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1

introduction

noel burton-roberts

The theoretical field of enquiry now called ‘pragmatics’ was effectively launched, from within philosophy, by Paul Grice. His work (brought together in Grice 1989) remains an enduring presence in the field even now when pragmatics is seen primarily as an adjunct to linguistics and psychology, and in the context of reservations as to the viability of Grice’s precise conception of pragmatics and the semantics/pragmatics distinction.

The chapters that make up this contribution to Palgrave’s *Advances* series address a wide range of issues that have arisen in post-Gricean pragmatic theory and present a range of theoretical positions and approaches. The field is currently characterized by lively debate and this is fully reflected here. The volume includes considerations of relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995 and related work), neo-Gricean pragmatics, optimality theoretic pragmatics, experimental work and philosophical considerations. The specific topics covered include scalar implicature, lexical semantics and pragmatics, concepts and concept-adjustment, indexicality, speech acts, procedural meaning and the notion of ‘constraint’, the explicature-implicature distinction, numerical expressions, the semantics and pragmatics of negation and negative polarity items, and whether successful communication involves ‘shared content’.

Rather than attempt to group these chapters by theme – impractical given that each chapter connects up with others in so many different ways – I introduce them in alphabetical order of the first author, the order in which they appear.

Jay Atlas’ chapter (‘On a Pragmatic Explanation of Negative Polarity Licensing’) is a contribution to the discussion of the long-standing and intriguing problems posed by the expressions *only*, *even*, *almost* and *not*

quite. What is communicated by utterances of sentences in which these occur clearly includes a negative proposition. But it is not clear just what the status of the negative proposition is in the total signification of the sentence uttered. Atlas approaches the problems through an exploration of the licensing of Negative Polarity Items (NPIs) in such sentences and reconsiders a pragmatic proposal of Horn. Horn (2002) proposed to treat assertion (and non-assertion, or 'presupposition') as speech acts pragmatically independent of semantic entailment. Although NPIs would be licensed by the semantics facts, Horn proposed that they are in fact only licensed by falling within the scope of the (independent) pragmatic act of assertion. Atlas explores and critiques this pragmatic proposal, advancing new data and asking *why* the occurrence of NPIs should depend on the pragmatics of assertion and how we are to characterize assertion, non-assertion and entailment in the representation of utterance meanings.

Kent Bach's chapter, 'Regressions in Pragmatics (and Semantics)', is in part a defence of Gricean principles, but with the refinement of *implicature* (see, for example, Bach 1994). The paper defends the idea that semantics and pragmatics are strictly separate though interacting in communication. Semantics concerns *sentences*. It captures what speakers actually *say* (in the locutionary sense of 'say', rather than the illocutionary sense of 'state' or 'assert'). It determines what is fully explicit in utterances. Pragmatics concerns what is communicated by the *utterance* of sentences, the performance of speech acts. Fully implicit communication – what is not said but conveyed by the saying of what is said (i.e. implicature) – falls within pragmatics. Bach's idea of implicature is offered as a way of maintaining this picture while qualifying it. Crucially, saying versus implicating is not exhaustive. Implicature takes up the slack, accounting for aspects of what is communicated that are neither said nor implicated but required by the fact that sentences may need completing (if utterances of them are to express propositions) and expanding (if utterances of them are to express the intended proposition). Implicature is implied by what is said (i.e. it is implicit in what is said) – in contrast to implicature, which is implied only by the *saying* of what is said (and is not implicit in what is said). Against this background, Bach identifies nine 'suspect ideas' in current pragmatic theory. He calls them 'regressions' because, he argues, they hark back to pre-Gricean 'ordinary language' philosophy influenced by Wittgenstein's injunction: 'Don't look for the meaning, look for the use'. He argues that this mistakenly imports into semantics what pertains to pragmatics. The nine suspect ideas that he identifies commit, in different ways, the error of conflating pragmatics and semantics.

In 'Constraints, Concepts and Procedural Encoding', Diane Blakemore offers an intricate investigation of procedural meaning, its relation to conceptual meaning and to the notion of 'constraint on relevance'. She approaches the issues through a discussion of a range of parentheticals. The parentheticals that concern her – *as*- and *and*- parentheticals – achieve relevance by providing information about how their hosts are to be interpreted (and they can do this in a variety of different ways). In that respect, they might be described as providing constraints on the relevance/interpretation of another expression, the host. The effect of using one of these expressions, then, might seem to be the same as that of using an expression that encodes a procedure. However, she shows that their encoded meaning is clearly conceptual. She argues that, unlike purely procedural elements, the (conceptual) content of the parenthetical does not drop out of the picture once it has served its purpose of constraining the process of interpreting the host. It contributes to the overall conceptual representation and (again unlike procedural elements) is itself subject to all inferential operations – e.g. strengthening – that conceptual representations are subject to. Thus we need to make a distinction between constraints on interpretation/relevance and procedural meaning. In the light of this, she argues that we need to recognize two notions – and loci – of constraints on interpretation: (a) constraints that are encoded as such – this constitutes procedural meaning, arising at the level of linguistically encoded meaning, and (b) constraints that arise at the level of conceptual representation, through the interpretation of the relation between the conceptual content of the parenthetical and that of the host.

Reinhard Blutner, in 'Optimality Theoretic Pragmatics and the Explicature/Implicature Distinction' offers a wide-ranging discussion that centres on relevance theory's explicature/implicature distinction. It begins by noting problems with how that distinction is defined within relevance theory. Blutner speculates that the distinction might be independently derivable within the framework of optimality theoretic (OT) pragmatics (see Blutner and Zeevat 2004) based on neo-Gricean principles and 'global' considerations governing rational communication. The OT framework invites the development of a 'diachronic' perspective. Blutner suggests the manipulation of the different rankings of a given OT system of constraints is a powerful but computationally simple task. This perspective encourages us to see certain on-line (synchronic) inferential processes as having become fossilized and thus automatized. This makes for highly efficient, speedy, on-line processing, consistent with the experimental results reported in the work of Noveck (see also

the chapter in this volume by Noveck and Sperber). The automatization and speed of processing of such processes, Blutner suggests, is consistent with relevance theory's treatment of them as explicatures, rather than with regarding them as the processing (the calculation and potential cancellation) of implicatures.

My own contribution (Burton-Roberts 'Varieties of Semantics and Encoding: Negation, Narrowing/Loosening and Numericals') considers relevance theory's distinction between 'linguistic semantics' (the encoded semantics of linguistic expressions) and 'real semantics' (the propositional – truth-theoretic – semantics of thoughts). I suggest that, on several grounds, 'linguistic semantics' is problematic and argue for a single ('real') notion of semantics, located in the Language of Thought. This implies – with Fodor (1998) and the strongest of Recanati's (2004) contextualist positions – that particular languages like English have no semantics. Distinguishing between 'having meaning' and 'having semantics', I allow that – like all signs – utterances in English do 'have meaning', but argue that this is so only in virtue of their being intended and recognized as standing in a relation of conventional *representation* to syntactico-semantically constituted thoughts. As *representational* of conceptual properties, utterable words are not themselves possessed of any conceptual property (either specific or schematic – Carston 2002). In this connection, I compare 'representation' with relevance theory's notion of 'encoding'. The implications of these ideas are explored with reference to negation (where a sharp distinction is drawn between the utterable English word *not* and the logical operator), 'narrowing' and 'loosening' (i.e. 'concept adjustment') and the problems posed by numerical expressions. A representational perspective, I argue, allows us to acknowledge that the differing concepts represented by uses of the word *three* all include the concept EXACTLY THREE while denying that the word itself has a semantic definition (including, and especially, 'exactly three').

The chapter by Herman Cappelen and Ernie Lepore ('Relevance Theory and Shared Content') is a critique of relevance theorists' claim that grasping what the speaker intends to communicate by the utterance of a sentence does not involve or require duplicating the speaker's thought. The relevance-theoretic (RT) claim is that successful communication involves entertaining a thought sufficiently similar to the speaker's thought. Cappelen and Lepore dub this the No Shared Content (NSC) principle: an audience will never grasp *p* (the intended proposition) but only another proposition *q*. They claim that RT is committed to the NSC principle because the only 'similarity' relation implied by RT is that two propositions are similar if they are developments of the same logical

form and this is too unconstrained to guarantee anything approaching shared content: two propositions can be developments of the same logical form and yet be utterly different. Furthermore, the NSC is implied if the cognitive effects of a particular utterance on an interpreter depend on that interpreter's assumptions, since such assumptions vary from person to person. In short, there is no 'fixed standard of similarity that RT can appeal to'. Cappelen and Lepore argue that, being committed to the NSC principle, relevance theory fails to account for our general practice of reporting what others say, and assessing the truth of what they say. It also fails to account for coordinated planned action. They write: 'A central challenge in pragmatics is to develop a theory of communication that reconciles two fundamental facts: we can share contents across contexts and communicated content is deeply context sensitive.' The authors conclude with a useful summary of their proposed response to this challenge, 'Pluralistic Minimalism' (Cappelen and Lepore 2004).

Marjolein Groefsema's contribution ('Concepts and Word Meaning in Relevance Theory') is a detailed consideration of relevance theory's treatment of word meaning, concepts and their content. She focuses particularly on the proposal that concepts are triples, having three kinds of 'entry': logical, lexical and encyclopaedic. She argues that this treatment is open to several interpretations. She rejects the idea that the content of concepts might include lexical information, since this would make phonological and syntactic information about words part of the content of the concepts that are supposed to be the meaning of those words. She then considers three further accounts: (1) that the content of concepts is constituted by their logical and encyclopaedic entries, (2) that concepts are unanalyzable atomic entities whose entries do not constitute their content, and (3) that their logical entries, but not their encyclopaedic entries, constitutes their content. Finally, Groefsema considers Carston's (2002) recent proposal to distinguish between encoded concepts and 'ad hoc' concepts derived from encoded concepts by 'concept adjustment'. She investigates each of these accounts in turn and argues that they make different predictions about what proposition is expressed by an utterance (the explicature) and what is implicitly communicated (implicature). Ultimately, as with several other chapters in this volume, it is the explicature-implicature distinction that is at issue in this chapter. Groefsema argues that, since relevance is defined in terms of the cognitive effects derived from the interaction of the proposition expressed/explicature with assumptions in the context, it is crucial that we know how to make the explicature-implicature distinction in principle and in practice.

As Laurence Horn's subtitle indicates, his chapter ('Neo-Gricean Pragmatics: A Manichaeian Manifesto') is indeed a wide-ranging manifesto for his neo-Gricean pragmatic stance (for example, Horn 1984, 1989), setting it in its historical context and within a range of philosophical, rhetorical, and cultural contexts. It is 'Manichaeian' in the sense of being grounded in the idea of two opposing but co-dependent, interacting principles (Good-Evil for Manichaeians, Yin-Yang for Confucians). In the pragmatic context, the co-dependent oppositions include speaker-hearer, economy-sufficiency, brevity-clarity, minimizing-maximizing, effort-effect (the last also found in relevance theory). Horn's neo-Gricean enterprise 'folds' the several maxims proposed by Grice into exactly two such principles, the R Principle ('Don't say too much') and the Q Principle ('Say enough'). The R Principle is speaker-orientated (minimizing effort) and is 'upper-bounding' in its effect, giving rise to strengthening implicatures. The Q Principle is hearer-orientated (guaranteeing sufficiency) and is 'lower bounding', giving rise to typically scalar implicatures (which, Horn argues, are distinct from strengthening implicatures). Horn illustrates the pervasive influence of the principles – and their explanatory character in offering a 'division of pragmatic labour' – across a wide range of linguistic phenomena: lexical, semantic and logical, not only synchronically but also diachronically, in semantic and lexical change. Horn defends this 'dualist' ('Manichaeian') picture against the three principles of Levinson (2000) – Q, I (equivalent to Horn's R) and M (for Manner) – and against the 'monist' position of relevance theory, which is grounded in a single Principle of Relevance. He questions whether relevance theory is in fact 'monist' since, as noted, it too stresses the effort-effect opposition.

In 'The Why and How of Experimental Pragmatics: The Case of "Scalar Inferences"', Ira Noveck and Dan Sperber present the case for an experimental methodology (see Noveck and Sperber 2004). This, they argue, is especially necessary in pragmatics, where the exclusive reliance on intuition is particularly problematic. They point up some interesting contrasts between semantic and pragmatic intuitions in this connection. In particular they advocate an experimental approach in choosing between alternative theories that may agree on the content of the interpretations of utterances, but have different implications for the cognitive mechanisms that derive these interpretations. A case in point is what is generally referred to as 'scalar inference' (e.g. the inference from *some* to *not all* and from *possible* to *not necessary/certain*) – and it is this that provides the focus of their chapter. While the treatment of scalar inference in terms of Grice's Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) is intuitive enough, they suggest the implications of that treatment

for processing are not attractive. Here they focus on Levinson's (2000) approach, in which the rationale for GCIs lies in the optimization of processing – the relevant inferences are automatic, speedy, one-step, default inferences. Noveck and Sperber doubt this claim about processing, doubt that the relevant inference is scalar and doubt that it results in an implicature. As regards processing, the speed of the inference has to be set against the potential processing cost of cancelling the implicature. They argue for an alternative account in terms of relevance theory. Ultimately, they suggest, the choice between these competing approaches needs to be – and can be – tested experimentally, by timing actual on-line comprehension processing (as Levinson himself has suggested). Noveck and Sperber present the results of their experiments, and compare them with results from similar experiments. They argue that these results strongly favour their own RT account over Levinson's GCI account. They suggest that, while this does not exactly falsify Levinson's account, it does present that account with a serious challenge.

François Recanati, in 'Indexicality, Context and Pretence: A Speech Act Theoretic Account', is concerned with context and context shift. He argues that, in the normal way of things, 'context' refers the objective context of utterance, and context shift is impossible. The reference of genuine indexicals – expressions whose dependence on context is determined by semantic rule, e.g. *I, here, now* – cannot be shifted by speakers' intentions. In this they contrast with context-dependent expressions such as *you, we, John's car*, and demonstratives, whose reference can be shifted at will. However, this difference between genuine indexicals and other context- and intention-dependent expressions has to be qualified in the light of pretence. This is the focus of his chapter. Pretence allows for context shift even with indexicals. Here Recanati distinguishes two types of context-shifting pretence. The first occurs in direct speech reports, delayed communication, the historical present, and, in parallel, 'presentifying' uses of *here*. The second type of context-shifting pretence occurs in various sorts of displayed assertion: non-quotational echoes, irony and free indirect speech. Recanati suggests that the distinction between these two types correlates with the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts. In the light of this, he suggests speech act theory must allow for a correlative distinction between locutionary contexts and illocutionary contexts, a distinction between the context of utterance and the context of assertion. As a consequence, context cannot be regarded as an objective given, but as constructed intentionally as an aspect of utterance meaning.

Finally, Deirdre Wilson and Robyn Carston's chapter ('A Unitary Approach to Lexical Pragmatics: Relevance, Inference and Ad Hoc Concepts') reports on their recent work in the domain of lexical semantics and pragmatics. They explore how the concepts encoded as word-meanings are adjusted in the context of utterance. The disparity between lexically encoded meaning and what is generally communicated by the use of words, they argue, is generally accounted for by positing a range of different mechanisms. They accept that concept adjustment appears to take different forms, including narrowing (strengthening), loosening (broadening) and metaphorical extension. However, with extensive illustration, Wilson and Carston argue, against a variety of previous accounts which treat these three phenomena as distinct, that there are no well-defined distinctions among these intuitive types of adjustment. Accordingly, their concern is to develop a more constrained, unified account in which a single inferential process, guided by the expectation of (optimal) relevance, is involved in all three – a single process that derives an ad hoc concept. Narrowing, loosening (including approximation, hyperbole, and category extension) and metaphor are simply different outcomes of this single process. They compare their unified inferential account with that of Recanati, which they argue is only partly inferential, and with what they see as the non-inferential account of Lakoff (e.g. 1987, 1994). They conclude by asking whether their account can be extended to cover a range of further figurative phenomena: metonymy, synecdoche, blends, puns and meaning transfers.

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