

1. A super high-altitude view of what Karen is doing

- In online communication (of the type Karen’s focusing on), there are some systematic problems about identifying and targeting an audience, and accompanying systematic problems about identifying a common ground to work on the basis of and/or target with one’s speech.
 - (And on the audience side, of identifying a CG to interpret in light of.)
- A response to this problem of identifying an appropriate audience and CG is to design one’s speech not on the basis of the *actual* (too big, too diverse, too unknown) audience, but some *imagined* audience, with an associated imagined CG.
 - This is a response that both seems likely to be useful, and seems actually to be employed in actual online speech.

2. A super high-altitude view of what I want to talk/ask/complain about

- This is a super cool and interesting phenomenon and I’m totally convinced that it’s real and that theorizing about it is going to be fruitful, and super grateful to Karen for drawing it out.
- It’s got a ton of points of contact with a ton of other phenomena that I think are super interesting, and which I’m super excited to think and talk about. Because I’ve got so many of those kinds of “ooh there’s a cool connection here!” and “oh this looks like it’s going to tied up with THAT interesting idea” thoughts, and so many of them didn’t really come together in a clear, settled way in my head by the time it was time to produce a handout, lots of them didn’t make it on here, or just made it on to a list of “maybe we can also talk about this” bullet points at the end.
- My big substantive objection-ish thought: It seems to me that there are two distinct threads to the “target an imagined audience rather than the actual audience” phenomenon that Karen is drawing attention to, and I want to ask Karen if she agrees that there are two different things happening, and if not to say a bit about how the two things I think are happening, and that I think are importantly different, are either not both happening or are more tightly bound together than I’m thinking they are.
 - Narrowing
 - Fictionalizing

- Another big picture question for Karen: How distinctive is this phenomenon to online speech, and how much do you care about how distinctive it is? A few possibilities below. (I'm inclined to interpret Karen as somewhere in between (2) and (3) here, but want to check before confidently attributing a view. I am inclined to think the truth is (3).)
 1. This is a phenomenon that only ever happens in online speech – it's a new linguistic phenomenon that we need to understand to understand online speech, but not other forms of speech.
 2. It's a phenomenon that only ever happens in forms of speech other than face-to-face speech. It's important for understanding non-fff speech generally, and examples of online speech are especially helpful for bringing it out because it's more common, or more important, or more obvious, there.
 3. It's a phenomenon that actually happens kind of all over the place, but the case of online speech is helpful for bringing it to the surface (because it's more common, or more systematically important, or more obvious, there). Once we've drawn attention to it in the online case, though, we can see it in lots of other kinds of speech as well, and it's important for getting a handle on what's happening there, too.
- The Qs on Discord are as usual awesome.

3. *Some preliminary tools, concepts and ideas to put on the table*

- Relevant stuff from Dan:
 - Possibility of successful communication w/o CG-update
 - Possibility of utterance design and interpretation without reliance on CG
 - “Let's you and him fight” question (really, “let's you and him clarify the issues by positioning them relative to existing views”, but that's less dramatic):
 - Why doesn't the stuff Dan says in “...People not Contexts” show that we don't actually need a common ground for communication, so there's no need to postulate an imagined CG in order to properly characterize what's going on when there's no convenient actual CG available for online speech.
- Relevant stuff from me:
 - Possibility of different messages to different audience members
 - Possibility of messages communicated to unknown audience members
 - Need to differentiate, among hearers, between *addressees* who can play a role in meaning-determination and *mere overhearers* who can't. (But who can figure out what got expressed to which addressees.)

- I don't think I ever put any substantive theoretical weight on common ground in that paper. (And I signed myself up for some stuff that entails some communication-without-common-ground commitments, but didn't really notice that I'd done that at the time.)
 - Question that would be an objection if I wasn't confident there was going to be a helpful and enlightening answer to it: What was I leaving out?
- Relevant stuff from Herb Clark (& Schaefer):
 - Addressee/side participant/bystander/eavesdropper distinction
 - Difference in speaker responsibility for making themselves understood to different audience-types
 - Precedent for identifying some special subgroups among the total audience (most inclusive group of utterance-encounterers) that play special roles in the communicative process and (therefore) in good theories of the communicative process.
- Relevant theoretical distinction that I got interested in while thinking about this stuff but that I couldn't think of good precedents for:
 - Identifying conversational boundaries, groups of conversational participants, and common ground *de re* vs. by description
 - To have a properly delineated conversation, proper communicative intentions, a for-real common ground, do I need to be having thoughts, intentions, and iterated beliefs about e.g. {Dan, Karen, Andy,...}, or can I have those instead about *the Fs*, even if I don't know who the Fs are, exactly?
 - Deflationary question from this plus Clark:
 - Can you get the same kind of narrowing effect as Karen gets by saying that the speaker merely imagines that their whole audience is subgroup-of-likely-actual-audience G by saying that the speaker differentiates, in the usual way, between addressees and overhearers, their addressees are descriptively picked out as the Gs, and what's happening is that their (totally actual, doesn't need to be imagined) addressees, and the speaker's (actual) CG with them, plays a (familiar) distinctive role in utterance design and interpretation?

4. Narrowing and Fictionalizing

Karen picture:

- A problem with online communication is that the audience is too big and diverse, and speakers don't have good enough information about it, for there to be anything

much in the line of CG for them to design their utterances in light of, or to aim to update with their utterances.

- And actual online speech doesn't seem like it proceeds by just backing way off and proceeding as if the CG were very thin.
- And it's probably good that it doesn't – it's hard to design interesting/helpful/expressive utterances against a super thin CG.

Karen says:

- In online communication we make use of an imagined audience, and an associated imagined CG.
- We design our utterances in light of an imagined CG – not what we take to be actual CG with our whole audience – and rely on audience to recognize our intended imagined audience and imagined CG and interpret accordingly.

(Karen: Is this MOP cool with you as a MOP of your view, and if not where am I deviating from what you'd want to say?)

Two threads to this, I think: *narrowing* and *fictionalizing*

- Narrowing: Acting as if what's actually just a segment of your audience is your whole audience.
 - Relying on the members of the target segment to identify themselves as in the target segment and interpret appropriately.
 - Relying on others to identify who the target segment is and interpret appropriately.
- Fictionalizing: Acting as if your audience were some person or group who needn't actually be part of your audience at all. (And potentially, is recognized by some or all of your actual audience not to be part of your actual audience at all.)
 - Relying on your actual audience to identify relevant features of the imagined audience, and interpret appropriately.

5. *Narrowing (finding your audience):*

I write/speak/tweet/etc. acting as if my audience were some specific subgroup G of all of the people who will/might be in the actual audience, and taking for granted what I take to be CG among G.

- When things go well and you're in my intended audience, you recognize what I'm taking for granted, recognize that you're part of a group that'd share that CG, and thereby recognize yourself as part of the audience.

- (This is the reversed-order bit on p10 – not that you first ID the audience and then take for granted what you take to be CG in that audience. It’s that you take some stuff for granted and thereby fix your audience as the group for whom that stuff is CG.)
- Then we can potentially establish a for-real CG if you reply to my post in a way that provides evidence that it was seen and understood. Can give actual-CG-securing grounding signal.
 - (Why this rather than saying that what happens is I recognize myself to be part of the descriptively-IDed group s.t. for whom the imagined CG is actual CG?)

An example I found helpful to think about, and seemed like the same phenomenon to me – curious of KL also wants to assimilate it or not.

- Some paper-writing is like this.
 - You write the paper taking some stuff for granted that you take to be CG among a certain target audience.
 - The paper then gets released out into the world and a bunch of people read it.
 - Some of those people, reading the paper, recognize that they are members of the group for whom the stuff you’re taking for granted is CG, and thereby recognize themselves to be in your target audience.
 - Others recognize that they’re not, and recognize themselves not to be in your target audience.
 - (This interpretive phenomenon is super familiar – happens to me all the time that I read some paper that’s doing more techno than I can handle and isn’t taking pains to introduce to the techno to the uninitiated, and I thereby recognize that I’m not in the target audience for that paper, and I put it down.)
- The paper-writing case really seems to me to call for a Dan-style “people not contexts” response to issues about establishing CG, rather than a Karen-style “we can get (actual or imagined) CG after all” response.
 - What’s different about the OL case that calls for a different response?
 - (One possibility – there really is the possibility (and actuality) of confirmation/grounding moves in OL discourse in a way that there’s not in paper-reading.)

6. *Fictionalizing (and exploiting bystander-update):*

I’m going to mix up some “how much do you care about how OL-specific this is”, some “isn’t this an importantly different phenomenon than narrowing”, and some

comprehension-check, “does this actually look like a legit MOP of (a strand of) your picture?” in this section.

A route to the fictionalized kind of imagined audience and imagined CG, not by way of OL speech (all very Clark and Schaefer influenced):

Route 1, via caring about bystander-update:

Something that happens:

- Karen says something to Dan, and a bunch of people hear it.
- Karen designs her utterance with Dan in mind, in light of the Lewis-Harris CG.
- Dan does an addressee-update, interpreting Karen’s utterance with Karen in mind, and with the fact that Karen is addressing him in mind, in light of the Lewis-Harris CG.
- Other people who hear the utterance do a bystander-update – they interpret it with Karen and Dan in mind, in light of their beliefs about the Lewis-Harris CG.
- So other people will resolve ambiguities and context-sensitivity, compute implicatures, etc. by reference to what they know about Dan’s and Karen’s conversational history, shared projects, QUDs in their conversation, etc
- Importantly *won’t* use their own projects, concerns, QUDs in conversations other than Dan’s and Karen’s, etc. to resolve ambiguity or context-sensitivity, compute implicatures, etc.
- They’ll do their best to work out what Karen was saying to Dan, and then do their own updates on the basis of Karen having said that to Dan. (They won’t, for example, try to work out what Karen was saying to them and update on the basis of that, because Karen wasn’t saying anything to them.)

Something else that happens:

- Karen says something to Dan, fully aware that a bunch of other people are going to hear it, and having among her communicative intentions some intentions about what people other than Dan will come to believe as a result of her utterance.
- Karen recognizes that other people will do a bystander-update, interpreting her utterance in light of what they know about the Lewis-Harris CG.
- She also recognizes that other hearers are likely not to be fully informed about everything that’s in the Lewis-Harris CG.

- So she might take pains to not exploit features of the Lewis-Harris CG that other hearers aren't going to be privy to in order to do crucial ambiguity-resolving, CS-resolving, or implicature-generating work.
- So she might not really design her utterance fully in light of the Lewis-Harris CG, but in light of some weakening of the Lewis-Harris CG that other people she cares about messaging to are more likely to be clued in about.

Something else that happens (here I think we move away from C&S to something distinctively KL-ish):

- Karen says something to Dan, fully aware that a bunch of other people are going to hear it, and having among her communicative intentions some intentions about what people other than Dan will come to believe as a result of her utterance.
- Karen recognizes that other people will do a bystander-update, interpreting her utterance in light of what they believe about the Lewis-Harris CG.
- She also recognizes that other hearers are likely to be misinformed about what's in the Lewis-Harris CG, and has some specific ideas about how they're likely to be misinformed.
- So she might take pains to not exploit features of the Lewis-Harris CG that other hearers aren't going to be privy to in order to do crucial ambiguity-resolving, CS-resolving, or implicature-generating work.
- And she might exploit things that she expects other hearers to *think* are in the Lewis-Harris CG in order to guide their interpretation of her utterance to the one she wants them to come away with.
- So she might not really design her utterance fully in light of the Lewis-Harris CG, but in light of some alteration of the Lewis-Harris CG that's likely to match up with what other hearers think the Lewis-Harris CG is like.
- Dan might well recognize that Karen is doing this, and interpret her utterance not in light of the actual Lewis-Harris CG, but in light of the altered Lewis-Harris CG that he anticipates Karen will use in designing her utterance. (It might be varying degrees of important to Karen whether Dan does this, depending on details of her communicative agenda.)

And now we are kind of off to the races with imagined audiences and imagined CGs.

Karen could just do away with Dan altogether at this point – she doesn't need actual-Dan at all to secure the intended effects on the overhearers, she just needs the overhearers to correctly work out what she's making as if to take for granted with her purported addressee.

Another thing that happens:

- Karen's giving a talk at the APA. She's got a large, diverse audience, some of whom she knows and some of whom she doesn't. The Lewis-X CGs for the various known X's are really different, the plausible candidate CGs with the whole audience are super thin, and since a lot of the audience is unknown the probability of being in a defective context is very high.
- So Karen designs her utterances for an imagined audience. For example, a person or group with a level of background knowledge that's likely to be widely but not universally shared in the audience, with theoretical beliefs and commitments not assumed to be the same as her own, but in enough of the same ballpark as her own to allow for constructive disagreement, etc.
- The audience recognizes Karen's utterance-design predicament, and they do a bystander-update, interpreting Karen's utterances in light of what they take to be the imagined common ground that Karen is designing her utterances around.
- The body of information Karen's taking for granted might, or might not, line up with what any actual audience member is taking for granted. (If it does, maybe those audience members recognize themselves as the intended audience and do addressee-updates. But it's not important for Karen's central communicative purposes that anybody does this.)

Another thing that happens:

- Karen posts on social media.
- It's just like giving a talk at the APA.

Another thing that happens:

- Karen gives a speech at a close friend's wedding. Weddings are (often) serious business collapsed contexts. So there's a similar utterance design problem.
- One thing that's likely to happen: Karen picks a bunch of different audiences, actual and imagined, for different parts of her speech.

- Part will be designed for just the friend who's getting married, with an inside joke and a hard-to-access implicature. Everybody else will recognize this and do bystander-updates, and Karen might take more or less care to make more or less of what she's communicating to her friend transparent (or opaque) to different bits of the audience.
- Part will be designed for the friend group Karen and her friend are members of. Again, everybody else is likely to recognize this and do bystander-updates.
- Part may really be designed for the whole audience, making use of a very thin CG that Karen thinks really is common to the whole audience. Everybody will do addressee-updates.
- But it's also likely that part will be designed for an imagined audience, making use of an imagined CG that Karen thinks (enough of) the audience will be able to cotton on to. Everybody does bystander-updates in light of what they take the imagined CG that Karen is designing her utterances for is like.
- (Maybe social media is actually more like the wedding speech.)

Lesson:

- There's definitely this capacity that we have to do bystander updates.
- Sometimes the best way for a speaker to communicate something to a particular audience is going to be by way of a bystander update.
- Bystander updates can go by way of, and it's often most effective for them to go by way of, fictionalized addressees who share an imagined CG with the speaker.

Route 2, via Bankshot communication:

Something that happens:

- I address one person but a big chunk of my communicative agenda (sometimes my main communicative agenda) is targeting somebody else. (Sometimes a side participant, sometimes an overhearer.)
 - One of my daughters is dawdling or has clearly forgotten we've got to leave for school, but things have been tense and directly instructing her to get moving might lead to a conflict that's going to derail the morning even more. (Just to pick a hypothetical case at random.)
 - So I tell kid 2, in a voice I'm confident kid 1 will hear, that it's time to go in five minutes.

- I'm hoping kid 1 does a bystander update and works out that since I'm telling kid 2 it's time to go in 5 minutes, it must be time to go in 5 minutes, and since we're all going in the same car, she'd better get ready.
- There are a lot of cases right next door to this one, many of them having to do with communicating indirectly with prickly teenagers.
- A whole genre of "I'm not talking to you" conversations that nominally go through third parties in romcoms etc.
- The spies who know the room is bugged saying things to each other in order to get the eavesdroppers to believe stuff.
- Undercover police or informants wearing wires saying stuff to the criminals they're interacting with in order to communicate to the officers on the other end of the wire.
- (There's a next-door-to-insinuation thing happening in some of these cases, where neither party has to openly acknowledge the communicative act, intention, or effect. Sometimes the indirectness is tied up with deception, sometimes with face-saving and relationship-management.)
 - (Another thread here: I think the self-presentation problems that Karen sets aside actually are relevant to theory choice wrt how to handle the CG problems, because they push toward allowing for fictionalized audiences, and once you've got fictionalized audiences in response to self-presentation you might as well make use of them in thinking about CG.)
- In a bunch of these cases, there's an actual addressee, where interpretation is supposed to go by way of the actual communicative target's correct beliefs about the addressee.
 - But there will also be fictionalized-addressee cases, where interpretation is supposed to go by way of predicted mistaken beliefs about addressee.
 - Also *transparent* fictionalized-addressee cases, where interpretation is supposed to go by way of mutually recognized false presuppositions about the addressee
 - (The chair gracefully corrects my mistaken view about some university policy that I really ought to know about by now by making as if to explain the policy to a junior colleague who makes as if they didn't already know about it. This case comes in both flavors.)

- (You correct my mistake about somebody's name by making a point of introducing the person to somebody in my presence, who makes as if they didn't already know the person's name.)
- There are also cases of bank-shot communication with a wholly fictional imagined addressee
 - Talking to the dog with a human-directed communicative goal:
 - "Bacon, the kids' rooms are super messy! Do you even have anyplace to lay down in there?"
 - "Bacon, don't distract Adeline while she's doing her homework"
 - "Hey Bacon, has anybody fed you yet?"
 - (One from yesterday: "Bacon, who were you barking at?")
- At least in this respect, looks a lot like (one thread of) Karen's picture of online communication:
 - I want to communicate something to some people other than my notional addressee(s), by way of my actual communicative targets working out some stuff about the kind of imagined addressee I've got in mind.

Another case where it seems like this is happening: Paper writing and paper reading.

- My paper-writing instructions to undergraduates (and job talk advice to grad students leaving the nest)
- My coping mechanism for impostor syndrome driven writing paralysis
- A clearly actual communicative strategy problem for writers, and a clearly actual interpretive problem for readers.
 - (Maybe a push here to just imagined CGs as bodies of information playing a role, rather than imagined CGs as byproducts of imagined audiences?)

Sidetracking things only leaving on the handout because I've got an extra side available:

- Bankshot communication and Grice
 - Some of these cases, speaker wants x to believe P because x recognizes speaker's intention to communicate P to y.
 - That's not quite Grice but it's right next door. Should it count as meaning of the kind G is targeting, though? Does it matter?
 - Transparent bankshot cases look straight-up Gricean. That taxonomical difference what we want?
 - How to categorize deceptive bankshots, transparent about CI trying to get hearer to attribute?
- Clark & Shaefer taxonomy: Peripheral participants.
 - Loosely-attached participants who might drift off from group
 - Attentive bystanders who might join
 - (Think about APA smokers, hopeful lurkers, discontented drifters, and inclusionary and exclusionary moves by insiders.)
- C&S: Deflationary assimilation
 - How much of what's happening with online speech can we assimilate to the audience-taxonomizing framework, how useful is it to apply this kind of framework to thinking about online speech?
 - Some online speech looks really a lot like this.
 - Twitter exchanges where there are clear addressees, pair or small group talking to each other.
 - Also a group of people who are participants – regularly involved in this kind of discussion, not directly addressed, but posts definitely designed partly with them in mind.
 - Also a group of people who are overhearers, and maybe there's a distinction between the overhearers that posters take some pains to be legible to, and others where they don't care.
- C&S: Whaddaya mean, 'addressee'?
 - Bankshot cases as potential trouble for addressee as target of Gricean intention. Prevents describing the case the immediately intuitive way.
 - But what else are you gonna say?