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The Role Of Grice's Maxims In The Creation Of Pragmatic Meaning And Their Significance In The Formation Of Implicature

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a scholarly analysis of the fundamental principles of Gricean pragmatics, particularly the Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims, and their role in the generation of pragmatic meaning. It further examines the concept of implicature, including its conventional and non-conventional types, the mechanisms underlying their formation, and the inference processes that constitute the implicit layers of meaning.

Keywords: Gricean pragmatics; Cooperative Principle; conversational maxims; implicature; conventional implicature; non-conventional implicature; conversational implicature; inference; implicit meaning; pragmatic interpretation.

Introduction

Among the modern branches of linguistics, pragmatics occupies a special place as a field that thoroughly analyses the semantic and meaningful aspects of human communication. In particular, the Cooperative Principle developed by H.P. Grice and the conversational maxims that constitute its core serve as a theoretical foundation for understanding the process of pragmatic meaning formation. According to Grice's view, each interlocutor is expected to follow certain principles during communication, and it is adherence to or deviation from these principles that leads to the emergence of implicatures.

Implicature represents the indirect layer of meaning in communication, forming a system of ideas that are not explicitly stated but can be inferred by the listener. For this reason, the manner in which Gricean maxims are applied, flouted, or intentionally violated becomes central to the process of pragmatic interpretation. This article provides a scholarly analysis of the theoretical foundations of Gricean pragmatics, the nature of conversational maxims, and their

functional significance in the formation of implicature. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of hidden meanings in communication, the evaluation of speaker sincerity, and the identification of pragmatic strategies within discourse.

One of the key principles of Gricean pragmatics is that the concept of implicature is based on the listener's ability to identify a meaning that is not explicitly expressed in the grammatical form of an utterance through inference, that is, through logical reasoning [1, 25-26]. Drawing on the mechanisms by which such implicit meanings are formed, Grice divides implicatures into two primary types: conventional and non-conventional.

A conventional implicature is independent of context and conveys additional meaning that arises from the lexical or grammatical properties of linguistic units. For example, contrastive conjunctions such as *but* or *however* generate additional pragmatic meaning in any communicative situation [2, 131].

A non-conventional implicature, however, does not arise directly from a linguistic unit but emerges through the context and the listener's inferential activity. In such cases, the listener interprets not the formal structure of the utterance, but the hidden meaning derived from the communicative situation. According to Grice, this type of implicature typically appears as a conversational implicature and is formed through adherence to or violation of Grice's maxims. Conversational implicatures occur in two forms: generalized conversational implicature, which can arise even without a specific context, and particularized conversational implicature, which appears only when a particular context is present. For instance, the statement "Some students passed the exam" usually yields the generalized implicature "not all," while an utterance such as "It's cold here," said in a restaurant, may convey the hidden meaning "Close the door" depending on the context [3, 99]. Another form of non-conventional implicature is the non-conversational

non-conventional implicature, in which the implied meaning is based not on Grice's maxims or linguistic conventions, but on social signals, cultural norms, and the interpretation of the situational context. Such implicatures are often shaped by the shared knowledge, experience, or social background of the interlocutors.

A common feature shared by all of these terms is that explicit meaning – that is, the meaning directly expressed through grammatical form – is supplemented by implicit meaning; the hidden meaning is constructed through the listener's inferential mechanisms. Therefore, an implicature is a meaning that is not present in the surface form of the utterance but is logically derived by the listener. In Grice's framework, this process is explained through default inferencing, which refers to habitual inferences regularly applied across various contexts, and nonce inferencing, which refers to inferences that arise only in a specific, one-time communicative situation.

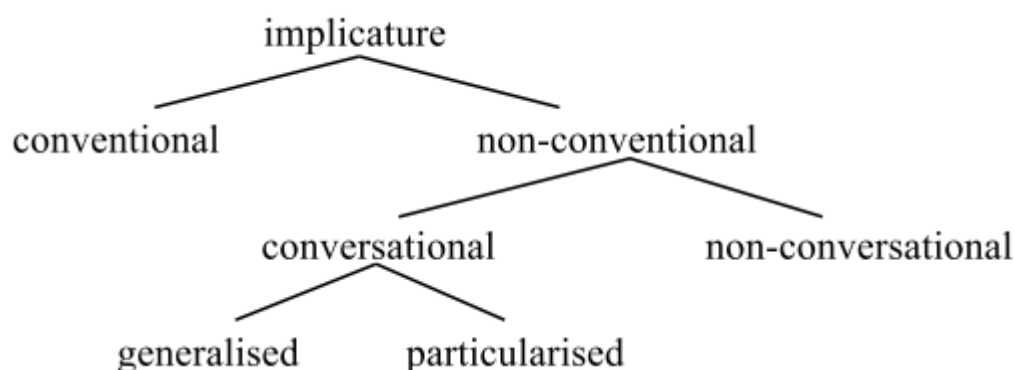


Figure 1: Types of Gricean implicature

The diverse interpretations of the concept of implicature, its lack of clearly defined boundaries, and its ability to generate multilayered meanings have led to the development of various analytical approaches in scholarly literature. This, in turn, once again confirms that implicature possesses a complex and dynamic nature within the pragmatic process.

A conventional implicature, according to Grice, is an implicature that arises from the traditional, convention-based meaning associated with particular linguistic units. In this case, the additional meaning does not form part of the literal meaning of the utterance but emerges due to the established function of certain words within the linguistic system. A key feature of conventional implicature is that it

is formed independently of context and is not related to the truth conditions of the proposition [1, 25]. As Horn and Levinson explain, such an implicature exists independently of the "said content," meaning that it arises from an additional pragmatic value attached to the word itself and does not constitute part of the sentence's semantics [4, 392].

To illustrate the nature of conventional implicature more clearly, let us analyze several examples from the Uzbek language. The conjunctions *lekin/ammo* ("but/however") express a contrast between two ideas: "U juda mehnatkash, lekin tez charchaydi." ("He is very hardworking, but he gets tired quickly.") Here, the literal meaning conveys two factual statements; however, the unit *lekin* introduces a

contrast between these ideas, adding the implicature of an “unexpected combination.”

The particle *hatto* (“even”) indicates that the situation described is surprising or unexpected: “*Imtihon murakkab edi, hatto eng sust o‘quvchi ham uni topshirdi.*” (“The exam was difficult; even the weakest student passed it.”) While the literal meaning of the sentence remains unchanged, the unit *hatto* implicitly conveys the meaning that “this outcome is usually not expected.”

The use of the adverb *hali* (“yet/still”) suggests that the situation may change: “*U hali qaytmagan.*” (“He has not returned yet.”) Although the sentence explicitly states only the current situation (that he has not returned), the presence of *hali* generates the pragmatic meaning “he is expected to return.” The particle *axir* (“after all”) adds an additional meaning that reflects the speaker’s evaluation or objection: “*Sen axir buni oldin aytgan eding.*” (“After all, you had mentioned this before.”) In this case, *axir* implicitly indicates that the speaker is either frustrated or dissatisfied.

The construction *...sa-da / ...masa ham* (“although / even if”) indicates that the main action continues despite the opposing circumstance: “*Yomg‘ir yog‘ayotgan bo‘lsa-da, sayohat davom etdi.*” (“Although it was raining, the trip continued.”) Through this form, the additional meaning “there was a difficulty, yet it did not stop” is implicitly conveyed.

As the examples above demonstrate, a conventional implicature is an additional pragmatic meaning that does not belong to the grammatical content of the sentence but arises from the traditional use of particular linguistic units. According to Potts’s interpretation, such implicatures often express the speaker’s attitude, evaluation, or metapragmatic stance conveyed through their lexical choice [5, 11] Therefore, conventional implicatures can be regarded as an essential component of pragmatic processes.

The views of Culpeper and Haugh are also consistent with this approach, as they emphasize that such intermediate meanings regularly occur in natural discourse, including literary texts and dialogues [6, 37].

Conventional implicatures are types of additional meaning that arise in the process of communication, emerging not from the factual content of the utterance but from linguistic units associated with its form. This phenomenon has been

explained by many scholars as an important category of pragmatics. In particular, J. Thomas, in her work *Pragmatics*, provides extensive information about the role of conventional implicatures in communication and their dependence on linguistic form [7, 269]. The first important feature of conventional implicatures is detachability. This phenomenon shows that even when the denotative content of a sentence remains the same, the implicature disappears if the sentence is expressed in a different grammatical form. For example, in the sentence “*U rahbar, biroq talabchan*” (“He is a manager, but demanding”), the conjunction *biroq* (“but”) generates an unexpected contrast. Here, the listener implicitly infers that managers are not always demanding. However, when expressed as “*U rahbar va talabchan*” (“He is a manager and demanding”), this additional meaning is not perceived. Such differences demonstrate that implicature is linked not to content but to linguistic form. K. Bach also emphasizes this point in his foundational work on the distinction between semantics and pragmatics [8, 327-366].

The second major feature of conventional implicatures – non-cancellability – is also highlighted by many researchers as an important characteristic of communication. For example, a comment such as “*U yosh, ammo tajribali, lekin men yoshlar odatda tajribasiz bo‘ladi degani emasman*” (“He is young but experienced, but I do not mean that young people are usually inexperienced”) is logically inconsistent, because the conjunction *ammo* (“but”) has already created a contrast, and this meaning cannot be eliminated by subsequent negating statements. Similarly, comments like “*Bu mashina eski, biroq ishonchli, lekin men eski mashinalar ishonchsiz bo‘ladi demoqchi emasman*” (“This car is old but reliable, but I do not mean that old cars are unreliable”) cannot cancel the implicature that has already been generated. H.P. Grice, in his seminal pragmatic research, analyzes this process in depth and notes that conventional implicatures are semantic units strictly tied to linguistic form and cannot be cancelled [1, 394]

Thus, conventional implicatures are an important pragmatic phenomenon that emerge through the formal means of language, enrich the hidden layer of meaning, and contribute to the formation of deeper communicative interpretations. They arise automatically through grammatical form and are interpreted by the listener on the basis of context; however, once created, they cannot be cancelled. With these characteristics, conventional implicatures serve as a crucial tool for explaining the

complex relationship between the semantic and pragmatic layers of discourse.

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