Linguistic Luck beyond Loar Cases

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Draft, Comments very welcome

Bonnie and Clyde stay alert inside their hideout. Bonnie is guarding the main door, while Clyde does the same by the back door of their one-story hut, deep in the forest. A group of policemen had tried to surprise them earlier in the morning, but they managed to subdue them and tied them up. They ran out of rope and thus had to tie the final one down with his own shoelaces. Clyde is worried that this policeman might break himself free and so moves him to the back of the house where he, Clyde, can more easily keep a watch on him.

While paying attention to the main entrance, Bonnie hears a snap of rope behind her. "Watch out! – she screams – one has freed himself!" while she runs towards where the sound came from in the living room. She makes it just on time to stop one of the policemen from reaching for his revolver. In the meanwhile, as Clyde hears Bonnie's scream from the back of the house, he turns to where he had left the policeman tied with his shoelaces and surely enough sees him untying himself free. In just a few seconds, Clyde manages to subdue the policeman before he could escape.

There clearly seems to be something odd in the communicative exchange between the famous thieves, and Clyde was certainly lucky to be able to use Bonnie's warning to subdue the policeman in the back room; however, our usual conceptual tool box for modeling human communication does not seem well suited to account for this. In this chapter, will argue that, instead of appealing to different levels of content, the speakers' communicative intentions or their inferential bases, it is more helpful to frame the phenomena in terms of what communicative successes or failures can be normatively attributed to the participants in the conversation. In broad strokes, I will defend that the normative status of Bonnie's assertion depended, in a sense to be further detailed, on the policeman in the living room in a way that got lost in the communicative

process. I will defend that this failure turned into a successful communication because there is a sense in which the fact Clyde took Bonnie's assertion to be normatively grounded on – i.e., that the policeman at the back of the house had freed himself – was also something that made the proposition communicated true. But since this something responsible for the truth of the proposition in Bonnie's mind was not what was in Clyde's mind, we can say that Bonnie and Clyde were lucky. They were lucky to token different facts, both of which were sufficient for the truth of the proposition. In a similar fashion, in those Loar cases where the correct referent is grasped by mere luck, the facts about the referent responsible for the speaker's normative status regarding her utterance do not account for the hearer's successful identification of such referent.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the first section, I will compare this case with the most well-studied cases of linguistic luck, i.e., Loar cases of lucky reference with misunderstanding. In particular, I will argue that even though both are particular cases of a more general phenomenon, linguistic luck, cases like Bonnie and Clyde's above do not involve miscommunication or a divergence in inferential bases. This must give us good reasons to not conflate both categories: linguistic luck and Loar cases (understood as cases of miscommunication where hearer and speaker still end up entertaining thoughts with the same truth-conditions). In the next section, I will continue the comparison by explaining, in very broad strokes, in what sense both are cases of linguistic luck, in so far as in both cases the participants achieved their linguistic goals in the basis of mistaken linguistic assumptions. Then, I will explain how the general characterization of linguistic luck sketched in the second section would explain Bonnie and Clyde's case, not in terms of any inferential basis, but in terms of what sort of facts make the assertion true.

1. Bonnie, Clyde and Loar

At first look, it might seem that my example above is just another Loar case, i.e., a case "where a hearer ends up entertaining a thought with the same truth-conditions as that asserted by the speaker

but where, intuitively, communication has not been successful" (Valente 2021: 170). Consider Loar's original puzzle:

> Suppose that Smith and Jones are unaware that the man being interviewed on television is someone they see on the train every morning and about whom, in that latter role, they have just been talking. Smith says, "That man is a stockbroker", intending to refer to the man on television; Jones takes Smith to be referring to the man on the train. Now Jones, as it happens, has correctly identified Smith's referent, since the man on television is the man on the train; but he has failed to understand Smith's utterance. (Loar 1976)

The referential goal of Smith's use of "that man" was to use it to communicate something about the man being interviewed on television, who also happens to be the man they see on the train every morning. This goal was achieved, yet Smith's referential intention was not correctly grasped by Jones. As described by Loar, Smith intended to refer to the man on television, while Jones took Smith to be referring to the man on the train. By good fortune, the man on television and the man on the train were one and the same, and thus it was because of this good fortune, that Smith and Jones ended up assigning the same referent to the demonstrative "that man".

Notice that, unlike Loar's case just described, Bonnie and Clyde's case of linguistic luck cannot be accounted for by appealing to the speaker's communicative intention, since it is not the case that Bonnie had a communicative intention that was not grasped by Clyde, one that went beyond the truth conditions successfully grasped by the hearer (Buchanan 2014). After all, Clyde was successfully warned by Bonnie that one of the policemen had freed himself. In screaming "One has freed himself", Bonnie had the intention of communicating the proposition that one of the (salient group of) policemen had freed himself and she succeeded, since that was the very proposition that Clyde grasped from her utterance. In this sense, Bonnie succeeded in communicating to Clyde what she intended to. For this same reason, this is not a case of partial understanding, at least as usually conceived, since Clyde fully grasped just the propositions Bonnie meant to communicate (Abreu *manuscript,* Davies 2021, Strawson 1970, 1964). Thus, is this a genuine case of miscommunication? The intuition that some miscommunication has taken place can

be harnessed by noticing, following Onofri (2019: 4), that the conversation might have continued as follows:

Clyde: How did you know that? Was it because you saw him untie himself?

Bonnie: I was actually thinking about the cop in the living room – I had no idea the one in the back had freed himself!

Clyde: Oh, I thought you were talking about the other cop.

Yet, we cannot say either that Bonnie tried and failed to convey Clyde information about the policeman in the living room and that this information was what Clyde missed from Bonnie's message. Bonnie never formed the communicative intention to convey information this specific in her assertion. Thus, if we follow Peet (2021: 2) in taking communication to break down when the audience fails to recover the speaker's intended meaning, there was no miscommunication here. If Buchanan is right in asserting that "the kind of misunderstanding that Loar has called to our attention shows that there is some aspect of the speaker's communicative intentions that her hearer is failing to recognize" (Buchanan, 2014, p. 64), then this is not a Loar case in the traditional sense, since it does not depend on anything that Bonnie intended to communicate but failed to. Of course, one can say that Bonnie intended for Clyde to become aware of the fact that the police person in the living room had freed himself, perhaps through an appropriate inference from the information conveyed in her utterance and further contextual input (Lacey 2004: 15). However, such intention was not a properly *communicative* intention (it might even be better characterized as a perlocutionary intention). After all, in order for there to be a genuine communicative intention, there has to be some manifestation of such intention (Németh 2020, Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995). Even in cases where speakers fail to communicate, there is at least some misguided signal or ostension with which the speaker tried to make her communicative intension to the hearer. It is there for Bonnie's intention to communicate the proposition that one of the policemen had freed himself,

but there is nothing of the sort corresponding to anything more specific about the policeman in the living room. Thus, it would be inaccurate too sat that the failure of Bonnie and Clyde's communication can be accounted for by the fact that, even though Clyde reached the same existential proposition as Bonnie's, he did not do so by means of properly recognizing her partner's communicative intention to linguistically refer to the man in the living room, for there was no such communicative intention. Instead, it is clear that Bonnie did not try to communicate anything more specific than what she successfully conveyed to Clyde.

Unlike traditional Loar cases, there was no pronoun resolution required to properly interpret Bonnie's statement, and thus no need for Clyde to appeal to contextual information to determine which policeman she was thinking about, at least not as part of determining the content of her utterance. Because of this reason, appealing to a failure in primary pragmatic processing would not explain what happens here either, since primary pragmatic processing need to be triggered by lexical items like pronouns, indexicals, demonstratives or similar context-sensitive expressions (Korta & Perry 2017). The existential "one" is not context-sensitive in this sense. Even if they are less determinate that singular propositions, existential propositions are not incomplete, and thus they do not require any pragmatic inference to recover a more complete message. They are already complete.

Yes, there was enough contextual information available to Clyde (at least in principle) from which he could have inferred that the policeman Bonnie was thinking about was the one in the living room, but this inference, even if Clyde had successfully performed it, would not have been a properly pragmatic one, for it would have had to happen after the linguistic interpretation of Bonnie's utterance. And yes, a more precise utterance could have been more helpful, but that does not mean that Bonnie's utterance violated the Gricean norm of quantity, in a way that could have triggered a free pragmatic inference (Grice 1975). Remember that, from a Gricean perspective, if

there is only one object of the relevant kind in the relevant environment, using a quantified singular expression does not violate the norm of quantity. Since Bonnie knew of only one policeman freeing himself, at least from her perspective, there was need for more precision than that contained in her utterance. Clyde did not know two policemen had freed themselves either, and thus from his perspective, the existential interpretation on Bonnie's assertion did not violate Grice's principle of quantity either. In consequence, the mismatch between Bonnie and Clyde cannot be attributed to pragmatics.

Also, it is not that Clyde and Bonnie reached the same conclusion from different inferential bases. It is not that they grasped the same proposition that a policeman had freed himself though inferential processes involving different policemen. This is so because Clyde did not need to think of any particular policeman in order to interpret Bonnie's utterance. If we want to keep talking in inferential terms, the divergence occurred not on the inferential basis but on the inferential consequences drawn from the communicated information. In this sense, the Bonnie and Clyde example is a sort of inferential dual of traditional Loar cases.

Furthermore, we cannot rescue the hypothesis that this is a genuine case of miscommunication by appealing to some other level of content that was somehow conveyed in Bonnie's utterance. For example, it was not that Clyde failed to grasp the literal meaning of Bonnie's words and thus what he failed to grasp was not what Cappelen and Lepore (2005) have called the *minimal* conveyed proposition. Remember that minimal propositions "are the result of little or no pragmatic processing and are available to provide the literal meaning of sentences" (Borg 2007: 340). In Clyde's case that minimal proposition would not even include information about it being a policeman who freed himself, much the less which policeman it was! In general, as their name suggests, minimal propositions tend to bear very little information. But whatever got lost between Bonnie and Clyde is more specific that the information conveyed in the relevant utterance.

Thus, it cannot be identified with the minimal conveyed proposition. In a similar fashion, it was not that Clyde failed to grasp the utterance's self-referential content (Perry 2001), since Perry's semantical account is also closely tied to the conventional meaning of the uttered sentence. However, as I have already mentioned, there is nothing demonstrative in Clyde's speech act. Thus, even if it is true that Clyde associates her use of "one" with the most salient individual in her context at the time of utterance, we cannot appeal too the conventional meaning of the quantifier "one" to trigger a self-referential mechanism that would recover this association. Thus, Perry's theory of self-referential content is of no help here. On the other hand, I have not read John Perry's contribution to this volume yet, thus I am open to be proved wrong in this regards.

Notice as well that what is puzzling about Bonnie and Clyde's case is not that they disagreed on what was at issue in the assertion, at least in the technical sense in which this notion is currently used. As long as the notion of at-issueness aims to capture the common "observation that contents conveyed by utterances differ [in their primacy, i.e., on] whether or not they are the main point" (Tonhauser 2012: 2), what is at issue is always one of the propositions conveyed in the assertion. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned, Bonnie and Clyde do not disagree on any proposition conveyed in Bonnie's assertion. Thus they did not disagree on what was at issue either.

Finally, it is also worth noticing that Bonnie knew that a policeman had freed himself. Consequently, her assertion complied with the norm of assertion – either because we think it is knowledge, truth or justification. Hers was full fledged knowledge, and not a case of epistemic luck. Her hearing the snapping of the policeman's rope was properly linked to the belief that a policeman had freed himself and so we are not dealing with a Gettier case here either. From Bonnie's testimony, Clyde achieved knowledge as well, so the sort of luck involved in the example does not seem to be a mere case of epistemic luck either.

However, it is clear that there is something missing in this picture: there was something about Bonnie's utterance that Clyde did not get and, because of that, there is a sense in which their communicative success was a matter of luck. Yet I hope to have shown in this section that our current conceptual toolbox does not seem to have the proper tools to account for this. The purpose of the rest of the chapter will be precisely to develop the conceptual tools necessary to deal with this and similar cases of linguistic luck, including more traditional Loar cases.

2. Linguistic Luck

Even though it is true that linguistic luck is a distinct phenomenon from epistemic and moral luck (Rey, *this volume;* Armstrong, *this volume;* Graham and Peet, *this volume*), we must not overstate the differences among them. As I have argued in (Barceló 2012) and (2019), despite the subtle differences of how it affects our moral, epistemic and linguistic evaluations, luck is the very much the same single phenomenon manifesting in these (and other) domains of human normativity.

Unlike the ordinary sense of "luck", the philosophical notion of luck, i.e., the notion of luck involved in linguistic, moral and epistemic luck (but, of course, not only in these three phenomena) does not refer to some providencial causal force that graces some and disfavors others (Desalles 2010, Teigen & Jensen 2011), but to a related factor involved in our normative practice of binding agents to the positive or negative consequences of their actions, so as to assign blame, praise and responsibility. In this sense, someone has good luck or is lucky in relation to some given event or state of affairs if such an event or state has a positive valence for that person yet she is not fully responsible in a praiseworthy way for such consequence (symmetrically, she is unlucky or has bad luck if such an event or state has a negative valence for her yet she is not fully responsible in a

blameworthy way) (Barceló 2019).[1] Both conditions are necessary and both are evaluative. Therefore, talk of linguistic luck makes sense in so far as linguistic acts can have positive or negative effects for those involved in linguistic behavior and these effects can be the object of blame, praise and/or responsibility.

Without getting too much into the debate of how and in what sense is language normative,[2] in order to make sense of linguistic luck, it is enough to recognize that speech involves many telic acts. In so far as people usually use language to achieve many sorts of specifically linguistic goals, many sorts of states can be deemed positive or negative in the relevant sense: We can understand or misunderstand an utterance, we can fail to communicate what we intend to communicate or refer to the entities we want to refer to, our speech acts can be infelicitous or, in general, do not achieve some or all of its intended effects, etc. Success and failure are both common in linguistic

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[1]. It is usually accepted that luck is a gradual notion, i.e, even among cases of good or bad luck, some cases are usually judged more or less lucky than others, where "typically, the most 'lucky' person is the winner who most easily could, or should, have lost" (Teigen 1996: 156) meaning that our judgments of how lucky an event was depend on downwards counterfactual reasoning, i.e., reasoning about how different are those real or imagined others who did worse than us (Teigen & Jensen 2011). Thus, linguistic luck must also be conceived as a gradual notion, even though this aspect of linguistic luck will not concern us in this chapter. Another caveat worth mentioning is that recent work has challenged the long held assumption that praise and blame are symmetrical aspects of a single phenomenon (Eshleman 2013, Stout 2020). I have no room here to address these concerns, but as with the gradual aspect of luck, the issue of whether blame and praise are asymmetrically related has little bearing on the main points I make in this chapter.

[2]. I acknowledge the many controversies surrounding linguistic normativity, i.e. whether linguistic norms like those of grammar are genuinely normative instead of regularities contingently abstracted from the complexities of language use. On the one hand, there is genuine danger in presenting language as goal oriented, for it invites the extrapolation to the damaging idea that some languages are better fit to help us reach those goals than others and thus are superior and must prevail. While, on the other, it is hard to make sense of genuine phenomena like hate speech, doublespeak, etc. without admitting some place for genuine normativity on language (Vázquez Rojas 2020, Barber & Stainton 2021).

performance. Even the most skilled speaker is bound to flounder now and then. All speakers commit slips of the tongue, ear and pen (Fromkin et al. 1981, Wilson 1994: 47, Yus 1999). Thus, linguistic luck occurs when an individual or collective agent's interests are affected, either positively (in cases of good luck) or negatively (in cases of bad luck) as a consequence of a speech act in which they are involved (usually as hearers or speakers), and such that some or all of them are not fully responsible in a praiseworthy or blameful way for such outcome.

Despite the generality of the phenomenon, in the recent literature, a lot of attention has been paid to the aforementioned Loar cases, i.e. cases of referential coordination without communicative success, These can be rightfully called cases of linguistic luck because they satisfy this general characterization. In them, speaker and hearer achieve their communicative goal of communicating information about some object through the use of some referential expression or device in such oblique way that such achievement cannot be attributed to them in a praiseworthy sense, but is better described as a matter of luck (Peet 2019, 2017; Buchanan 2014). As Unnsteinsson (2018) has correctly noticed, most Loar cases are usually under-described so that it is hard to determine what is happening in them, yet one can still see how they would work as cases of genuine linguistic luck. In Loar's original puzzle, for example, in order for the successful reference to be a matter of luck, it must depend on circumstances beyond the normative reach of the participants in the conversation. This means that we must reconstruct the case in such a way that the success cannot be attributed to neither Smith nor Jones. Perhaps, Smith assumed that being interviewed was the man's most salient property and/or Jones also assumed that the fact that they had been recently talking about the man on the train was what made him the most salient candidate to be the intended referent for Smith's use of "he". Thus, even though neither Smith nor Jones were right in their assessments of saliency, they were still lucky to coordinate on the same referent. In other words, Smith and Jone's success was lucky, because it was based on mistaken assumptions.

However, there is nothing special about reference or truth here. Similar phenomena can give rise to analogous cases of good or bad linguistic luck. Consider Jerzy Kosinski's 1971 celebrated novella *Being There.*[3] The story is completely built on fortunate linguistic misunderstandings. "When faced with complex questions [the novella's main character] Chauncey responds with infantile answers that are constantly misinterpreted, to his credit. [For example, a] simple statement about gardening is taken … as a profound metaphorical comment on national affairs." (Hartney 2006) When the President of the country asks Chaucey for advice on how to face the current bad season – meaning the country's economic recession –, he famously replies that seasons continuously turn and that "as long as the roots are not severed, all is well and all will be well." The president finds the response "refreshing and optimistic" and thanks Chaucey for the advice. (Kosinski 1971: 32) Thus, the president's metaphorical use of "season" is interpreted literally by Chaucey, while his literal talk of seasons and roots in his reply is interpreted metaphorically by the president. This creates a strange situation where the president seeks advice, gets good advice and yet no actual good advice is communicated between Chaucey and the president. We can describe this situation as one of illocutionary luck. Chauncey and the president perform complementary adequate illocutionary acts – giving and taking advice – while their locutionary acts fail miserably![4]

Outside of fiction, illocutionary luck is not rare either. Think of every time you have tried to compliment someone you do not know well enough, for example, when trying to leave a good first impression. No matter how good you are at assessing people, you will still run the risk of saying something that the other person will not find flattering (Maíz-Arévalo 2012). If in the end the

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[3]. Luck is such a central topic in Kosinski's novella that its cinematographic adaptation (Ashby 1979) was re-titled "Un Jardinero con Suerte" (A lucky gardener) for the Mexican market. Furthermore, for the cinematographic version, Kisinski re-named the main character "Chance".

[4]. For a more detailed pragmatic analysis of the misunderstandings in (Kosinski 1971), see (Ferrer Revull 2014)

compliment lands, you still cannot fully attribute the success of your illocutionary act to yourself and instead need to recognize that luck was on your side. And the same thing can be said of other illocutionary acts like threats, insults, promises, etc. Anything we try to do with words might fail or succeed and this failure or success cannot always be fully attributed to us. Sometimes, it will be the result of good or bad luck.

Even a cursory look at all the above examples reveals a common structure behind all cases of linguistic luck. In all of them, we cannot attribute the positive outcome of the speech act to the relevant agent or agents because they acted on mistaken assumptions. Whenever, as speakers or hearers, we try to accomplish some linguistic task we work on a series of usually implicit assumptions about ourselves, our hearers, language itself and the world (Barceló 2018). We assume what language is being spoken, what common beliefs are shared among the participants, what aspects of the context are more salient, what is the topic under discussion, etc. We assume how things are or can be, but perhaps as importantly, we also make assumptions about how things are not or cannot be.[5] Assumptions ground our expectation that our speech acts will be successful. Thus, even though our capacity of making the right sort of assumptions depends on our general linguistic skills, whether these assumptions hold or not in the particular circumstances of the conversations at hand usually lies outside our direct and immediate control. For example, it is not

[5]. Without getting too much into psychological details, it is important to notice that assumptions need not be occurrent beliefs or even conscious thoughts. It is rare that we consciously choose which language to speak in a given situation, for example (Kapiley & Mishra 2019, Reverber et ai, 2018). When engaging in conversation, we are usually not consciously looking for clues that our interlocutor is not a robot or engaged in some sort of fictional performance, and the mechanisms responsible for our extraordinary success at sharing the reference of our terms are largely automatic. As Montemayor (2019) has argued, the key notion here is agency, not consciousness. Thus, it is better to think of assumptions as the manifestation of skills, either conscious or automatic, instead of occurrent thoughts. In this sense, assumptions are less about what we do than what we do *not* do.

entirely up to us what conventions are operating in a given context, what is up to us is to know those conventions and to identify when they are operating. It is not up to us how other people evaluate their achievements or traits, yet it is up to us to try to find out how they do if we want to compliment them. It is not up to us how words sound, yet it is up to us to pronounce them correctly if we want to use them, etc. In other words, what we assume is up to us but not whether our assumptions are fulfilled or not. For example, to successfully use "water" to refer to water is to manage to make one's referential intention to use that word to talk about that substance. But it would be quite misleading to say that when we use "water" to refer to water we assume we are making our referential intention (to use "water" to refer to water) manifest. Instead, what we assume is that the circumstances are such that what we will actually end up doing will make our referential intention manifest. What we assume are things like that our hearer is a competent speaker of English, that "water" is the English word for water, that we can competently use the word "water" in a grammatically correct sentence and pronounce it in a way that the hearer can identify, etc. In general, we do not assume that we will succeed in our linguistic goals, what we assume instead is that our actions will deliver such goals. We know that whatever we end up doing cannot guarantee success in all possible situations, but we assume that it will be enough to reach our goals in the particular situation we are in. For example, we would not use "water" to refer to water in a particular situation if we did not assume that in such situation it will serve us to refer to such substance, even if we know that in other circumstances it might not.

Assumptions allow us to give teleological explanations of our telic acts. They explain why an agent does what she does when she pursues a goal, even when she fails. For example, the assumption that English is being spoken explains why the speaker used the word "water" to refer to water. In *Being there*, the president's assumptions about who Chaucey was explains why he interpreted his utterances as good political advice. In the original Loar case, Smith assumes that

being on the television is what makes the man on the television the most salient man in her context of assertion. This assumption explains why Smith used the pronoun "he" with the intention of referring to that man. In Bonnie and Clyde's case, Bonnie also assumed that the policeman in the living room was the only one to have freed himself and this partly explains why she used the existential sentence she did, but this explanation does not require ascribing to her a communicative referential intention like Smith's. Thus, we can see that in every case of linguistic luck, the participants in the conversation reach their linguistic goals despite of acting on mistaken linguistic assumptions. This allows us to explain all these cases in a similar fashion, regardless of whether we can describe them as cases of miscommunication or not. In other words, not all cases of linguistic luck are cases of failed communicative intentions, but all of them are cases of mistaken assumptions.

3. Lucky Truth and Assertion

So far I have claimed that all cases of linguistic luck involve some mistaken linguistic assumptions. But what are the mistaken assumption behind Bonnie and Clyde's example above? In this section, I will argue that, just as in the original Loar case, the mistaken assumption had to do with what made the salient man salient, in my example, the mistaken assumption had to do with what made the true utterance true. In order to understand how assumptions about truth-making factor in teleological explanations of why we assert what we assert, let me introduce one further example, from Barceló (2018, 2019), based on the famous paradox of the preface (Makinson 1965). Just as in the original paradox, consider an author of a non-fiction book who has done her best to verify everything she asserts in her book, yet in all honestly also makes the assertion in her book's preface that the book certainly contains at least one error. Now, let someone who the author knows has read her book come and tell her that there is a mistake in her book. From the above description, the author already

knows that there is a mistake in her book yet the communication exchange does not seem to be flawed at all. She may actually welcome the assertion!

Introducing truth-makers as linguistic assumptions can successfully explain this: We have two assertions that convey the same true proposition, i.e., that there is at least a mistake in the author's book. Yet, it is not hard to recognize that the reasons behind each assertion were different. The author's claim was not based on any particular mistake she knows to be contained in her book, but on the recognition of her own fallibility; in contrast, the interlocutor who comes to her with the news of there being a mistake in her book is presumably talking about a particular mistake she has found, and not about the author's fallibility. In other words, the author wrote in her preface that her book certainly contained at least one error, because she thought that her utterance was true, based on assumptions about human fallibility in general, and hers in particular. In contraste when the visitor asserted that very same proposition, what explains her assertion was a whole different set of assumptions, not directly involving anything about the author's fallibility, but instead about one (or more) particular sentences in her book.

It is a general fact that the same action can be justified in more than one way,[6] and linguistic acts like assertions are nor the exception.This, when we make an assertion, we hardly ever base our assertion on the bare assumption that the proposition is true. No, we base our assertion on a very specific idea of how or why it is true. We may have specific assumptions about what fact makes it true, or general assumptions of why it is true. In the example above, the author does not have a specific idea of what fact makes it true that there is an error in her book, but her interlocutor does.[7]

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[6]. I hope it is clear that I am talking about the broad notion of justification and not the narrow epistemic one. On the difference and relation between justification broadly construed and epistemic justification, see Gómez-Torrente (2005).

[7]. A more detailed account of the difference between general and specific grounds for assertion is developed in (Barceló 2019).

But this is not the only way two agents can assert the same content on different normative bases. The point can be generalized to any case where the same proposition can carry information about different aspects of the world. The simplest example of this phenomenon are disjunctions. An elementary truth table tells us that, when we make a disjunctive assertion, we can act on assumptions bearing on the content of one of the disjuncts, on the content of the other, or both. Also, we could also ground our assertion of the disjunction in a more general knowledge of its truth, without knowing which disjunct makes it true. Even more, if the disjunction is a tautology, we might base our assertion on our knowledge of its logical form. In each case, we can base our assertion of a disjunction on assumptions about any of these possible aspects of the world.

Most (perhaps all) propositions are not perfectly specific and thus they are made true in very different ways in different possible worlds. The proposition that I am wearing a shirt with red flowers on it is true both in those worlds where the flowers are crimson and those where they are auburn, in those where they are carnations and those where they are roses, those where my shirt has short sleeves and those where my shirt has long sleeves, etc. Propositions can and are made true by a wide variety of possible facts. Many times, when someone utters a sentence, their intention may be to communicate a proposition, even if their utterance is linked in their mind to a more specific way or ways the proposition is made true (or, at least, they thinks it is made true) in the actual world. If I tell you that I am wearing a shirt with red flowers on it, even if my assertion does not contain information about what shade of red the flowers are and I have no intention to communicate anything more specific than that, this content is still linked to this more specific information in my mind. What the speaker knows about what her utterance is about far outstrips the information the sentence contains. In general, when someone asserts a proposition, the basis of her assertion usually contains information enough to ground something strictly stronger, i.e. not just that the proposition is true but *how* it is true, that is, which fact or facts actually make it true. For example, our perceptual states usually contain much more information that whatever belief we obtain from them,

and given the informational nature of inference, we usually arrive at new beliefs by subtracting information from previously held beliefs and/or similar informational states. Therefore, when we make an utterance, matters of optimal management of cognitive and material resources constrain us to select amongst the information we have available, which one is worth investing our resources to convey. For example, when, based on the perception of my own ache I say that my stomach hurts, my perception is not just of my stomach aching but of it aching in a very particular way. Similarly, when I remember that Xochimilco is a beautiful lake, my memories of it are of a lake being beautiful in a more specific way than that contained in the very broad and indefinite adjective "beautiful". Yet, I do not choose to utter words that semantically contain all those specific details, nor I leave enough contextual clues so that my hearer can pragmatically infer such specific information.

Now, whenever a speaker conveys a proposition which, according to him, is made true by a particular fact and from this the hearer acquires the belief that that very proposition is true, but according to her, the proposition is made true by a different fact, then we have a sort of linguistic failure that does not correspond to a misidentification of the message. Instead, it is a mismatch on what makes the message true. This is just what happens in the Bonnie and Clyde example at the beginning of this chapter. The relevant proposition at issue here is simply that one of the policemen had freed himself. It was made true by two different facts, each of them separately sufficient for its truth, each one involving a different policeman. Clyde asserted that a policemen had freed himself because she had evidence that a policeman in the living room had freed himself, while Bonnie was lucky to subdue the policeman at the back of the cabin because his having freed himself also made that very same proposition true. In other words, Bonnie was right in assuming that the policeman at the back of the cabin had freed himself, because this belief of his was actually true, but he was wrong in assuming that Clyde's warning was about that policeman.

Remember that assumptions link actions to agents, once this link is severed, the linguistic consequences of the action are detached from the agent and, in consequence, whatever good comes from it cannot be attributed to them. Instead, it has to be attributed to good fortune (Barceló 2019). This general principle applies perfectly to speech acts, as I have illustrated throughout the chapter. In Loar cases, Smith's use of "that man" to refer to the man on the television is based on the mistaken assumption that being on the television is what makes that man the most contextually salient. Because of this, whatever positive consequences he derives from his use of "that man" with this referential intension cannot be attributed to him. In particular, the fact that her hearer, Jones, succeeded in attaching the intended referent to his use cannot be attributed to him, but has to be attributed to good fortune. In the Bonnie and Clyde case, Bonnie's use of "one man has freed himself" to warn Clyde is based on the mistaken assumption that only one policeman, the one in the living room, had freed himself. That this assumption was mistaken detaches Bonnie from the positive consequences of her utterance. That is why her success in warning Clyde cannot be attributed to her, but instead has to be attributed to good fortune. It is because of this that both are cases of linguistic luck.

As I have mentioned, much recent literature on linguistic luck has focused on so-called "Loar cases". However, this literature has failed to link this phenomenon with the literature regarding luck in other philosophical fields, like epistemology or ethics. In this chapter I hope to have contributed to fill this gap in the literature by showing how framing Loar cases this way can shed new light on them. By introducing a case of linguistic luck that is clearly very similar to Loar cases but differs from them in the very elements that traditional accounts have focused on, i.e., failed communicative intentions and different inferential bases, I hope to have shown why these are inessential in explaining why Loar cases are cases of linguistic luck. Instead, it is better to focus on what Loar and Bonnie and Clyde cases have in common. I have argued that what they have in common is a failure on the assumptions that explain why the agents behaved the way they did. In

general, cases of lucky successes are cases where agents achieve their goals based on mistaken assumptions. In the linguistic realm, this means that linguistic luck happens when agents achieve their linguistic goals based on mistaken linguistic assumptions. In Loar cases, these are assumptions about what made someone the more salient candidate to be the referent of the relevant pronoun. In Bonnie and Clyde's case it was assumptions about what made the communicated proposition true.

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