FOR INFORMATION – GIVING INFORMATION script and thus violating the Principle.

Universal principles of communicative behaviour and community specific stereotypes also guide interpretation of semantic and pragmatic potential of utterances.

The following example shows that interpretation of pragmatic intentions can be influenced by communicative practices typical of a particular community, like, for instance, gender:

Jill was writing a speech.

JILL: I just feel self-conscious getting up in front of a group of people.

TIM: ***You don't like the way you look?***

JILL: ***What's wrons with the wav I look?*** [Tim thinks carefully]

TIM: ***Nothing, that was just a question***.

JILL: ***Why was that the first question you asked?***

TIM: ***Alright, here's another first question: are you so attractive and thin that you're afraid to go up in front of people?***

JILL: ***So what're you savins? I'm fat and uslv?***

TIM: [short pause] ***I'm not gonna win at this, am I?*** (Home Improvement)

Trying to find the reason of Jill's being self-conscious in public Tim makes a suggestion that her self-consciousness may be accounted for by the fact that Jill does not feel comfortable about her looks. This suggestion is made in the form of a question. Jill interprets the question as a euphemistic statement that there is something wrong with the way she looks. When Tim gives another try to find out the

reason of Jill's self-consciousness and makes the same suggestion in the form of a jocular question Jill fails to see a joke and interprets it as an ironic statement where words mean the opposite: ***attractive → ugly / thin → fat.***

So while Tim builds utterances with respect to MAKING A SUGGESTION script Jill interprets them in MAKING A EUPHEMISTIC STATEMENT script. This dialogue develops within stereotypic expectations of gender specific female behaviour according to which women are rather vulnerable about their looks. This vulnerability brings about unexpected inferences as to the pragmatic intentions of the man's utterances.

It is far more difficult to trace a communicative failure resulting from gaps in the ethological and lingua-ethological experience to a particular network of communities of practice shaping this experience than it is with ontological knowledge because here the ties are not so obvious. Yet, it is quite logical to assume that such connections do exist even if we cannot explicitly point them out.

To conclude, lingua-cognitive causes explain the cases of communicative failures occurring due the difference in ontological, ethological and lingua-ethological experience of the communicants participating in different networks of communicative events licensed by their communities of practice.

4. Extra-lingual causes explain the cases of communicative failures when the speaker's utterance is not heard/seen by the speaker due to some hindrance coming either 'from inside' (psychological or physiological state of the interpreter) or 'from outside' (the state of channels of communication).

4.1. Psychological causes of communicative failures are connected with such a basic psychological ability as attention or the focus of consciousness [Chafe 1994: 26-30], Attention is modelled in terms of degree of activation of conceptual structure in a neural network model of the mind. One aspect of attention is selection which is based on the ability to select - "to attend to parts of our experience that are relevant to the purpose at hand and ignore aspects of our experience that are irrelevant" [Croft, Cruse 2004: 46-47],

The mechanism of selection accounts for the lack of the communicants' involvement into interaction and focusing on different subject matters in the act of communication. Concentrating on different subject matters explains the cases of irrelevant inferences which cannot be accounted for by 'centrality misbalance' coming from the peripheral status of conceptual content associated with the lingual unit in the memory of communicants. For example:

Daphne: *Dr. Crane...*
Niles: [Passionately:] *Yes, Daphne?*
Daphne: ***We're losing the fire.***
Niles: ***No we're not, it's burning with the heat of a thousand suns!***
Daphne: **[Turning to the fire:]** ***But it's down to its last embers!***
Niles: [Calming down:] *Well then... I'll put some wood on it!* (Frasier 117)

Daphne and Niles are sitting at the fireplace. Saying 'We're losing the fire', Daphne puts literal meaning into this utterance, since her focus of attention is on the

possible lost of the source of energy and getting cold while Niles, whose focus of attention is on his feelings for the girl, interprets the utterance metaphorically.

4.2. Physiological causes can strongly influence the process of understanding, as in the following example:

INDY: *Ox? Ox! It's me, Indy. You 're faking it, right pal?*

[**Oxley won't even look at Indy. His eyes are wild, they never rest, never make eye contact**. Oxley dances towards Indy]. INDY: *Listen to me pal, your name is Harold Oxley, you were bom in Leeds, England. You and I went to school together at the University of Chicago, and you were never this interesting! My name is Indi –* [though it pains him]. *My name is Henry Jones Junior.* **[Oxley just spins away and he's off again, dancing around him and, muttering unintelligibly].** (Indiana Jones)

Oxley cannot react adequately to Indy's utterance because he has lost control of his mind by staring too long into the 'Crystal skull's' eyes.

4.3. Perceptual causes refer to the hindrance in the sensory channels available to the communicants in the act of communication, like poor telephone connection in the example below:

[JESSICA sits in a taxi with a large winter coat on. She's on the phone. It's summer in New York]

JESS [into phone]: *It's a surprise for him. I'm going to walk in and just drop my coat on the ground. What do you think?*

[Jess' model-beautiful best friend, CECE MEYERS, is putting on her shoes in front of the mirror].

CECE: *Why don'tyou hang it up?*

JESS: *No...* [Speaking softly] *I'm not wearing anything underneath.*

[The DRIVER looks back at her through the rearview mirror].

CECE*: What? I can't hear you.*

JESS: *I'm... I'm naked under my coat.*

CECE: *Are you whispering something?*

JESS: [Louder] *I'm naked!* (New Girl)

To conclude, extra-lingual causes cover the cases where the addressee does not make any attempt at interpretation because the speaker's utterance does not get into his/her focus of attention due to some hindrance of communication coming from inner or outer sources.

5. Conclusion. The analysis reveals that communicative failures take place when: 1) the speaker's verbal utterance does not evoke any conceptual content in the mind of the interpreter as a result of a) losing its symbolic function due to the speaker's violation of lingual norms (lingual causes) or b) being out of the interpreter's focus of attention (extra-lingual causes); 2) the communicants' privilege different aspects the encyclopaedic knowledge evoked by a verbal or non-verbal utterance in some discourse context due to the difference of experience shaped by the communities of practices they are part of (lingua-cognitive causes).

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