

Communication and Indexical Reference

ABSTRACT

In the debate over what determines the reference of an indexical expression on a given occasion of use, we can distinguish between two generic positions. According to the first, the reference is determined by *internal* factors, such as the speaker's intentions. According to the second, the reference is determined by *external* factors, like conventions or what a competent and attentive audience would take the reference to be. It has recently been argued that the first position is untenable, since there are cases of *mismatch* where the intuitively correct reference differs from the one that would be determined by the relevant internal factors. The aim of this paper is to show that, contrary to this line of argument, it is the proponent of the second position that should be worried, since the second position yields counterintuitive consequences regarding communicative success in these cases.

Keywords: Reference, Indexicals, Demonstratives, Communication, Intentions

1. Preamble

Indexical and demonstrative expressions, such as 'I', 'here', 'now', and 'that' can have different referents on different occasions of utterance. But what determines their reference in a given situation? Let us start by distinguishing two generic positions with respect to this question. According to what I will call *I-theories*, the reference is determined by some *inner state* of the speaker, typically an intention of some sort (Bach 1992; Predelli 1998, 2002). According to what I will refer to as *E-theories*, the reference is determined by factors that are *external* to the speaker, such as conventions (Corazza *et al.* 2002; Gorvett 2005) or what a competent and attentive audience would take the reference to be (Romdenh-Romluc 2006). My purpose in this paper is to argue that I-theories are preferable to E-theories.

Just as there are different possible views about what the relevant external factors are, there can be different views about what kind of internal states determine the reference.

Although the points I make are intended to apply in general, it will sometimes be convenient to focus on one of these possible views. Thus, in what follows, I will sometimes let I-theories be represented by *Intentionalism*, i.e., the view that the speaker's intention determines the reference of indexical expressions in context.¹

The scope of this paper is restricted in two important respects. Firstly, the discussion below is concerned only with the communication of *semantic* (or *truth-conditional*) content. It is not concerned with what may be called *pragmatic* communication, via implicatures and the like. Secondly, I restrict the scope to communication with indexicals and demonstratives. Expressions of these kinds are uncontroversially context-dependent, and thus all parties of the debate can accept that their (standing) meaning alone does not determine their reference.

2. A problem for I-theories?

An apparent problem for Intentionalism is that there are cases in which the intended reference and the correct reference intuitively come apart. For instance, suppose that on Tuesday, Charles says 'I am tired today', intending to express the proposition that Sebastian is tired on Tuesday. Charles does not give his audience any additional clues that could lead them to the intended interpretation.² He just utters the sentence in a perfectly ordinary way. Intuitively, the occurrence of 'I' in Charles's utterance refers to Charles rather than to Sebastian, in spite of Charles's intention. Another version of this kind of case involves the use of post-it notes. Suppose that on Wednesday, Charles puts a post-it note saying 'I am not here today' on what he believes to be Sebastian's office door, intending to convey the message that Sebastian is

¹ For instance, one may take the speaker's intention to determine which context pertains to the relevant utterance. Cf. Predelli 1998: 403.

² Charles might have succeeded in referring to Sebastian by the E-theorist's standards if he had provided such evidence. For instance, he might have made a very good impersonation of Sebastian while he made the utterance. Under these circumstances, it would seem less counterintuitive that he could have used 'I' to refer to Sebastian.

not in his office on Wednesday. However, Sebastian has recently swapped offices with Julia, and everyone knows this except Charles. Intuitively, the occurrence of ‘I’ on Charles’s post-it note refers to Julia rather than to Sebastian, in spite of Charles’s intention.

On the one hand, Intentionalism will yield the counterintuitive result that ‘I’ refers to Sebastian in both of these cases, since Sebastian is the intended referent. On the other hand, E-theories tend to yield the intuitively correct result in cases like these. The structure of these problem cases is as follows: Firstly, the reference that would be determined by the internal factors differs from the one that the external factors would determine. Secondly, our intuition about the case is that the reference that would be determined by the external factors is the correct reference. Hence, our intuitions point in the direction of E-theories rather than I-theories. Following Christopher Gauker (2008: 363) I will call cases with this structure *cases of mismatch*.

In his reply to the objection from cases of mismatch, Stefano Predelli (2002: 315) argues that it is possible to *refer* to an object *o* with an expression *e*, even in cases where *e* cannot be *used to communicate* the relevant information about *o*. The idea is that we could explain away the intuitions behind the objection by claiming that, in cases of mismatch, our intuitions track something distinct from the correct reference, namely *what the indexical expression can be used to communicate in that situation*. This reply can be generalised. The I-theorist could agree that our intuitions track *something* that is distinct from what would be determined by the relevant inner state, but still deny that this something is the correct reference. They can even agree that our intuitions track what *would* be the correct reference if some E-theory were correct, and still deny that some E-theory is correct. The crucial thing is to make a distinction between *the correct reference*, and *what the external evidence points to*.³

³ Of course, if we already endorse an E-theory according to which the external evidence determines the correct reference, this distinction will not make sense to us. However, from a neutral perspective, we can assume that there is something that gets determined by the relevant inner state, and that there is something that gets determined by the relevant external factors. For instance, if the relevant inner state is an intention and the

The relevant intuitions are thus explained away, since they are taken to track the latter rather than the former.⁴

Several authors have expressed worries about views that separate reference from communication in the way that Predelli suggests. For instance, Komarine Romdenh-Romluc argues that since public *meanings* must be accessible to other people than the speaker, we cannot allow that expressions in public languages have *references* that are not accessible to other people than the speaker without ending up with the unacceptable conclusion that these expressions lack public meaning:

To claim, as Predelli does, that there are utterances which cannot communicate anything because no-one apart from the utterer knows the reference of expressions occurring in them, is to say that only the utterer can understand them, and this is to deny that those utterances have public meaning. (Romdenh-Romluc 2006: 265.)

It is a bit surprising that Romdenh-Romluc should put forward an argument like this, since she clearly accepts Kaplan's view that indexicals have characters – functions from contexts to contents – as meanings. (Cf. Kaplan 1989: 505.) Predelli shares this view, and holds that the speaker's intention determines the context pertaining to the utterance and thereby determines the reference together with the character. (Cf. Predelli 1998: 400-401, 403.) This means that even though the *meaning* of the indexical (the function itself) is public and known by the audience, the *reference* (the value of the function) may not be accessible to the audience in cases where they do not have access to the relevant contextual factors (the argument of the function). Once we take this into account we see that Romdenh-Romluc's conclusion is a *non*

relevant external factor is what a competent and attentive audience would take the reference to be, we may distinguish between the *intended* reference, and what we may call the *reasonable* or *legitimate* reference. The dispute between I-theories and E-theories concerns which of these is to be identified with the *actual* or *correct* reference.

⁴ In Author (*Forthcoming*) I present a more detailed defence of Intentionalism along these lines. I will say something more about these intuitions below.

sequitur: inaccessibility of the reference of an indexical in certain cases is perfectly compatible with accessibility and publicness of its meaning.

Another author who has concerns about Predelli's notion of reference is Jonathan Gorvett who brings out his point by contrasting Predelli's view with Keith Donnellan's:

For Predelli reference is simply a relationship between a word and an object, but one that does not require or entail successful communication. That a word refers to an object does not mean that it can necessarily be used to communicate a thought about that object.

Donnellan, however, seems only to be interested in reference as part of a theory of communication. I am firmly on Donnellan's side over this discrepancy as I share his intuition that reference should be more closely tied to communication. (Gorvett 2005: 300.)

And later in the same paper: "A notion of reference that does not enable one to communicate does not seem to me to be a coherent or useful notion of reference at all." (Gorvett 2005: 306.)

The worries about the I-theorist's strategy for handling cases of mismatch that Romdenh-Romluc and Gorvett express concern the relation between reference and communication. There seem to be a number of slightly different ideas involved, but not all of them can be used for the purpose of arguing against I-theories. For instance, Gorvett's rather unspecific demand that an interesting notion of reference must be part of a theory of communication can actually be met by I-theories, even if they invoke the strategy described above. The internal states that determine the reference may also be taken to play an important role in the choice of words, gestures, and other means of communicating. A speaker who wants to say something about a certain object may decide to refer to it, and then choose whatever devices she believes will help her getting her message across. If she fails to make

the right kind of evidence available to the audience, they will not be in a position to grasp the reference. But the factors that determine the reference still play an important role in the account of the communicative process, since they explain why the speaker acts as she does. So there is a sense in which the I-theorist's notion of reference can be part of a theory of communication.⁵

3. Reference and communication

In order to create trouble for the I-theorist, something stronger and more specific is needed. One idea, which Gorvett seems to hint at in the passage quoted above, is that an interesting notion of reference must be such that it *requires* or *entails* successful communication. On the one hand, this requirement would certainly be hard for the I-theorist to meet, so it would serve the E-theorist's purpose well. On the other hand, however, it is obvious that this requirement is way too strong. Surely it must be possible to refer to something even though the audience does not *in fact* grasp the reference. So, this is probably not what Romdenh-Romluc and Gorvett have in mind. Rather, the idea seems to be that there is something wrong with a notion of reference that is not constrained by the *possibility* that the audience grasps the reference. If this is right, then, the constraint on reference that Romdenh-Romluc and Gorvett have in mind can be expressed as follows: *An indexical or demonstrative expression e refers to an object x only if e can be understood as referring to x by someone other than the speaker, as a result of the communicative act.* In what follows, I will refer to this as the *graspability requirement*.

The graspability requirement is suitable for the purpose of blocking the I-theorist's strategy for handling cases of mismatch. Recall that according to this strategy, we can explain away the intuitions in cases of mismatch by appeal to a distinction between what

⁵ Cf. Author (Forthcoming) and Bach 1992: 299.

the correct reference is, and what the external evidence points to. Now, even the I-theorist should agree that the external evidence is all the audience has to go on when they interpret the speaker's utterance.⁶ This means that unless the available external evidence can guide the audience to the correct reference, they will not be able to grasp it as a result of the communicative act. Hence, if we were to accept the graspability requirement, the I-theorist's strategy would no longer be workable.

Since we have not yet excluded the possibility that communication may be impossible even though the reference can be grasped by someone else than the speaker, the graspability requirement still leaves a gap between reference and successful communication. However, the gap can be closed if we make the natural and plausible assumption that communicative success with indexicals and demonstratives simply *consists in* the audience's grasp of the reference as a result of the communicative act.⁷ The following principle captures this idea: *Communication with an indexical or demonstrative expression e succeeds exactly in those cases where the audience comes to grasp the correct reference of e as a result of the communicative act.* Call this the *basic connection principle*.

Given its prima facie plausibility, both E-theorists and I-theorists have good reasons to accept the basic connection principle. Moreover, we have already seen that E-theorists have some reason to accept that the audience's grasp of the reference (as the result of the communicative act) is *sufficient* for communicative success, since that would close the gap between reference and communicative success that the graspability requirement leaves open. Both Gorvett and Romdenh-Romluc seem to tacitly accept this, and they also seem to accept that the audience's grasp of the reference is *necessary* for communicative success,

⁶ For instance, it seems clear that Predelli would accept that the audience does not have any direct access to the relevant intentions. If he did not, why would he claim that we cannot use the relevant indexical expressions to communicate in cases of mismatch?

⁷ Of course, more would be needed for successful communication of the full semantic content, and even more would be needed for successful communication of, e.g., implicatures. But recall that we are only concerned with communication of semantic content of indexicals and demonstratives, and for this to succeed, grasp of the reference as a result of the communicative act seems both necessary and sufficient.

since this latter assumption lurks in the background of both of their objections to Predelli. Let me explain.

Govett complains that on Predelli's view, there is no connection between reference and successful communication since there is no guarantee that a speaker can *communicate a thought about the object referred to*. Similarly, Romdenh-Romluc complains that communication would be impossible if no one but the speaker could understand what the relevant expressions referred to, and thus apparently takes *understanding of the reference* to be crucial for communicative success. Thus, both of these objections to Predelli's intentionalist strategy for treating cases of mismatch presuppose that the audience's grasp of the reference is necessary for communicative success.

So, it seems that E-theorists have good reasons to accept the basic connection principle. Even if it would be possible to deny it, its initial plausibility is high enough to make it interesting to see what consequences acceptance of it would have for the choice between I-theories and E-theories. Therefore, let us now turn to that question.

4. Mismatch and communicative success

As we saw above, cases of mismatch have been invoked by E-theorists in order to argue against I-theories in general, and Intentionalism in particular. However, given the basic connection principle, we can turn things around, so that these cases turn out to be problematic for E-theories instead. In cases of mismatch, E-theories dictate that the reference of the indexical or demonstrative expression *e* is the object *o* picked out by the relevant external factors, and thus, given the basic connection principle, E-theories entail that communication succeeds in such cases just in case the audience understands *e* as referring to *o*. The problem with this is that cases of mismatch in which the audience takes the object picked out by the relevant external factors to be the reference seem to be paradigm cases of communicative

failure. Intuitively, in the examples given above, Charles's exchanges with his audience are *not* instances of communicative success if they interpret 'I' as referring to Charles in the first case and as referring to Julia in the second case, as E-theories in conjunction with the basic connection principle would entail. For instance, take Romdenh-Romluc's E-theory, according to which the reference is determined by what a competent and attentive audience would take it to be. (Cf. Romdenh-Romluc 2006: 274.) We can safely assume that Charles's audience is both competent and attentive, so her account will entail that the correct reference is Charles and Julia, respectively.⁸ Assuming that this is also how the audience understands the utterance, Romdenh-Romluc's account (in conjunction with the basic connection principle) entails that communication succeeds in this case. But that is a very counterintuitive result. The natural thing to say in these cases is that Charles is trying to communicate something about Julia and Sebastian, but fails.

The I-theorist can also reverse Gorvett's charge that the I-theorist's separation of certain central notions is problematic. It seems clear that cases of mismatch in which the audience goes for the interpretation suggested by the external evidence are instances of communicative failure. This, together with the E-theorist's claim that the external evidence determines the correct interpretation, entails that communication with respect to the indexical or demonstrative expression can fail even when the audience arrives at the correct interpretation of that very expression. Thus, the I-theorist can complain that the E-theorist's notion of correct interpretation will be separated from the notion of communicative success, in the sense that communication may fail even if the audience arrives at the correct interpretation.⁹ In fact, since grasping the externally determined reference of the indexical

⁸ Romdenh-Romluc (2006: 274) also says that the reference-determining context for an indexical or a demonstrative is the one that the audience would identify using the cues that she would reasonably take the speaker to be exploiting. It seems clear that this would yield the same problematic results in cases of mismatch.

⁹ It should be noted that communication might fail even if the audience arrives at the semantically correct interpretation, in the sense that the speaker may still fail to convey, e.g., an implicature. But again, we are only concerned with *semantic* content here.

expression is neither necessary nor sufficient for successful communication (with respect to that expression) in cases of mismatch, it could even be claimed that the E-theorist is guilty of the same mistake that Romdenh-Romluc and Gorvett accuse I-theorists of committing, namely that of divorcing reference and communication.

This last point does *not* depend on the basic connection principle. However, just like the previous argument, it *does* depend on whether or not communication really fails in cases of mismatch when the audience goes for the interpretation suggested by the external evidence. In stating these arguments, I have, so far, relied on what I take to be rather obvious common sense judgements about the relevant cases. I suppose that this is fine as far as it goes, but it would be nice if we could also appeal to more general criteria for communicative success, since that would give more solid support to these arguments.

The *classical view* of communication, endorsed by Locke and Frege, and recently defended by Peter Pagin (2008), says that communication succeeds exactly in those cases where the communicative act results in that the speaker and audience *share a thought content* in the relevant respect.¹⁰ In the case of indexicals and demonstratives, the classical view says that we have an instance of communicative success whenever the speaker and audience come to have the same object in mind (in the relevant respect) as a result of the communicative act. In other words, communication with respect to indexicals and demonstratives succeeds exactly in those cases where the audience grasps the reference that the speaker has in mind. For instance, Charles's exchange with his audience would be an instance of communicative success with respect to the indexical expression 'I' just in case they were to take the occurrences of 'I' in Charles's utterances to refer to Sebastian and Julia. So, the classical view seems well suited to support the common sense judgements that the above arguments rely on.

¹⁰ Of course, the audience need not share the speaker's *attitude* to this thought content.

What reasons do we have for accepting the classical view? Well, it does seem to get the right results in most cases, and it is far from clear that there is any viable alternative that fares equally well or better in this respect. I cannot give a full defence of the classical view here, but let me just mention the two main alternatives, and at least indicate why they do not seem very promising. The first alternative is to use *behavioural* criteria for judging communicative success, instead of criteria stated in terms of thought content.¹¹ However, coordination of behaviour does not seem sufficient for communicative success, as the following example illustrates:

[S]uppose Paul mistranslates Pierre's French word 'ouest' into English as 'east', where the correct alternative is 'west'. Pierre and Paul agree to meet outside the station building, in front of what Pierre calls 'l'entrée oueste', translated by Paul as 'the eastern entrance'. At the station Paul goes to the eastern entrance, where he happily meets with Pierre, since Pierre has mistaken it for the western entrance. (Pagin 2008: 100-101.)

Due to the systematic mistranslation, this is arguably a case of communicative failure, despite the action coordination. Moreover, action coordination does not seem necessary either, since if Paul had translated correctly but Pierre had still had his mistaken belief, then communication would arguably have succeeded regardless of their behaviour. (Cf. Pagin 2008: 101.)

The second main alternative is to require not only that certain conditions obtain (for instance that the speaker and audience share a thought content in the relevant respect), but

¹¹ One of the most famous proponents of this kind of idea is Quine. (See for instance Quine 1992: 43.) It should be noted, though, that Quine did not suggest that we should apply behavioural criteria on the *event level*. But this is exactly what would be needed in the present context, since we want to be able to decide whether or not certain *individual events* are instances of communicative success. Cf. Pagin 2008: 100-104.

also that the interpreter must *know* or at least have sufficient *evidence* that they obtain.¹²

However, this criterion gets the wrong result in cases like the following:

[A]fter having asked for directions, I may be justifiably unsure whether my rather incommunicative informant understands English. Maybe the pointing gestures he responds with have no rational relation to my query. In fact, however, they do, and after interpreting them by standard rules, and following them according to this interpretation, I arrive at my desired location. (Pagin 2008: 105.)

As Pagin points out, it would be implausible to conclude that communication was unsuccessful in this case because of lack of knowledge or evidence on the interpreter's part. These examples, together with the observation that the classical view will give the correct result in both of these cases, give us some reason to prefer the classical view over its competitors.¹³

Should E-theorists accept the classical view? Well, one reason why they should *not* accept it is that it entails that communication fails in cases of mismatch where the audience takes the reference to be what the external evidence points to. Together with the basic connection principle, E-theories entail that communication succeeds in these cases, so if the E-theorist were to buy the whole package, she would end up with a contradiction. But is there any viable alternative to the classical view that the E-theorist could adopt in order to avoid the arguments above? What the E-theorist would need is an independently motivated account of communicative success according to which communication can succeed in cases of mismatch where the audience takes the reference to be what the external evidence points to. Clearly, adding a knowledge or evidence requirement would not help, since that would just

¹² For instance, Michael Dummett invokes the knowledge requirement in his criticism of Frege. (Dummett 1980: 132.) The evidence requirement, as well as the knowledge requirement, has been defended by Gareth Evans (1980: 310, 320), and more recently by Richard Heck (1995: 90-94). For discussion, see Pagin 2008: 104-109.

¹³ For a more thorough defence of the classical view, and a deeper criticism of its alternatives, see Pagin 2008.

raise the bar for what can count as communicative success. What about behavioural criteria? Well, if we were to take action coordination rather than thought content to be what matters for communicative success, there would clearly be scope for claiming that communication can succeed in these cases. However, this would not sit well with the kind of objection that Gorvett and Romdenh-Romluc raise against I-theories, since if behavioural coordination were all that mattered for communicative success, then the fact that the reference of a certain expression could not be grasped or known by anyone else than the speaker would be compatible with the possibility of successful communication with that expression. Hence, it could not be claimed that inaccessibility of the reference leads to impossibility of communication, and this is what these objections are all about. Dropping these objections just in order to be able to adopt behavioural criteria for communicative success would be *ad hoc*, and sticking to them while claiming that coordination of behaviour is all that matters for communicative success would be incoherent.

I cannot claim to have given an exhaustive account of all possible alternatives, so it is still possible in principle that E-theorists could come up with some further alternative. But note that no matter what this alternative would look like, in order to be of any help to the E-theorist, it would have to entail that communication can succeed in cases of mismatch where the audience takes the reference to be what the external evidence points to. As noted above, this is a very counterintuitive result in itself, so it seems that any alternative that could help the E-theorist would be inferior to the classical view, at least in this respect.¹⁴

We have seen that there are good reasons to accept the classical view and the basic connection principle, and that the acceptance of these gets the E-theorist into trouble. These ideas can also be used to defend I-theories, since once we accept the basic connection principle and the classical view, the E-theorist's case against I-theories is undermined. How

¹⁴ Note that the classical view is meant to support the common sense judgements about the relevant cases by fitting them into a coherent framework, rather than by providing an independent foundation for them to rest upon. Thus, appeal to this kind of mutual support is unproblematic.

so? Well, the graspability requirement plays a crucial role in the argument against the I-theorist's strategy for handling cases of mismatch, and it is incompatible with the basic connection principle and the classical view. According to the classical view, communication in a case of mismatch would succeed just in case the audience were to take the indexical expression e to refer to the object o that the speaker has in mind, as a result of the communicative act. Together with the basic connection principle, this entails that e refers to o (in this case). But since the external evidence –which is all the audience has to go on – points in a completely different direction, the audience cannot come to understand e as referring to o as a result of the communicative act, and this, together with the graspability requirement, entails that e cannot refer to o (in this case).

5. Egocentric speech

The I-theorist's strategy for handling cases of mismatch appeals to a distinction between the correct reference and what the external evidence points to. The crucial claim is that the relevant intuitions track the latter rather than the former. But why do we have these intuitions? And where do they go wrong? I suggest that what makes us inclined to think that the speaker fails in referring as intended in cases of mismatch is that we tend to *sympathise* or *identify* with the audience. Let me explain.

The only reasonable thing for the audience to do in cases like these is to go for the interpretation that the external evidence points to. In cases where the audience goes for this interpretation, it does not seem like they do anything wrong in the course of interpreting the speaker's utterance, so it is very natural to assume that the interpretation they arrive at is the correct one. However, even the most reliable of methods, flawlessly applied, can lead the audience to the wrong interpretation, especially in cases where the evidence is misleading. According to the I-theorist, this is exactly what happens in cases of mismatch: the audience

proceeds via a reliable method based on taking the external evidence into account, but the available evidence points the wrong interpretation. When we consider such cases, our tendency to sympathise with the audience leads us to the mistaken conclusion that the interpretation that the audience arrives at when they follow the misleading evidence is the correct one.

There are other cases of so-called *egocentric speech* in which the speaker fails to take into account the audience's point of view, and thus fails to provide them with the evidence needed to identify the intended reference. Consider the following scenario: Some people are waiting for a seminar to start. Emily, the convener of the seminar, looks at her watch, and says: 'We should start now, but let us just wait a few minutes, just in case Nixon turns up.' The rest of the participants are puzzled. They have no idea who she is talking about. A few minutes later, Henry, who looks very much like Richard Nixon, enters the room, and the previously puzzled seminar participants immediately realise that the intended reference is Henry. Of course, 'Nixon' is not an indexical or demonstrative, so this case is not immediately relevant to our present concerns. However, we can easily modify the case. Suppose that Emily had used 'he' instead of 'Nixon' and made a gesture towards the place where, unbeknownst to the seminar participants (they might all be there for the first time), Henry always sits in the seminars. When Henry enters the room, and takes his usual seat, they grasp the intended reference, even though they were in no position to grasp it at the time of Emily's utterance.¹⁵ Or we can suppose that it is clear in the context that one (and only one) male person is missing, but that the audience has no idea who this is, and that Emily uses 'he' indexically to refer to Henry. Again, when he enters, they will grasp the intended reference.

These cases differ from cases of mismatch in that it seems much more natural to take Emily to succeed in referring to Henry, even before the audience is in a position to grasp

¹⁵ Of course, they were in a position to identify the referent *descriptively* as *the man who usually sits in that chair*. However, this kind of identification is not very interesting, since any audience is always in a position to identify the referent descriptively as *the x such that the speaker refers to x*.

the intended reference. Again, I think that this has to do with our tendency to identify with the audience. The speaker has just made an utterance containing an indexical expression, and we have no idea what or who she has in mind. There is no external evidence such that it leads us to believe that the speaker refers to some *other* object than the one intended. Rather, we are left completely in the dark about what the reference of the relevant expression is. What do we do? Conclude immediately that she fails to refer? No. Rather, we keep looking for further evidence, until we get hold of enough evidence to come up with a reasonable interpretation. Of course, it would not make sense to search for further evidence if we were to take our initial inability to identify the correct reference to entail that there *is* no correct reference. So it seems that we actually do *not* take the graspability requirement to hold in cases of this kind. Rather, we are inclined to think that the speaker can succeed in referring, even though her audience is unable to grasp the reference at the time of the utterance. Consider how natural it would be for Emily's audience, when they get the required additional information, to think to themselves: 'Ahh, *that* is who she referred to'. Or, consider how natural it would be for them, before they have been given the additional information, to ask 'Who is she talking about?' or 'Who is she referring to?'¹⁶

6. Conclusion

We have seen that the case against I-theories is not very solid. The intuitions that seem to speak against I-theories can be explained away by appeal to our tendency to identify with the audience. The graspability requirement, that is supposed to block the I-theorist's strategy for handling cases of mismatch turned out to be incompatible with the classical view and the basic connection principle, both of which we have independent reasons to accept. Moreover,

¹⁶ We could weaken the graspability requirement in order to accommodate cases like these, for instance by allowing that the speaker could succeed in referring if the audience can grasp the reference if they are given the required additional information. However, that would make it too weak to play the intended role in the argument against I-theories, since given that the audience get the right kind of additional information, they will *always* be able to grasp the reference.

although there is some intuitive support for the graspability requirement as applied to cases of mismatch, there are other cases of egocentric speech in which we do not seem to take this requirement to hold, and that gives us reason to doubt that it holds in general.

But given the very nature of language and communication, is there not something crucial that I-theories fail to capture? Well, part of what makes E-theories appealing is that they give priority to external factors, which arguably have a special role to play in communication. Internal factors like the ones that determine reference according to I-theories cannot play the same kind of role as external factors when it comes to guiding the audience to the right interpretation; *any* reliable method for arriving at the correct interpretation must proceed via the external evidence. However, as we have seen, this does not mean that the external evidence must be what determines the correct interpretation, so it gives us no reason to prefer E-theories over I-theories. External factors do have an important *epistemic* role, but from this it does not follow that they must also have the *metaphysical* role that E-theorists claim that they have.

In conclusion, then, given principles that both parties of the debate have good reasons to accept, cases of mismatch turn out to be problematic for E-theorists rather than for I-theorists. As it turns out, E-theorists are committed either to the denial of some very appealing principles, or the acceptance of some very unappealing consequences. Since I-theorists do not face this dilemma, we have good reasons to prefer I-theories over E-theories.

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