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HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

An Animated and Narrated Glossary of
Terms used in Linguistics
presents

Cooperative Principle



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Definition

The Cooperative Principle (CP) is a principle of conversation postulated by H. P. Grice (1975).

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

Slide 2



Motivation

Read this:

I would like some salt please. This kitchen does not store harmful chemicals.

Did it make any sense? **NO!!**

Obvious connection between the sentences missing.

Slide 3



Motivation

I would like some salt please.

This makes better sense
WHY?

This kitchen does not store harmful chemicals.

Slide 4



Ideas of the CP

According to Grice,

- Conversations do **not** normally consist of a series of **disconnected remarks** and
- are characteristically, to some degree, **cooperative efforts**.
- Each participant **normally recognizes** in conversations, to some extent, **a common purpose**.
- Given that conversation is a **rational** and **purposive** behavior, it is possible that there is a generally accepted principle which each participant is **assumed** to observe in conversations.

Slide 5



Conversational Maxims

Grice has elaborated the CP in four sub-principles, called **conversational maxims**.

1. Maxim of Quantity
2. Maxim of Quality
3. Maxim of Relation
4. Maxim of Manner

The CP together with its attendant four maxims are used as bases for explaining an interesting conversational phenomena:

implicature.

Slide 6



Further reading

- Davis, Wayne (2009) Implicature. In Edward N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2008 edition. Retrieved 15 March 2009 from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2008/entries/implicature/>
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Slide 7



The End

Wee, Lian-Hee and Winnie H.Y. Cheung (2009)
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Hong Kong Baptist University.