

## How Conversation Cooperates.

Communication has never been about just the spoken or written word; more often than not, what people say is quite clearly not what they mean. As such, meaning, communication and context are all very broad and often difficult concepts to encapsulate. The core components of Gricean pragmatics attempt to capture and quantify the meaning behind the communication. One of the main components of Grice's theory of pragmatics and conversational coherence is the cooperative principle.

The cooperative principle is the general principle "underlying the efficient co-operative use of language ... expressed as follows: ... make your 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" (Levinson, 1992, p. 101). These principles are encapsulated in the following four maxims:

- 1) The maxim of Quality: try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:
  - i. do not say what you believe to be false
  - ii. do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence
- 2) The maxim of Quantity:
  - i. make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange
  - ii. do not make your contribution more informative than is required
- 3) The maxim of Relevance: make your contributions relevant
- 4) The maxim of Manner: be perspicuous, and specifically:
  - i. avoid obscurity
  - ii. avoid ambiguity
  - iii. be brief
  - iv. be orderly

(Levinson, 1992, pp. 101-102)

Grice further "suggests that the maxims are in fact not arbitrary conventions, but rather describe rational means for conducting co-operative exchanges" (Levinson, 1992, p. 103).

Grice's Cooperative Principle states "[m]ake 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" (Grice, 1989, p. 26). Grice's maxims are linked to the Cooperative Principle when participants in a talk exchange *follow*, *violate*, *opt out*, *clash*, or *flout* those maxims. In the cases where the maxim is not *followed*, Grice states that the maxims of conversation are adhered to through use of conversational implicature (p. 30). Put simply, a conversational implicature is when a participant in a talk exchange says something but means something else. For a particular conversational implicature to hold, it must be intuitive, that is, it should be understood by the participants involved, and be clear enough to work out.

However, implicatures are not restricted only to the content of the utterance. For example, a wink when uttering a sentence gives the implicature that what is uttered is not to be taken seriously. Similarly, stress on a particular word in an utterance can easily change (or even negate) the intended meaning of a sentence. Stress, intonation, pauses, facial expressions, body movements, and many other factors outside of the actual content of an utterance can contribute to the implied meanings of a sentence. These factors are also wholly reliant on the medium of the talk exchange.

As a hypothesis, Grice's premise should show that regardless of the medium of communication, the maxims of the cooperative principle should hold. In a more focused sense, it should be shown that when comparing online discourse with spoken discourse using Grice's cooperative principles, with particular focus to implicatures of conversation, there are no fundamental differences between the two modes of communication. Focus is placed on implicature, as it is a core requirement in understanding "what is meant" over "what is said"; Grice's maxims show failure in communication mainly through the ability of a hearer to understand or not understand the underlying meaning of a discourse through the relevance of an utterance.