

THE INTUITIVE BASIS OF IMPLICATURE: RELEVANCE THEORETIC *IMPLICITNESS* VERSUS GRICEAN *IMPLYING*¹

Michael Haugh

Abstract

The notion of implicature was first introduced by Grice (1967, 1989), who defined it essentially as what is communicated less what is said. This definition contributed in part to the proliferation of a large number of different species of implicature by neo-Griceans. Relevance theorists have responded to this by proposing a shift back to the distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* meaning (corresponding to explicature and implicature respectively). However, they appear to have pared down the concept of implicature too much, ignoring phenomena which may be better treated as implicatures in their over-generalisation of the concept of explicature. These problems have their roots in the fact that *explicit* and *implicit* meaning intuitively overlap, and thus do not provide a suitable basis for distinguishing implicature from other types of pragmatic phenomena. An alternative conceptualisation of implicature based on the concept of *implying* with which Grice originally associated his notion of implicature is thus proposed. From this definition it emerges that implicature constitutes something else inferred by the addressee that is not literally said by the speaker. Instead, it is meant in addition to what the literally speaker says, and consequently, it is defeasible like all other types of pragmatic phenomena.

Keywords: Implicature, Grice, Relevance theory.

1. Introduction

The concept of implicature is a theoretical construct which was first introduced by Grice in the William James Lectures more than thirty years ago (Grice 1967, 1989). Grice used the concept to deal with examples in communication where what a speaker means goes beyond the meaning literally expressed by a particular utterance.

For example, if I happen to be with a friend who is eating an icecream and I ask something like, "What flavour is it?", my friend might respond by offering me a bite of her icecream. By offering some of her icecream to me, my friend has shown that she thinks I was *implying* that I would like to taste it. I didn't actually say I wanted to taste the icecream, and thus I could deny that I *implied* this, either quite directly as in "Oh, I didn't mean I wanted to have a bite", or more indirectly as in "Oh, I'm not hungry at the moment". However, unless I make some kind of denial, then the fact that I wanted to taste my friend's

¹ I would like to thank my supervisor Yasuko Obana, the reviewers at *Pragmatics*, and Robyn Carston for all the very helpful comments they have made about the ideas presented in this paper.

icecream has been *implied*. In lay terms, I have communicated the *implication* that I would like to try some of my friend's icecream. This kind of *implication* was termed an implicature by Grice. The term implicature was first coined by Grice to distinguish it from the notion of implication as used in logic and semantics.

However, while Grice is credited with introducing the concept of implicature, it has been pointed out that Grice did not actually define what an implicature in general is (Gauker 2001: 165; Saul 2002: 239). Implicature was defined negatively as what is communicated less 'what is said' (Noro 1979: 76; Sadock 1978: 282).² In other words, implicature was characterised simply as whatever is communicated that is not part of what is said by a speaker. The only positive characterisation of implicature by Grice was his indication that it is related to the terms *imply*, *suggest* and *mean* (Saul 2002: quoting Grice 1989: 24).³ Most neo-Griceans have essentially retained this definition of implicature in subsequent developments of Gricean theory, so implicature has continued to be defined as what is communicated less what is said.

The problem for the Gricean (and neo-Gricean) definition of implicature is that it encompasses far too large and diverse a range of phenomena. If something is not said, then it constitutes pragmatic input into what is communicated. This means that implicature is ultimately equated with pragmatic input in Gricean and neo-Gricean implicature theory (Carston 1998a: 477). But clearly not all pragmatic phenomena can be considered implicatures. While indexicality and lexical ambiguity, for example, require some pragmatic input (that is, some kind of inference), no one would claim that the results of indexical resolution or disambiguation constitute implicatures.⁴ On the other hand, the relationship of other kinds of pragmatic phenomena identified by Griceans and neo-Griceans, such as 'conventional implicature' (Grice 1989: 41, 46), 'generalised (conversational) implicature' (Grice 1989: 37; Levinson 2000) 'short-circuited implicatures' (Horn and Bayer 1984; Morgan 1978), 'politeness implicature' (Leech 1983: 170-171) and so on to the notion of implicature is much less clear. There is still considerable debate as to whether many of these phenomena should be considered implicatures or not, and where the line should be drawn between implicature and other types of pragmatic phenomena.

The fact that Grice only defined implicature as something that is not part of 'what is said', lies at the heart of controversy in implicature theory today as to scope of phenomena that should be encompassed by the notion of implicature. The various types of pragmatic phenomena that have been posited as examples of implicature by theorists thus need to be examined more closely. First, to consider whether examples which have been treated as implicatures can really be considered to be implicatures. Second, to investigate the relationship of these possible examples of implicature with other examples of

² 'What is said' was defined by Grice as the meaning of an utterance after semantic decoding, reference resolution, indexical fixing and disambiguation; or roughly the truth-conditional content of an utterance (Levinson 2000: 170-171).

³ Grice (1989: 26, 39-40) did propose characteristics of 'conversational implicature', but how these relate to the general notion of implicature was never made clear.

⁴ Indexical resolution involves making inferences about who or what indexicals (such as 'I', 'she' or 'that') refer to, while disambiguation involves making inferences about which sense a word/sentence with multiple senses refers to (e.g. 'bank' which can refer to a financial institution or to the side of a river etc.).

implicature. The first step in realising these aims is to postulate a more fully developed notion of implicature.

In the first half of this paper, I argue that there are problems with the relevance theoretic definition of implicature, which is one of the main alternatives to the Gricean and neo-Gricean notion of implicature to have emerged. I then propose in the latter half of the paper that implicature be characterised more fully in terms of the notion of *implying*, from which the concept originally arose. In the next section, the relevance theoretic view of implicature, which can be characterised as essentially a reductive approach to implicature, is outlined in contrast to the Gricean and neo-Gricean position. Problems arising from the fact that the relevance theoretic notions of explicature and implicature are based on the distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* meaning are then discussed. In the final section, it is suggested that in order to successfully characterise implicature and bring more clarity to this issue, we need to return to the concept of *implying*, which Grice himself seemed to associate with his notion of implicature. A preliminary definition of implicature based on the key characteristics of *implying* is thus proposed.

2. The relevance theoretic approach to implicature

Since the notion of implicature was first introduced, there have been a large number of proposals made in relation to implicature theory. In this section I discuss the relevance theoretic approach to implicature, in particular focusing on the manner in which it has reduced the scope of pragmatic phenomena encompassed by the notion of implicature.

The relevance theoretic approach to implicature was developed by Sperber and Wilson (1995) as part of a broader attempt to shift pragmatics into a cognitive framework. In relation to implicature, relevance theory can be characterised as essentially a reductionist theoretical approach for two reasons. Firstly, it reduces all pragmatic principles that have been proposed to underlie the generation of implicature by Griceans and neo-Griceans into a single 'Principle of Relevance'.⁵ Secondly, it reduces all the different species of meaning in the Gricean/neo-Gricean framework (such as what is said, conventional implicature, short-circuited implicature, generalised conversational implicature, particularised conversational implicature and so on) into just two broad categories: Explicature and implicature. While the first aspect of aspect of reductionism in the relevance theoretic approach to implicature has received some comment in the literature (e.g. Davis 1998; Levinson 1989), the latter has received less attention. In this section I outline how relevance theorists have subsumed all the different pragmatic phenomena discussed by Griceans and neo-Griceans into the two relevance theoretic categories of explicature and implicature.

Sperber and Wilson (1995: 182) introduced the notion of explicature, which was to complement the Gricean notion of implicature, in an attempt to show that pragmatic inferences contribute not only to what is implied, but also to what is explicitly communicated. They defined an explicature as an 'explicit' assumption communicated by

⁵ The Principle of Relevance, or more specifically the Communicative Principle of Relevance, states that "every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance" (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 260), where relevance is defined as a balance between (positive) cognitive effects and processing effort (pp.265-266).

an utterance, which is a development of a logical form encoded by the utterance (*ibid*: 182). Carston, who has done much of the work in relevance theory on explicit and implicit meaning (1988, 1995, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2001, 2002), has expanded upon this definition of explicature in the following manner:

"...a propositional form communicated by an utterance which is pragmatically constructed on the basis of the propositional schema or template (logical form) that the utterance encodes; its content is an amalgam of linguistically decoded material and pragmatically inferred material..." (Carston 2000: 10).

Pragmatic processes involved in deriving explicatures include disambiguation, saturation (including reference assignment), free enrichment (including unarticulated constituents), and 'ad hoc concept construction' (Carston 2000). Relevance theorists have thus done much to show that a variety of different pragmatic processes are involved in developing what is encoded by an utterance into the propositions that are actually communicated.

An implicature, on the other hand, is defined as "any other propositional form communicated by an utterance; its content consists of wholly pragmatically inferred matter" (Carston 2000: 10).⁶ This definition of implicature follows from Sperber and Wilson's original assumption that any assumption communicated which is not explicit must be implicit, and thus must be an implicature (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 182). In other words, implicatures in relevance theory are primarily defined in terms of their relationship to another concept. In relevance theory, an implicature is essentially any communicated assumption that is not an explicature. Relevance theorists do note, however, that the conceptual content of implicatures must be wholly inferred (Carston 2000, 2001; Sperber and Wilson 2002), and to be inferred they must be intended by the speaker, and be understood by the hearer as intended (Sperber and Wilson 2002; Papafragou 2002).⁷

Implicature in the relevance theoretic framework is a much more restricted concept than in Gricean and neo-Gricean approaches, as it primarily encompasses only 'particularised conversational implicatures'.⁸ Relevance theorists have argued that phenomena which are termed 'conventional implicatures' (Blakemore 1987, 2000; Iten 2000a, 2000b; Wilson and Sperber 1993), 'short-circuited implicatures' (Groefsema 1992; Papafragou 2000; Yus 1999), and metaphor/metonymy (Carston 1996, 2000; Ruiz de Mendoza 1998, 1999; Ruiz de Mendoza and Perez Hernandez 2001) all contribute to the

⁶ Yus (1999), another relevance theorist, also defines implicature in a similar way: "...propositions which are not developments of the logical form, but rather are constructed according to a combination of contextual information and the proposition expressed by the utterance. They are totally context-dependent and not straightforwardly deducible from the utterance..." (p. 494).

⁷ The second characteristic is somewhat controversial, as it has been argued that implicatures are drawn from inferences about the situation as a whole, rather than from inferences about the intentions of speakers (Gaukier 2001: 164; Marmaridou 2000: 271).

⁸ Some figures of speech, such as conventionalized metaphors, however, are treated as explicatures, in contrast to the Gricean approach in which they are treated as particularised conversational implicatures.

explicatures of utterances, and are thus not actually examples of implicature.⁹ Although it is not entirely clear, it also appears that some examples of 'generalised conversational implicatures' are treated as explicatures, while others are treated as implicatures by relevance theorists (Carston 1988, 1995, 1998b, 2001; Sperber and Wilson 2002; Wilson and Sperber 1998). In example (1) the portion in square brackets is considered to be an explicature by relevance theorists, but a generalised conversational implicature by neo-Griceans.

(1) Bill drank a bottle of vodka and [as a result] fell into a stupor (Carston 2001: 21).

However, the status of the inferred element in brackets in example (2) is not so clear. Carston (2001: 22) seems tempted to call it an example of an explicature, but Sperber and Wilson (2002: 4), on the other hand, seem to characterise it as an implicature.

(2) Some [but not all] of the children were sick (Carston 2001: 22).

Overall, a picture of the relevance theoretic view of implicature in comparison to the neo-Gricean view emerges as illustrated in Figure 1.

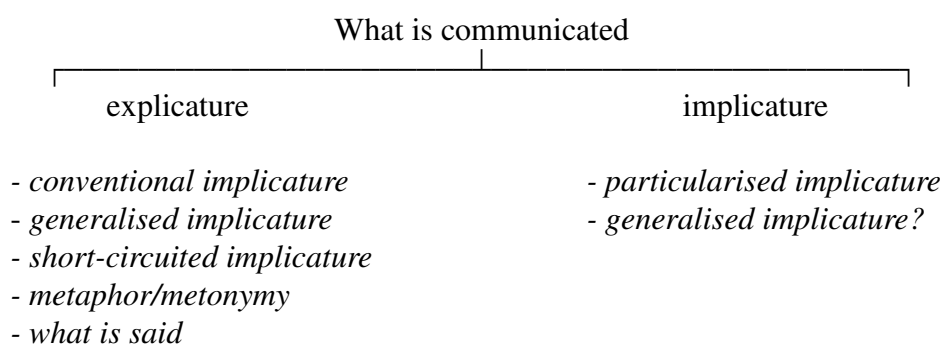


Figure 1: The relevance theoretic explicature/implicature distinction

It has been claimed there is psycholinguistic evidence to support the relevance theoretic treatment of most neo-Gricean implicatures listed in Figure One as part of what is said (that is, explicatures), rather than as part of what is implied (that is, implicatures). Gibbs and Moise (1997) and Hamblin (1999) tested a number of different generalised conversational implicatures, and found that they were considered to be part of what is said, rather than implicatures by ordinary speakers. Gibbs (1999a, 1999b, 2000) has argued that these results support the relevance theoretic distinction between explicature and implicature, or at least something akin to it.

⁹ Relevance theorists initially treated metaphor and metonymy as implicatures (for example, see Blakemore 1992: 163), but recently seem to be moving towards a view where they are treated as explicatures (for example, Carston 2000: 31-33).

However, while these kinds of intuitions provide a valuable starting point, one must be careful in analysing which intuitions are actually being tapped into in these kinds of experiments. Bach (2001a: 26, 2001b: 23) and Levinson (2000: 197) both argue that what ordinary speakers consider to be 'what is said' depends on how one elicits the response. What is said is commonly interpreted in two ways (Wilson and Sperber 2000: 253): In an indirect-quotational sense and in a commitment sense (what the speaker is committing herself to in producing the utterance). Ordinary speakers vacillate between these two senses in describing what is said, creating problems for empirical studies such as those conducted by Gibbs and Moise (1997) and Hamblin (1999). Bach (2001b) argues that ultimately Gibbs and Moise's (1997) results show:

"...how people apply the phrase "what is said" and perhaps of what they mean by the word "say". It tells us little about what is said, much less about the cognitive processes whereby people understand utterances..." (p.23)

Moreover, other experiments demonstrate that ordinary speakers may perceive unequivocal examples of implicature to be a part of what the speaker has said in some cases (Ariel 2002b; Bezuidenhout and Cuttings 2002; Nicolle and Clark 1999). These results indicate that intuitions about what is said may actually overlap with what is implicated.¹⁰

Thus upon closer examination, Gibbs and Moise's (1997) and Hamblin's (1999) experiments do not provide any support in favour of the move in relevance theory to treat phenomena such as generalised conversational implicatures as explicatures. As Noveck (2001: 183) concludes from the results of studies investigating the understanding of generalised conversational implicatures by young children, there is still as yet no psycholinguistic evidence either way to resolve these issues.¹¹

Furthermore, while relevance theorists have demonstrated that more pragmatic processes are involved in communication than was previously assumed, in their rush to reduce all the different types of pragmatic phenomena into the two relevance theoretic categories of explicature and implicature, important characteristics of various pragmatic phenomena have been neglected. For example, Groefsema (1992) claims that the request arising from *Can you pass the salt?* is an explicature rather than a short-circuited implicature. But this argument is weakened by the fact that there is no mention at all of the potential politeness effects associated with *Can you...?* as a request. It is hard to see how one would explain politeness effects in account where an utterance like *Can you pass the salt?* is treated in the same manner as an utterance like *Can you swim?* (the latter is almost never associated with politeness, while the former often is). In other words, there is no explanation of why only the former give rise to politeness effects in many contexts, if both types of interpretation of *can* arise in the same manner to generate explicatures. One important feature of these sorts of examples is that they give rise to politeness effects, something which is missed in the current relevance theoretic treatment of this phenomenon.

¹⁰ This poses problems for Hawley's (2002) recent attempt to define implicature in relation to a more fully developed notion of what is said.

¹¹ This is not to say that the intuitions of ordinary speakers are not useful, but the point here is that one must be careful to analyse which intuitions one is dealing with.

A further problem with the relevance theoretic account of examples like *Can you pass the salt?* is that it does not explain why one can still 'hear' in a peripheral kind of way the 'ability reading' of *can*. Groefsema claims that the 'ability' reading of *can* is not accessed in examples like *Can you pass the salt?*, because only the 'request' reading contributes to the relevance of that utterance. However, this does not match with my intuition that there still remains the 'ability' reading of *can* in *Can you pass the salt?*, although this meaning is somewhat backgrounded or peripheral. Relevance theoretic accounts of these sorts of examples offer no answers to these issues.

Relevance theorists have put various pragmatic phenomena which neo-Griceans have identified as generalised conversational implicatures, short-circuited implicatures, conventional implicatures and so on, all into the same category as what is literally said, namely the category of explicature. This is problematic in some cases, because a number of the phenomena identified as implicatures by neo-Griceans have characteristics which distinguish them from what is literally said (in particular defeasibility and being meant in addition to what is literally said), but these characteristics are not recognized in a relevance theoretic analysis. Whether all these phenomena should be treated as implicatures, or should be called something else, is a terminological issue which has not yet been resolved. Careful analysis of the different phenomena is required to ascertain the manner in which they should be approached to resolve these terminological debates. But lumping them altogether into a single category seems to be a premature move given the current state of empirical evidence about these phenomena. In some cases it leads to researchers to miss important distinctions that need to be made between different types of pragmatic phenomena.

The issue of whether the relevance theoretic distinction between explicature is overly reductive is not the only one facing relevance theorists. A second very fundamental issue is how to consistently distinguish between these two categories. In the next section, some problems for the current relevance theoretic conceptualisation of implicature (and explicature) are discussed.

3. Implicature and the *implicit/explicit* distinction

The relevance theoretic notion of implicature is based on the distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* meaning, and this led to the coining of the term 'explicature' to complement implicature (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 182), as mentioned in the previous section. In relevance theory then, one important issue that remains to be resolved, is how to distinguish between implicatures and explicatures (Breheny 2002; Carston 1988, 1998a, 2001; Kandolf 1993; Recanati 1989, 1993; Wilson and Sperber 2000). The problem facing relevance theorists trying to do this, however, is how to consistently define implicature and explicature, when the concepts on which they are based, *explicit* and *implicit* meaning, actually appear to overlap. More specifically, the point where less explicit *explicit* meaning ends, and less implicit *implicit* meaning begins is not really clear-cut, which makes consistently differentiating explicatures and implicatures using our intuitions difficult.

The problem with the allegedly exhaustive explicature/implicature distinction is reflected in the difficulties it faces in analysing examples commonly found in Japanese

where utterances 'trail off'.¹² In example (3), B's response to A's question about whether he will go to the party implies that he will not go (the symbol +> means "implicates").¹³

- (3) A: *Paatii ni iki-masu ka?*
party to go-Pol Q
(Are you going to the party?)
B: *Chotto yooji ga ari-masu.*
a little business Nom have-Pol
(I have a little something to do)
+> *Iki-ma-sen*
go-Pol-Neg
(I won't go)

In relevance theory the proposition *ikimassen* ('I won't go') is considered to be an implicature, as one might expect. However, in example (4) where the linguistic unit *kara* ('so', 'therefore') is added to B's utterance, the status of *ikimassen* ('I won't go') is much less clear. According to Sperber and Wilson's (1995: 182) definition of implicature and explicature, it should probably now be considered to be an explicature, because it has become part of a 'logical development' of B's utterance (as a consequence of the grammatical unit *kara* ('so') being added).

- (4) A: *Paatii ni iki-masu ka?*
party to go-Pol Q
(Are you going to the party?)
B: *Chotto yooji ga ari-masu kara...[iki-mas-en]*
a little business Nom have-Pol so [go-Pol-Neg]
(I have a little something to do so...[I won't go])

According to Sperber and Wilson's (1995: 182) definition of implicature and explicature then, in example (3) *ikimassen* ('I won't go') is an implicature, but in example (4) it may be a part of the explicature of the utterance. This seems to be somewhat odd. Our intuitions about whether *ikimassen* ('I won't go') in example (4) is *explicitly* or *implicitly* communicated do nothing to resolve this matter either. *Ikimassen* ('I won't go') in example (4) may be considered both less *explicitly* meant, or less *implicitly* meant than *ikimassen* in example (3). Our intuitions cannot help us here, because *explicit* and *implicit* meaning intuitively overlap. Implicature (and explicature) as defined by Sperber and Wilson cannot seem to deal with this kind of case.

Carston (2001) has recently suggested an interpretation of relevance theoretic implicature which avoids this counter-intuitive analysis. She argues that in relevance theory:

¹² See (Haugh, in progress) for numerous other examples of this kind of phenomena in Japanese.

¹³ The symbols in the morphological glosses of Japanese examples (3) and (4) refer to the following: Pol = polite form; Q = question marker; Nom = nominative; Neg = negative form. For further details refer to Obana (2000: 27-28).

"...the point is that decoded linguistic meaning does not contribute conceptual constituents to the content of implicatures, not that it never plays a role in shaping that content. According to the relevance-theoretic view, there are linguistic expressions, including so-called discourse connectives such as *but*, *so*, *after all* that encode procedural meaning which constrains the derivation of implicated premises and conclusions..." (footnote 3, p.31)

In other words, because *kara* ('so') encodes procedural meaning and does not contribute conceptual content to the communicated assumption, but rather constrains the derivation of the implicature, *ikimassen* ('I won't go') can be considered an implicature in both examples (3) and (4). This is a more reasonable analysis and illustrates that the relevance theoretic definition of implicature needs to more explicitly describe the influence of their distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning on the scope of implicature.

However, it also shows that the distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* meaning is not sufficient to consistently distinguish between explicatures and implicatures. This in turn calls into question the relevance theoretic distinction between explicature and implicature itself, because after all, it was originally formulated with the distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* meaning in mind (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 182). If *explicit* and *implicit* meaning cannot be clearly distinguished, then what is the basis for assuming the explicature/implicature distinction?

The relevance theoretic division between implicature and explicature as currently formulated is not able to adequately deal with examples where speakers 'trail off' their sentences, which is a common phenomenon in Japanese conversation. It is unable to cope with such examples because it relies on the assumption that *explicit* and *implicit* meaning can always be distinguished. Examples of trailing off utterances in Japanese, such as example (4) above, indicate that this division is not exhaustive, but in reality overlaps. The fact of the matter is that it is not possible to determine whether the meaning of *ikimassen* (I won't go) communicated in example (4) is an example of less explicit *explicit* meaning or less implicit *implicit* meaning according to our intuitions. Other criteria are required to determine whether it really is a valid example of implicature or not.

From this discussion it has become clear that the Availability Principle (intuitions about whether a meaning is an implicature or is part of what is said are available to all speakers, and we should rely on these intuitions in deciding whether something is an implicature or not) proposed by Recanati's (1989, 1993, 2002), is not rigorous enough if it is based on our intuitions about *implicit* versus *explicit* meaning.¹⁴ Other criteria, such as Carston's (1988) Functional Independence Principle (implicatures must be logically independent of the explicature expressed by an utterance; that is, an implicature must not entail, or be entailed by the explicature), or the Scope Principle (implicatures must not fall within the scope of logical operators such as negation and conditionals) (Breheny 2002: 176; Recanati 1989, 1993: 271; Wilson and Sperber 2000), are not sufficient to distinguish between implicatures and explicatures either. The former is problematic because it relies on the assumption that implicatures are never logically related to what is said, when in reality, some implicatures may entail what is said (Carston 2001: 17; Recanati 1989: 111-

¹⁴ If the Availability Principle is formulated in terms of our intuitions about *implying*, however, it shows more promise, as argued in the following section, but this would not be consistent with the relevance theoretic claim that *explicit* and *implicit* meaning underlie the explicature/implicature distinction.

112; Vicenti 1998: 252-253).¹⁵ The latter is inadequate because in practice it cannot be easily applied to all potential examples of implicature (that is, it is difficult to construct reasonable sentences containing logical operators for all examples of implicature). Thus, to date, no criteria have been proposed by relevance theorists which solve this dilemma.¹⁶ The failure to find criteria to consistently distinguish implicature from explicature, and the overly reductive nature of these concepts, indicates that the distinction between *implicit* and *explicit* meaning is not a solid foundation upon which to build a definition of implicature. Levinson (2000: 198) has recently argued that there is "...no consistent way of cutting up the semiotic pie such that "what is said" excludes "what is implicated" ...". In other words, implicatures cannot be defined in contrast to what is said, explicatures, or any other notion which is based on the distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* meaning. Implicatures are related to *implicit* meaning, but they are not synonymous with it, so attempts to define implicatures in contrast to *explicit* meaning are unlikely to succeed. Implicatures need to be characterised and defined according to the properties they possess, not only according to properties they do not possess (the latter being the way in which relevance theorists essentially define implicatures). If implicatures cannot be consistently distinguished from explicatures, then the move in relevance theory to consider generalised implicatures, conventional implicatures and short-circuited implicatures as part of explicatures becomes a re-naming exercise with little theoretical import.

4. Implicature and *implying*

Much of the controversy about what constitutes a valid example of an implicature has arisen because it was originally defined by Grice primarily in terms of something else (that is, as what is communicated less 'what is said'). Relevance theorists have followed this lead, and have also tended to define implicature in terms of another concept (that is, as a communicated assumption that is not an explicature). However, instead of relating it to the

¹⁵ Carston (1998a, forthcoming) has recently argued that her Functional Independence Principle was not meant to be interpreted in this way. However, her more recent conceptualisation of the Functional Independence Principle, which states that if something can be deductively derived from what is literally said in a particular context, it cannot constitute part of an explicature, and thus constitutes an implicature, is still problematic in that there is no principled way of determining how a given derivation is made (Breheny 2002: 180).

¹⁶ The problems for the relevance theoretic analysis do not end here, as there is no clear explanation that follows from relevance theory for why example (4) is commonly perceived as more polite than example (3). In ordinary terms B's response seems somewhat more abrupt in example (3) than in example (4), and this is what gives rise to the feeling that B's response in example (3) is impolite, while B's response in example (4) is considered fairly polite. While in both cases B's response (*chotto yooji ga aru*: 'I have a little something to do') gives rise to an implicature (*ikimasen*: 'I won't go'), in example (4) the linguistic unit *kara* ('so') gives rise to an additional implication. This additional implication (indicating that B is hesitant about saying he won't go; in other words, a hedged refusal), is what gives rise to the impression that B's response in example (4) is polite. Without this implication, B's response is considered somewhat impolite, as in example (3). It is not at all clear that this additional implication would be predicted in a relevance theoretic analysis, since the politeness arising in example (4) would not normally be noticed, while the potential impoliteness arising in example (3) would definitely be noticed and have significant cognitive (and interpersonal) effects.

lay notion of *implying* as Grice did, they based it on the distinction between *implicit* and *explicit* meaning. I argued, however, in the previous section that this distinction is not a suitable basis for distinguishing between implicature and other types of pragmatic phenomena.

In attempting to delineate the scope of implicature it is thus better to go back to the original source of Grice's notion, that is, the notion of *implying*. The sense of *implying* which underlies implicature is where it refers to expressing something indirectly or hinting at something (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume 7, 1989: 725).¹⁷ In other words, Grice seemed to be interested in cases where to *imply* something is hinting at or suggesting something without actually saying it when he proposed his notion of implicature.

However, the notion of *implying* can only serve as starting point for a more fully explicated conceptualisation of implicature, because other notions that are not totally synonymous, such as *indirectness*, *hinting* and so on, are used to define *implying*. For example, while *indirectness* is closely related to *implying* there are examples of *indirectness* that do not involve implicatures. Hedges, such as *think* and *probably* in example (5), which soften the illocutionary force of the refusal, give rise to *indirectness*, but they do not involve implicature.¹⁸

- (5) A: Are you going to the movie tonight?
B: I think I probably can't.

Hinting, on the other hand, involves cases where the speaker is not sure that the addressee will understand what the speaker means beyond what is said, whereas in *implying* something the speaker is generally more confident that the addressee will understand what the speaker means beyond what is said.

In this section, I thus propose from my examination of numerous examples of implicature in English and Japanese (Haugh, in progress), that the notion of *implying* underlying implicature can be characterised in terms of four properties: It is not literally said, it is inferred in a particular context, it is defeasible, and it is meant in addition to what is literally said.

1. What is *implied* is not literally said by the speaker.¹⁹ The notion of literal meaning has been defined in various conflicting ways, but *implying* involves literal meaning in the sense of coded meaning which is minimally affected by context, is obligatory and automatic, or what Ariel (2002a) terms 'linguistic minimal meaning'. For example, if I call up a friend's house on the phone and ask, 'Is John there?', I *imply* a request to speak to John. An

¹⁷ The other sense of *imply*, to involve or comprise as a necessary logical consequence, does not necessarily underlie the notion of implicature.

¹⁸ This fact poses problems for approaches to implicature which are grounded in conceptualisations of implicature as indirect meaning (Breheny 2002; Davis 1998).

¹⁹ Literal meaning is defined by Matthews (1997: 211) as: "...The meaning of a sentence or other expression as determined solely by those ascribed to the separate words, etc. of which it is composed and to the syntactic relations in which they stand...". In other words, the literal meaning of an utterance is formed from the denotations which comprise the utterance, and the syntactic relations that hold between these denotations.

implicature something like 'Can I speak to John?' arises from my utterance. Clearly this implicature is not literally said by me.

2. What is *implied* is inferred by the hearer from what the speaker has said and their manner of saying it in a particular context - it is not encoded by what has been said. What is *implied* is generated from some kind of inference, rather than from the decoding of the literal meaning of utterances. This inference is generated on the basis of various situational factors. For example, if my friend asks me 'Do you like *Star Wars*?', and I reply 'Well, I like the music', my friend will probably understand from this that I don't particularly like *Star Wars*. The fact that I don't particularly like *Star Wars* is not linguistically encoded in my response, so it must be inferred. This is not to say that the same kind of inference underlies all implicature, but implicature always involves some kind of inference.

3. What is *implied* is defeasible - it can be denied later in the conversation. For example, if a friend asks me if I am going to a party tomorrow night, and I respond by saying 'Oh, I am busy with something else', I *imply* that I will not go to the party. However, if I were to say later, 'I am still going, but I will be arriving late', then the implicature associated with my first utterance will be cancelled. Although this might seem somewhat misleading on my part as a conversationalist, it is still theoretically possible. The claim that implicatures are defeasible does not mean that implicatures are normally cancelled, or that defeasibility is a characteristic shown by all implicatures in actual conversations. Defeasibility refers only to the fact that there is always the *theoretical potential* for an implicature to be cancelled. In other words, in another context the same implicature may not be generated. Defeasibility is thus best considered as a kind of test for the presence of implicatures, rather than as something exhibited by implicatures in actual interactions.

4. What is *implied* is meant in addition to what the speaker has literally said. There are two key aspects of being meant 'in addition to what is literally said'. Firstly, an implicature is functionally independent of what is literally said. What is meant by functional independence is that the pragmatic function of an implicature differs from the pragmatic function associated with what is literally said. In speech act theory terms, one might say that implicatures and what the speaker literally says give rise to different speech acts. This aspect differentiates implicatures from another type of pragmatic inference which involves expanding upon what is literally said.²⁰

For example, the utterance in (6) may be understood to mean (7) and (8).

- (6) (Jane has finished packing her luggage in preparation for her trip overseas and takes it downstairs to the door)
Jane (to her husband): I am ready.
- (7) I am ready to leave for the airport.
- (8) Can you drive me to the airport now?

Both the 'to leave for the airport' part of I am ready to leave for the airport, and the fact that she is asking her husband to drive her to the airport are not literally said. Instead they are inferred in a particular context, where Jane and her husband know that Jane is going somewhere on a plane that day. What is inferred in (7) and (8) is also defeasible, as Jane

²⁰ Of course, what is literally said, or an implicature, may give rise to more than one pragmatic function respectively, but even if there is more than one function, none of them should overlap if they are to be considered functionally independent.

might say later, 'Where is my coffee?', thereby canceling 'to leave for the airport' in favour of 'to drink my coffee', and 'can you drive me to the airport now?' in favour of something like 'can you make me a cup of coffee?'

However, the pragmatic inference in (7) (that is, 'to leave for the airport') does not count as an example of an implicature. It is not an implicature, because its pragmatic function is not different from the function of what Jane literally says in (6). In both (6) and (7) the speech act is the same, that is, it is an assertion about the current state of Jane's readiness to leave. The inference in (7) develops the speech act in (6) further, but it does not alter the pragmatic function of what Jane literally says.²¹

In contrast, the inference in (8) is an implicature, because its pragmatic function is different from that of what Jane says in (6). The function of (6) is say something about Jane's current state (that is, it is an assertion about the current state of Jane's readiness to leave), while the function of (8) is to make a request. The inference in (8) is therefore something else that her husband thinks in addition to what she literally says.

The second key aspect of being meant 'in addition to what is literally said' is that for something to qualify as an implicature, the hearer must think *both* what is literally said and what is inferred. If the hearer only thinks what is inferred, then it does not constitute an implicature, because the pragmatic inference is meant *instead* of what is literally said rather than *in addition* to what is literally said. This aspect differentiates implicatures from types of pragmatic inference which are fossilised, such as idioms.

For example, the utterance in (9) is usually understood to mean something like (10). The speaker has not literally said that Mary has died, so some kind of pragmatic processing may be involved. Moreover, (10) might not be communicated in a situation where there actually is a bucket that Mary has kicked, and thus is not always associated with the expression in (9).

(9) Mary has kicked the bucket.

(10) Mary has died.

However, (10) does not count as an example of an implicature, because it is meant *instead* of what the speaker says in (9). In other words, if the hearer understands (10) to have been communicated by (9), then he or she will not also think (9), but rather will only think (10). When we take "Mary has kicked the bucket" to mean that "Mary has died", we do not think that Mary has physically kicked a bucket, but instead only think that she has passed away. In contrast, (8) does count as an implicature because Jane's husband will think 'Can you drive me to the airport?' as well as 'I am ready to leave for the airport'.

While each of these characteristics is not enough on its own to be used to define implicature, in unison they provide a basis for developing a more adequate definition of implicature. In other words, for an example to count as an implicature, it must have all four of these characteristics. An implicature is therefore something that is communicated in a certain way in addition to what is literally said.

It is important to note that these first three characteristics are common to all pragmatic input into what is communicated. In other words, all pragmatic inference is not

²¹ While most neo-Griceans still consider this to be an example of an implicature, Bach (1994) terms this kind of inference 'implicature', while relevance theorists consider it to be a part of the explicature of the utterance.

literally said, inferred in a particular contexts, and defeasible.²² They are thus necessary, but not sufficient for defining implicature. The most crucial characteristic of *implying* and thus implicature, is that it involves something which is meant *in addition* to what is literally said. That is to say, what differentiates implicature from other kinds of pragmatic phenomena is that it is meant *in addition* to what is literally said.

A conceptualisation of implicature that builds upon the notion of *implying* can thus be summarised in the following definition, where A is the speaker, B is the addressee, 'X' is the speaker's utterance, and 'Y' is an implicature. 'X' includes not only the literal meaning of 'X', but also the manner in which it is said, since implicatures may also arise from the way in which a speaker says something (or even doesn't say something as the case may be).²³

An implicature arises when:

A says 'X'

A thinks that if A says 'X', in this way,

B can think something else in addition to 'X' because of that ('Y')

B thinks something else in addition to 'X' that A does not say ('Y')

B thinks 'X' and 'Y' because of that

This definition is not meant to accurately represent the actual process by which implicatures are derived, but rather aims to embody the four main characteristics of implicature that have been discussed in this section. The simple expressions used are meant to clarify what is meant by the more technical jargon which has been used thus far. While this conceptualisation of implicature as 'something else in addition to 'X' is fairly broad, it is delimited by the fact that the implicature arises because 'A says 'X' in this way', and the speaker ('A') thinks that this will happen, and thus it must be related by some kind of inference to what the speaker says ('X').

One of the problems which has plagued both Gricean/neo-Gricean and relevance theoretic conceptualisations of implicature is their assumption that the distinction between 'what is said' (or explicature) and implicature is exhaustive (Bach 2001a: 23). In this section, a preliminary definition of implicature has been proposed which does not make this assumption. Instead, it has been formulated in such a way so as to leave open the middle ground between what is literally said and implicature, where various other types of pragmatic phenomena may be observed.

²² I wish to thank Robyn Carston (personal communication) for reminding me of this fact. As she points out, the core problem in Gricean and neo-Gricean approaches is that they define implicatures as defeasible pragmatic inferences, and thus consider virtually all pragmatic phenomena to be implicatures. However, defining implicature in this way produces examples of implicature which are counter-intuitive, as illustrated by examples (7) and (10).

²³ Hawley (2002: 978) notes that implicatures may arise from silence. And in situations where one did not hear what the speaker said clearly, implicatures may also still be generated simply from the fact the speaker has said something.

5. Conclusion

Griceans and neo-Griceans assume that a range of different processes underlie the generation of implicatures, and thus a variety of different categories of implicature are needed to analyse pragmatic phenomena falling within the scope of the notion of implicature. Relevance theorists, on the other hand, have pared down the concept of implicature, and have claimed that many of the pragmatic phenomena termed implicatures by neo-Griceans are in fact explicatures. The relevance theoretic notion of implicature is fundamentally based on the distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* meaning, but examples in Japanese where utterances 'trail off' indicate that this distinction is not exhaustive. *Explicit* and *implicit* meaning actually overlap, so this distinction does not provide a strong intuitive basis on which to build the notion of implicature. While relevance theorists have shown that neo-Griceans may have over-generalised the notion of implicature to some extent, the notion of 'conventional implicature' being a good example of this (Blakemore 1987, 1992; Iten 2000a, b), their characterisation of implicature is problematic due to its reliance on the distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* meaning.

To avoid over-generalisation of the notion of implicature, it has been suggested in this paper that characteristics of the notions of *implying*, with which Grice originally associated his notion of implicature, can be used to clarify what constitutes valid examples of implicature. These characteristics indicate that an implicature is a defeasible inferred meaning that is not actually said, but rather is meant or communicated in addition to what is literally said. While suggestions for a firmer intuitive basis on which to assess whether various pragmatic phenomena fall within the scope of the notion of implicature has been proposed in this paper, there remains considerable work to be done in drawing up a framework in which to analyze different pragmatic phenomena falling within the scope of implicature, and in proposing notions to deal with pragmatic phenomena that fall outside the scope of implicature.

References

- Ariel, Mira (2002a) The demise of a unique concept of literal meaning. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34.4: 361-402.
- Ariel, Mira (2002b) Privileged interactional interpretations. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34.8: 1003-1044.
- Bach, Kent (1994) Conversational implicature. *Mind and Language* 9.2: 124-162.
- Bach, Kent (2001a) You don't say? *Synthese* 128.1/2: 15-44.
- Bach, Kent (2001b) Seemingly semantic intuitions. In Joseph Campbell, Michael O'Rourke & David Shier (eds.), *Meaning and Truth: Investigations in Philosophical Semantics*. New York: Seven Bridges Press, pp. 21-33.
- Bezuidenhout, Anne, & J. Cooper Cutting (2002) Literal meaning, minimal propositions, and pragmatic processing. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34.4: 433-356.
- Blakemore, Diane (1987) *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Blakemore, Diane (2000) Indicators and procedures: *Nevertheless* and *but*. *Journal of Linguistics* 36: 463-486.
- Breheny, Richard (2002) The current state of (radical) pragmatics in the cognitive sciences. *Mind and Language* 17.1/2: 169-187.
- Carston, Robyn (1988) Implicature, explicature, and truth-theoretic semantics. In Ruth Kempson (ed.), *Mental Representations: The Interface between Language and Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 155-181.
- Carston, Robyn (1995) Quantity maxims and generalised implicature. *Lingua* 96: 213-244.
- Carston, Robyn (1996) Enrichment and loosening: Complementary processes in deriving the proposition expressed. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 8: 61-88.
- Carston, Robyn (1998a) Postscript (1995). In Asa Kasher (ed.), *Pragmatics. Critical Concepts. Volume IV*. London: Routledge, pp. 464-479.
- Carston, Robyn (1998b) Informativeness, relevance and scalar implicature. In Robyn Carston, & Seiichi Uchida (eds.), *Relevance Theory. Applications and Implications*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 179-236.
- Carston, Robyn (2000) Explicature and Semantics. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 12: 1-44.
- Carston, Robyn (2001) Relevance theory and the saying/implicating distinction. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 13: 1-34.
- Carston, Robyn (2002) Linguistic meaning, communicated meaning and cognitive pragmatics. *Mind and Language* 17.1/2: 127-148.
- Carston, Robyn (forthcoming) *Thoughts and Utterances: The pragmatics of explicit communication*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Davis, Wayne (1998) *Implicature. Intention, Convention, and Principle in the Failure of Gricean Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gauker, Christopher (2001) Situated inference versus conversational implicature. *Nous* 35.2: 163-189.
- Gibbs, Raymond Jr. (1999a) Interpreting what speakers say and implicate. *Brain and Language* 68.3: 466-485.
- Gibbs, Raymond Jr. (1999b) Speakers' intuitions and pragmatic theory. *Cognition* 69.3: 355-359.
- Gibbs, Raymond Jr. (2000) *Inferring what speakers say and what they mean*. Paper presented at the Seventh International Pragmatics Conference, Budapest, Hungary.
- Gibbs, Raymond Jr., & Jessica Moise (1997) Pragmatics in understanding what is said. *Cognition* 62.1: 51-74.
- Grice, Paul (1967) Logic and Conversation, *William James Lectures*.
- Grice, Paul (1989) *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Groefsema, M. (1992) 'Can you pass the salt?': A short-circuited implicature. *Lingua* 87: 103-135.
- Hamblin, Jennifer (1999) *Understanding what is said and what is implicated*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Santa Cruz.

- Hawley, Patrick (2002) What is said. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34.8: 969-991.
- Haugh, Michael (in progress) *Politeness implicature in Japanese*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Queensland.
- Horn, Laurence, & Samuel Bayer (1984) Short-circuited implicature: A negative contribution. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 7: 397-414.
- Iten, Corrine (2000a) *Conventional implicature, tone and procedural meaning*. Paper presented at the 7th International Pragmatics Conference, Budapest, Hungary.
- Iten, Corrine (2000b) *'Non-Truth-Conditional' Meaning. Relevance and Concessives*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, London.
- Kandolf, Cindy (1993) On the difference between explicatures and implicatures in relevance theory. *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* 16: 33-46.
- Leech, Geoffrey (1983) *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Levinson, Stephen (1989) A review of Relevance. *Journal of Linguistics* 25.2: 455-472.
- Levinson, Stephen (2000) *Presumptive Meanings. The Theory of Generalised Conversational Implicature*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Matthews, P.H. (1997) *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morgan, Jerry (1978) Two types of convention in indirect speech acts. In Peter Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics, Volume 9. Pragmatics*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 261-280.
- Nicolle, Steve, & Billy Clark (1999) Experimental pragmatics and what is said: A response to Gibbs and Moise. *Cognition* 69.3: 337-354.
- Noro, Ken (1979) Generalized conversational implicature. *Sophia Linguistica* 5: 75-83.
- Noveck, Ira (2001) When children are more logical than adults: Experimental investigations of scalar implicature. *Cognition* 78.2: 165-188.
- Obana, Yasuko (2000) *Understanding Japanese. A Handbook for Learners and Teachers*. Tokyo: Kuroshio.
- Papafragou, Anna (2000) Early communication: Beyond speech act theory. In Catherine Howell, Sarah Fish, & Thea Keith-Lucas (eds.), *Proceedings of the 24th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development, Volume 2*. Somerville, Mass: Cascadilla Press, pp. 571-582.
- Papafragou, Anna (2002) Mindreading and verbal communication. *Mind and Language* 17.1/2: 55-67.
- Recanati, François (1989) The pragmatics of what is said. *Mind and Language* 4: 295-329.
- Recanati, François (1993) *Direct Reference. From Language to Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Recanati, François (2002) Does linguistic communication rest on inference? *Mind and Language* 17.1/2: 105-126.
- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibanez, Francisco (1998) Implicatures, explicatures and conceptual mappings. In Jose Luis Cifuentes (ed.), *Estudios de Linguística Cognitiva I*. Alicante, Spain: University de Alicante, pp. 419-431.

- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibanez, Francisco (1999) The role of cognitive mechanisms in making inferences. *Journal of English Studies (University of La Rioja)* 1: 237-255.
- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibanez, Francisco, & Lorena Perez Hernandez (2001) Cognitive operations and pragmatic implication, *Sincronia (E-Journal of Culture Studies)* (Fall volume). <http://sincronia.cusch.udg.mx/fall01.htm>
- Sadock, Jerry (1978) On testing for conversational implicature. In Peter Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics Volume 9. Pragmatics*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 281-297.
- Saul, Jennifer (2002) Speaker meaning, what is said, and what is implicated. *Nous* 36.2: 228-248.
- Sperber, Dan, & Deirdre Wilson (1995) *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*. (2nd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sperber, Dan, & Deirdre Wilson (2002) Pragmatics, modularity, and mind-reading. *Mind and Language* 17. 1/2: 3-23.
- Vicente, Begona (1998) Against blurring the explicit/implicit distinction. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 11: 241-258.
- Wilson, Deirdre, & Dan Sperber (1993) Linguistic form and relevance. *Lingua* 90: 1-25.
- Wilson, Deirdre, & Dan Sperber (1998) Pragmatics and time. In Robyn Carston, & Seiichi Uchida (eds.), *Relevance Theory. Applications and Implications*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 1-22.
- Wilson, Deirdre, & Dan Sperber (2000) Truthfulness and relevance. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 12: 215-257.
- Yus, Francisco (1999) Misunderstandings and explicit/implicit communication. *Pragmatics* 9.4: 487-517.