In 1952 Gregory Bateson received a grant to study communication within the framework generated by Russell's "logical types." (Russell 1910) Bateson took Russell's concept of paradox and applied it to human communication in an attempt to understand the genesis of schizophrenia. It was Bateson's idea that language encodes many levels of message in and contextualizing the utterance. (Bateson, Haley 1972) In his article, "The message this is play," Bateson outlines a theory of communication in which one communicative behavior is qualified or "framed" by a higher "metacommunicative" message, which has the effect of telling the hearer how to interpret the behavior. Thus, in its primitive form, a theory of frames evolved in which content messages could and must be qualified by 'meta messages' of the sort, 'take this ironically' or 'sarcastically,' or 'literally,' etc. Non verbal communication becomes, in this theory, a level of message that may be congruent with the content message or incongruent. Bateson gives an example where a mother of a potentially schizophrenic child tells her daughter to, "come and hug mommy, to show mommy you love her," then when the daughter hugs the mother, the mother stiffens, clearly illustrating how levels of message may disaffirm one another. In the above example of mother and daughter we may suppose that the verbal message, 'your hugging me = love' is paradoxical from the daughter's perspective, as her mother seems to be saying one thing, and denying what she is saying on another, non-verbal level. The child learns to systematically distort her perception of metacommunicative signals. (Bateson 1972)

In Bateson's schema, this is the essence of schizophrenia, a systematic disjunction between levels of message. Thus schizophrenia is a communicational pathology.
In Bateson's theory, all communication involves 'relationship-defining behavior' what people say verbally and non-verbally is framed by the existing relationship between them. If no such relationship exists, before adequate communication can take place a relationship must first be defined between the participants. Relationships are of two basic types in his schema: Symmetrical and Complementary. A Complementary relationship is one where participants do not compete for dominance, their behaviors fit one another - one directs, the other is directed. In a Symmetrical relationship the participants compete or vie for dominance. If one member does something spectacular, the other member tries to do as well or better. This is a competitive relationship where members take turns in being "boss" over time. In a complementary relationship there is characteristically one boss over time. Relationship defining behavior, for example, is the major function of greeting ceremonies. Phatic communication, as a whole functions to define relationships rather than content. Watzlawick, an associate of Bateson's in his research on schizophrenia, has hypothesized that in 'healthy relationships,' relationship defining behavior recedes in importance and content becomes more important. Relationships are only rarely defined deliberately or with full awareness. In fact, it seems that the more spontaneous and "healthy" a relationship the more the relationship aspect of communication recedes into the background. Conversely, "sick" relationships are characterized by a constant struggle about the nature of the relationship with the content aspect of communication becoming less and less important. (Watzlawick et al 1952)

I will suggest that cooperation may be defined as a principle by which both participants agree to a mutual definition of the relationship they are involved in, and to its limits. This agreement may not be overtly discussed but may be the result of one, or both participants' not challenging the relationship-defining maneuvers of the other. Thus, I use cooperation to mean nonchallenging behavior.
This paper is concerned with a class of utterances which are designed to control the hearer's behavior without appearing to do so. The speaker's strategy becomes one of extreme indirectness. It will be hypothesized that much of what is known as 'indirect speech' can be adequately explained in relational terms as the only viable way of directing from the bottom end of a complementary relationship without attempting to redefine the relationship as more symmetrical. (See note 1) First the examples, then the analysis. Functionally the following utterances have a similar effect on some hearer.

(1) Traffic's pretty heavy, huh?
(2) The baby woke up three times last night.
(3) Does the kid have a cold again? (mother to daughter)
(4) Did you change the baby's diaper?
(5) Did you get a flat on the way home?

What (1)-(5) have in common is that they all criticize by implication. Witness the following dialogues in terms of the implication of criticism that obtains for the addressee. I have underscored the hearer's reaction to the implication of criticism:

(1) A-1 Traffic's pretty heavy, huh? (slight sarcasm)
     B-2 I know. I should've been home sooner. I'm sorry.
     A-3 I wasn't blaming you.
(2) A-4 The baby woke up three times last night.
     B-5 You mean I should've gotten up too. I'm sorry.
     A-6 Oh no! What could you have done? He only wanted to nurse anyway.
(3) A-7 Did you change the baby's diaper?
     B-8 Sure. Why? Do you think I don't pay any attention to him?
     A-9 Why'd you say that? I just wondered if you changed his diaper, that's all.
Does the kid have a cold again? (mother to daughter)

I know I should be more careful. I shouldn't take him out so much.

What do you mean, it's hard being a mother.

The hearer in each dialogue answers A by speaking to the implication of blame or criticism. The speaker then denies having intended this level of message thus creating, in the hearer's perception, a paradox, he's being criticised (by implication) and he's not being criticised (speaker denies having intended criticism). Paradox, and not contradiction obtains, for the speaker is not negating something she said, but rather is denying an implication resulting from what she said, and how she said it. The speaker is thus in the position of being able to imply criticism and then deny having intended to do so since her intentions are not directly "knowable" by the hearer. The speaker's strategy becomes one of paradoxical communication she must imply something and deny that she is implying something on the basis of not having said what she implied. Paradox is possible for the speaker invokes two communicative levels in her denial she denies implying 'x' on the basis of not having asserted 'x'.

I suggest that the speaker's use of paradoxical communication is motivated by two opposing forces. They are (1) The need to criticize (or direct the addressee to change his behavior), and (2) the inability to direct the addressee to change his behavior because of being at the lower end of a complementary relationship. Her use of Paradox is an attempt to direct without challenging the structure of the relationship in which their interaction takes place.

The speaker's success in getting B to accept the fact that he's being criticized (though A is denying this) depends upon B's cooperation with A's paradoxical messages. B, then, cooperates with paradoxical communication by not challenging it. Not challenging this behavior amounts to legitimizing it within the limits of their relationship.
The interactional system represented by A and B is highly resistant to change. The frame of complementarity imposes restrictions on both participants. Let's imagine that B decides he wants A to interact more symmetrically with him. This would involve A being more direct, so B decides to answer A on the literal-content level only, thereby frustrating A's attempt to communicate by implication.

(1) A  Traffic's pretty heavy, huh? (slight sarcasm)
B  Yeh, it's a bitch! (or) No.

(2) A  Does the kid have a cold again? (Mother to daughter)
B  Uh. huh. (or) No.

By answering only the literal form of the question, B is giving A "negative feedback" about her attempt to communicate indirectly. B can respond to the literal form in other ways too as the following interchange shows

(3) A  The baby woke up three times last night.
      (slight sarcasm)
B  Why? (or) That's very interesting
      a
      (slight sarcasm)
      b

In either of B's responses, a or b, his strategy, as in (1) and (2) is to not cooperate with the implied message. In a, B treats A's utterance as purely informational and 'angelically' asks for more detail. In b, B replies in kind, sarcastically. B is communicating to A in b that strategies of the sort A is employing are not viable ones within the framework of their relationship. B, in both a, and b, is uncooperative within the framework of indirect communication.

The field of cybernetics suggests that the behavior of people in a relationship or behavioral system may be analyzed in terms of a self-correcting or cybernetic system. Speaking about family members' interaction Haley says
It follows that people associating together during long periods of time will not put up with any and all kinds of behavior from each other, they will set limits upon one another. Insofar as family members set limits for one another, it is possible to describe their interaction in terms of the self-corrective processes in the total system. The family members respond in an error-activated way when any individual exceeds a certain limit. This process of mutually responsive behavior defines the rules of the family system. In this sense a family is a system which contains a governing process. However there is not just a single governor for the system, each member functions as a governor of the other(s) and thus the system is maintained (Haley 1963).

The idea of a 'self-correcting' relational system as a legitimate way to view linguistic behavior becomes apparent in the following example:

A-1-a Traffic's pretty heavy, huh?
B-2-a I know. I should've...
A-3-a I wasn't blaming you
B-4-a Then why did you ask me at all?
A-5-a Well, I just wanted to know if there was a lot of traffic. How could I know? I was home all day with the kid (you know).

B-4-a challenges A's right to communicate paradoxically. But A-5-a answers B's challenge in a way that at once suggests criticism of B. Thus, A denies having intended criticism in A-1-a, and when challenged in B-4-a once again implies criticism in A-5-a. B can never 'trap' A into admitting that criticism was intended, for A can eternally justify, or make relevant her utterance in other ways. A general principle emerges: A hearer can never prove that an utterance is irrelevant. The relevance of an utterance thus, depends upon knowing the intentions of the speaker, and it is impossible to "know" directly what some speaker intended in uttering 'x'.
A more concrete example of the impossibility of "knowing" speaker's intentions comes from Charles Pyle at the University of Michigan.

Someone seems to be 'putting you down.' You ask him what he's doing, (i.e. why he's talking to you the way he is) and he replies that he's "just playing." You then have the option of accepting his statement of his intentions as congruent with his "real" intentions, or you can assume he's lying about his "real" intentions, and is in fact, not playing. In either case the hearer cannot prove directly what the speaker's "real" intentions are in uttering 'x,' for intentionality lies within the speaker's mind.

In conclusion I suggest that the Batesonian framework sketched above is a useful way of talking about the teleology of 'indirect' speech forms. I suggest, too, that "explaining" indirect speech must explain why a more indirect form may be used, and not merely map a surface form to an implied form as Gordon and Lakoff (1971) have done. I suggest that speaker A, in my examples, finds it impossible to be more 'direct' without altering or maneuvering for a different definition of relationship.

Many linguists have treated 'indirect speech' and 'direct speech' as alternate forms having the same content. This view has subordinated the pragmatics of indirect speech usage and concentrated on the content or 'information' aspect of message. The theory of language usage presented in this paper posits an equally important level of message to the utterance, that of 'relationship defining.' This latter view suggests that direct forms are not substitutable for indirect forms as different relationship parameters would then be entailed.

I believe that much rethinking is needed concerning the putative distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' speech. Some of these same questions are addressed in Pyle's "The Function of Indirectness" (Pyle, forthcoming)
Let me summarize several of the points I have raised in this paper:

1. **Talking involves both content and relationship defining behavior.** (Even in "healthy" relationships this is so, for the relationship defining aspect of communication in such a case is a given, and not fought over)

2. **Relationship and content definitions frame each other** (are metacommunicative to each other)

3. **Indirect speech forms may be the only way someone at the bottom end of a complementary relationship can direct, without altering the definition of relationship in which he/she is involved.**

4. **Indirect speech may feed paradoxical communication** as in, "I'm implying criticism but I deny criticizing you." Such Paradoxical messages may serve to maintain a communicational system of a certain type.

5. **Cooperation is another way of talking about "positive feedback" to a particular communicative strategy used within a behavioral system.** The lack of cooperation, or "negative feedback," then defines the limits or range of that particular system.

6. A hearer can never prove that an utterance is irrelevant, for relevance is tied to speaker's intentions, which are not directly "knowable."

The usefulness of the Batesonian framework to linguistic research is yet to be adequately projected. There are cases such as levels of pronoun usage in S E Asia, nicknames vs proper names in the U S, and honorifics in Japanese (to name three examples) where relative intimacy or distance of relationship is obligatorily marked in the grammar. Such examples are well known. In English we might view the "got passive" with the reflexive pronoun as a case where English is developing a way of formally indicating...
metacomplementary relationships, as "Jane got herself kicked" indicates that Jane was responsible for someone doing 'x' to her. It seems, too, that in English the active voice may be used in highly personal discourse where the passive voice cannot, so we get a paradigm of inappropriateness like the following.

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I am {loved} by you
you are {liked} her
he is {comforted} him
They are {comforted} them
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A paper I'm working on now suggests that the use of generic statements may, at times, be governed by speaker's intentions to intimate, to a second person, a closer relationship with some 3rd person, than actually is the case. This research suggests that a discussion of generic usage must include the information that a speaker, in using a generic form, implies that he/she knows the subject well enough to be able to make such generalizations about him. Overall length of a monologue in a discourse suggests relationship defining behavior. Witness Hamlet's objection to Laertes' pompous and flowery oration over the grave of his sister Ophelia.

"...what is he whose grief bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow conjures the wandering stars and makes them stand like wonder wounded hearers..." (Hamlet, Act V Scene 1)

Hamlet makes note of Laertes' insincerity as being a function of lengthy discourse. The pervasiveness of relationship defining behavior in language is yet to be adequately handled in linguistics. I hope that many more linguists will recognize the necessity of future research in this area.

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NOTES

1. The schema as I present it here is actually simplified. Bateson sets up a third category of relationship which occurs when one directs the other to direct. This he terms, "meta-complementary," which is a complementary relationship at a higher level.

2. Albert Schefflin in his book *Body Language and Social Order* has hypothesized that even before verbal verbal interaction takes place two people exchange relationship defining signals kinesically. They map out territorial parameters before uttering a syllable. Relationship defining verbal behavior in this structure, is redundant (information) to what was first mapped out non-verbally.

3. Although I agree in general with Watzlawick's statement I would qualify his strong version in that unsettled relationships may further degenerate if no attempt is made by the participants to talk about their relationship. Such talk may actually ameliorate the relationship.

4. Note that paradox is here a product of at least \(A_1B_1A_2\), that is, \(A_1\) must first imply 'x' to which \(B_1\) responds. The \(A_2\) must deny 'x' as having been intended for paradox to obtain. Paradox is not the result of ambiguity in A's intentions would be satisfied when A answered that 'x' was not intended. Paradox can only obtain for B if 'x' is perceived by B as having been clearly intended, that is unambiguously intended. Only in this case is A's later denial of intending 'x' seen as paradoxical.

5. In Pyle's example of B questioning A's intent, A's response, "just playing," must also be interpreted by B as to intention. For example, A might be trying to get B to believe that he (A) is 'playing' where in fact he is not. This sort of judgement is once again B's to make, and again he is in the position of not "knowing" with what intention A has uttered.
"just playing." The regression as to "real intention" is, from B's point of view, potentially infinite.

6 The MetaComplementarity of the "got passive" with reflexive was suggested by C. Pyle.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


