

# Indirect Speech Acts

## An Expansion of Week 7's Handout

### Intention & Acts of Meaning Seminar

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#### 1 Saying vs. Implicating: The Constitutive Question

- Saying  $p$  and implicating  $p$  are both ways of meaning  $p$ , and so one cannot do either of the former without doing the latter.
- Lots of people have misinterpreted or disregarded Grice on this point (for a book-length example, see Davis 1998).
- But it's not just an exegetical issue; it's important!
  - Saying and implicating are both acts by way of which a speaker can communicate with an addressee.
  - So if we think that m-intentions do important work in explaining human communication, we need both saying and implicating to be grounded in m-intentions.
  - By contrast, if you read implications into my speech act that I genuinely didn't intend (even unconsciously), then we haven't thereby communicated. You've either misinterpreted me or you've otherwise inferred something about me that I wasn't trying to communicate.

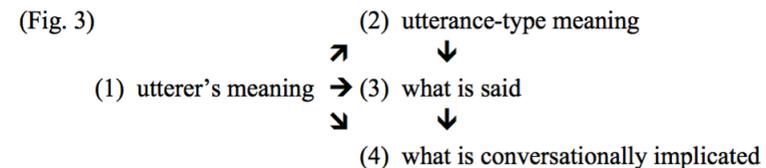
This raises the question:

- Assuming a speaker has meant  $p$  in uttering  $x$ , what makes it the case that this act of meaning was an act of saying vs. an act of implicating?

Grice is not totally clear on the issue, but Neale (1992) reconstructs his view as follows:

- Saying  $p$  requires both (a) meaning that  $p$  and (b) using an utterance-type that means something "closely related" to  $p$ . (See (Grice, 1989, 86–88))
- Implicating  $p$  requires (a) meaning that  $p$  and (b) neither saying nor conventionally implicating that  $p$ .

Neale therefore maps out Grice's hierarchy of concepts as follows ("where ' $\alpha \rightarrow \beta$ ' is understood as ' $\alpha$  (or its analysis) plays a role in the analysis of  $\beta$  (but not vice versa)'"):



This way of setting things up leads to some problems:

- It seems like we might want to draw something similar to the saying/implicating distinction even when the utterer is not using a meaningful utterance type. (E.g., conspicuously faking a yawn at a party in order to *directly* inform a friend that you're bored and *indirectly* inform them that it's time for the next party.) This is not possible on the proposed way of analyzing things.
- As Grice's own struggles demonstrate, it's not easy to cash out the phrase "closely related" in Grice's explication of saying.
- There are problems with explicating utterance-type meaning directly in terms of speaker meaning (i.e., because there are some phrases, like 'can you pass the salt', that we almost never use literally). So it would be nice to be able to invoke saying in our explication of utterance-type meaning.

One way to solve these problems: explicate saying and implicating directly in terms of different kinds of m-intentions ("direct" vs. "indirect" speaker meaning). Then explicate utterance-type meaning in terms of saying only. We'll explore this idea in later weeks.

A slightly different option, which I am tempted by: what makes a case of speaker meaning direct or indirect is its position within a broader communicative plan. Here is the sort of communicative plan someone would have to have in order to say  $p$  and thereby implicate  $q$ :

#### Saying $p$ and thereby Implicating $q$

The fact that  $U$  said  $p$  and thereby implicated  $q$  in addressing an utterance  $x$  to a  $A$  is grounded in the fact that  $U$  uttered  $x$  intending:

- (1) (SAYING  $p$ )
  - (i)  $A$  to believe  $p$ ;
  - (ii)  $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (1i);
  - (iii)  $A$  to fulfill (1i) on the basis of his fulfillment of (1ii);

- (2) (IMPLICATING  $q$ )
  - (i)  $A$  to form a belief that  $q$ ;
  - (ii)  $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (2i);
  - (iii)  $A$  to fulfill (2i) on the basis of his fulfillment of (2ii); and
- (3) (INDIRECTNESS CONDITION)  
 $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (2i) partly on the basis of his recognition of  $U$ 's intention (1i);

This doesn't quite entail definitions of saying and implicating, but it suggests the following ones:<sup>1</sup>

#### Saying $p$ (Directly Meaning that $p$ )

$U$  said  $p$  in addressing an utterance of  $x$  to  $A$  iff:

- (i)  $U$  meant  $p$  by uttering  $x$  (i.e.,  $U$  uttered  $x$  with an m-intention for  $A$  to believe that  $p$ );
- (ii) There is no  $q$  such that (a)  $U$  meant  $q$  by uttering  $x$  and (b)  $U$  uttered  $x$  intending  $A$  to recognize  $S$ 's intention for  $A$  to believe  $p$  on the basis of recognizing  $S$ 's intention for  $A$  to believe  $q$ .

#### Implicating $p$ (Indirectly Meaning that $p$ )

$U$  implicated  $p$  in addressing an utterance of  $x$  to  $A$  iff:

- (i)  $U$  meant  $p$  by uttering  $x$  (i.e.,  $U$  uttered  $x$  with an m-intention for  $A$  to believe that  $p$ );
- (ii) There is some  $q$  such that (a)  $U$  meant  $q$  by uttering  $x$  and (b)  $U$  uttered  $x$  intending  $A$  to recognize  $S$ 's intention for  $A$  to believe  $p$  on the basis of recognizing  $S$ 's intention for  $A$  to believe  $q$ .

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<sup>1</sup>Please note that although I've cooked up these definitions myself, they implement a general strategy of "total intentionalism" that Neale has advocated in various past work. Although most of Neale's work on the topic is unpublished, the idea has in places shown up in print Neale (2004). Neale's current position is less clear.

## 2 Making as if

Grice distinguished between saying and making as if to say. This is an important distinction! After all: if I merely make as if to say  $p$ , then I don't mean  $p$ , and if you take me to have meant  $p$ , that will count as miscommunication rather than communication.

Grice is clear that his notion of saying is a technical one that has to earn its usefulness by playing a role in a theory of meaning and communication. The reason that saying implies meaning, and the reason why Grice insists on distinguishing saying from making as if to say, is that these two notions play very different theoretical roles. One can communicate  $p$  by saying  $p$ , but not by making as if to say  $p$ . And so, although Grice's terminology is not important (it seems to have led many people astray), the distinction he was aiming at is important.

What is making as if to say? Here's a first try at a definition:

### **Making as if to say $p$**

The fact that  $U$  made as if to say  $p$  in addressing an utterance  $x$  to a  $A$  is grounded in the fact that  $U$  uttered  $x$  intending:

- (1) (MAKING AS IF TO SAY  $p$ )
  - (i)  $A$  to entertain and reject the possibility that  $S$  intended  $A$  to believe  $p$ ;
  - (ii)  $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (1i);
  - (iii)  $A$  to fulfill (1i) on the basis of his fulfillment of (1ii);

Normally, we make as if to say something in order to indirectly mean something else. Indeed, all of Grice's examples have this quality: making as if to say is something one does in order to implicate something.

Here's how that would go:

### **Making as if to say $p$ , and thereby implicating $q$**

The fact that  $U$  made as if to say  $p$  and thereby implicated  $q$  in addressing an utterance  $x$  to a  $A$  is grounded in the fact that  $U$  uttered  $x$  intending:

- (1) (MAKING AS IF TO SAY  $p$ )
  - (i)  $A$  to entertain and reject the possibility that  $S$  intended  $A$  to believe  $p$ ;
  - (ii)  $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (1i);
  - (iii)  $A$  to fulfill (1i) on the basis of his fulfillment of (1ii);
- (2) (IMPLICATING  $q$ )
  - (i)  $A$  to form a belief that  $q$ ;
  - (ii)  $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (2i);
  - (iii)  $A$  to fulfill (2i) on the basis of his fulfillment of (2ii); and
- (3) (INDIRECTNESS CONDITION)  
 $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (2i) partly on the basis of his recognition of  $U$ 's intention (1i);

Of course, we can easily generalize this definition of making as if to say to definitions of making as if to perform other speech acts. In requesting some salt by uttering 'can you pass the salt?', for example, I am making as if to ask whether you can pass the salt in order to indirectly request for you to pass the salt. The m-intended effect of making as if to ask whether  $A$  can  $\psi$  is that  $A$  entertain and reject the possibility that  $S$  intends for  $A$  to say whether  $A$  can  $\psi$ .

Moreover, we can also make as if to implicate. (I'll give an example below.)

So what we *really* need to cover all these cases is a general definition of making as if to mean something. So, here's that:

### **Making as if to mean something**

The fact that  $U$  made as if to mean something in addressing an utterance  $x$  to a  $A$  is grounded in the fact that  $U$  uttered  $x$  intending:

- (i)  $A$  to entertain and reject the possibility that  $S$  intended to produce a certain response,  $r$ , in  $A$ ;
- (ii)  $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (1i);
- (iii)  $A$  to fulfill (1i) on the basis of his fulfillment of (1ii);

Suppose communicative acts of  $\phi$ ing are grounded in m-intentions to produce tokens of  $r$ . Then acts of making as if to  $\phi$  are grounded in m-intentions to produce states of entertaining and rejecting the possibility that one intends to produce  $r$ . An act of making as if to  $\phi$  can be either direct or indirect, depending on how it fits into the speaker's overall communicative plan.

### 3 Some Advantages of this Account

#### The Centrality of Speaker Meaning

Speaker meaning is explanatorily basic: both 'U said  $p$ ' and 'U implicated  $p$ ' are defined in terms of 'U meant  $p$ ' (although both could also be defined directly in terms of the intentions that define 'U meant  $p$ ').

Both saying  $p$  and implicating  $p$  are special cases of meaning  $p$ . Specifically, 'U said  $p$ ' and 'U implicated  $p$ ' both entail 'U meant  $p$ '.

Still, there is a clear sense in which implicating is something one does by meaning something else, and normally by saying something else.

#### Degrees of Indirectness

These definitions also allow for the possibility of implicating  $q$  by saying  $p$ , and further implicating  $r$  by implicating  $q$ . That is, it allows for meaning that is indirect by more than one degree.

Again, this is a good thing. For example, it's possible to implicate  $q$  by saying  $p$ , but to be sarcastic about  $q$ .

1. A: How do you like working with Smith?  
B: Oh, I've been getting to work early *just* to see him.

By his utterance, B means that he doesn't like working with Smith. But how does he get this across? Plausibly, he does so by (i) saying (or making as if to say) that he has been getting to work early just to see Smith, and thereby (ii) making as if

to implicate that he likes working with Smith, and thereby (iii) implicating that he doesn't like working with Smith.

There's nothing about Grice's theory of implicature that is incompatible with this, but his definition of implicature collapses the asymmetry between (ii) and (iii). He has the resources to distinguish saying from implicating (because saying must fit with the meaning of the utterance-type used), but Grice has no way to distinguish between different degrees of indirectness.

#### Theoretical Application

Since these definitions don't define saying in terms of utterance-type meaning, they give us the option of defining utterance-type meaning in terms of saying (as opposed to speaker meaning more generally). This makes the prospect of grounding utterance-type meaning in facts about speakers' intentions much more likely to succeed. (This is just a promissory note for now.)

#### Non-Linguistic Saying and Implicating

These definitions predict that it should be possible to say  $p$  and thereby implicate  $q$  without using an utterance-type that is meaningful. This seems right. Consider Neale's example of producing an obviously fake yawn, thereby directly meaning that you're tired, and indirectly meaning that you want your guests to leave.

#### Saying $p$ with a Sentence whose meaning doesn't "match" $p$

These definitions allow for the possibility of saying (/directly meaning)  $p$  by uttering a sentence whose meaning doesn't "match"  $p$  (in any interesting sense of "match"). This seems to me to be a feature rather than a bug, mainly because of how it handles malapropism, misspeaking, and certain, seemingly direct, cases of metaphor:

- **Malapropism/Misspeaking**

Yogi Berra once uttered

2. Texas has a lot of electrical votes

m-intending his audience to believe *that Texas has a lot of electoral votes* (call this proposition ‘*p*’). We have independent motivation for thinking that Berra meant *p* by uttering 2. After all: a hearer who takes Berra to have meant *p* will have correctly understood him, and communication will have thereby succeeded. But it’s far from clear that Berra’s act of meaning should count as a conversational implicature. There’s a sense in which his act of meaning is cancellable (he could follow with ‘and I mean *electrical*, not *electoral*’, but this seems importantly different than the usual kind of cancellation). There’s a sense in which what he meant is calculable, but again, this seems very different than the cases of calculability that Grice gives (there is no sense in which Yogi was intentionally flouting any maxims, for example). What Berra meant is not non-detachable (and yet it seems strange to call his act of meaning a manner implicature). So this is a case of meaning *p* but not implicating *p*. Barring the invention of some further category, that makes it an act of saying *p*.

- **Metaphor**

Suppose that Romeo says

3. Juliet is the sun

intending Mercutio to believe *that Juliet is the most beautiful and important woman in the world* (call this proposition ‘*p*’). Now suppose that Mercutio responds by uttering one of the following:

4. (i.) No, that’s false: *Tybalt* is the sun. Juliet’s nothing but a candle!.
- (ii.) No, you’re wrong: *Tybalt* is the sun. Juliet’s nothing but a candle!.
- (iii.) What you say is false: *Tybalt* is the sun. Juliet’s nothing but a candle!.

Propositional anaphors, like ‘no’ and the occurrence of ‘that’ in Mercutio’s ‘that’s false’ can normally only be used to target what is said, as opposed to what’s implicated. Consider any of Grice’s examples of conversational implicature, for example. Here’s the gas station case:

5. (i) A: I need gas.

(ii) B: There’s a gas station around the corner.

(iii) A: # No, that’s false: it’s closed.

(iv) A: # No, you’re wrong: it’s closed.

(v) A: # No, what you’ve said is [false/wrong]: that gas station is closed.

(The same goes for other clear cases of implicature.) This gives us a reason to think that at least some cases of metaphorical meaning, including 3, are not cases of implicature.<sup>2</sup> But if so, then these are cases in which one can say (/directly mean) *p* by uttering a sentence that doesn’t match *p*.

## 4 Objections and Replies

An objection raised by Neale, first in class and then by email: “It’s not clear how your account precludes something that Griceans want to preclude: *S* simultaneously saying and conversationally implicating that *p* by uttering *x*. For better or worse they hold that any proposition entailed by what’s said is part of what’s said and not part of what’s conversationally implicated.”

I am quite tempted to say that that’s an invalid concern, and that there are cases in which it’s very natural to say that someone has implicated something that’s entailed by what they said. The clearest cases are ones in which it’s not obvious, to everyone involved, that the entailment holds.

For example, suppose that a logic student asks their professor whether ‘If  $\phi$  then (If  $\psi$  then  $\phi$ )’ is a tautology. Here are a couple of ways that the professor might respond (maybe in an exasperated voice):

2. (A) Well, we’re not relevance logicians around here!

(B) Well, conditional proof is a valid inference rule and conditionals with true consequents are true, so I think the answer should be obvious!

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<sup>2</sup>Others have also argued that metaphorical meaning can be direct: Camp, Sperber, Wilson, Carston, etc.

These both strike me as ways in which the professor could implicate that ‘If  $\phi$  then (If  $\psi$  then  $\phi$ )’ is a tautology. But of course (assuming classical logic), the fact that it is a tautology follows from either (2A) or (2B) (or, for that matter, anything else he could have said).

These seem like prima facie solid examples of implicating  $q$  by saying  $p$  when  $p$  entails  $q$ . More generally, it would seem a peculiar and unwanted consequence of Grice’s theory that it is impossible to ever implicate a tautology, even in cases when neither speaker nor hearer realize that the thing being implicated is a tautology. Why should the logical status of  $p$  affect the mechanisms by which speakers can communicate  $p$ ?

It seems to me that it is possible to say  $p$  without meaning  $p$ . For example, I can say that he’s a fine friend by uttering ‘he’s a fine friend’ even if I’m being ironic and so don’t mean it.

In effect, this is the suggestion that Grice’s *saying/making as if to say* distinction should be given up, and that we should call both kinds of act ‘saying’. But as I argued above, the distinction is theoretically motivated.

Also, your intuitions probably track something other than the notion we’re interested in. The English word ‘say’ is polysemous: sometimes it’s a device of direct quotation (tracking the sentence-type, roughly) and sometimes it’s a device of indirect quotation (tracking the proposition expressed, roughly). But I think we suck at keeping these separate. Or maybe the English verb ‘say’ is actually never completely a device of indirect quotation; maybe there’s always a bit of direct quotation involved. Whatever the source of our intuitions about ‘say’, we shouldn’t let them run the show (For more hating on your intuitions about ‘saying’, keep reading.)

It just sounds wrong to describe Yogi Berra as saying that Texas has a lot of electoral votes when what he uttered was ‘Texas has a lot of electrical votes’. And it just sounds wrong to describe someone as saying that  $p$  when all they did was fake a yawn. And in general, it sounds wrong to describe someone as saying  $p$  when they don’t use a Etc.

Reminder: this use of ‘saying’ is technical. We’re trying to come up with a theory of communication here, not analyzing concepts. Screw your dumb intuitions!

Oh but I really like my intuitions about saying. Can’t I keep them?

Sure, whatever you prefer, you wanton intuition monger. Instead of talking about ‘saying’ and ‘implicating’, I’ll just talk about ‘d-meaning’ and ‘i-meaning’ instead. I bet you don’t have any intuitions to monger about those.

But what are my intuitions about saying about then? They seem important, at least to me.

Hard to say. Intuitions about saying are a big mess, and I think it’s unlikely that they’re tracking any theoretically unified notion. (See, for example, Cappelen and Lepore (2005).)

Maybe we could suitably regiment your intuitions about ‘saying  $p$ ’ so that it would refer to acts of d-meaning  $p$  performed by uttering the right kind of sentence. Just to be clear about what we’re talking about, let’s call this stipulated notion saying\*. On this view, saying\*  $p$  is d-meaning  $p$  by uttering a sentence whose semantic value is a property of  $p$ . This is (roughly) what Grice takes saying (in his technical sense) to be (1989, 88).

So have I been wrong about everything? Is saying saying\*?

Let’s remind ourselves that what’s important in all this is not figuring out what saying is, in any ordinary sense of the word! What’s important is isolating a notion that will do as much explanatory work for us as possible. That notion is d-meaning. The concept of saying\* we’ve just come up with to track your intuitions is a lot less useful in the theories of meaning and communication than the notion of d-meaning. Saying\* is not a natural kind, it yields less empirical generality when it comes to the

mechanisms underlying communication, and it will get in the way of an account of utterance-type meaning. At the very least, we need to theorize about *both* d-meaning and saying\*, and saying\* is just a less theoretically interesting special case of d-meaning.

Devitt's 2013 Objection to Neale (as remembered by Neale): "Nothing can count as what the speaker said in uttering X unless it fits the linguistic meaning of X. Without that you miss what's special about what's said: the commitment to content that comes through using words with their conventional meaning. On your account, that got out of the window. I thought you wanted what's said by a statute, for example, to depend upon the makings of the words used."

Intuitions about what "can count as saying" aside, I understand you to be arguing that saying\* is actually pretty theoretically interesting after all. You're arguing that saying\* is special because it has a normative property that any old case of d-meaning doesn't. Namely: saying\* *p* commits the speaker to something in a way that other ways of d-meaning don't. (What exactly does saying *p* commit the speaker to, by the way? (Neale's recollection of) Devitt doesn't say. Maybe someone who says\* *p* has committed themselves to believing *p*? Or maybe they've committed themselves to having a justified belief in *p*? Or maybe they've committed themselves to a true, justified belief in *p*? Perhaps we can take Williamson's (2000) arguments for the knowledge norm of assertion to be evidence that saying\* *p* commits the speaker to knowing *p*, in the sense that the speaker can be justifiably criticized for saying\* *p* if they don't count as knowing *p*.)

But Commitment of this kind is not *sufficient* for saying\* *p* because someone can commit themselves to *p* without uttering a sentence whose semantic value is a property of *p*. For example: suppose that Teacher thinks that Bobby knows who cheated on the test, and says, 'Bobby, who cheated on the test?' Bobby responds by pointing to Linda, thereby m-intending Teacher to believe that Linda cheated. Suppose it is later discovered that either (a) Bobby was wrong, or (b) he believed Linda had cheated, and his belief turned out to be true but totally unjustified, or (c) he didn't even believe that Linda had cheated, and was either lying or pointed at her on a whim. In any of these cases, Bobby could be justifiably criticized in much the same way as if he had said\* 'Linda cheated on the test'. But Bobby didn't say\* that.

Is undertaking a commitment of this kind *necessary* for saying\* *p*? I suppose so, but I think that every case of meaning *p* is as well. Or at least, this is what is predicted by the maxim of quality, which says that we shouldn't make a contribution that is

false or for which we lack justification. In particular: d-meaning  $p$  always requires undertaking a commitment to  $p$ , since doing otherwise would be uncooperative.

Of course, it may be that saying\*  $p$  involves an even stronger commitment to  $p$  than other ways of speaker meaning  $p$ , or at least it might be harder to weasel out of a commitment that one has undertaken by saying\*  $p$ . Why would this be?

The answer to this question, it seems to me, is that when one says\*  $p$ , one gives extremely precise and unambiguous evidence that one means  $p$ . (This is the whole point of saying\*—see my answer to the next question.) It's harder to weasel out of commitments undertaken in precise and unambiguous ways, because everyone is much more sure that you've undertaken them. And for the same reason, precisely and unambiguously undertaken commitments are often more binding, since it will be more likely that others' expectations and plans will be formed around them, and the frustration of these expectations and plans are one important source of the normative force behind commitment.

Schiffer's 2013 objection (as remembered by Neale): "How are you going to explain the fact that there are all sorts of complex things we can say that we cannot d-mean without saying, like the contents of counterfactuals, the contents of complex scientific statements, statements about the aesthetic properties of late 14th century Italian poetry? You can't even explain why the aetiological constraints on the formation of communicative intentions accompanying a particular utterance of sentence B have the properties they do without appealing to X's linguistic meaning. And if you could, the linguistic meaning of a sentence wouldn't be doing for us what it actually does do for us: clue us in on the speaker's communicative intentions by virtue of specifying a property that a proposition must have in order to be the content of that part of what the speaker meant that the speaker d-meant and which can serve as the basis for working out what the speaker i-meant. If you can't extract a notion of what S says by uttering X on a given occasion that isn't a proposition whose content that is constitutively constrained by the linguistic meaning of x, what's the point (or even the sense) in saying that the meaning of X is a property that a proposition must have in order to be the content of what S is saying in uttering X?"

Why do we choose to say things rather than non-linguistically d-mean them? The answer is painfully obvious: we produce utterances in order to give evidence of the m-intentions with which we speak. By uttering a meaningful sentence, we give extremely rich and precise evidence. Indeed, there is almost never any other way to give such rich evidence of one's intentions to one's addressee. That shouldn't be too surprising: natural language is an incredibly complex system that is purpose-built for this exact task, after all! Without it, we have to rely on whatever we have at hand.

By using language, then, I get several things:

- If I use a sentence (as opposed to some hand-waving) to give you evidence of my intentions, then you will be much more likely to figure out what my intentions are. This becomes increasingly the case as my intentions become increasingly complex.
- I know that it's very unlikely for you to recognize complex m-intentions if I don't give you rich evidence about them. But since intending for you to rec-

ognize them is part of having them, I can't (rationally) have them if I think it's impossible or extremely unlikely for you to recognize them. So there are many things that, for practical purposes, I can't mean unless I do so by producing a linguistic utterance.

- Does this show that there are whole categories of propositions that I can't mean unless I say\* them? I don't think so. In the right circumstances, I might be able to communicate a counterfactual nonlinguistically.
  - Suppose you're traveling in a foreign country with your partner, who has gone to bed, leaving you in the hotel bar with a bunch of people who don't speak English. Someone offers you a drink. Is it really impossible to communicate that *if your partner were here, they would not approve*? I don't think so.
  - As the example about Yogi Berra from earlier shows, is possible to communicate the proposition that Texas has a lot of electoral college votes without saying\* that Texas has a lot of electoral college votes. Indeed, for any sentence *s* and any proposition *p* that can be said by uttering *s*, I bet we can imagine a scenario in which someone means *p* (but does not say *p*) by uttering a sentence *s\** that is a malaprop-variant of *s*.

This brings us to the second half of Schiffer's objection:

And if you could [give examples like the ones just given], the linguistic meaning of a sentence wouldn't be doing for us what it actually does do for us: clue us in on the speaker's communicative intentions by virtue of specifying a property that a proposition **must** have in order to be the content of that part of what the speaker ...d-meant and which can serve as the basis for working out what the speaker i-meant.

I have bold-faced 'must' here because I want to call attention to it. I think it's too strong. In using a sentence *s* to mean *p*, I can sometimes d-mean *p* without saying\* *p*, and without meaning any proposition of the type that is the semantic value of *s*.

The malapropism cases show this. They have a special property: the speaker *thinks* they're using a sentence whose meaning "matches" *p*, but they're failing to do so. If a hearer correctly understands what they mean (thereby completing successful communication), it is likely because the hearer recognizes that the speaker used a word incorrectly, and is taking that into account. So, although a malapropism is worse evidence of the speaker's intentions than a correct locution, it can often be good enough if supplemented by other evidence of the speaker's intentions.

More broadly, the point is this: the sentence one utters (and its meaning) are just one kind of evidence that a speaker can give of their m-intentions. There are many other kinds of evidence we can give. Sometimes the evidence conflicts, and some evidence overrules others. Even though linguistic evidence is by far the most rich and precise, it can sometimes be overruled by non-linguistic evidence. That's what's going on in the case of misspeaking and malapropism.

I anticipate the following rebuttal from Schiffer: "What's really going on in the case of malapropisms is that the speaker is using a different dialect (or idiolect) of English, and the hearer is temporarily and tacitly agreeing to communicate with the speaker in that dialect. For example: when we hear Berra say 'electrical' and take him to mean 'electoral', that's because 'electrical' means, for Berra (at that moment) what 'electoral' normally means for us, and we're temporarily using his language rather than ours."

This is a desperate move and it won't work.

First: in many cases of malapropism and misspeech, the speaker doesn't believe that the word they use means whatever they're using it to mean. They're simply making a mistake by their own lights. (As Unnsteinsson (2016) puts it, the mistake originates in a *misarticulation* or *mispronunciation* rather than some unusual configuration in their linguistic competence.)

Second: suppose it's true that after H understands Berra, H tacitly agrees to use 'electrical' to mean what H would normally mean by 'electoral', and that this constitutes a minor semantic change that lasts for the rest of the conversation. Berra and H thus adopt what Ludlow (2014) calls a new 'microlanguage'. Throughout the rest of the conversation, we may want to say that 'electrical' means, for S and H, what

‘electoral’ normally means for English speakers. (It certainly counts as having a new meaning by the standards of, say, Lewis’s and Schiffer’s theories of linguistic convention.) Still, the first time H hears S use ‘electrical’ in the unusual way, it doesn’t yet have this new meaning for Berra and H, and H can’t rely on their competence with this microlanguage in working out what S said. In all likelihood, H recognizes what Berra said by recognizing that Berra has come out with a malapropism.

(It’s also worth noting that all of this doesn’t make sense in misarticulation cases, since Berra might not consistently mix up ‘electoral’ and ‘electrical’ if he uttered the wrong word by accident. In that case there probably won’t be any stage in the conversation at which ‘electrical’ changes its meaning, even locally.)

## 5 Generalizing Grice’s Theory to Other Speech Acts

In several respects, Grice’s theory of utterer’s meaning/saying/implicating is only really set up to handle assertoric speech acts. I see three problems that must be overcome in order to allow us to generalize to other cases.

### 5.1 Terminology

In saying that S *meant*  $p$ , *said*  $p$ , *implicated*  $p$ , *d-meant*  $p$ , or *i-meant*  $p$ , we seem to presuppose that we’re talking about an assertoric speech act.

- ‘Stephen said that Grice was right.’ sounds a lot like ‘Stephen asserted that Grice was right’.
- There is no natural way to report what Stephen said in a case where what he did was request for you to do your homework by uttering ‘do your homework’.
  - Schiffer’s attempt: ‘Stephen said that you should do your homework’
  - But then how to distinguish this from the case in which Stephen asserted that you should do your homework by uttering, ‘You should do your homework’?

The solution:

- replace ‘meant’ with ‘performed a communicative act’ (or ‘asserted’/‘commanded’/‘asked’, as the case may be).
- Replace ‘said’ with ‘performed a *direct* communicative act’ (or ‘*directly* asserted’, etc.).
- Replace ‘implicated’ with ‘performed an indirect communicative act’ (or ‘*indirectly* asserted’, etc.)

### 5.2 What Makes it the Case that Someone Performs an Indirect Speech Act?

We can easily generalize from my answer to the constitutive question about saying and implicating. E.g.:

**Directly asking-whether A can  $\psi$  in order to indirectly direct A to  $\psi$**

The fact that  $U$  requested for a certain addressee  $A$  to  $\psi$  in uttering  $x$  is grounded in the fact that  $U$  uttered  $x$  intending

- (1) (DIRECTION)
  - (i)  $A$  to form an intention to say whether they can  $\psi$ ;
  - (ii)  $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (1i);
  - (iii)  $A$  to fulfill (1i) on the basis of his fulfillment of (1ii);
- (2) (EXPRESSION OF DESIRE)
  - (i)  $A$  to form an intention to  $\psi$ ;
  - (ii)  $A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (2i);
  - (iii)  $A$  to fulfill (2i) on the basis of his fulfillment of (2ii); and
- (3) (INDIRECTNESS CONDITION)
 

$A$  to recognize  $U$  intends (2i) partly on the basis of his recognition of  $U$ ’s intention (1i);

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