

Implicature and Co-operative Principle

In some situations, interactants may be “uninformative”, “evasive”, “irrelevant” or “obscure”. However, they still produce **meaningful utterances** or if we can say **inferred by recipient as meaningful**. This has been referred to by Grice as “implicature”. This latter, is actually used to refer to **what is implied**, what the speakers **mean rather than what they say** (Davis, 1998).

Finch (2005, p. 233) illustrates that an implicature is **an extra and additional meaning beyond what is overtly spoken in an utterance**.

Implicature: a neology by Paul Grice (1913- 1988)} He was a British language philosopher who made remarkable contributions to the field of pragmatics. His most influential work relates to his analysis of speaker meaning and his account of conversational implicature.} His legacy is encapsulated in such widely used phrases as "Gricean Cooperative Principle", Gricean Maxims', "Gricean Intention", and "Gricean Reasoning"

An implicature can be classified into two kinds: **conventional and conversational** (or non-conventional) (Cruse, 2006, p24).

1. Conventional Implicature

Conventional implicature depends on the **conventional meaning** of the words of the sentences (Grice, 1975, p. 44).

2. Conversational Implicature

Archer et al. (2012, p. 49) acknowledge that to Grice, **conversational implicatures are implicit meaning which generates when there is flouting of CMs**. Grice (1975) puts it as follows:

What is conversationally implicated is what is required that one assumes a speaker to think in order to preserve the assumption that he is observing the cooperative principle (and perhaps some conversational maxims as well).

Conversational implicature is of two types (Cruse, 2006, pp. 37-9):

a- Generalized Conversational Implicature: it does **not require specific contextual** conditions to its inference. While working out generalized CI "no special background knowledge of the context of utterance is required in order to make the necessary inferences" Yule (1996:40)

-Phrases with indefinites 'a' and an

I was sitting in a garden one day. A child looked over the fence.

An X +> not speaker"s X

-Scalar Implicatures

Scalar implicatures are given rise by the **use of certain scales of value**. **The use of one expression indicates one point on the scale and cancels the other expressions indicating points on the scale**. All, most, some, few/ always, often, sometimes/ certain, probable, possible

b- Particularized conversational implicature: it is that implicature which relies on the particular **context of an utterance to make inference**. In other words, particularized conversational implicature does **not need only general knowledge** but it also needs knowledge about that context in which the utterance is expressed in order to work out the conveyed meanings (see Levinson, 1983, p. 126).

The Cooperative Principle

Conversations are **not** just a set of **unrelated utterances produced randomly**. In fact, there are **rules that govern them** (Cruse, 2000). Grice (1975) expects that people **follow certain rules, called principles**, when communicating with each other. He goes on to argue that these principles make **meaningful rational conversations**. He puts his assumption under the concept of the cooperative principle and says that when people interact a cooperative principle is put into practice (cited in Yule 38).

The cooperative principle is a theory which **explains how people correctly interpret** what others are implying, and this is by universal conventions in human interactions (Cutting, 2002). In addition, it **explains and regulates what people say** to contribute in conversations (Widdowson, 2007).

Grice formulates the cooperative principle as follows:

“Make your conversational contribution such is required at the stage in which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are engaged” (cited in Jaszczolt, 2002, p. 210).

This cooperative principle is an umbrella term for **nine components that guide** how we communicate. These nine components are **grouped together into four categories**, called the *Maxims of Conversation*: the maxim of quality (truthfulness), the maxim of quantity (informativeness), the maxim of relation (relevance), and the maxim of manner (perspicuity).

1.The Maxim of Quantity

The first maxim of the cooperative principle is the maxim of quantity. It is about **the amount of information the speaker gives in an utterance** in conversations. In other words, the maxim of quantity **requires speakers to give the right amount of information** when they speak. This means **not to be too brief or to give more information** than is required (Cutting, 2002).

Grice (1975) puts it as follows:

- Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange).
- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. (Cited in Yule, 1996, p.37)

2.The Maxim of Quality

The quality maxim is about **the truthfulness of the information** given in conversations (Cruse, 2000). According to Thomas (1995), the maxim of quality is a matter of giving the right information. Therefore, **speakers should say nothing that they know to be false**, or which **they lack sufficient evidence**. In other words, they must avoid lying (Cutting, 2002).

Grice (1975) puts it as follows:

Try to make your contribution one that is true.

- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (cited in Yule 37).

3.The Maxim of Relation

The third maxim is that of relation, which says that speakers are required to **be relevant to what has been said before** (Cutting, 2002). In other words, what speakers say ought to be relevant to the **“topic” or the “purpose” of communication** (Widdowson, 2007). Hence, utterances in conversations require being relevant as well as being true and informative.

Leech (1983), formulates the relevant maxims as follows “an utterance U is relevant to the speech situation to the extent that U can be interpreted as contributing to the conversational goals of S or H” (cited in Cruse, 2000, p.357).

- Be relevant

4.The Maxim of Manner

The last maxim is that of manner, which is regarded as less important than the three previous ones. It says that speakers’ **utterances should be clear and easily understood** (Cruse, 2000). According to Grice (in Yule, 1996: 37), the speaker **needs to be perspicuous**. It means that messages expressed during conversation should **not be vague**. The speaker has to deliver messages **right to the point**. Using a brief and clear expression can be the right method to convey the speaker’s utterances. **Arranging information orderly** can also be performed in order to observe the maxim of manner.

Grice suggests the following:

- Be perspicuous.
- Avoid obscurity of expression.
- Avoid ambiguity
- Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- Be orderly (cited in Yule, 1996, p.37).

Non-observance of the maxims

People **naturally follow conversational maxims** when they exchange talks. However, they sometimes fail to observe one maxim or more, either intentionally or unintentionally. **Any failure to observe** a maxim may be referred to as **'breaking'** a maxim (Grice, 1979, p. 49).

1. Flouting

As Grice (1975, p. 49) spells out that the speaker in talk exchange may not observe a maxim so that s/he can **provoke the listener to find out the intended and hidden** meaning rather than surface meaning (Fasold & Connor, 2006, p. 161). Paltridge (2006) assume that **speakers purposely fail to observe the cooperative principle because they assume that hearers are aware of this.**

When flouting a maxim, the speaker does **not intend to mislead** the hearer but wants the hearer to look for the **conversational implicature**, that is the meaning of utterance not directly stated in the words uttered (Thomas, 1995).

Accordingly, if working under the cooperative principle, the **hearer will interpret the meaning and fill in the missing information** relying on the context. In other words, **flouting the maxims is the direct reason for the occurrence of implicatures.** But, this can be only applied in specific situations:

- When the hearers can infer that maxims are flouted.
- If the speaker expects that the maxims are being flouted.
- When the speaker has no intention to mislead the hearer (Cruse, 2000).

2. Violating

In contrast to flouting, when violating a maxim, speakers **intend to mislead the hearers** (Thomas, 1995).

According to Davis (1998) violating a maxim is quietly **deceiving**, the speaker gives insufficient information, says something false, and provides irrelevant or ambiguous utterances with the purpose of misleading hearers. **The speaker can achieve this because the hearers assume that he is cooperating with them. The hearer wrongly assumes that his partner in conversation is being cooperative.**

3. Opting out

Opting out the maxims of conversation can also be considered non-abiding by CMs. In opting out the interlocutors **refuse to cooperate because of the existing of some justifications** (Thomas, 1995). In daily life, you can find many instances of opting out in the talk exchange such as when the **speaker cannot, perhaps for legal or ethical reasons, respond as required.**

Mesthrie (2001, p. 149) argues A speaker opts out a maxim by indicating unwillingness to cooperate in the way that a maxim requires. It commonly happens when the speaker bothered to answer a question.

4. Infringing

The last type of non-observance of maxims is infringing. Thomas (1995, p. 74) explicates that infringement of the maxims of conversation takes place when an interlocutor who, has **no intention to create an implicature and no intention to cheat or mislead the listener**, fails to observe a maxim is said to *infringe* the maxim.

This act is usually **carried out by non natives or language learners** (an imperfect ability of the language), or by those who experience **impaired linguistic performance**. Someone who is incapable to speak clearly and tongue-tied is more likely to infringe the maxims. Other reasons such as excitement, drunkenness, and nervousness can also lead to infringing a maxim (Cutting, 2002: 41).

Hedges

Yule (2010, p. 148) explicates that there are **certain types of expressions used in conversation**, called hedges, **to display that a speaker is aware of the maxims while being co-operative in conversation**.

Hornsby (2014, pp. 203-4) believes that speakers may select to use hedges, to warn their interlocutors that they do not believe themselves to entirely be able to satisfy the requirements of a maxim. Look at the following examples:

- As far as I know the math exam is not going to be taken.
- Now, correct me if I am wrong, but as an assistant director I should say something, the project costs 550 000 \$.....

Criticism of the Maxims

1. It is not clear whether the maxims work in other contexts, languages and cultures.
2. They are not a complete listing of the rules we follow in conversation; for example, there are also rules about, say, politeness, which are not addressed.
4. There is some overlap, so it is not always clear-cut which maxim is being violated.

Even though Grice's work can be seen as a bit sketchy in places and has been criticised, his theory has been one of the most influential (Thomas 1995:56).

The Maxims of Quality

- i. Do not say what you believe to be false
- ii. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

The Maxims of Quantity

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

The Maxims of Relation

Be relevant

The Maxims of Manner

- i. Avoid obscurity of expression
- ii. Avoid ambiguity
- iii. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- iv. Be orderly

Grice Cooperative Principle

