

## PH130 Meaning & Communication Lecture 06

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### What does 'and' mean?

An utterance of a sentence of the form "A and<sub>1</sub> B" is true if both A, B are true.

An utterance of a sentence of the form "A and<sub>2</sub> B" is true if (i) both A, B are true and (ii) the event described in A occurred before the event described in B.

An utterance of a sentence of the form "A and<sub>3</sub> B" is true if (i) both A, B are true and (ii) B because A.

### Indexicals

An indexical word is one whose reference varies with fixed features of the context of utterance according to a rule.

'I' refers to the utterer of a sentence

'now' refers to the time of utterance

### Objections to the Two Hypotheses

"I visited a house" / "I broke a finger"

"Dogs must be carried." / "Shoes must be worn."

"I've had breakfast"

"I've had a cold"

"I've had chickenpox"

"I've had a great evening. This wasn't it." (Groucho)

### Utterances are actions

Utterances are actions which are goal directed, intentional, done for reasons, co-ordinated and co-operative.

### How is having a conversation like carrying a boat together?

Grice's *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." (26)

The four *Maxims* (Quality, Quantity, Relation and Manner) fill out this Cooperative Principle.

### Do Grice's Cooperative Principle and Maxims accurately capture the sense in which conversation is cooperative?

(a) *whether the maxims are necessary for cooperation*—is every violation of a maxim a failure to cooperate?

(b), *whether the maxims are sufficient for cooperation*—do failures to be conversationally co-operative involve violating at least one Maxims?

### How does co-operative principle apply to conversation?

Grice did not claim that people are, as a matter of fact, cooperative in conversation. He writes: "observance of the Cooperative Principle and maxims is reasonable (rational) along the following lines: that anyone who cares about the goals that are central to conversation/communication (such as giving and receiving information, influencing and being influenced by others) must be expected to have an interest, given suitable circumstances, in participation in talk exchanges that will be profitable only on the assumption that they are conducted in general accordance with the Cooperative Principle and the maxims." (30)

## Conversational implicature

A three-fold distinction:

- i. **MS**, the meaning of the sentence
- ii. **PE**, the proposition expressed by an utterance of the sentence (Grice calls this ‘what is said’)
- iii. **PM**, the proposition meant by the utterer (Grice calls this ‘what is implicated’)<sup>1</sup>

“to calculate a conversational implicature is to calculate what has to be supposed in order to preserve the supposition that the //p. 40// Cooperative Principle is being observed” (39–40)

“A man who, by (in, when) 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; //p. 31// (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 (or doing so in those terms) consistent with this 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.” (30–1)

Hypothesis 1 & 2 should be restricted to knowledge of PE, propositions an utterance expresses; Grice’s account of conversational implicature explains how knowledge of PM, propositions meant, can be derived from knowledge of PE together with an understanding the cooperative nature of communication and an ability to recognise intention.

Is this right?

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<sup>1</sup> This is Stephen Neale’s (1992) terminology. Saul (2002) would object on the grounds that a speaker may mean but fail to implicate something (or perhaps even accidentally implicate something). I disagree with Saul to this extent: the theoretically central cases are those in which utterer intends to implicate something and is successful. Since our interest here is in explaining how communication is possible, how we legislate unsuccessful cases seems unimportant.