

April 7, 2006

CLASS 23: MAXIMS

GRICE'S THEORY OF IMPLICATURE

Grice: conversational implicatures arise because *we tend to be co-operative*.

① *The Co-operative 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."

① *The maxim of Quality*

Supermaxim: 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.

② *The maxim of Quantity*

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.

③ *The maxim of Relevance*

Make your contributions relevant.

④ *The maxim of Manner*

Supermaxim: Be perspicuous.

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

USING THE MAXIMS TO GENERATE IMPLICATURES

There are three ways to *generate conversational implicatures*:

1. *Observe* the maxims —
2. *Violate* the maxims —
3. *Flout* the maxims

1. *Observing the maxims*

- (1) A: *I've run out of petrol.*
 B: *There's a garage just round the corner.*

If B's answer is *relevant* and *informative*, but not *too informative* (i.e. with useless, misleading information), it must connect to A's statement.

2. *Violating a maxim*

- (2) A: *Where does Gérard live?*
 B: *Somewhere in the South of France.*

B violates Quantity (less information than 'required'). So how is this co-operative?

Answer: This way B adheres to Quality.

Implicature: B doesn't know exactly where Gérard lives.

3. *Flouting maxims (exploitation)*

Violating a maxim is enforced (usually by **clashing maxims**). Flouting is deliberate:

- (3) A: *What if the USA block EU-accession of Cyprus?*
 B: *Oh come on, Europe has all the power!* (flouts Quality)
- (4) *John is John.* (flouts Quantity)
- (5) A: *I do think Mrs Jenkins is an old windbag, don't you?*
 B: *Huh, lovely weather for March, isn't it?* (flouts Relevance)
- (6) Johnny: *Hey Sally, let's play marbles.*
 Mother: *How is your homework getting along, Johnny?* (flouts Relevance)
- (7) *She produced a series of sounds that roughly corresponded to the score of I am alive.*
 (flouts Manner)

- flouting is effectively an invitation to *find a new meaning*, beyond 'what is said' — one that makes the utterance co-operative after all
- flouting is generally associated with particular rhetorical effects

Opting out

A speaker may 'opt out' of the Co-operative Principle, i.e. being *openly unco-operative*:

- (8) *My lips are sealed; I can say no more.*