

GRICE ON IMPLICATURE

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Phil Language

1. Formalist vs informalist approaches to logic

P	Q	$P \& Q$	P	Q	$P \vee Q$	P	Q	$P \rightarrow Q$
T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
T	F	F	T	F	T	T	F	F
F	T	F	F	T	T	F	T	T
F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	T

1. “He got drunk and drove home” vs “He drove home and got drunk”
2. “Either he is at the bar or he is hard at work; and he is at the bar”—in order given the logician’s ‘or’, but no one would ever say this.
3. “If my name is ‘Ted’ then grass is green”; “If I dropped the chalk then grass is blue”—ditto

2. Implicating vs saying

Suppose that A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies, *Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn’t been to prison yet.*

A is clearly *implicating* (suggesting, implying) that C is prone to getting into trouble (or something like that). But all that A (strictly and literally) *said* was that C hasn’t been to prison yet.

What is said:

Conventional What is said is “closely related to the conventional meaning” of one’s sentence

Context can matter Resolution of indexicality (e.g., ‘I’) can be relevant to what is said

Context not overly important You can know a lot about what is said without knowledge of the context

What is implicated:

“Strictly speaking” If an utterance implicates something false, it may yet be *strictly speaking* true

Can be conventional E.g., ‘He is an Englishman; therefore, he is brave’

Are usually conversational (not conventional)

Conversational implicatures governed by general norms of rationality

They arise from the fact that conversations are activities with a commonly known purpose, and which are governed by commonly known rules

Can be cancelled “He hasn’t been to prison yet — that’s not to say that he’s the sort to get in trouble.”

3. Grice’s maxims

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 common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. This purpose or direction may be fixed from the start ..., or it may evolve ...But at each stage, *some* possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable. We might then formulate a rough general principle which participants will be expected (*ceteris paribus*) to observe, namely: 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. One might label this the Cooperative Principle. (p. 173)

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE:

Do what's expected of you in the conversational situation

Quantity

- Be as informative as the situation requires
- Don't be overly informative

Quality Try to speak the truth

- Don't say what you believe to be false
- Don't say what you have inadequate evidence for

Relation Be relevant

Manner Be perspicuous

- Avoid obscurity of expression
- Avoid ambiguity
- Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- Be orderly

4. Implicatures defined

S implicates q by saying that p iff

- i) S is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle
- ii) it is common knowledge between S and her audience that S could say p while obeying the Cooperative Principle only if S thinks that q

5. Examples of implicatures

- A: “I am out of petrol”; B: “There is a garage around the corner”
- A: “Where does C live?”; B: “Somewhere in the south of France”
- Letter of recommendation: “Dear Sir, Mr. X’s command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours, etc.”
- “War is war”—a triviality, so not worth saying (quantity)
- Metaphor: “She is the cream in my coffee”—so obviously false that we look for another interpretation.
- “X produced a series of sounds that closely resembled the score of The Star Spangled Banner”—violates “be brief”; implicates that it was terrible (otherwise why not just say “... sang The Star Spangled Banner”).

5.1 Resolution of formalism vs informalism

- He got drunk and drove home last night—but not in that order!
- ‘P or Q’ implicates that the speaker does not know which is true

5.2 Pragmatics vs semantics