

Cascades

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Abstract

An intentional action of a human agent often constitutes events at different levels of conception. A classic example is Austin's theory of speech acts. According to Austin, any speech act is an act at (at least) three levels: locution (saying what one says), illocution (a type of speech act), and perlocution (the causing by the speaker of a certain effect). These three acts are not simultaneous, i.e. in parallel, but they are carried out in one. We introduce the notion of 'cascade' for this type of stratified representation of acts: a cascade consists in the in-one enacting of several acts at related levels of (inter)action. The notion of cascade can build not only on Austin's example of speech acts, but in particular on Goldman's (1970) work on "level-generation", and on Clark's (1996) notion of "action ladders": the elements of a cascade are connected by the lower ones level-generating the higher ones; and cascades are underlying what Clark calls action ladders.

Analyzing certain types of actions as cascades opens new perspectives for the conceptual analysis of verb meanings. (1) Many action verb meanings are defined at higher levels of a cascade, leaving open the deeper levels of concrete implementation; for example, the meaning of *help* leaves open what the concrete help consists in. (2) Modification can be analyzed as applying at different levels of a cascade (see also the talk by Andersen&Gabrovska).

Cascades will be modeled as frames according to the Düsseldorf Frame Theory.

From philosophical perspectives, the cascade model of human action will be related to reasoning (cascades providing basic sorts of inference), planning, and social interaction – an aspect of stratified joint action of central concern in Clark (1996).

Austin, John L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clark, Herbert H. (1996). *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldman, Alvin A. (1970). *A Theory of Human Action*. London: Prentice-Hall.