

The Purposes of Talk

Looking at extracts from 'Blood Brothers' and 'An Inspector Calls'

It's all TRIPE

Generally there are a range of purposes for our discourse, both in fiction and non-fiction. Below are some different types of discourse we can identify:

T - transactional i.e. exchanges where there is a negotiation.

R - referential i.e. providing information.

I - interactional i.e. the main aim is socialisation.

P - phatic i.e. small talk, devoid of serious intent.

E - expressive i.e. conveying or describing feelings.

Task 1: write our own examples of each purpose of speech. E.g. phatic discourse - talking about the weather. Add where and who might have these types of conversations.

Task 2: conduct a mini-investigation around the purpose of real-life talk.

Mini-investigation tasks:

1. Record a conversation between two or more people in your household.
2. Write a transcript of what was said - use the key below to show pauses etc.
3. Identify what the purpose of the talk is using TRIPE to help you.
4. Identify language techniques used (e.g. rhetorical questions) and explain what these techniques add to the discourse.
5. Explain why the pauses and lengths of pause are significant. Consider how meaning might be altered if they were in different places.

Key: (.) indicates a brief pause.

Numbers within brackets indicate length of pause in seconds.

Words between vertical lines are spoken simultaneously.

Other contextual information is in *italics* in square brackets.

Task 3: write a short explanation of your chosen purpose of speech.

Things to include:

1. An explanation of your chosen purpose of speech. Examples of it in everyday life.
2. A short summary of your transcript, including context of the conversation and the people involved.
3. Discussion of the language techniques used and why they are used.
4. Discussion of the pauses - consider the placement of them, the length of them and why this might be significant.
5. Overall, what stands out about this purpose of talk?

Consider purposes of talk in drama.

We will start applying our knowledge of purposes of talk to drama texts: 'Blood Brothers' and 'An Inspector Calls', respectively.

'Blood Brothers' tasks: identify the purpose of talk on slide 7. How does this purpose of talk add to the narrative? (How does it move the plot, the characterisation the themes forward?)

'An Inspector Calls' tasks: identify the purpose of talk on slide 8. Edit and add pauses, simultaneous speech and context as you go through the text where be appropriate.

Blood Brothers: Mrs. Lyons, is trying to persuade Mrs. Johnstone to give up one of her twins to her, as Mrs. Lyons is unable to have children.

Mrs. Lyons: (5) Give one to me.

Mrs. Johnstone: (2) What?

Mrs. Lyons: Give one of them to me.

Mrs. Johnstone: (3) Give one to you?

Mrs. Lyons: Yes...(.) yes.

Mrs. Johnstone: But y' can't just...

Mrs. Lyons: When are you due?

Mrs. Johnstone: Erm, (.) well, (3.) about...Oh, but Mrs...

Mrs. Lyons: Quickly, quickly, tell me...when are you due?

Key: (.) indicates a brief pause.

Numbers within brackets indicate length of pause in seconds.

Words between vertical lines are spoken simultaneously.

Other contextual information is in italics in square brackets.

An Inspector Calls: Sheila says she believes the Inspector already knows about Gerald's relationship with Eva, the woman's death he is investigating. Gerald tries to hide this by accusing Sheila of being 'hysterical'.

Inspector: (To Gerald) Well?

Sheila: (with hysterical laugh to Gerald) You see? What did I tell you?

Gerald: Inspector, I think Miss Birling ought to be excused any more of this questioning. She's nothing more to tell you. She's had a long, exciting and tiring day - we were celebrating our engagement you know - and now she's obviously had about as much as she can stand. You heard her.

Sheila: He means that I'm getting hysterical now.

Inspector: And are you?

Sheila: Probably.

Key: (.) indicates a brief pause.

Numbers within brackets indicate length of pause in seconds.

Words between vertical lines are spoken simultaneously.

Other contextual information is in italics in square brackets.

Final thoughts

Write a short summative paragraph about what you've learnt about the purposes of talk. Consider:

What techniques might be suitable for different purposes.

How pauses, context, simultaneous talk might be appropriate.

How playwrights mimic real-life talk in their performances.

Whether some purposes of talk are suitable for use in drama texts.