

The Cooperative Principle

RETAIL



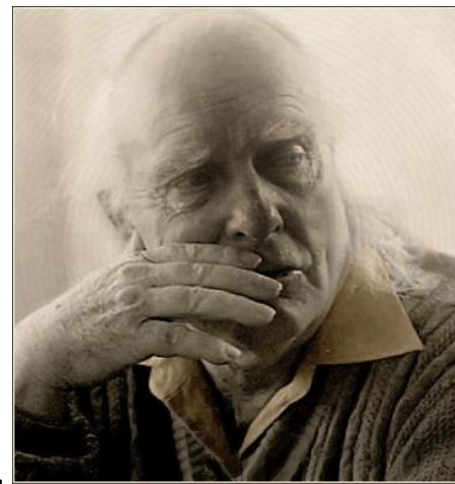
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Chapter 3

Paltridge (2006)

H. P. Grice

- In Grice's paper, 'Logic and conversation' (1975), he argued that in order for a person to interpret what someone else says, some kind of **cooperative principle** is assumed to be in operation.



The Cooperative Principle

- The **Cooperative Principle**, proposed by Grice, maintains that **people follow a pattern in conversation**:
 - i.e. There is a set of **principles** which direct us to a **particular interpretation of what is said**.

Specifically, the cooperative principle says ...

- We should aim to make our **conversational contribution**:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Such as is required | (What needs to be said) |
| 2. At the stage at which it occurs | (At appropriate point in the interaction) |
| 3. By the accepted purpose or direction of the exchange | (They have reason for saying what they say) |

(Grice, 1975, p. 45)

Example of speakers cooperating in production and interpretation

A: Customer number two!

B: Ah Could I have 2 pounds of salmon please?

(At the fish counter in the supermarket)

1. Such as is required	No more than the necessary information is said.
2. At the stage at which it occurs	When the person working behind the counter finished serving one person and is ready to serve another.
3. By the accepted purpose or direction of the exchange	The speakers have a reason for saying what they say (speaker A offering service and indicating whose turn it is)

Grice based his cooperative principle on **four** sub-principles he called *maxims*

1- Quality:

Make your contribution truthful:

- a. Do not say what you believe to be false.
- b. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

2- Quantity:

Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange)

- a. Not less informative
- b. Nor more informative

3- Relation:

- Be relevant.

4- Manner:

- Be clear in what you say, avoid ambiguity or obscurity, be brief and orderly in your contribution.

Example of speakers observing all the maxims

A: Hi. What would you like?

B: Two pounds of freshly ground meet, thanks.

Cooperative Principle	Both are saying what is required at the appropriate stage , observing the purpose and direction of the conversation.
Maxim of Quality	Both are telling the truth, being genuine.
Maxim of Quantity	Both said what was required. No more and no less.
Maxim of Relation	What they are saying is relevant to the conversation.
Maxim of Manner	Both were clear, unambiguous, brief and orderly.

How do we know we follow the maxims?

- The use of **certain expressions** signals our **awareness** of the maxims:
 - *I don't want to bore you with details, but*
 - *It may rain tomorrow .*
 - *I am not sure, but I heard that*
 - *By the way,*

Such expressions (in green) are called ***metadiscourse items***.

Metadiscourse Items

- **Metadiscourse** describes **comments** on what people are about to say or have just said.
- **Metadiscourse** signals our awareness of the maxims and our observation of them.

'I **may** be mistaken, but ...'

'She **might** be sick'

'I **think** she's the one who said so ...'

Awareness of the maxim of **quality**

'**to cut a long story short**,...''

Awareness of the maxim of **quantity**

'**by the way**, ...' or '**anyway**, ...'

Awareness of the maxim of **relation**

'**it might sound confusing**, but ...'

Awareness of the maxim of **manner**

Example 1

- Sometimes, speakers **purposely** do not observe the maxims and intend their hearer to be aware of this.

Librarian: (raises his eyes, looks at the student with no facial expression)

Student: Hi. Could you check for me whether I have any books to collect?

Librarian: (swipes the student's card, clears his throat, wipes his nose with a tissue, glances at the computer screen, turns to the shelf to get a book, then another book)

Student: Any more?

Librarian: (turns and gets a third book, stamps them all with the return date)

Student: Is that all?

Librarian: **Are you going to borrow all the books in the library?**

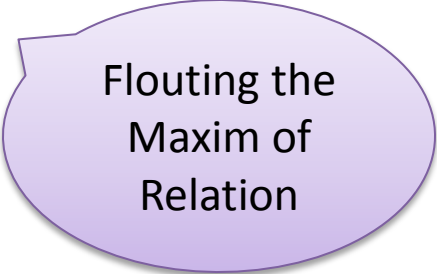
Student: OK .. I see .. Thank you very much.



Not
observing
the Maxim
of Quality

Example 2

Chinese student: What do you do in America?
American student: I work in a bank.
Chinese student: It's a good job, isn't it?
American student: Well, just so so.
Chinese student: Then, how much is your salary every month?
American student: Oh no ...
Chinese student: What's wrong?
American student: Why are you asking that?
Chinese student: Just asking, nothing else ...
American student: The station isn't far, is it?



Flouting the
Maxim of
Relation

Example 3

مشترى: بسكوت أبو نص بكم؟

البائع: بنص يا اخوي ...

Not
observing
the Maxim of
Quantity

Not Observing a Maxim

When we don't observe a maxim, we:

1- Flout a maxim:

- When we have **NO** intention to deceive or mislead hearer.
- Speaker knows that Hearer will get the meaning implied.

2- Violate a maxim:

- There is **an intention** to deceive hearer.

Father: Mummy's gone on a little holiday because she needs a rest.

[Truth] Mummy's gone away to decide if she wants a divorce or not.

Violating Quality and
Manner

3- Opt out of a maxim:

- Speaker chooses not to observe a maxim for **ethical** or **legal** reasons.
 - Lying for the sake of working things out is an example for ethical reasons.
 - When a doctor lies about a patient's medical case to an unauthorized person, he does this for legal reasons.

Which maxims are flouted, violated, and opted out of?

(1)

- Wife (*to husband*): I would die if you left me.

(2)

- Mother (*to son*): I tried calling you a hundred times!

(3)

- Son: My phone was on silent mode.

(It wasn't, but he knew she would ask him to come home early.)

Overlap between Maxims

- An utterance may be **unclear** (flouting maxim of manner) and **longwinded** (flouting maxim of quantity) at the **same time**.
- It may also be **socially acceptable**, or **preferred**, to **flout a maxim** (e.g., **quality**) for reasons of **tact** or **politeness**.

Flouting the
Maxim of
Quality
would have
been **nicer!**



Implicature

- **Implicature:** An additional meaning that is intended by the speaker and generated by the hearer.
 - **It arises from:**
 1. The **literal meaning** of what the speaker said.
 2. The **cooperative principle** and its **maxims**.
 3. The **linguistic** and the **non-linguistic context**.
 4. **Background Knowledge** and **knowledge** of the world.

Example:

Speaker: There's nothing on the TV.



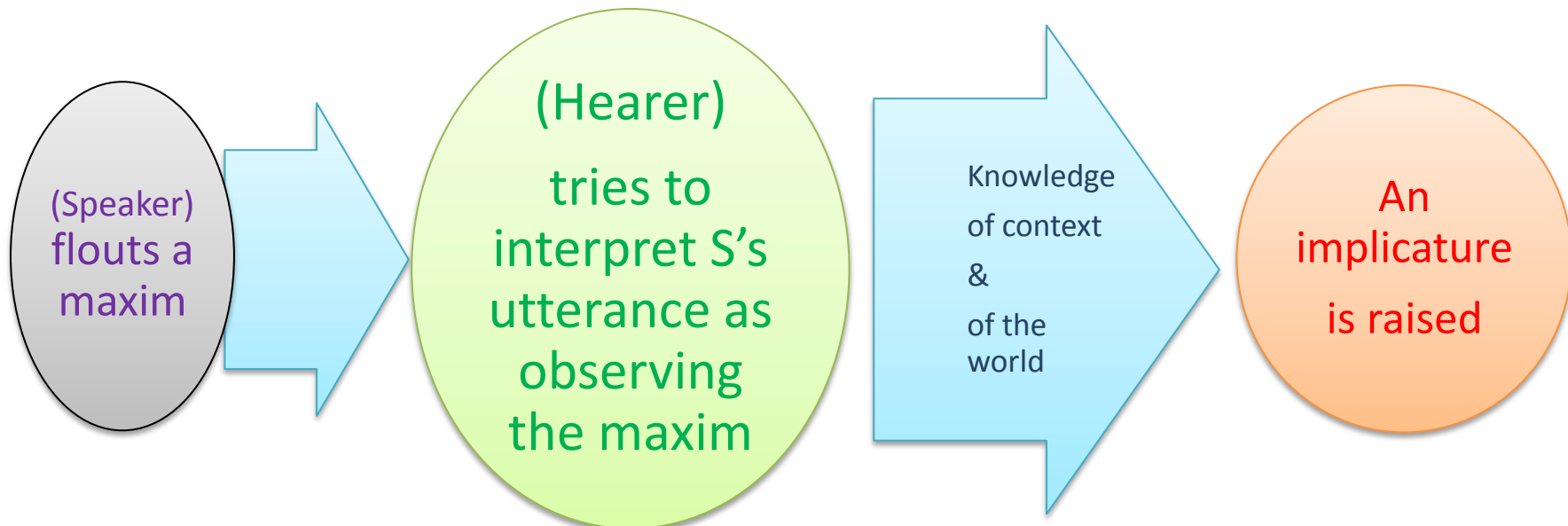
Calculating Implicatures

A: I'm out of coffee.

B: There's a shop around the corner.



Maxim flouted:
Relation



Husband: Honey, what's for dinner tonight?

Wife: My sister broke her leg.

Wife
flouted
maxim
of
Relation

Husband
tries to
interpret
wife's
utterance
as
observing
the
maxim

Knowledge of context:

- Wife is very close to sister;
- Sister is dependent on wife,

Knowledge of the world:

- People need to go to hospital when they break their legs;
- It takes a long time to get medical care of a broken leg;
- Making dinner requires time and to be at home,
- Having a meal ready needs prior planning

An
implicature
is raised

- Wife had to go to hospital with sister
- She had to spend a good part of the day there
- She was not able to make dinner
- **There is no dinner tonight**

Assignment

Provide your own real-life example where one of the maxims is not observed and explain using the same diagram.

