# Chapter 3
# Problems, reinterpretation, and revision

This chapter will examine some fundamental issues concerning Grice's account of implicature generation. I shall begin by setting out some problems for Grice's definition of conversational implicature and the Calculability Assumption, and arguing that they are serious ones. I shall then consider a proposal by Jennifer Saul, who argues that Grice's notion of conversational implicature is a normative one, and that additional notions are needed in order to capture all the psychological aspects of implicature. I shall argue that this is an attractive reading of Grice, and that the resulting enriched Gricean framework avoids many of the problems discussed. I shall then go on to propose some further modifications to the Gricean definition in order to bring it still more closely in line with the normative reading and to avoid some remaining problems. The aim will be to set out the most plausible version of the Gricean framework, revised as necessary.

## 1. Problems for Grice's definition

This part of the chapter will consider some problems arising from Grice's account of the way implicatures are generated. Recall Grice's three-part definition of conversational implicature (with Davis's terminology added in brackets):

> A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that *p* has implicated that *q*, may be said to have conversationally implicated that *q*, provided that (1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle ['the cooperative presumption']; (2) the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, *q* is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with this presumption ['determinacy']; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required ['mutual knowledge']. (Grice 1975/1989, pp.30–1)

This definition is supplemented with the Calculability Assumption, which says that q can, in principle, be identified by a Gricean calculation, as described in the previous chapter. I shall treat this assumption as a supplement to the determinacy clause.

As we saw, there is debate about whether these conditions are sufficient for the existence of a conversational implicature (perhaps speaker intentions are needed as well), but it is clear that Grice thinks they are necessary, and this in itself creates problems. (Again, in what follows I shall often drop the qualification 'conversational'; unless otherwise indicated, 'implicature' always means 'conversational implicature'.)

*1.1 Problems with the cooperative presumption.*

The first of the three conditions for the presence of an implicature is the cooperative presumption: the speaker is presumed to be being cooperative (observing the CP).

Before going on, I want to mention an interpretative issue. The cooperative presumption is standardly quoted or paraphrased in the way I have just done, as the descriptive claim that the speaker *is* presumed to be being cooperative (following the maxims or at least the CP).[1] However, Grice actually says that the speaker is *to be* presumed to be being cooperative (see the quotation above). This phrasing is not easy to interpret, but it seems to indicate a normative claim: the hearer *ought* to presume the speaker to be being cooperative. The standard version, by contrast, makes a descriptive claim: the hearer *does* presume the speaker to be being cooperative. Whether this interpretation is right and exactly how much importance should be placed on the wording is not clear (for some discussion, see Davis 2007; Green 2002; Saul 2010). Since my aim here is to evaluate the Gricean framework as it is commonly understood, I shall focus primarily on the descriptive version, but I shall also indicate how things might differ if the normative reading were adopted (though, given the uncertainty surrounding the interpretation of

[1] Writers who use this wording in quoting or summarizing Grice's definition include, among many others, Davis (1998, p.13, 2014), Levinson (2000, p.15, 171), Saul (2002a, p.231), and Soames (2009, p.26, p.299).

Grice's words, these remarks should be taken as tentative). With this preliminary point made, I shall now argue that the cooperative presumption has several counterintuitive consequences.

The first problem is that, assuming it is the hearer who is supposed to do the presuming (and it is unclear who else it could be), then this means that implicatures are dependent for their existence on something hearers do. This is counterintuitive. Usually, we do not think that the meaning of an utterance depends on the particular person hearing it, and this seems to go for non-conventional meaning as much as conventional. In trying to work out whether a speaker is implicating something, our sense as a hearer is that we are trying to ascertain a fact that is independent of us, not one that is dependent on what we ourselves do. This assumes the standard descriptive reading of the condition, of course, but a similar problem threatens to arise on the normative reading of it. For it is no more plausible to think that implicatures depend on what the hearers *ought* to do than on what they actually do. (Note that the normative claim is not that speakers are to *be* cooperative, but that they are *to be presumed* to be cooperative, where the presuming is to be done by (I assume) the hearer.)[2] Whether or not a hearer ought to presume that a speaker is being cooperative plausibly depends on what the hearer believes about the speaker. If they believe that the speaker is trying to mislead them, then they ought not to presume that they are being cooperative. But this means that whether or not the cooperative presumption holds in any given case, and thus whether or not there is an implicature, depends on facts about the hearer.

A second problem is that the cooperative presumption has the consequence that if the speaker is *not* presumed to be cooperative (or *ought* not to be) — say, because the hearer has reason to think they are lying — then the speaker cannot be implicating something. And this seems wrong. Davis gives the following examples (Davis 1998, p.116):

(1) Karen: Were you out with Jennifer last night?
George: I was out drinking with the boys.

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[2] Compare 'The prisoner is to be watched closely', which is the passive form of the statement that someone should watch the prisoner closely.

(2) Alice: Do you like my new dress?
Brett: I like all your dresses.

Karen may suspect, or even know, that George is trying to deceive her, and therefore not presume that he is observing the CP. Nevertheless, she will still interpret his words as carrying an implicature to the effect that he was not out with Jennifer. Similarly, Alice may believe that Brett is merely being polite, and thus not cooperative (in the sense that involves being truthful); yet she will still interpret him as implicating that he likes her new dress. Indeed, a speaker can openly *refuse* to cooperate, yet still implicate something (Sterelny 1982, p.189). Rather than answering Alice's question, Brett might try to change the subject by saying 'Is that the time?'. Though this utterance is clearly not cooperative, it still carries an implicature: namely, that it is late and that Brett must leave (and perhaps that he does not wish to talk about Alice's dress).

This problem with the cooperative presumption can be stated in a more general way. People often use implicature in order to *mislead*. They say something that is strictly true but that implicates a falsehood, hoping to get their hearer to believe the falsehood without having actually said anything untrue. (This, of course, is what Mr Bronston was accused of doing in the case discussed in Chapter 1.) Now in itself this is not incompatible with Grice's definition. The cooperative presumption does not say that speakers *are* cooperative, only that they are *presumed* to be (or ought to be presumed to be). However, there is still a difficulty for Grice. For it is common knowledge that people often implicate falsehoods, and when we detect an implicature we may wonder whether we can trust it. If I ask my son, 'Did you eat all the chocolates?' and get the reply, 'I ate some of them', I might wonder whether I can trust the implication that he did not eat them all. Yet on Grice's view, questions of this sort should not arise. Given the cooperative presumption, if one ceases to regard a speaker as being cooperative (or has good reason to think one ought not to regard them as being cooperative), then one should cease to regard them as implicating anything. In interpreting an utterance, the only options should be that it carries no implicature or that it carries a sincere implicature, which the speaker believes to be true (though it might, of course,

actually be false). But in fact we can, and often do, interpret utterances in a third way, as carrying insincere implicatures.

It might be suggested that we could avoid this problem by weakening the CP. For example, we might say that an utterance is cooperative if it is informative, relevant, and suitably expressed, regardless of whether or not the speaker believes it to be true or has evidence for it. (That is, we might drop the commitment to the maxim of Quality.) The problem with this, however, is that it would threaten to undermine the second condition of Grice's definition, determinacy, which is that there should be a *unique* proposition required to preserve the cooperative presumption. For if all that cooperativeness requires is informativeness, relevance, and appropriate expression, then this condition will be met in few cases, if any. In general, if 'p' is an informative, relevant, well-expressed contribution to a conversation, then 'It is not the case that p' would be an equally informative, relevant, and well-expressed contribution. So the supposition that the speaker believes the latter would preserve the presumption of cooperation just as well as the supposition that they believe the former, and thus neither of them could be singled out as *required* to preserve the presumption.

It is likely that any other attempted weakening of the CP cooperation would suffer from similar problems. As we shall see in the next sub-section, there are problems with the determinacy clause as it stands, and weakening the notion of cooperation would only make these worse. Besides, even if a weaker notion of cooperation were adopted, the cooperative presumption would still fail for cases where the speaker blatantly fails to cooperate by changing the subject.

Another problem case for the cooperative presumption is monologue, in which there is no audience at all and hence no one to make the presumption (or to be under an obligation to make it). Grice's definition implies that in such cases speakers cannot implicate at all, and Grice explicitly endorses this conclusion:

> I take it as being obvious that insofar as the presence of implicature rests on the character of one or another kind of conversational enterprise, it will rest on the character of concerted rather than solitary talk production. Genuine monologues are free from speaker's implication. (Grice 1989, p.369).

However, this is counter-intuitive. Suppose Inspector Clouseau is talking to himself, trying to reason out the chauffeur's motives. 'The chauffeur is clearly not the murderer', he says, 'But some of his statements were lies... Perhaps he is covering up for the real murderer.' Intuitively, his second sentence carries the implicature that not all of the chauffeur's statements were lies. Similarly, in his reasoning Clouseau might employ figures of speech which depend on implicature, such as metaphor or irony. He might say to himself, 'Maria Gambrelli cannot be the murderer; she is a saint!' — meaning that she is virtuous, not that she has been canonized. Grice might reply that Clouseau's reasoning does not constitute a *genuine* monologue; perhaps in this case Clouseau is his own hearer, or there is an imagined hearer. But if this is not a genuine monologue, then it is not clear what would count as one.

It might be suggested that Grice could accept the possibility of implicature in monologue if he were to allow that the presumption of cooperation can be made by speakers themselves. However, this would threaten to make the first clause of his definition of implicature redundant. For speakers will always (and probably should always) presume that they are being cooperative *with themselves*.

A final problem with the cooperative presumption is that in making implicature hearer-dependent, it also seems to make it hearer-*relative*. Suppose speaker S has two hearers, A and B. S says that p, aiming to implicate that q and thinking that A and B will realize this. A has no reason to distrust S, and therefore presumes (and ought to presume) that S is being cooperative. B, however, has been told (on seemingly good authority, that S is untrustworthy, and therefore does not presume (and ought not to presume) that S is cooperative. Has S implicated that q? Assuming the other conditions are met, it seems that they have done so as far as A is concerned but not as far as B is concerned. But this would mean that implicature is hearer-relative — something which Grice's definition does not acknowledge or allow for.

*1.2 Problems with determinacy and calculability.*

Grice's second condition for the existence of an implicature with content q is that the supposition that the speaker believes q is required to preserve the cooperative

presumption. This condition is supplemented by the Calculability Assumption, according to which a hearer can work out that this supposition is required from general principles and background knowledge.

The first thing to say here is that this further extends the hearer-dependency of implicature. If the supposition that the speaker thinks that q is required in order to make their utterance consistent with the presumption that they are following the CP, then if the hearer has not identified q, they cannot consistently continue to presume the speaker to be observing the CP (and surely ought not to either). But according to (1), that presumption is necessary for the existence of the implicature. Thus, it seems, the identification of an implicature by the hearer is necessary for the existence of the implicature itself. This again is counterintuitive. Common sense tells us that a hearer may fail to spot an implicature. A third party, listening to our account of an earlier conversation, may alert us to an implicature we had missed. ('How could you be so silly?', we might say to a friend, 'He was implying that he wanted to ask you out!') Likewise, common sense tells us that a hearer might believe that a speaker is implicating something without being able to work out exactly what. (I shall give an example shortly.) It may be objected that this is an uncharitable reading of Grice's definition, but it follows from the wording as it stands, and it is in line with the hearer-dependency of implicature indicated by condition (1).

Another problem with the determinacy condition is the role it gives to the demands of consistency. The condition says that a speaker S implicates q in saying p only if one must suppose that S thinks that q in order to make the claim that S said p consistent with the claim that S is observing the CP. The problem is that such a supposition, attributing a specific belief to S, will *never* be required; a hearer can always reconcile the two claims simply by supposing that S believes (and is trying to communicate) *some*, unidentified, proposition that would be a cooperative contribution to the conversation.[3] The demand for consistency would never push us to go beyond this general supposition — with the consequence that no one ever implicates anything specific! Obviously, this is not what Grice intended — though, again, it follows from his wording. To get the intended result,

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[3] Thanks to Keith Frankish, who pointed this out to me.

the required supposition should be one that does not merely make S's saying that p consistent with their being cooperative, but one that *explains how* it manifests their cooperativeness — what cooperative contribution it makes. That is, (2) should be something like the following:

> (2') the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, *q* is required to explain how his saying or making as if to say p (or doing so in *those* terms) reflects his presumed observance of the CP.

Having noted this, for convenience I shall continue to use Grice's original wording in what follows; none of the points I make will be affected by this.

Further problems arise from the Calculability Assumption. As we saw in the previous chapter, this states that for an utterance U to carry an implicature, q, it must be possible to arrive at the supposition that the speaker believes that q by a process of inference from information mutually available to speaker and hearer, including the CP and its maxims, the conventional meanings of the words used and the identity of any references involved, the context of the utterance, and appropriate background knowledge. This assumption has been the subject of much discussion, and a large number of problem cases have been described, in which a Gricean calculation appears to produce the wrong result — either predicting an implicature that intuitively isn't there (a false positive, as Davis calls it; 1998, p.63), or failing to predict one that intuitively is there (a false negative). The latter cases are the more problematic ones for Grice, since Grice does not hold that calculability is *sufficient* for implicature (condition 3, mutual knowledge, must be met too), but only that it is necessary. The hard cases for Grice are ones where a hearer believes that an implicature is present (and may even be able to identify it) but cannot calculate it by Gricean means. Grice must deny that there is any implicature in such cases, but, as we shall see, this is often highly counterintuitive. I shall not summarize this literature here (for a careful presentation of many problem cases, see Davis 1998, Chapters 2–3). Rather, I shall focus on certain core cases that highlight fundamental problems with the Calculability Assumption. (In addition, some problems concerning the calculability of *generalized* implicatures will be considered in Chapter 5.)

One problem lies with the starting point of the calculation process. According to Grice, the process begins when a hearer detects an apparent violation of the CP — when a speaker says something that, taken literally, flouts one or more of the conversational maxims. The problem is that in some cases it may not be clear whether or not a speaker is doing this. Some utterances can be taken either literally or figuratively, and yet be equally cooperative either way. (Davis calls this 'the rhetorical figure problem'; Davis 1998, pp.65–70.) For example, suppose Danny has taken Candy to the cinema to see Quentin Tarantino's latest violent action movie. Throughout the movie Candy sits silent and emotionless. When it is over, the following exchange takes place:

(3) Danny: What did you think of the movie?
Candy: It was sublime and beautiful.

How should Danny interpret Candy's reply, given the assumption that she is observing the CP? Intuitively, there are two options: Candy might be speaking literally, or she might be being ironic — saying the opposite of what she believes (flouting the maxim of Quality) in order to implicate that the movie was brutal and ugly. Either message would be an informative and relevant reply to Danny's question, so the assumption that Candy is observing the CP does not distinguish between the two interpretations. Given Candy's lack of response during the movie, the context of the conversation does not help to decide between them either. It might be argued that further contextual information or background knowledge could settle the matter. For example, if Danny knows that Candy dislikes violent action movies and was reluctant to see this one, then he might suspect she is being ironic. But even so, Candy might still be speaking literally. She might have been so impressed by Tarantino's film that she had changed her mind about action movies. And if Danny himself thinks that the film really was sublime and beautiful, then he might regard this as an equally plausible reading of Candy's remark.

It is true that there might be further items of information that would settle the matter. Suppose that Candy did in fact intend her words to be taken ironically (and believed that Danny could work this out). And suppose Danny, who knows Candy well, senses this, and concludes that she thinks the movie was brutal and ugly.

Still, this does not mean that the implicature is calculable in Grice's sense. For Danny can work out what Candy thinks from the literal meaning of her words together with the fact that she meant them ironically, without appealing to the CP at all. Since the calculation does not depend on the assumption that Candy is observing the CP, it does not show that the supposition that Candy thinks the movie was brutal and ugly is required in order to preserve the assumption that she is observing the CP.[4] This is not surprising. Since her utterance would be cooperative under both literal and figurative readings, the assumption that she is being cooperative cannot help Danny decide which interpretation to prefer — which means that a Gricean calculation is not possible.

Since Grice holds that calculability is necessary for implicature, he must deny that there is an implicature in this case; the ironic reading is not required, so there is no irony. This clashes with our intuition that there might be an implicature, with Candy's intentions that there should be one, and with Danny's conclusion that there was one. The example here involves irony, but similar examples could be generated for other figures of speech — understatement, overstatement, metaphor, and so on.

A second type of problem case is one where a Gricean calculation can at best show that *something* is being implicated without being able to identify *what*. Consider the following example (based on an actual exchange between the author and a former colleague). Jill enters her workplace and greets a colleague Finn, whom she hasn't seen for several days:

(4) Jill: How are you feeling?
Finn: I need to find Suleiman again.

Jill knows that Suleiman is someone Finn met on a recent holiday in Turkey. Finn has mentioned him several times and shown her a photo of him. So she knows the

[4] Davis makes the same point: if facts about the figures of speech speakers are using are treated as part of the context of their utterances, then implicatures can be calculated directly from this context and what is said, without establishing that they are required to maintain the cooperative presumption (Davis 1998, p.70).

reference of ‘Suleiman’. But she thinks it is unlikely that Finn literally means that he needs to find this person again, and, even if he does, the information is not relevant to her question. Now Jill knows that Finn has a liking for non-literal uses of speech, so she suspects that he is implicating something. And she can confirm this by Gricean reflections. Finn’s utterance appears uncooperative, violating the maxims of Relation and Quantity. However, Jill thinks it is unlikely that Finn is being uncooperative or that he has produced an uncooperative utterance by mistake, so she infers that Finn means to convey some relevant information, and that he thought she could and would work out what this was. However, Jill cannot do this. She can infer that the relevant information must concern Finn’s state of physical or mental well-being, and perhaps further that he is lacking something that Suleiman could provide. But she cannot move beyond this, since she has no idea *what* Suleiman could provide. She cannot identify the relevant attribute of Suleiman.[5]

It may be objected that Jill lacks some crucial background knowledge. If she knew more about Suleiman and Finn’s relationship with him, then she could make the calculation. But even if Jill did have more background knowledge, she still might not be able to make the calculation. Suppose she knows that Suleiman is an amusing conversationalist, a skilled masseur, a good cook, and that he makes herbal teas to treat headaches. Then, perhaps, she can narrow down what Finn is implicating. It may be that Finn is bored and wants to be diverted, or that his back is hurting, or that he is hungry, or that he has a headache. But, even so, Jill cannot work out *which*; she doesn’t know which of Suleiman’s attributes is the relevant one.

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[5] In the actual conservation on which this example is based, my colleague said ‘I need to find myself a Suleiman’, and in previous presentations of this material I used this form of words. I have changed the wording in the present version in order to avoid the objection that in the phrase ‘a Suleiman’, ‘Suleiman’ serves, in the speaker’s idiolect, as a common noun (meaning, say, ‘an interesting conversational partner’) and thus that if the hearer knew its literal meaning they would be able to work out the implicature. The objection does not apply to the present version, where ‘Suleiman’ is a singular term. (Thanks to André Gallois for drawing my attention to this point.)

Of course, there is information that would allow Jill to work out what Finn is implicating. She could simply ask Finn why Suleiman would help. If he mentions Suleiman's conversational talents, then Jill will conclude that Finn is implicating that he is bored. But this would still not establish the sort of rational connection between literal meaning and implicature that Grice requires. Even if Jill could now work out that Finn was expressing the belief that he is bored, she still wouldn't be in a position to establish that he *must* have been doing this (or even that it is probable that he was), in order to preserve the assumption that he was observing the CP. For, given the range of Suleiman's talents, Finn's utterance would have been equally cooperative if it had expressed the belief that his back hurt, or the belief that he was hungry, or the belief that he had a headache.

Again, then, it seems that Grice must deny that there is an implicature here. If a Gricean calculation cannot identify a unique belief that must be attributed to Finn to make sense of his utterance, then the determinacy condition fails to hold and there is no implicature, despite the fact that Gricean considerations would lead a hearer to believe that he is implicating *something*.

It might be objected that Grice allows that implicatures can be indeterminate. He writes:

> Since, to calculate a conversational implicature is to calculate what has to be supposed in order to preserve the supposition that the Cooperative Principle is being observed, and since there may be various possible specific explanations, a list of which may be open, the conversational implicatum in such cases will be a disjunction of such specific explanations; and if the list of these is open, the implicatum will have just the same kind of indeterminacy that many actual implicata do in fact seem to possess. (Grice 1975/1989, pp.39–40)

Thus, since there are various equally plausible explanations for Finn's utterance (that Finn is bored, that his back is hurting, that he is hungry, that he has a headache), perhaps his utterance should be interpreted as the disjunction of these claims: that Finn is bored or has a sore back or is hungry or has a headache.

There are problems with this suggestion, however, which illustrate a general difficulty for the determinacy condition. It is true, as Grice notes, that many implicata are indeterminate; many metaphors, for example, are effective precisely because they express an open-ended range of related thoughts (Martinich 1991). However, as Davis points out, a metaphor is not equivalent to a disjunction of the thoughts it expresses. We would not regard a metaphor as appropriate if only one of the many thoughts it expressed were true, even though that would be enough to make the disjunction true. 'My love is like a red rose' would not be an apt metaphor if its subject possessed only one of the many properties which a human might share with a rose — say, being sweet-smelling — while being utterly unlike a rose in every other respect (Davis 1998, pp.71–2). Moreover, it is very unlikely that a speaker who uses a metaphor believes that their hearer will construct a disjunction of all the ideas their words express and attribute a belief in it to them. Yet if they do not, then the determinacy clause will not hold and there will be no implicature. For example, in Finn's case it is very unlikely that he is seeking to convey a complex disjunctive proposition to the effect that he has at least one of a series of needs, and thinks Jill can work this out. And even if he were, it would be hard to reconcile the supposition that he is doing so with the presumption that he is being cooperative. Since Finn must know which of the disjuncts is true (all the claims are about his own feelings), it would be uncooperative of Finn not to indicate which of them it is (violating the maxim of Quantity). And if more than one of the disjuncts is true, then it would be uncooperative not to indicate that their conjunction was true (again violating the maxim of Quantity).

Another problem with Grice's approach is that it makes some implicatures dependent on the hearer's state of knowledge. Suppose Finn wants to implicate that he is bored. He thinks that all Jill knows about Suleiman is that he is a good conversationalist, and so believes she will work out what he means. And if that were all Jill knew about Suleiman, then the implicature would succeed. Jill presumes that Finn is observing the CP, and, given what she knows about Suleiman, the only way to make sense of his utterance is to suppose that he is indicating that he is bored. And Finn believes that she can work this out. So the three conditions are met, and Finn successfully implicates that he is bored. Now consider another case. Everything is the same except that Jill knows more about

Suleiman: that he is a skilled masseur, a good cook, and so on. Now there are other equally plausible suppositions available to Jill, and the disjunctive reading is required. But since Finn does not know that Jill has this additional knowledge, he still believes she will suppose that he is indicating that he is bored, and he doesn't even consider the disjunctive reading. So the determinacy condition does not hold, and nothing is implicated at all. This is counterintuitive, and it leaves us with a puzzle as to what to say about cases where a speaker has multiple hearers. What if Finn's remark had been addressed to a group of people, each of whom had a different level of knowledge about Suleiman? For Finn to successfully implicate that he was bored, would it be sufficient that one of his hearers was required to attribute that belief to him (given their particular background knowledge) or must all of them be required to do so (given their different levels of background knowledge)? Neither option seems plausible. It seems too weak to allow that one hearer is sufficient (especially as that hearer might be the one with the least background knowledge), but too strong to require that all are necessary, since then the addition of one new poorly informed or over-informed hearer could undermine an implicature that everyone else agreed existed.

*1.3 Problems with mutual knowledge*

The third of Grice's conditions for the existence of an implicature with content q is that the speaker should think (and expect the hearer to think that they think) that the hearer can work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition that the speaker believes q is required to make their utterance consistent with the presumption that they are observing the CP. (For simplicity I shall omit the parenthesis in what follows; nothing will turn on it.) Again, there are problems with this condition.

One problem is that the condition requires speakers to possess a sophisticated understanding of the role that (according to Grice) cooperation plays in the generation of implicatures. Yet, it seems, young children can implicate things without having this understanding. When my five-year old son says he ate some of the chocolates or asks me if I can find his shoes, he implicates things, though I doubt if he believes I can work out what these things are from the presumption that he is observing the CP (despite his having overheard me talk about this at great length!). Likewise, a person can doubt that hearers can derive implicatures from

the CP without thereby becoming unable to implicate. Wayne Davis notes that his rejection of Gricean theory has not reduced his power to implicate things (Davis 1998, p.121).

Moreover, even if speakers do sometimes form the beliefs Grice mentions, it seems possible to implicate without them. I implicate things to my five-year old (for example, in saying that he can have *some* of the sweets), without believing that he can work out that the supposition that I believe that he may not have all the sweets is required in order to preserve the assumption that I am being cooperative. And though I do believe that he can grasp my meaning intuitively, I do not believe that he can do this in the 'quick' way Grice describes, which involves having the ability to construct, or at least recognize, the full Gricean calculation (see the discussion in Chapter 2, section 3).

There are many other cases where a speaker implicates something without believing that their hearer can calculate or intuitively grasp the implicatum. A speaker might say something with the intention that it should carry an implicature that they do not expect their hearer to recognize. Talking to a particularly annoying acquaintance, I might say something that carries a subtle and insulting implicature just for my own satisfaction and with the intention that it should go over my acquaintance's head. Or a speaker might say something with the *hope* that their hearer will get the implicature but without being confident that they will or even believing that they won't. (Think of a relative talking to a coma patient in the hope of triggering a response.) Or a person might say something without realizing that it carries an implicature until it is pointed out to them later — an embarrassing situation with which most of us are familiar. Or, finally, as noted earlier, one might use implicatures in a monologue, where there is no hearer involved at all.

It might be objected that the beliefs Grice mentions need not be conscious ones, and that in the cases mentioned the speakers have *nonconscious* beliefs of the required kind, which in some cases conflict with their conscious beliefs (for the view that we have separate conscious and nonconscious systems of belief, whose contents may conflict, see, for example, Frankish 2004). However, without independent evidence for the existence of implicit beliefs with the contents in question, this looks like an ad hoc move designed to save the theory. Moreover, it

is hard to see how the suggestion could be extended to cases of unintended or solitary implicature.

## 2. A normative reading

Many of the problem cases considered above are ones in which Grice's theory of conversational implicature seems to conflict with our intuitions as to whether an implicature is present or what its content is. But it may be that the conflict is only apparent. Perhaps the theory and the intuitions concern different things. In particular, it may be that our intuitions concern what speakers *intend* to implicate by their utterances or what hearers *take* utterances to implicate, whereas Grice's theory concerns what utterances actually *do* implicate, in a normative sense. If so, then many of the supposed problems for Grice will disappear. This approach has been proposed by Saul (Saul 2002a), and I shall look at it in this section of the chapter.

### *2.1 Speaker meaning, implicature, and an extended taxonomy*

Saul proposes that Grice's notion of conversational implicature is intended to capture a normative aspect of language use, parallel to his notion of sentence meaning. Grice holds that for a speaker to succeed in saying p by uttering sentence S, it is not enough for *the speaker* to mean that p (to have the right communicative intentions); it must also be the case that the *sentence S* means that p — which, for Grice, is, roughly, to say that people typically use it to mean p. The sentence's meaning must match the speaker's meaning. Similarly, Saul proposes, for a speaker to implicate that q it is not enough for them to mean q; they must also produce an utterance that implicates q, where this is not determined by the speaker's intentions. The idea is that as speakers we do not have complete control over what we implicate, any more than we have complete control over what we say. We cannot implicate whatever we like by a given utterance, any more than we can say whatever we like by it. (I cannot say that I am dyslexic by uttering the words 'I am dialectic', even if that is what I mean to say, and even if I think that that is what the sentence means.) To implicate that q by uttering S, an objective, normative condition must be met as well as a subjective, psychological one. However, this normative condition cannot be that S is typically used to implicate

q (as the parallel with sentence meaning would suggest), since many implicatures are context dependent. So, Saul suggests, Grice identifies it instead with the meaning that the hearer is required to attribute to the speaker in order to preserve the assumption that the speaker is being cooperative. This may vary from context to context, but it is not controlled by the speaker's intentions, and so gives the required objective condition (Saul 2002a, p.241).

On this reading, implicature is not a form of speaker meaning, and we must reject the view (which Saul suggests is close to being an orthodoxy) that for Grice what a speaker *means* divides into what they say and what they implicate. (This is the view by defended Stephen Neale, discussed in Chapter 2.) Saul argues that this is an implausible reading of Grice, given that his definition of speaker meaning is framed wholly in terms of the speaker's intentions, whereas his definition of implicature focuses on what *the hearer* presumes and supposes. It follows that a hearer's attitudes cannot constrain what a speaker means but can constrain what they implicate, which suggests that the two can diverge. Saul argues that one can mean things that one does not implicate (and does not say either), and she suggests that it may be possible to implicate things one does not mean.

Saul illustrates the former case (meanings that are not implicated) with variants of an example used by Grice, in which a philosophy professor is writing a reference letter for a student who is applying for an academic job (Grice 1975/1989, p.33). In the first variant, the professor is writing a reference for Fred, who is a poor philosopher and a thief. She doesn't wish to say this explicitly, however, so she devotes her reference letter to praising Fred's genuine typing skills, intending to implicate that Fred is a poor philosopher. However, her audience does not interpret her letter in the way she expects. Fred is in fact applying for a typing job, and the employer takes the letter literally. In the second variant, the professor writes a similar letter for Cedric. Again she focuses on irrelevant matters, such as Cedric's typing skills, intending to implicate that Cedric is a poor philosopher. Again, she fails, however. For the appointing committee have been told that she disapproves of writing reference letters, and they therefore assume that she is simply being uncooperative, and do not search for an implicated meaning. In both cases, then, the speaker means something that is not successfully implicated (and not said either) (Saul 2002a, p.230, pp.234–5).

As a possible case of unmeant implicature, Saul uses another variant of the same example. This time, although the student, Roland, is a poor philosopher, the professor likes him and wants him to get the job. So she writes a long and detailed letter containing lots of information about Roland's academic career but no judgements on his ability. Since the letter lacks important information, it can be read as cooperative only on the supposition that the professor thinks that Roland is a poor philosopher, and the professor believes that the audience can work this out. So the letter implicates that Roland is a poor philosopher (in the example it is the letter that implicates rather than any particular sentence in it). However, the professor does not *intend* the audience to form this belief; in fact, she hopes that they will read the letter superficially and form a positive impression of Roland. So she does not intend the audience to form the belief that Roland is a poor student and so does not *mean* that, though her letter implicates it (Saul 2002a, p.237–8). If this is right, then speakers can mean things that they do not implicate (or say either) and implicate things that they do not mean. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

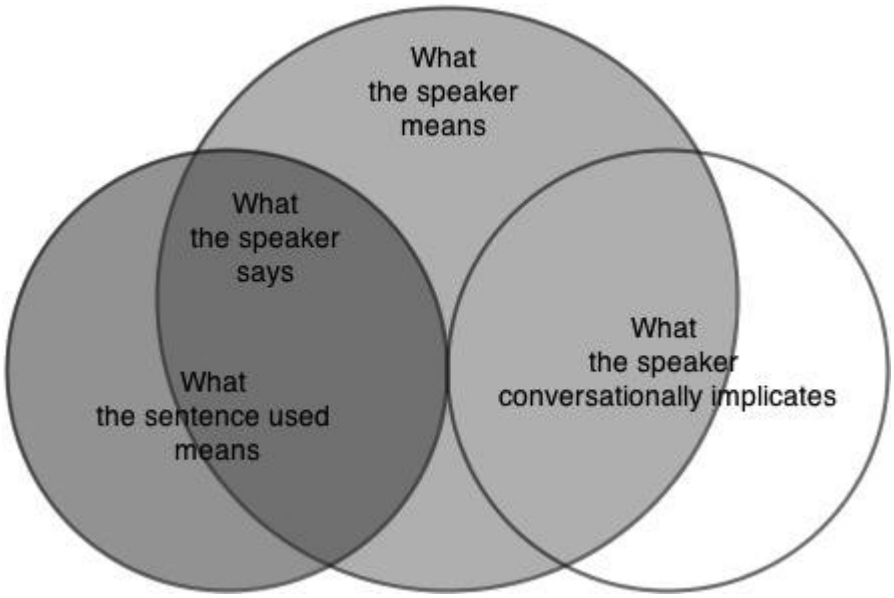


**Figure 2:** The relation between speaker meaning, sentence meaning, and conversational implicature, on Saul's reading of Grice. A given proposition may fall in any of the circles or their defined overlaps. (The Roland case would fall in the unshaded area on the far right.)

Saul notes that if there are aspects of meaning that are neither said nor implicated, then Grice's taxonomy is incomplete. To rectify this, Saul introduces the notion of *utterer-implicature*. The definition of utterer-implicature is the same as that of conversational implicature, except that it is not necessary for conditions (1) (the cooperative presumption) and (2) (determinacy) to hold, but only for the speaker to *think* they hold.[6] That is (1) and (2) are replaced by:

> (1*) *The speaker thinks that* he is presumed to be following the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle.
>
> (2*) *The speaker thinks that* the supposition that he [the speaker] is aware that, or thinks that, *q*, is required to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with this presumption.
>
> (From Saul 2002a, p.235)

In the Fred and Cedric cases, the professor utterer-implicates that their student is a poor philosopher, without conversationally implicating it.

Saul also proposes a corresponding notion of *audience-implicature*, which replaces clauses (2) and (3) in the definition of conversational implicature with the following:

> (2A) *The audience believes that* the supposition that he [the speaker] is aware that, or thinks that, *q*, is required to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with this presumption.
>
> (3A) *The audience takes the speaker to think that* it is within the audience's competence to work out that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required. [7]
>
> (From Saul 2002a, p.242)

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[6] Saul adopts the usual descriptive phrasing of the cooperative presumption, rather than Grice's own normative one, and I shall follow her in this in what follows.

[7] Saul says 'the supposition mentioned in (2)' but to make the definition more self-contained we could change this to 'the supposition mentioned in (2A)'.

As an example of an audience-implicature, Saul uses another reference-letter case. This time the professor is writing a letter for a student, Felix, who she thinks is applying for a job as a typist. Although Felix is an excellent philosopher, the professor says nothing about his philosophical abilities and writes about his typing skills and punctuality. However, Felix is in fact applying for a philosophy post, and the audience interpret the letter as implicating that Felix is a poor philosopher. This is not a genuine conversational implicature, since, although conditions (1) and (arguably) (2) are met, condition (3) is not.[8] However, it is an audience-implicature, since (2A) and (3A) hold (Saul 2002a, p.242).

As Saul notes, an utterer-implicature is (roughly) what the speaker is trying to implicate, and an audience-implicature is what the audience takes the speaker to be implicating (Saul 2002a, p.243). Thus, if a claim q is both utterer-implicated and audience-implicated, then it will have been successfully communicated. This might suggest that a conversational implicature is simply a combination of the two: q is conversationally implicated if it is both utterer-implicated and audience-implicated. Saul rejects this suggestion, however, arguing that something can be conversationally implicated without being audience-implicated. She illustrates this with two final examples, in which a professor writes reference letters for two students, Trigby and Wesley. In both cases, the professor seeks to implicate that the student is a poor philosopher by writing about irrelevant matters, such as their rock-climbing skills or wide knowledge of illegal drugs. The letters can be read as cooperative only on the assumption that the professor thinks that the students are poor philosophers and believes the audience will realize this, so the conditions for conversational implicature are met. However, the audiences fail to interpret the letters as intended. In Trigby's case, they see that the supposition that Trigby is a

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[8] (2) is met if it is assumed that the writer understood who they were addressing and why. Although this assumption may be false (as in the Felix case), it seems reasonable for hearers to make it when deciding how to interpret an utterance. If it is not made, then a non-literal reading of an utterance will be required only if there is no conceivable misunderstanding on the speaker's part which would make the utterance cooperative on a literal reading — with the consequence that non-literal readings are required far less often than we think.

poor philosopher is needed, but don't realize that the professor intended them to work this out. (They think she was trying to trick them into forming a positive opinion of Trigby.) Hence (3A) is not met. In Wesley's case, the audience read the letter quickly, notice some positive words, and think that the professor is recommending Wesley. Here (2A) is not met. Thus in these cases the claim that the student is poor is conversationally implicated but not audience-implicated (Saul 2002a, p.244).

Saul uses the Wesley case to illustrate what the role of conversational implicature actually is, on the interpretation she proposes. Suppose the audience (the hiring committee) complain that the professor misled them about Wesley. It would not be sufficient, Saul argues, for the professor (who in the examples is Saul herself) to reply that she *utterer-implicated* that Wesley was a poor student — that she *believed* that the supposition that she thought he was a poor student was required in order to make sense of her letter. For if her belief was not justified, then she could still be blamed for the miscommunication.

> Saying that I utterer-implicated that Wesley is a poor philosopher is not much of a defense: I could have utterer-implicated that Wesley was Elvis if I was crazy enough to suppose that attributing this belief to me was required to make sense of my utterance, and that the audience could work this out. (Saul 2002a, p.244)

But (Saul continues) it *would* be a good defence to claim that she *conversationally implicated* that Wesley was a poor student:

> What I can do, however, is maintain that I conversationally implicated it: It *was* required in order to understand me as cooperative, and my audience *was* capable of working it out. (ibid.)

By conversationally implicating something, Saul argues, one has *made it available* to one's audience, and thereby fulfilled one's communicative responsibilities in the matter — whether or not one's audience actually grasps it. Grice's notion of

conversational implicature, Saul concludes, is designed precisely to play this normative role.

*2.2 An enriched Gricean framework*

By treating (conversational) implicature as a normative notion, and by introducing the additional concepts of utterer-implicature and audience implicature, Saul enriches the Gricean framework and enables it to avoid some of the problems discussed earlier. In particular, the enriched framework provides at least partial solutions to the problems concerning determinacy and calculability. If we understand implicature as normative, then it becomes easier to accept that there is no implicature present in cases like those of Candy and Finn, where calculability fails. We can agree that the utterer has not done enough to make the information available. Our intuitions that there is an implicature in place in these cases (or that there is a more determinate one than we can calculate) can be vindicated by the existence of appropriate utterer-implicatures. Thus, Candy utterer-implicated that Tarantino's movie was ugly and brutal, and Finn utterer-implicated that he was bored, since they believed that those interpretations were required to make sense of their utterances as cooperative and they thought their hearers could work that out. However, they were wrong about this, since in neither case was the intended meaning required in the Gricean sense. Candy's utterance did not require a non-literal reading at all, and although Finn's did require such a reading, he did not do enough to narrow down the possible non-literal meanings to the one he had in mind. Thus, neither conversationally implicated the things they utterer-implicated.

However, Saul's account doesn't resolve all of the problems for Grice. First, it does not address the problems that arise from condition (1) (the cooperative presumption). As noted earlier, it is plausible to think that an utterance can carry an implicature even if the hearer does not (or should not) presume the speaker to be being cooperative (for example, where the hearer thinks the speaker is trying to mislead them, or where the speaker is changing the subject or engaging in monologue). We might respond by saying that in such cases there is only an utterer-implicature, not a conversational one. That is, though (1) does not hold, (1*) does: the speaker *thinks* that he or she is presumed to be being cooperative. However, this is not adequate. For in many of the cases discussed earlier, even

(1*) will not hold: typically, speakers who openly change the subject or engage in monologue will not even *think* that their hearers presume them to be being cooperative.

Second, the enriched framework still faces the problems created by condition (3), mutual knowledge, which says (simplifying somewhat) that a speaker thinks that the hearer can work out the implicated message in the Gricean way. As we saw, intuitively it is possible for an utterance to carry an implicature even where this condition is not met (for example, where the speaker is a child, or where an implicature is intended to go over a hearer's head, or where the speaker is engaged in monologue or talking to a coma patient). And the enriched framework still cannot explain this. There cannot be an utterer-implicature in these cases any more than there can be a conversational one, since the definition of utterer-implicature includes condition (3) unchanged. Nor is it plausible to think that there is an audience-implicature. For an audience-implicature exists only if the audience thinks that condition (3) holds (that is, if they take the speaker to think that they can work out the implicated content in Gricean fashion) and in the problem cases discussed (where the speaker is a child, or the hearer uncomprehending or comatose or non-existent) this is no more likely than it is that condition (3) will actually hold.

## 3. Some modifications

Despite its attractions, there are also some difficulties for Saul's reading of Grice, and in this section I shall highlight these and propose some modifications to the definition of conversational implicature in order to bring it more in line with the normative view proposed by Saul. Although this means departing from the letter of Grice's account, the modified version will remain broadly faithful to his approach, and, as we shall see, the modifications will also remove some of the remaining problems for the Gricean framework mentioned in the first section.

### *3.1 The cooperative presumption revised*

The first difficulty concerns condition (1), which runs against the spirit of the normative reading. If implicating something involves *making it available* to one's hearer, then it should not depend on the *hearer's* doing something. A content might

be made available to a hearer even if they did nothing to pick it up — not even presuming that the speaker was being cooperative. From a normative perspective, it doesn't matter whether anyone actually makes the presumption that the utterer is being cooperative.[9] What matters is what is *rationally required* to make their utterance consistent with that presumption, and this is captured by (2) on its own, with slight rephrasing as follows:

> (I) (= 1 & 2 revised) The supposition that the speaker is aware that, or thinks that, *q*, is required to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with the presumption that he is observing the CP.

This suggests that if implicating involves making a content available, then we should revise its definition, dropping (1) altogether and replacing (2) with (I) above. This would be more consistent with the idea that the notion of implicature is a normative one. Moreover, it has the additional advantage that it removes all the problems for the Gricean framework arising from clause (1). On the modified view, a speaker can conversationally implicate something (make it available) no matter what attitude their audience takes towards them and even if there is no audience at all. (In the latter case, the content will be made available to merely *potential* hearers.)

*3.2 Mutual knowledge revised*

The second difficulty concerns condition (3), which also does not fit in well with the normative approach. If implicating something involves making it available according to an objective standard (fulfilling one's communicative responsibilities with regard to it), then there ought to be more to it than the speaker merely *believing* that certain conditions are met. Thus, when discussing clauses (2) and (2A), Saul points out that if a speaker is accused of not properly communicating a

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[9] A similar point holds on the 'to be presumed' reading of the cooperative presumption. Whether or not a speaker makes a piece of information available should not depend on the *hearer's* obligations.

piece of information, p, it would not be enough for them to reply that they had *believed* that attributing the belief that p to them was required in order to make sense of their utterance (Saul 2002a, p.244). If attributing that belief to them was not *in fact* required, then they had not made p available. Similarly, I suggest, it would not be enough for a speaker to say that they *believed* their audience could work out that attribution of the belief that p was required: their belief about their audience's abilities must be a reasonable one. To see this, consider another reference letter example. Again, the professor wants to implicate that one of her students, Dido, is a poor philosopher. This time, however, she tries a different tactic. She writes a glowing letter full of relevant details, but closes the letter with the sentence 'In closing, it is of the utmost importance to stress that I am a biscuit'. She believes that the only way to make sense of this surreal comment is as conveying the belief that all she has just written about Dido is unreliable, and she believes that her audience are able to work this out. It is not implausible to think she is right about the first point (how else could one make sense of the comment?), so the conditions for implicature are met (the message that Dido is a poor philosopher is required to make sense of the speaker's utterance and the speaker believes the audience can work this out). As it turns out, however, the professor has overestimated her audience's inferential abilities. Her tactic is too subtle for the hiring committee, who are simply baffled by the closing sentence. So although the conditions for implicature are met, the professor has not made the relevant information available, since she had a mistaken view about her audience's ability to work out what is required to make sense of her utterance. (This resembles Saul's Wesley case, where the audience read the professor's letter quickly and failed to work out that the intended meaning was required in order to make sense of it. However, in that case the professor was right to think that the audience could work out the intended meaning (they could have worked it out if they had read the letter more carefully), and responsibility for the failure of communication lay with the audience. In the Dido case, by contrast, the professor is wrong to think that the audience can work out that the intended meaning is required, and responsibility for the failure of communication lies with her. Thus, in the Wesley case the professor made her meaning available, whereas in the Dido case she did not.)

Since (3) is the cause of the problem here, this suggests that we should revise it so that it becomes a claim about what the audience *can* do, rather than about what the speaker *believes* they can do:

> (3') It is within the audience's competence to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (I) is required.

Together with the previous modification, this change has the effect of making the notions of utterer-implicature, audience-implicature, and conversational implicature more clearly parallel to each other: the first concerns what the utterer thinks is the case, the second concerns what the audience thinks is the case, and the third concerns what is in fact the case. Thus, an utterance U carries the utterance implicature q if *the utterer thinks* that the supposition that they think q is required to make sense of U and that the audience can work this out. U carries the audience-implicature that q if *the audience thinks* that the supposition that the utterer thinks that q is required to make sense of U and that the utterer thinks they can work this out. And U carries the conversational implicature q if the supposition that the utterer thinks that q *is in fact* required to make sense of U and the audience *can in fact* work this out. Or, more concisely, q is utterer-implicated if the utterer thinks U makes q available; q is audience-implicated if the audience thinks U makes q available, and q is conversationally implicated if U does make q available.

There are problems with this suggestion, however. If (3) was not demanding enough on speakers, the revised version, (3'), seems *too* demanding. For it would mean that an implicature could fail for reasons outside the speaker's control. A speaker might produce an utterance which is designed to implicate that q and which most hearers would interpret as implicating that q, yet fail to implicate that q because their actual hearer is unable to work out that q is implicated — say, because they are confused, ill, or suffering from some mental disability. A normative standard which requires speakers to take account of the specific abilities of individual hearers seems too strict. After all, on the normative reading, implicature is supposed to have a similar role to that of sentence meaning, and that is not relativized to individual hearers. Moreover, many of the original problems for condition (3) would still remain on the revised version. For example, it would

still be impossible to implicate something when talking to a coma patient or in monologue, or to implicate something that went over the hearer's head.

One option here would be to drop condition (3) altogether, and say that an utterance implicates a proposition q if the supposition that the speaker thinks that q is required to make sense of the utterance, regardless of whether the speaker thinks the audience can work this out or whether the audience can in fact work it out. This would of course solve all the problems arising from condition (3), and it seems to get at the core of Grice's account, as reflected in his briefer presentations of it.[10]

However, dropping (3) would again give us a rather loose normative standard, as the unrevised version of (3) did. There could be cases where a certain supposition is required to make sense of an utterance, but where it is beyond the scope of a typical audience to work this out, and in such cases the speaker would not have done enough to convey the supposition. The Dido reference letter serves again as an example. Perhaps the best option, then, would be to revise (3) further, so that it becomes a claim about what a typical, or normal, audience would be capable of:

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[10] For example:

> [W]hat is implicated is what it is required that one assume a speaker to think in order to preserve the assumption that he is observing the Cooperative Principle (and perhaps some conversational maxims as well), if not at the level of what is said, at least at the level of what is implicated. (Grice 1989, p.86)

and

> 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 a speaker in order to secure one or another of the following results; (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 … (Grice 1989, p.370)

> (II) (= 3 revised) It would be within the competence of a typical audience to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (I) is required.

(I call the revised claim (II) to match (I), which is our revised version of (1) and (2)). Here 'typical' means something like 'alert, averagely informed, competent adult speaker of the relevant language'. (This definition will do for the present, but in the next chapter I shall argue that we must define the typical hearer more narrowly, to take account of the background assumptions and other information on which the hearer is expected to draw.) This also has the advantage of avoiding the other problems for (3). A speaker can implicate things even if their hearer cannot calculate the implicatum or even if there is no hearer at all, provided a typical hearer could make the calculation. Thus, one can implicate something in monologue or while talking to a coma patient.

*3.3 Unmeant implicatures*

Another consequence of this revision of clause (3) is that there will be clear cases of unmeant implicatures. Although Saul suggests that there may be unmeant implicatures, she does not commit herself and says that the issues are 'incredibly tricky' (2002a, p.247 n.28). This is true so long as we stick with Grice's definition, with the original clause (3). On the one hand, if conversational implicature is the pragmatic parallel of sentence meaning, then it should be possible to produce utterances with implicatures one does not intend, just as it is possible to utter sentences with meanings one does not intend. On the other hand, it is not easy to think of cases where a speaker believes that their audience can work out that the supposition that they (the speaker) believe that q is required to make sense of their utterance *and yet* does not intend to express the belief that q. This is not to say that implicature *conceptually* requires intention. As we saw in the previous chapter, Grice's views on that are not clear. The point is that it is not easy to find *psychologically plausible* cases where a person fulfils the conditions for

implicating that q without also intending to communicate p. (Saul offers the Roland case as a possible example, but does so only tentatively.)[11]

The revised version of Grice's definition, with (II) instead of (3), avoids this problem. Since (II) does not make reference to what the speaker believes, there is no obstacle to a speaker's producing an utterance that carries an unmeant implicature. If a certain reading is required to make sense of a given utterance as cooperative, and if a typical audience would work out this meaning, then it is implicated, regardless of whether or not the speaker intended it.

This is, I suggest, an intuitively desirable result. The following example may help to illustrate this. A professor, Donald, phones a colleague, Rita, to ask her opinion of one of her former students, Omar, who has just applied to Donald's institution. As it happens, Rita thinks that Omar is an excellent philosopher. However, she also knows that he is an exceptionally kind, caring, and inspiring human being, who spends all his spare time on voluntary work and charitable activities, and on the spur of the moment she is so eager to say what a wonderful person Omar is that she forgets to say anything at all about his philosophical abilities. Donald interprets this failure to mention Omar's philosophical work as implicating that Omar is a poor philosopher, and decides to reject his application. Here I think we would intuitively say that Rita (or perhaps her utterance — see below) had implicated that Omar is a poor philosopher, and if she were later to reflect on what she had said, she might well come to that conclusion herself and feel guilty for misrepresenting Omar, albeit unintentionally. But Grice's definition does not support this intuitive conclusion, since clause (3) would not be met. Rita would not count as having implicated that Omar was a poor student, since she did not believe that Donald was able to work out that that belief must be attributed to her to preserve the supposition that she was being cooperative. (If she had believed that, she would have spoken very differently.) However, the revised definition, with (II) instead of (3), does support the intuitive conclusion, since it does not

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[11] To recap: The professor writes a reference letter that clearly implicates that Roland is a poor philosopher, yet she does not intend the hiring committee to form the belief that he is a poor philosopher, and hopes they will not notice the implicature (Saul 2002a).

mention Rita's beliefs at all. Since (plausibly) attributing to Rita the belief that Omar was a poor philosopher was required to uphold the presumption that she was observing the CP and following the maxims, and since it was within the power of a typical hearer to work that out, Rita (or her utterance) implicated that message.

Although implicatures like Rita's are unintended, the speaker may still be held responsible for them, since they neglected to consider the way in which their utterance would be understood. The recognition of the possibility of unmeant implicatures may have consequences for questions about the ethics of implicature.

## 4. Implicature and speaker meaning again

I now want to return to the role of speaker meaning in implicature. As we saw in the previous chapter, Grice does not clearly commit himself as to whether implicatures must also be meant, and we left the question open. However, Saul's normative reading, revised as proposed, suggests a way to resolve this issue, as I shall now explain.

### *4.1 Normative and psychological conditions for implicature*

Saul proposes that Grice's notion of implicature is intended to play a normative role, similar to that of sentence meaning. Now, for Grice, uttering a sentence which means that p (sentence meaning) is only one of two necessary and sufficient conditions for saying that p. The other condition is that the speaker must mean that p (speaker or utterer's meaning) — where this is a matter of the speaker being in a certain psychological state (having certain communicative intentions, as previously discussed). If the notion of implicature plays the same role as that of sentence meaning, then this suggests that for a speaker to implicate that q it is not enough for them to produce an utterance that implicates that q; in addition, the speaker must meet some psychological condition, parallel to having an appropriate speaker meaning (see Table 1).

But what is this psychological condition? One option would be to say that it is the existence of an utterer-implicature (in Saul's sense) with content q. Utterer-implicature is defined in terms of speaker's beliefs, so this is a psychological condition. However, it does not seem to be the right psychological condition. Roughly speaking, to say that a speaker S utterer-implicates q is to say that S thinks

that their utterance implicates q — that is, S thinks that the normative condition holds. But in the case of *saying* the two conditions are not related in this way. To say that a speaker S means that p is not to say that S believes that the sentence they utter means that p. Speaker meaning is a matter of having certain communicative intentions, and it is more basic than sentence meaning and independent of it.

A better view, I propose, is that the psychological condition is simply that S means that q in Grice's standard sense — that is (roughly), S intends to get their hearer H to believe that q (or to believe that S believes that q) and to achieve this in part by getting H to recognize this very intention. As we saw in the previous chapter, there are several reasons to think that Grice held that implicatures need to be backed by speaker meanings, and these reasons all support the present proposal. Thus, I propose that the conditions for the performance of speech acts with, respectively, conventional and nonconventional meaning are as in Table 1. (For simplicity, I have assumed that conventional meaning is limited to what is said, and nonconventional meaning to what is conversationally implicated; the table could easily be extended to accommodate conventional implicature and nonconversational nonconventional implicature.)

| | **Act** | **Psychological condition** | **Normative Condition** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Conventional meaning** | S says that p | S means that p (speaker meaning) | S uses a sentence that means p (sentence meaning) |
| **Nonconventional meaning** | S implicates that q | S means that q | S produces an utterance that meets the Gricean conditions for implicating q |

**Table 1**: Saying and implicating. A psychological condition and a normative condition are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for each act.

Of course, as we also saw in the previous chapter, there are also reasons to think that Grice held that implicatures do *not* need to be backed by speaker meanings. However, from our present position we can explain this, as I shall now show.

*4.2 Speaker implicature and utterance implicature*

If what has been said in the previous section is correct, then a speaker might meet the normative condition for implicating that q without meeting the psychological one. In the case of conventional meaning, Grice holds that a speaker says that p only if both conditions are met, so by parallel, we should say that a speaker implicates that q only if both relevant conditions are met. In the case where only the normative condition is met, we might say that the *utterance*, but not the *speaker*, implicates that q. (The parallel with conventional meaning would suggest that we should say it is the *sentence* that implicates. But although this might be appropriate for generalized implicatures, where the same sentence generates the same implicature in most contexts, it does not allow for particularized implicatures, which are context-dependent. To accommodate both kinds, we need to consider sentences as uttered in particular contexts — that is, utterances.) Thus, we need to distinguish between *an utterance* implicating something and *a speaker* implicating something. An utterance U implicates that q when the normative condition holds (that is, on the proposed revised account, when (I) and (II) hold), whether or not the speaker means that q. A speaker S implicates q when both the normative and psychological conditions hold (that is, when (I) and (II) hold, and, in addition, S means that q).[12] I shall refer to these as *utterance implicature* and *speaker implicature* respectively. (The latter should not be confused with *utterer-implicature* as defined by Saul. A person utterer-implicates that q in Saul's sense if they think that their utterance meets the Gricean conditions for implicating q. A person speaker implicates that q in my sense if (a) their utterance meets the Gricean conditions for implicating that q (or my revised versions, (I) and (II)), and (b) they

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[12] As a reminder, conditions (I) and (II) are:

> (I) The supposition that the speaker is aware that, or thinks that, *q*, is required to make his saying or making as if to say *p* (or doing so in *those* terms) consistent with the presumption that he is observing the CP.
>
> (II) It would be within the competence of a typical audience to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (I) is required.

mean that q.) Cases of unmeant implicature, like Rita's, are ones of utterance implicature but not speaker implicature. The relation between utterance implicature and speaker implicature, and the parallel relation between sentence meaning and what is said, are set out in diagram form in Figure 3.

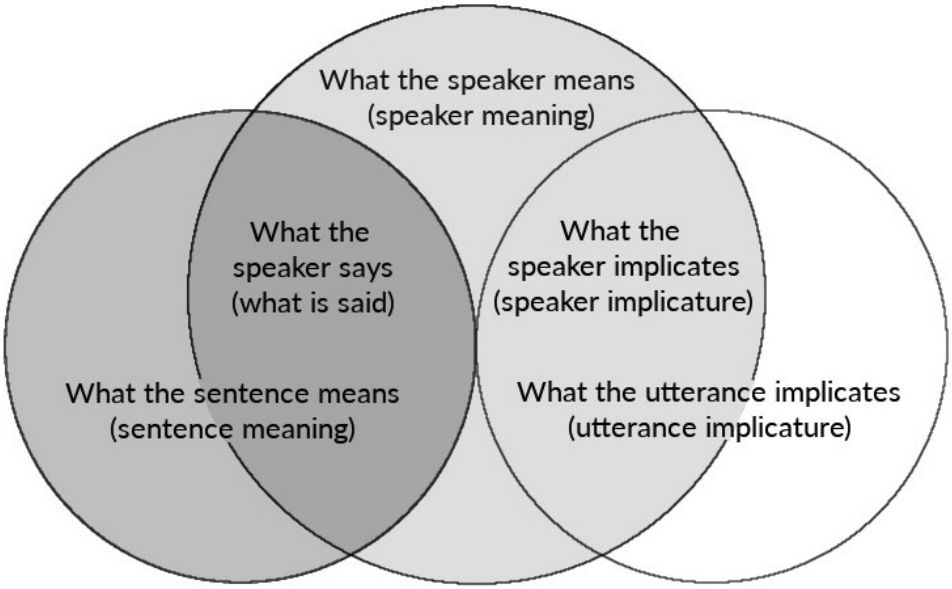


**Figure 3**: The relation between sentence meaning and what is said, and between utterance implicature and speaker implicature, on the view proposed here. The Roland and Rita cases fall in the unshaded crescent on the far right.

The cases of unmeant sentence meaning (those in the crescent on the far left) will include both ones where the speaker misspeaks, choosing the wrong words for their meaning, and ones where they deliberately say something they do not mean in order to convey something else (where they *make as if to say* it, as Grice puts it). Similarly, the cases of unmeant utterance implicature (in the crescent on the far right) will include both unwitting ones, in which the speaker is unaware that their utterance carries an implicature (as in Rita's case) and ones where the speaker deliberately creates an implicature they do not mean, as in Saul's Roland case (in which the professor deliberately writes an irrelevant reference letter but hopes no one will spot the implicature). In cases of the latter kind, we might say that the speaker *makes as if to implicate*.

*4.3 The role of intention*

This distinction between utterance implicature and speaker implicature enables us to resolve the apparent conflict in Grice's views about the role of speaker meaning in implicature. As we saw in the previous chapter, a case can be made for thinking both that Grice did and did not hold that implicatures must be backed by speaker meanings. Now, on the view proposed here, an *utterance* can implicate something without the speaker meaning it, as in Rita's case, but a *speaker* cannot implicate something without meaning it (though that is not all there is to implicating it; meaning that q is necessary but not sufficient for implicating that q). Thus, the apparent tension in Grice's views can be resolved. The two contrasting positions on the role of speaker meaning can be thought of as corresponding to two different questions: what is required for an *utterance* to implicate something and what is required for a *speaker* to implicate something. Since the requirements for a speaker to implicate that q differ from those for saying that q only in that they involve producing an *utterance* which implicates that q, it is natural that Grice's discussion of implicature focuses almost exclusively on the conditions for utterance implicature and makes little or no mention of intentions. However, when we set Grice's theory of implicature in the wider context of his theory of meaning, we need to bring in the further psychological conditions for a person to communicate something, and thus to focus on the broader notion of speaker implicature. Thus, the distinction between utterance and speaker implicature makes sense of what is otherwise a mysterious conflict in Grice's views.

I am not claiming that Grice would have endorsed this explanation. For one thing, he does not distinguish between speaker implicature and utterance implicature, and indeed it is difficult to make that distinction while working with the unrevised Gricean definition, which does not easily accommodate unmeant implicatures. Moreover, Grice's definition of implicature is framed in terms of the conditions for a *person* (indeed, a man) to implicate something ('A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that *p* has implicated that *q* [etc.]' (1975/1989, p.30). This is not, however, strictly incompatible with the proposal made here. Grice's definition might give only *necessary* conditions for speaker implicature, while at the same time giving *sufficient* conditions for utterance implicature. At any rate, I suggest that the interpretation I have proposed makes

the best sense of Grice's comments on the topic, which, as noted in the previous chapter, are often tentative and exploratory.

A final comment on the role of intention in implicature. The view just outlined is similar to the hybrid one suggested in the previous chapter, which tried to link Grice's accounts of implicature and speaker meaning by proposing that when a speaker S implicates that q, S must both (a) intend to get their audience to believe that q in part by recognizing this very intention and (b) believe that the audience can do this by going through a Gricean calculation. (These conditions were not supposed to be sufficient for implicature; the other Gricean conditions for implicature were also required.) I noted, however, that the suggestion created a puzzle as to why it should be necessary for condition (b) to hold, given that it is not necessary for S to believe that their intention can be recognized *only* by means of a Gricean calculation. The proposal set out in the present chapter is similar to this, but also significantly different. For if the revisions to the Gricean definition in section 3 above are accepted, it is no longer necessary for (b) to hold. Condition (b) followed from clause (3) of Grice's definition, but we have revised this so that it no longer requires the speaker to believe that the implicated message can be recovered by a Gricean calculation. It is sufficient that the message *can* be recovered (by a typical audience) by a Gricean calculation (condition (II)), and the reason for including this condition is simply that (together with condition (I)) it provides the normative element highlighted by Saul.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have considered some fundamental problems for Grice's definition of (conversational) implicature and set out a response which involves adopting a normative reading of Grice and introducing new psychological notions of utter-implicature and audience-implicature. I showed how this enriched Gricean framework avoided many, but not all, of the problems raised. In the spirit of the normative reading, I then went on to propose further modifications and extensions, replacing Grice's three-part definition with a shorter two-part one, and introducing a distinction between speaker implicature and utterance implicature. I argued that these revisions removed many of the remaining problems for Grice and also resolved a persistent problem concerning the role of intention in implicature. I

suggest that the resulting account is the most charitable and consistent formulation of the Gricean framework, and that it affords the best line of reply to the problems raised in section 1 of this chapter. Finally, construed in this way as a normative theory, the framework promises to provide us with norms of implicature, of the sort discussed in Chapter 1, which may help us to avoid misunderstandings and resolve disputes. So far, the Gricean framework is standing up well, then. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, a serious problem remains.