The Principles Underlying What is Communicated and not Said: A Cursory Discussion of Grice's Cooperative Principle and its Maxims

Yeboah Joyce

Foreign languages and literature Department, Nanjing Tech University, China
✉ **Corresponding Author**: Yeboah Joyce, **E-mail**: joysyeb.jy@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT

As humans communicate, much of what goes on is not simply about conveying information to themselves. In Grice's paper "Logic and Conversation (1975)", he argued that some cooperative principle is assumed to be in operation for a person to interpret what someone else says. In a typical conversational flow, the speaker needs to adhere to a pattern in order to be informative, truthful and clear and there exist a set of principles that direct the hearer to a particular interpretation of what is said. This is because a speaker can mean something either by saying it or by saying (or 'making as if to say') something else. What is implicated by saying something is generally not what is said. This paper attempted to critically review how speakers manage to convey more than what is said and how the hearer arrives at the speaker meaning using a descriptive qualitative approach. This paper employs a descriptive qualitative approach. The key findings of the study is described in two context: first of all, speakers intentionally obey the maxims in conversation which in essence affirms Grice's theory of cooperative principle in fulfilment of at least some of the maxims. Second, speakers exploit the maxims either deliberately or fail to observe by deciding to violate, suspend, flout, infringe, or opt-out of a conversation. This situation is one premised to give rise to conversational implicatures. A competent hearer should be able to arrive at these possible conclusions in order to draw out the speaker meaning from what was merely said.

1. Introduction

Some utterances or words are not necessarily said in conversations, nonetheless often implied. When we talk, utterances are literally the units of sound you make, but what gives the sounds their true meaning are the signs that accompany those utterances. Unlike semantics that studies the meanings of words and their meanings within a sentence, or more precisely, the study of the relation between linguistic expressions and their meaning, pragmatics as a branch of linguistics deals with language use in context.

Pragmatics is explained as the ways in which context contributes to meaning. It is concerned with the meaning linguistic utterances can have beyond their literal meaning (implicature) and at presupposition and turn to take in conversation. Pragmatics expands on how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity. It states that meaning relies on the manner, time, place, etc., of utterances.

In the early 1950s, Grice, an American language philosopher, notices that people don't usually say things in daily conversations but tend to imply them. However, the main problem is not about what's said but to explain the science of how the speaker can manage to convey more than is said and how the hearer can arrive at the speaker meaning.

Paul Grice, first of all, introduced the Cooperative Principle and explored conversational implicature in his paper, "Logic and Conversation" (1975). He claimed that the generation and perception of these implicatures were based on these set of principle:

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which is occurs, by the accepted purpose of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975, p. 48). The Cooperative Principle sets out to make explicit certain rational principles observed by people when they converse. Grice argues that people communicate most logically and rationally, and cooperation is rooted in people's conversations. Moreover, he explains that this habit will not be lost, not ever. This is because it has been learned during their infancy. The notion is that the listener comprehends the implication of a speaker's remarks by drawing on an assumption of cooperativeness, contextual information and background knowledge. He makes a distinction between saying and meaning which argues that speakers can create implicit meanings and their audiences are able to infer these intended meaning from their conversations

More importantly, interlocutors are required to reason not only in terms of their language but also to understand the context, each other's goal and intentions. Thus, the underlying ability to make inferences about the mind of others, keeping track of what is known and unknown and how others views differ from your own in a given conversation. That is to say, being a competent language user does not just involve having access to a vocabulary and grammar that are shared with others but more so your ability to focus on the importance of context for any account of meaning in language and for understanding. It also involves knowing how to deploy linguistic tools to achieve a communicative goal in a social context. The aim of this present paper is to understand how saying and implicature interact; why what is not said in a conversation is as important to the communication as what is said and to explore the theories and principles that makes it possible for both the speaker and the hearer to understand each other. It employs a descriptive qualitative approach relying largely on brief descriptions and literature review in this research field.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Pragmatics
Pragmatics is seen as the highest level of evolution in language. It deals with the context-dependent assignment of meaning to language expressions used in acts of speaking and writing. Although most linguistic studies have often connected the rise of pragmatics from the work of Peirce (1931), Aristotle also wrote on certain aspects of pragmatics (Allan 2004) and illocutionary types (acts performed through speaking; see below and chapter 20) were identified by the Stoics (second century BCE), Apollonius Dyscolus, St. Augustine, Peter Abelard, and Thomas Reid before being rediscovered by speech act theorists such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969; 1975). Furthermore, at least since the time of Aristotle there have been commentaries on rhetoric and oratory. Therefore, one can say that several aspects of pragmatics have a long history.

2.2 Language and context

Language is a system of symbols and rules that is used for meaningful communication. The purpose of language is concerned with communicating meaning. When we begin to develop our language abilities, the main purpose is to communicate or interact with others.

The context of an utterance is vital in the interpretation of some words and in the complete conveyance of the meaning. Context is usually understood to mean the immediately preceding discourse and the situation of the participants (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Context also refers not only to the situation and physical surroundings, but also to the context of the communicators, that is, what they can see at this moment and also what they are likely to know or be interested in.

The field of pragmatics is interested in how we use context when producing and interpreting linguistic utterances. There are two types of context which can be differentiated as physical context and linguistic context. The physical context is the location of a given the word, the way and manner in which it is being used, as well as the timing, all of which helps in the proper understating of the word. Linguistic context, on the other hand, often called co-text is the set of words that surround the lexical item in question in the same phrase, or sentence. Some circumstances determine the meaning of most English sentences. In order to understand these sentences, one must know foremost, who the speaker is, who is he/she is speaking to, about whom, where and when. This knowledge of the context is considered non-linguistic knowledge. This is because the knowledge of these circumstances do not belong within the framework of the general knowledge about a language. (Saeed, 2003 p.23)

2.3 Grice's Cooperative Principle, Maxims and Implicatures
Grice (1975) proposes that participants in a conversation obey a general 'Cooperative Principle' (CP), which is supposed to be in force whenever a conversation unfolds:

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted objective or direction of the talk exchange in which you are involved"

2.4 Implicature
The ability of interlocutors to make sense of the utterances they exchange in spite of some missing factors, is that such factors are often implicated and such implicatures are made possible by the cooperation existing between speaker and listener. The

expectation of observing the CP enables language users to realize when a certain assumption has been suspended and or why interlocutors have chosen to disregard an accepted set of conversational postulates. Grice views pragmatic interpretation as significantly relying on inferencing processes: the hearer is able to hypothesize about the Speaker's meaning, based on the meaning of the sentence uttered, on background or contextual assumptions or presuppositions and, last but not least, on the general communicative principles which speakers are expected to observe.

"To imply is to hint, suggest or convey some meaning indirectly by means of language" (Thomas 1995: 58). In his explanation of implied or additional meaning, Paul Grice distinguishes between two types of implicatures: Conventional implicatures, which in most regard, convey the same extra meaning regardless of context and which are always lexicalized; Conversational implicatures, which convey different meanings according to different contexts, i.e. they are weighed afresh each time the Speaker and the Hearer interact.

2.5 Conversational implicature

Conversational implicatures are the pivot of Gricean pragmatics (Grice 1975) and its subsequent developments. Once the meaningful interpretation of a language expression makes recourse to context, pragmatics comes into play (Gazdar 1979; Levinson 1983).

The boundary between semantics and pragmatics was originally defined by as a distinction between "what is said" and "what is implied, suggested, or meant (Grice 1975: 43)

Conversational implicatures:

  K: Is that whiskey over there?

  R: Help yourself.

K's utterance is literally a request for information (on the nature of the liquor), yet R interprets it as a request for the alcoholic beverage, Whiskey. There is nothing in the literal meaning of K's utterance that could lead R to that interpretation. This can only be derived by means of conversational implicature.

Any implied meaning risks being (mis) understood by the Hearer as the Speaker intended it to be up taken, since a Speaker may imply something that the hearer may fail to infer appropriately.

Implicatures can be established by envisaging the four conversational rules or 'Maxims' comprised by the CP:

I. Maxims of Quantity:
  1.   Make your contribution as informative as is required for the recent objectives of the exchange.
  2.   Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

 II. Maxims of Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true. Be truthful.

  1.   Do not say what you believe to be false.
  2.   Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

III. Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.

 IV. Maxims of Manner: Be perspicuous.

  1.   Avoid obscurity of expression.
  2.   Avoid ambiguity.
  3.   Be brief
  4.   Be orderly.

2.6 The non-observance of maxims

A competent hearer will draw on one of several possible conclusions when faced with a speaker's non-observance of a maxim:

1. The speaker openly 'opts out' of the operation of the maxim and is not willing to abide by the CP.

2. The speaker intentionally and discreetly subverts the maxim and the CP. This is for some self-serving objective and it constitutes an instance of maxim violation.

3. The speaker means to observe the CP, however, fails to fulfil a particular maxim through ineptitude. For example, he may ineptly use words or phrase too technical for the listeners and or the situation, thus unpremeditatedly non-observing the Maxim of Manner. This is an instance of maxim infringement.

4. The speaker evidently means to observe the CP, and yet s/he is blatantly not observing a maxim; if he is not incompetent, s/he must mean something additional to what s/he is saying. For instance, when asked what she thinks of a new dining hall, a woman responds, it has a fine carpet. It would look as if to be flouting the first Maxim of Quality, if there is no reason that she means not to be observing the CP and that she is not inept either, then her remark must mean something other than what it literally asserts - for example, that the meal they serve is not the best in town. When non-observance of a maxim is deliberate and intended to be recognized as deliberate, Maxim Flouting is a case (Hancher 1978).

2.7 Failing to observe the maxims

Seeming contradictory, more and more, people fail to observe the maxims. Call it deliberate or accidental. There are five major ways people fail to observe a maxim. This is by:

 a. Flouting b. Violating c. Infringing d. Opting out e. Suspending

2.7.1 Flouting of a maxim

A Speaker fails to observe a maxim, not to beguile or deceive, but per adventure because the speaker wishes to alert the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning" (Thomas 1995: 65). In an article, Mey (1996: 70) reinforces Thomas's claim by providing a concise yet comprehensive definition of 'flouting', understood as a case of verbal communication when "we can make a completely obvious show of breaking one of the maxims... in order to lead the addressee to look for a covert, implied meaning".

2.7.2 Flouts exploiting the Quality Maxim: These flouts occur when the Speaker says something which is and needs to be perceived as brazenly untrue.

An ambulance picks up a drunk who collapsed on the sideways on Thanksgiving. Soon the drunkard throws up all over a medic. The medic says: 'Oh great, that's really great! That's made my thanksgiving!' Inferencing in the Gricean framework expand as:

1. The medic expressed pleasure at having someone throws up over her.
2. There is no example in recorded evidence of a person being elated at having another throw up all over them.
3. There is no reason to believe that the medic is trying to deceive us.
4. Unless the medic's trying to convey some other proposition, her utterance is entirely pointless.
5. The most clear-cut related proposition is the exact opposite of the one she has expressed.
6. The medic is obviously annoyed at having the drunk threw up all over her.

2.7.3 Flouts exploiting the Quantity Maxim: When a Speaker blatantly gives more or less information than it's required, s/he may flout the Quantity Maxim and deliberately talk either too much or too little in compliance with the goal of the ongoing conversation:

Alex Karev's message on his answering machine: Believe it or not, Alex isn't at home. Please leave a message after the tone. I must be out of or I'd pick up the phone. Well, where could I be? Anyways, believe it or not, I'm not at here.

Alex leaves superfluous information obviously; a person is either at home or is not alongside acknowledging the Hearer's disbelief as to his not being in the house.

2.7.4 Flouts exploiting the Relation Maxim: this flouts tend to occur when the response is evidently irrelevant to the topic (immediate change of topic or deflection, overt failure to address interlocutor's goal in asking a question):

Mother to son at dinner: Any news about the college applications?

Son: More salad?

Son is reluctant to discuss college application issues either because he feels his family is too intrusive or has no good news. To postpone discussing the topic, he switches the line of conversation to an 'easy or safe' topic, such as an offer to serve or be offered more salad.

2.7.5 Flouts exploiting the Manner Maxim: In most cases, such flouts involve absence of clarity, brevity and transparency of communicative intentions. The case is explained in the example below:

Interviewer: Did the Government promise nurses a raise and did not start any legal procedures about it?

Spokesperson: I would not try to steer you away from that conclusion.

The twist or convoluted response by the speaker is not caused by his or her inability to speak to the point because the speaker faces a clash of goals: she would like to cooperate during the interview but successful conversation conflicts with another goal: sparing the government she is the spokesperson of from acquiring an unfavourable public image.

2.8 Violation of a maxim

Violation is defined as the unostentatious or 'quiet' non-observance of a maxim. A Speaker who violates a maxim 'will be liable to mislead' (Grice 1975: 49). Violating a maxim is quite the opposite of flouting a maxim. Violating a maxim rather prevents or at least discourages the Hearer from seeking for implicatures and rather encourages their taking utterances at face value. Examples:

*2.8.1 Violation of the Quantity Maxim***:**

Lecturer: Did you read the book for the test this morning?

Student: I certainly read the book. Weren't they mind blowing!

2.8.2 Violation of the Quality Maxim

A: You poured red wine on my shirt, you klutz!

B: No one will notice.

2.8.3 Violation of the Relation Maxim

A: Did you like my performance?

B: The attendance was impressive, wasn't it?

2.8.4 Violation of the Manner Maxim

A: Major Owen Hunt, M.D., manic depressive. It's an honorary title.

B: He's also schizophrenic.

A: He sleeps in two lairs.

2.9 Infringing a maxim

Maxim infringement occurs when a Speaker fails to observe the maxim, although s/he has no intention of generating an implicature and no intention of deceiving. Generally infringing stems from imperfect linguistic performance (in the case of a young child or a foreigner) or from impaired linguistic performance brought about by nervousness, drunkenness, excitement, disability.

2.9.1 Infringing a maxim

Rachel: Yeah, and also, we need more umm, drinks. Hold on a second. (Gets up but stumbles a little bit.) Whup, okay. (She makes it to the phone and picks it up, without dialing.) Hello! Vegas? Yeah, we would like some more alcohol, and y'know what else? We would like some more beers. Hello? Ohh, I forgot to dial!

(They both start laughing. There's a knock on the door.)

Ross: That must be our alcohol and beers! (Gets up to answer it.)

Joey: Hey! – Ross: Ohh, it's Joey! I love Joey! (Hugs him.)

Rachel: Ohh, I love Joey! Joey lives with a duck! (Goes and hugs Joey.)

Joey: Hi! – Rachel: Hey!

Joey: Look-look-look you guys, I need some help! Okay? Someone is going to have to convince my hand twin to cooperate!

Ross: I'll do it. Hey, whatever you need me to do, I'm your man. (He starts to sit down on the bed. There's one problem though, he's about two feet to the left of it. Needless to say, he misses and falls on his butt.) (Looking up at Joey.) Whoa-oh-whoa! Are you, are you okay? (Extract from Friends, movie series)

2.10 Opting out of a maxim

A Speaker opts out of observing a maxim whenever s/he shows reluctance to cooperate in the way the maxim requires. This occurs when an accused person exerts their right to remain silent or when a witness chooses not to impart information that may prove baneful to the defendant.

Police Detective: Has the defendant ever told you she hated her husband and wanted him dead?

Psychologist: this sort of information is confidential and it would be unethical to share it with you. You know, doctor-patient confidentiality and all.

2.11 Suspending a maxim

In certain instances or as part of some events, there is no expectation on the part of any participant that one or several maxims should be observed (and non-fulfilment does not generate any implicatures). Similar cases include:

1) Suspending the Quality Maxim in case of funeral orations and obituaries, when the description of the deceased needs to be praiseworthy and exclude any potentially unfavorable aspects of their life or personality.

2) Poetry suspends the Manner Maxim since it does not aim for conciseness, clarity and lack of ambiguity.

3) In the case of speedy communication via telegrams, e-mails, notes, the Quantity Maxim is suspended because such means are functional owing to their very brevity.

4) Jokes are not only conventionally untrue, ambiguously and seemingly incoherent, but are expected to exploit ambiguity, polysemy and vagueness of meaning, which entails, among other things, suspension of the Maxims of Quality, Quantity and Manner.

2.12 Saying and implicating distinction

A speaker can say something and mean just that. The contrast between saying and implicating allows both for cases in which the speaker means what she says and something else as well and for ones in which the speaker says one thing and means something else instead.

Grice counted both as kinds of implicature, although the latter might better be described as speaking figuratively (recall, though, that Grice described this as a case of merely 'making as if to say' something, since for him saying something entails meaning it). Grice seems to have overlooked a phenomenon intermediate between saying and implicating, one that has been investigated by many others (Sperber and Wilson 1986, Bach 1994, Carston 2002, and Recanati 2004).

As they have observed, there are many sentence-forms whose typical uses go beyond their meanings, even with references fixed and ambiguities resolved, but are not cases of implicating (or speaking figuratively). The reason is that what the speaker means, though distinct from what is said (strictly speaking), is too closely tied to what is said to be a case of merely implicating.

3. Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. This means the study does not include calculation or enumeration. It relies largely on brief descriptions and literature review in this research field.

4. Results and Discussion

This section discusses with examples the rationale in a bid to achieve the objectives of this study basing its core ideas on Grice's understanding of principles that must be followed in a conversation as reviewed in the preceding section.

According to Grice, in making a conversation there are general principles in which participants need to observe, otherwise it will be close to impossible for them to have an efficient communication.

The cooperative principle, along with the conversational maxims, partly accounts for conversational implicatures. The Cooperative Principle and the maxims represent not sociological generalizations or prescriptions for proper conversational etiquette but baseline presumptions that generate conversational implicatures by their observance or apparent violation.

The first issue under discussion is how people manage to understand the speaker's meaning, especially the implied meaning. The debate here is premised on the Cooperative Principle, proposed by Paul Grice in a paper entitled Logic and Conversation (published in 1975) as have been reviewed in the earlier section of this paper. Paul Grice proposed that all speakers, regardless of their cultural background, adhere to a basic principle governing conversation which he termed The Cooperative Principle (1975:45-6). Under this principle fall four categories of maxim.

According to this principle, hearers adopt the assumption that the speaker adheres to a number of maxims and this assumption guides the hearer in the inferences s/he makes about the purposeful content of the utterance and the intentions of the speaker. What then is the relationship between cooperative principle and its maxims?

First, the speaker is able to obey the maxim, or at least some of them. The default case occurs when the maxim of quantity, relation and manner are satisfied. For example, as an illustration of the sub-maxim of manner "be orderly", the interpretation of (1a) will not be exactly the same the interpretation of (1b);

(1) a. John and Bernice got married, lived happily and had three children.

　　b. John and Bernice had three children, lived happily and got married.

Second, the speaker may exploit the maxims, that is, (i) violate the maxims, (ii) opt out of both the maxims and the CP, (iii) face a clash by fulfilling one maxim and violating another, and (iv) flout a maxim. Example (2) to (5) illustrate these four cases;

(2) I have a little money on me

(3) I cannot say more, my lips are sealed

(4) *A;* Where does C live

　　B; Somewhere in the East Asia

(5) War is war

In (2), in a case where the speaker is carrying a lot of money, he violates the first maxim of quality and thereby mislead his audience. In (3), the speaker refuses to cooperate, and the audience understands that even if he cannot say more, he knows more than he says. In (4), the speaker is confronted with a possible contradiction between satisfying the first maxim of quantity – and thus violating this – and satisfying the last maxim by violating the first maxim quality. In this case, the implicature will be that the speaker does not know precisely where C lives. Finally, in (5), there is a blatant violation of the first maxim of quantity. Manifestly, in (5), the speaker uses a formula to convey some implicature (in a wartime situation, anything is allowed).

In saying something one generally intends more than just to communicate- getting oneself understood is intended to produce some effect on the listener.

Philosophically, the important point is that whatever the particulars, even though what we mean cannot in general be read off of what we say, we as speakers are pretty good at making our communicative intentions evident and that as hearers, we are pretty good at identifying such intentions. Grice's primary insight was that unless communication were a kind of telepathy, there must be rational constraints on speakers' communicative intentions and corresponding constraints on hearers' inferences about them.

If a speaker says something that is obviously false, thereby flouting the first maxim of quality, she could well mean something else. For example, with (1) she would probably mean the opposite of what she says, with (2) something less extreme, and with (3) something more down to earth.

(1) Theodora Roosevelt was the most intellectual president in American history.

(2) I could have eaten a billion of those chips.

(3) She bungee-jumped from 85% approval down to 40%, up to 60%, and down to 15%.

In these cases, respectively, of irony, hyperbole, and metaphor, it should be evident what a speaker is likely to mean, even though it is not what she says. Notice that it is possible, however unlikely, that the speaker does mean what she says, but then her communicative intention would be unreasonable, since she could not reasonably expect the hearer to figure this out. It is important to remember that it is one thing for a speaker to mean/implicate something and another thing for the hearer to figure out what she means/implicates, that is, for the utterance to be communicatively successful.

5. Conclusion
In conversations, interlocutors are required to make sense of the utterances they exchange in spite of the missing elements; they make inferences and take into account the context in which communication occurs and exploit its affordances to get messages across. This is important because people don't usually say things, but they imply or mean them. However, what one implicates by saying something is generally not implied by what one says.

In this paper, a descriptive analysis of Grice's cooperative principle is expanded with examples is employed in attempt to explore the idea that some utterances convey more than the words that form the sentence and the speaker meaning, more often than not is deduced from what is merely spoken. The ideal objective was to investigate how a speaker manages to convey more than what is said and how the hearer arrives at the speaker meaning.

Grice systematized this idea by formulating an overarching Cooperative Principle and four sets of subordinate maxims of conversation for which this paper explored to understand the science behind how the hearer arrives at the speakers meaning. The study's key findings are described in two context: first, a speaker may intentionally obey the maxims in conversation, which in essence contributes significantly to Grice's theory of cooperative principle in fulfilment of at least some of the maxims. Second, a speaker exploits the maxims either intentionally or is inept to observe by violating, suspending, flouting, infringing, or opting out of an exchange.

The limitation of this study is that it only looked at the observation or non-observation of cooperative principle as the situation, characteristic for giving rise to conversational implicatures without considering any cultural component or background. In any community, there are developed rules of community behaviour, which is part of individuals and guides group identity. This is also true for any discourse community. In every discourse context, there may exist a cooperative principle; however, each language culture and discourse pattern is designed uniquely. Researchers should explore the differences in cultural patterns that give rise to conversational implicatures.

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