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メタデータ	言語: en 出版者: Kansai Gaidai University. Intercultural Research Institute 公開日: 2016-09-05 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: De Sousa Melo, Candida メールアドレス: 所属: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte
URL	https://doi.org/10.18956/00005389

Intentionality and Meaning in Natural languages

Candida de Sousa Melo

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte

candida.jaci@gmail.com

Abstract

In the logical tradition of analytical philosophy, to understand the meaning of an utterance is to understand its truth conditions. In the tradition of natural language analysis, meaning is related to the use of language. Since Grice, meaning is linked to speakers' attitudes and actions. Following Austin, Searle and Vanderveken, to mean is to use words with the *intention* of performing *illocutionary acts*. Such acts have *felicity conditions* instead of truth conditions. The aim of this paper is to clarify the nature of meaning in the second trend of the contemporary philosophy of language. In my view, to mean something is mainly to attempt to perform *illocutionary acts*. Every attempt is an *intentional* action rather than an attitude. I will characterize the nature of the act of meaning and analyse its felicity conditions.

1. Introduction

Following many philosophers, any adequate analysis of the nature of linguistic meaning must clarify the basic links between mind, language and world. In the contemporary philosophical analysis of natural language¹ and of mind in general, any account of the role and place of meaning in discursive interactions has to explain how the words that we use can represent both our ideas and the things to which we refer, and how our mind can establish a correspondence between language and the world.

¹ Like W. G. Lycan (1999 , p. 673–676). I use the expression «natural language» instead of «ordinary language» to refer to languages developed through time by human communities in opposition to formal or artificial languages invented by mathematicians, logicians and computer engineers.

From the point of view of Grice (1957), Austin (1962), Searle (1979, 1983), Vanderveken (1990, 2013) and others, the representational character of language and the mind is based on their *directionality*. Whenever we use words and express ideas we are *directed* towards objects and facts of the world. This is logically linked to the *intentionality* of human agents according to Brentano (1874). Thanks to our intentionality, we can link our ideas to the words that we use and to the facts of the world that we represent. In traditional philosophy of mind, human agents are directed towards objects and facts in two different ways: in the mode of *sensorial perception* and in the mode of a *conceptual representation*. When we have visual, oral, auditory, gustative and tactile perceptions, we have *sensorial presentations* of the facts towards which our mind is directed.² When we have mental states like beliefs, desires, intentions, when we perform mental acts like judgements and elementary illocutions like assertions, promises and directives we refer to objects under concepts and we have *conceptual propositional representations* of the facts towards which our mind is directed. Propositional attitudes and elementary illocutions are paradigmatic cases of conceptual representations; *propositional attitudes* have a proper *psychological mode* and *elementary illocutions* a proper *force* in addition to their *propositional content*. As Frege³ pointed out, we always indirectly refer to objects through concepts in expressing propositions. So concepts as well as properties and relations that we predicate are propositional constituents.

On the basis of such considerations, we can conclude that intentionality is the key of the relation between mind, language and world. On one hand, intentionality enables us to have access to the world in which we live (thanks to our five senses and conceptual representations) and, on the other hand, it gives us the possibility to transform the world as we need or want (thanks to our actions).

Since Grice's analysis⁴, the notion of meaning is related to intentional properties. It now belongs to the field of philosophy of mind and action as well as to the field of

² The features of our conscious sensorial impressions are distinct from the features of objects perceived. In order to be real perceptions, our sensorial presentations of facts must of course be caused by them. Otherwise, they are hallucinations. The features of our conscious sensorial impressions are distinct from the features of objects perceived.

³ This account was developed by Frege (1971).

⁴ Paul Grice is may be the first contemporary philosopher to sustain the idea that linguistic meaning is completely derived form human thoughts (attitudes). In his paper (1957) Grice wants to reduce the meaning of utterances to speakers' intentions.

philosophy of language. Grice analysed meaning in mental terms. According to him, meaning is derived from the intentions, beliefs and actions of interlocutors. Of course the words of a language are bearers of meaning in virtue of conventions adopted by the linguistic community of agents who use that language⁵. But moreover the particular meaning of specific utterances depends on the speaker's intentions. Grice defends the idea that the meaning and communication are ontologically dependent on the speaker's intentionality. His notion of speaker's meaning is based on certain propositional attitudes, namely *the speaker's intentions to produce certain effects on the hearer(s)*. Whoever makes an assertion intends to convince the hearer of the truth of the asserted proposition. Whoever gives an order intends to influence the hearer's behavior by trying to get him to carry out the ordered action. According to Grice, illocutions are then related to intentions to perform perlocutionary acts like acts of convincing and of influencing hearers.

The basic notions of the taxonomy of speech acts are due to Austin (1962) who was influenced by Frege (1970, 1977)'s considerations on meaning.⁶ In Frege's philosophy of language⁷, forces, senses and denotations are the three basic components of sentence meaning. According to Austin, agents who use language in order to mean something to someone, have in addition to the intention of producing oral sounds or graphic signs the intention of performing speech acts that he called *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary acts*. Here is an example which serves to distinguish these three types of speech acts. When an agent uses the sentence "Plato, my neighbour's dog, is a very wild animal" he or she intends to perform: first, a *locutionary act*: namely to produce tokens of the words of that sentence and to use its subject and verb phrases respectively to *refer* to Plato (the dog of his neighbour) and to *predicate* of that dog the property of being a very wild animal⁸, second, an *illocutionary act*: namely to assert the proposition that Plato, his neighbour's dog, is a very wild animal, and third a *perlocutionary act*: namely to get the hearer to pay attention to the represented fact.

⁵ Thanks to intentionality, the agents can attribute to objects and physical events like graphic and oral signs semantic properties they do not have intrinsically. See Searle (1998) *Mind, Language and Society* Basic Books.

⁶ See *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* edited by P. Geach & M. Black, Basil Blackwell, 1970 and Frege *Logical Investigations*. Yale University Press, 1977.

⁷ See M. Dummett (1981). *Frege: Philosophy of Language*.

⁸ According to Austin locutionary acts contain *phonetic acts* of producing sounds, *phatic acts* of uttering words and *rhetic acts* of using them in order to refer.

Austin contributed to clarify illocutionary features of meaning. He first came to distinguish *performative* utterances from *constative* utterances. Constative utterances are by definition *true* whenever their propositional content represents a fact existing in the world and they are *false* otherwise. Unlike constative utterances, performative utterances are neither true or false but rather *felicitous* or *infelicitous* according to Austin. Thanks to felicitous performative utterances, speakers have the power not only to describe but also to transform the world by doing what they say. As Austin pointed out, in the performative use of language, speakers *do things with words*. By making felicitous utterances of performative sentences like “I promise you to come” they perform present actions represented by used performative verbs just by saying by they perform these actions by virtue of their utterance. Later, Austin generalized his theory. He admitted that even in making constative utterances of declarative sentences like “It is raining”, speakers intend to perform assertive illocutionary acts. Thus Austin gave to meaning a pragmatic dimension and insisted on the primacy of illocutionary acts. After all, meaning is linked to different kinds of speech acts that we do in language use and primarily to illocutions.

Grice, Austin and later other contemporary philosophers of language like Searle and Vanderveken (1985) have contributed to a systematic analysis of mental and illocutionary features of meaning. According to these authors, the basic units of meaning and communication in the use and comprehension of natural languages are entire illocutionary acts with felicity conditions instead of propositions with truth conditions. From their point of view, meaning and speech acts are inseparable. In their view, in order to be able to speak and understand a natural language, linguistically competent speakers must first of all be able to perform and understand certain speech acts, in particular illocutions. For that reason, their analysis of meaning and communication establish a link between mind, language and action. On one hand, our mind needs language to fully describe and change the world. On another hand, our meaningful use and comprehension of language require that we, competent speakers and hearers, are provided with intentionality and even conscience so that we can *have* and *form* certain types of *mental states* (above all beliefs, intentions and desires) and moreover *make* certain speech *acts* (above all acts of utterance, of reference and predication and illocutionary and perlocutionary acts).

My primary aim here is to further analyse the very nature of meaning. In my view, in order to mean and communicate something, speakers must inevitably attempt to perform illocutionary acts which are, as I said, acts of conceptual thoughts directed at objects and facts of the world. Now as Vanderveken (2005, 2008) pointed out, *attempts* are *per se intrinsically intentional actions* that agents make rather than *attitudes* that they have. Consequently meaning does not reduce to speaker's *attitudes* as Grice thought, but rather to speaker's *attempts at performing illocutions* which are speech acts of a new kind that neither Grice nor Searle considered.⁹ Such attempts can succeed or fail. Thus meaning does not require the successful performance of attempted illocutions, as many philosophers and linguists wrongly think. In my view whoever attempts to perform a public illocution by emitting signs makes a meaningful utterance, no matter whether he succeeds or fails to perform the attempted illocution. Notice that not all attempts that agents make in order to mean and communicate are acts of conceptual thoughts like attempts at performing illocutionary acts. Some are non verbal and non conceptual voluntary attempts to move the body in order to emit sounds or produce graphic or gestural signs. Acts of utterance require a voluntary movement of the speaker's body. I have made introductory and historical remarks on meaning in the first section. I will now successively analyse the very nature and the felicity conditions of the act of meaning in the second and third sections. I will present my results in the conclusion.

2. The nature of meaning

Traditionally, linguistic meaning is considered as a basic relation between language and the world. This relation is established thanks to sentences which are syntactic combinations of words serving to represent things and facts about which we speak. However, words and sentences are not *per se* bearers of meaning. Their use is not sufficient for meaning. Similarly facts that we represent do not have *per se* meaning. What is, then, the very nature of meaning?

To answer this question, I will assume on the basis of previous considerations that agents who really mean something perform certain intentional, conscious and rational

⁹ See Vanderveken (2013) "Towards a Formal Discourse Pragmatics".

acts in making their utterances. In my view, artificial agents (like machines and robots) which follow programs but are deprived of consciousness and intentionality do not really mean and understand what they say when they contribute to so-called intelligent automatic dialogues. They just simulate meaning and understanding as Searle (1980) pointed out in his Chinese room argument. Human agents are in principle free to choose the sentences that they use and they select their words with the purpose of performing illocutionary acts provided with felicity conditions that they represent. In Speech Act Theory, the main felicity conditions of illocutionary acts are their conditions of success and of satisfaction.¹⁰ Obviously, the existence of objects and facts in reality is in general ontologically independent from the thinking agents. However, without these agents, used signs and represented objects and facts would not have any role in semiotic systems. For, semantic attributes or functions are not intrinsic to signs and even utterances. Human agents create and determine the meaning possibilities by virtue of their own intentionality.

There are two trends in contemporary philosophy of language. The logical trend founded by Frege and Russell explains how language is linked to the world and analyses meaning mainly thanks to the theory of reference and of truth. Traditionally, in the theory of truth by correspondence, a sentence expresses a true proposition when it represents an existing fact in the world.¹¹ According to the logical trend, the primary objective of semantics is to analyse the truth conditions of expressed propositions. According to most philosophers of the logical trend, we understand the meaning of declarative utterances when we understand the truth conditions of expressed propositional contents. Unlike others, Frege¹² noticed that many meaningful utterances do not serve to make assertions but other kinds of speech acts. He pointed out that interrogative sentences serve to ask questions, imperative sentences to give directives and exclamatory sentences to express attitudes. He discovered that meaningful utterances have a *force* in addition to a propositional content and argued that *force* is a component of meaning in addition to *sense* and *denotation*. Frege's discovery of forces influenced very much Austin who used

¹⁰ Felicity conditions are now considered in the theory of intentionality and the general theory of action.

¹¹ Of course propositions can have different truth values in different possible circumstances. The proposition that it is raining in Brasilia is true at certain moments and false at other moments of utterance.

¹² See his paper « The thought ». (In French: 1971).

Frege's term¹³ in his general theory of speech acts but did not make any reference to Frege's ideas in his book *How to do things with words* that became central in the development of speech act theory in the trend of natural language analysis.

According to Grice, Austin, Searle and Vanderveken and most philosophers of the trend of natural language analysis, speakers who use language in order to represent facts link the propositional contents that they express to the world with various illocutionary forces. They mainly intend to perform particular speech acts of the type called by Austin illocutionary acts which have felicity¹⁴ rather than truth conditions. The success conditions of an elementary illocution are the conditions that must be fulfilled in a context of utterance in order that the speaker succeeds in performing that act in that context. A condition of success of a promise is that the speaker commits himself to doing something. The notion of a satisfaction condition (Searle) is a generalisation of the notion of truth that covers all illocutionary force. Just as an assertion is satisfied when it is true, a promise is satisfied when it is kept, a command when it is obeyed and a request when it is granted. In speech act theory, in order to understand a meaningful utterance one must understand under which conditions the speaker succeeds in performing the intended illocutionary act and what must happen in the world in order that that act be satisfied. The theory of meaning must then analyze mental and illocutionary features of illocutions in addition to the truth conditions of propositions.

As I said earlier, Grice and Austin were the first to contribute to the analysis of mental and illocutionary aspects of the meaning. Searle (1969) (1979) who studied in Oxford under the direction of Austin further developed speech act theory and improved the analysis of meaning of his two Oxford masters. Like them he claimed that meaning was logically linked to language use, speakers' attitudes and particularly to intended illocutionary acts.¹⁵ But he went farther and developed a new and more adequate taxonomy of illocutionary acts¹⁶ and performative verbs¹⁷. He made important critical

¹³ Frege used the German term « Kraft » that means force. Austin translated in English Frege's book *Foundations of Arithmetic*.

¹⁴ The terms « illocutionary » and « felicity » come from Austin's terminology.

¹⁵ See Searle, 1969, chap. 2.

¹⁶ See his paper "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts". (1975). In K. Gunderson (ed.) *Language, Mind and Knowledge*.

¹⁷ See chapter 9 of Searle and Vanderveken (1985). *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*. CUP.

remarks against Austin's notion of locutionary act¹⁸ and introduced the new notions of *act of utterance* and *propositional act*. Acts of utterance serve to utter tokens of sentences. Propositional acts serve to express entire propositional contents. Searle also analysed important components of force like illocutionary points and preparatory conditions. In the eighties he developed entirely new ideas on language use when he developed his philosophy of mind in books like *Intentionality* and *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. Searle's analysis of meaning is now integrated in his general theory of intentionality, consciousness and action. Let us now consider some of Searle new ideas.

Searle criticised Grice in distinguishing sharply the meaning intention from the communication intention. According to him:

“We need a clear distinction between representation and communication. Characteristically a man who makes statements both intends to represent some fact or state of affairs and intends to communicate this representation to his hearers. But his representing intention is not the same as his communication intention. Communicating is a matter of producing certain effects on one's hearers, but one can intend to represent something without caring at all about the effects on one's hearers. (Searle, 1983, 165).

Searle defends here two important ideas: First, he underlines the link between meaning and representation. There is no meaning without representation. The intention to represent is part of the meaning intention. On the other hand, he makes a clear distinction between meaning and communication. According to him, the relation between the two types of intentions is not symmetric. For one can intend to represent without intending to communicate. For example: “One can make a statement without intending to produce conviction or beliefs on one's hearers or without to get them to believe that the speaker believes what he says or indeed without even intending to get them to understand it at all. There are therefore, two aspects to meaning intentions, the intention to represent and the intention to communicate”. (Searle, 1983, *Ibidem*). Thus the communication intention depends on the meaning intention but not the opposite.

¹⁸ Searle 1968: « Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts ». *Philosophical Review*, vol lxxvii, n° 4.

On Searle's approach, we can have private thoughts in mind without being obliged to communicate them to anybody. Naturally, we can, in principle, always publicly express and communicate our private thoughts using a public language.¹⁹ Such a communication is even necessary when we want to interact with others. However, and this is very important, we can express thoughts without wanting to communicate. It is the reason why Searle and Vanderveken (1985) pointed out:

“First, we need to distinguish those acts that require an overt public performance from those which can be performed in silent soliloquy. Declaring war and resigning from office require a public performance, conjecturing and asserting do not. All hearer-directed acts where the hearer is not identical with the speaker require a public performance.” (1985, p. 180).

In short, we can, in our mind, represent how things are and even, I will add, commit ourselves to future actions, without being obliged to communicate that to anyone. On Searle's analysis, the agent's intention to communicate is simply the intention that the hearer understands his or her meaning intention. One can sometimes have the meaning intention without having the communication intention but the converse is impossible. Many assertive and commissive illocutions do not require a public performance. Only in particular cases where the success of the attempted illocutionary act requires a public performance directed at a different hearer, one cannot intend to mean without intending to communicate. Thus, we cannot accept an offer, supplicate, command or fire someone else without intending to communicate our meaning intention to that person. Nevertheless, the two intentions can be logically distinguished: for they have different conditions of satisfaction. Suppose I promise to help someone who does not understand my utterance. Because of a noise, he was unable to hear my words. I have tried to make that promise. So, I have meant something even if I failed to communicate.

¹⁹ Searle (1969) advocated a general principle of expressibility of conceptual thoughts. Any agent who has a conceptual thought can in principle express that thought by using language.

Later Searle adopted an evolutionary point of view for meaning which is a consequence of his evolutionary approach of the mind. He argued that meaning is a type of intentionality of a very sophisticated level which only human beings can have:

From an evolutionary point of view, just as there is an order to priority in the development, language and meaning, at least in the sense in which humans have language and meaning, come very late. Many species other than humans have sensory perception and intentional action, and several species, certainly the primates, have beliefs, desires, and intentions, but very few species, perhaps only humans, have the peculiar but also biologically based form of Intentionality we associate with language and meaning. (1983, p. 160).

In his view, language and meaning are peculiar to the human species. Because meaning requires the understanding of felicity conditions of attempted speech acts, he argues that meaning is a matter of imposing conditions of satisfaction on conditions of satisfaction:

The key element in the analysis of meaning intentions is simply this: For most types of speech acts, meaning intentions are at least in part intentions to represent, and an intention to represent is an intention that the physical events which constitute part of the conditions of satisfaction (in the sense of things required) of the intention should themselves have conditions of satisfaction (in sense of requirement). (Searle, 1983, p. 167-8), author's italics).

Let us remember that in philosophy of mind the notion of a condition of satisfaction is also a generalisation of the notion of truth that covers all psychological modes. Just as *beliefs* are *satisfied* when they are *true*, *desires* are satisfied when they are *realised* and *intentions* when they are *executed*. In Searle's analysis, the agent imposes to the satisfaction conditions of his first intention (to utter a token of the selected sentence) the satisfaction conditions of his second more important intention (to perform the intended illocutionary act). He wants to make his utterance with the intention to perform

a certain illocutionary act and this attempted act is what he means. Thus Searle proposes a more unified theory of language use: speech act theory is now based on the theory of intentionality and the theory of meaning is based on the two theories.

But what is exactly the process of imposing conditions of satisfaction to other conditions of satisfaction in Searle's philosophy? In order to answer this question I will analyse in detail in the next section the felicity conditions of the act of meaning conceived as a linguistic attempt to perform an illocution. What are its proper success and satisfaction conditions? Attempts to perform speech acts are by nature intrinsically intentional actions that speakers can only make voluntarily. As Vanderveken (2008, 2014) pointed out²⁰, attempts are necessarily successful actions, in the sense that whoever attempts to make an attempt *eo ipso* makes that attempt by forming his or her intention to make it. Unlike most other actions, it is sufficient to attempt to make an attempt in order to make it. However any agent who makes an attempt intends to do something else. He or she has another more important objective that he or she wants to achieve by making that attempt. The objective of an attempt to raise one's hand is to raise the hand. In order to achieve an objective an agent must make a good attempt in the right circumstance. One can form the intention to raise one's hand without succeeding in raising it when one is prevented. An attempt is by definition *satisfied* if and only if the agent succeeds in achieving its objective.

In my view, to mean is first of all to attempt to use words of a sentence. The speaker achieves the objective of that first attempt when he or she succeeds in producing a token of the chosen sentence. When the agent does not succeed in uttering the right words (he is unable to produce their tokens) or when he utters wrong words (he makes a slip of the tongue), his first intention is not executed and he fails to make the intended utterance. When the agent succeeds in making the intended utterance and means what he says, that utterance constitutes a second attempt to perform the illocutionary act expressed by the uttered sentence. Doing this act of utterance, the agent makes more than sounds or marks; he gives moreover a meaning to the words that he uses in the context. He utters them in order to perform the expressed illocutionary act. He therefore adds to

²⁰ See his papers « Attitudes, tentatives et actions ». In D. Vanderveken & D. Fiset (2008), and "Intentionality and Minimal Rationality in the Logic of Action". In T. Müller (2014).

the conditions of satisfaction of the first attempt (whose sole objective is to utter the right sentence), the conditions of satisfaction of the second attempt (whose purpose is to perform the intended illocutionary act). In summary, in any meaningful utterance the speaker intends to utter a sentence with the intention to perform an illocutionary act mentally or publicly. The conditions of satisfaction of the main attempt are identical with the success conditions of the intended illocutionary act.

3. Conditions of felicity of the act of meaning

In speech act theory, illocutionary acts are intrinsically intentional actions. We cannot perform them involuntarily. Performed illocutions are always attempted. The success conditions of elementary illocutionary acts of the form $F(P)$ with a force F and a propositional content P are defined with precision in *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*. Here are conditions of success of acts of meaning given the nature of attempted illocutionary acts. As I said earlier, in order to make an attempt, it is sufficient to *form the intention* to make that attempt. Some attempts to move the body are more difficult than others. It is relatively easy to form the intention to raise one's hand. It is more difficult to form the intention to make other body movements like to jump higher than 2 and half meters. The same holds for attempts to perform illocutionary acts. It is relatively easy to form the intention to assert one's existence. It is more difficult to form the intention to confirm Goldbach's conjecture. Any agent who tries to perform an elementary illocutionary act of the form $F(P)$ in a context must attempt to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) First, he must try to make the right utterance in order to express the intended illocutionary act. For that purpose, he must make certain body movements. In the case of oral utterances, he must activate vocal cords, larynx, muscles of the mouth (tongue, lips, jaw), in the case of written utterances, he must move muscles of the arm, hand and fingers. In the philosophy of action, such voluntary attempts to move the body are presentations rather than representations of the attempted act. They are by nature non conceptual actions.

- 2) In making his utterance, the agent must perform the right propositional act, that is to say express the propositional content P of the attempted illocutionary act. For that purpose he must make adequate acts of reference and of predication. Whoever expresses a proposition predicates properties or relations to objects of reference. Moreover, he understands under which conditions that proposition is true.
- 3) In making his utterance, the agent must also express the illocutionary force F and relate the propositional content P to the world with that force. Whoever expresses an illocutionary force has in mind all its components.²¹ Whoever attempts to perform an illocution knows under which conditions he can succeed.
- 4) For that reason, the agent must try to achieve the illocutionary point of force F on the propositional content P with the mode of achievement proper to F. Whoever attempts to resign from a position must attempt to terminate his or her tenure of that position by virtue of the utterance.
- 5) He must also express a propositional content P that satisfies the propositional content conditions of the force F in the context of utterance. The propositional content of an attempted prediction must be a future proposition with respect to the moment of the utterance. Predictions are directed towards the future.
- 6) He must moreover presuppose that all preparatory conditions of illocutionary act F(P) are fulfilled in the context of utterance. Whoever attempts to make a promise must presuppose that the promised action is good for the hearer.
- 7) Finally, the agent must attempt to express with the degree of strength of F all mental states that enter in the sincerity conditions of the illocution F(P). Whoever attempts to apologise must try to express his regret.

By virtue of its intentional nature, the act of meaning is directed towards reality. It has conditions of success. I have distinguished the different kinds of actions that an act of meaning contains: attempts to move the body and to perform speech acts like acts of utterance, propositional acts, acts of presupposition and attempts to achieve illocutionary points and to express attitudes and. In order to make all these attempts the agent must

²¹ The components of a force are its illocutionary point, mode of achievement of point, propositional content, preparatory and sincerity conditions and its degree of strength.

form at the moment of utterance the corresponding intentions-in-action.²² In that case, he succeeds in making a meaningful utterance. For short, a meaning act is successful in a context when the agent *forms* the intention to perform all constitutive actions of the attempted illocution. The agent executes his meaning intention when he succeeds to perform the attempted illocution. As I already said, the satisfaction conditions of an attempt are the success conditions of the attempted action. As one can expect, acts of meaning with stronger satisfaction conditions have stronger conditions of success. When an illocution strongly commits the speaker to another, whoever attempts to perform the first illocution attempts to perform the second. One cannot attempt to make a prediction without attempting to make an assertion.

4. Conclusion

On the basis of previous considerations, I will give short answers to questions raised on the nature of meaning.

First question: What is meaning in language use?

Meaning is before all an act. To mean linguistically is to make double attempt: first to try to move one's body in order to utter words, second to try to perform thanks to one's utterance an illocutionary act. The first attempt to move the body is neither conceptual nor verbal. The second attempt is a conceptual thought. The act of meaning has both a presentational and a representational aspect.

The second question is linked to the first: Why do we make a distinction between the act of meaning and the illocutionary act?

We mean something when we attempt to perform an illocution, no matter whether we succeed or fail. In order to mean something it is sufficient to attempt to perform an illocution. For that purpose it is sufficient to form the intention to make that attempt. However in order to succeed to perform an attempted illocution, one must make a good attempt and use appropriate words in the right context. For example, in order to *give* an object to someone, one must well name that object and also possess it. Whoever uses a wrong name of the object that he wants to give or refers to a wrong object fails to give the

²² See chapter 3 of Searle (1983) on intentions in actions.

object in question. However, he meant something when he tried to give it. From a logical point of view, the success of the meaning act is independent from the success of the attempted illocution. Only the satisfaction of the meaning act depends of the success of the attempted illocution.

Third question: What are they the essential features of the act of meaning?

Because they are attempts, acts of meaning have all features of intrinsically intentional actions. As Vanderveken pointed out, they are personal, voluntary, and free. Only the agent himself can make his own attempts; no one else can make them. Nobody can make an involuntary attempt. Whoever makes an attempt could not make it. So our acts of meaning are free and voluntary like illocutionary acts. However, unlike illocutions which can in general be performed by several people, our acts of meaning are private, in the sense that only an agent himself can mean what he means in making an utterance. Different speakers can of course attempt to perform the same illocution in different contexts but they make these attempts by making different voluntary movements of their body.

The fourth question is linked to the first: What is the direction of fit of the act of meaning?

Acts of meaning like all attempts and intentions have the direction of fit from world to mind. When an agent succeeds in meaning something, his attempt to mean something by his use of language causes his act of meaning. When moreover that agent succeeds performing the attempted illocution, his attempt to perform that illocution causes that very illocution. Similarly, when an agent executes a meaning intention, that intention is a cause of the intended illocution.

The fifth question is linked to the previous one: How is it possible to go from the physical level to the semantic level?

I mentioned above the capacity of the mind to represent objects and facts of the world by the means of conceptual thoughts. As Searle (1995) pointed out, this capacity is linked to the capacity to symbolize which is proper to human mind. We are able to attribute to objects and purely physical entities (like words and their instances) statuses and functions whose they do not have intrinsically. Doing that, we pass from the physical level to the semantic level. So by virtue of our power to represent and to symbolise, we can transform

the world. We can bring about that certain things (words) have in certain conditions semantic properties which are totally foreign to them.

The sixth question is an extension of the previous one: Why do we have to distinguish between linguistic meaning and speaker's meaning?

Words alone cannot mean anything. Only intentional agents who use them in order to express and communicate their thoughts can give them meaning. Linguistic meaning is derived from the intentionality of agents. Agents of linguistic communities can assign a linguistic meaning to word types by adopting conventions. Agents who adopt conventions make declarations. Now when agents use words in order to make a meaningful utterance, they can mean something else than what they say. They can attempt to perform an illocution that is different from the illocution expressed by the sentence that they use. In that case the speaker's meaning is different from the sentence meaning in the context of utterance.

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