Chapter 3 Utilization of Sentences

A *speech act* is a certain utterance used by a speaker to serve a certain communicative function. A speech act or *illocutionary act* has a certain *verb ‘form’* (*performative verb*), which performs the illocutionary force of the utterance.

**Illocutionary force = illocutionary meaning = intentional meaning**

**Illocutionary acts**: warning, promising, assuring, advising, requesting, offering, etc.

**Prelocutionary acts**: the effects of a certain illocutionary act towards the action or believe of the hearer. An utterance might be successful in performing the illocutionary act but fail to perform the prelocutionary act.

Each speech act can be grouped in some categories of the following:

1. Represents: conveying speaker’s belief that some proposition is true or false.
2. Directives: asking listener to do something
3. Commissives: expressing speaker’s commitment to some future course of action
4. Expressive; expressing speaker’s psychological state about something
5. Declarations: declaring a new state of a certain affair.
**Propositional and thematic content**

**Propositional content** is the content or meaning of the proposition expressed with a sentence.

**Thematic content** is the information intended to be conveyed by a speaker. The information is usually structured as new – given information.

Example: It was June who went to Jakarta.

- **Given**: someone went to Jakarta
- **New**: the one is June

**Given-new Contract**: The speakers agrees (a) to use given information to refer to information he thinks the listener can uniquely identify from what he already knows and (b) to use new information he believes to be true but is not known to the listener.

Differentiate the followings:

A. John hit BILL.
B. It was JOHN who hit Bill.

(A) Given: John hit X
   New: X = Bill
(B) Given: X hit Bill
   New: X = John
Cooperative Principle, maxims and conversational implicature

There should be a good cooperation in order that a communication runs well. In dealing with such principle, Grice proposes four conversational maxims as:

1. **Maxim of quantity**: Make your contribution as informative as possible but not more informative than is required.
2. **Maxim of quality**: Do not say something you believe to be false.
3. **Maxim of relation**: make your contribution relevant to the aim of the ongoing communication.
4. **Maxim of manner**: Avoid obscurity, ambiguity, wordiness and disorderliness in your language.

Conversational principles:

1. Principal of minimal information; Do not provide any information that is believed that both the speaker and listener have already known. If it is stated, interpret as other than it is mentioned.
2. Principal of relevance: Provide the information the listener needs or will need to interpret what the speaker says or will say.

**Implicature**: Bridging assumption built by a hearer. In building such an assumption a listener should make use of the given-new strategy.

Example: Bill had a black eye. It was JOHN who hit him. Implicature: Bill had a black eye because someone hit him.

When a certain maxim is flouted at the level of what is said, there should be a certain meaning which is implied by the speaker.
**How listener record and verify information**

Integrating Information into Memory: Table 3-2, page 96

**Denial:** supposition + cancellation

Example: It wasn’t JOHN who hit Bill.
1. Both speaker and listener share the information in the memory that X hit Bill.
2. Speaker supposes that listener has in mind that X = John.
3. Speaker tries to cancel the proposition X = John and asserts that X ≠ John.
4. Speaker expects the listener to cancel the X=John and replace it with X ≠ John.

**Answering Yes/No Question**

Example: Was it John who hit Bill?
   Given: X hit Bill
   New: X=John?

In verifying such Yes/no question, listener does the following:
1. searching the proposition **X hit Bill** in the memory
2. comparing the X=John with what exists in the memory. (X=John is not a new information, it is one which is queried)
3. Answer **Yes** if they match one another, or **No** if they don’t.