

Assignment 8: Language Comprehension

- a. I think in certain texts we create situation models, but it requires having most of the elements described by Zwaan (time, place, people, and goals) as well as an element of relatedness to the reader. I don't think that a situation model could be created for a scientific article because there are no people involved specifically except for the researcher, terms used within the article are often not very common to the average individual, and it is often written for a focused audience. I also don't think a situation model can be created for instructions for constructing a piece of furniture for some similar reasons. Though in this type of passage/text, there is a goal and seemingly time-related events, there are no people or real relatedness. I don't feel that when most people read instructions they are imagining themselves actually performing the task described (maybe just picturing what the object should look like so far in comparison to the picture). For example, if the step was to hammer in a nail, I wouldn't picture myself actually hammering in the nail, but would look at the instructional picture to see if my completed object looked like the representation. Contrarily, I do feel like a historical account of a civil war battle would be able to have a situational model created. In these types of texts, there are often key people, events, and places told in time-relation to each other. Also, this account I feel is more relatable to us as Americans than a retelling of a battle in the Korean War would be because we are American. All of these aspects combined I feel would help create a situational model and increase comprehension. I feel that one way one could decide if a situational model could be created is to think if it could be made into a movie. No one would ever go see a movie about how a scientific fact was proven or how to build a bookshelf, but I can easily see people going to see a movie on the Battle of Bunker Hill.
- b. Just recently, my mom told me that my cousin's fourteen-year old dog, Sasha, got hit by a car on the highway and died. She told me so I could call my cousin Tijana and console her. I feel the situational model I created of where my cousins live (right off the highway), the time of day it occurred (rush hour), and wondering how my cousin felt finding her allowed me to take the best possible perspective on how to help console my cousin. By creating the situational model, I could place myself in the occurrence and imagine how I would feel had it been one of my own dogs and how I could be consoled. This shows an example of how creating the situational model can help people in a social situation cope and deal with others involved.
- c. I think our knowledge of situation models does help us predict what people will think is a well-formed story. You need to have all the elements described by Zwaan to create not only an interesting text, but also one that isn't confusing. As you tell someone a story, you usually are telling them because either the events are out of the ordinary (funny, surprising, sad, etc) or the listener knows one of the people involved. You often don't tell someone a story that consists of a common event (ex: "I woke up this morning.") or about people they've never met before (ex: "My great-great-grandparents got in a fight

about politics.”) After you decide that the other person probably will enjoy the story, you have to utilize Zwaan’s elements to create a non-confusing retelling of the events (ex: describe your grandparent’s relationship, their views on politics, the fact that it is an election year, why the fight was significant, etc.) Knowing what to expect in a story allows us to paint a full picture for another and clarify points that we guess may be confusing for them.