

PHIL 332: Philosophy of Language  
Class 31: Examples of Gricean Implicature

1. 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.
2. 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.

3. Conversational implicatures must be capable of being worked out. Here is the general pattern:

He has said that *p*; there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; he could not be doing this unless he thought that *q*; he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that *q* is required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that *q*; he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q*; and so he has implicated that *q*.

4. Group A: No maxim is actually violated.

A: I am out of petrol.

B: There is a garage round the corner.

Implication: the garage is open.

5. Group B: A maxim is violated, but because of a clash.

A: Where does C live?

B: Somewhere in the south of France.

Implication: B does not know in which town C lives.

6. Group C: A maxim is violated, in order to generate an implicature (i.e. it is flouted). The maxim is violated at the level of what is said, but not at the level of what is implicated.

*Quantity, 1*

A: What is Zeynep like?

B: She uses a nice font.

Implication: Zeynep is no good at philosophy.

‘Women are women’, ‘War is war’.

*Quantity, 2*

A: Will it rain tomorrow?

B: Yes, because weather.com said so.

Implication: It is to some degree controversial whether or not it will rain tomorrow.

*Quality, 1*

A: John is a fine friend.

Implication: John is not a fine friend. (Irony)

A: You are the cream in my coffee.

Implication: You resemble the cream in my coffee. (Metaphor)

A: He was a little intoxicated.

Implication: He was very intoxicated. (Meiosis)

A: The plane was a mile long.

Implication: The plane was very long. (Hyperbole)

*Quality, 2*

A: She is probably deceiving him this evening.

Implication: She is given to deceiving her husband.

*Relation*

A: Mrs X is an old bag.

B: The weather has been delightful this summer, hasn't it?

Implication: A's remark should not be discussed.

*Manner, 1*

A: We're going to the z-o-o today.

Implication: The child should not be told. (Deliberate obscurity)

*Manner, 2*

A: I sought to tell my love, love that never told can be.

Implication: Both readings. (Deliberate ambiguity)

*Manner, 3*

A: Miss X produced a series of sounds that correspond closely with the score of 'Home sweet home'.

Implication: Miss X did not count as singing. (Deliberate prolixity)