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Discourse and Information

Chafe, Wallace, *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time: The Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994. 340 pp. ISBN 0-226-10054-5.

I want to engage argumentatively with this challenging and elegantly written book. Wallace Chafe's pioneering work on language, mind and communication spans more than 30 years, and this is its fullest and most recent expression. *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time* (henceforth *DCT*, to which all page citations refer unless otherwise specified) is not just a textbook summary of findings, but a detailed and integrative exposition of a major theoretical and analytical perspective on discourse. Its topics range across natural conversation, narrative structure, conscious experience, communicative intent, speaking and writing, intonation, music, memory (our 'displaced' sense of the past), imagination (our 'displaced' anticipation of the future), brief comparisons with an indigenous American language and music (Seneca), tenses, information structure, topicalization and various other discourse categories.

Chafe identifies himself with the tradition of Boas and Sapir: the study of mind, language and culture. This, together with a central concern with the relations between language and consciousness, locates his work alongside the major themes of first-generation cultural psychologists such as Vygotsky and Bartlett. There is much to celebrate in both the scope and the detail of Chafe's approach, and yet I have reservations about it. The line I shall take is appreciative but

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critical, and the critique stems from my own preference for studying discourse not as an expression of mental contents and processes, but as a domain of social action. My position is that those two approaches (the expression of mind vs the performance of social actions) do not mix together very well, but mostly clash, both in their basic conception of what discourse is all about, and in specific details of analysis.

The main resources that Chafe brings together are his own brand of discourse-oriented linguistics, and various basic features of cognitive psychology (schema theory, psycholinguistics, basic memory processes). However, in contrast to cognitive psychology's standard methodologies (experimentation, simulation, computational modelling), and rejecting linguists' usual reliance on invented sentences and texts, Chafe favours introspecting conscious experience and analysing recorded samples of natural speech. The book celebrates its own novelty and scope; it is 'not in the mainstream of anything' (p. x). That may be so, but it is still recognizable as particular and positioned. Most importantly, *DCT* incorporates at its heart the mainstream psychological assumptions of cognitivist metatheory. That is to say, it assumes an interactionally disinterested perceiver and talker, making sense of conscious experience under the constraints of limited-capacity information processing, taking an observer's interest in unexpected phenomena, and transmitting messages about them to other like minds. As such, and in spite of its innovative uses of natural discourse, it uses a conception of language, mind and communication that pervades standard cognitive psychology and social cognition. The perspective from which I criticize it derives from discursive psychology (e.g. Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Harré & Gillett, 1994) and conversation analysis (e.g. Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1991).

Chafe approaches language as 'an imperfect bridge between one mind and another' (p. 63), a vehicle that can 'capture and communicate ... thought' (p. 4). The explanatory context for the book is a set of assumptions about 'the evolution of the human mind ... [in which] our powers of remembering and imagining have far outstripped those of other creatures. But this development has failed to include any increase in the capacity of active consciousness' (p. 140). Mind and thought are basic; it is *their* rhythm and displacement, in and out of limited-capacity consciousness, that are reflected and expressed in discourse. *DCT* is a forceful and sustained exercise in the intentionalist, 'communication model' psychology of language. It is a model that Chafe has been articulating and developing since *Meaning and the Structure of Language* (Chafe, 1970). Despite the emphasis in *DCT* on

empirical studies of conversation, and the insistence that 'conversational language [is] the basic use from which all others are deviations' (p. 5), there are no references to Sacks, Schegloff, nor conversation analysis generally, nor to Austin or Wittgenstein. Pointing to a book's absences is an easy kind of comment; all books have to be selective, and Chafe's book is coherent and complete. But absences point to *what kind of book it is*, just as contents do.

Natural and Narrative Discourse

DCT approaches language and mind through the study of natural discourse, including written, but mainly spoken, discourse, and speech is considered primary. As with conversation analysis (CA), and various kinds of discourse analysis (DA), Chafe approaches discourse empirically, as a natural phenomenon, rather than as the object of knowledgeable intuitions. Most of the data are taken from recorded dinner table conversations between academics and graduate students, together with some conversation extracts from a variety of non-university people (though including 'students'). Chafe produces a strong argument on the limitations of treating invented texts as data, in psychology and linguistics. But there is also a limit on Chafe's own interest in natural discourse. He sees it as evidence of *consciousness at work*, a 'window to the mind' (p. 19), rather than a domain of social action, as CA and discursive psychology prefer to approach it. Again, why do I write 'rather than'? Why not have both mental product and social action, added together, and why prefer one to the other? To answer that fully would require more scope than this review permits (see Coulter, 1990; Edwards, 1997), but I shall develop some arguments here.

One of the important features of *DCT* is the challenge it poses to the kinds of linguistics and psycholinguistics that are based on invented sentences that nobody would plausibly say. Examples taken from the literature include: 'The royal guests danced in the palace to the music of an orchestra', and 'The farmer kills the duckling'. Chafe addresses why it is that we might judge such sentences as implausible occurrences, even though they are grammatical; sentences of that kind seem ill adapted to any imaginable state of conversational information flow. The broad basis for the implausibility of various invented sentences is surely the difficulty (though seldom the impossibility) that we have in dreaming up a coherent sequential environment for them: what could somebody be doing by saying such a thing, at some juncture?

Chafe continues a long-term interest in narrative discourse (Chafe, 1980, 1990) by allocating spontaneous narratives a pervasive role as

discourse samples in *DCT*. But his main interest is in the communication and flow of 'information', in and out of conscious experience. So, a narrative category such as 'orientation' (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) is interpreted in terms of how a speaker's and hearer's consciousness needs to be oriented in time and space (into the story, sequentially within it, and back out again), and how 'complicating events' and the 'climax' generate expectations, failures, surprises, and so on, for the schema-governed minds that produce and receive them (pp. 128–132). For Chafe, when a speaker mentions time and place this is to help listeners get their referential bearings; they have to 'adequately orient the listener's consciousness' (p. 202). This kind of minds-in-communication approach to references to time and place can be contrasted with how conversation analysts have dealt with them (e.g. Drew, 1978; Schegloff, 1972; Wooffitt, 1992). In CA, specific *formulations* of place and circumstance are potent, evaluation-relevant details for the story told, essential details that could always have been differently described, and that therefore perform interactional business as part of the story's telling. The thing about Chafe's narrative data, for all their naturalness as *spontaneous speech*, is the general lack of ordinary interaction sequences, the lack of uptake and repair, the lack of any kind of interaction management of the sort studied in CA. There is little sense of the kinds of social interactions within which, *and for which*, the talk occurred. Most of the data (with the exception of a story about house painting) are single-speaker narrative speech samples, transcribed from audiotape and marked for intonation.

It is surely this treatment of spoken discourse, as a set of interactionally decontextualized utterances and narratives, that makes Chafe's analysis of them amenable to cognitive theorizing, and also so smoothly extendable to the analysis of written texts (chapters 17–21). Removed from the kinds of interaction sequences studied by CA, we are left with talk as information transfer, driven by the contents of speakers' consciousness and beliefs about each other's knowledge states. It is the classic cognitivist move. Remove talk (however natural) from the performative business of social interaction, and what seems to remain is information processing, coding and transmission—talk as an expression of mind, stories relayed on a merely 'that's interesting' kind of basis, with analysis performed as a set of interpretations about what people are thinking, where what they are thinking generates their talk. In *DCT*, 'people tend to talk about things that are *interesting* to them and ideally about things they judge to be interesting to others ... interestingness seems above all to reside in conflict with mundane expectations' (p. 34). In CA, story telling and story swapping are

somewhat special cases of interactive talk, but ones that are nevertheless designed in their detail in ways that manage current interpersonal business, just as interactive talk generally does (see, for examples, Edwards, 1997; Goodwin, 1984; Jefferson, 1978; Lynch & Bogen, 1996; Sacks, 1992).

Displacement

Chafe's main concern is with the 'constant succession of focuses of consciousness' (p. 31) that characterize natural discourse. The contents of discourse correspond to movements of information in and out of focal consciousness, just as it would be if an individual sat around thinking, dreaming, musing, observing, taking an interest in things, and talking on that basis to other similar individuals. In *DCT*, 'flow' is the time-frame in which thoughts are expressed and communicated in speech and hearing. 'Displacement' is the familiar notion that language and thought are able to focus on matters distant in time and place from the act of speaking. In the 'immediate mode' speakers focus on events happening here and now. In the 'displaced mode' speakers narrate past events (memory) or anticipate future ones (imagination). An 'extroverted consciousness' is in immediate mode, dominated by currently happening external events. In the case of an 'introverted consciousness',

... its input no longer comes from directly perceiving, acting on, or evaluating the immediate environment, but through the process of remembering what was present in a distal extroverted consciousness, or alternatively through the process of imagining what might be present in such a consciousness. (p. 198)

The problem with 'displacement' is its implicit notion of *reference*, the way it conflates talk's topics with actual things, times and places, and with thoughts about them. I imagine it would be difficult to say objectively, for talk's referents, where the boundaries fall between past, present and future (e.g. how long a time is the present?); these are surely conceptual categories, and grammatical ones, rather than objective ones. If that is so, then a kind of circularity enters, where the deictic categories of language are the very basis on which we appear to account for them, in terms of where consciousness has wandered to. And what of the notion, on which CA insists, that *all* talk is indexical, done on and for the occasion of its production, however 'displaced' its topic might be? For example, Chafe's discussion of a displaced, imaginary consciousness at work includes (p. 199):

and uh=, .. now I'm going to save my money,
and try to get my own pad

But this can be glossed as a formulation of *current plans*, not just a description of imagined future events. Also, it was said as part of an interaction, presumably doing something in the here and now. For example, consider it as an active *formulation of* (rather than merely a relaying of) the speaker's thoughts, prospects, circumstances. It is the kind of utterance that can manage, within whatever interaction it is produced for, the speaker's identity or reputation (*as* one who has such plans, etc., rather than, say, one who is careless of the future). That is to say, it operates reflexively, as all talk does, within whatever social interaction it is produced for. 'Displacement' is less fruitful an analytic concept than it first appears. It is a *referentially driven* concept that deflects analytic attention from how talk performs social actions in the here and now.

DCT explains talk's content as governed by the contents of consciousness. So, 'displaced' talk is what occurs 'when conversationalists verbalize remembered or imagined *experiences*' (p. 207; emphasis added). The content of such 'verbalizations' stems from the speaker's flow of conscious experience. For example, when looking directly at some scene, we are aware of many details that we soon forget when looking away and recalling it from memory (pp. 202–203). The fact that people do nevertheless provide descriptive details, when talking about recalled events, is due to unspecified foibles of the speaker's memory: 'isolated details are recalled by the speaker for isolated reasons' (p. 203). Missing from Chafe's account, once again, is any notion of the interactional and performative bases of descriptive details. It is as if a directly apprehended scene would sustain only one set of descriptions, however lengthy and *ad infinitum* they may become, such that speakers who witness the same events hardly need say anything about them—'because the speaker and listener share an environment, the content of an extroverted consciousness is more or less equally available to both' (p. 200). When people talk about *displaced* topics, the amount of detail that gets put into words is therefore a function of memory, of whatever details happen to be recalled (p. 203).

While this kind of psychological presumption about descriptive details inevitably underestimates any conversation's interactional business, this is obscured by the fact that Chafe mostly analyses decontextualized narratives. But surely the notions that people see the same things, would describe them in the same ways, and basically that

what they are doing is dumping their conscious experiences and memories into talk, and sharing them with other people, are gross underestimations of the flexibility and locally managed consequentiality of descriptive details. It is another expression of Chafe's basic cognitivist *a priori*, the presumption that language is the expression of mind's contents, and that, even when analysing natural data, analysis can sensibly proceed in a vacuum of interaction, save only for speakers' and hearers' requirements for information updates and transfers.

Active and Semiactive Information

DCT is largely concerned with how 'information flow' is realized in discourse structures, including intonation and grammar. There is an extended and very useful treatment of how intonation foregrounds or backgrounds specific items of talk's content as new or old (given) information, and generally how this (along with definiteness, the 'light subject constraint' and other features) is used to manage speaker-listener intersubjectivity in samples of recorded speech. The major advantage of Chafe's treatment of these phenomena in terms of *consciousness* is the improvement that this brings to earlier studies of 'given' and 'new' information (e.g. Chafe, 1970; see also Clark & Haviland, 1977; Prince, 1981). According to Chafe,

... ideas ... flow in and out of fully conscious activation in a manner that is reflected in the intonation units of speech. When they leave this fully active state, ideas remain for some time semiactive. Speakers monitor the activation states of ideas in the minds of their listeners, treating ideas accordingly as given, accessible, or new. (p. 301)

By treating emphasized 'new' information as an expression of active consciousness, and of speakers' assumptions about hearers' states of consciousness, information can be not merely what is already known or not, but what the hearer is not *currently thinking* about. It allows people, let us say, to remind each other, rather than just inform each other.

The notions of *inactive* and *semiactive* consciousness rescue the cognitive analysis of talk from the absurdity of conceiving of new and old information in straightforward 'knowledge' terms, as information either known or not. They offer the further advantage of mapping onto the sequential ebb and flow of intonation in talk, and to choices of grammatical subject, as Chafe shows. Nevertheless, it all remains a psychological reduction of talk's business to the expression of mental

states. I prefer to approach conversational 'reminding' and 'informing' as kinds of speech act categories, or participants' at-issue business, rather than as actual or intended updates of mental contents. One reason for that is circularity again; the important category of 'semi-active information' eludes non-circular definition. It depends on (as well as explaining) how 'intonation units' are defined, and upon appeals to introspection. The trouble is that all the analytic precision relies on the details of talk itself. What people are more or less conscious of is referred back to the talk that supposedly expresses it. I am not proposing any kind of behaviourist objection to introspection as such, but, rather, to how it is descriptively rendered. The contents of consciousness do not come with their own analytic vocabulary attached. What we are conscious of cashes out, *in analysing discourse*, as the content and intonational focus of talk. That makes appeals to consciousness rather weak and woolly as an explanatory framework for discourse.

A second reason for my worry about psychological reductionism is the 'speech act' one. (I am using the term 'speech act' here to invoke talk's performative, interaction-accomplishing business, rather than as an endorsement of Austin and Searle.) A quick example will have to suffice, taken from a longer discussion (Edwards, 1997). It is common in formal settings such as law courts, interrogations, interviews, propaganda and advertising, as well as mundane conversations, for potentially contentious claims or versions of events not to be marked or focused on as 'news' but, rather, to be *packaged as 'given'*. In a televised advertisement for the breakfast cereal Shredded Wheat, the long-retired ex-captain of England's Rugby Union team, Bill Beaumont, endorses the product thus, referring back to his playing days: '*In those days I never really thought about why I ate Shredded Wheat ...*', and then proceeds to list what he now knows are its nutritional virtues. The information packaged as 'given' was that he 'ate Shredded Wheat' in those days; the 'new' part is that he never thought about why.

Now, it is doubtful that the television audience already knew about Beaumont's long-term breakfast habits, or that Beaumont (or his script writer) actually assumed we did, whether inactively, semiactively, or whatever. So what is it doing there, positioned as 'given'? Note that we can ask what it is doing there irrespective of whether or not Beaumont actually was a long-term Shredded Wheat eater, or thought we knew he was. In a product endorsement of this kind, an issue of 'stake' can arise that threatens to undermine its credibility (Edwards & Potter, 1992): Beaumont may be endorsing it because he is being paid to. The device used here, to deal with that authenticity issue, is the packaging

of Beaumont's long-term consumption of the stuff as 'given information'. We are thereby invited to treat that as known and uncontentious, both as mere 'information' and as 'given', rather than as a contentious description doing persuasive business. So, while accepting much of how 'given' and 'new' information are analysed linguistically, the thing I am disputing is the way it is all couched, by Chafe and others, within a cognitivist, doing-nothing framework of intermental information exchange. It is the psychology I dispute.

In the Shredded Wheat example what is 'given' is neither mutually known nor already activated in the talk. The basic problem is that the whole idea of talk as *information exchange* fails to characterize what the talk is doing. That failure, in turn, starts to generate various unnecessary and unresolvable psychological difficulties, such as determining (outside of how they talk) what speakers and listeners actually know and assume each other knows, and specifying (again, outside of how they talk) at what point something remains given, or is semiactive, and needs reactivating (p. 79). Much of the complexity of Chafe's model of intonation units stems from this view of them as expressions of states and stages of information exchange, to be formulated in terms of the contents of consciousness. Thus, considering only the speaker, extracted from the act of communication, and starting at a point where a pause has occurred:

... an idea that was already active at the beginning of the pause would constitute given information; one that was semiactive, accessible information; and one that was inactive, new information. ... But there are several problems with defining activation cost solely in these terms. For one thing, some intonation units are not preceded by pauses. ... Perhaps an idea may change instantaneously from the inactive to the active state, but it is more satisfying to find at least a break in timing during which the change might have taken place. Furthermore, there is the very real possibility that a speaker might have activated an idea well before the pause onset, though he or she might nevertheless verbalize it as new information. We could not then say that it was an immediately preceding change from inactive to active in the speaker's mind that was responsible for newness. (pp. 73–74)

Not only would such an analysis prefer that conversational participants generally paused for thought in between each expression of an idea, but it assumes that this is what pauses signify, the common-sense notion that they are outward manifestations of underlying states of consciousness, ticking over and processing information behind the scenes. In CA, pauses are significant items of talk, but analysed very differently (e.g., within preference organization, Atkinson & Heritage, 1984).

Chafe's uses of cognitive psychology extend beyond the adoption of information transmission of mental contents as a general explanatory framework. He also incorporates specific cognitive research findings, though in a largely speculative and suggestive manner. Thus, drawing on the cognitive psychology of categorization, 'basic-level topics verbalize the content of semiactive consciousness' (p. 140). Similarly, 'the intonation unit ... seems to be of exactly the right size to be processed in its entirety with the help of echoic memory' (p. 55). These kinds of links between conversational phenomena and cognitive psychological findings vary in how precise or compelling they are. (The notion of limited-capacity devices that process discrete and serial information-slots-in-consciousness certainly fits the single-operation microprocessor metaphor of mental processing better than more recent connectionist models.) But they suggest a number of useful contributions to psycholinguistics, based on how 'speakers tend not to introduce new ideas out of the blue, but fit them in some way into the ongoing interaction' (p. 176; cf. Clark, 1996). For example, Chafe's discussion of definiteness as encoding 'given' information, and the requirement for sentences to include some 'new' information (cf. Halliday, 1970, p. 163), is useful for explaining why sentences such as 'The man hit the colorful ball' (p. 108) are strange examples of natural talk, despite their formal grammaticality.

Chafe's discussions of discourse are a major contribution to psycholinguistic work. But the way he theorizes about what is going on *psychologically* is based on normative assumptions of idealized, cooperative information updates. Take, for example, an utterance that crops up a number of times in *DCT*, 'I talked to Larry last night' (the accents mark emphasis, with primary stress on Larry). Chafe remarks that 'for the participants in the conversation ... there must have been one person named Larry who was more salient than any others possibly known to them by that name' (p. 101). This is a reasonable assumption, but a logical and normative one (rather than empirically grounded), based on the presumption of conversation as disinterested, doing-nothing information exchange. Imagine the utterance as a way of fishing for the other person to ask who Larry is, where he is perhaps someone important (their boss) or famous, like Laurence Olivier. Calling him Larry can be a way of signalling the speaker's casual acquaintance with someone so famous, where the casual mention of him is a way of 'doing being casual' about knowing people like that. And it can be a way of getting the basis of that acquaintance invited as a topic by the addressee, like with 'Larry who?', where it would be wrong to assume that 'Larry who?' signals some kind of commu-

nicative or psychological error about shared knowledge on the part of the first speaker. I am not proposing all this as a preferred analysis of the utterance (I have no idea what it *was* doing, interactionally), but merely as the kind of thing that talk *can* do, for which Chafe's more mechanical framework of information exchange has no place.

Blind Men and Elephants

A counter-argument to my objections to *DCT* might be to say that performative considerations are merely an additional layer of social pragmatics, superimposed upon a deeper information-transmission basis of discourse. But I prefer it the other way round. I see talk as foundationally performative, not just in special cases. It is primordially a domain of social action, and only secondarily a device for disinterested information representation and exchange. The notion of language as disinterested knowledge representation is, arguably, a relatively specialized, recent, western, academic, literary, cultural invention: an idealized specialization of some of the things that talk does. Nor is the difference I am promoting here reducible to the old story about blind men poking at different parts of the same elephant and producing different claims about it (p. 9). That trope merely locates its user as the privileged, sighted watcher from afar, who sees all the blind men and the elephant too, seeing them *as* blind, and the elephant *as* a (whole) elephant, even when counting oneself as one of the blind. It is a rhetorical trick, an 'above the argument' argument against argument.

Chafe occasionally introduces a distinction between what a particular linguistic device *is* and what speakers *do* with it—between its *nature* and its *use*' (p. 209). While this distinction works, to a limited degree, with grammatical structures such as verb tenses (though even there, I would expect their uses to be their *raison d'être*), no such distinction between nature and usage can be sustained for Chafe's basic information-communication model of talk. That is surely a model of what talk *is* that thoroughly compromises any investigation of what it *does*. For example, compare Chafe's treatment of 'representing distal speech' to CA's work on 'formulations' (Heritage & Watson, 1979). These are occasions on which speakers refer to, quote or provide a gist of something said previously, often by other people.

For Chafe, 'indirect speech ... does not pretend to replicate the actual words of the distal speech, but reconstitutes them in a way that acknowledges the *inability of ordinary remembering to reproduce other language verbatim*' (p. 214; emphasis added). This is essentially a

memory-dumping model of talk, implicit in much of cognitive psychology. But there are surely occasions when indirect speech, and its transformations, are introduced when prior talk *was* recallable (unless, of course, these categories are circular, such that indirect speech is taken as the evidence that something could not be remembered more accurately!), or recallable in more detail, or in different detail, or with different glosses and transformations, and so on. In fact, these variable possibilities are precisely how talk's business gets done (by formulating gists one way or another), and it is by examining those details, their priors, upshots and consequences, that we get to see what talk *does*. It is surely inadequate, analytically, to treat these formulations as the products of a limited memory capacity, or as reflections of what speakers found novel or interesting.

Similarly, Chafe uses a distinction between two types of intonation units: those that 'convey *substantive* ideas of events, states, or referents' vs those that are '*regulatory* . . . in the sense of regulating interaction or information flow' (pp. 63–64). For example, particles such as 'well' and 'Mhm' (when occurring as full intonation units) are 'regulatory', whereas the vast bulk of referential talk is 'substantive'. This kind of distinction between bits of talk that regulate interaction and those that convey ideas is a consequence of the notion that talk is basically the socially coordinated conveyance of ideas. CA does not sustain the distinction. It quickly becomes arbitrary, dividing speech into segments which are regulatory vs substantive, when talk is analysed for the social actions it performs, rather than for the information it conveys.

It is not a matter of adding on an interactional, rhetorical factor or variable to Chafe's disinterested stream-of-consciousness speaker. There is genuine competition here (not just gropings after different parts of the elephant) for understanding the basis on which talk's details are produced. It is Chafe's psychological assumptions that lead him to suggest that indirect quotation 'must reflect the true relation between the immediate and displaced modes of speaking' (p. 223), whereas direct quotation, because of our limited memory, must be an imaginary pretence. If we want to grasp the nature of conversational details, we have to consider their interactional functions and consequences. We get nowhere by referring them circularly back to whatever the speaker must have been thinking about, and to the capacity limitations of memory. The informational value of discourse, including matters of accuracy and error, is approachable as talk's matters in hand, the stuff under active management (amongst much else), rather than talk's 'actual' prior conditions, psychological products or ways of working.

What difference does it make to adopt Chafe's view of discourse or mine? It is a matter of how the whole thing is conceptualized and approached, and it starts to generate different kinds of research, data and theory. Chafe suggests that 'it is only through a major effort at self-delusion that one can avoid recognizing that people's actions are determined by what they feel and think' (p. 13). I am afraid it is a delusion I share not only with behaviourists, but with various analytic philosophers, ethnomethodologists, social constructionists, cultural psychologists and others that human actions are not 'determined' thus at all. In discursive psychology, the status of thoughts and feelings with regard to actions is talk's topic and resource. It is precisely the kind of common-sense topic and resource that we need to *study*, in terms of how natural discourse deals with them, rather than adopt as our own abstracted and idealized metatheory of why folk actually do what they do and say what they say. Given an information-processing model of mind, and an information-transmission model of language, what you logically get is something like the given-new contract (Clark & Haviland, 1977; cf. Chafe, 1970; Grice, 1975). Given an action-performing, rhetorically potent notion of discourse, what you get are *ways of talking* which handle and manage, rather than reflect and communicate, notions of what participants know. The advantages of approaching it all as performative *ways of talking*, rather than as expressions of underlying knowledge states, are that it gains in the range of phenomena that are handled. It encompasses all of Chafe's phenomena, and adverts for Shredded Wheat too, while reducing the need for circular speculations based on talk itself, about what is in, beyond or on the edges of consciousness.

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