

Implicature

<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~gawron/semantics>

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Overview

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Basic Machinery of the theory
- 3 Examples
- 4 Logic

Outline

1 Introduction

2 Basic Machinery of the theory

3 Examples

4 Logic

Grice's example

A is writing a testimonial about a pupil who is a candidate for a philosophy job and his letter reads as follows: "Dear Sir, Mr. X's command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours, etc."

What is implicated

This letter quite clearly conveys that Mr. X is no good at philosophy.

What is said

Two very positive things about Mr. X, that he speaks English well and that he is regular and reliable fellow.

Entailment vs. implicature

- 1 What is entailed is, for example, that Mr. X speaks English, that he has tutorials, that he has been attending them, etc.
- 2 What is implicated is that he is bad at philosophy, and that is definitely NOT entailed.
- 3 What is implicated is particular to the context of a recommendation letter for a letter in philosophy
- 4 Suppose someone asks: How is Mr. X's English and how is his attendance at tutorials.?
- 5 In this context, the utterance "Mr. X's command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular" carries no implication about Mr. X's abilities as a philosopher.
- 6 But the same entailments hold as before.

Reliance on context

Entailments are not context dependent. They are **detachable**; that is, they are not **attached** to a particular context.

Mr. X's command of English is excellent.

Context	Impl.	
	Speaks English	Bad at philosophy
Job letter	Yes	Yes
Describing X's English skills	Yes	No

What happened

Principles in conflict

- 1 Say as much as is required by the present circumstances
 - 2 Be truthful.
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- 1 A has apparently flouted the first principle.
 - 2 On the assumption he is not just being a randomly uncooperative guy, there must be a reason.
 - 3 The reason is that he is confining himself to things he can say truthfully (He's obeying the second principle).
 - 4 This gives rise to the implicature: There is not a great deal more of relevance that he could say truthfully.

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The 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.

The Four Conversational Maxims

- 1 Quality (Truthfulness)
- 2 Quantity (Informativeness)
- 3 Relation (Relevance)
- 4 Manner (Clarity)

Maxim of Quality [Truthfulness]

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 evidence.

Maxim of Quantity [Informativeness]

- (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.

Maxim of Relation[Relevance]

Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner[Clarity]

- (1) Avoid obscurity of expression.
- (2) Avoid ambiguity.
- (3) Be brief. (Avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- (4) Be orderly.

Reviewing what A did

- 1 A flouted Informativeness in order to preserve Truthfulness.
- 2 Frequently an implicature is given rise to when two principles come into conflict and one is obeyed in deference to other.
- 3 In flouting, the conspicuousness of disobeying a maxim is what gives rise to the implicature.
- 4 We call the maxim disobeyed the *flouted maxim*.

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Smitty's girlfriend

A: Smitty doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.

B: He's been driving to New York every weekend.

- 1 What has been *implicated*?
- 2 What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

Why did B do this?

- 1 B may not have adequate evidence for the implicature
- 2 B may not want to expose herself to being called upon to produce her evidence, because she doesn't want to reveal how she got it.

The missing screwdriver

A: Have you seen my stubby screwdriver?

B: Look in the red toolbox.

Notice that B hasn't directly provided an answer to A's question.

- 1 What has been *implicated*?
- 2 What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

The birthday present

A: What would you like for your birthday?

B: Well, my camera's not working.

- 1 What has been *implicated*?
- 2 What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

Note how the peculiar particle *well* functions here. What it actually seems to signal is: I'm not saying everything I could be saying here. There's something I'd like you to infer.

A: You know, I can crush rocks with my bare hands.

B: Yeah, and I'm Marie, Queen of Rumania

- ① What has been *implicated*?
- ② What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

The relative

A: Who are those two standing by the door?

B: That's my mother and her husband.

- ① What has been *implicated*?
- ② What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

A: I've just run out of gas.

B: Oh, there's a garage around the corner.

- ① What has been *implicated*?
- ② What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

Fooling the kids

A: *Let's get the kids something.*

B: *Okay but I veto I C E C R E A M S.*

- 1 What has been *implicated*?
- 2 What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

A: Their flag is white.

- 1 What has been *implicated*?
- 2 What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

Having a family

A: Nigel has fourteen children.

- 1 What has been *implicated*?
- 2 What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

Tracking the milkman

A: Can you tell me the time?

B: Well the milkman has come.

- ① What has been *implicated*?
- ② What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

Sweating the small stuff

A: Walk up to the door, turn the door handle clockwise as far as it will go, then pull gently toward you.

- ① What has been *implicated*?
- ② What maxim has given rise to the implicature?

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Truth tables: and/or

$$p \wedge q \Rightarrow p \vee q$$

p	q	$p \wedge q$	$p \vee q$
T	T	T	T
T	F	F	T
F	T	F	F
F	F	F	F

$p \wedge q$ is **more informative** than $p \vee q$. If $p \wedge q$ is true, then $p \vee q$ is true.
 $p \wedge q$ is **entails** $p \vee q$.

$$p \vee q \not\Rightarrow p \wedge q$$

p	q	$p \wedge q$	$p \vee q$
T	T	T	T
T	F	F	T
F	T	F	F
F	F	F	F

Exclusive or

- 1 John bought a Porsche or BMW.
- 2 Fred ordered an apple pie or a lemon meringue pie.

Not so exclusive or

- 1 Anyone who owns a dog or a cat is invited.
- 2 The previous residents owned either a dog or a cat.
- 3 To qualify for the job, you must own a car or a bicycle.

Exclusive or is an implicature

- 1 Maxim of Quantity: If the speaker knows $p \wedge q$ is true, then in most contexts saying $p \vee q$ violates the maxim of quantity. ($p \wedge q$ is more informative than $p \vee q$).
- 2 Saying $p \vee q$ implicates that it is not the case that $p \wedge q$ (or you, being a cooperative speaker, would have said so).
- 3 This kind of implicature called a quantity implicature (Q-implicature).

More Q-implicatures

Some Q-implicates Not all

Some of the boys went to the party

Q-implicates

Not all of the boys went to the party

Not-all is an implicature

- 1 Maxim of Quantity: If the speaker knows *All of the boys went to the party* is true, then in most contexts saying *Some of the boys went to the party* violates the Maxim of Quantity. *All of the boys went to the party* is more informative than *Some of the boys went to the party*
- 2 Saying *Some of the boys went to the party* implicates that it is not the case that *All of the boys went to the party*. (or you, being a cooperative speaker, would have said so).

- 1 Previous examples of implicatures using Quantity had to do with informativeness relative to **context**. The philosopher's recommendation letter violated informativeness because that context very specifically called for information that was missing from the letter.
- 2 Here we have informativeness as defined by linguistic alternatives (*and* vs. *or*), *all* vs. *some*) and the **entailment** relation between sentences, which by definition, cuts across all contexts.
- 3 So implicatures like *some* Q-implicates *not all* and *or* Q-implicates *and* are going to cut across all contexts. Grice calls them **Generalized Conversational Implicatures** (as opposed to implicatures restricted to facts of a certain context, like the philosopher's letter, which are called **Particularized Conversational Implicatures**

Cancellability: Distinguishing implicature from entailment

- ① So we can't use the fact that implicatures can be context-specific to distinguish implicatures from entailments because GCIs are not context specific. We need a new **test**.
- ② GCIs are cancellable; entailments are not.
 - (1) a. I saw some of the boys go to the party. In fact, I saw all of them. (2nd sentence cancels GCI “Not all”)
 - b. I saw all of the boys go the party. # In fact I didn't see some of them. (#In fact I saw none of them.) [Failed attempt to cancel the entailment **All** \Rightarrow **Some**]

The form of Q-implicatures

$$p \wedge q \Rightarrow p \vee q$$

“All P Q” \Rightarrow “Some P Q”

$$A \Rightarrow B$$

$$p \vee q$$

“Some P Q”

$$B$$

Q-impl

Q-impl

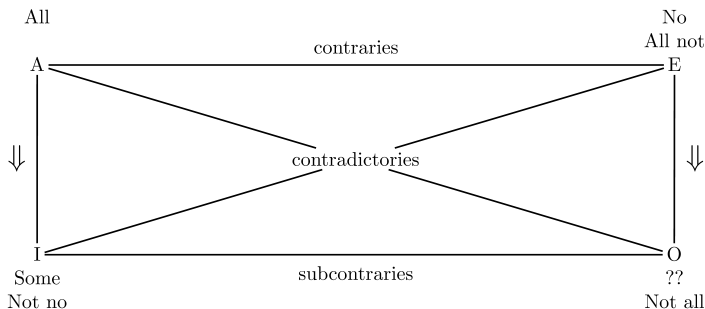
Q-impl

$$\sim (p \wedge q)$$

Not All P Q

Not A

Aristotelian Square



Some Q-implicates **not all**, so **not all** is hardly ever lexicalized.

Contraries can never both be true; contradictories can never both be true and can also never both be false.

Grice, H Paul. 1975.

Logic and conversation.

In *Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.