

# Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet (2000), Chapter 4

## 3rd Session

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Goal: present a crash course on the topics of this seminar.
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## 1 Paper

### 1.1 Reference

Chierchia, Gennaro & Sally McConnell-Ginet (2000) Speaking, meaning and doing. *Meaning and Grammar. An introduction to semantics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Pages 194–255.

### 1.2 Guidelines

- What's the difference between expression's meaning and speaker's meaning?
- What's the difference between content and force? Is this an uncontroversial, widely acknowledged distinction?
- How is the dynamic semantic view on the meaning of expressions described?
- What are locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts? What are indirect illocutionary acts? Which one of them are the object of study of semantics?
- What's the difference between constative and performative speech acts? Are assertions performative acts?
- What's special about Searle's concept of meaning?
- What is the performative hypothesis and what's wrong with it?
- Is illocutionary force encoded in grammar?
- What are the hallmarks of Conversational Implicatures?

## 2 Preliminaries

### 2.1 Goals

- Introduce the essential, widely-accepted notions that concern the semantics-pragmatics interface.
- Point out some issues under discussion and present their proposal.

### 2.2 Structure

- Introduction: limitations of a semantics model based on literal meaning.
- Expression's meaning and speaker's meaning: effect of *meaning*.
- Sentential force and discourse dynamics: context update potential of sentences.
- Speech acts: beyond sentential force.
- Conversational Implicature: cooperative speakers contributing non-literal meaning.

## 3 Introduction

**Model-theoretical semantics:** we assume a method for carrying out the program of truth-conditional semantics for a fragment of an object language. We construct a model of those things there are in the world we are considering (i.e., constants, variables, operators) and we specify an interpretation for the expressions of the object language. Characteristically, we have to be able to derive the meaning of complex expressions by taking into account the meaning of their parts and the way they combine (**Compositionality Principle**).

**Scope of semantics proper:** it captures the meaning of expressions by appealing to relations such as entailment, synonymy, contradiction. For instance, we understand that (1-a) and (1-b) together entail (1-c).

- (1)
  - a. Pavarotti hates every woman.
  - b. Sophia Loren is a woman.
  - c. Pavarotti hates Loren.

“This entailment relation is independent of what speakers believe or do.” A pure semantic model is not concerned with the uses of language. One such Model “is an abstract system, a formal language that is describable in terms that make no reference to how or why speakers might use such a system, to their intentions, goals or attitudes.”

However, the semantic meaning does impose constraints on the use of sentences. For instance, we would find strange that a speaker asserts (1-a) and (1-b) and denies (1-c).

**Summary:** semantics does not approach meaning to include the speaker's intentions, but literal meaning does impose constraints on the use of language.

## 4 Expression's meaning and speaker's meaning

"[...] the pragmatic notion of speaker's meaning complements our semantic account of linguistic meaning in two ways. First, it provides insight into what it is for a linguistic expression to be used meaningfully: it provides a way to connect abstract linguistic meaning with what people do by means of using language. [...] Second, it helps us understand how interpretations of actual utterances might sometimes fail to coincide with the linguistically assigned interpretations of the expressions uttered."

### Use of language

So far (in a model that aims to provide an interpretation to expressions of a language), we identify the **denotation** (roughly, meaning) of a sentence with its true conditions: a sentence  $\alpha$  means  $p$  just in case  $\alpha$  is true in situation  $v$  iff  $p$ , where  $p$  is some sentence of our metalanguage that gives the true conditions for  $\alpha$ .

- (2) a. Pavarotti doesn't like Loren.  
b.  $\langle \llbracket \text{Pavarotti} \rrbracket^M, \llbracket \text{Loren} \rrbracket^M \rangle \notin \llbracket \text{like} \rrbracket^M$

That is, we have a **formal system** that models a fragment of English. However, grasping the truth-conditions of an expression does not constitute the entire semantic knowledge of English speakers. This "underlies the capacity of English speakers to use (2-a) to convey the information that Pavarotti doesn't like Loren [...] That a sentence means that  $p$  in a language is somehow connected to its being reliably usable by speakers of that language to mean that  $p$  and to communicate the meaning to one another."

### What does it mean to mean $p$ ?

We, as speakers, are able to understand that the authors of the book are only **mentioning** (2-a) and not **using** it. That is, they are "expressing no opinions at all about Pavarotti's attitude toward Loren when [they] cite this sentence to illustrate [their] general points about sentence meaning [...]" For someone to mean something in uttering a sentence, more is required than just producing a written or phonetic realization of the sentence, knowing what the sentence itself means, and expecting one's addressee to share that knowledge."

**Meaning as evidence** (Paul Grice): To mean that  $p$  is "to intend addressees to recognize one's intention that one's utterance is to count as evidence that  $p$ , and furthermore, to intend that the addressee's recognition of one's intention be instrumental in achieving the intended effect."

**Speaker's vs. expression's meaning:** "[...] in uttering (2-a) the speaker intends to express the information that Pavarotti doesn't like Loren and to mean thereby that Pavarotti doesn't like Loren."

The speaker's means  $p$  in uttering  $\alpha$  ...

- o Speaker's meaning (aka occasion meaning):  $p$
- o Expression's meaning (aka timeless, linguistic meaning or semantic value):  $\alpha$

“If in uttering the sentence (2-a) Joan means that (2-b) is true, then the speaker’s meaning of that utterance of (2-a), what Joan herself means, and the expression meaning, what the sentence she uttered means, completely coincide.”

**The role of convention:** it is a convention that in uttering  $\alpha$  – with timeless meaning  $p$  – we as speakers mean that  $p$ .

- (3) Sentence  $\alpha$  means that  $p$  in a community  $C$  iff there is some convention established among the members of  $C$  that to utter  $\alpha$  is to mean that  $p$  (or that the speaker’s meaning of utterances of  $\alpha$  is  $p$ ). (Grice)

**Problematic cases** where we cannot equate the expression’s meaning and speaker’s meaning: ambiguity and context dependency.

- (4) a. Someone likes everyone.  
 b.  $\exists x \forall y \text{ like } (x, y)$   
 c.  $\forall y \exists x \text{ like } (x, y)$
- (5) a. He likes Loren.  
 b.  $\langle g(he_1), [[\text{Loren}]]^M \rangle \in [[\text{like}]]^M$

**Applied timeless meanings:** Grice introduces this notion to cover disambiguation and contextual specification. “[...] the semantic rules of the language will tell us what propositions are potentially available as applied timeless meanings for a particular sentence  $\alpha$ , what speakers might conventionally mean in uttering  $\alpha$ . Where a string is ambiguous or incomplete, the rules will tell us that an utterance of  $\alpha$  expresses one of the propositions available as a disambiguation or completion. The linguistic rules themselves do not say which such proposition is expressed by uttering the string [...]”

**More problematic cases** where there is a divergence between the speaker’s meaning and the meaning of the sentence expressed: the speaker may be mistaken about the meaning of lexical items or s/he may be mistaken when using a referential expression (e.g., “The man drinking the martini”).

- (6) a. The man drinking the martini doesn’t like Loren.  
 b. The man drinking water doesn’t like Loren.  
 c. The man drinking a martini will get drunk.

“[...] there are principles that guide hearers in their interpretive tasks, whether disambiguating, fixing referents, or adding to what the speaker has actually encoded further aspects of the propositional content intended to be taken as if expressed. We need not spell out everything unambiguously and in full detail to one another. The reason is that interpretation can make use not only of linguistic knowledge but also of knowledge about the context in which we attempt communication and of expectations about one another as conventionally cooperative communicators.”

- (7) a. Wolf!  
 b. I have just seen a wolf near here.  
 c. I have just been thinking about a wolf.  
 d. My father once saw a wolf in a field far from here.

- e. A wolf can be dangerous.

How do we interpret **beyond the letter** what is said? See Grice's conversation theory.

“**The central point** of what an expression means is directly tied to conventions for what speakers can mean in uttering it. What a sentence means can be thought of as its truth conditions relative to disambiguation and contextual specification. But what an expression means is only part of the evidence available to the hearer for interpreting what the speaker means in uttering it.”

Speakers may mean something different or more than what the sentence means. This is so because speakers and hearers are assumed to have non-linguistic knowledge that complements the expressions' meaning. This includes certain expectations as communications and beliefs about the situation.

**Levels of meaning:** there may be different levels (i.e., explicit vs. implicit) on which the speaker performs acts of meaning something. E.g., in (2-a) the speaker may mean that not only Pavarotti doesn't like Loren, but s/he even hates her. In order to do so, s/he can rely on intonation or shared knowledge. But the **understatement** is meant to be noticed. Otherwise, s/he would have directly said “Pavarotti hates Loren”.

**Recap:** “Grice notes only that the speaker's meaning can diverge from what the uttered expression means; he does not comment on the fact that such divergence may sometimes itself also be part of what the speaker means. But the general spirit of Grice's proposal seems to us quite compatible with these added complexities.”

## 5 Sentential force and discourse dynamics

**Content of a sentence:** their truth conditions, the circumstances in which the sentence is true.

In the following sentences it can be argued that the speaker is doing something more than just producing a representation of the circumstances where Bond gives every fish to Loren:

- (8) a. Bond gives every fish to Loren.  
b. Does Bond give every fish to Loren?  
c. Give every fish to Loren.

Every sentence does “something” with the content of what is said, but they all involve different semantic values.

- (9) a. Declarative: can be assigned a truth value.  
b. Interrogative: can be answered by (9-a)  
c. Imperative: can be complied with or satisfied.
- (10) a. Pavarotti stated that Bond gives every fish to Loren.  
b. Pavarotti asked whether Bond gives every fish to Loren.  
c. Pavarotti told Bonn to give every fish to Loren.

**Sentential force** (Frege): “[...] what the grammar assigns to the sentence to indicate how the content is conventionally presented.” The semantic correlate of **sentence type**.

- (11) a. Declarative sentence type  $\Rightarrow$  stating that  
 b. Interrogative sentence type  $\Rightarrow$  asking whether  
 c. Imperative sentence type  $\Rightarrow$  telling to

**Sentential force as a context-changing function**: “[...] the change that uttering a particular sentence type produces in a discourse context.”

The semantic value assigned to a declarative sentence ( $\llbracket S \rrbracket$ ): a function that takes  $S$  together with the context in which is uttered and yields a new discourse context.

Discourse as a sequence of sentences  $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_n$  The effect of uttering a sentence  $S_j$  also depends on the sentences uttered before ( $S_1, \dots, S_{j-1}$ ). The structure of discourse is independent of the purposes the participants may have.

**Common ground** (Stalnaker, Heim): a slate of discourse commitments developed as discourse progresses, which contains what the participants believe to be shared knowledge. It includes every new information that is judged to be true by all the participants.

**Content** of the common ground: it is not a clean slate, when discourse starts. It contains: (i) commonplaces that are already in play (e.g., “that humans direct utterances toward one another intending thereby to achieve some effect”), (ii) accessible information (e.g., “that water relieves thirst”).

**Structure** of the common ground: not a set of unconnected thoughts. Rather, propositions are added in it in the course of conversation, and in doing so, the participants also consider the propositions the former entail. If the entailed propositions are obvious, they become part of the common ground directly; if they are inconsistent with the propositions already in the common ground, the new thought is rejected or a previous assumption is.

- (12) a. Pavarotti likes Loren.  
       (someone’s utterance)  
 b. Loren is a woman.  
       (already part of the common ground)
- (13) Pavarotti likes a woman.  
       (entailment of (12-a) + (12-b)  $\Rightarrow$  part of the common ground)

**Inconsistency**: revision + higher level proposition to the effect that speakers have uttered incompatible propositions.

- (14) Pavarotti hates every woman.  
       (cannot be part of the common ground without revision)

**State vs. assert**: declarative sentences are not always used to propose a new proposition to become part of the common ground. Sometimes a speaker may repeat an utterance, in which case s/he is not asserting  $p$ , where “asserts” suggests that the infor-

mation provided is supposed not to be part of the common ground. “State” is a more neutral term.

**Static vs. dynamic approach:** dynamic seems more promising to cover a theory of meaning that goes beyond truth conditions. “[...] the meaning of a sentence involves both static truth-conditional content and dynamic force, which specifies something of how that content functions in discourse.”

## 6 Speech acts

**From sentential force to illocutionary force:** sentential force is an abstract concept that describes the effect of introducing the propositional content of an expression into discourse (e.g., increase the common ground).

Sentential force (state)  $\Rightarrow$  illocutionary force (claim, guess, remind, warn, threaten)

(15) The bull is on the field.

Where does this abstract stating act fit in a larger theory of the actions we perform when speaking?

### 6.1 The kinds of things we do with words

Tripartite classification of acts performed when a person speaks (Austin):

- Locutionary: act of producing a meaningful expression.
- Illocutionary: acts we produce *in* engaging in locutionary acts which have a certain (conventional) force (e.g., informing, ordering, warning, undertaking). Part of the speaker’s strategy in meaningfully using language.
- Perlocutionary: acts we produce *by* saying something (e.g., convincing, persuading, deterring). Only performed if the speaker’s strategy succeeds.

Locutionary acts cover the abstract notion of *sentential force*, but we want to find out how locutionary force (e.g., stating that the Bull is in the field) results in illocutionary force (e.g., warn about this fact being dangerous).

Illocutionary force does not need to coincide with Grice’s speaker’s meaning: (*i*) it is not clear that the speaker needs to make his/her plan of action manifest to the addressee, who might not fully grasp the speaker’s illocutionary act; (*ii*) there is a way to understand that the speaker means the same when using a specific sentence type (e.g., an imperative), even though it can be interpreted as being different interactional moves (e.g., an order or a suggestion).

**Indirect illocutionary acts**

- (16) Give every fish to Loren.
- a. And that’s an order.
  - b. That’s the best suggestion I can come up with.

- (17) The bull is on the field. # And that's an order. (Intended to force the addressee to close the gate.)

"[...] the possibility of specifying imperatives as orders or suggestions or some other variety of directive does not mean, we think, that the imperative is ambiguous between ordering and suggesting and other kinds of directive [...] whatever imperative meaning might amount to, it seems it must be sufficiently abstract to accommodate a wide range of actions."

- (18) Imperatives
- a. Have a wonderful time. [A wish]
  - b. Swim at your own risk. [A warning]
  - c. Help yourself to whatever you want. [Permission or an offer]
- (19) Declaratives
- a. I'll be there right away. [A promise or an offer]
  - b. She must get better. [A wish]
  - c. You may watch "Sesame Street" tomorrow. [Permission]

## 6.2 Performative utterances

"Performatives offer a strong prima facie challenge to any theory that distinguishes sharply between locutionary force, which is associated with sentences as such and makes no reference to the goals or plans of the speakers, and the action that gives illocutionary forces their potency [...] We do not think, however, that performatives constitute an insuperable problem for a program that places illocutionary force outside the realm of semantics proper."

A **performative utterance** of a declarative makes two jobs: (i) conveys a message, (ii) performs the action that the content of the declarative describes.

- (20)
- a. I bid three clubs. [To utter the sentence is to bid three clubs.]
  - b. You are fired. [To utter the sentence can be to fire the addressee.]
  - c. Gentlemen are requested to wear jackets and ties to dinner. [To utter the sentence can be to request gentlemen to wear jackets and ties to dinner.]

**Non-truth-conditional:** the performative utterance cannot be judged true or false. The utterance of a performative makes the circumstances fit the words. "[...] it would generally be absurd to say "Yes" or "No" or "That's right" or "That's wrong" to a performative utterance [...] Such utterances actually create the circumstances they speak of, so the question of whether they fit those circumstances is quite irrelevant."

**Constatives:** ordinary statements, which can be judged true or false, in comparison to performatives. Some sentences ((20-c)) can be used either constatively (to report) or performatively (to do).

- Constatively: uttered by a man who has just learned the hotel's policy and is explaining to his companion why they need to get themselves jackets and ties.
- Performatively: uttered by the hotel manager.

**A social convention:** “Performativity of an utterance is a matter of what the words mean and the powers accorded to people by virtue of certain social institutions.”

Performatives can be appraised as **felicitous** or **infelicitous** in various ways. **Felicity conditions** (Austin): conventions that regulate our use of performatives. When an utterance **misfires**, the act in question does not come off (e.g., when a player has bid three hearts, the speaker cannot utter “I bid three clubs”). Cases of insincerity constitute **abuse** rather than misfire (e.g., an insincere promise).

Do performative utterances have the abstract sentential force of statements? “[...] a possible explanation of performative power may be found in a more thorough consideration of truth conditions. It seems plausible that certain words (*bid*, *promise*, *fire*) are such that their contribution to truth-conditional content ensures that their utterance in certain context is **self-verifying**.” The *doing* component of performatives is effected by means of the stating.

### 6.3 Illocutionary acts as the subject of semantics

Searle denies the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts. The linguistic meaning of the expressions used has to do with “[...] the social conventions for selecting particular linguistic expressions to achieve particular aims.” This conventional component resembles Grice’s approach to linguistic meaning, but it is more radical, in that Searle sees no place for a truth-conditional notion of linguistic meaning.”

He proposes specific conventions to particular kinds of illocutionary acts. E.g., what does it take for an utterance to be a felicitous promise? There are input (speaking) and output (understanding) conditions.

Searle, like Frege, establishes a difference between propositional content and force, but according to the former, propositional content is speaker’s meaning and force is illocutionary force. Utterances include (*i*) a component that expresses its propositional content, and (*ii*) the illocutionary force indicating device (e.g., inversion, intonation markers, performative verbs).

- (21)
- a. The propositional content rule. *P* is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence predicating some future act *A* of the speaker.
  - b. The preparatory rule. *P* is to be uttered only if the addressee is positively oriented toward *A* and the speaker so believes (and only if it is not obvious to the addressee prior to this utterance that the speaker will do *A*.)
  - c. The sincerity rule. *P* is to be uttered only if the speaker intends to do *A*.
  - d. The essential rule. Uttering *P* counts as undertaking an obligation to do *A*.

### 6.4 The performative hypothesis

**Basic idea** (Ross, Sadock): “[...] every sentence determines a literal illocutionary force and that explicit performative utterances overtly indicate this literal illocutionary

force.” In Deep Structure (cf. early generative grammar), every sentence includes a performative verb as its highest verb with a 1st person subject and a 2nd person object.

- (22) a. I'll write you next week.  
 b. I promise to write you next week.
- (23) a. I claim that I will write you next week.  
 b. I predict that I will write to you next week.

This position was untenable for several reasons. For instance, (24-a) and (24-b) are claimed to have identical meanings, but (24-a) becomes true once it is uttered, whereas (24-b) can be judged true or false.

- (24) a. I say to you that grass is purple.  
 b. Grass is purple.

## 6.5 Grammar and illocutionary force

A single sentence can be used to perform a variety of illocutionary acts, and the same illocutionary act can be performed by a variety of sentence types. Hence the difficulty of considering illocutionary force to be part of the linguistic meaning of expressions (like Ross and Sadock did).

This leads us to an **ambiguity account**: whether (25) is a promise, a threat or a report of a decision would hinge on the ambiguity of the auxiliary *will*.

- (25) I'll write you next week.

What happens when the same utterance involves more than one illocutionary force (which is usual)?

Do we want to say that the following sentences are synonymous?

- (26) a. Count on a letter from me next week.  
 b. I promise to comply with your request next week.  
 c. I'll resume my daughterly duties again next week.  
 d. You'll get a letter from me next week.

Some illocutionary acts seem more tied to the linguistic expressions than others:

- (27) a. How would you like a letter from me next week?  
 b. The orthopedist says I'll definitely be able to use the type writer next week.  
 c. #That's a promise.

## 7 Conversational Implicature

Grice is the first to attempt a systematic account on how we can convey more than what our words overtly say.

### Terminology

- A sentence  $A$  **implies** a sentence  $B$  if  $A$  suggests or conveys  $B$ , or if  $B$  can be inferred from an utterance of  $A$ .
- A sentence  $A$  **entails** a sentence  $B$  if the basis for judging that  $A$  implies  $B$  is the truth-conditional content of  $A$ .
- A sentence  $A$  **implicates** a sentence  $B$  if what licenses the implication has to do with expectations about the reasons people talk and about their typical strategies in using language.

### Classes of implicatures

- Conversational: derived on the basis of conversational principles and assumptions.
  - Particularized (Sperber & Wilson): depend on contextual features specific to a given utterance.
    - (28) a. Have you read E.O. Wilson's *Sociobiology*?
    - b. I don't read science fiction.
    - c. I have not read *Sociobiology*.
    - d. I view *Sociobiology* as (like) science fiction (and thus bad science).
  - Generalized: hold in a wide range of conversational contexts. They can be calculated by resorting to basic beliefs about communication and social norms.
- Conventional: assigned on the basis of the conventional meaning of lexical items.

**Conventional implicatures.** Different from entailments in that *(i)* their exact content is not readily made explicit, and *(ii)* the conventionally implicated content is not at-issue, is not truth-conditional.

- (29) a. [John]<sub>*i*</sub> is an Englishman, but [he]<sub>*i*</sub> is cowardly.
  - b. [John]<sub>*i*</sub> is an Englishman, and [he]<sub>*i*</sub> is cowardly.
  - c. [John's]<sub>*i*</sub> being cowardly is somehow unexpected or surprising in light of [his]<sub>*i*</sub> being English.
- (29-a) but not (29-b) implies (29-c).
  - Uttering (29-a) and (29-b) involves adding the same propositional content to the common ground.
  - (29-a) but not (29-b) presupposes (29-c).

- And yet, (29-c) may be false while (29-a) is true (i.e., there is no entailment relation).

Principle of cooperation:

- (30) Make your conversational contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk in which you are engaged.

Cooperative speakers are assumed to comply with the following maxims.

- (31)
- a. Relation. Be relevant.
  - b. Quantity. Be only as informative as required for current conversational purposes.
  - c. Quality. Say only what you believe true and adequately supported.
  - d. Manner. Be perspicuous: be brief and orderly and avoid obscurity and ambiguity.

Properties: calculability (*i*), cancelability (*ii*), nondetachability (*iii*).

- (32)
- a. John has a husband.
  - b. John has only one husband.
  - c. John has one or more husbands.

(32-a) implicates (32-b) and entails (32-c).

(*i*) **Calculability.** Conversational Implicatures are calculable from: (1) the linguistic meaning of what is said, (2) the assumption that the speaker is observing the conversational maxims, (3) contextual assumptions of various kinds.

(*ii*) **Cancelability.** It follows from the fact that these implicatures are calculated from contextually supplied and tacit premises, some of which might be abandoned if inconsistent with new information supplied.

- (33)
- a. Joah has a husband, perhaps even two.
  - b. Nicky got a job at Harvard and moved to Cambridge but not in that order.
- (34)
- a. #Joan has a husband, yet perhaps she's unmarried.
  - b. #Nicky got a job at Harvard and therefore moved to Cambridge, but her move was quite unconnected to her job.

(*iii*) **Nondetachability.** Expressions with the same linguistic meaning are expected to generate the same implicatures relative to a fixed context. This could be a little problematic ...

- (35)
- a. Can you pass the salt?
  - b. Are you able to pass the salt?
  - c. Please pass the salt.

Scalar implicatures (Horn): are they really implicatures or are they part of the truth conditions of the expressions (i.e., entailments)?

- (36) a. Some students did very well on the exam.  
b. Some students did not do very well on the exam.

(i) **Calculability** (maxims of quantity and quality): “The proposition that every student did well on the exam is informative in the context. If it is thought to be true on the basis of adequate evidence, then it should be stated. Since the speaker did not so state, one can infer either that the speaker does not believe it or has inadequate evidence. Since the speaker is presumed to have good evidence about how all students did, the speaker does not believe that every student did very well and, on the assumption about the speaker’s access to evidence, the speaker knows that not all students did well and intends to convey this.”

(ii) **Cancelability**

- (37) a. *Some* of the students did very well on the exam, perhaps *all*.  
b. The novel will certainly be *good*, and it may well be *excellent*.  
c. It is *possible*, perhaps even *necessary*, to treat these inferences as implicatures.

Possible counterargument: weaker scalar items (e.g., some, good, possible) are ambiguous between a “two-sided” sense (i.e., where the stronger item is negated) ((38-a)) and a “one-sided” sense (i.e., where they are consistent with the stronger item) ((38-b)).

- (38) a. Some students did not do very well on the exam. (Entailment)  
b. *Some* of the students did very well on the exam, perhaps *all*.

**Problems:** cross-linguistically, there are no different lexical items (i), the distribution of the meanings are linked to factors that determine pragmatic implication (ii), the ambiguous item is systematically the weaker member of the scale (iii).

The following apparent examples in favor of the ambiguity account can be explained if we understand negation as not descriptive, but rather **metalinguistic**: we do not deny the two-sided reading of the weak scalar item, we mention, not use.

- (39) a. That novel isn’t *good*; it’s absolutely *superb*.  
b. She didn’t get *some* of the questions right; she answered *every single one* correctly

**Clausal implicatures** (Gazdar): about the epistemic status of an embedded clausal complement. These implicatures can be calculated (i) and canceled (ii).

- (40) a. Either [Joan]<sub>i</sub> bought a steak, or [she]<sub>i</sub> bought swordfish.  
b. If [Joan]<sub>i</sub> did not buy a steak, [she]<sub>i</sub> bought swordfish.  
(41) a. For all the speaker knows, Joan did not buy a steak.  
b. For all the speaker knows, Joan did buy a steak.  
c. For all the speaker knows, Joan did not buy swordfish.  
d. For all the speaker knows, Joan did buy swordfish.

**Flouting a maxim.** Even if one maxim is abandoned, Grice assumes that the cooperative principle is still in play, so we try to understand what the speaker conveys on this basis.

- (42) This sentence in a reference letter . . .
- a. Lee has a nice smile and draws beautiful phrase-structure trees.
  - b. Lee is no good as a linguist.

The letter is not informative enough and we cannot understand that the professor does not have the information. Hence, he is abandoning the maxim of quantity. For the calculation of the implicature, we need to add that professors avoid to say negative aspects of their students in reference letters, and that the person writing the letter is cooperative.

## 8 Conclusions and discussion