## Habits of Interpretation – audio transcript

Habits of interpretation. Habits of interpretation might be the trickiest of the four elements of a discourse community. It's a function where people from different discourse communities could look at exactly the same word, exactly the same speech, even exactly the same punctuation and interpret it differently because they're informed all the rules and assumptions of their separate discourse communities. I'm going to tell you a story about someone from your generation and someone from my generation. Imagine someone's just graduated from USF in his first big job at a corporation, super excited. He's got his first big chance to do a big presentation to the client. His boss, who's 55 years old, says, this is a big chance for you to make an impression on the client. If you do well with this presentation, you might even get a promotion. So the new employee works on his slides and sends them to the boss. It's Friday. The presentation is Monday. Boss doesn't respond. So the new employee texts the boss. Did you look at my slides? Do you think they're ready for Monday? The big boss, 55-year-old, texts back, saw your slides, see you Monday, dot, dot, dot. The new employee freaks out, worries all weekend, spends the entire weekend worrying that not only is he not gonna get the promotion, that he might in fact get fired. Whereas the big boss thinks, I just told my employee, see you Monday, dot, dot, dot. I mean, you know, to be continued, relax, take it easy, your slides are fine. Whereas the new employee interpreted that ellipses, those three dots, as you're a complete idiot and I'm giving you total sarcasm because I don't think you're worthy of even working at this company. So we're looking at the same piece of punctuation, three little dots, but two different people have a habit of interpreting those three dots differently. I love the ellipses. I use them all the time. I text them to my daughter and she thinks I'm criticizing her. I just mean to be continued. She thinks I mean you're an idiot. Those are two different habits of interpretation formed by two different discourse communities. In this case, the discourse communities have to do with generation or age.