

PHIL 332: Philosophy of Language  
Class 30: Gricean Implicature

1. Consider the following phenomenon:

Wylie: Jo, it's getting a bit cold in here.

Jo: What are you implying, suggesting?

Wylie: Zeynep uses nice ink.

Oxford: What are you implying, suggesting?

2. In such cases I am hoping to communicate something without actually saying it.
3. But there are lots of cases like that:
  - a. It is sunny.
  - b. If you mow my lawn I will give you ten dollars.
  - c. I will go to the party if you do.
  - d. They got married and had a child.
  - e. They had a child and got married.
  - f. He went to the edge and jumped.
4. These are all cases in which I mean something other than what I have said. We should think carefully about whether or not it is the same phenomenon in each case.
5. Here is perhaps one difference:
  - a. By 'It is sunny' I mean that it is sunny here. (T)
  - b. By saying that it is sunny I mean that it is sunny here. (F)
  - c. By 'Zeynep uses nice ink' I mean that Zeynep is not a good philosopher. (F)
  - d. By saying that Zeynep uses nice ink I mean that she is not a good philosopher. (T)
6. Lycan: "[this is] another linguistic phenomenon that [...] is part of what anyone would have to understand in order to be counted as a fully competent speaker of the language." (p. 190)
7. Another example from Grice: 'He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave.' Have not said that it follows from his being an Englishman that he is brave, but have indicated/implicated that this is so.
8. Grice calls the phenomenon in (1) above *implicature*. He distinguishes *conversational* implicature from *conventional* implicature. He gives an account of what is going on.
9. He notices that conversation is a cooperative effort. He gives the *Cooperative Principle*:

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

10. He proposes various maxims and submaxims:

- a. *Quantity*. (1) Make your contribution as informative as is required; (2) Do not make it more informative than is required.
- b. *Quality*. 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.
- c. *Relation*. Be relevant.
- d. *Manner*. Be perspicuous. (1) Avoid obscurity of expression; (2) Avoid ambiguity; (3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity); (4) Be orderly.

11. The observance of some of these is more urgent than the observance of others.

12. There are no doubt maxims that govern conversation (e.g. be polite), but are not in place for the benefit of communication.

13. The cooperative principle can be generalised to cooperative behaviour. Suppose you and I are cooperating to make a cake:

- a. *Quantity*. If I need two cups of flour, you should not hand me one or three.
- b. *Quality*. If I need sugar, you should not hand me salt or pepper.
- c. *Relation*. You should not out of the blue hand me the newspaper.
- d. *Manner*. You should not make me reach too far.

14. Various ways to fail to fulfill a maxim:

- a. Violate it. E.g. lie.
- b. Opt out of it. E.g. 'I cannot say any more.'
- c. Face a clash. E.g. I cannot be as informative as required but have sufficient evidence.
- d. Flout it (exploit it). E.g.: all cases of conversational Implicature.

15. He then gives an account of conversational Implicature:

A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that *p* has implicated that *q*, provided that (1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the cooperative principle; (2) the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, *q* is required in order to make his saying, or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with this presumption; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2) *is* required.