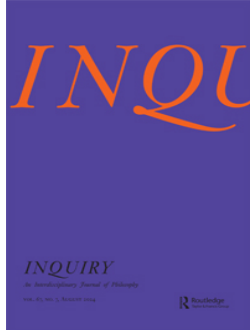

Inquiry
An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/sinq20

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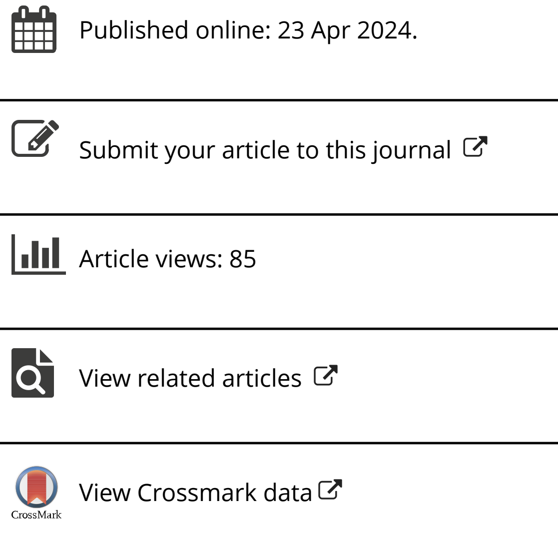
To cite this article: Berit Brogaard (23 Apr 2024): The rational roles of experiences of utterance meanings, Inquiry, DOI: 10.1080/0020174X.2024.2341408

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2024.2341408



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INQUIRY
https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2024.2341408

The rational roles of experiences of utterance meanings

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ABSTRACT
The perennial question of the nature of natural-language understanding has received renewed attention in recent years. Two kinds of natural-language understanding, in particular, have captivated the interest of philosophers: linguistic understanding and utterance understanding. While the literature is rife with discussions of linguistic understanding and utterance understanding, the question of how the two types of understanding explanatorily depend on each other has received relatively scant attention. Exceptions include the linguistic ability/know-how views of linguistic understanding proposed by Dean Pettit and Brendan Balcerak Jackson. On these views, to tacitly linguistically understand a sentence just is to possess the linguistic ability/knowledge-how needed to derive/infer what is said by different utterances of the sentence. Despite their focus on linguistic understanding, both views can straightforwardly explain utterance understanding as the output of a derivation/inference from a representation of the sentence uttered. Here, I take issue with these approaches to utterance understanding and then develop an alternative. More specifically, I distinguish two kinds of utterance understanding, experiential and doxastic, and then argue that experiences of what is said by utterances play distinct rational roles in the two kinds of utterance understanding. I conclude by addressing a recent challenge to my proposal.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 21 October 2021; Accepted 7 April 2024

KEYWORDS Experience of utterance meaning; dogmatism; knowledge-how; linguistic meaning; speech comprehension; utterance understanding

1. Introduction

The perennial question of the nature of natural-language understanding has received renewed attention from philosophers in recent years.[1] Two

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[1]See e.g., Siegel (2006; 2010), Bayne (2009), Strawson (2009), O'Callaghan (2011; 2015), Azzouni (2013), Dodd (2014), Reiland (2015), Nes (2016), Brogaard (2018a; 2020), Longworth (2008; 2009; 2018), Gasparri and Murez (2019), Drożdżowicz (2021a; 2021b; 2023), Grodniewicz (2020; 2022). In many cases, what lies at the center of dispute is not the nature of language understanding as such but rather (i) the nature of experiences as of what is said (see e.g. Fricker 2003; O'Callaghan 2011; Gasparri and Murez

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kinds of natural-language understanding, in particular, have captivated the interest of philosophers: linguistic understanding and utterance understanding. Natural language, of course, need not be tokened verbally in the form of an utterance but is at least as frequently tokened in the form of a text, the written equivalent of an utterance. However, my primary focus here will be on utterances of sentences and (to a lesser extent) verbal discourse, where the latter is a sequence of several connected utterances that jointly form a unit of speech.

Linguistic understanding and utterance understanding differ in two key respects. First, linguistic understanding takes as its proper object the linguistic meaning (or *Kaplanian character*; Kaplan 1989) of a linguistic expression understood as a repeatable type (e.g. a word, phrase, or sentence). Utterance understanding, by contrast, takes as its proper object the meaning of, or what is said by, a particular utterance of a linguistic expression in a particular context. Second, utterance understanding is explicit (or occurrent), entailing that it is consciously present in the mind (or at least readily consciously available).[2] Linguistic understanding, by contrast, is implicit (or tacit), entailing that it endures in an unconscious (but not necessarily consciously inaccessible) format in the mind.[3]

Whether natural-language understanding, in either sense, is a species of knowledge or a different type of attitude altogether is a matter of controversy. So, to facilitate discussion, I would like to begin with as broad a

2019; Brogaard 2018a; 2020; Drożdżowicz 2021a; 2021b), or (ii) what it takes for our seemings or beliefs about what is said to be justified (see e.g., Brogaard 2018a; 2020; Balcerak Jackson 2019; Grodniewicz 2020; 2022).

[2]The occurrent/dispositional distinction, which traditionally has been more deeply entrenched in philosophy, is a viable alternative to the explicit/implicit distinction. Mental state (or attitudes), such as beliefs, desires, and states of understanding, are said to be 'occurrent' when they are at the forefront of your mind. All of your occurrent mental states are plausibly constituents of your stream of consciousness. Dispositional (or standing) mental states, by contrast, endure in an unconscious form but are generally prone to become occurrent under certain eliciting circumstances. Whether the occurrent/dispositional distinction maps neatly onto the explicit/implicit distinction is a matter of dispute. While it is quite plausible that implicit mental states are always (or necessarily) dispositional, it remains an open question whether there are any mental states that are dispositional yet explicit. Here, I shall assume that the occurrent/dispositional distinction is commensurate with the explicit/implicit distinction.

A final distinction that should be mentioned is the personal-level/subpersonal-level distinction. Its application to mental states and activities derives from Daniel Dennett's (1969, 93) distinction between different explanatory levels on which to explain human behavior: 'the explanatory level of people and their sensations and activities' and 'the subpersonal level' of brains and cognitive subsystems and their operations and processes. Although personal-level states and activities can be a-rational (e.g., pain and perceptual states), a hallmark of personal-level states and activities is that they are assessable for rationality (e.g., 'needs', 'desires', 'intentions', and 'beliefs') (Dennett 1969, 164). By contrast, subpersonal-level states and activities are not subject to normative assessment (except perhaps in the minimal sense that they can be said to function properly or improperly). Due to the elusiveness of the personal-level/subpersonal-level distinction, I shall remain neutral on the question of whether it is commensurate with the explicit/implicit distinction.

[3]See also Steven Gross (2010) on the gap between implicit and explicit linguistic knowledge.

conception of linguistic and utterance understanding as possible and only later provide narrower accounts of these concepts. I shall thus start out by using 'linguistic understanding' and 'utterance understanding' as blanket terms for whichever mental states take linguistic meanings and utterance meanings as their proper objects, respectively, and that satisfy the following conditions: Linguistic understanding covers tacit or dispositional mental states whose contents comprise linguistic meanings and their compositional features (i.e. their semantic-type structure or phrase structure). While structured linguistic meanings are invariable and therefore underdetermine the meanings of utterances, they play an important role in constraining what sentences can be used to say (Collins 2020, 43).

'Utterance understanding', in its broad sense, refers to mental states whose contents comprise utterance meanings (or equivalently: what is said, semantic content, semantic value) and that may be subject to certain additional constraints.[4,5] Utterance meanings are determined by linguistic meanings and their compositional features, sentence syntax, compositional rules, and extralinguistic factors. Extralinguistic factors – which include such things as the context of utterance, the linguistic context, prosody, paralanguage, and the common ground among the interlocutors – modulate (*inter alia*) compositional rules and compositional features (e.g. type shifts) and determine the semantic values of indexicals, demonstratives, anaphora, and other context-sensitive lexical items on the basis of the linguistic meanings.

[4]It should be noted that while the term 'utterance understanding' (or 'comprehension') has wide currency in contemporary philosophy of language, different authors use the term differently. Most use it as a success term, which is to say that having an inaccurate attitudinal state about what the speaker said in uttering a sentence S and/or lacking sufficient justification for that attitudinal state precludes one from counting as understanding (or comprehending) what the speaker said (Pettit 2002; Fricker 2003; Brogaard, 2018a, 2020; Balcerak Jackson 2019). However, 'comprehension' (and 'comprehension-based') is also sometimes used more loosely to refer to/describe a hearer's belief about what a speaker said in uttering a sentence S, provided the hearer's belief is formed on the basis of direct exposure to the utterance (as opposed to, say, learning what the speaker said on the basis of testimony) (see e.g., Grodniewicz 2022). On the latter account, forming a belief about what a speaker said in uttering a sentence S on the basis of direct exposure to the speaker's utterance may suffice for the belief to be comprehension-based, even if the belief is inaccurate or unjustified. This is *not* how I intend to use the term 'utterance understanding' (or 'comprehension'). Rather, in this paper, I shall use 'utterance understanding' (and 'comprehension') exclusively in the former sense (i.e., as a success term).

[5]What is said by an utterance is not always truth-valuable (or alethic) and may not have a propositional structure. Utterances used to perform speech acts, for example, need not be truth-evaluable and may not have a propositional structure (e.g., an utterance of 'Who stole the cookies?'). The same goes for the verbal articulation of phrases on a list for the purposes of committing them to memory, conveying them to an addressee, or practicing their pronunciation. But when what is said by an utterance is truth-valuable and propositionally structured, we can also refer to what is said as the truth-condition, or the proposition expressed.

When an utterance is used to perform a speech act, both the content and (illocutionary) force of the speech act may be part of what is said by the utterance, depending on which sentence is uttered and which extra-linguistic factors are available to the hearer.[6,7] For example, (1) below makes explicit reference to a promise by the speaker to call the hearer. So, if a speaker uses (1) to promise to call a hearer, the content and force of the speech act performed is part of what is said by the use of (1).

1. I promise to call you.

But the sentences we use to perform speech acts do far from always make explicit reference to a particular type of speech act. In some such cases, grammatical verb mood and syntax may help the hearer determine the force of the speech act performed. For example, if (2) and (3) below are used to make a speech act, the use of the imperative mood is a strong indicator that the speech act performed is an order or suggestion.

2. Ken, do your homework!
3. Let's go to the beach!

The use of interrogatory syntax is a similarly strong indicator that the speaker intends to ask a question. But the force and content of a speech act may be radically underdetermined by mood and syntax. For example, a speaker may be using (4) to warn you, but this is not reflected in the mood or syntax.

4. There is a bull behind the fence.

In such cases, extralinguistic factors like common ground, prosody (e.g. stress, rhythm, and voice quality), and paralanguage (e.g. gestures, gaze

[6]John Austin (1962) distinguishes between the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts of speech. A locutionary act is an act of speech used to perform a speech act (e.g., 'I demand that you close the door.'). The illocutionary act is the act performed by uttering the words (e.g., the act of demanding that you close the door). Finally, the perlocutionary effect is the effect the illocutionary performer intends to bring about by performing the illocutionary act (e.g., the door being closed). Here, I shall use 'speech act' to mean illocutionary act. The 'content of a speech act' refers to what the speaker asserts is the case, promises to do, demands that the addressee do, apologizes for having done, declares to be the case, etc., whereas the 'force of the speech act' refers to nature of the speech act performed (e.g., the speech act being an assertion, a promise, a demand, an apology, a declaration, etc.).

[7]I am grateful to Brendan Balcerak Jackson (pers. comm.) for helpful discussion here.

direction, and posture) may help the hearer determine the force of the speech act performed.

While the philosophical literature is rife with discussions of the nature of linguistic understanding and the nature of utterance understanding, the question of how the two types of understanding explanatorily depend on each other has received relatively scant attention. Exceptions include the linguistic ability/know-how views of linguistic understanding proposed by Dean Pettit (2002; 2010) and Brendan Balcerak Jackson (Forthcoming). On the ability/know-how views, to tacitly linguistically understand a particular sentence just is to possess the linguistic ability/knowledge-how needed to derive or infer what is said by different utterances of that sentence. Despite their focus on linguistic understanding, both views can straightforwardly explain utterance understanding as the output of a derivation or inference from a representation of the sentence uttered. Here, I take issue with these approaches to utterance understanding and then develop an alternative. More specifically, I distinguish two kinds of utterance understanding, experiential and doxastic, and then argue that experiences of what is said by a particular utterance play distinct rational roles in the two kinds of utterance understanding. I conclude by addressing a recent challenge to my proposal.

2. Propositional knowledge and linguistic understanding

On an intuitive theory of linguistic understanding, to understand that a sentence S has linguistic meaning *m* is to have *propositional knowledge* that the linguistic meaning of S is *m*. Following Dean Pettit (2002), let's call this the 'epistemic view'. The epistemic view is presupposed by a widely accepted account of the nature of language understanding known as 'cognitivism'. According to cognitivism, a competent speaker of a language L understands L just in case they *know* the correct meaning theory for L (e.g. Campbell 1982; Davies 1989; Dummett 1991; 1993; Heck 1995; Higginbotham 1992). A meaning theory for a language L is made up of meaning postulates that assign linguistic meanings to the simple expressions of L, along with compositional rules for deriving the linguistic meanings of complex phrases and sentences on the basis of the assigned meanings. For example, a meaning theory for English would assign simple meanings to the expressions 'Birds' and 'fly' and would supply the rule from which competent speakers can derive the complex meaning of the sentence 'Birds fly'. Likewise, according to the epistemic view, we understand the sentence 'Birds fly' by virtue of

having propositional knowledge of its linguistic meaning. For example, a meaning theory for English would assign simple meanings to the expressions 'Birds' and 'fly' and would supply the rule from which competent speakers can derive the complex meaning of the sentence 'Birds fly'.

In an influential paper, Pettit (2002) presents three Gettier-style counterexamples to the epistemic view that jointly purport to show that we can understand a speaker's use of a linguistic expression (i) without having propositional knowledge of what it means, (ii) without having a warranted (or justified) true belief about what it means, and (iii) even without having a belief about what it means in the first place.

His first case purports to show that propositional knowledge is dispensable to natural-language understanding. You are an intermediate-level speaker of German visiting Berlin. Upon encountering an unfamiliar German word, 'Krankenschwester', you ask an elderly man what it means. 'Nurse', he correctly replies. As you continue your trip, you are now able to understand and use the word accurately in German. If the receptionist says,

5. Die Krankenschwester ist hier,

you accurately take them to say that the nurse is here, and if you want to know if the nurse is available, you can accurately ask,

6. Ist die Krankenschwester frei?

As your successful linguistic performance demonstrates, you have acquired and thus come to understand the German word 'Krankenschwester'. Unbeknownst to you, however, the elderly man who told you what 'Krankenschwester' means is senile and has taken to saying 'nurse', regardless of what he is asked. By sheer luck, this happened to be the right answer to your question. Had you asked how to get to the Berlin Television Tower, he would still have replied with 'nurse'. So, although you received the correct response, things could easily have turned out otherwise. As your true justified belief that 'Krankenschwester' means *nurse* is true by luck, and propositional knowledge is incompatible with this kind of luck, you don't know that 'Krankenschwester' means *nurse*. Nor do you know what the receptionist is telling you by uttering (5) or what you are asking by uttering (6). Pettit takes this to show that we can understand linguistic expressions without *knowing* what they mean.

His second case purports to show that having a true belief but no epistemic warrant suffices for natural-language understanding. A team of mad neuroscientists surgically alter your brain to induce semantic aphasia that results in your assigning the wrong meaning to slightly more than 50% of the mass nouns in your vocabulary. For example, you incorrectly assign *pudding* to 'mud' and *mud* to 'pudding' but *pasta* to 'pasta'. You are aware of your condition but not of which mass nouns are affected. Even so, you are just as confident in your linguistic abilities as you always were. So, if it seems to you that a mass noun means *m*, you will (truly or falsely) believe it means *m*. If Fran says,

7. Let's have pasta for dinner.

you will believe (truly) that she suggested you have pasta for dinner. Likewise, if you reply,

8. We had pasta yesterday.

you will believe (truly) that you replied that you had pasta the day before. But because you have no evidence indicating whether you get a mass noun right or wrong, you lack an epistemic warrant for your true beliefs about what Fran suggested by uttering (7) and what you said in reply by uttering (8). Despite lacking a warrant for your true beliefs, however, it seems that you understand Fran's suggestion and your own reply perfectly well and hence that you understood the mass noun 'pasta' perfectly well.

Pettit's final case purports to show that understanding a linguistic expression doesn't even require having a belief about what it means. A team of mad neuroscientists kidnap you and put you under anesthesia. When you wake up, they tell you they have surgically altered your brain to induce a form of semantic aphasia that makes you systematically mistaken about the meaning of mass nouns. But it's a hoax. Nothing has been done to your brain. To convince you that you have semantic aphasia, they show you surgical instruments and fake scars and let you interact with actors saying things like.

9. I had mud for lunch.

and

10. The rain has made big puddles of pudding.

Their efforts pay off. You (justifiably) come to firmly believe that mass nouns do not mean what they seem to you to mean. When Lucy later uses ‘juice’ correctly to ask,

11. Could I have a glass of juice?

it seems to you that she is asking for juice, yet you believe she must be asking for something else, such as water or milk, which deters you from fulfilling her request. Likewise, you are deterred from using mass nouns in your own speech. Even so, Pettit argues, because your brain is unaltered, you are still a perfectly competent speaker with the same linguistic ability to understand and produce speech containing mass nouns. Because the hoax is successfully deterring you from responding to and producing speech containing mass nouns, it has impaired your linguistic performance but not your linguistic competence (Pettit 2002, 531).

Pettit concludes on the basis of these cases that the epistemic view (and the cognitive view that presupposes it) is false. Recall that the epistemic view takes understanding a linguistic expression to require knowing its meaning. As Pettit’s first case shows that understanding a linguistic expression doesn’t require knowing its meaning, the first case suffices to refute the epistemic view. Pettit’s last two cases reinforces the unviability of the epistemic view while warding off weakened versions of the epistemic view according to which to understand a linguistic expression is a matter of having a true justified belief or a mere true belief about what it means.

According to Pettit, whatever the correct view of understanding is, it needs to be able to accommodate the intuition that we can understand a speaker’s utterance of a linguistic expression (i) without having propositional knowledge of what it means, (ii) without having a warranted true belief about what it means, and (iii) even without having any beliefs about what it means. Pettit proposes a view of this kind according to which we can understand the linguistic meaning of a linguistic item in virtue of being able to (i) competently use it in speech production and (ii) implicitly derive (or infer) impressions of what is said by utterances of the linguistic item from its characteristic speech sounds and contextual cues (see also Pettit 2010). Call this view the ‘ability view’:

> *Ability View*: A subject understands what a sentence S means in a language L by virtue of exercising her linguistic ability to compositionally derive impressions (i.e. experiences or seemings) of what is said by utterances of S in L from a recognition of the speech sounds of S.

Since the notion of implicit derivation or inference is pivotal to the ability view, I shall classify it as an inferential view. Here, I construe inference with sufficient latitude to cover personal-level/subpersonal-level and explicit/implicit rule-governed cognitive activities and processes (see note 2).

As the ability view explains linguistic understanding partly in terms of utterance understanding, this may seem to leave the view in need of a corollary account of the nature of utterance understanding. However, the ability view already suggests an approach to utterance understanding. This is because of the central role it plays in explaining how a hearer can understand a speaker's utterance (i) without having propositional knowledge of what it means, (ii) without having a true belief about what it means, and (iii) even without having any beliefs about what it means. A hearer can arrive at an understanding of a speaker's utterance subject to these constraints by implicitly exercising her linguistic ability to derive (or infer) an impression of what the speaker said from her recognition of the speech sounds made.

3. Knowledge-How and linguistic understanding

In 'Inferential Practical Knowledge of Meaning' (*in press*), Balcerak Jackson proposes an ingenious alternative to the ability view, which glosses linguistic knowledge in terms of inferential know-how:

> PKM: A subject knows what sentence S means in language L in virtue of knowing how to infer what is said by literal utterances of S in L directly on the basis of identifying S as the sentence uttered.

While PKM is a thesis about linguistic knowledge, Balcerak Jackson (Forthcoming, §2) argues that its main advantage compared to alternatives lies in the epistemic role it plays in explaining what justifies our beliefs or judgments about what is said by utterances. Specifically, a hearer can arrive at a justified belief of what is said by an utterance by transitioning directly from a perceptual representation of a sentence uttered to a rational (or justified) belief about what the speaker said by exercising the know-how described in PKM.

It should be mentioned that, on Balcerak Jackson's account, a hearer who exercises the know-how described in PKM counts as making a genuine inference only if she transitions *rationally* from a representation of the sentence uttered to a judgment about what the speaker said in uttering it. Furthermore, as Balcerak Jackson envisions it, an inference is a distinctive kind of personal-level process (see note 2). While he grants that inferences are psychologically realized in subpersonal rule-governed processes, he rejects the idea that subpersonal processes are part of what the hearer does in rationally transitioning (directly) from a premise state to a conclusion state (Balcerak Jackson Forthcoming, §3).

Despite superficial similarities, Pettit's (2002) and Balcerak Jackson's (Forthcoming) approaches to how the hearer arrives at what a speaker says in making a particular utterance differ in several ways, one being what they take to be the conclusion state of the inferential or rule-governed activity undertaken by the hearer when she exercises her inferential know-how/ability. Whereas Pettit takes the conclusion state to be an impression (i.e. an experience or seeming) of what is said by the utterance, Balcerak Jackson takes it to be a justified belief whose justification depends on the belief's inferential basis. More on that below.

Although Balcerak Jackson characterizes PKM in terms of inferential know-how, there is evidence to suggest that PKM is, in fact, better construed in terms of linguistic ability, or so I will argue. There is an ongoing debate in philosophy about whether knowledge-how constitutively involves propositional knowledge (e.g. Bengson and Moffett 2007; Brogaard 2011; Cath 2011; 2015; Stanley and Williamson 2001). According to intellectualism, knowing how to φ requires knowing that *w* (for some *w*) is a way to φ. According to anti-intellectualism, originally advocated by Gilbert Ryle (1949; 1945), knowing how to φ merely requires having the ability to φ.

Balcerak Jackson emphasizes that he is neutral on the nature of knowledge-how. As it turns out, however, we have just as good reasons for rejecting that knowledge-how requires propositional knowledge as we do for rejecting that linguistic understanding requires propositional knowledge. This is because, knowledge-how is no less immune to Gettier-style cases than linguistic understanding, as shown by Yuri Cath (Cath 2011; 2015; cf. Carter and Pritchard 2013).[8]

[8]Carter and Pritchard (2013) argue that if knowledge-how is a kind of knowledge-that, as intellectualists argue, then knowledge-how and knowledge-that must have the same epistemic properties. But

Here is a variation on Cath's (2011) counterexample to knowledge-how being a kind of propositional knowledge. After moving into her new condo, Penny realizes that the faucet leaks. She looks for a faucet manual and finds one in a drawer. After reading the manual, she fixes the faucet. Subsequently, she also fixes several of her neighbors' faucets. Penny, it seems, knows how to fix faucets. In fact, people in her condo building often talk about what a handywoman she is. Unbeknownst to Penny, however, the manual was the creation of the previous owner's little squirrel monkey, who enjoyed step dancing on the owner's old typewriter's keyboard. Over the forty years of keyboard stepping, the little squirrel monkey had created a lot of nonsense. But there was this one occasion where he happened to hit the right keys and created something that made sense: the faucet manual. The previous owner had never looked at what it was but had unthinkingly thrown it into a drawer, where Penny found it. In the envisaged case, there is no way *w* such that Penny *knows that w* is a way to fix the faucet. Granted, she truly believes that *w* (for some *w*) is a way to fix the faucet. But her belief is true purely as a matter of luck. As propositional knowledge is incompatible with this kind of luck, on the received view, Penny fails to *know* that *w* (for some *w*) is a way for her to fix the faucet. Yet it would seem that she knows how to fix the faucet by virtue of having the ability to do so.

Cath (2011) also presents cases purporting to show that we can know how to φ without having an epistemic warrant for believing that *w* (for some *w*) is a way to φ and even without believing that *w* (for some *w*) is a way to φ. In the first case, Josy suffers from memory hallucinations. It often seems to her that she remembers learning how to do something in spite of the fact that she never learned it. To mitigate her condition, she has a false memory detector. On Saturday, Josy learns how to juggle. On Sunday, it seems to her that she learned how to juggle the day before, and she forms the belief that *w* (for some *w*) is a way for her to juggle. But her false memory detector accidentally goes off. This ought to make her stop believing that *w* (for some *w*) is a way for her to juggle. In spite of her counterevidence, she continues to believe that *w* (for some *w*) is a way for her to juggle. As she ignores the evidence against her belief, she lacks an epistemic warrant for the belief. However, intuitively, Josy knows how to juggle. If you ask her, she will show you. So, according to Cath, it would seem that we can know how to φ without

Gettier-style cases illustrate that knowledge-how is compatible with a kind of epistemic luck that is not compatible with knowledge-that.

having an epistemic warrant for believing that *w* (for some *w*) is a way for one to φ.

Cath's final case runs as follows. Kensy suffers from the same kind of memory hallucinations as Josy. To mitigate her condition, she also has a false memory detector. On Saturday, Kensy learns how to juggle. On Sunday, it seems to Kensy that she learned how to juggle the day before, and she comes to believe that *w* (for some *w*) is a way for her to juggle. On Sunday, her false memory detector accidentally goes off. Unlike Josy, however, Kensy ceases to believe that *w* (for some *w*) is a way for her to juggle. Despite no longer believing she knows how to juggle, it seems to her that she knows how to do so. If you ask her to try to juggle, she will insist that she cannot, but once she tries, she will juggle skillfully. This suggests that we can know how to φ without having a belief that *w* (for some *w*) is a way to φ.

Cath's (2011) three cases provide evidence against the intellectualist thesis that having propositional knowledge that *w* (for some *w*) is a way to φ is necessary for knowing how to φ and in favor of Ryle's (1949; 1945) anti-intellectualist thesis that to know how to φ just is to have the ability to φ.

It's straightforward to conjure up analogous counterexamples to the intellectualist thesis that knowing how to infer what is said by an utterance requires propositional knowledge. Here is one such case: After moving into her new condo, Penny finds an audiotape that contains instructions for how to learn Spanish. By listening to the tape, Penny comes to know a little Spanish, for instance, she knows how to infer what is said by utterances of simple words and phrases like '¡Hola!', '¡Buenos días!', '¿Cómo estás?', '¡Hasta luego!', 'Me llamo Penny', '¡Dos cervezas, por favor!', '¡Lo siento!', '¿Dónde está el restaurante?', etc. Unbeknownst to Penny, the audiotape was accidentally created by the previous owner's random sound generator. Over the fifty years of constantly generating sounds and recording them, the generator had generated and recorded a lot of nonsense. But there was this one occasion where the generator generated and recorded something that made sense: the Spanish audiotape. The previous owner had never listened to any of the tapes but had unthinkingly thrown the one that made sense into the drawer where Penny found it. As for Cath's remaining two cases, we can suppose that instead of learning how to juggle, Josy and Kensy learn how to speak a little Spanish. So, they understand what is said by utterances of '¡Hola!', '¡Buenas noches!', '¿Cómo estás?', '¡Perdón!', '¿Cómo te llamas?', '¿Dónde está el hotel?', etc.

While such cases give us some reason to resist the intellectualist thesis that knowledge-how is a species of propositional knowledge, they do not constitute a knock-down objection to intellectualism. It is open to intellectualists to argue that these kinds of cases merely demonstrate that subjects can have the ability to φ without knowing how to φ. In response to Cath's (2011) cases, for example, intellectualists can deny that Penny knows how to fix faucets immediately upon reading the manual but only gains this knowledge-how when her previously accidentally true belief transitions into knowledge-how as she actually fixes her faucet. With respect to the juggling cases, most people's intuitions about whether the protagonist *knows* how to juggle or merely has the ability to do it are somewhat murky. So, it is open to the intellectualist to argue that while the protagonist has the ability to juggle, she doesn't *know how* to do it.[9]

But the envisaged intellectualist reply to Cath (2011) need not bother us. The reason is twofold. First, it is pretty clear that Cath's cases are all very closely analogous to Pettit's (2002). So, if Pettit's cases against linguistic understanding requiring propositional knowledge succeed, it is overwhelmingly plausible that the analogous cases against linguistic knowledge requiring propositional knowledge succeed too. Second, even if we grant for argument's sake that intellectualism is true, this does not undermine my point that Balcerak Jackson would be better served casting his view in terms of linguistic ability, as independent support for my point can be derived from the conclusion of David Carr's (1979) influential argument against anti-intellectualism. Here is a slightly modified version of Carr's argument. Suppose Scarlett, a world-renowned solo ballet dancer, performs an item from her repertoire on stage, which she has named:

12. Improvisation No. 15

By sheer coincidence, and unbeknownst to Scarlett, her performance of the ballet variation described in (12) happens to be an accurate performance (movement perfect) of the ballet variation described in (13).

13. The 'fan' variation of Kitri in the ballet *Don Quixote*

[9]I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing this point.

(12) and (13) are alternative descriptions of the same dance movements. But whereas Scarlett has the ability to bring about the dance *movements* described in (12) and (13), intuitively, she doesn't know how to bring about the dance *performance* described in (13) because she lacks the ability to bring it about *intentionally* or *purposefully*.[10] On the basis of these considerations, Carr argues that to have the ability to φ merely requires being able to cause the same movements as someone who intentionally brings about φ, whereas knowing how to φ requires being able to bring about φ intentionally (see also Habgood-Coote 2018).

While Carr's argument is intended as a refutation of Ryle's anti-intellectualist thesis, it also causes trouble for Balcerak Jackson's (2019) inferential know-how view, as it is doubtful that we are typically in a position to *intentionally* infer what is said by an utterance directly on the basis of identifying the sentence uttered. In paradigmatic cases of utterance understanding, it would seem that we cannot help but hear the utterance as having a certain meaning. In such cases, hearing the meaning of an utterance is mandatory, not an intentional choice. But if we are not typically in a position to intentionally infer what is said by an utterance directly on the basis of identifying the sentence uttered, then we do not always know how to infer what is said by the utterance, despite being able to do so. So, it seems that Balcerak Jackson would be well advised to render his view in terms of linguistic ability rather than inferential know-how.

There is another key difference between Pettit's and Balcerak Jackson's inferential views. Pettit's view provides an account of linguistic understanding, whereas Balcerak Jackson's provides an account of linguistic *propositional knowledge*.[11] Here is PKM again:

[10]In fact, in some cases, the subject must have an explicit action plan for how to get to φ *and* exercise that plan intentionally or purposely. To see this, consider Paul Snowdon's (2003) counterexample to the view that knowing how to φ just is being able to φ. As he puts it: 'A man is in a room, which, because he has not explored it in the least, he does, as yet, not know how to get out of. In fact, there is an obvious exit which he can easily open. He is perfectly able to get out, he can get out, but does not know how to (as yet).' (Snowdon 2003, 11).

[11]Given that the explanandum of PKM says 'A subject knows what sentence S means in language L', it may be argued that Balcerak Jackson (Forthcoming) does not provide an account of propositional linguistic knowledge in terms of knowledge-how but rather an account of linguistic knowledge-wh in terms of knowledge-how. However, whereas it is a matter of controversy whether knowledge-how is a kind of propositional knowledge, it is nearly universally agreed that a sentence headed by 'know-wh' is equivalent to a sentence headed by 'know that', for instance, 'Jena knows what S means' is equivalent to 'For some *m*, Jena knows that S means *m*', 'Jeff knows where the meating is taking place' is equivalent to 'For some L, Jeff knows that the meeting is taking place at L', 'Alex knows when dinner is served' is equivalent to 'For some *t*, Alex knows that dinner is served at *t*', and so forth (see e.g., Lewis, 1982; Higginbotham, 1996; Braun, 2006; Brogaard, 2009). Not much hinges on how we settle this issue for present purposes, however. If it should turn out that Balcerak Jackson disagrees that the explanandum of PKM (viz. 'A subject knows what sentence S means in

> PKM: A subject knows what sentence S means in language L by virtue of knowing how to infer what is said by literal utterances of S in L directly on the basis of identifying S as the sentence uttered.

The explanandum of PKM says that where *m* is the meaning of the sentence S in language L, a subject knows that S means *m* in L. If, however, Pettit (2002) is right that we can understand what a sentence means linguistically without having propositional knowledge of what its linguistic meaning, which he seems to be, then PKM is not a general account of implicit linguistic understanding, but an account of implicit linguistic knowledge that is silent on cases of linguistic understanding that do not qualify as linguistic knowledge. To avoid such unprincipled exclusion, Balcerak Jackson might want to recast the explanandum of PKM in terms of linguistic understanding rather than linguistic knowledge. If we implement these changes to PKM, we get the following version of the ability view.

> Ability Version of PMK: A subject understands what sentence S means in language L by virtue of being able to infer what is said by literal utterances of S in L directly on the basis of identifying *S* as the sentence uttered.

In keeping with Balcerak Jackson's original view, I shall take this particular occurrence of 'inference' to refer to a rational transition from a premise state to a conclusion state, specifically, a rational transition from an identification of the sentence uttered to a belief about what is said by the utterance. If the identification of the sentence uttered is justified, the justification transmits across the rational transition to the belief about what is said by the utterance, in which case the conclusion state is a justified belief about what is said by the utterance.

Like PKM, the ability version of PKM explains linguistic understanding partly in terms of utterance understanding, understood broadly to encompass knowing, realizing, or grasping what is said by an utterance (as specified at the outset of the paper). Furthermore, like PKM, the ability version of PKM suggests an approach to utterance understanding according to which the exercise of our linguistic ability (or linguistic competence) plays a key role in explaining how we acquire justified beliefs about what is said by the utterance. To acquire a justified belief that the speaker said that P, the hearer must competently exercise her

language L') is equivalent to a sentence headed by 'know that', this is of no consequence for what I say below. Thanks to Kim Pedersen Phillip and Anna Drożdżowicz here.

linguistic ability to infer what the speaker said from a *justified* representation of the speaker having uttered S.

As noted above, a key difference between Pettit's version of the ability view and the strengthened version of Balcerak Jackson's account lies in the nature of the conclusion state of the inference. In Pettit's view, a competent exercise of one's linguistic competence yields an impression (i.e. an experience or seeming) of what the utterance means. On the ability version of PKM, a competent exercise of one's linguistic competence yields a justified belief or judgment about what was said by the utterance. The two versions of the ability view thus differ in whether understanding an utterance is an inferentially acquired impression or an inferentially acquired justified belief about the meaning of the utterance.

So far so good. However, as we will see, the inferential approaches to utterance understanding just outlined are less than fully satisfactory. In the remainder of this section, I offer two objections to the strengthened version of Balcerak Jackson's proposal that understanding that a speaker said P in uttering S requires having a true justified belief about what the speaker said that is competently inferred from a representation of the speaker having uttered S. My worries concern the claim that understanding what is said by an utterance requires having a belief about what is said by the utterance. We have already seen that having a belief is not required for linguistic understanding. Here are two reasons to think it is not required for utterance understanding either.[12] First, as Guy Longworth has argued on a number of occasions, views that require the subject to hold a belief about what is said by the speaker's utterance over-intellectualize utterance understanding, entailing that those without sophisticated semantic concepts (e.g. young children) cannot understand utterances (since they cannot token beliefs like 'The speaker has asserted P by uttering S') (see e.g. Longworth 2018). Second, there is evidence to suggest that understanding utterances that occur in real time is cognitively comparable to object recognition, such as visually recognizing a fork, a pipe, or a phone.[13] On the prevailing view of object recognition, incoming sensory information is matched to schematic object

[12]I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing this point.

[13]The phenomenon of associative agnosia, a brain disorder that impairs object recognition, provides a key bit of evidence that utterance understanding is cognitively comparable to object recognition (Riddoch and Humphreys 2003; cf. Bayne 2009). Associative agnosia has been reported not only for visual object recognition but also for the recognition of the meanings of spoken words (Buchtel and Stewart 1989). Auditory associative agnosia (word meaning deafness) differs from verbal auditory apperceptive agnosia (pure word deafness), which impairs the ability to recognize word sounds rather than word meanings (Buchtel and Stewart 1989).

representations in long-term memory, and the best match is encoded in working memory, resulting in a conscious representation of the object (e.g. Bundesen and Habekost 2008). In the absence of conflicting information, a conscious representation of the object being a *K*, where *K* is a kind, counts as object recognition as long as it is veridical as a result of competent cognitive processing and categorization. Object recognition does not require having a belief that the object in question is of kind *K*, say a remote control. So, if utterance understanding and object recognition are cognitive cousins, this provides some reason against the view that understanding what is said by an utterance *requires* having a belief about what is said.

In the next section, I develop an alternative to the linguistic ability views of utterance understanding. In the course of developing my alternative proposal, I take issue with the implication of Pettit's view that to understand that a speaker said that P in uttering S, it suffices to have an accurate impression (i.e. an experience or seeming) of what the speaker said that is compositionally derived from a representation of the speaker having uttered S. As we will see, on my proposal, having an accurate and properly grounded experience of what a speaker said doesn't suffice for utterance understanding, as the presence of a defeater may undermine the experience's *prima facie* claim to be a state of utterance understanding.

Furthermore, I take issue with the idea that utterance understanding is analyzable in terms of a single (more familiar) mental state (subject to certain constraints). As the reader may have surmised when I introduced 'utterance understanding' as a blanket term at the outset, I take utterance understanding to come in more than one variety. More specifically. I propose that we need to recognize (at least) two kinds of utterance understanding: an experiential and a doxastic kind of utterance understanding.

Before delving into the details, a clarification of my use of 'experience' and 'experiential' is in order. Experiential approaches to utterance understanding have usually taken experiences as of what is said by an utterance to be perceptual or perception-like (e.g. Brogaard 2018a; Fricker 2003).[14] The perceptual view should be distinguished from the thesis that understanding an utterance involves enjoying a (conscious) experience as of an utterance having a certain meaning. Both friends and foes of the

[14]Fricker (2003) calls these kinds of experiences 'quasi-perceptual', thus leaving it open whether they are genuinely perceptual or perception-like.

perceptual view can (and do) endorse the latter thesis.[15] Whether experiences of utterance meanings are perceptual, post-perceptual, or *sui generis* mental states is a matter of controversy (e.g. Drożdżowicz 2021b; 2023; Gasparri and Murez 2019; Longworth 2018; Nes 2016; O'Callaghan 2011; Pettit 2010; Stanley 2005). I have defended the perceptual view in previous works (e.g. Brogaard 2018a; 2020). That is not my aim here. Rather, my aim vis-a-vis experience is to examine its rational in utterance understanding without taking a stance on its exact nature. I begin by developing my account of experiential utterance understanding and, in the course of that, some key objections to Pettit's view and then proceed by making my case for the need for a distinctive kind of doxastic utterance understanding.

5. Experiential and doxastic utterance understanding

Having an experience as of what is said by an utterance clearly does not by itself count as understanding what is said by the utterance. To count as understanding, the experience as of what is said must meet at least the following constraints.

First off, even those who are favorable toward utterance understanding being experiential in nature generally agree that a falsidical experience as of what is said by an utterance doesn't count as understanding what is said by the utterance (see e.g. Fricker 2003; Longworth 2018; Pettit 2010). Although this point is fairly uncontroversial, let's illustrate the pull of this intuition by way of an example. Consider the following discourse fragment.

Lin: Last night, I dreamed your smile had become detached from your mouth.
Bea: I am bemused.
Lin: Oh, I am so glad.
Bea: Why? Are you deliberately trying to bemuse me? That's not nice.
Lin: No! … Sorry. I guess I just didn't understand what you said.

Here, Lin makes the common mistake of taking 'bemuse' to mean *amuse*. As a result, Lin undergoes an experience as of Bea saying that she is amused, even though Bea, in fact, says she is confused. In this case, it is evident that Lin does not understand what is said by Bea's utterance.

[15]That understanding what is said by an utterance typically involves undergoing an experience as of the utterance having a certain meaning is particularly salient when we are learning a foreign language and for the first time effortlessly understand what is said by an utterance in that language (Drożdżowicz 2021b).

To count as understanding an utterance, an experience as of what is said by the utterance must be veridical (cf., McDowell 1998).

Secondly, even if one's experience of what was said by an utterance is veridical, this does still not suffice for utterance understanding because veridical experiences can lack a relevant causal connection to the utterance. Suppose Lily suffers from a disorder that makes her highly prone to verbal hallucinations. Whenever a complete stranger in close proximity to her says something to her, and no one else is around, she verbally hallucinates that the stranger tells her.

14. Be careful. I am watching you.

even though they said no such thing. As is in the nature of hallucinations, the utterance meaning presented in Lily's verbal hallucinations is not relevantly causally connected to the utterances made by the strangers she encounters. So, her hallucinations are ordinarily falsidical. However, one day where Lily is in close proximity to a complete stranger with no one else around, things go a little differently. To scare her, the stranger addresses her uttering (14). As expected, the particular circumstances rather than the content of what the stranger said causes Lily to hallucinate that the stranger uttered (14). As this is in fact the sentence uttered by the stranger, Lily's hallucination is veridical. Being a hallucination, however, her veridical experience of what the stranger said in uttering (14) is not relevantly causally connected to the stranger's utterance of (14). So, despite having a veridical experience of what the stranger said by making the utterance, Lily clearly fails to understand what he said.[16] The lesson is that to count as understanding what is said by an utterance, a veridical experience of what is said by the utterance must have the right sort of etiology. Moreover, the experience must be veridical because it has the right sort of etiology. Call an experience of what is said by an utterance that satisfies this condition 'apt'.[17]

Thirdly, even if one's experience of what is said by an utterance is veridical because of one's competent exercise of one's implicit linguistic competence (or apt), this may still not suffice for utterance understanding. This is because having evidence that casts serious doubt on the

[16]Note that the alternative accounts on the table (i.e., Pettit's account and the strengthened version of Balcerak-Jackson's view) seem to handle this and the first case perfectly well. So, here, my proposal is in agreement with their accounts.

[17]The term 'apt' is borrowed from Sosa (2021), although Sosa doesn't apply it to mental states representing linguistic meanings or utterance meanings, nor to experiences.

veridicality of one's experience of what is said by an utterance can prevent the experience from rising to the level of utterance understanding. To see this, consider the following case.[18] Hugo suffers from mild verbal auditory agnosia, which makes him unable to distinguish [f] and [b] sounds about 50% of the time. When his linguistic ability misfires, his auditory system arbitrarily fills in either [f] or [b], making an utterance of, say, 'bone' just as likely to sound to him like 'phone' as it is 'bone'. Fully aware of his condition, Hugo is in the habit of doubting the veridicality of his experiences of what is said by utterances involving [f] or [b] sounds except when it's subjectively probable that the speaker said what it sounded like she said. One day, in his 8 am philosophy class on emotions, Hugo is drifting off but is abruptly awoken by the professor saying what sounds to him like.

15. Beer is a basic emotion.

Hugo has an experience as of the professor saying beer is a basic emotion. But he has prior evidence that the professor rarely makes mistakes and never jokes around in class. Moreover, having spent hours preparing for class the day before, Hugo knows the chapter on basic emotions by heart. Given the totality of the evidence in his possession, Hugo comes to justifiably believe that the professor actually said that fear is a basic emotion. When a fellow student asks if he heard what the professor said, he replies, 'Yeah, she said fear is a basic emotion'. Unbeknownst to Hugo, however, the professor said exactly what it sounded like she did. She purposely said 'beer' instead of 'fear' in a desperate (and unsuccessful) attempt to get the students to pay attention. In the envisaged case, Hugo's experience of the professor saying beer is a basic emotion is veridical and grounded in his linguistic competence and veridical because grounded (apt). Yet the fact that Hugo justifiably (albeit falsely) believes that the professor said that *fear* is a basic emotion and unhesitantly shares this information with his classmate suggests that his grounded veridical experience of the professor saying beer is a basic emotion has little to no influence on his linguistic performance. Rather than being based on his grounded veridical experience of the professor saying beer is a basic emotion, his response to his classmate's question is informed by his false belief that she said that fear is

[18]The Hugo case echoes Balcerak Jackson's (2019)'s Rabbit Habit and New Goat cases, which I turn to below.

a basic emotion. The fact that Hugo's response to his classmate is guided by his false belief rather than his grounded veridical experience suggests that his experience doesn't rise to the level of understanding.

Pace Pettit (2002), the same lesson can be drawn from his third counterexample to the epistemic view.[19] In the example, a group of mad neuroscientists successfully convince you that they have surgically altered your brain to induce a form of semantic aphasia that makes you systematically mistaken about the meaning of mass nouns. As part of their brainwashing scheme, they let you interact with actors who say things like:

16. Do you take your coffee with acetone?

and

17. Please add a little more soap to the stew.

When your other people later address you using mass nouns correctly, your conviction that you are systematically wrong about the meaning of mass nouns causes you to believe they must have said something other than they seemed to say. As a result, you will be deterred from disagreeing with the false assertion made by the speaker of (18), from answering the question posed by the speaker of (19), and from fulfilling the request made by the speaker of (20).

18. Silver is more expensive than gold.
19. What sort of research are you doing?
20. Could you get the saffron in the cupboard?

But not only will you be deterred from disagreeing with false assertions, answering questions, and fulfilling requests, your conviction that you are utterly incompetent with mass nouns psychologically compels you to respond insincerely to people addressing you or not respond at all.

Here is a case to illustrate. At a gathering after your kidnappers release you, you escape to the kitchen-dining area where Lydia is busy with something at the large kitchen island. You met Lydia once before but

[19]More precisely, although the target of Pettit's third case is the view that understanding the linguistic meaning of a linguistic item requires having a belief about its linguistic meaning, I will argue that contrary to what Pettit seems to think, this case also presents a counterexample to the view that utterance understanding, in its generic sense, requires having a doxastic attitude about what is said.

only briefly at another gathering and before the kidnapping. However, you have only barely greeted each other before, she asks.

21. Could you add cayenne and sage to the sauce? It's in the storage.

Convinced you are utterly incompetent with mass nouns, you're sure she must have said something other than what it seems she did. As you don't have the faintest idea what she wants you to do, you are in a bind about how to react. The earnest person you are, you are loath to lying and insincere behavior and shudder at the thought of divulging how mad scientists kidnapped you and altered your brain. At a loss to explain your quiescence, you end up muttering something by way of an excuse before storming off.

Your bewilderment and inactivity when faced with utterances of sentences containing mass nouns addressed to you suggests that despite having an apt experience of what is said by such utterances you fail to understand what is said by them.

Readers may still have a nagging feeling that in the envisaged scenario, your apt experiences of what is said by utterances of sentences containing mass nouns suffice for your understanding such utterances. I submit that this feeling can be traced to the *prima facie* claim of these kinds of experiences of what is said to be states of utterance understanding, where an experience of what is said can have a *prima facie* claim to be a state of utterance understanding despite the hearer possessing a justified mental state that gives her a good reason to doubt the aptness of her experiences. More on that shortly.

But let us concede that there might be a marginal use of 'experiential utterance understanding' according to which having apt experiences of what is said by utterances of sentences containing mass nouns suffice for understanding what is said by such utterances even though the addressee never responds sincerely to other people using such utterances to address her, if she responds at all.

Even if we grant that there might be a marginal use of 'experiential utterance understanding', however, it can hardly be denied that there is a more widespread and commonsensical use of 'understanding' according to which a hearer who never responds sincerely, if at all, to uses of mass nouns addressed to her fails to understand what is said by uses of mass nouns.

Collaborative speech acts, such as agreements, contracts, and bets, may help drive home this point. Collaborative speech acts are illocutionary acts that require for their felicity that the speaker and addressee

collaborate linguistically, for instance, by the addressee accepting what the speaker offers. For example, we cannot felicitously agree to meet on campus tomorrow unless we both accept the suggestion to do so. Likewise, I cannot felicitously bet you $50 that the San Francisco 49ers will win the Superbowl unless you accept my bet. Suppose Jeremiah has no knowledge of your brainwashing and sincerely propose:

22. Let's meet tomorrow to discuss furniture.

Due to your conviction that you are systematically wrong about the meaning of mass nouns, you think Jeremiah must have suggested meeting to discuss something other than what it seems he suggested. Even so, you hesitatingly accept his proposal. As you have no idea what he suggested you meet to discuss, your acceptance of his suggestion is insincere, which makes your agreement to meet tomorrow infelicitous.

In these cases, your justified belief that you are systematically wrong about the meaning of mass nouns defeats the *prima facie* claim of your apt experiences of what is said by utterances of sentences containing mass nouns to be states of utterance understanding. Experiential utterance understanding, in the full sense, would thus seem to require an apt experience whose claim to be a state of utterance understanding is undefeated.

The proposal that undefeated apt experiences of what is said by an utterance can qualify as utterance understanding does not rule out that doxastic states (subject to certain constraints) can also count as utterance understanding. Indeed, I propose that we recognize two kinds of utterance understanding: experiential and doxastic. This distinction is motivated by the different cognitive functions experiences and doxastic attitudes subserve.

On the received view in philosophy of mind, experiences and judgments (or occurrent beliefs) play distinct cognitive roles (e.g. Brogaard 2018c; Bundesen and Habekost 2008). Experiences are mental representations of, or hypotheses about, external stimuli. Thus understood, experiences yield putative insight into what the external world is like. Experiences are furthermore the inputs to cognitive operations, such as reporting, reflection, and decision-making, but are not themselves proper objects of such processes. Rather, the proper objects of cognitive operations are judgments (or occurrent beliefs). If we apply the received view to experiences as of what is said by utterances, such experiences serve to yield putative insight into what is said by utterances that occur

in real time and to provide the inputs to cognitive operations, whereas judgments about what is said by utterances serve as proper objects of those operations. For example, if you ponder a response to a hurtful remark addressed to you earlier in the day, your contemplation does not operate directly on your earlier experience as of the speaker saying that P in making the remark but rather on your judgment that the speaker said that P in making the remark.

Doxastic utterance understanding involves either a judgment (occurrent belief) or a dispositional belief. If I judge that you said that you are a firefighter and commit that information to memory for later retrieval, the representational form of the memory trace is that of a dispositional or standing belief about what you said. So, if my judgment about what you said counts as utterance understanding, and no errors of memory occur, so does my dispositional belief. For simplicity's sake, however, I shall focus primarily on doxastic utterance understanding involving a judgment.

The question before us, then, is what it takes for a judgment about what is said by an utterance to count as utterance understanding. Given that undefeated apt experiences of utterance meanings count as utterance understanding, it seems intuitively plausible that a judgment properly based on an undefeated apt experience can too. But this raises the question of why we should think that an undefeated apt experience that forms a proper basis of a judgment can boost the standing of that judgment. As I will show momentarily, my argument for why we should think that an undefeated apt experience can do this rests on the thesis that the aptness of an experience can transmit across the basing relation to a judgment properly based on the experience in much the same way that justification can sometimes transmit across an a strong ampliative inference, that is, an inference from P to Q that is intuitively compelling to the agent because the truth of P evidently increases the likelihood of Q by a lot (e.g. 'All 10,000 times we flipped this coin, it came up heads. So, this coin is rigged.')

Due to space limitations, I can only provide a brief sketch of my argument for the claim that the aptness of experiences can transmit across the basing relation to the judgment properly based on the experience (defenses of the argument's key premises can be found in Brogaard 2013; 2018b; Brogaard and Gatzia 2024). My argument has two parts. The first part establishes that a judgment that P is properly based on an experience as of P just in case the agent judges that P on the grounds that her experience as of P provides propositional justification

for P. The second part likens the transmission of aptness across the basing relation to the transmission of justification across ampliative inference.

Part 1: The first part of my argument is premised on dogmatism about experiential justification.[20] I have defended dogmatism in previous work (e.g. 2018b). So, I shall assume it here. Dogmatism about experiential justification is the thesis that an experience as of P provides *prima facie* immediate and full justification for judging that P by virtue of its phenomenology relative to its content. To say that justification is *prima facie* is just to say that it is compatible with the agent possessing a defeater undermining the justification. Very roughly, a defeater of the justificatory power of an experience is evidence that gives the agent a good reason to doubt that her experience is apt. Dogmatism thus implies that, in the absence of a defeater, an experience as of P provides immediate and full justification for judging that P.

Dogmatism is a claim about propositional justification, not doxastic justification. Where doxastic justification is something that doxastic states possess, propositional justification is something agents have for judging or believing that a proposition is true (Turri 2010). Propositional justification is also referred to as a 'warrant' or 'evidence'. Justification for a proposition P is immediate just if it justifies P on its own rather than only in conjunction with independent justification for another proposition Q. For example, an experience of a red square on a whiteboard is immediate justification for the proposition that the square is red but not for the proposition that the red square is a regular polygon, as the experience of the red square justifies the latter proposition only in conjunction with independent justification for the proposition that squares are regular polygons.

As dogmatism is a claim about propositional justification, an experience as of P conferring justification on a judgment that P does not by itself make the judgment (doxastically) justified. For the judgment that P to be doxastically justified by the experience as of P, the judgment must furthermore be properly based on the experience.

There is emerging consensus that a judgment (or belief) that P is properly based on an experience as of P just when the agent judges that P on the grounds that her experience as of P is a good reason for her to judge that P (Brogaard 2018b). I shall take this view for granted. Now, the fact

[20]For thinkers sympathetic to dogmatism, see e.g. Chisholm (1966), Pollock and Cruz (1999), Pryor (2000; 2004; 2012; 2013), Huemer (2001; 2005; 2005), Silens (2008; 2013), Tucker (2010a), Chudnoff (2012; 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2018); Brogaard (2013; 2018b; *in press*), Ghijsen (2014; 2015), Moretti (2015), Fuqua (2017), Pace (2017), Brogaard and Gatzia (2024).

that an experience as of P provides propositional justification for P is not by itself a good reason for the experiencing agent to judge that P, as she may not realize that her experience has this justificatory power. But if she judges that P on the grounds that her experience as of P provides justification for P, she has a good reason for her judgment that P. So, if she judges that P, her judgment is properly based on her experience as of P.

Part 2: The second part of my argument likens the transmission of aptness across the basing relation to the transmission of justification across strong ampliative inference. An inference from P to Q is ampliative just in case the truth of P increases the probability of Q (e.g. '99.99% of faculty at the Spanish Art Academy are Spanish. Maya is a faculty member at the Spanish Art Academy. So, Maya is Spanish.'). If it increases it a lot, it's strong. If it only increases it a little, it's weak. As I have argued elsewhere, justification transmits across an ampliative inference from P to Q only if the truth of P increases the likelihood of Q by a lot (i.e. only if the inference is strong), and it seems that way to the agent (Brogaard 2021; Brogaard and Gatzia 2024; see also Tucker 2010b). In the absence of a defeater, an experience as of P provides a high degree of justification for P. As the experience's justificatory power is undefeated, the degree of justification reflects the degree of confidence that that the agent is warranted in having in P. So, the accuracy of the experience as of P makes it a lot more likely that the judgment that P is true. Judging that P on the grounds that one's experience as of P provides a high degree of justification for P is thus exactly analogous to inferring Q from P on the grounds that the truth of P makes Q a lot more likely. As justification transmits across ampliative inference, we are thus warranted in believing that aptness transmits across the basing relation to the judgment.

Thus far, I have given a reason to think that the aptness of an experience can transmit across the basing relation to a judgment properly based on the experience but not that the aptness of the judgment is undefeated. However, there is a straightforward reason to think that the agent doesn't have a defeater of the aptness of her judgment that P either. An agent's justified (albeit inaccurate) mental state D defeats the *prima facie* claim of her apt mental state M to be a state of understanding just if D is a good reason for her to doubt the aptness of M. If an agent has a judgment that P that is properly based on an undefeated apt experience of P, then she recognizes that her judgment that P is justified by her experience of P. As she recognizes that her judgment that P is justified by her experience of P, her possessing a defeater of the aptness of her judgment that P would make her warranted in doubting the aptness of her experience of P. So, if

the agent had a defeater of the aptness of her judgment that P, she would also have a defeater of the aptness of her experience of P. As the aptness of her experience is undefeated, it follows that she has no defeater of the aptness of her judgment that P. This concludes my argument for the thesis that if a judgment is properly based on an undefeated apt experience, it is itself apt and undefeated.

Since this conclusion is a general claim about judgments, it entails that if a judgment that a speaker said that P in uttering S is properly based on an undefeated apt experience of the speaker saying that P in uttering S, the judgment is itself apt and undefeated. To illustrate, suppose that your supervisor asks you when you want to defend your dissertation but that you need to mull it over before you can answer. In that case, your experience as of your supervisor asking you when you want to defend your dissertation serves as the input to your contemplating that question, provided that your experience forms a proper basis of a judgment about what your supervisor asked you. Your judgment counts as understanding what your supervisor asked you just if it is properly based on your experience as of what she asked you, and your experience is apt and undefeated.

Let's take stock. I have proposed an account of utterance understanding that recognizes two kinds of utterance understanding: experiential and doxastic. Experiences of what is said by utterances count as states of utterance understanding if apt and undefeated. A hearer's experience of what is said by an utterance is apt just in case it's accurate because compositionally derived from the sentence uttered and extralinguistic factors, such as context, prosody, paralanguage, and common ground. An apt judgment (or occurrent belief) that a speaker said that P in uttering S is properly based on an undefeated apt experience as of the speaker saying that P in uttering S is itself apt and undefeated, because the aptness of an experience can transmit across the basing relation to a judgment properly based on the experience. A defeater of an experience's aptness undermines both the experience's *prima facie* claim to be a state of experiential utterance understanding and the *prima facie* claim of an apt judgment properly based on the experience to be a state of doxastic utterance understanding. So, if the aptness of an experience of what is said is undefeated, so is the aptness of a judgment properly based on the experience. Experiences of what is said by an utterance thus play dual rational roles in utterance understanding. The undefeated aptness of an experience as of what is said by an utterance boosts its standing to that of experiential utterance understanding and the standing of a judgment properly based on the experience to that of doxastic utterance understanding.

In the paper's final section, I address some concerns about my proposed conception of doxastic utterance understanding, or more specifically, about the dogmatist thesis.

6. Objections to dogmatism about meaning experiences

Balcerak Jackson (2019) provides three objections to dogmatism about the epistemic role of meaning experiences in utterance understanding.[21] Although his primary target is Elizabeth Fricker's (2003) quasi-perceptual view, his objections seem no less problematic for the dogmatist thesis I appeal to in my account of doxastic utterance understanding. As the first two cases Balcerak Jackson presents are analogous, I will limit my discussion to his first and third cases: *Rabbit Habit* and *New Goat*.[22]

Rabbit Habit: Susie hears Elvis assert what sounds like (23):

23. I have too many bad rabbits.

However, Susie's doctor has warned her that the medication that she is taking frequently causes patients to confuse [h] and [r] sounds in others'

[21]Since I initially drafted this reply to Balcerak Jackson (2019), J. P. Grodniewicz (2022) has independently developed related responses to Balcerak Jackson's (2019) counterexamples to dogmatism. A crucial difference between my reply and that suggested by Grodniewicz (2022) lies in our different approaches to Balcerak Jackson's (2019) second case (see note 21). Unconvinced by available dogmatist replies to this case, Grodniewicz (2022) offers a reliabilist alternative to dogmatism, according to which our beliefs about what is said must be reliably formed on the basis of a reliable exercise of our linguistic competence in order for them to enjoy *prima facie* justification. As I cannot now give this proposal the scrutiny it deserves, I refer the reader to Grodniewicz (2022) for the details of his account.

[22]A reviewer for this journal convinced me that the second case is interestingly different from *Rabbit Habit*. So, let me briefly deal with it here. *Interpretive Clairvoyance*: Eddy is meeting Liz for the first time and asks her about her occupation. But when she answers, it sounds to him as if she is speaking Volapyk or some other foreign language entirely unknown to him. Even so, he has a quasi-perception as of her saying she is a vet (adopted from Balcerak Jackson 2019, 396). The problem for the dogmatist, Balcerak Jackson (2019) argues, is that Eddy has a quasi-perception as of what Liz is saying despite not being justified in believing what she said. By way of reply, the case seems to violate the grounding constraint on utterance understanding canvassed in the last section. But I don't think dogmatism need to appeal to etiological issues to adequately reply to *Interpretive Clairvoyance*: As Balcerak Jackson lays out the example, Eddy's auditory experience as of Liz making 'unfamiliar vocal noises' undoubtedly counts as an undercutting defeater of the *prima facie* justificatory status of his experience as of her saying she is a vet. So, dogmatism will yield the intuitively correct verdict that Eddy is not justified in believing that Liz said that she is a vet. Balcerak Jackson could have assimilated his counterexample to the standard clairvoyance objection which has been leveled against reliabilism (BonJour, 1980) by adding that Eddy has a perfectly reliable interpretive clairvoyance faculty, and that he is aware of this fact. In the envisaged circumstances, Eddy's auditory experience as of Liz making 'unfamiliar vocal noises' would not count as a defeater of the *prima facie* justificatory status of his experience as of her saying she is a vet but he would not count as *understanding her utterance* on the basis of his auditory experience of the speech sounds she makes because he would be relying on his perfectly reliable interpretive clairvoyance faculty rather than his ordinary linguistic competence and hence would violate the grounding constraint.

speech. So, 'habit' may sound like 'rabbit' (2019, 391). Although it sounds to Susie that Elvis asserted that he has too many bad rabbits, intuitively, she is not justified in believing that this is what Elvis asserted.

According to Balcerak Jackson (2019), the challenge for dogmatism is to account for why the doctor's warning defeats Susie's *prima facie* justification for thinking Elvis said he had too many bad rabbits. If the doctor had warned Susie that she would be likely to misperceive the voice pitch or accent of other people, Balcerak Jackson argues, his warning would not have had any undermining effect on Susie's justification. Balcerak Jackson finds it unsurprising that Elvis's voice pitch and accent make no difference to Susie's justification for forming a belief about what Elvis said in uttering (23). But, he adds, dogmatism holds that the perception of speech sounds has no more bearing on the epistemic role of experiences of what a speaker says than the speaker's pitch and accent do. So, the burden on the dogmatist is to explain how Susie's rational belief about her misperception of [h] and [r] sounds can defeat her experiential justification for beliefs about what Elvis said in uttering (23) yet deny that Elvis's voice pitch or accent makes any difference to the justificatory status of Susie's experience as of what Elvis said. Balcerak Jackson concludes that to insist that the doctor's warning defeats Susie's justification is 'entirely ad hoc' (2019, 392).

This is a clever objection. As Balcerak Jackson (2019) correctly observes, the standard gloss on dogmatism about the rational role of experiences of utterance meanings does not mention speech sounds at all (including the one I sketched above). So, for the dogmatists, the perception of *speech sounds* cannot have any bearing on the rational role of experiences of utterance meanings. Yet the doctor's warning is that Susie is likely to confuse [h] and [r] sounds in other people's speech and so his warning is precisely about the perception of *speech sounds*. But this then means that the doctor's warning cannot have any bearing on the rational role of experiences of utterance meanings, which in turn means that it cannot serve as a defeater of the justificatory status of Susie's experience. Or so the argument goes.

However, as I will now argue, the dogmatist has a way of responding to this objection. While we refer to Susie's justified belief that she is likely to confuse [h] and [r] sounds in other people's speech as an undercutting defeater, her belief can only do its defeating work in conjunction with background knowledge about the connection between speech sounds and utterance meanings, specifically the background knowledge that it matters to the meaning of the resulting word whether we affix the

speech sounds [r] or [h] to [ab] + [it]. So, Susie's justified belief that she is likely to confuse [h] and [r] speech sounds, along with her background knowledge that confusions of speech sounds such as [r] and [h] sounds are interestingly connected to utterance interpretation, jointly undercut the justificatory status of Susie's experience as of what Elvis said. As the justificatory power of Susie's experience as of what Elvis said is defeated, her experience has no justificatory power. So, her belief that Elvis said that he has too many bad rabbits is unjustified.

We are not quite done, however. Part of the challenge *Rabbit Habit* was intended to present to the dogmatist was that of explaining why Susie's rational belief that she is likely to misperceive people's voice pitch (i.e. the lowness or highness of a person's voice) and accent (i.e. the distinct idiolectic or dialectical pronunciation) does not defeat the *prima facie* justificatory status of her experiences of what people say when making utterances, when her rational belief that she is likely to confuse [h] and [r] sounds does just that. I suspect the reason for the difference is this. Susie's justified belief that she is likely to confuse [r] and [h] sounds is able to defeat her experience as of what Elvis said in uttering (23) because, together with her background knowledge that confusions of speech sounds such as [r] and [h] sounds are interestingly connected to utterance interpretation, she can rationally infer from that belief that the sort of phoneme mix-up she justifiably takes herself to be vulnerable to makes her prone to misperceptions of what speakers say. By contrast, if Susie had justifiably believed that she is likely to misperceive voice pitch and accents, she would not be able to rationally infer that she would be likely to have misperceived what Elvis said in uttering (23). After all, it's normally only highly unusual accents and voice pitches rather than voice pitches and accents that fall within the normal range of variability (even if quite wide) that causes us to misperceive what speakers say. As Susie does not have the background knowledge that normal variability in voice pitch and accent (though significant) is interestingly connected to utterance interpretation, she cannot rationally infer from her justified belief that she is likely to misperceive other people's voice pitch and accent, that she is likely misperceiving what Elvis said in uttering (23). So, if Susie had justifiably believed she were vulnerable to misperceive other people's voice pitch and accent, this would not have undercut the justificatory status of her experience as of what Elvis said.[23] Let's now proceed to Balcerak Jackson's (2019) third counterexample.

[23]Grodniewicz (2022) disagrees with me here: 'I think that Balcerak Jackson is simply mistaken in assuming that a warning about misperception of voice pitch or accent would not defeat the justification of comprehension-based beliefs. In fact, it would have the exact same effect on [Susie]'s justification as

New Goat: Stella hears Atticus assert (in a sincere voice) what sounds like (24):

24. I just bought a new goat.

But Stella knows that Atticus hates goats and lives in a small city apartment that doesn't allow pets. So, she concludes that she must have misheard him and that he must have asserted something else, perhaps that he bought a new coat.

The problem that this case presents for the dogmatist thesis, Balcerak Jackson (2019) argues, is not that it cannot account for the defeat of the *prima facie* justificatory status of Stella's experience as of Atticus asserting that he bought a new goat, but rather that it cannot account for why Stella is *prima facie* justified in thinking that Atticus must have asserted something else.

By way of reply, Stella's experience of Atticus asserting that he bought a new goat doesn't just give her *prima facie* justification for believing that Atticus asserted that he bought a new goat, it also gives her *prima facie* justification for other beliefs, such as the belief that Atticus asserted something or other. Stella's prior knowledge that Atticus hates goats and lives in a small city apartment that doesn't allow pets makes it probable that Atticus did not assert that he bought a new goat. But it does not make it probable that Atticus did not assert anything at all. So, while Stella's prior knowledge defeats the justificatory status of her experience as of

the warning about possible confusion of phonemes; it would be an undercutting defeater' (2022, 114). However, one of the wonders of natural language is that fluent speakers of a language often have no trouble understanding each other despite enormous variations in voice pitch (i.e., the lowness or highness of a person's voice) and accent (e.g., a Boston vs a Texas accent). The pitch/accent constancy found in natural language is akin to the shape/size/color constancy found in visual object (or scene) perception. To revisit the *Rabbit Habit* case: if Susie had been told by her doctor that she is likely to misperceive people's voice pitch and accent, this by itself would not undermine the justificatory force of her experience as of Elvis saying that he has too many bad rabbits. To be sure: Susie's background information about Elvis might give Susie a reason to doubt the accuracy of her experience as of what Elvis said, but that has nothing to do with accent or voice pitch. Grodniewicz (2022) is right, of course, that intonation (i.e., the variation of pitch across a phrase/sentence) can convey a difference in force (e.g., interrogative versus assertoric force) and expressive meaning (e.g., sounding serious), which by Balcerak Jackson's light (Forthcoming) might count as a change in what is said (e.g., 'I work here?' vs 'I work here!'). For instance, if Susie were told by her doctor that she is likely to misperceive intonation, then she would have reason to question the force of what Elvis said. In that case, she might have wondered if he was asking her whether he had too many bad rabbits rather than asserting that he did have too many, which was how it sounded to her. So, Susie's justified belief that she is likely to misperceive intonation would undermine the justificatory status of her experience as of the force of Elvis's utterance. This is a nice point. But we can grant that point and still maintain that if Susie had come to justifiably believe that she was misperceiving Elvis as uttering (23) with a low-pitched Boston accent rather than, say, a high-pitched New York accent, she would *not* thereby have had good reason to doubt the veracity of her experience as of what Elvis said in uttering (23).

Atticus asserting that he bought a new goat, it does not defeat the justificatory status of her experience as of Atticus asserting something or other. Stella thus has justification for believing that Atticus didn't assert what he appeared to assert and justification for believing that he did assert something or other. From this, she can rationally infer that Atticus must have asserted something other than what he appeared to assert. Assuming justification transmits across strong ampliative inference (Brogaard 2021; Brogaard and Gatzia 2024; Tucker 2010b), Stella can thus come to have justification for thinking that Atticus asserted something other than what he appeared to assert. This concludes my argument for thinking that dogmatism about the epistemic role of meaning experiences in one kind of utterance understanding is well equipped to handle Balcerak Jackson's (2019) counterexamples against it.

7. Conclusion

The nature of natural-language understanding has been hotly debated in philosophy in recent years. One question at the heart of this debate is whether understanding what is said by, or the meaning of, an utterance involves perceptually experiencing what is said. The perceptual view is commonly complemented with dogmatism about perceptual justification, which holds that an experience as of a speaker saying that P in uttering S provides *prima facie* immediate justification for thinking that the speaker says that P in uttering S. I have defended the perceptual view elsewhere. That was not my aim in this paper. Rather, my aim here was to develop an account of utterance understanding premised on a dogmatist thesis about the rational role of meaning experiences in utterance understanding, but one that is neutral on the exact nature of meaning experiences.

To motivate my proposal, I began by revisiting two related accounts of linguistic understanding proposed by Pettit (2002) and Balcerak Jackson (Forthcoming). On these accounts, understanding the linguistic meaning of a linguistic item requires having the linguistic ability or knowledge-how required to competently derive or infer what is said by utterances of that item. The ability/know-how accounts thus explain linguistic understanding in terms of utterance understanding, which at first may seem to leave them in want of an auxiliary theory of utterance understanding. Initial appearances to the contrary, however, the ability/know-how views pride themselves on being able to explain utterance

understanding as the result of the hearer competently exercising her linguistic ability or knowledge-how.

After outlining the dual aspirations of the linguistic ability/know-how views, I proceed by arguing that their suggested approaches to utterance understanding are less than fully satisfactory. Balcerak Jackson takes utterance understanding to require having a justified belief, which leaves him vulnerable to objections that turn on empirical insights into cognitive processing. Pettit suggests that understanding the meaning of an utterance involves having an impression (i.e. a seeming or experience) of what is said. This proposal, I argued, is unable to accommodate the intuition that the possession of defeaters that psychologically compels hearers to respond insincerely to utterances addressed to them or to not respond at all can prevent their impressions of what is said from rising to the level of understanding.

In the final sections of the paper, I developed an alternative account of utterance understanding that was intended to avoid the shortcomings of the alternatives. On my proposed account, undefeated apt experiences of what is said play distinct rational roles in two distinct kinds of utterance understanding: experiential and doxastic.[24]

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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[24]I am grateful to the organizers and participants of the *Linguistic Understanding: Perception and Inference* conference at the University of Oslo in 2021 and an audience at NYU for the opportunity to present some of these ideas and for excellent discussion and feedback. I am also grateful to Anna Drożdżowicz, Kim Pedersen Phillip, and three anonymous reviewers for this journal for helpful comments on a previous version of this paper and to Casey O'Callaghan, Elijah Chudnoff, and Song Oh for insightful discussion of these and related issues.

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