What use is 'what is said'?

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Grice's 'what is said': definitions

- "I intend what someone has said to be closely related to the conventional meaning of the words (the sentence) he has uttered"

  (L&C, 1975/1989:25)

- "Utterer said that p" =

  Utterer did something *x*

  (1) by which U meant that *p*

  (2) which is the occurrence of an utterance type S (sentence) such that

  (3) S means '*p*'

  (4) S consists of a sequence of elements (such as words) ordered in a way licensed by a system of rules (syntactical rules)

  (5) S means '*p*' in virtue of the particular meanings of the elements of S, their order, and their syntactical character"

  (UMI, 1969/1989: 87)

☞ **Compositional / sentence meaning + reference to speaker**

Grice's 'what is said': the fine print

- ▪ "the more problematic of these assumptions, […] connected with the meaning of the word *say*."

- ▪ "Given a knowledge of the English language but no knowledge of the circumstances of the utterance, one would know something about what the speaker had said, on the assumption that he was speaking standard English, and speaking literally."

  ☞ **Sentence meaning**

- ▪ "But for a full identification of what the speaker had said, one would need to know
  - ○ **(a) the identity of *x*,**
  - ○ **(b) the time of utterance, and**
  - ○ **(c) the meaning, on the particular occasion of utterance, of [any ambiguous phrases].**   (L&C 1975/1989: 25)

  ☞ **Sentence meaning + reference assignment + disambiguation**

Bach's 'what is said'
(1999, 2001, 2005, 2006, forth.)

- **Content of speaker's locutionary act**

- **Subject to the Syntactic Correlation constraint**

- **Specified by speaker's semantic (linguistic) intention**

- **Non truth-conditional**

☞ **the sentence's semantic content relative to a context + resolution of ambiguity**

'What is said' and speaker's meaning

- **S does not say what S intends to say**
  - e.g., slips of the tongue, misuse of words

- **S says sth and means sth else *instead***
  - e.g., non literality

- **S says sth and means sth else *as well***
  - e.g., implicatures, indirect speech acts

- **S says sth and doesn't mean anything at all**
  - e.g., translating, reciting, rehearsing

'What is said' and conventionalised ISAs

- **Two-part responses** (Clark 1979, Clark & Schunk 1980), **e.g.,**

  A: *Can you pass the salt?*

  B: *Yes, here you are* **((passes))**

  Q   **R**

  direct/literal   **indirect**

- **Literal reply matched direct/literal meaning of ISA**
  - **in form** (yes/no + assertion fragment, e.g. I can/you may)
  - **in meaning** (whether reply was included + how it was modified depended on ISA's literal meaning)

☞**Multiple-meaning process:**
both literal and indirect are accessible

Comparing literal and indirect meanings of ISAs

- **Non equivalence of two parts**
  - ordering: literal first
  - different interactional consequences if only one is provided:
    - no reply to literal meaning > impoliteness
    - no reply to indirect meaning > uncooperativeness

  What kind of meaning is the literal meaning?

Literal meaning as 'what is said' in conventionalised ISAs

Literal meaning cannot be

- **the explicature / impliciture**
  - indirect meaning would have to be implicature;
    no difference conv/ed vs. non-conv/ed ISAs

    (indirect meaning may of course be higher-order explicature, but is there enough difference between explicatures of different orders to capture non-equivalence of literal and indirect meanings in ISAs?)

- **sentence meaning**
  - ambiguities resolved
    e.g., Can you VP? = knowledge vs. (physical) ability cf.
    A: *Can you play the piano?*
    B: *Yes, but I sprained my thumb and I can't play for a while* (Q only)
    B: *Yes, but I can't on Thursday* (Q+R)

☞ **Literal meaning is 'what is said' in ISAs**

Replying to 'what is said' in ISAs
(Clark 1979, Clark & Schunk 1980)

- **Conventionality**

  the more conventionalised, the less wis replied to
  - **conventionality of means**
    - **no reply to literal meaning** (just R)
  - **conventionality of form (entails conventionality of means)**
    - **reply to opposite of literal meaning** *(Would you mind? Yes, ...)*

- **Politeness**

  the more polite, the more wis replied to

Recalling 'what is said' in ISAs (Holtgraves 1997, 2005)

- **Conventionality**

  the more conventionalised, the less wis recalled

  - **recall of explicit performative instead of conv/ed ISA**

  - **recall of conv/ed ISAs better in unexpected context**
    - ☞ conventionalisation relative to context

  - **recall of conv/ed ISAs better than for unconv/ed ISAs??**
    - ☞ online reconstruction

Acquiring 'what is said' in ISAs (Snow et al. 1993)

- "Direct teaching of the child about **what forms to use in various situations**" is an important source of information about politeness.

    (1) What's the time?
    (2) Can you tell me the time?
    (3) Do you know what time it is?
    (4) I'm sorry to bother you, but you wouldn't happen to know the time, would you?

- (1)-(4)
    - are not interchangeable in different contexts
    - must be taught as different
    - do not differ in communicated content (explicature)
    - do differ in sentence meaning
    - but they also differ in more than that: only one meaning of ambiguous formulae operative for successful speech acts

      ☞ **(1)-(4) differ in 'what is said'**

Summing up

- **'What is said' corresponds to the semantic content of the speaker's locutionary act.**

- **'What is said' can be made consciously accessible, although normally it is not.**

- **'What is said' distinguishes conventionalised formulae for the same act from each other.**

- **As such, 'what is said' plays a direct role in replies to, memory for, and the acquisition of, conventionalised ISAs.**

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