We have examined several different types of semantic theories: one-tiered theories, two-tiered theories, and use theories. According to Davidson, we should expect a semantic theory to tell us the meaning of every sentence of the language; that is, it should imply a sentence of the form “‘S’ means M” for every sentence ‘S’ in the language. Do our candidate theories do this?

I. **One Tiered Theories**

In these cases, ‘M’ stands for a referent or for a sense. Such theories either lead to regress if we insist that every linguistic item have meaning (e.g., “Theatetus flies”). If we allow that some particles derive their meaning from their influence on the meaning of the sentences in which they figure, we get the Slingshot on the reference approach or vacuity on the sense approach.

II. **Two Tiered Theories**

In these cases, ‘M’ is spelled out along two dimensions. One option is the Frege combination, but it is not clear how combination of sense and reference can obviate the problems just mentioned. Another option is the Chomskytie “Recursive Syntax + Dictionary” option, but this doesn’t help us with intensional contexts.

III. **Use Theories**

There is something correct about these, and Davidson helps himself to it; however, the fully intentional theory of Grice fails to supply a systematic approach that can generate the necessary implications.

So Davidson veers away from these options and in another direction. He adopts Frege’s idea that words only have meanings in the context of sentences, and then manipulates the form of the implication in light of Tarski’s work on truth. He also adds two overriding desiderata: compositionality, which is necessary to explain language acquisition and use,
and empirical verifiability. He gets these by combining a Tarski-style recursive truth theory geared to the former, and a Quine-style radical interpreter theory geared to the latter. With this in mind, he proceeds as follows:

I. **Theory of Content**
   This theory consists of (a) a set of basic axioms that specify the meaning of the primitive expressions, and (b) recursive axioms that dictate how complex expressions are to be formed out of simpler expressions. This theory should imply sentences of the form, “‘S’ is T iff P”, for every sentence “S” in the language. These T-sentences are theorems derivable from the axioms.

II. **Theory of Illocutionary Force**
   This theory assigns to every sentence a communicative function, such as assertion, interrogation, command, etc. The theory will lay out rules that determine when the production of a sentence in a context counts as an assertion, a question, a command, etc.

III. **Pragmatic Theory of Conversation**
   This theory spells out how an utterance, with a certain content and illocutionary force, can be hitched up in the service of broader communicative goals.

IV. **Empirically Verifiable Explanations & Predictions**
   This is supplied by taking this theory and envisioning it as the guiding model for scientific investigation into the linguistic practices of a community whose language you do not know.