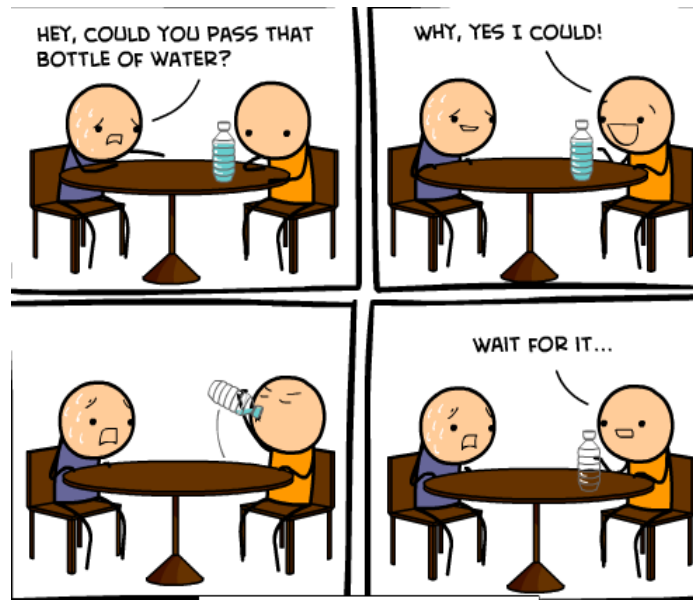


Grice on Implicature



Grice's Goals:

Primary Goal: Explain the difference between *what is said* and what is *suggested/conveyed/implicit*. (Grice uses the word, "implicated" for the latter notion.) Some of Grice's examples:

Recommendation: A professor is writing a letter of recommendation for a pupil who is a candidate for a philosophy job, and the professor's letter reads:

"To whom it may concern, Mr. X's command of English is excellent and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Sincerely, ..."

What B said: (Mr. X's command of English is excellent) ^ (Mr. X's attendance at tutorials has been regular)

Implicatum: Mr. X isn't very good at philosophy.

Petrol: A is standing by an obviously immobilized car and is approached by B.

A: I am out of petrol.

B: There is a garage around the corner.

What B said: There is a garage around the corner.

Implicatum: The garage is open and has petrol to sell (or at least B think the garage is open and has petrol to sell).

Secondary Goal: Reject the widespread assumption that there is a divergence between the semantics of the logical operators (\neg , \wedge , \vee , \rightarrow , \exists) and corresponding natural language expressions (*not, and, but, therefore, or, if then, some*).

What Gives Rise to Implicatures?

Grice: “Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a purpose or set of purposes...”

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

Grice goes on to formulate four more specific maxims and submaxims:

MAXIMS OF QUANTITY

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

MAXIMS OF QUALITY

Supermaxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

MAXIM OF RELEVANCE

Be relevant.

MAXIMS OF MANNER

Supermaxim: Be perspicuous

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief.
4. Be orderly.

(Note: some have thought that Grice’s taxonomy of the maxims is needlessly baroque. Can you think of a way of simplifying this list?)

Ways in which a person S might fail to fulfill a maxim:

1. S may “quietly and unostentatiously” VIOLATE a maxim
2. S might OPT OUT from the operation of the maxim and the CP – in effect, S makes it clear that she/he won’t (or can’t) cooperate.
3. S might be faced with a clash: she/he may be unable, for example, to fulfill the first maxim of Quantity (be as informative as required) without violating the second maxim of Quality (have adequate evidence for what you say).
4. S might flout a maxim – that is, she/he may BLATANTLY fail to fulfill it. On the assumption that S is able to fulfill the maxim (and is able to do it without violating another one), is not opting out, and not trying to mislead, the hearer confronts a question: How can the fact that S said what she/he did be reconciled with the supposition that she/he is observing the Cooperative Principle? Grice observes: “This

situation is one that characteristically gives rise to a conversational implicature... [in this case] a maxim is being EXPLOITED.”

Here’s one way of defining conversational implicature (Grice 1975; Levinson 1983):

S’s saying that p conversationally implicates q iff

- (i) S is presumed to be observing the maxims, or at least (in the case of floutings) the cooperative principle
- (ii) In order to maintain this assumption it must be supposed that S thinks that q
- (iii) S thinks that both S and the hearer H mutually know that H can figure out that to preserve the assumption in (i), q is in fact required

According to Grice, conversational implicatures are *calculable*: we must be capable of in principle working it out, using an argument.

Calculating the implicature in Petrol Case

A: I am out of petrol.

B: There is a garage around the corner.

A goes through the following reasoning:

- (1) B would be infringing the maxim “Be relevant” unless he thinks the garage is open.
- (2) B is abiding by the Cooperative Principle. (assumption)
- (3) B is not infringing the maxim, “Be Relevant”. (from (2))
- (4) So B must think that the garage is open. (from (1), (3))

Questions:

(Q1) Which maxim is being flouted in the Recommendation case?

“To whom it may concern, Mr. X’s command of English is excellent and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Sincerely, ...”

(Q2) For each of the following, say (a) what the implicature is, (b) which maxim(s) is (are) generating the implicature. (Note: in some cases there may be more than one implicature!)

- (i) A: Is Sally going to be in at work today?
B: Her car broke down.

- (ii) Context: Jane and Fred are going to a movie; tickets cost \$10.
Fred: I have \$9.

(iii) Example from a CNN Interview (circa Obama's election):

A: Is Obama ready?

B: I think he's young.

(iv) I'll invite Mary or Sue.

(v) A: Will you go to dinner with me this evening?

B: I have to finish writing a paper.

(vi) A: Jim had five drinks and drove home.

(vii) Context: it's pouring rain and A and B realize they've forgotten the keys to their apartment.

A: This is a fine state of affairs!

Properties of Conversational Implicatures

CANCELABILITY: If an utterance U has a conversational implicature p , one can cancel the implicature by following up with something along the lines of, "... but not p ".

Examples:

- There is a garage around the corner, but I don't know whether it has petrol.
- Mr. X's command of English is excellent and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. He's also an amazing philosopher.

(Unclear whether the cancelability of conversational implicatures follows from Grice's definition of conversational implicatures. Hirschberg (1985) argues that it doesn't, and that we should add cancelability into the very definition of conversational implicatures.)

REINFORCEABILITY: We can reinforce conversational implicatures without the discourse feeling redundant, unlike entailments:

Mr. X's command of English is excellent. He's also a terrible philosopher.
?? Mr. X's command of English is excellent. His English is also very good.

NON-DETACHABILITY. If an utterance U has a conversational implicature *p*, then any utterance U* that says the same thing as U will also implicate *p*.

(Grice offers one exception to this rule. What is it?)

INDETERMINACY: There's often not a single proposition that's clearly implicated – often there are multiple candidates (e.g. Grice's prison example)

Further Issues Involving Implicatures...

1) *Does Grice's Theory Overgenerate Implicatures?*

Sentence (a) typically implicates that sentence (b) is false:

- (a) Some students passed.
- (b) All students passed.

Grice's theory gives a straightforward explanation for this. However, some have argued that his theory erroneously predicts that (a) also implicates that (c)-(e) are false:

- (c) Most students passed.
- (d) 40% of students passed.
- (e) Several students passed.

Is there any way of explaining why (a) implicates that (b) is false, but doesn't implicate (c)-(e) are false?

2) *Are all implicatures detachable?*

Grice held that all conversational implicatures are non-detachable (except for those involving manner): any two sentences that have the same literal meaning will also have the same implicatures. But is this true? Here's an example due to Levinson (1983):

- (a) Some of the kids went to the soccer match.
- (b) Not all of the kids went to the soccer match.
- (c) Some and perhaps all of the kids went to the soccer match.

According to Grice, (a) and (c) are equivalent in meaning, so they should generate the same implicatures. But (a) implicates (b), unlike (c).

3) *Implicatures in the Wild*

Recently, there has been a surge of interest in empirical work on implicatures. One fascinating recent investigation concerns whether we find implicatures in animal communication.

For a long time, people assumed that implicatures could only be present in human communication, since implicatures seem to require fairly sophisticated reasoning about the intentions of a speaker. But the linguist Philippe Schlenker and his colleagues have recently argued that certain monkey calls are best explained in terms of implicatures (Schlenker et al. 2014, 2017). Here's an overview of their arguments.

The Data:

Campbell monkeys in the Tai Forest on the Ivory Coast use a variety of calls to indicate predators. Four are particularly relevant here:

<u>Call</u>	<u>Typical Situation of Use</u>
“hok”	presence of an eagle
“krak”	presence of a leopard
“hok-oo”	alert from above
“krak-oo”	unspecific alert

At first, if one was trying to do monkey semantics, one might think that each typical situation of use is just the literal meaning of the corresponding call. But that would be unsatisfying for two reasons:

- i) It seems like two of the class, “hok-oo” and “krak-oo”, are complex, and so their meanings should be built up compositionally out of the meanings of the parts (specifically, “hok”, “krak”, and the suffix “oo”)
- ii) A further data point: A group of Campbell monkeys on the nearby Tiwai island use the calls in much the same way, with only one difference: they use “krak” as an unspecific alert (equivalent to how the monkeys in the Tai forest use “krak-oo”). Interestingly, another relevant difference is that

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