WHAT IS SAID, WHAT IS IMPLICITED, WHAT IS IMPLICATED

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1.1. Before embarking on our analysis of Grice's concept of Conversational Implicature and, above all, of the problems with this theory, we will describe the three types of source of knowledge that provide a contextual background for understanding utterances.

There are three main sources for the knowledge a speaker has to estimate, i.e. '*knowledge as context*' (a speaker chooses how to make references to an entity making estimations of what his/her listeners knows).

The three main sources are:
• the physical context;
• what has already been said;
• background or common knowledge.

The first source refers to deictic expressions.

The second source refers to discourse topic:

   (1) A. Who gave the party?
       B. Helen did.

It is clear that the participants would have no difficulty interpreting *Helen did,* since the preceding discourse licenses this interpretation.

The third source of knowledge includes common-sense, encyclopaedic cultural knowledge, that a hearer might work out by virtue of membership in a community resorting to certain types of knowledge which are shared with other members of the community:

   (2) A. Let's go on a picnic.
      B. It's my mum's birthday.

Participant A might reasonably infer that participant B's reply is a refusal.

1.2. At this point, two conclusions are important: firstly, implication and reference rely on cultural knowledge; secondly, since the speaker A makes guesses about the knowledge of his/her listener, there is no certainty:

   (3) A. Let's go on a picnic.
      B. It's my mum's birthday.
      A. Oh, all right, then!

We could take the mutually known proposition to be something like that: Mum's birthday prohibits spending the day elsewhere. So speaker B knows this and relies for his implication on the speaker A knowing it. Since speaker A seems to understand the refusal correctly, then he did know the proposition .

It seems clear that the participants' access to background knowledge involves guesswork rather than certain knowledge and involves quick calculations. Speaker B's reply might be true or just a way of escaping speaker A's invitation.

The participants seem to make inferences to preserve the coherence in what they are told. Speakers use less explicit utterances than they might simply because they are sure that the hearers will make inferences.

There seems to be enough regularity in the inference-forming behaviour of hearers for speakers to exploit this by implying something, rather than stating it.

Grice argued that this type of predictability of inference formation can be explained by introducing the 'Cooperative Principle', as a sort of agreement underlying communication.

2.1. In order to distinguish literal utterances from non-literal utterances, Grice (1967) uses the terms ' *implicate*' and ' *implicature*', thus establishing two aspects of utterance meaning : *'what is said'* and *'what is implicated'*.

Grice identifies six criteria defining conversational implicature (Grice 1989: 39-40):
o Conversational implicature is calculable; i.e. the participants will calculate it relying on the linguistically coded context, on the cooperative principle, on the maxims, on both the linguistic and non-linguistic context, on the cultural/ background knowledge;
o Conversational implicature is non-detachable from the utterance by a replacement of the words used with synonymous expressions;
o Conversational implicature is cancellable, i.e. it can be annulled by certain contexts;
o Conversational implicature is not carried by what is said but by the saying of it;
o Conversational implicature can be indeterminate;
o Conversational implicature is non-conventional. (Sadock 1991: 367)

2.2. While implicature covers different ways for 'what it says' (conventional and non-conventional implicature, conversational - generalized and particularized - and non-conversational implicature), Grice never clearly defines what 'implicature' means. He just gives examples and defines only one kind of implicature: namely, conversational implicature:

' A man who by saying (or making as if to say) that p has implicated that q may be said to have conversationally implicated that q, provided that 1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational *maxims*, or at least the Cooperative Principle; (2) the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that q is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say p consistent with the presumption; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in 2) is required.' (Grice 1989: 30)

Moreover, according to the way Grice defined the Cooperative 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* (Grice 1989: 26*)* - this is a sort of presumption that the hearers make in order to give coherence and meaning to what they are told.

M. Sbisa (2003: 233) shows that, since the speaker is 'to be presumed' to observe the conversational maxims, *the requirement is actually on the receiver, which should have good reasons for presuming of the speaker that he or she is observing the conversational maxims.*

2.3. It is essential to emphasize that the conversational principles are not rules, they are moral principles that can be broken.

Grice (1978) groups the maxims into four categories:

The Maxim of Quality

Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

The Maxim of Quantity

Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.

The Maxim of Relevance

Be relevant.

The Maxim of Manner

Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity.

Be brief.

Be orderly.

One can assume that the speaker is willing to make calculations along the above mentioned principles. According to Grice, implicature seems to be the result of the context.

Let us take two examples:

(3)

A: Can I borrow your car?

B. It is in the garage.

The implicature is: yes, you may have it.

(3')

A. Can I borrow your car?

B. It is in the garage. Don't you ever think to take it. Not again, after the bad accident you had last week.

The implicature in (3), in this case, is cancelled.

3.1. Grice himself is not sure whether '*it is possible in terms of some or all of these features to devise tests to settle the question whether a conversational implicature is present.*' (Grice, 1989: 42)

The definition for this type of implicature suggests that the speaker is implicating something. It is simple to conclude that implicatures are for Grice 'non-truth functional inferences; *sentences that may be derived from the fact that a certain sentence has been uttered, without their truth value affecting the truth value of that sentence or depending on it.* (Sbisa, 2003: 236)

Further studies (Sadock 1991) show that of the six criteria proposed by Grice (see section 2.1.), only cancellability can be seen as a vital criterion.

Since this criterion cannot be regarded as a sufficient and necessary condition of a conversational implicature, Bach (1994) introduced a triple distinction between '*what is said*', '*implicature*', and '*impliciture*'.

The following example shows the distinction proposed by Grice between '*what is said*' and '*what is implicated*':

   (4) A. How is Mary doing as a housemaid?

      B. She hasn't run away with the silverware yet.

What speaker B communicates is not only what she says but also what she implies.

Let's take another example:

(5)

a.   I have cleaned the house.

b.   I have cleaned the house this afternoon.

What a) says is implicitly implicit and what b) says is explicitly explicit. Our intuitions (or what we called *'common / background knowledge'*) seem to distinguish between what is explicit and what is implicit in utterance meaning.

Examples like (5a) and (5b) made Bach (1994) think of a third concept- *impliciture.*

In 'Conversational Impliciture', Bach defined impliciture as follows:

An implicatum is completely separated from what is said and is inferred from it (more precisely, from the saying of it). What is said is one proposition and what is communicated in addition to that is a conceptually independent proposition, a proposition with perhaps no constituent in common with what is said. While implicatures are built up from the explicit content of the utterance by conceptual strengthening. Implicatures are, as the name suggests, implicit in what is said, whereas implicatures are implied by (the saying of) what is said. (Bach, 1994: 40)

According to Bach, implicitures, unlike implicatures, do not depend on the content said, therefore they are detachable. If we change the way of uttering 'what is said', the implicature in the first example will cease to exist in the second version.

Let us take the following examples:

(6)

    c. I haven't cleaned the house.

    d. I haven't cleaned the house before.

    e. Sue hasn't cleaned the house.

In what is said in c) the speaker hasn't cleaned the house before the time of utterance; the impliciture is that the speaker hasn't cleaned the house that day.

In d) the impliciture 'that day' ceases to exist. Therefore, implicitures, like implicatures, exploit the Maxim of Manner *(Avoid obscurity of expression; (avoid ambiguity; be brief; be orderly)*, but unlike implicatures, are detachable.

In e., the pragmatically determined element of 'what is said', the personal pronoun *I* does not disappear when uttered by a third person. Therefore, 'what is said' is non-detachable.

By accepting this statement, we emphasize the importance of intuitions regarding both implicatures and the distinction between the explicit and the implicit.

At this moment we agree with Kepa-Korta's (1997: 17) conclusion: while 'what is said' and 'implicatures' are non-detachable', implicitures are detachable.

In fact, implicitures, just like implicatures, by exploring the Maxim of Manner, are detachable.

Let us analyse the following examples:

    f. He has several cards.

  Here, the term 'cards' is ambiguous; it can mean either:

    g. He has several playing cards

      or

    h. He has several business cards

      or

    i. He has several credit cards.

If cancellability is one of the characteristics of conversational implicatures, but not a good one for the no the testing their presence, implicitures are explicitly cancellable. The test is adding 'but not' to the utterance:

c.He has several cards, but I do not mean by 'cards' playing cards' or business cards', but' credit cards'.

The conclusion is obvious; in the case of the pragmatic determination of the meaning of ambiguous words, the result can be substituted by another meaning. This is valid in the case of both implicitures and implicatures.

We propose a new term for 'cancellability - that of 'substitution'. In this way, whereas 'what is said' cannot be 'substituted,' both implicitures and implicatures can.

It is logical that we cannot cancel something that we have said, while we can substitute something that is implied or implicit.

4. Conclusion

After revising Grice's concept of Conversational Implicature and Bach's concept of Impliciture, we can say that if there is a distinct difference between 'what is said' on the one hand, and 'implicature' and 'impliciture' on the other hand, we cannot distinguish between 'implicatures' and 'implicitures beyond our intuitive characterisation, since both of them are 'detachable' and 'cancellable' (or can be substituted).

In order to understand 'what is said' we need only pragmatic determination; in order to understand what is implied or what is implicit we need something else too: intuitions within discourse topic and common/background knowledge.

References

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