

# Reading Definition

A complex ability to extract, or build, **meaning** from a text

*(Grabe)*

# Meaning

Is framed by syntax, semantics, and pragmatics

*(Morris)*

# L2 Reading: Cultural Information Mining

**Text Information Transmitted = Information received?**

## Meaning

- Syntax
- Semantics
- Pragmatics

## Knowledge

- New schemata of language, text and interpretation
- Discourse and culture-specific schemata
- Value orientations, logic
- Rhetorical patterns

## Cognition

- Memory
- Judgment
- Reasoning
- Decision making

# Russian Public Discourse: Distinguishable Types

<b>Dictatorial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Distanced from recipients</li><li>○ Minimal personal involvement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Preference of nouns over verbs</li><li>○ Prevalent replacement of notional verbs with the copula verb <b>быть</b>, with <b>являться</b>, <b>иметь место</b></li><li>○ Ubiquity of impersonal syntactic structures</li><li>○ Heavy, broken syntax</li><li>○ Limited vocabulary</li><li>○ Abundance of formulaic “bureaucratic speak”</li><li>○ Heavy use of nouns make discourse unintelligible</li></ul>
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# Russian Public Discourse: Distinguishable Types

<b>Totalitarian</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Suppression of individualism</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>The language of the collective trumping the individual</b></li><li>○ <b>High degree of metaphorization</b></li><li>○ <b>Belittling, pejorative lexicon to describe ideological opponents as political foes</b></li></ul>
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# Russian Public Discourse: Distinguishable Types

<b>Imperial, Nationalistic, Revanchist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Change of focus: marginal becomes mainstream</b></li><li>○ <b>Propensity to demean and dominate others</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Demeaning language goes mainstream</b></li><li>○ <b>Language replete with cultural attitudes of superiority and dominance, imperial overtones</b></li><li>○ <b>National irredentist terminology, aiming at reunifying the Russian nation in one state</b></li><li>○ <b>Patriotic overtones</b></li><li>○ <b>Geopolitical metaphors</b></li><li>○ <b>Language of violence and domination: Thinly veiled allusions</b></li></ul>
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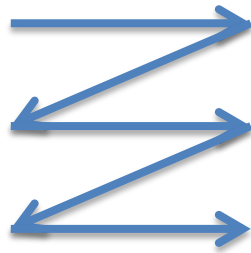
# High context vs. low context

Verbal expression style	Direct	Indirect
Verbal messages	Explicit	De-emphasized
Values	Self-expression, verbal fluency and eloquent speech	Harmony, ambiguous language, silence in interactions
Expression of opinions	Direct	Circular, around the point

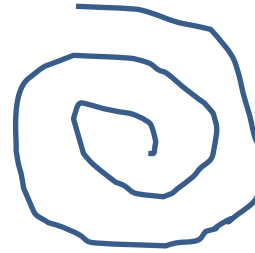
# Cultural Thought Patterns



English



Arabic/Semitic



Asian



Russian



# High context vs. low context

Logic per se is a cultural phenomenon

*(Kaplan)*

Different cultural patterns influence the ways of organizing thinking and writing

If Aristotle had been Mexican, his logic would have been different

*(Pierce)*

# Metaphorism

In this mode of thinking C does not logically follow B which is preceded by A. Things manifest themselves in a different light

No rigorous logic throughout a text

Metaphorical in the sense that not everything is spelled out. A lot is left for the reader to be interpreted

# Russian Metaphorism

Russian culture is a high-context culture, geared towards metaphorism: not everything needs to be said

The reader is implicitly advised to read between the lines

# Cultural Patterns

<p><b>Obliqueness, figurativeness, metaphorism</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Highly figurative discourse</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Ubiquitous Aesopian language</b></li><li>○ <b>Metaphorism as a way to blend realities and to invoke the discourse of foreign enemy</b></li><li>○ <b>Literary allusions</b></li><li>○ <b>Misnomers, ameliorations: enlightened patriotism = nationalism, sovereign democracy = autocracy, optimization = reduction, lay-offs</b></li></ul>
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# Cultural Pattern

<b>Affective reasoning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ In choosing arguments, preference is given to affective reasoning. Emotions trump logic - fact juggling</li><li>○ Broken causality</li><li>○ Betting on emotion, logical consistency is disregarded</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Form over content, eloquence to cover up for weak content</li><li>○ Strong, often marginal lexicon that would cover up for a very nebulous content</li><li>○ Denigration</li><li>○ Pejoration</li><li>○ Expressing diminution and derogation</li></ul>
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# Cultural Patterns

<b>Inarticulateness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>VOIDS in public speaking articulatory</b></li><li>○ <b>Noticeable logical inconsistencies</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Bureaucratic vernacular covers up for lack of articulatory</b></li><li>○ <b>Unextended vocabulary, deficient syntax</b></li></ul>
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# Culture and text

## **Structure of formal argumentative text in Russian:**

Freedom to digress

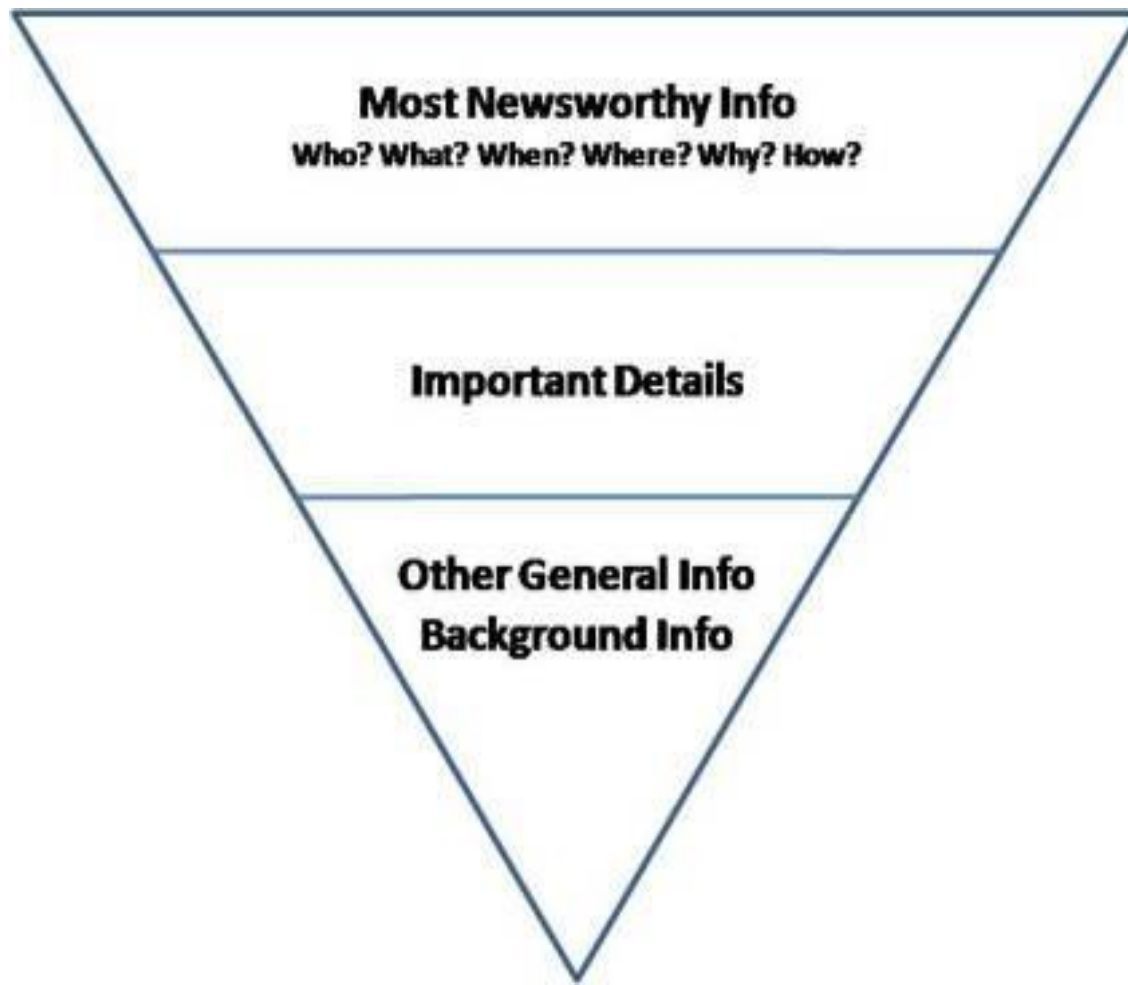
No need for logical consideration, for the truth is evident

Irrelevance - extraneous materials are often introduced (vs.

Gricean maxims)

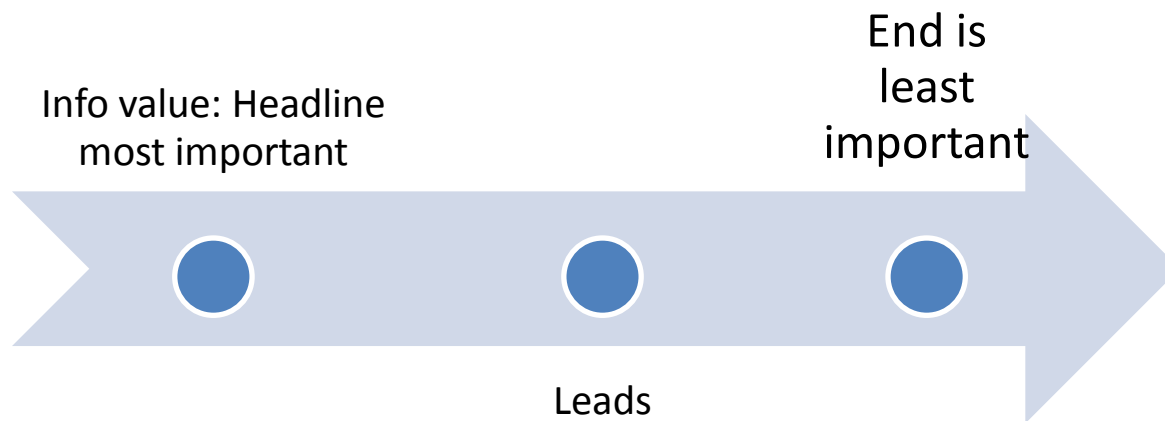
Reasoning pattern similar to deduction

# Factual text organization: predictable sequence





# Factual text organization: predictable sequence



# Op-ed: non linear, unpredictable



# Teaching Implications

## **Forewarn students that in L2 reading:**

Treatment of text could be puzzling

Text not respected

Main ideas are presented and developed differently

Genres, roles, expectations vary

Evidence, persuasion, new info organization and

introduction: different

Inferences unexpected

Balance of rational and emotional is skewed toward

emotional

Balance of implied vs. worded

# L2 Reading: Linguistic Information Mining

Information Transmitted = Information received?

## Meaning

- **Syntax**
- Semantics
- Pragmatics

## Knowledge

- The capacity to counter the effects of the surroundings and, in the case of more knowledgeable systems, to anticipate them

## Cognition

- Mental abilities and knowledge capabilities

# Syntax and reading comprehension

The relationship between reading comprehension and sentence processing as a prerequisite of reading comprehension has not been well addressed in reading research (Scott, 2009).

# Syntax or Semantics?

The existing research:

grammar overall has a comparable effect on L2 comprehension to that of lexical knowledge

syntactic knowledge remains one of the deciding factors in the performance on text reading comprehension (Barnett, 1986; Shiotsu and Weir, 2007).

# Syntax or Semantics?

Comprehension = semantically based comprehension  
heuristics + syntactic processing

# Sentence processing

Difficulties in understanding and processing syntax may be important reasons for reading failure (Krashen, 1981; Bentin, Deutsch, & Liberman, 1990).

## **Goal**

We seek to identify which cross-language sentence-level structural differences account for inhibited reading comprehension and to look into effective remedies to address them.



# L1-L2 Differences in Sentence Processing

The L2 processing is dominated by the shallow processing route

Clashen and Felser (2006), Dowens and Carreiras (2006) observed that adult L2 learners underuse syntactic information during sentence processing and instead rely more on lexical-semantic cues for interpretation.

# Cross Language Syntactic Parameters

	ENGLISH	RUSSIAN
Pro-drop?	Yes	Mixed
Proximity of S and V	Yes	No
Word order	SVO (VSO)	Any kind of scrambling
Head-complement directionality	Head initial	Mixed
Discontinuity	Frowned at	Welcomed

# Reading Implications

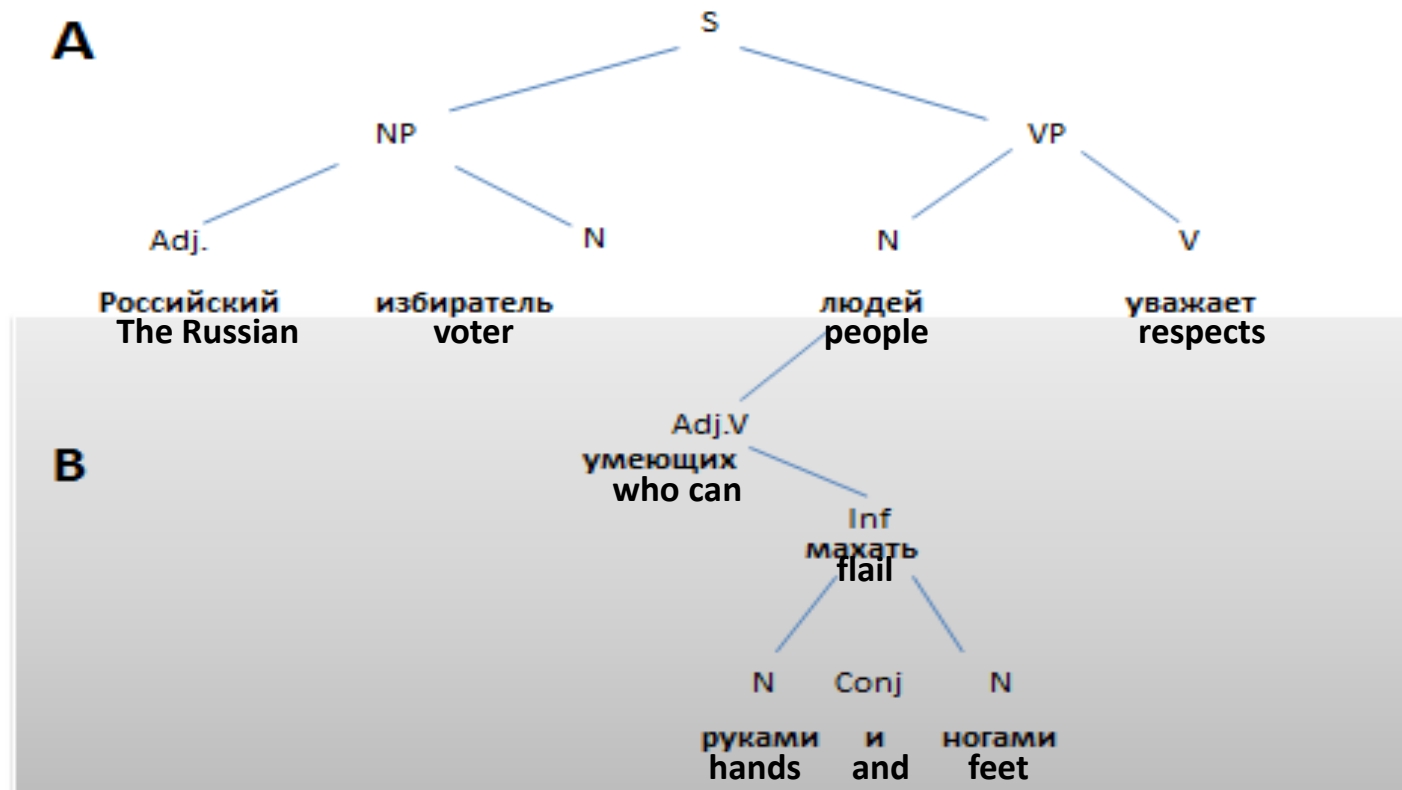
The incongruencies in the above parameters between L1 and L2 undermine the existing patterns of sentence processing and challenge/obstruct the semantic decoding

The mismatch of the parameters slows down reading speed, and acts as a hindering factor

# L2 Sentence Processing

The automaticity of grammatical, as opposed to lexical or semantic, processing is significantly reduced. (Sorace, 2005)

# Sentence Parsing



# Syntactic roadblocks

NP

VP

Но радикально менять экономический курс, отказываться  
от социализма, пусть и «с человеческим лицом», как  
говорили тогда, ради спасения Союза последнее  
СОВЕТСКОЕ ПОЛИТБЮРО не решилось.

*However, to change the economic course, to renounce the socialism, even the one with the human face to it as they would say at the time, – for the sake of saving the (Soviet) Union, - the last Soviet Politbureau did not summon enough courage.*

**Scrambling: O-S-V**

**2 Parenthetical phrases**

**Discontinuous constituents**

# Syntactic roadblocks

S



V



Попытки внедрить какие-то "образовательные стандарты, якобы почерпнутые из зарубежного опыта, а на самом деле продиктованные лишь банальным стремлением сэкономить на нищем образовании ещё больше, вселяют ужас уже перед ближайшим будущим, когда безграмотные люди станут руководить страной, поддерживать сохранившуюся инфраструктуру, управлять сложным импортным оборудованием и лечить людей.

*Attempts to implement some educational standards that are reportedly gleaned from best practices overseas, but are in fact prompted by an ordinary desire to save on education beyond any reasonable measure, instill the horror of the nearest future when illiterate people will run the country, maintain the existing infrastructure, operate the complex imported equipment and treat people.*

**Discontinuous S-V**  
**Extensive right branching**  
**Extensive homogeneity**

# Syntactic roadblocks

S



V



Советский Союз с кем хочет, с тем и граничит

*The Soviet Union borders on whoever it wants*

**SOV**

**Discontinuous S-V**

**Complex inverted object**



# Syntactic roadblocks

Без культуры, т.е. без высочайшего уровня образования – не всех, а тех, кто может и кому это нужно, - без науки, в том числе и прежде всего фундаментальной, а не только заточенной под военно-промышленный комплекс, без искусства, в том числе и нравящегося не всем, страна все больше и больше будет отставать от направления цивилизованного движения, развития мира

S

V

Heavy digressions  
Extended homogenous parts  
Right branching

# Syntactic roadblocks

Этот архетип настолько прочно сидит в национальном сознании, что даже **выжившие на самом деле** герои в легендах погибают.

*This archetype is so deeply rooted in the national psyche that even [**the indeed surviving**] heroes die according to legends.*

Социальная сфера — это не только гуманитарные ценности, но и **столь превозносимая нами** безопасность.

*The social sphere means not only the humanitarian values, but also **so lauded by us** security.*

**Left branching**

# Syntactic roadblocks VOS

**VOS**

**V**



**O**



**S**



**Внушает** большое **сомнение** и необходимость хранить все данные о владельцах карт в какой-то единой базе данных

*Casts big doubts the necessity to store card owner data in a single database*

# Syntactic Roadblocks

OVS

Ещё шесть беспилотников перехватили российские подразделения радиоэлектронной борьбы.

Талант договариваться вытеснило умение демонстрировать силу.

Российские военные объекты в Сирии атаковали беспилотники самолетного типа с наведением по GPS.

Последний гвоздь в гроб советской империи вбил антигорбачевский путч 19 августа 1991 года

# Remedial Action in L2 Reading Instruction

Given the preexisting imbalance between semantic and syntactic processing in L2 readers, effective instruction aimed at rebalancing of L2 sentence processing routines should be launched

Syntactic analysis as part of the structured instruction

We suggest that syntactic analysis be elevated to the level of structured instruction whereby typological L1-L2 differences should be accounted for, detailed and enshrined/reflected in a set of pre-reading exercises.

The full parsing (is under-used in L2 processing)

# Remedial Action in L2 Reading Instruction

To wean readers off their proclivity to shallow language processing, semantically reiterative, but syntactically probabilistic set of reading exercises should be created to cover a diversity of syntactic cross language incongruencies.

# Instructional Implications

Before starting a reading course or designing a reading syllabus contrastive analysis is recommended.

Teaching and practicing the phrasal structure in both L1 and L2 and comparing it with the clause structure in the two languages is one technique that can be adopted

# Instructional Implications

Repeated reading that encourages quick, automatic structure recognition can result in a restructuring of cognitive processing

L2 reading instruction should pursue instilling in readers the competence of essential sentence elements and training the techniques of their local or distal search throughout the sentence based on inflections bearing markers of gender, number and case.



# Instructional Implications

Teachers and L2 learners should not view translation as "an undesirable habit to be discouraged at all costs but, rather, an important developmental aspect of L2 comprehension processes.

The reason why L2 readers rely on translation as part of their developmental L2 comprehension process (see Kern, 1992) could be the complexity arising from the mismatch of the parameters

# Comprehension as a function of redundancy

L2 Information source. What should it be?

	R (in per cent)	
	Russian Language	French Language
Language at large	72.6	70.6
Conversational language	72.0	68.4
Literary texts	76.2	71.0
Various Business texts	83.4	73.4