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A score-keeping model of covert speech actions

AIM:

- to account for covert speech actions (CSAs) within a score-keeping model of conversational dynamics (Lewis 1979; Langton 2015; Labinaz 2018; Witek 2021).

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The point of insinuation:

- to communicate a certain content without being held accountable for it.

HYPOTHESES:

(H₁)   CSAs can be defined by reference to how they affect the state of conversation ($\rightarrow$ ambivalent effects).

(H₂)   The communicative function of CSAs can be best understood by adopting the concepts of *pretence* (Isaacs & Clark 1999), *etiolation* (Austin 1975), and *showing* (Green 2007, 2009).

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PLAN

1. Questions

2. Camp's (2018) model of insinuating

3. An alternative model

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Q₁ How to account for the communicative character of acts of insinuating?

    Q₁.₁ What is it for an act of insinuating to be communicative?

    Q₁.₂ What does the insinuating speaker communicate?

Q₂ How do acts of insinuating *qua* CSAs affect the state of conversation?

    Q₂.₁ What is the characteristic effect of an act of insinuating?

    Q₂.₂ How to represent it?

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Camp:

- in uttering U, the driver speaker-means:
  $F(\text{P})$ —   an innocuous conversational move,
  $M(\text{Q})$ —   a troublesome and risky speech act, i.e., (1').

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Camp:

- M(Q) construed as an off-record implicature;
- insinuated contents = implicatures with deniability.

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Further question: How is deniability possible?

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  [a] that $M(Q)$ be off-record, and
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$Q_{1.1}$ What is it for an act of insinuating to be communicative?

$A_{1.1}$ The act of insinuating is a *peculiar* act of speaker-meaning

$Q_{1.2}$ What does the insinuating speaker communicate?

$A_{1.1}$ What S speaker-means does not reduce to $M(Q)$, but has two further aspects:

$\rightarrow M(Q)$ is off-record,

$\rightarrow S$ is unwilling to own up to having meant $M(Q)$.

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MW:

- implicatures can be reinforced (Włodarczyk 2019);
- the "force" of insinuating:
  $\rightarrow$ an attempt to shift the responsibility for contributing $M(Q)$ from S to H;
- is this force speaker-meant?

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Q$_{2.1}$ What is the characteristic effect of an act of insinuating?

Camp:

- the effect of insinuating $M(Q)$ = putting $M(Q)$ off-record and thereby minimizing conversational risk ($\rightarrow$ deniability).

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Q$_{2.2}$ How to represent the effect of insinuating and its off-record status?

Camp:

- the insinuated content (or the fact that is speaker-meant) is mutually recognized ($\rightarrow$ **MB**), but S and H are unwilling to acknowledge this;
- therefore, the effect of insinuating is not registered by **CG**; it is not registered by **CR** either.

   CG = "what both parties are prepared to *acknowledge* as mutually obvious" (p. 48)

   CR = "commitments that interlocutors undertake in conversations which they are liable for defending or executing in other contexts" (p. 59)

$$CS = \langle \, \underline{\textbf{MB}}, \, CG, \, CR \, \rangle$$

3. An alternative model

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Ambivalence (Isaacs & Clark 1990)

- in insinuating $M(Q)$, S puts herself in an ambivalent speech situation or takes an ambivalent conversational stance.

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- in insinuating $M(Q)$, S puts herself in an ambivalent speech situation or takes an ambivalent conversational stance.

(*i*) S intends H to adopt $M(Q)$,

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H: "Do you really want me to adopt $M(Q)$?"

(*i*)   → S cannot honestly reply "No, I don't";

(*ii*) → S cannot admit "Yes, I do",

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Serious *versus* etiolated communicative mode (Witek 2022b)

- serious communicative practice consists of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts;
- to adopt the etiolated mode is to exploit the mechanisms of the serious mode to achieve goals which go beyond what the mechanisms have been designed for.

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SM →   in saying that John is a friend, *S* illocutes that John is a friend;

EM →   in saying that John is a friend, *S* evokes a contextually available thought and expresses her dissociative attitude towards it.

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SM →   in uttering *U*, *S* speaker means *F*(P) and speaker means *M*(Q);

EM →   in uttering *U*, *S* speaker means *F*(P) and **shows** her ambivalent stance,
         i.e., she uses her overt pretence to make her ambivalence manifest
         (see Green 2007 on showing, and Isaacs & Clark on overt pretence).

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Q₁.₁   What is it for an act of insinuating to be communicative?

Q₁.₂   What does the insinuating speaker communicates?

A₁.₁: → adopting the etiolated mode;

            → using one's overt pretence to show one's ambivalent communicative stance;

A₁.₂: → S's ambivalent communicative stance

              which involves her intention to get H to adopt $M(Q)$

              and her intention to avoid responsibility for having conveyed $M(Q)$.

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The on-record effect of a speech act:
(a) is recognizable to every hearer who shares our conversational standards,
(b) puts constraints on the scope of available subsequent conversational moves,
(c) can become the topic of conversation (i.e., can be explicitly stated),
(d) the speaker can be held accountable for it.

The ambivalent effect of an act:
      (a) & (b), but not-(c) & not-(d)

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A$_{2.1}$ → the ambivalent effect

A$_{2.2}$ → a score component, i.e., an element of AR

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THANK YOU

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