

Why do we say what we say the way we say it?

Istvan Kecskes

School of Education, State University of New York, Albany, NY 12222, United States

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Abstract

This paper seeks answer to the question why exactly we say what we say the way we say it. Although Giora (1997, 2003) argued that cognitively prominent salient meanings, rather than literal meanings, play the most important role both in production and comprehension of language, most attention in pragmatics research has been focused on comprehension rather than production. This paper claims that salience plays as important a role in language production as in comprehension, and discusses how salience of an entity can be interpreted as a measure of how well an entity stands out from other entities and biases the preference of the individual in selecting words, expressions, and complex constructs in the process of communication. It is argued that there is a unique interplay between linguistic salience and perceptual salience both in production and comprehension. The role of perceptual and linguistic salience involves a relation between prominence of entities in a ranking, and preference of a choice among alternatives.

From the perspective of interlocutors, three theoretically significant categories are distinguished: inherent salience, collective salience, and emergent situational salience. *Inherent salience* is largely equivalent to cognitive status. It is characterized as a natural built-in preference in the general conceptual and linguistic knowledge of the speaker, which has developed as a result of prior experience with the use of lexical items and situations, and changes both diachronically and synchronically. Inherent salience is affected by collective salience and emergent situational salience. *Collective salience* is shared with the members of a speech community, and changes diachronically. *Emergent situational salience* that changes synchronically refers to the salience of specific objects or linguistic elements in the context of language production and comprehension, and may accrue through such determinants as vividness, speaker motivation and recency of mention. In an actual situational context inherent, individual salience is affected and shaped both by collective and situational salience. When the speaker is faced with the choice of a word or an expression, a ranking of the available choices is obtained on the basis of the degree of salience of entities in the generation context. The word or phrase then is selected for utterance on the basis of maximum salience. This paper argues that inherent salience is dominated by linguistic salience, while emergent situational salience is usually governed by perceptual salience.

As stated above salience is equally important both in production and comprehension. However, the focus of this paper will mainly be on speaker production because this issue has received less attention so far.

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1. Introduction

As a semiotic notion, salience refers to the relative importance or prominence of signs. The relative salience of a particular sign when considered in the context of others helps an individual to quickly rank large amounts of information by importance and thus give attention to that which is most important. We tend to overestimate the causal role (salience) of information we have available to us both perceptually and linguistically.

E-mail address: ikecskes@albany.edu.

1.1. Linguistic salience and perceptual salience

Linguistic salience describes the accessibility of entities in a speaker's or hearer's memory and how this accessibility affects the production and interpretation of language. Several theories of linguistic salience have been developed to explain how the salience of entities affects the form of referring expressions, as in the givenness hierarchy (Chafe, 1976; Givón, 1992; Gundel et al., 1993), or how it affects the local coherence of discourse, as in Centering Theory (Grosz and Sidner, 1986; Grosz et al., 1995), which was further developed into a Meta-informative Centering by Włodarczyk and Włodarczyk (2006) or in Giora's Graded Salience Hypothesis (1997, 2003) just to mention a few. I also include Jaszczołt's (2005) concepts of "primary meaning" and "pragmatic default" in this list, because the latter also deals with salience, albeit from a somewhat different perspective.

Perceptual salience refers to information that is the focus of people's attention. Perceptual salience is about how the state or quality of information stands out relative to neighboring items. This paper argues that there is a bidirectional influence between linguistic salience and perceptual salience. This claim differs from the traditional view. There are two approaches to the issue of how language interacts with perceptual processing. According to the traditional view, language is "merely the formal and expressive medium that is [used] to describe mental representations" (Li and Gleitman, 2002:290). Language is just a tool for reporting perceptual or conceptual representations, rather than shaping and modulating them (Bloom and Keil, 2001; Gleitman and Papafragou, 2005; Pinker, 1994). According to this view, linguistic-perceptual interactions are seen in terms of recoding perceptual experiences into verbal ones (e.g., Dessalegn and Landau, 2008; Munnich and Landau, 2003). Lupyan and Spivey's work (2010) represents an opposing view, which argues that language dynamically modulates visual processing. Although they focused only on one aspect of this interaction—the degree to which processing spoken labels facilitates the visual processing of the named items—I agree with their claim and speculate further that there is a bidirectional influence between linguistic salience and perceptual salience, which will be discussed later.

1.2. Need for research on how salience affects production

Giora (1997, 2003) claimed that cognitively prominent salient meanings, rather than literal meanings, play the most important role both in production and comprehension of language. There are numerous works analyzing how salience affects comprehension, but only a little number of studies have focused on production. The main reason is that production is simply inherently more difficult to study. It is quite hard to design appropriate tests for the effects of salience on language production because we have access only to what is actually produced, not all the options that were left out. Despite this difficulty, some studies have made efforts to investigate the subject. For instance, the paper of Givón et al. (in this issue) explores how speakers use linguistic markers to explicitly cue addressees to multiple meanings of concepts.

2. Former research¹

Clark Hull (1943:229) was likely to be the first to have tackled salience in production with his principles of behavior. He argued that in both comprehension and production, more salient meanings would be processed first. In their studies Osgood and Bock (1977) and MacWhinney (1977) entertained the idea that the attentional processing of the cognized world may somehow be reflected in how people organize their production and comprehension of sentences. Osgood and Bock's study (1977) explicitly suggested that the referents' salience status acting as an exogenous determinant of the distribution of a speaker's attention should promote the referents currently in focus to the prominent positions in a spoken sentence. MacWhinney (1977) presented the "Starting Point" hypothesis. Although it is not specifically geared toward sentence production, the hypothesis predicts that one of the main factors determining the assignment of the prominent positions in a sentence is the interlocutor's perspective or attentional focus.

Osgood and Bock (1977) distinguished three principles of salience: naturalness, vividness, and motivation of the speaker. All three principles are based on the assumption that more prominent or more salient items appear earlier in a sentence. Osgood and Bock argued that *naturalness* is exhibited in the fact that subjects almost always come before objects in languages around the world because the subject is more prominent than the object. This prominence often arises naturally from a series of relations. It should be noted here that there are subject-prominent and topic-prominent languages. Li (1976) distinguished topic-prominent languages, like Chinese and Japanese, from subject-prominent languages, like English. Topic-prominent languages have morphology or syntax that highlights the distinction between the

¹ I owe sincere thanks to my student Matthew Parker, who helped me collect information about former research. A significant part of this information was already published in Kecskes (2011).

topic and the comment (what is said about the topic). Topic-comment structure may be independent of the syntactic ordering of subject, verb and object like in Chinese. See for instance (1):

- (1) Yuàn zi lǐ tīng zhe yí liàng chē.
In the courtyard is parked a car.

The topic of the sentence (defined as “old” information) takes precedence in the sentence. The sentence does not follow normal subject-first word order, but adheres perfectly to the topic-comment structure.

Vividness refers to the affective features of a particular element. The more emotional intensity a unit carries, the more likely it will appear earlier in the sentence. Emotional intensity naturally raises the level of prominence for the speaker, making it only natural that such a movement should occur. See for instance (2) and (3):

- (2) Never have I got such a slap in the face.
(3) To grandma’s house we go.

Motivation relates to the prominence a speaker gives to a particular unit that otherwise may carry no special significance. This principle has been thought to carry the largest effect of the three principles. However, Osgood and Bock’s study claimed otherwise. Naturalness was found to be highly regulatory in terms of ordering. The earlier occurring elements of an utterance will be more salient because they have more prominence in the mind of both the speaker and the hearer. Ordering is influenced by the salience prominence of the agent (for active relations) or figure (for stative relations).

Orderings occurred as predicted in the various test situations. The basic hypothesis was that speakers around the world promote the more salient elements of an utterance to the beginning of that utterance. According to Osgood and Bock this phenomenon derives originally from the unconscious forward movement of items that have inherent salience. *Their study showed that the effects of inherent salience consistently trumped those that would need to gain salience from speaker motivation.* Speakers naturally fronted items that occur in a number of situations that inherently comprise an element of increased salience. These situations included cases of actors and instruments, which were found to be more active or potent (increasing their salience); animateness, for which living elements were always evaluated as more active and more meaningful than non-living ones; and for mobility, where mobile pieces were more salient than non-mobile ones (tongue vs. tooth, animal vs. vegetable, etc.). Palpability did not hold the same effect, as the more palpable elements were not found to be significantly more salient than their impalpable partners (cube vs. square, ball vs. smoke, etc.). Subordinates (September as compared to month, baby as compared to human, tarantula as compared to spider, etc.), however, were found to be considerably more salient. Since inherently salient items naturally move to the beginning of utterances, it makes sense that this trend would not be continued when the salience of the element in question is not inherent. Human speech production is expected to follow a principle that is already naturally in place. The claim made by this principle has effects that reach well beyond these observations.

The analysis of the experimental data in Osgood and Bock (1977) revealed several important things. First, speakers tended to use naturalness as the main determinant of the order of mentioning in the sentence (in other words, they relied heavily on the natural event causality and the canonical grammar of English). Second, Agents were more likely to be mentioned before Patients. Third, referents of a higher vividness status were more likely to be mentioned before the ones of a lower vividness status. Osgood and Bock (1977) contrasted their findings to the well-known tendency of the old discourse information to appear before the novel material. They claimed that control of the ordering through givenness is not as powerful as the same process driven by the factors related to “naturalness” and “vividness.” They, however, acknowledged that the problem with this interpretation is that the “perceptual” properties of the referents, such as vividness, were derived solely from the lexical ratings. Whether such vividness reflects a tendency for a preferential perceptual treatment of corresponding world referents is not at all clear. Later I will argue that in the symbiosis of perceptual and linguistic salience the former may play the leading role.

Languages around the world further demonstrate the fronting of salience-high elements through topicalization (see example 1), which very frequently is manifest through forward movement. This means that the element intended to have the greatest salience or importance is placed at the beginning of the sentence, regardless of its grammatical category. In configurational languages, a syntactic change accompanies this movement; in non-configurational languages, such a change is unnecessary as the relevant morphemes still clarify the meaning of the sentence.

- (4) English (configurational)
Peter likes dogs. It is Peter who likes dogs. (structural change)
- (5) Russian (non-configurational)
Petr ljubit sobak. Ljubit Petr sobak. Sobak ljubit Petr. (word order change)

This movement appears to follow the theory of naturalness primarily through generative effect. Speakers consider whatever they have topicalized to be most salient in their utterance, and therefore simply follow the standard rules of the principle of naturalness and promote that item to position prominence. Although this explanation makes some sense, Osgood and Bock (1977) made an interesting distinction. They claimed that elements whose high salience is the result of speaker cognition rather than inherent attribution are categorized differently. Osgood and Bock proposed a theory concerning motivation of the speaker, which includes a host of salience effects that closely mirror those of the principle of naturalness in many aspects, but were shown to differ in some key ways. Their study showed that differences might exist between the processes that apply to inherently or motivationally salient items. (This finding will be very important in some further discussion.) Osgood and Bock (1977) found that *elements of inherent salience have a stronger effect on ordering than elements of motivated salience*. This claim basically coincides with what Giora said in her Graded Salience Hypothesis (Giora, 1997, 2003). Of course, she spoke about linguistic salience and comprehension. However, further research is needed, especially in production, because a speaker's emergent motivation (that I call "emergent situational salience") could easily overcome the effects of inherent salience in ordering in the process of communication. We can topicalize any element of a sentence that we feel is most important, so shouldn't what we feel is important trump whatever effect naturalness has? I will return to this question later.

Continuing on the work of Osgood and Bock, Stevenson (2002) studied referent generation from the perspective of salience. Her findings were rather clear in demonstrating that salience does affect the choice of whether someone will refer to an entity in an utterance, though they went into further detail in a number of areas. Osgood and Bock's principles of vividness and naturalness are again confirmed in this study, though Stevenson adds to the idea some relatively new elements. Animacy was found to be a deciding factor in salience—verb-evoked salience (from implicit causality verbs and the like) and proximity salience are only applicable when the subject is animate. Inanimate subjects failed to carry the salience required to properly trigger the naturalness or vividness principles.

Stevenson (2002) also proposed a theory of salience effects blended with the Centering Theory (Grosz and Sidner, 1986). Her work dealt primarily with the generation of pronouns. Centering Theory posits two local discourse centers: Cf (which is forward-looking) and Cb (which is backward looking). The Cf is used to introduce entities, whereas the Cb is used to refer back to previously mentioned entities. Since multiple Cfs can occur in a single utterance, the most salient of these is also identified. This is labeled as the Cp, or "preferred center." Several methods have been proposed for ranking Cfs, but current research is trending toward structure being the main factor, with ranking determined by order of occurrence—that which comes first is ranked highest. This fits very well with Osgood and Bock's (1977) theory of naturalness.

So what do Cfs and Cbs have to do with salience and production? Stevenson (2002) claims that the Cb will be present in the choice of what referent a pronoun takes. Whatever realized Cf in the previous utterance (U_{n-1}) is the highest ranked element, so this will be the referent for the Cb in the current utterance (U_n). Gordon et al. (1993) made the claim that the pronominalization of the Cb actually increased the coherence of the discourse as it forced relational cohesion in the mind of the listener, because using a pronoun naturally makes the listener go back and relate the previous utterance to the current one. If the pronoun is left out in favor of an actual name, it may suggest to the listener that the sentences are somehow not meant to correlate, as the interpretation can be that this is a Cf instead of a Cb. In a study by Stevenson et al. (1994), it was found that the salience of the antecedent in U_{n-1} affected the choice of entity referred to in U_n , but not how it was referred to, which was chosen instead by the grammatical role of the entity. Stevenson also claimed that, "the choice of who to refer to in an utterance depends on the salience of the entity in the speaker's mental model of the preceding utterance" (Stevenson, 2002:188).

3. The socio-cognitive framework

Salience in this paper is discussed in a socio-cognitive approach (SCA), which was proposed by Kecskes (2008, 2010) and Kecskes and Zhang (2009). This approach unites the societal and individual features of communication, and considers communication a dynamic process in which individuals are not only constrained by societal conditions but they also shape them at the same time. SCA emphasizes not only the role of co-construction, but also the importance of individual prior knowledge as basis of salience in the interaction. It points out the complex role and interplay of social and cultural models and private individual mental models, and how these are applied categorically and/or reflectively by individuals in response to socio-cultural environmental feedback mechanisms, and how this leads to and explains different meaning outcomes and knowledge transfer. In meaning construction and comprehension, individuals rely both on pre-existing encyclopedic knowledge based on their prior experience and current knowledge co-constructed by interlocutors in the process of interaction.

In the SCA interlocutors are considered as social beings searching for meaning with individual minds embedded in a socio-cultural collectivity (Kecskes, 2010, 2012). Individual traits (prior experience → salience → egocentrism → attention) interact with societal traits (actual situational experience → relevance → cooperation → intention). Each trait is the consequence of the other. Prior experience results in salience which leads to egocentrism that drives attention. Intention is a

Table 1
Individual vs. social traits.

Individual trait	Social trait
Attention	Intention
Egocentrism	Cooperation
Saliency	Relevance
Prior experience	Actual situational experience

cooperation-directed practice that is governed by relevance which (partly) depends on actual situational experience (see Table 1).

In the socio-cognitive paradigm, communication is driven by the interplay of *cooperation* required by societal conditions and *egocentrism* rooted in prior experience of the individual and triggered by saliency. Consequently, egocentrism and cooperation are not mutually exclusive phenomena. They are both present in all stages of communication to a different extent because they represent the individual and societal traits of the dynamic process of communication (Kecskes, 2010).

We need to make a distinction between a conscious type of egocentrism that is driven by the preferences of the speaker as discussed in the relevance theory (e.g., Sperber and Wilson, 1995), and a subconscious, automatic speech behavior of the interlocutor that cognitive psychologists talk about (e.g., Keysar and Bly, 1995; Barr and Keysar, 2005). Cooperation was questioned by Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1995) when it referred to counter-cases of cooperation, with interlocutors being unwilling to build relevance because of their preferences for certain interests, as opposed to cases when they are unable to be relevant because of the lack of the needed information or mental resources. In the RT, the interlocutors are free to be cooperative or uncooperative, and their preferences for cooperation or the reverse are driven by their own interests. Cognitive psychologists, however, talk about a different type of egocentrism. Several researchers (e.g., Keysar and Bly, 1995; Barr and Keysar, 2005; Giora, 2003) have indicated that speakers and hearers are egocentric to a surprising degree, and individual, egocentric endeavors of interlocutors play a much more decisive role in the initial stages of production and comprehension than current pragmatic theories envision. Their egocentric behavior is rooted in the interlocutors' greater reliance on their own knowledge instead of mutual knowledge. *Egocentrism means that interlocutors activate and bring up the most salient information to the needed attentional level in the construction (by the speaker) and comprehension (by the hearer) of communication.* Consequently, the speaker will use the linguistic resources (e.g., lexical units, syntactic structures) which s/he thinks are most salient for expressing his/her communicative intentions and/or goals; similarly, the hearer will cooperate by capturing those salient units and assigning them a proper place in the communicational process. Because of their different knowledge bases, the frequency/rituality of their knowledge in the situation, and the attendant attentional resources available to them for processing the salient items, the interlocutors' knowledge has different levels of saliency; as a result, they conduct the attentional processing of communication in an egocentric manner, as for instance in (6):

- (6) Chris's friend Peter arrived by plane and Chris met him at the airport.
Chris: Are you hungry?
Peter: I had something to eat on the plane. I am OK.
Chris: All right. Let's go to a Wendy's.

In this conversation, Peter's utterance, "I had something to eat on the plane" can be interpreted in three different ways: kind of hungry, not hungry, and don't really know. However, his adding, "I am OK," points to implying "not hungry." Chris either misses this interpretation or thinks that his friend needs encouragement. Or, maybe, he is hungry himself. In any case, his suggestion to go to a Wendy's does not quite match Peter's intention.

4. Utterance generation in SCA

SCA demonstrates a functional and cognitive view of utterance production, according to which utterance structures reveal the cognitive processes involved in the preparation and production of sentences. Basic cognitive operations, such as memory retrieval and attentional tracking of entities, therefore become important phenomena underlying aspects of utterance production.

By producing an utterance, the speaker makes a commitment to some information or action s/he can be held accountable for. However, the degree of the speaker's commitment and accountability varies between saying and implying. Haugh (2010) argued that where two (or more) interlocutors co-construct what is said, the speaker generally holds him/herself accountable for that interpreting, while in the case of implying, where two (or more) interlocutors co-construct an implicature, the degree to which the speaker should hold him/herself accountable for that interpreting is often more open to discussion. This is what

happens in example (6). Haugh added that he did not want to suggest that speakers are always held less accountable for meanings achieved through *implying*, because implicatures cannot always be legitimately canceled (Burton-Roberts, 2006; Jaszczolt, 2009). Instead, he proposed that a richer understanding of speaker meanings may be derived through greater exploration of the ways in which interlocutors *create* meanings in interaction.

4.1. The mechanism

In order to explain sentence production, SCA adopts Levelt's modular approach to explain perceptual, conceptual, and linguistic processes during production of sentences in different languages (Levelt, 1989; Bock and Levelt, 1994). The model includes three levels or stages of sentence generation distinguished as (1) MESSAGE component, (2) GRAMMATICAL component, and (3) PHONOLOGICAL component of ARTICULATOR (see Fig. 1, adopted from Bock and Levelt, 1994).

Accordingly, the production stages are as follows:

PERCEPTUAL (from perceptual analysis to rapid apprehension) → conceptual (from lemma selection to lexical access) → linguistic (from lexical retrieval to phonological encoding).

Each of the processing stages receives input from the preceding level. At the first step of producing an utterance, a communicative intention is created. This intention is called a message (cf. Garrett, 1975). At the message stage, pre-verbal thought (intention) is processed, and organized into a conceptual scheme of the event before any linguistic processing occurs. It is at this message level that salience comes in as an important factor. The perceptual effects are supposed to be the most active here, biasing conceptualization of the event according to the event's salience map. The message captures features of the speaker's intended meaning and provides the raw material for grammatical encoding. The grammatical component has two sub-stages: functional processing level and positional processing level. The functional level is responsible for word selection: selecting *lemmas*. Lemmas are "amalgams" of an individual lexical concept's properties, including its semantic representation and its morpho-syntactic features (cf. Myachykov, 2007). However, lemmas are not yet lexical forms. This is also the level in which grammatical functions, like Subject and Object are assigned. Lemmas and grammatical function information are fed into the positional sub-component. At this sub-level representations of words are sequentially inserted into a sentence structure that later becomes fixed as the order of the elements in an utterance. This ordering may not be imposed during functional processing. Evidence for this comes from different types of errors. For instance, according to Garrett (1982) quoted by Myachykov (2007), when sounds are exchanged, they originate in the same phrase 87% of the time as opposed to whole word exchanges that occur within the same phrases only 19% of the time. Finally, at the phonological level, the phonological forms for the words are retrieved and an overt utterance is produced.

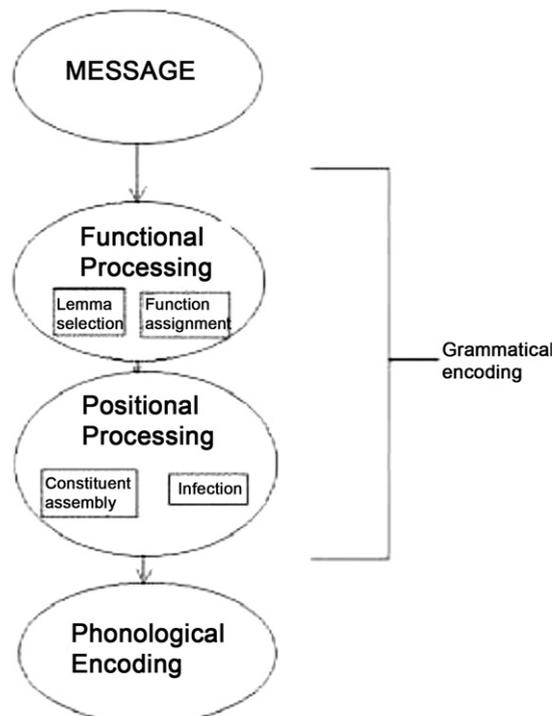


Fig. 1. Modular approach.

4.2. Selection and ordering

What determines the selection of words into which the preverbal thoughts are placed? Past and current research has focused mainly on the formal and structural issues of selection and ordering asking the question, *What facilitates the choice of a structure and the ordering of the sentence constituents during the production of utterances?* However, according to SCA conceptualization and the concept/word (lemma), interface plays a crucial role in shaping structures. Selected words require/facilitate particular structures and not vice versa. Structural variability depends on the selected words. Before this is explained, we need to review findings on the formal and structural selection and ordering.

Evidence from some previous studies points to the role of salience and the distribution of attention in planning and formulation of sentences (e.g., Myachykov, 2007; Tomlin, 1997; Stevenson, 2002). Speakers seem to actively take into account the attentional status of the referents in the scene when they decide what to say first and, depending on that, what structure to use to organize the sentence (Myachykov and Posner, 2005; Myachykov, 2007; Garrod and Pickering, 1999; Sanford, 2001). But several other factors have also been found to influence the accessibility of words and, therefore, their ordering in sentences. Those factors comprise the ones that are related to the referent's conceptual status: novelty in discourse, animacy, concreteness, definiteness, imageability, and prototypicality.

The role of salience and distribution of attention as primary factors affecting selection and ordering somewhat contradicts the traditional view commonly shared in linguistics: "The [sentence] constituents move to certain positions because of their discourse function interpretation" (King, 1995:63). This approach is based on the assumption that the assignment of the syntactic positions in a clause is based on the functional opposition between clause-level *theme and rheme, topic and comment*, and/or the referents' semantic roles, like *agent and patient*. Traditionally, starting from the Prague school of linguistics (e.g., Mathesisus, 1929; Firbas, 1965; Daneš, 1970) and continuing with Halliday (1985), the notion of theme is associated with the element "what one is talking about, the topic," while the rheme is "what one says about it, the comment" (Daneš, 1970). In this framework, the subject of a sentence frequently acts as the syntactic counterpart of the theme or topic of the utterance. But there may be other structures that highlight the theme through means such as clefts and dislocations.

Functional interaction between discourse elements is generally realized as the hierarchy of semantic roles. Fillmore (1968) used the term "agent" to denote a doer of the action while the term "patient" referred to an experiencer of the agent's action. According to this view, the semantic agent is the most likely candidate to take the position of syntactic subject of a sentence. This is usually so in configurational language, such as English, as for example in (7):

(7) Because of the rain, **the driver** could hardly see the road.

However, this is not necessarily the case in non-configurational languages such as Russian, Turkish, and Hungarian. Example (8) comes from Russian:

(8) Mne nravits'a Masa. ('I like Mary')

In order to understand what makes one referent more prominent than another, why some referents (or, more broadly, concepts) receive preferential treatment by the processor, we need to attend to the notion of conceptual accessibility (Bock and Warren, 1985), which is related to "codeability," "imageability," "retrievability," etc. Bock and Warren said that, "Conceptual accessibility is the ease with which the mental representation of some potential referent can be activated in or retrieved from memory" (Bock and Warren, 1985:50). Sanford and Garrod (1981) developed a similar approach. They claimed that one important function of maintaining coherence in discourse is to constantly perform a successful search for discourse-relevant referents in the memory of the interlocutors. They called such referential situation a *scenario*. They argued that referents that form part of the current portion of the discourse, and, therefore, are actively maintained in the memory, are more easily (or quickly) accessible than the referents that do not correspond to the current topic of discussion (see Myachykov, 2007). Levelt (1989) also expressed a similar idea. He related the production of referring expressions to the level of the accessibility in terms of the addressee's mental state.

As mentioned above, the information flow in discourse can be divided into old or given information and new information. The term *givenness* represents the knowledge shared between the interlocutors. Consequently, the given information is that which the speaker believes to be known by the hearer. In contrast, the new information is the information with which the hearer is unfamiliar (cf. Clark and Haviland, 1977; Halliday 1967/1968; Haviland and Clark, 1974). A quasi-psychological view on givenness suggests that given vs. new distinction correlates with the notion of cognitive activation of the concept. Chafe (1976:30) said that, "Given (or old) information is that knowledge that the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance. The so-called new information is what the speaker assumes he is introducing into the addressee's consciousness by what he says." In fact, here, Chafe implicitly referred to the issue of salience and memorial activation. Explaining what makes the referent given or new, he argued that the new

information is “newly activated” at a given point in conversation, while the old information is the one that does not require such activation (Chafe, 1994:72). Such activation status, among other things, depends on the speaker’s perspective affected by the salience of the processed material.

5. Conceptual accessibility (CA) and salience

5.1. Dimensions of conceptual accessibility

Prat-Sala and Branigan (2000) distinguished two dimensions of conceptual accessibility: inherent and derived accessibility dimensions. Inherent accessibility is based upon the intrinsic properties of the concept, such as word frequency status, familiarity, animacy, concreteness, and prototypicality. These are the features the concepts possess, regardless of the interlocutors’ intentions and the current discourse status of the corresponding referents. The derived accessibility is a temporary property of the concept that is dependent on the referent’s current activation status in both linguistic and non-linguistic terms. The derived accessibility is driven by various means of priming such as vividness, speaker motivation, and recency of mention. These two CA dimensions can overlap at any given time in discourse if the inherent prominence status is supported by the current, derived prominence status. On the other hand, the contributions of the inherent and derived accessibility forces can be contradictory if the prominence promoted by priming is not supported by the inherent prominence status of a referent. This approach introduces both the global and the local levels for the CA effects to appear.

Inherent and derived accessibility looks similar to what Pattabhiraman (1993) called canonical salience and instantial salience. The former is a natural, built-in preference that is inherent in the general conceptual knowledge and linguistic knowledge of the speaker. Canonical salience is rooted in prelinguistic perceptual experience and has resemblance to Osgood’s naturalness. Instantial salience arises in the generation context because of a number of factors, such as vividness, speaker’s motivation, and recency of mention. Pattabhiraman also mentions that the interaction between canonical salience and instantial salience (between built-in factors and situationally arising factors) is a crucial issue of language production.

5.2. Salience in SCA

In SCA both linguistic salience and perceptual salience can take three forms: inherent salience, collective salience, and emergent situational salience. The notion of *inherent salience* is close to what Prat-Sala and Branigan (2000) called “inherent accessibility” and Pattabhiraman (1993) referred to as “canonical salience.” Inherent salience is characterized as a natural preference built into the general conceptual and linguistic knowledge of the speaker; it has developed as a result of prior experience with lexical items, and changes both diachronically and synchronically. Inherent salience is affected by the two other types of salience. *Collective salience* is shared with the other members of the speech community, and changes diachronically. *Emergent situational salience* is similar to “derived accessibility” of Prat-Sala and Branigan (2000) and instantial salience of Pattabhiraman (1993). It changes synchronically, and refers to the salience of specific objects and linguistic elements in the context of language production. Situational salience may accrue through such determinants as vividness, speaker motivation, and recency of mention. In an actual situational context, inherent salience is affected and shaped both by collective and situational salience. The following (source: British sitcom) example serves to show the role of salience both in production and comprehension:

- (9) Jill: I met with someone today.
 Jane: Good for you.
 Jill: He is a police officer.
 Jane: Are you in trouble?
 Jill: Oh, no....

Jill met someone who was a policeman. Conforming with our society’s collective salience, the concept of “policeman” is identified with some kind of trouble. However, this understanding of the concept is privatized in Jill’s case and acquires a positive overtone, as the result of her positive (maybe even romantic) encounter with the policeman. Jane did not have this experience, so she processed the word in accordance with its collective salience, as privatized by her in the given situation. What the speaker meant differed from what the hearer inferred from the same utterance. The difference is the result of the concept’s different privatization, based on prior experience.

Emergent situational salience refers to the salience of situational constraints that can derive from factors such as obviousness, vividness, recency of mention, and others. The cashier’s “How are you doing today?” question in a

supermarket requires only a short “Fine, thank you.” The salience of the situation makes the function of the expression obvious. However, actual situational salience can be overridden by both collective salience and inherent salience. In the following example, situational salience is overridden by collective salience, individualized similarly by hearer-readers.

- (10) (Sign on the door of a department store)
“Girls wanted for different positions.”

Not even the actual situational context and environment can subdue the sexual connotation of the sentence. As Giora (2003) claimed, both salient information and contextual knowledge run in parallel, and salient, but contextually inappropriate information may not be discarded. A similar example comes from one of Robin Williams’ films (*The Survivors*), where the hero says, “I had to sleep with the dogs. Platonically, of course. . . .” The speaker thinks that the sexual connotation of “sleep with” is so strong that a clarification is necessary.

5.3. Competition between inherent and emergent situational salience

From a theoretical perspective, it is also difficult to reconcile the attended first (instantial salience, situational salience) with the given-before-new (canonical salience, inherent salience) hypothesis. Bock et al. (2004) provided a comprehensive account of this theoretical controversy. They claimed that “the focused first” and “the old first” proposals are contradictory because the information that attracts the focus of attention is typically the new elements of the scene, whereas givenness promotes the already established background. The lexical-semantic factors (e.g., old-before-new) and the perceptual factors (e.g., focused/attended first) should, therefore, produce competing effects. However, this is not necessarily so in the socio-cognitive paradigm. Prior experience also plays some role in attention-getting; i.e., it may determine what the focus of attention becomes. Inherent salience (old-before-new) and emergent situational salience (focused-first) are intertwined and affect each other continuously in the communicative process. The strongest communicative effect is reached when there is no competition between the two, like in the advertisement in Fig. 2.

- (11)



Fig. 2. Wherever your destination we deliver.

Not only actual situational salience but also perceptual inherent salience direct (especially males') attention to the girl in the advertisement. However, this is just perceptual salience. Linguistic salience is another matter. The text "Wherever your destination we deliver" has nothing to do with the girl in the picture. The note "girl not included" aims to decrease the powerful perceptual saliency, and solve the discrepancy between perceptual salience and linguistic salience.

The interdependence of inherent salience (old-before-new) and emergent situational salience (focused-first) and their bidirectional influence is based on the assumption that inherent salience is dominated by linguistic salience, while emergent situational salience is usually governed by perceptual salience. The following example (12) demonstrates how the two different types of salience operate.

(12) Allen and Sherry (of sitcom *Two and a Half Men*) are sitting in a restaurant. Allan's right eye is covered with a bandage so he does not see Sherry very well.

Allen: -You know, Sherry, I would really like to see more of you.

Sherry: - *Maybe, we should wait and see how the night goes.*

Allen: - Oh, no. I mean I have only got one good eye. Can we change places?

Sherry: - Sure.

The conversation demonstrates that Sherry completely misunderstood Allan's utterance "... I would really like to see more of you." This may be due to the fact that she relied exclusively on linguistic salience and ignored perceptual salience in processing the utterance. Some studies referred to the fact that inherent linguistic salience seems to override perceptual salience in most cases. Osgood and Bock's study (1977) also showed that the effects of inherent salience consistently trumped those that would need to gain salience from speaker motivation. Lupyan and Spivey (2010) also came to a somewhat similar conclusion when they argued that language dynamically modulates visual processing.

6. Differences between SCA and the Graded Salience Hypothesis

SCA relies on the Graded Salience Hypothesis (GSH) of Giora (1997, 2003) to a significant extent, but it does not accept all of its tenets. GSH basically is hearer-centered, while SCA focuses on both production and comprehension. The focus of GSH is on linguistic salience, specifically meaning salience. GSH deals with lexical processing, whereas SCA's concern is both linguistic salience and perceptual salience. While GSH uses "context" in the sense of actual situational context, SCA emphasizes the difference and interplay between prior context and actual situational context.

The main claim of the GSH is that salient information is superior to less salient information and often (Giora, 2003:15), though not always, to unstored information, such as novel information or information inferable from context (see Giora, 2003:10–11; Peleg et al., 2001). As a consequence, salient meanings of lexical units (e.g., conventional, frequent, familiar, or prototypical meanings) are processed automatically, irrespective of contextual information and strength of bias. Although context ("actual situational context") effects may be fast, they run in parallel with lexical processes and initially do not interact with them (Giora, 2003:24).

According to the GSH, in language processing, both salient information and contextual knowledge run in parallel, and salient information may not be filtered out even when it is contextually inappropriate. This claim basically questions context-dependency, which is one of the main tenets of current pragmatic theories. While salience, according to the GSH, mainly concerns the storage of knowledge as a function of degree of familiarity, frequency, prototypicality, and conventionality, salience in SCA refers to the contingent effect of salient knowledge as a result of the attentional processing of communication in a particular situation, which facilitates or hampers the expression of intention and the subsequent achievement of communicative effects.

Another significant difference between GSH and SCA is that the GSH emphasizes mainly the importance of stored information, while SCA considers salience to be both a stored (inherent salience) and an emergent entity (actual situational salience). According to the GSH (Giora, 2003:15), for information to be salient—to be foremost on a person's mind—it needs to undergo consolidation, that is, to be stored or coded in the mental lexicon. Stored information is superior to unstored information, such as novel information or information inferable from the context: while salient information is highly accessible, non-salient information requires strongly supportive contextual information to become as accessible as is salient information. Giora seems to equate salient information with consolidated/stored information and nonsalient information with unstored information. This, to me, is somewhat questionable because it considers salience as a relatively static entity that changes only diachronically. According to Giora, in order for something to be salient, it should be stored in the memory. What is ranked "most salient meaning" at the present moment may die off after only a few decades. An example of such diachronical change is the word "gay," whose most salient meaning in the '50s of the past century was "joyful"; nowadays, this meaning would rank below that of "homosexual." Salient information can be "disconsolidated" when its salience dies off and the information in question ends up as less salient or non-salient. In contrast, SCA

emphasizes that salience is in a continual state of change not only diachronically but synchronically as well (emergent situational salience).

7. Salience as a guiding mechanism in utterance production

The role of salience in language production involves a ranking relation of prominence of entities, as well as a preferred choice among alternatives. When the speaker is faced with having to choose a word or an expression, a ranking of the available choices is obtained on the basis of the degree of salience of entities in the context of generation. The word or phrase then is selected for utterance on the basis of maximum salience. Once a speaker has either an *a priori* or an emergent, co-constructed intention to communicate, s/he should find an appropriate linguistic representation to transfer this message to the hearer. The message of the preverbal thought is made up by combining the concepts that the speaker intends to *explicate*. Concepts are attached to several possible frames. When a preverbal thought is formulated, the related schemas will be activated. Jackendoff (2002) claimed that concepts have no direct, one-to-one connection with lexical items. A concept may be associated with several lexical expressions, and conversely the process of transforming preverbal thought into linguistic expressions varies among different speakers because they have several options to explicate their intentions.

Kecskes (2008:401) argued that there is some difference between speaker processing and hearer processing. When a lexical unit is used by a speaker, private/subjective contexts attached to this lexical expression are activated top-down in a hierarchical order based on salience. This hierarchical order works differently for the speaker and the hearer. For the speaker, there is primarily an inter-label hierarchy, while for the hearer the intra-label hierarchy comes first. The *inter-label hierarchy* operates in the first phase of production, when a speaker looks for words to express her/his intention. First, s/he has to select words or expressions from a group of possibilities in order to express his/her communicative intention. These words or expressions constitute a hierarchy from the best fit to those less suited to the idea s/he is trying to express. The hearer, however, has to cope with a different type of hierarchy from her/his perspective. Thus, an *intra-label hierarchy* is in force when the hearer processes (a) lexical unit(s) in an utterance (or even an entire utterance). The label (word) uttered by the speaker hierarchically triggers the history of that particular label as used by the hearer (but not by the speaker). This may also be a reason for misunderstanding in the communicative process. Compare the following (source: American sitcom) interchange in (13):

- (13) Bob: Are you OK?
 Mary: I am fine.
 Bob: I know you are fine, but are you OK?

Bob had several options to ask about Mary's well-being: "Are you OK?", "Are you fine?", "Is everything all right?", etc. His selection of "Are you OK?" caused a slight misunderstanding between the two because they interpreted "OK" differently.

The mechanism of putting preverbal thought into linguistic expressions is a process of privatization of the actual situational context by the speaker. In fact, this process contradicts Grice's notion of "what is said." For how can a truth-conditional semantic meaning be transferred from speaker to hearer without any change? Both processes, the speaker's utterance production and the hearer's interpretation, are highly personalized/privatized, and are the results of the interplay of inherent salience and emergent situational salience. Both speaker's production and hearer's inference comprise lexical processes and contextual processes that run parallel and are governed by salience. A speaker's utterances often undergo corrections showing the speaker's attempts to adjust to the context en-route. Similar processes occur in comprehension. Utterance interpretation hardly consists of just those two modules, as the Gricean pragmatics maintains. Inferencing/interpreting is a trial-and-error process on the part of the hearer, who tries to make sense of the speaker's intention. In fact, implicature is one of the possible interpretations of speaker intention (cf. Bach, 2001).

8. Conclusion

This paper has presented a socio-cognitive approach to speaker's utterance production that is based on salience as a guiding mechanism. It was argued that salience is both an individual and a societal phenomenon. Prior and actual situational experience is privatized/subjectivized and prioritized in the mind of interlocutors. Their different prior experiences, their different evaluations of the actual situational context, their dynamically changing intentions and individual degrees of salience result in a personalized process of production and comprehension. As a result, there may be no single point in the recovery process at which a speaker's utterance *fully* matches a hearer's interpretation. This is because both a speaker's production and a hearer's interpretation are "contaminated" by individualized pragmatic

elements. Pragmatic enrichment processes work differently for both speaker and hearer. Consequently, the match between the two sides keeps varying in the communicative process. This is why we think that, “we almost always fail. [...] Yet we almost always nearly succeed” (Rapaport, 2003:402). And this is why a pragmatic theory should be both speaker- and hearer-centered. Speaker’s utterance production should be analyzed in its own right as a full proposition that does not need any enrichment and/or saturation from the speaker’s perspective. It is another thing how the audience will interpret the speaker’s utterance and what enrichment and saturation processes will support the interpretation.

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Istvan Kecskes is Professor of Linguistics and Education at the State University of New York, Albany. His research interest is in pragmatics, second language acquisition and bilingualism. He is the President of the American Pragmatics Association. He published six books and numerous articles in journals such as *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Pragmatics & Cognition*, *Pragmatics & Society*, *International Journal of Bilingualism*, *Second Language Research*, *International Journal of Multilingualism* and others. He is the founding editor of the journal *Intercultural Pragmatics* and the *Mouton Series in Pragmatics* as well as the new bilingual journal *CASLAR (Chinese as a Second Language Research)* published by Mouton. He is also the co-editor of the new *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* published by Benjamins.