Betty J. Birner. *Language and Meaning*. Routledge 2017. 156 pp. $95.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9781138218239); $29.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9781138218246).

This book aims to provide newcomers to linguistics and the philosophy of language with an understanding of some of the key aspects of these areas. As such, it is targeted at undergraduates who are new to these topics and the related issues. There are chapters on the philosophical approaches to meaning, semantics, and pragmatics. One appealing point of this book as an introduction is that it makes use of both the philosophy of language and linguistics. There is an impressive array of topics covered in this book; some of the particularly useful sub-topics include (but are not limited to): an introduction to possible world semantics, the use of logic to represent different possible truth-conditions, sense and reference, semantics and syntax, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, implicature, speech acts, and non-canonical word order. This review will predominantly focus on how useful the text might be as a teaching tool for undergraduate courses, where the clarity and range of topics will be relevant. I'll first look at the positive features of the book, and close by raising some concerns.

The reader gets an introduction to problems that motivate a study of language and this then builds to philosophical questions about how to understand meaning, followed by a consideration of how meanings are composed to make sentences. This arc ends with an overview of features of pragmatics. This natural progression from foundational questions through to language use makes the book easy to follow and gives one a good sense of how to understand the various topics in relation to one another.

The writing is very clear and concise, with careful definitions of technical terms as and when they occur. So syntax is defined as 'the study of what a speaker of a language knows about acceptable sentence structures in that language' (80). There is also a helpful index for students who wish to check the definitions of terms. Throughout the book examples are used to illustrate the cases and important points which goes a long way to making the problems accessible. Some of these examples can be found elsewhere and are fairly standard, such as 'Smith's murderer is insane' to illustrate referential and attributive reference (30), but there are also a number of novel examples which help to make the book feel more interesting and possibly more accessible to undergraduates.

The tone is also quite enthusiastic and humorous throughout, and no clarity is lost as a result. For example, an inclusive disjunction is illustrated by 'Consider a situation in which I've introduced you to Harrison Ford at a party (lucky you!), and, a bit unsure of film credits, I tell you: (27) Mr. Ford played Han Solo in *Star Wars* or Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*' (43). This helps to make the book more accessible. The frequent invitations to the reader to imagine the scenarios that are taking place also helps to make the more abstract points concrete and relatable.

There are few criticisms of this book—cases in which it might not be entirely helpful to students. One example of this is '*metonymy*, where a word comes to stand for something closely related to it, as with a *chair* for sitting and the *chair* of a committee' (61). Whilst there is nothing incorrect here, it makes it look as though metonymy is usually conventional, which it needn't be. For instance, 'The ham sandwich wants his bill,' where 'ham sandwich' refers to the person who ordered the sandwich, is not so conventional.

Some other cases don't seem to be so intuitive, which risks the illustrations becoming more opaque than they need to be. So an example in which implicatures don't arise goes as follows:

'Inez: To get into the bar, we all have to be 21.

Juan: No worries; I'm 21.

...if Juan is actually 22 he hasn't lied, since all that's relevant is whether he's *at least* 21' (101). This seems likely to appear to be a lie to some undergraduates, however. This is because a reading on which Juan states that he is at least 21 and not older could be most salient to them. Understood in this way, it appears that for Juan to have been cooperative, he would have had to intend to implicate that he is at least 21, which seems to be the opposite kind of case to the one that the example is intended to illustrate. Whilst this is not the only reading of Juan's utterance available, it seems that it is one that will be salient to many undergraduates. Fortunately, it has an accompanying example which is much clearer. Whilst instances such as this are *very* rare in this book, they do still occur.

On the whole the book assumes a combinatorial approach to meaning, making use of a classical Gricean approach. Yet, this is something Birner clearly indicates so as to avoid misleading a reader into thinking that this is the only option available. However some of the definitions of key terms that are given may make them difficult to apply to certain contemporary positions. For instance, it is said that 'semantic meaning is *truth-conditional* and pragmatic meaning is *non-truth-conditional*' (6). Yet this is clearly a definition which would be rejected by more radical contextualist views such as those of Travis and Carston (*"*Pragmatics" in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, Blackwell, 1997; *Thoughts and Utterances: The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*, Blackwell, 2002). Whilst this is only one of several ways of framing the difference that Birner gives, there is a worry that not flagging these issues may make things confusing for students who wish to pursue questions about the nature of semantic or pragmatic content in more detail. This seems to be especially prevalent given that many in the philosophy of language subscribe to contextualist views according to which pragmatic inferences are necessary for deriving a proposition.

Whilst the coverage in the book is typically very good and fair, there are a few cases where the drawbacks of a view could be clearer. For instance, there is not much discussion of some of the criticisms of the Gricean approach to pragmatics. One question that arises is what to do when there are several possible implicatures that could be generated by an utterance: which do we select? There may also be cases in which someone has said more than they strictly speaking had to in order to answer a question. For instance, "Are you well?" would minimally require a yes or no answer, but most people will say a little more than this. In doing so it seems as though they violate the maxim of quantity. Yet it is not obvious that an implicature is generated in every such instance where one gives more than a yes/no answer.

There are also some larger debates which do not get a mention or much of a treatment. This seems inevitable for such an introductory text, but some of these *may* prove problematic for an introductory course. One debate that gets left out is that between usage-based accounts of language acquisition and universal grammarians. That these debates don't get a mention reflects that this seems to be more of a philosophy of language text which makes use of linguistics rather than a linguistics text book, as well as a tendency for people to teach one theory or the other. Whilst this is nothing unusual, it would have added an interesting new feature to the text.

The final chapter includes references to further reading, and briefly mentions some of the topics that are not covered in the book. For instance, Birner mentions that a 'related issue is precisely where to draw the line between semantics and pragmatics' (142) which is not discussed a great deal in the book, but may be important for an introductory course to cover. For instance, questions like whether the broadening or narrowing of a concepts extension counts as an implicature, or falls into the category of what is said. These are ongoing debates in the field, but, given how lively recent debate on these topics has been, they are quite likely to be included in an undergraduate course. Had Birner included an overview of this debate with her usual clarity, it might have made the book a more useful introduction.

On the whole, this is a very good, short, introduction to the topic of language and meaning. It should serve very well in providing a platform from which students can start to address the issues in both semantics and pragmatics. It also does well to make what can be a jargon heavy and confusing field accessible. So whilst some debates are left out, it should be easier for students to approach them having read this book.

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