

## Preface

Guiding the work of most linguists and philosophers of language today is the assumption that language is governed by rules. Linguists debate over the correct description of the rules of grammar for the various languages, and over the rules of semantics, phonology, morphology, and prosody. And they debate about whether all of these rules are conventional or about which are innately known. A major philosophical literature on the nature of rule following has amassed largely due to the interest in linguistic rules. And because linguistic rules are taken to be at least in large part conventional, another literature has grown up on the nature of conventions. Those devoting attention to the various uses of language debate what the rules are for the performance of various speech acts and whether all speech acts are conventional. They debate what tests will distinguish what has been communicated conventionally, by semantic rule, from what has been communicated only pragmatically. Many believe that it is of the essence of thought itself to follow rules, rules of inference determining the intentional contents of our concepts, and that these rules originate as internalized rules of language. But throughout these discussions and debates, exactly what it is for there to be such things as rules of language remains distressingly unclear.

That the rules of language are not mere uniformities of use follows from the frequency with which they are broken. People lie, they miss-speak, they use broken syntax, they misuse words, and they often willfully flaunt the purported rules with fanciful figures of speech, sarcasm, joking and the like. So, it is thought, the rules must instead be only "normative", "fraught with ought," as Wilfrid Sellars liked to say. But the origin of this normativity remains obscure. From what source do these norms flow? What

sanctions enforce them? What happens, exactly, if you don't follow the rules? There is overwhelming evidence that unlike moral rules, rules of etiquette, rules of the road, rules of games and so forth, nobody teaches children the rules of language. How then do children learn the rules, for example, the conceptual rules or the rules of pragmatics?

This volume presents a different way of viewing the the partial regularities that language displays, the way they express norms and conventions. By "normative" philosophers typically have meant something prescriptive or evaluative, but there are other kinds of norms as well. There are non-evaluative measures from which the facts or from which instances can depart, for example, a simple average is also a kind of norm. I argue that the central norms applying to language are non-evaluative. They are much like those norms of function and behavior that account for the survival and proliferation of biological species. Broadly speaking, they are biological norms. Specific linguistic forms survive and are reproduced together with cooperative hearer responses because often enough these patterns of production and response benefit both speakers and hearers. Like conformity to other biological norms, conformity to these patterns need not be universal or even average. In some cases conformity may not even be particularly common. Conformity is needed only in a critical mass of cases, enough to insure that the cooperative use constituting the norm --the convention-- continues to be copied hence continues to characterize some interactions of some speaker-hearer pairs. Similar norms govern the primitive communication systems of animals, though in that case the reproduction of cooperative patterns of interaction is transmitted genetically rather than culturally, rather than conventionally.

On this view of language it becomes apparent that what needs to be reproduced, often enough, for a given language to survive is not specific conceptual rules, not uniformity in responses to sensory stimulations or uniformity in inference patterns. What must be conserved are only satisfaction conditions concerning distal objects and properties, and essential elements of hearer responses to the various forms constituting a language. Because there need not be inferential uniformities (common "conceptual rules") exhibited within language communities, the psychological processes that support our uses of proper names, of words for kinds, properties and so forth, need to be examined anew. The result is a fairly uncompromising rejection of conceptual analysis as a tool in philosophy.

Another result is that the distinction now generally acknowledged between the propositional content and the force of a linguistic utterance comes at last into very sharp focus. Force emerges as essential to the creation of content rather than as something added to content. A fresh view of the notion of illocutionary force emerges, and because what is conventional in language use involves hearer reactions as well as speaker purposes, the traditional distinction between illocutionary act and perlocutionary act must be rethought. The distinction between linguistic meaning and speaker meaning is also illuminated in a new way as is the semantics/pragmatics distinction, the distinction between what is said and what is meant.

As language is characterized not by rules but (broadly speaking) by biological norms that concern satisfaction conditions and function, so is thought. I have discussed thought at length other places (1984, 1993, 2000, 2004). Here I explore the interface

between language and thought. On the model proposed, neither the Quine-Sellars-Brandom interpretation of thought as internalized language nor the Gricean interpretation of language as externalized thought is correct. Neither the intentionality of thought nor the intentionality of language is derived from the other. Although closely entwined, they have separate origins. Also, the processes involved in understanding language are not well modeled by Grice's analysis. They are modeled better as a form of direct perception of the world as mediated, for example, through the natural signs contained in the structured light that allows vision. The main arguments for this position appear in my (2000, 2004); here I explain the consequences for pragmatics, for how language is understood by adults and for how children learn language.

Many of these chapters had earlier published incarnations, or at least pieces of them did. Their origins are acknowledged in footnotes.

## References Cited

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