

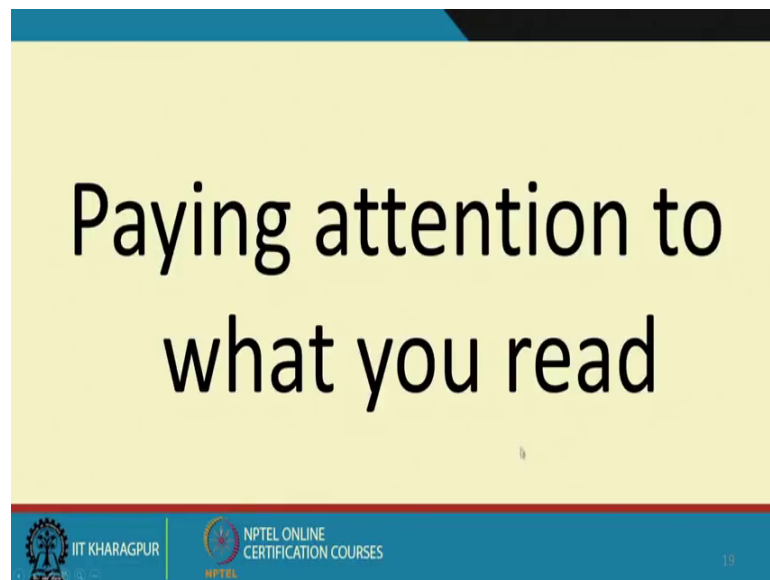
**Research Writing**  
**Prof. Aradhna Malik**  
**Vinod Gupta School of Management**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur**

**Lecture - 07**  
**Paying Attention to What you Read**

Welcome back to the MOOC course on Research Writing. My name is Aradhna Malik and I am helping you with the course and we have been talking about various aspects of research writing. Now, in this class we are going to end the discussion on how you read documents and that will end the discussion for this particular week. So, in this particular lecture we will look at the nitty gritty.

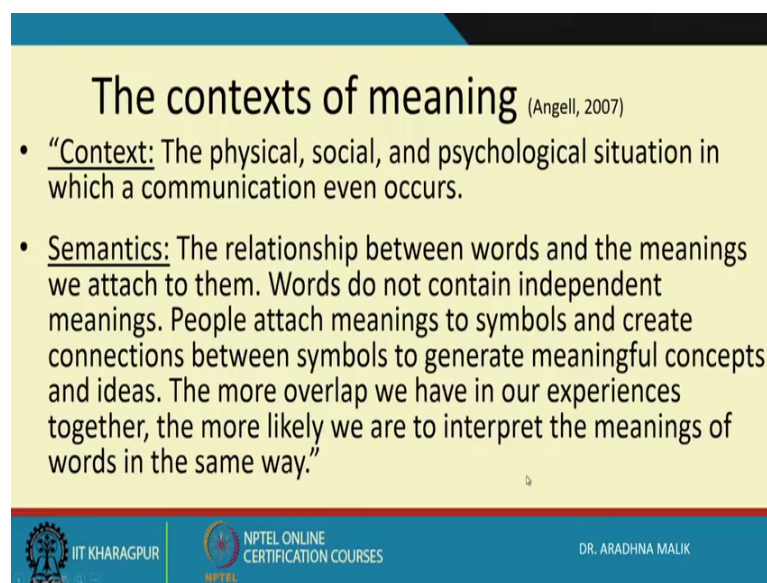
In the last lecture we talked about how you read a technical texts and what should you look for from a broad perspective. Now, in this class we are going to get down to the nuts and bolts of how you should read any document per say and you can apply these things to where reading research documents also. So, this class this lecture is called its titled paying attention to what you read.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:05)



And let us see what we have here for you. Now, when we read a document we look at the contexts of meaning we try and interpret what we are reading.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:12)



## The contexts of meaning (Angell, 2007)

- Context: The physical, social, and psychological situation in which a communication even occurs.
- Semantics: The relationship between words and the meanings we attach to them. Words do not contain independent meanings. People attach meanings to symbols and create connections between symbols to generate meaningful concepts and ideas. The more overlap we have in our experiences together, the more likely we are to interpret the meanings of words in the same way."

IIT KHARAGPUR NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES DR. ARADHNA MALIK

Now, the context is the physical social psychological situation in which a communication event, the event in which a communication event occurs. Now, context refers to the situation from within which the data must have been collected the perspective from which the author is writing a particular document you may not be aware, but there is a whole body some of you may be aware of this there is a whole body of literature that talks about how English is written in various parts of the world.

For example among the editorial board of a journal called Asian English as a foreign language journal. Now, this journal looks like how English is spoken and written in Asia and the way the papers are written in this journal reflects the way the people in these countries have been trained. So, that is very different from reading any research paper written by a person whose native language is English. So, we have you know in the journal we have papers coming in from you know writers in Korea and the Philippines in Vietnam and Japan and China and, so how Asian English is and India and Pakistan and Sri Lanka and all of those places people submit papers to this journal. Now, the way English is spoken and written in these parts of the world is different from the way English is spoken and written in the rest of the world.

So, you know, so the originality of the voice the voice of the author is preserved and that is what you must see when you are reading something, you may be reading something written by an author who is based in say a different part of the world and so the way you

know from your perspective there could be some, some things that you may not understand about the research yes again in the people use English we will talk about why English is being used in another lecture. However, in another lecture we discuss the relevance of English for research writing, but in this class we must understand, where the, what the perspective of the author was especially when we are evaluating qualitative research for example, ethnography. Now, ethnography requires the researcher to experience an event as part of the event and then distance oneself from that event and then see the event from an outsiders perspective related to the past knowledge that has been created, and go into the event armed with the knowledge with the past knowledge of similar events and experience the event once again or keep on experiencing the event as a insider.

So, the research moves from being an insider to an outsider and back to an insider and writes about those experiences emotions factor, opinion factor and personal ideas factor. Now, that all that needs to be on, and all that is presented in the form of a research paper it is a very valid very well established method of research. So, when we look at context we must understand which perspective the paper has been written from. And here the communication event is the getting putting together of the knowledge for somebody else to read and build on.

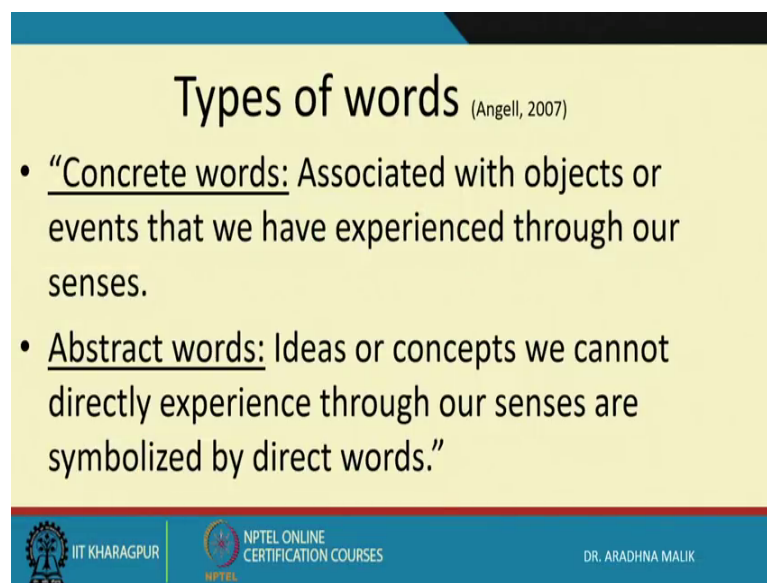
Semantics, semantics refers to the relationship between the words and the meanings we attach to them. Words do not contain independent meaning people attach meanings to symbols and create connections between symbols to generate meaningful concepts and ideas. The more overlap we have in our experiences together the more likely we are to interpret the meaning of the words in the same way. Semantics refers to how words are interpreted, how meaning is drawn from the same word, how research when we talk about research documents we are talking about reading research documents, we are also talking about reading information that may have been collected in a different setting, not only in a pure purely literary or academic setting, but we could be drawing from information that has been collected in a different kind of setting.

So, when say we drop on personal interviews with people especially in qualitative research. Now, you may go and interview experts on the issue and take their opinions and what they say and incorporate that into your research very very valid method of collecting data. However, the semantics will govern how or the way you interpret the

meaning, contexts situates the meaning contexts help it help you understand by somebody said what was being said. Semantics refers to the interpretation to the meanings that are assigned to people and situations and events in a particular setting. So, how you draw meaning from an event that you have observed from the material that you have collected all that will govern how you write about whatever information you have collected and that is of extreme importance in your research writing.

So, when you are reading a paper you must pay attention to the context in which the data was collected. You must also look for a commonality of interpretation. You must try and see how and why the author interpreted, what was interpreted and do you would you interpret those events those pieces of information in a similar manner as the author of the paper that you are reading or author of the document that you are reading.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:59)



The slide is titled "Types of words" with a citation "(Angell, 2007)" in parentheses. It contains two bullet points. The first bullet point is "Concrete words: Associated with objects or events that we have experienced through our senses." The second bullet point is "Abstract words: Ideas or concepts we cannot directly experience through our senses are symbolized by direct words." The slide has a yellow background with a blue header and footer. The footer contains the IIT Kharagpur logo, the NPTEL Online Certification Courses logo, and the name "DR. ARADHNA MALIK".

### Types of words (Angell, 2007)

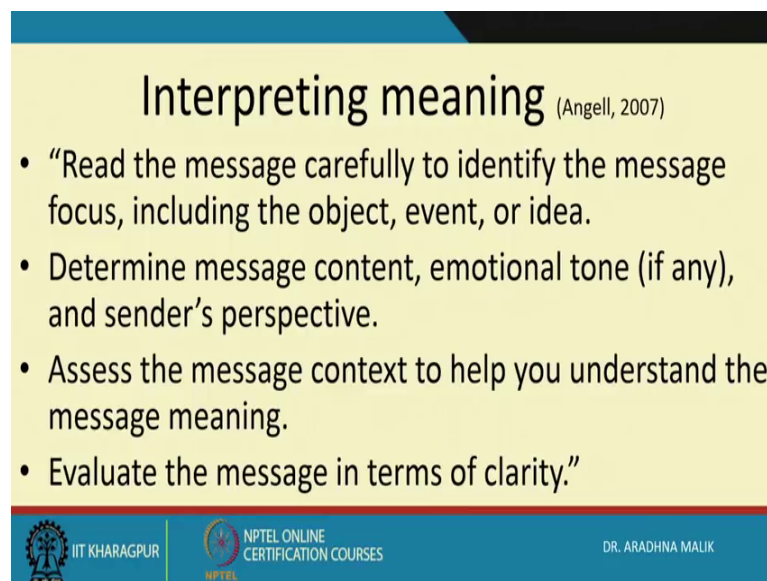
- Concrete words: Associated with objects or events that we have experienced through our senses.
- Abstract words: Ideas or concepts we cannot directly experience through our senses are symbolized by direct words."

IIT KHARAGPUR | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES | DR. ARADHNA MALIK

Various types of words you will come across various types of words in your when reading papers or when reading information you could come across concrete words they are associated with objects or events that we have experienced through our senses. For example, this is a computer screen. This is a concrete words this is a computer screen that I am reading on, I am sitting on a chair at a table. So, all of that is concrete things that you can tangibly feel and see and everybody will interpret concrete words in the exact same manner.

Abstract words, ideas or concepts we cannot directly experience through our senses that are symbolized by direct words. So, these are the ideology for example, that is an abstract word that is a word that you experience that you cannot directly experience through your senses, but we have given a name to a kind of thought. Openness to new ideas know that is an abstract term or relevance of literature. So, you know what do you mean by relevance, how relevant, who decides whether something is relevant or not. So, these are abstract words.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:24)



**Interpreting meaning** (Angell, 2007)

- “Read the message carefully to identify the message focus, including the object, event, or idea.
- Determine message content, emotional tone (if any), and sender’s perspective.
- Assess the message context to help you understand the message meaning.
- Evaluate the message in terms of clarity.”

IIT KHARAGPUR | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES | DR. ARADHNA MALIK

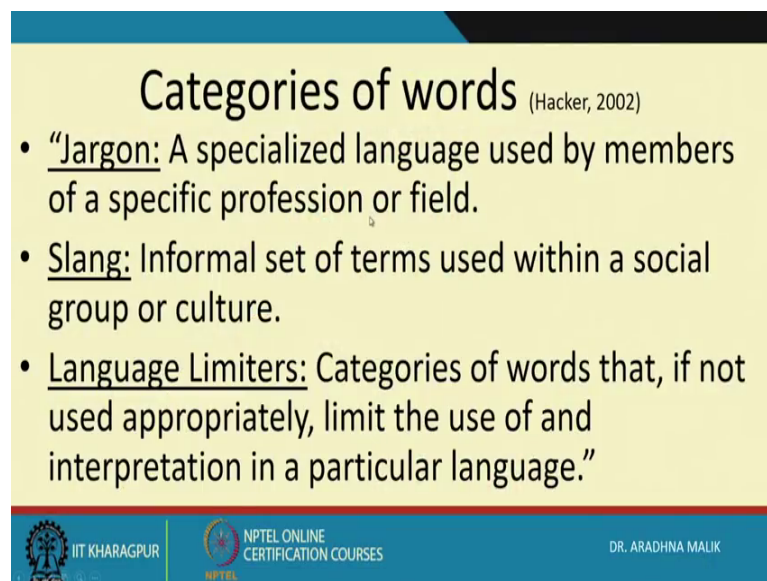
Then interpreting meaning, how do you interpret meaning? You read the message or the document carefully to identify the message focus including the object, event and idea. Find out what is written and find out the author meant to say, when you are reading a research document, when you are reading a magazine article, when you are reading an interview try and read the message or the document here, with by message you mean whatever piece of information you are reading. Try and interpret the message carefully to identify the message focus to identify where the author wanted you to go without all that information, what did the author want you to believe about the message that was written including the object event or idea.

Then determine the message content, emotional tone if any and the sender’s perspective. So, you need to situate the meaning within that context try to find out what the author said, why the author what he or she said, why is the author emphasizing on one part of

the argument, why is the author intent on defending a part of the argument and refuting another etcetera. And emotional tone, if any you might find it any qualitative studies qualitative studies are the emotional tone you must remember that when you write; however, when you read qualitative accounts you might find pieces of emotional tone. Assess the message context to help you understand the message meaning. So, find out where the context of the message or the document.

Evaluate the message in terms of clarity you may find sentences that are you know 50 to 60 words wrong and you start from one end and you incorporate 50 other things and then you entered something else and you somehow get lost in whatever is being said. So, you must evaluate the message in terms of clarity how clear the message is, is it clear to you it may be clear to somebody else, but is it clear to you as a reader and then you need to evaluate the message or the document.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:34)



**Categories of words** (Hacker, 2002)

- Jargon: A specialized language used by members of a specific profession or field.
- Slang: Informal set of terms used within a social group or culture.
- Language Limiters: Categories of words that, if not used appropriately, limit the use of and interpretation in a particular language."

IIT KHARAGPUR | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES | DR. ARADHNA MALIK

Now, some categories of words that you might come across Jargon definitely when you read research papers you will come across Jargon. Jargon is a specialized language use, used by members of a specific profession or field.

So, for example, if I were to talk about as a student of communication, if I were to talk about say interpretivism or positivism or constructivism these are terms that we use in qualitative research. So, this is Jargon these are specialized terms or as a student of communication if I were to talk about the appearance as a unit of communication. So, I

would understand the meaning you know through and through or maybe orality or if I were to talk about (Refer Time: 11:21) and, you know, so stuffs like that. So, these names and the meanings associated with or say situating something within a context.

Now, this is a specialized term. So, these terms you will understand only if you are part of that academic group. A medical person may talk about say the names given two different bones or different muscle groups, so that kind of thing. So, all that is Jargon.



Now, slang is an informal set of terms used within a social group or culture it is unlikely that you will find slang in research documents if you do find slang then you might need to evaluate the credibility and the authenticity of the document. Authenticity definitely, but the credibility and the fit the appropriateness of the document with your research again, you will have to see how. You know slang when we talk about slang sometimes slang may be useful for example, if you are evaluating popular culture in slang would be very very useful.

However when you are talking about hardcore research then use of slang will not really fit it. So, you have to look for these words. Now, language limiters and will deliver it a little more on language limiters language limiters are categories of words that if not used appropriately it limits the use of an interpretation in a particular language. So, let us see what different types of language limiters are.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:52)

### Language Limiters (Hacker, 2002)

- Intensifiers: Words such as *very*, *such*, *so*, and *quite* are usually intended to intensify a statement but often act to undermine its strength.
- Qualifiers: Qualifiers make the communicator sound insecure or negative. e.g. *I think*, *I guess*, *I believe*, *you know*, *sort of*, *kind of*, *possibly*, *perhaps*, and *in my opinion*."

 IIT KHARAGPUR |  NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES | DR. ARADHNA MALIK

And this is something that I emphasize on when I am talking to my research students. Intensifiers are words such as very search, and quite are usually intended to intensify a statement, but of act to undermine its strength.

So, if you have to say something was important, you say it was very important, it was very very important. Why? If you have given some if you have put forth in logic and you say something was important the logic itself should convey that whatever you are saying was important. So, or you could say based on the data we can conclude we can satisfactorily conclude we can conclusively state. So, that is fine, but we can very conclusively state, we can very satisfactorily conclude. I mean, so all of these things are intensifiers you are trying to heighten the importance of whatever you are saying. However, the word the use of these intensifiers brings down the value of what you are saying because the reader will feel that if you are using these words; that means, that might be something missing from the argument itself. And when you are reading a research document you will feel the same thing.

People who tend to use or authors who tend to use these intensifiers are somehow their work might be not always, but in many cases the work that they are presenting may be lacking in some way or another. The argument itself may be lacking in some way or another. The logic may not be as sound the logic may not be as strong.

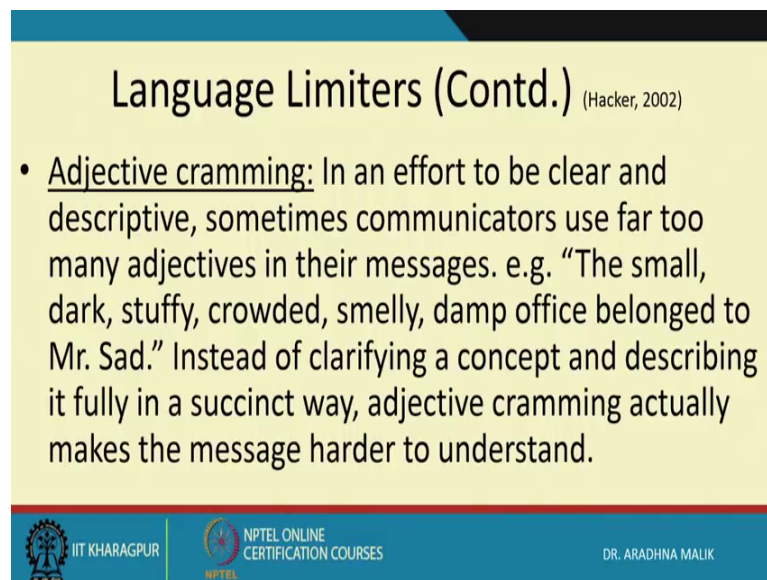
Qualifiers, qualifiers make the communicator sound insecure or negative. For example, I think, I guess, I believe, you know sort of, kind of, possibly, perhaps and the last one in my humble opinion, in my opinion, from the researchers point of view. That really qualifies that says that if you are reading something and you will have a different opinion; that means, that I cannot be blamed for it because in my opinion from my perspective I have found this. Now, that again brings down the importance of whatever is being said it makes the writer of a document sound insecure or negative when the person says in my opinion and if your logic is sound then whatever you are arriving at any good researcher doing this using the same methods that you are using will arrive at similar conclusions.

So, when we talk about these qualifiers; that means, we are somehow trying to again narrow down the credibility of or we feel that we say in my opinion we be saved because nobody can point a finger and say you arrived at a wrong conclusion you only say that



based on my ability I was only able to compute this much. So, when you see such statements when you see such phrases written in a research document you might want to reread what has been written and establish the work for whatever you are reading yourself.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:30)



The slide has a yellow background with a blue header and footer. The title 'Language Limiters (Contd.)' is in black, with '(Hacker, 2002)' in smaller text to its right. A single bullet point is listed on the slide. The footer contains three logos: IIT Kharagpur, NPTEL Online Certification Courses, and the name 'DR. ARADHNA MALIK'.

### Language Limiters (Contd.) (Hacker, 2002)

- Adjective cramming: In an effort to be clear and descriptive, sometimes communicators use far too many adjectives in their messages. e.g. “The small, dark, stuffy, crowded, smelly, damp office belonged to Mr. Sad.” Instead of clarifying a concept and describing it fully in a succinct way, adjective cramming actually makes the message harder to understand.

IIT KHARAGPUR | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES | DR. ARADHNA MALIK

Adjective cramming: In an effort to be clear and descriptive sometimes communicators use far too many adjectives in their messages. For example the small, dark, stuffy, crowded, smelly, damp office belongs to Mr Sad; obviously. Obviously if a room is so bad the person inside it cannot be other anything other than sad. So, you see this is adjective cramming. We tend to just put in all kinds of adjectives. Now, this we had V talked about communication styles, this kind of adjective cramming works very beautifully for any kind of speech at any event. There you must load your speech with lots of adjectives; however, when you are reading a research document, when you are reading, when you are looking for appropriateness of a research document such adjective cramming will bring down the worth of whatever it is that you are trying to say.

So, brevity crispness etcetera is of extreme importance when you are writing something and when you are reading something your attention to these things and your vigilance about such things will help you believe or may be swift out the non credible or the not so credible pieces of information. So, good information well presented information will not have such elements in it.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:15)

## Euphemisms (Hacker, 2002)

- “Undermine message goals by minimizing components of the message. They are positive terms to describe negative things. e.g. downsizing = firing employees.

Euphemisms have a tendency to backfire. They can fail to communicate important, if unwelcome, information. They can also give your reader the impression that you don’t appreciate the severity of the problem.”

IIT KHARAGPUR | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES | DR. ARADHNA MALIK

Euphemisms undermine message goals euphemisms are another category of words the undermine message goes by minimizing components of the message they are positive terms to describe negative things for example, downsizing, which means firing employees.

Now, again these are words that that make any statement sound politically correct, then not direct words. They have a tendency to backfire, they can fail to communicate important if unwelcome information. They can also give your reader the impression that you do not appreciate the severity of the problem. So, when you are reading a document that has euphemisms or that uses euphemisms then one must look at it with a very critical eye to see whether the rest of the information, supporting the claim made by the author is believable or not. So, this is one more thing that you need to pay attention to.

Now, this is where I would like to end the discussion on reading research documents and this takes us to the end of week 1. We will continue with more specifics about how you read literature reviews and how you know, how you actually get down to the nuts and bolts of getting your research documents together in the next in the classes, in the next week.

Thank you very much for listening.