Course description

Course title: Mental Spaces and Blending in Language for Specific Purposes

Instructor: Esther Pascual

Course level: PhD, intermediate

Course description

Language – in discourse and interaction- is treated in terms of dynamic contextualized conceptualisation. The mental configurations that situated language use prompts in the minds of addressees are analyzed vis-à-vis their communicative goals and the overall socio-cultural context of interpretation. The theoretical framework used is Fauconnier’s (1985) theory of mental spaces, later developed into conceptual integration theory or ‘blending’ (Fauconnier & Turner 1994). This theory accounts for the cognitive process of conceptualizing something as fused with something else. The focus is on the following topics:

1. Conceptual integration in humor (joke: “I asked the bartender for something cold and full of rum, and he recommended his wife”)
2. Conceptual integration in persuasion (advertisement: “If chocolate were the food of Gods, heaven would be in Birmingham”)
3. Conceptual integration in journalistic discourse (news headline: “Superman is dead” for “Christopher Reeve, the actor famous for playing Superman, is dead”)
4. Conceptual integration in instructional discourse (teacher to class: “This orange is the sun and this marble the Earth, which turns around the sun like this”)

These topics will be studied through the analysis of naturalistic data from cartoons, commercials, legal arguments, and classroom discourse. Both verbal and audio-visual material will be dealt with. Students are also required to bring and discuss real-life examples of their own.

Day-to-day program

Lecture 1: Mental spaces and conceptual integration
Lecture 2: Conceptual integration in humor
Lecture 3: Conceptual integration in persuasion
Lecture 4: Conceptual integration in journalistic discourse
Lecture 5: Conceptual integration in instructional discourse
Reading list

Course readings:

Lecture 1:


Lecture 2:


Lecture 3:


Lecture 4:


Lecture 5:


Background and additional readings:


