

PHIL 332: Philosophy of Language
Class 32: Conversational versus Conventional Implicature

1. Last time we considered *particularized* conversational implicatures – cases in which a conversational implicature is generated by special features of the context.
2. Grice claims that there are also cases of *generalized* conversational implicature – certain sentences are such that utterances of them normally generate certain conversational implicatures:
 - a. John is meeting a woman this evening.
 - b. John went into a house yesterday and found a turtle.

Compare these with the following:

- c. I have been sitting in a car all morning.
- d. I broke a finger yesterday.

This suggests that what is communicated in the first two examples are implicatures, and not part of the meaning of ‘an F’ or ‘a F’.

3. Conversational implicatures (both particularized and generalized) are generally *cancelable*.

‘Zeynep uses nice ink, but I don’t mean to imply that she’s not a good philosopher.’

The implicature may be *explicitly cancelled* (as above), or *contextually cancelled* (i.e. the context makes it clear that the speaker is opting out).

4. Conversational implicatures are generally *nondetachable*.

A speaker who asserts ‘John tried to run’ implicates that John did not run, and would do if she asserts ‘John attempted to run’, ‘John endeavored to run’, ‘John set himself to run’, etc. instead.

Exceptions: some cases in which the implicature is generated by flouting the maxim of manner.

Note that sometimes no other way of saying the same thing.

5. There are also *conventional* implicatures:
 - a. He is English, and therefore brave.
 - b. She is a linguist but often right.
 - c. He is a philosopher and his wife isn’t tolerant either.
 - d. She is Japanese and her husband loves karaoke too.

6. Conventional implicatures:
 - a. Are not worked out.
 - b. Are not cancelable.
 - c. Are detachable.
7. Note that a generalized conversational implicature is not a conventional implicature, but might become one.
8. There is also *presupposition*:
 - a. The king of France is bald.
 - b. John has stopped beating his wife.
9. It has been suggested (Bach) that there is *implicature*:

A: How was the party?
B: Everyone was there.

A: What are John and Mary doing together?
B: They are married.
10. A test case: is 'or' ambiguous between an inclusive sense and an exclusive sense?