

# "Grice's Theory of Implicature"

---

**Lalić, Ema Luna**

**Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad**

**2020**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište u Rijeci, Filozofski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:186:320523>

*Rights / Prava:* [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-01-14**



*Repository / Repozitorij:*

[Repository of the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences - FHSSRI Repository](#)



UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RIJEKA

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

**GRICE'S THEORY OF IMPLICATURE**

STUDENT: Ema Luna Lalić

MENTOR: dr. sc. Martina Blečić

## Contents

Abstract.....	1
Introduction .....	2
The development of Grice’s theory of implicature.....	4
The Cooperative Principle and four categories of conversational maxims .....	7
The Cooperative Principle.....	7
Four categories of conversational maxims .....	8
Conversational and conventional implicature.....	13
Conversational implicature.....	14
Conventional Implicature.....	19
Conclusion.....	21
References .....	22

## Abstract

This paper is an overview of the theory of implicature by Herbert Paul Grice, as it is an important concept in philosophy of language. It is an action of suggesting a meaning that goes beyond the literal understanding of the utterance. Grice distinguished between two general types of implicatures: conversational and conventional. Conversational implicature has two subtypes: particularized and generalized conversational implicature. This paper examines the distinction between two and elaborates on the theoretical background of the linguistic phenomenon. It also provides an account of the Cooperative Principle and Grice's conversational maxims, which are vital contributors to the theory. The maxims are divided into four categories and analysed in terms of the consequences for not observing them.

Keywords: implicature, conversation, meaning, philosophy of language, context, pragmatics

## Introduction

English philosopher Herbert Paul Grice (1913-1988) is regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of language. His contribution to the study of meaning continues to inspire philosophers and linguists to this day and has resulted in the establishment of theories of Gricean and neo-Gricean pragmatics (Chapman 2005, p. 207-208). In addition, his influence is evident in opposing theories, such as relevance theory by Sperber and Wilson, which is a substantial departure from Grice's original theory, but is greatly motivated by it (Sperber and Wilson 2012, p.5). Grice was a very versatile philosopher, his interests ranging from metaphysical inquiry about perception, ethics and studying Kant and Plato. Grice's most prominent ideas were published posthumously in a collection of essays *Studies in the Way of Words* (1989). The first part of *Studies in the Way of Words*, called *Logic and Conversation*, is an assortment of his William James lectures at Harvard University in 1967. In *Logic and Conversation*, Grice proposes his theory of meaning and implicature. Implicature is a word coined by Grice himself and counts as one of the most important concepts of his philosophical career. It refers to the "action of implying a meaning beyond the literal sense of what is explicitly stated" (Oxford Online Dictionary Lexico). This paper is an overview of Grice's theory of implicature. The first section of the paper will examine the development of the theory of implicature by identifying Grice's general stance on relevant issues in philosophy of language. One of them pertains to the distinction between ordinary language philosophy (OLP) and ideal language philosophy (ILP). In this section I will also provide a brief outline of Grice's theory of meaning. The second section deals with the concepts of the Cooperative Principle and four categories of conversational maxims, which are vital for understanding of the theory of implicature. After specifying the nature of maxims, I will provide an account of the ways speakers fail to observe them. The last section of the paper is a clarification of two types of

conversational implicature, as well as an analysis of conventional implicature. In this section I will provide my examples of implicatures, along with those put forward by Grice.

## The development of Grice's theory of implicature

In the Preface to *Studies in the Way of Words*, Grice reveals that his philosophical approach is to be concerned with *ordinary* language. Ordinary language philosophy belongs to linguistic philosophy and examines natural language (as opposed to formal language) by focusing on instances of its everyday use (Blackburn 1996, p. 329). In order to understand the development of Grice's theory of implicature and meaning, it is important to shed light upon the difference between ordinary language philosophy and ideal language philosophy.

It was one of the most important topics of philosophical debate in analytic philosophy in Grice's period of influence, and continues to be today. The difference between ordinary language philosophy and ideal language philosophy is a matter of methodology in regards to philosophical inquiry.

As Lüthi (2006, p.250) points out, philosophers who adhere to ideal language philosophy (ILP) hold the view that the subject of philosophical inquiry should be the language used in the domains of natural and formal sciences, i.e. philosophy's central task should be to provide an analysis of scientific propositions (statements). Ideal language philosophers maintain that ordinary language is often too ambiguous, unclear and misguided, whereas formal languages of logic and mathematics are concise and structurally rounded.

Ordinary language philosophy (OLP), on the other hand, focuses on ordinary language use, i.e. how regular people usually use language in its everyday, non-scientific form (Lüthi 2006, p. 250). That does not mean that OLP denies the value of scientific discourse, just that it is not a foundation of its investigation.

Ordinary language philosophy was a dominant approach at Oxford, where Grice built his philosophical career. He was a part of that movement, in terms of implementing similar methods as ordinary language philosophers, but he also criticized OLP's tendency not to "distinguish semantic and pragmatic implications" (Neale 1992, p.9). In other words, he claimed that it was of utmost importance to clarify the subtleties of linguistic meaning as well as to determine the difference between the standard meaning of an utterance and the meaning speaker intends to convey. He sought to devise an approach to language that would incorporate different kinds of language analyses. Chapman (2005, p. 90) states that Grice's idea that the distinction between standard meaning and speaker meaning is not as arbitrary as it might seem generated an innovative approach to the study of that distinction, which he deemed can be constructive and valuable.

One of Grice's goals was to propose a theory that would determine the reason a certain utterance is mistakenly used. Primarily, he wanted the theory's aim to be a distinction between the case in which an utterance is not appropriate because it is not true taking into consideration the state of affairs in the world, and the case where there is a different reason for its inappropriateness (Grice 1989, p. 4).

The relevance of Grice's theory lies in the fact that he "suggested that speaker's meaning was relevant to philosophy and could be properly studied in its own right" (Wilson and Sperber 2012, p.26). This notion was often overlooked in philosophy of language, because speaker's meaning was thought not to have the capacity to be analysed. Speaker's meaning is closely tied to speaker's intention.

As Wilson and Sperber (2012, p. 26) point out, Grice views meaning as a "psychological phenomenon", as opposed to being exclusively a linguistic one. As previously stated, some philosophers of language at the time viewed the study of natural language as strictly linguistic,



resulting in a detailed account of a particular language phenomenon, whereas Grice tried to accomplish a comprehensive study of language, analysing both how a certain language unit is standardly used and how the speakers utilize it in their speech acts.

In *Logic and Conversation*, Grice introduces the concept of ‘implicature’, i.e. the action of implying, the verb ‘implicate’ and the noun ‘implicatum’ (referring to what is implied) (Grice 1989, p. 24). The notion of implicature corresponds in a way to the vital assumptions of Grice’s theory of meaning, because it exemplifies his focus on intention of the speaker and in determining the meaning of natural language in its ordinary use. In his papers *Meaning (1957)* and *Meaning Revisited (1976)*, Grice distinguishes between utterer’s (speaker) meaning and timeless meaning, which is connected with his interest in defining the difference between non-conventional and conventional meaning, as well as analysing manifold of speaker’s intentions. Grice’s theory of meaning was developed before he officially published his theory of implicature and could be said to provide a basis for it, in terms of anticipating the main methodological approaches Grice used in his philosophy.

Grice also proposed what he called Cooperative Principle and a set of conversational maxims, which are the groundwork for his development of implicature. By acknowledging that participants in the conversation usually share some common purpose and observe simple patterns of communication, Grice set the stage for the explanation of implicature.

## The Cooperative Principle and four categories of conversational maxims

A characteristic of any conversation is that it is a mutual activity involving two or more people. In other words, conversations are “cooperative efforts” (Grice 1989, p. 26). A participant of a conversation needs to understand that his partner has certain needs and expectations in terms of that specific conversation, so he should be willing to contribute to that cause. There are several features of discourse (written or spoken language, i.e. speech or writing) that are associated with conversational implicatures. The persons involved in the conversation acknowledge that there is at least one shared intention or purpose and a stipulated direction which the conversation is expected to be heading.

There are certain conditions that, independently of the topic of the conversation, govern conversational acts in general. The participants of the conversation do not need to determine these conditions at the beginning of the conversation, since they can change according to the nature of that particular conversation. In informal conversations there is a broader sense of freedom in determining the direction of the conversation, but it is important to recognize that in any conversational act there are some inappropriate measures that should not be taken (Grice 1989, p. 27).

### The Cooperative Principle

In any case, cooperation of the participants of the conversation is an extremely important aspect of communication. Grice calls this principle the Cooperative Principle and formulates it in a form of a maxim: “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, p. 26). This is a “general principle” which is employed in standard situations, when there are no other conditions or obstacles for acting in accordance with it. The Cooperation Principle entails that the participants determine what type of contribution is required, as well as its course and objective. Apart from being a principle, it is also a standard conversations indeed uphold and a rule people tend to intuitively observe, except some situational exceptions.

If the Cooperative Principle is adhered to, four categories containing different rules (maxims) and submaxims are proposed.

#### Four categories of conversational maxims

Grice distinguishes four categories, which contain different maxims, as well as submaxims. In philosophy in general, a maxim is “any simple and memorable guide or rule” (Blackburn 1996, p. 235). They are usually in form of a sentence in an imperative mood. Maxims in philosophy have been usually used in the realm of ethics, as rules or sets of rules for moral reasoning and behaviour. Grice’s maxims are rules or recommendations, examples of prescriptions. However, they seem to reflect the way people *actually* converse, not just how they *should*. Grice states that “it is just a well-recognized empirical fact that people do behave in these ways” (Grice 1989, p. 29).

Furthermore, their importance to communication is such that “in paradigmatic cases, their observance promotes and their violation dispromotes conversational rationality” (Grice 1989, p.370). To behave in a completely different way would be unintuitive and would require an extreme adjustment. In that sense, conversational maxims also shed light on human communication in general, revealing the importance of certain characteristics of discourse.

Namely, communication, especially in the form of conversation, is a dynamic process in which the participants regulate the nature of their interaction. Conversational maxims are flexible enough to account for that fact because they are not strict commands, but general rules of effective conversation.

As previously stated, maxims are products of the Cooperative Principle. In other words, they are further elaborations and clarifications of the principle, providing more detail to the way people communicate. The categories of conversational maxims are: Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner (Grice 1989, p.26). Their maxims could be interpreted as “truthfulness, informativeness, relevance and clarity”, respectively (Wilson and Sperber 2012, p.48).

The first category, category of quantity refers to the quantity (amount) of information that is supposed to be given by the speaker. There are two maxims in this category:

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

2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.” (Grice 1989, p. 26)

The first maxim is stating that the amount of information should be suitable to the needs and the objective of the conversation. In other words, the first maxim is advising the speakers against providing too little information. If they are less informative than expected, the communication will be significantly less effective. Of course, exactly how many pieces of information is needed is dependent on the specific conditions of that particular conversational act.

The second maxim, conversely, states that providing too much information is also disadvantageous to effective communication. It causes problems by broadening the scope of the conversation in an unsuitable way, since the hearers naturally assume that the speaker has a reason to provide such amount of information. That raises many unwanted questions in the hearer and takes away from the main issue of the conversation.

The second category of conversational maxims is Quality with its supermaxim “Try to make your contribution one that is true” (Grice 1989, p. 27). The maxims associated with it are:

“1) Do not say what you believe to be false.

2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.” (Grice 1989, p.27)

The first maxim is a discouragement of lying, i.e. consciously producing untruthful statements, in most cases in order to deliberately deceive the hearer. The second maxim states that the speaker should only express those propositions for which he has a justifiable reason to believe are true.

The category of Relation is realised through one maxim: “Be relevant.” (Grice 1989, p. 27). Conversations have a natural tendency to evolve and progress from one topic to another. This is a ubiquitous phenomenon associated with any type of conversation. So, being relevant does not have a fixed standard. It is considerably determined by the characteristics of the specific conversation (Grice 1989, p.27). Participants of the conversation decide what is considered relevant and what is not, but a problem arises when the hearer(s) believe(s) that the speaker does not to provide relevant information or provides a great number of irrelevant remarks.

The fourth category, Manner, is different from the first three. Whereas the other categories are connected with the content of speaker's contribution, Manner refers to the way the contribution was expressed. The supermaxim for this category is "Be perspicuous" (Grice 1989, p. 27), that is to say, one should be clear and precise in their way of speaking.

The maxims are:

- “1) Avoid obscurity of expression.
- 2) Avoid ambiguity.
- 3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
- 4) Be orderly.” (Grice 1989, p. 27).

The main goal of conversation is successful communication between the speaker and the hearer(s). Of course, this is not the only goal of communication when it is in the form of speech acts. There are also types of communication that do not involve classic conversational acts, for instance different kinds of assistance, such as one person helping the other to fix a car or bake a cake (Grice 1989, p.28). These types of transactions are not conversations, but categories of conversational maxims are, nonetheless, applicable to them. For instance, if one person is helping another carry a couch, he expects the other person to move accordingly to his instructions.

Maxims are, as may be expected, frequently disobeyed. Grice offers four typical manners in which the speaker involved in a conversation might transgress the rules of the Cooperative Principle and maxims connected with it and possibly generate conversational implicatures by doing so. The first one is speaker's violation of a maxim in a understated way. When this happens, usually the hearer is not aware of the violation and the speaker is probably not being

trustworthy. The second manner refers to a straightforward and transparent refusal to follow the prescriptions set by the maxims, by means of speaker notifying the listener, for example, that he is not going to provide an answer to a question, which Grice calls “opting out” (Grice 1989, p.30).

The third manner is a ‘clash’ of two different maxims, resulting in a dilemma as to which one the speaker should give more importance to (Grice 1989, p.29). For instance, the speaker could be incapable of abiding by the maxim of Relevance and the second maxim of Quality. In this situation, the speaker is bound to fail to observe one of the maxims. The fourth manner is a direct, but seemingly not misleading, disregard of one of the maxims. When this occurs, the speaker flouts (exploits) a maxim, which has an effect on the hearer, who is questioning whether or not the speaker is being true to the Cooperative Principle (Grice 1989, p.30). In this way conversational implicatures are created.

Irony is an exploitation of a maxim, resulting in a figure of speech. When a maxim is exploited, conversational implicatures are created. Grice offers an example of irony, in which the first maxim of Quality is exploited in order to convey a meaning that is in sharp contrast with what was actually said. Imagine a situation in which X and A have been good friends, but X has told A’s secret to a business competitor, resulting in A’s disapproval of X’s actions and a feeling of annoyance with X in general. A says: “X is a fine friend” (Grice 1989, p.34). It is apparent that what A said is not what he wanted to say in literal terms. A’s knows that X betrayed A, so they understand the implicature and acknowledge that the reason A said something that is not true is to achieve irony. When A said the utterance, he exploited the first maxim of Quality. By doing so, he wanted to say the opposite of what was said. He, therefore, strongly implicated that X is not a good friend, but a bad one.

In the following section, I will discuss two types of implicature as proposed by Grice and corroborate them with examples of my own.

## Conversational and conventional implicature

Implicature is the central concept in Grice's philosophy of language. Oxford Languages Online Dictionary defines implicatures as "the action of implying a meaning beyond the literal sense of what is explicitly stated" and "implied meaning". In *Retrospective Epilogue (1987)*, at the very end of his career, Grice summarizes the process in which implicatures are delivered:

"Implicatures are thought of as arising in the following way; an implicatum is the content of that psychological state or attitude which needs to be attributed to the speaker in order to secure [...] ; (a) that a violation on his part of a conversational maxim is in the circumstances justifiable, at least in his eyes, or (b) that what appears to be a violation by him of a conversational maxim is only a seeming, not a real, violation; the spirit, though perhaps not the letter, of the maxim is respected" (Grice 1989, p. 370)

Grice points out the importance of the psychological aspect of language and implicature, referring to the speaker's mental content and intentions. The speaker must have a legitimate reason to violate a conversational maxim in that particular situation or must, at least, think that he does. Another assertion is that the presence of an implicature does not unambiguously indicate a violation of a maxim at every level. A maxim was violated at the level of what was said (conventional meaning), but at the level of what was meant by the utterance there is no such violation. The main functions



of the maxims are respected, although they seem unobserved. Consequently, the Cooperative Principle seems to also be adhered to.

Grice distinguishes conversational and conventional implicature. Conversational implicature has two subtypes: particular and generalized. Conversational and conventional implicatures differ in the level of conventionality their implicata have (i.e. how ordinary their use is and how naturally they are assumed) (Grice 1989, pp. 25-26).

### Conversational implicature

Grice provides an account of the concept of conversational implicature in form of a general chain of speaker's thought process concerning the propositions he wants the hearer to think. In return, the hearer himself recognizes the speaker's intention and comprehends the implicature according to the conditions of the conversation, such as contextual knowledge.

A clarification of the process in which conversational implicatures are generally created can be delineated in the following way: A person (speaker) who conversationally implicates  $q$  by saying  $p$ : 1) is assumed to comply with the Cooperative Principle or/and the conversational maxims, 2) believes that  $q$ , thus making his saying  $p$  in accordance with 1), 3) believes (and expects the hearer to understand that the speaker believes) that the hearer is capable of inferring that 2) (Grice 1989, pp.30-31).

The symbol  $p$  signifies what was said in terms of conventional meaning and  $q$  what was meant according to the implied meaning. Since the speaker is supposed to observe the maxims, or at the very least, the Cooperative Principle, he needs to believe that  $q$  is true. The reason for this lies in the fact that if he does not believe that  $q$ , he is lying, which is a direct violation of the first maxim of Quality. Moreover, the speaker should say  $p$  in belief that the hearer is able to understand that  $q$  is necessary because the speaker is observing the Cooperative Principle

and/or the maxims. This notion that both participants in the conversation have a shared understanding relevant to the nature and objective of the conversation is at the core of success of an implicature. If it is not present, the implicature will not be successfully carried out.

Levinson (1983, p. 16) states that effective conversation is achieved when the intention of the speaker ('sender') becomes mutual knowledge. In other words, a conversational implicature (and conversation as such) is successful when the speaker's intention is recognized by the hearer in an adequate way.

It is important to assert that a conversational implicature needs to have a potential to be explained in terms of providing different reasons of its valid understanding. In other words, in case of an appearance of a conversational implicature, one should be able to understand its implicatum (i.e., that which is implied) by means of referring to several relevant pieces of information. They include the standard definitions and usage of the expressions, the notion of the Cooperative Principle and contextual and background knowledge. (Grice 1989, p.31).

The following example introduces an instance of conversational implicature: "Suppose that A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies, Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet." (Grice 1989, p. 24). This straightforward example is a paradigmatic illustration of Grice's theory of implicature. When the utterance B replies to A (in cursive text) is encountered in text or speech, it becomes evident that there is a discrepancy between what is actually said and what is "implied, meant or suggested" (Grice 1989, p. 24) by the utterance. It is important to differentiate the verbs 'say' on one side and 'imply', 'suggest' and 'mean' on the other. While 'say' is used in Grice's theory as relating to what the speaker has *prima facie*

said in terms of the standard meaning. On the other hand, ‘imply’, ‘suggest’ and ‘mean’ refer to what the speaker intended the hearer to infer or intuitively grasp.

Naturally, A will question what B meant by producing that utterance, since its literal meaning will not suffice to explain the true meaning. Grice provides two answers (while offering the possibility of further explanations): 1) C is a type of person to succumb to the temptation of having a job at a bank and 2) C’s bank colleagues are deceitful people (Grice 1989, p. 24). These two interpretations serve as potential meanings of the utterance. Of course, it is possible that A will not question what B meant by saying “[...] and he hasn’t been to prison yet” (Grice 1989, p. 24), since A will know the answer on the basis of context. In this possible outcome, the answer would be evident from the pieces of contextual information.

Grice introduces two types of conversational implicature: particularized conversational implicature and generalized conversational implicature. While particularized conversational implicature is heavily dependent on context (which means that the produced word/phrase/utterance will probably not have the same effect in another situation), generalized conversational implicature can be fairly easily produced and understood by speakers of a certain language (Grice 1989, pp. 37-38). Speakers of the same language share some linguistic intuitions, provided that they have an adequate language proficiency. Concerning generalized conversational implicature, it does not depend on context. It is conveyed by means of relying on the linguistic knowledge speakers share, without a reference to another kind of understanding.

At this stage it would be useful to provide some examples of the first type, particularized conversational implicatures.

Imagine that A is a parent to B. A comes home from work later than usual and asks B if he had soup, which A cooked the day before.

A: Did you eat the soup I cooked for lunch?

B: I was not hungry.

Although B does not directly answer A's question, it seems that he does not violate the maxims. He implicates that he did not eat anything at the relevant period of time, so he most definitely gives an answer as to whether or not he ate the soup. So, B was presumably observing the maxims, including the maxim of Relation, which might seem to be violated at the first glance. This example represents cases "in which no maxim is violated, or at least in which it is not clear that any maxim is violated" (Grice 1989, p. 32).

In this instance, A and B are students who just had an exam in mathematics. A asks B about the answer to one of the questions and B replies with the answer he gave in the exam.

A: What was the answer to the fifth question?

B: I wrote 72.

It could be said that B is not certain whether his answer in the exam was the correct one, although it was the one he provided in the exam. By uttering his sentence, B is implicating that he is not completely convinced that the answer he provided in the exam was in fact the right answer, but he, at least to a certain degree, believes that it is. In this example, there seems to be a conflict between two maxims: the first maxim of Quantity, "Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)" (Grice 1989, p. 26) and

the second maxim of Quality, “Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence” (Grice 1989, p. 27).

In other words, B seems to lack evidence that his answer is the correct, but deems it necessary to provide A with the information he believes to be relevant to the question. This is an example that is likely to be explained by a ‘clash’ of two different maxims (Grice 1989, p. 32). Consequently, the speaker has no choice but to decide which one to violate, since he is not willing to refuse to participate in the conversation (decide not to answer the question at all).

In this situation, A and B are co-workers. A notices that B does not look rested during the morning shifts.

A: Why do you always look so tired in the morning?

B: I am a night owl.

By uttering his reply, B implicates that he is a type of person to stay awake late at night. B’s reply is a metaphor, an expression in which one language unit is used to represent another on the basis of some kind of similarity between them. It is apparent that what was said by the metaphor (what was actually said, in its conventional meaning) is completely different from what was meant by the implicatum of the metaphor.

In strict terms, what was said is clearly untrue (since B is not a ‘night owl’). However, in examples of this kind the implicatum (the meaning, that which is implicated) does not fail to observe the maxims or the Cooperative Principle (Grice 1989, p. 33-35). In the example, a maxim is “flouted for the purpose of getting in a conversational implicature by means of something of the nature of a figure of speech” (Grice 1989, p. 33). Further examples of this

kind of implicature include irony, meiosis (Grice 1989, p.33). Levinson (1983, p. 130) contrasts the concepts of standard implicature (which are created because the hearer presupposes that the speaker is not failing to observe the maxims) and conversational implicature based on flouting of the maxim.

Generalized conversational implicature, on the other hand, are created in an usual setting and do not attain their meaning through particular contextual conditions. They are expected to be carried out by a part of an utterance, independently of the particularities of the conversational situations (Grice 1989, p.26). If, for instance, the speaker would say 'I walked a dog yesterday', it would implicate that the dog in question does not belong to the speaker. In other words, in this case the indefinite article *a/an* implicates that either the object (in this example, a dog) does not belong to or is not closely related to the speaker (Grice 1989, p.38). Consequently, if the indefinite article is not used properly, the hearer is going to have a false assumption.

### Conventional Implicature

Conventional implicatures are conventionally linked to certain phrases or words in the language, but are not subject to conversational maxims (Levinson 1983, p.127). Whereas conversational implicatures are closely connected to the maxims, conventional are not, since their meaning is more a matter of convention and less that of context. Grice himself points out that, even though there seems to be a relatively clear distinction between particular conversational implicature and conventional one, the situation is more complex in terms of the distinction between generalized conversational and conventional implicature, so there is often a problem of providing an unambiguous examples of them (Grice 1989, pp.37-38).

Grice defines conventional implicatures as those in which “the conventional meaning of the words used will determine what is implicated, besides helping to determine what is said” (Grice 1989, p.25). He offers two examples, conjunction ‘but’ and adverb ‘therefore’. As Levinson (1983, p. 127) points out, the word ‘but’ generates the same truth-value to its sentence as the conjunction ‘and’, but unlike ‘and’, ‘but’ provides a conventional implicature (a contrast between the two conjoined terms).

Specifically, the contrast is achieved through the perceived incompatibility of the two terms . For example, the utterance ‘Our new car is inexpensive but reliable’, implies that being inexpensiveness is in contrast with reliability. In other words, the utterance implies that it is surprising that the car is both inexpensive and reliable, since the adjectives in question usually exclude each other.

Some utterances containing ‘x, therefore, y’ also indicate a conventional implicature. For instance, the utterance ‘This book is a bestseller, therefore it is incredible’. While this type of utterance containing ‘therefore’ implicates that the reason for y is x, the speaker does not want to say that this is the case, since he is apprehensive about the situation where x would be true and y false. So, if y is not true, then the proposition is also false, and the speaker would not like to commit himself to that. In the abovementioned example, although the speaker implicates, by extension, that the reason the book is incredible is that it is a bestseller, he does not want to actually say that.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to provide an overview of Grice's contribution to philosophy of language in terms of his theory of implicature. In order to elaborate on this issue, it was of utmost importance to discuss the distinction between ordinary language philosophy (OLP) and ideal language philosophy (ILP) and acknowledge that even though he was an ordinary language philosopher, he opposed some of the views usually attributed to that school of thought. It was necessary to demonstrate that Grice's idea that the distinction between conventional and speaker meaning can be properly studied created a novel approach to philosophy of language. It involved a thorough evaluation of both linguistic and psychological language phenomena. Furthermore, it prompted the creation of the Cooperative Principle, conversational maxims and ultimately resulted in the theory of implicature. I have provided an analysis of the general aspects of Grice's concept of implicature, its types and functions, as well as its relationship to cooperation as means of attaining effective communication.



## References

- Blackburn, Simon. (1996). *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Chapman, Siobhan (2005). *Paul Grice, Philosopher and Linguist*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan
- Grice, Herbert Paul. (1989). *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Levinson, Stephen C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Implicature. Oxford Online Dictionary Lexico. Accessed 9th of September 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.lexico.com/definition/implicature>
- Lüthi, David. (2006). 'How Implicatures make Grice an unordinary ordinary language philosopher'. *Pragmatics*. Volume 16 (issue 2-3, January 2006), pp. 247-274
- Neale, Stephen. (1992). 'Paul Grice and the Philosophy of Language'. *Linguistics and Philosophy*. Volume 15 (issue 5, October 1992), pp. 509-559
- Sperber Dan and Wilson, Deirdre (2012). *Meaning and Relevance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press