

Davidson's Literal Theory of Metaphor

- Davidson rejects two kinds of theories: two meaning theories and simile theories.
- Two meanings
 - Metaphors have an ambiguous meaning (Objection: we don't hesitate, and there's no resolution, to interpretation.)
 - Metaphors are puns. (Objection: there is no waffling between two meanings.)
 - Metaphors have a literal and figurative/extended meaning. (Objection: these meanings would not be distinguishable from a broader literal meaning.)

Davidson's Literal Theory of Metaphor

- Simile theories
 - Elliptical: a metaphor is like a conjunction, it's just shorthand for a simile. (Objection: but don't we think that there is a literal meaning to the metaphor? If so, then elliptical theory is wrong.)
 - Simile meaning: the metaphor's meaning is identical to the meaning of a relevant simile. (Objection: this collapses into a two-meaning theory of the kind he has already rejected. Take "My love is a rose" to mean My love is like a rose. That's the literal meaning. But now what is the meaning of "My is like a rose"? Attractive, short-lived, etc. But these are additional meanings, not there in the literal meaning (which is just a likeness statement). So we have returned to a literal/figurative framework and explained nothing or at least simplified not at all.)

Davidson's Literal Theory of Metaphor

- His literal theory is that a metaphor means only what it literally says.
- We see the statement is false.
- This causes us to reflect, and then to “see” in a new way the thing or situation described.
- This is a psychological theory.
- Consider the duck rabbit. We see it in different ways, our perspective shifting from one perception to another. This (he hopes) is analogous to the effect of metaphor.

Homework. My attempt.

- “You’re it!” (In a game of tag.)
- **Propositional content:**
 - The hearer is now the person being avoided.
- **Preparatory:**
 - Hearer is playing the game and can play the game.
 - Speaker is playing the game and can play the game.
 - Hearer was not the person being avoided at the time of the utterance.
 - Speaker was it and touched the hearer.
- **Sincerity:**
 - Speaker intends to play the game and avoid hearer.
 - Speaker intends to be the person avoided if the hearer touches the speaker.
- **Essential:**
 - The utterance obligates hearer to act as person being avoided, and to seek contact.
 - The utterance obligates the speaker to act as a person being chased, and to elude contact.

Pragmatic Theory of Metaphor (Martinich). Background/Toolkit.

- Grice's four maxims of speech acts
 - 1. Quality:**
 - a. Do not say what is false, and
 - b. Do not say that for which you lack sufficient evidence.
 - 2. Relation:** be relevant.
 - 3. Quantity:** make your utterance as informative as is necessary (to express your meaning or achieve your intent).
 - 4. Manner:** be clear, unambiguous, brief.

Pragmatic Theory of Metaphor (Martinich). Background/Toolkit.

- **Saying**
 - **Saying-that**: where the intended meaning and literal meaning are the same.
 - **Making-as-if-to-say**: the intended meaning and the literal meaning are **not** the same.
- **Implication**
 - **Linguistic**: this is like logical implication (the utterance implies what must be true if the utterance is true)
 - **Non-linguistic**: this depends upon extra-linguistic information, such as norms about speech (the utterance combined with various kinds of social knowledge together imply something).

Pragmatic Theory of Metaphor (Martinich).

- (Most, normal) Metaphors flaunt the maxim of quality. E.g., the speaker says “U” and U is obviously false.
- If we assume that the speaker is following the norms of speech (including Grice’s four maxims), then we conclude (as a matter of non-linguistic implication) that the speaker only **makes-as-if-to-say U**.
- The next non-linguistic implication that we draw is that we should treat the metaphor as having something like simile-meaning: we ask, what are the features of the comparison that we are asked to attend to?

But Wait! Didn't Davidson say...

- ... that similes were uninteresting because everything is like everything?
- Davidson's argument was that the simile theory collapsed into a two-meaning theory, since you still need to explain what features are relevant and which are not. (Presumably the relevant meaning would then be something like the metaphorical/simile meaning, and the irrelevant one would be subsumed in the literal meaning.)
- Martinich has an answer:

Pragmatic theory: Narrowing Similarities

- When we conclude that an utterance is a metaphor, we seek **salient similarities**.
- Still, there are many salient similarities. So, we narrow farther using two standards:
 - Apply Grice's maxim of relevance. Only similarities that are relevant should be considered.
 - Seek only true similarities. Derived similarity claims that are false are to be rejected.

Pragmatic theory: Contrast with other speech acts that flaunt maxims

- Hyperbole – flaunts maxim of quality
- Meisos – flaunts maxim of quantity
- Sarcasm and irony – flaunts the maxim of quality

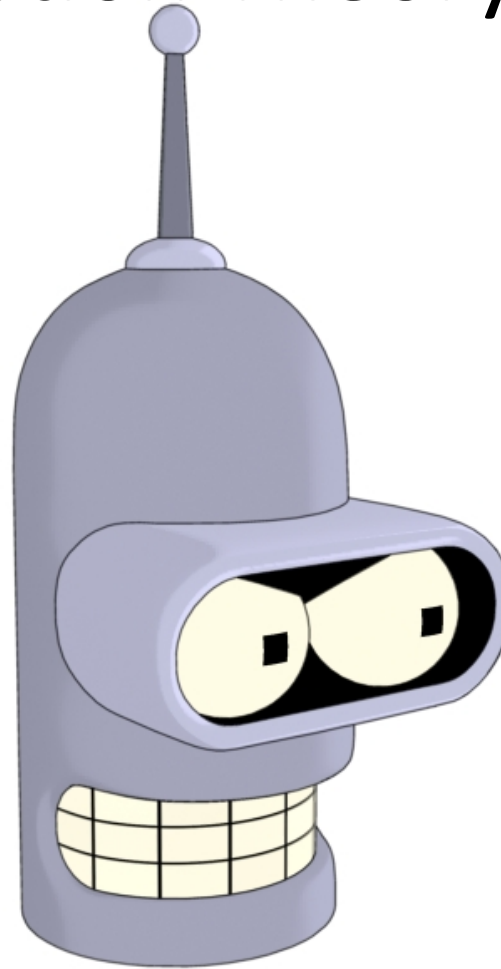
An exercise in applied review

- Suppose we had to program a robot to understand speech.
- If we believed one or another of the theories of meaning we have seen, what kind of choices would we make about how to program the relevant parts of the robot's "mind"?



Reference Theories: Description Theory

Utterance “U”
(E.g., “gold” or
“Abraham
Lincoln”)



Reference Theories: Description Theory

Utterance “U”
(E.g., “gold” or
“Abraham
Lincoln”)



What does “U” mean?

A collection of descriptions of U that are uniquely true of U constitute the meaning.

||

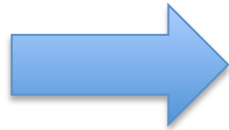
How do we recognize U?

The descriptions that are the meaning of U enable us to identify U (or things of kind U)

NOTE: we assume the ability to recognize the relevant referent is also the **same** ability that enables us to know the meaning of the referential term.

Reference Theories: Historical Theory

Utterance “U”
(E.g., “gold” or
“Abraham
Lincoln”)



What does “U” mean?

The meaning of U is given by:

- What U actually is
- What other users intend
- What experts intend



How do we recognize U?

We have some description that we use to identify U (but this could be false). This is most likely **not** the meaning of “U”.

NOTE: we assume the ability to recognize the relevant referent is **independent** of the ability that enables us to know (or make use of) the meaning of the referential term.

Meaning Proto-Theories: Truth-Based Theory (first pass)

Utterance “U”
(E.g., “Gold is
an element.”)



What does “U” mean?

1. Analyze the utterance into its constituent logical structure.
2. Determine the truth conditions of the fully analyzed sentence.
3. These truth conditions are its meaning.

Meaning Proto-Theories: Modal-Truth-Based Theory (first pass)

Utterance “U”
(E.g., “Gold is
an element.”)



What does “U” mean?

1. Analyze the utterance into its constituent logical structure.
2. Determine the **possible** truth conditions of the fully analyzed sentence.
3. These possible truth conditions are its meaning.

Meaning Proto-Theories: Use Theory (first pass)

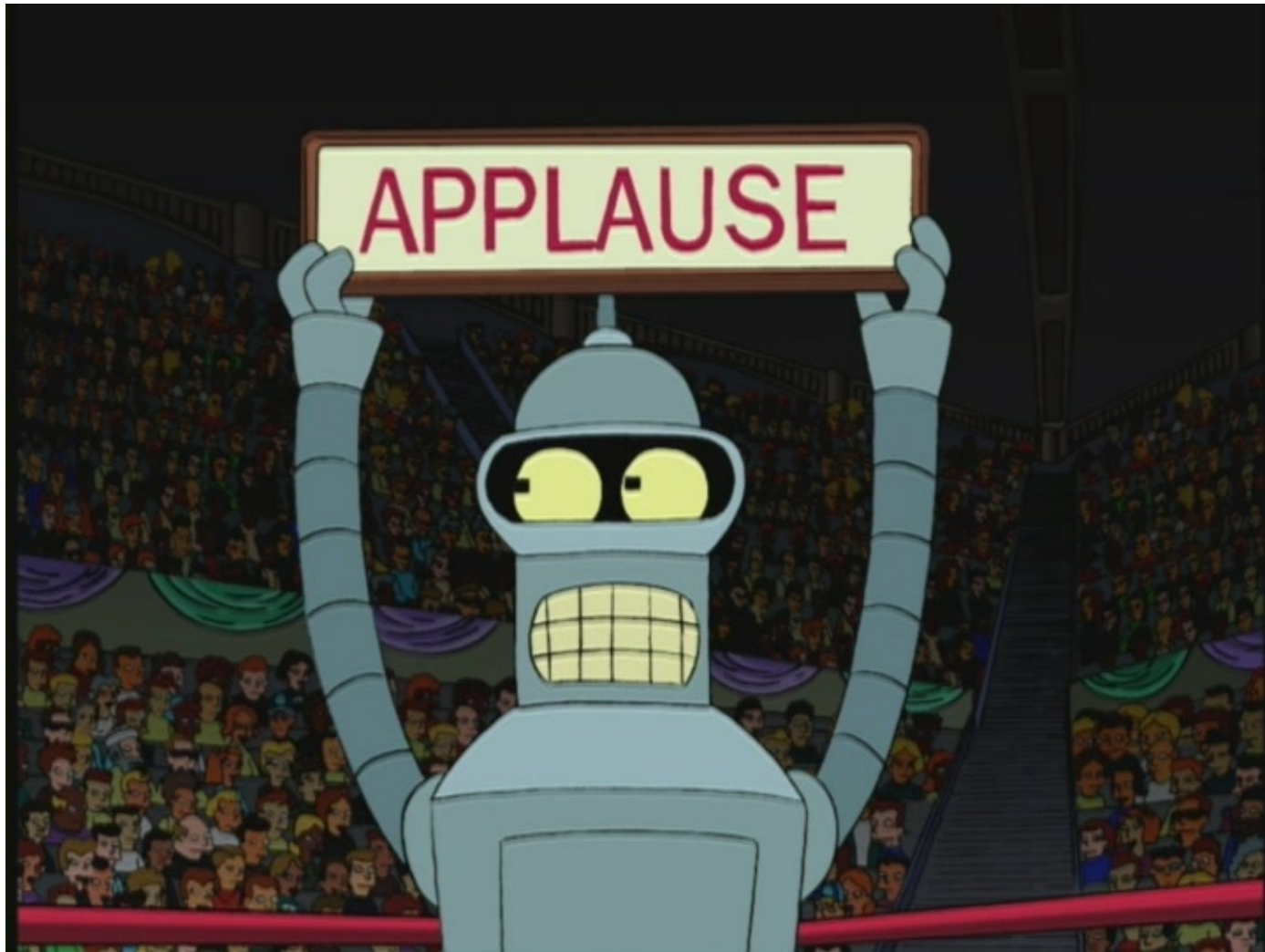
Utterance “U”
(E.g., “Gold is
an element.”)



What does “U” mean?

1. Determine the context and possible social uses of the utterance.
2. Decide what are the most likely social norms applicable in this context.
3. These social norms determine the proper use of the utterance.
4. This use is the meaning of the utterance.

What about performatives?

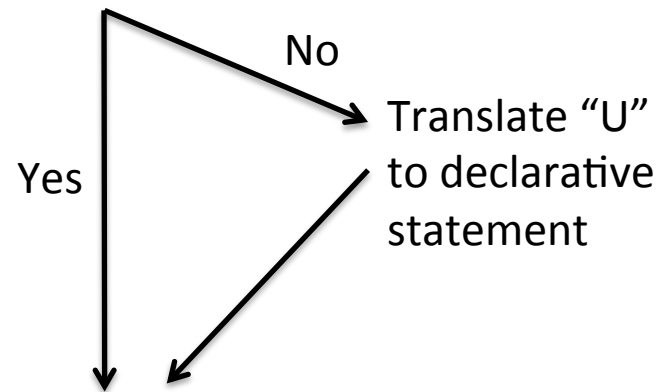


Meaning Proto-Theories: Truth-Based Theory (second pass)

Utterance U
(E.g., “Gold is
an element”
or “Open the
window.”)



Is “U” a statement?



What does the “U” mean?

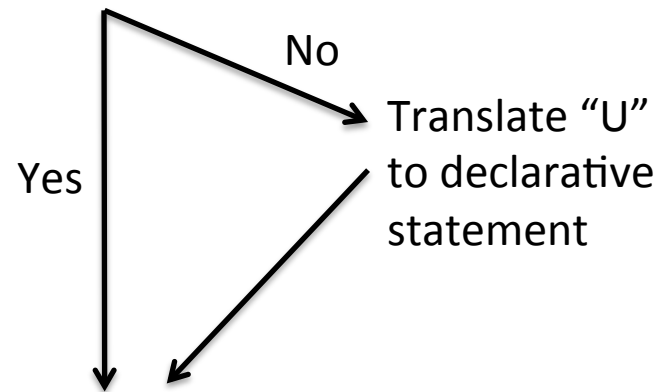
1. Analyze the utterance into its constituent logical structure.
2. Determine the truth conditions of the fully analyzed sentence.
3. These truth conditions are its meaning.

Meaning Proto-Theories: Modal Theory (second pass)

Utterance U
(E.g., “Gold is
an element”
or “Open the
window.”)



Is “U” a statement?



What does the “U” mean?

1. Analyze the utterance into its constituent logical structure.
2. Determine the **possible** truth conditions of the fully analyzed sentence.
3. These possible truth conditions are its meaning.

Meaning Proto-Theories: Use Theory (second pass)

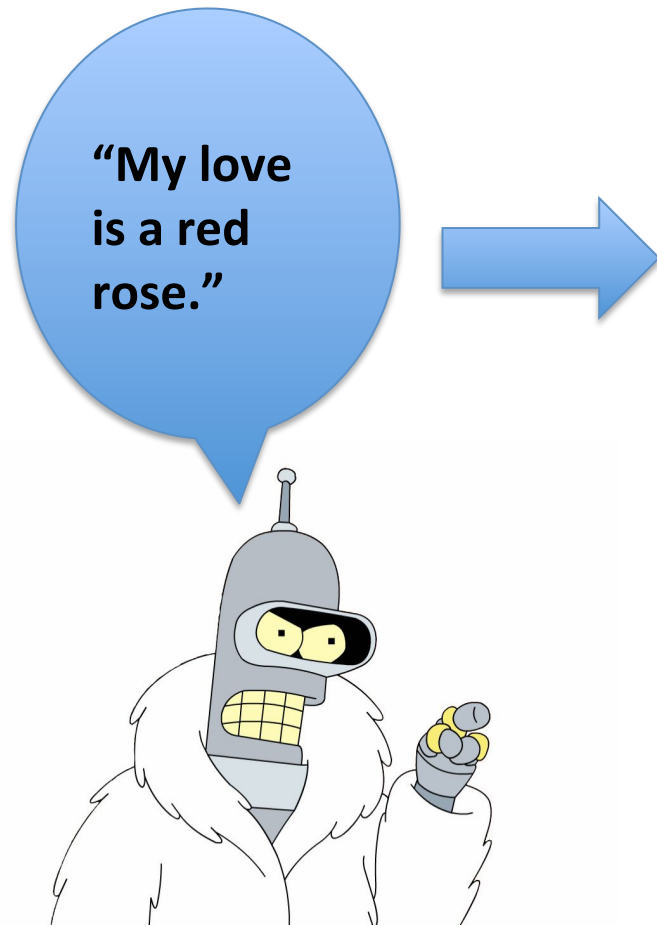
Utterance “U”
(E.g., “Gold is
an element”
or “Open the
window”)



What does “U” mean?

1. Determine the context and possible social uses of the utterance.
2. Decide what are the most likely social norms applicable in this context.
3. These social norms determine the proper use of the utterance.
4. This use is the meaning of the utterance.

Metaphor: Simile/Ellipses Theory



How should our meaning theory (program) prepare to handle "U"?

1. If "U" is obviously false, then insert "like," "as," or cognate phrases to make U'
2. The meaning of U' is given by whatever meaning theory you have

Metaphor: Simile Meaning Theory

Utterance “U”
(E.g., “My love
is a red rose.”)



**How should our meaning theory
(program) prepare to handle “U”?**

1. If “U” is obviously false, then use your meaning theory to identify the meaning of an utterance U’ that is an equivalent simile.
2. The meaning of U is the meaning of U’ for whatever meaning theory you have

Metaphor: Literal Theory

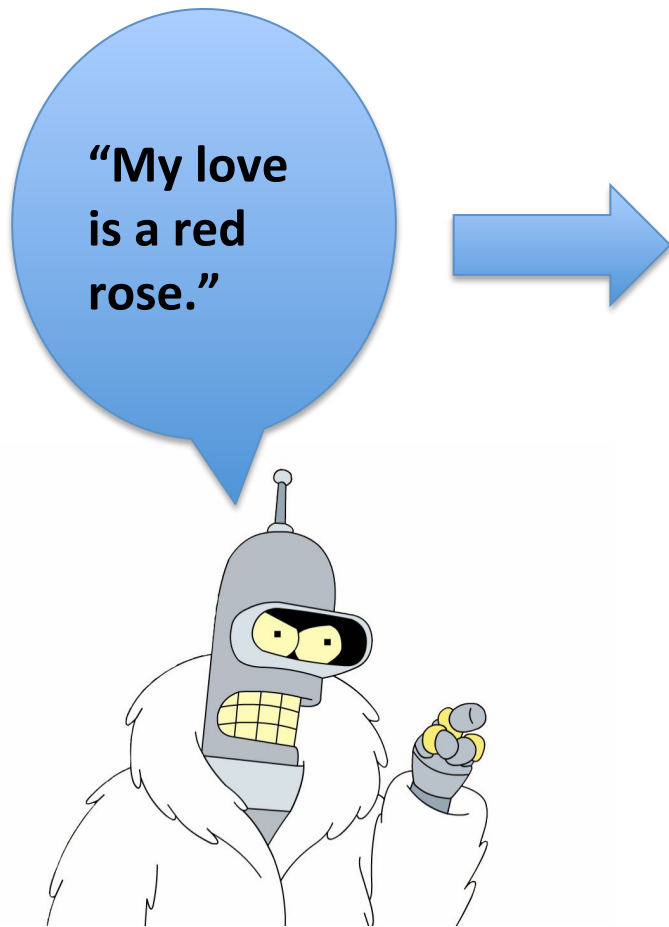
Utterance “U”
(E.g., “My love
is a red rose.”)



**How should our meaning theory
(program) prepare to handle “U”?**

1. Treat “U” as a literal claim.
2. Consider “U” with whatever meaning theory you have.
3. Because U is obviously false, “U” has psychological (extra-linguistics) effects on the hearer.

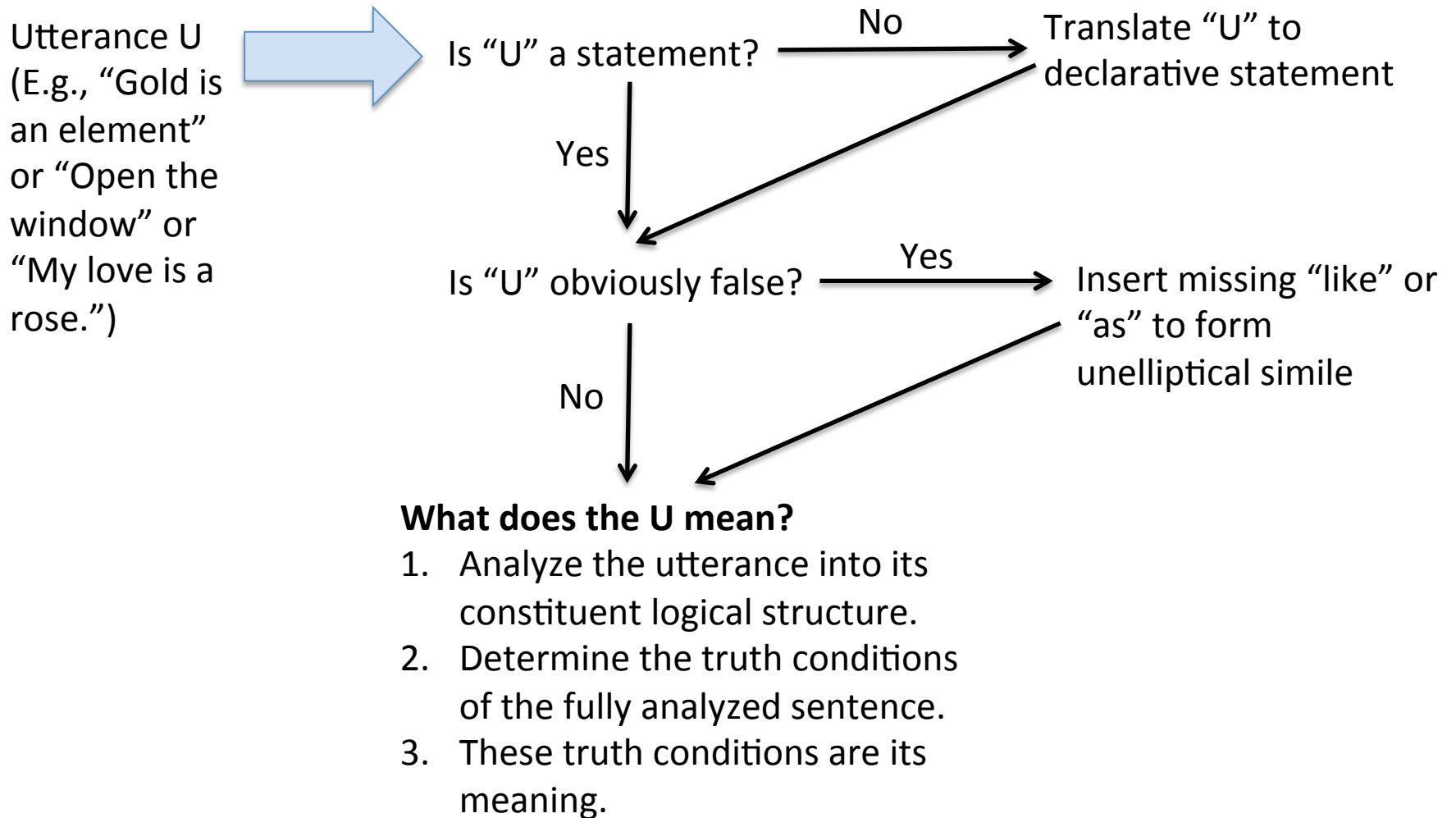
Metaphor: Pragmatic (Martinich) Theory



How should our meaning theory (program) prepare to handle “U”?

1. If “U” flaunts the maxim of quality, consider “U” as a simile.
2. Use the maxim of relevance to determine what properties are likely similar and salient between the compared things.

Example: Truth-Based Theory combined with Simile Theory



A Note About Use Theory

- For the use theory, all the work is done by way of appeal to social norms and our understanding of social norms. For example, the use theory of metaphor is presumably something like:

Meaning Proto-Theories: Use Theory (for metaphor)

Utterance “U”
(E.g., “My love
is a red rose.”)



What does “U” mean?

1. Determine the context and possible social uses of the utterance.
2. Decide what are the most likely social norms applicable in this context.
3. These social norms determine the proper use of the utterance.
4. This use is the meaning of the utterance.

That is, nothing changes, because we’ve assumed all the work is done in step 2.

A Note About Use Theory, continued

- If the use theory is going to be predictive, have practical utility, and so on, we'll need to develop accounts of norms, how people recognize norms, and when people follow and when they break norms, and more.
- This is why attempts by Searle and Grice to find a common framework for all our speech norms are important.

Meaning Proto-Theories: Use Theory (with Searle's conditions)

Utterance "U"
(E.g., "Gold is
an element"
or "Open the
window")



What does "U" mean?

1. Determine the context and possible social uses of the utterance and decide what are the most likely social norms applicable in this context. This requires determining how the following rules apply:
 - a. **Propositional content:** What proposition is implicit in the utterance?
 - b. **Preparatory:** What implicit rules must be satisfied for the utterance to succeed?
 - c. **Sincerity:** what volitions must the speaker have for the utterance to fully succeed.
 - d. **Essential:** what obligations result if the utterance succeeds?
2. These conditions determine the meaning of the utterance.