Cooperation and Implicature

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When people talk with each other, they try to converse smoothly and successfully. **Cooperation** is the basis of successful conversations.
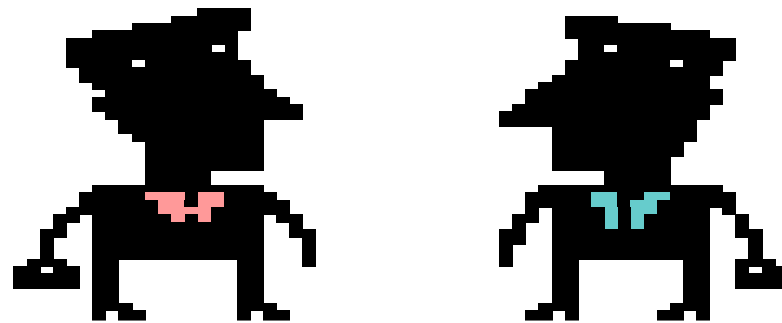
The concept and the function of **cooperation** and **implicature** are fundamentally linked. "This sense of cooperation is simply one in which people having a conversation are not normally assumed to be trying to confuse, trick, or withhold relevant information from each other" (Yule, 1996: 35).
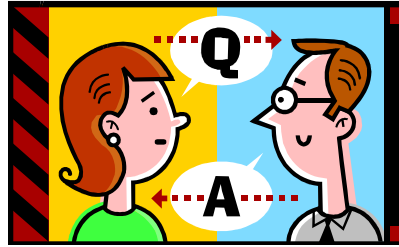
Cooperation can be understood as an essential factor when speakers and listeners are interacting, in other words, it is the expectation that the listener has towards the speaker. The speaker is supposed to convey true statements and say nothing more than what is required.

Implicature can be considered as an additional conveyed meaning (Yule, 1996: 35). It is attained when a speaker intends to communicate more than just what the words mean. It is the speaker who communicates something via implicatures and the listener recognizes those communicated meanings via inference.

Conversational Implicatures

■ **There is a set of guidelines for effective and rational use of language.**

■ **Guidelines = a general cooperative principle + Four maxims of conversation.** (H.P.Grice 1975)

A General Cooperative Principle

Four Maxims
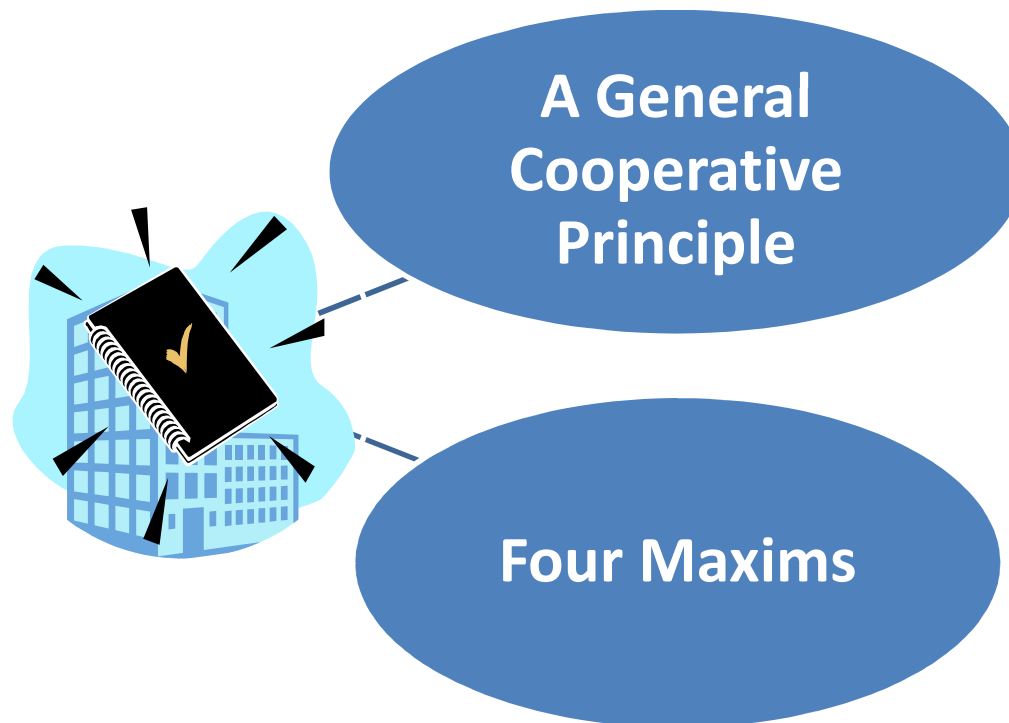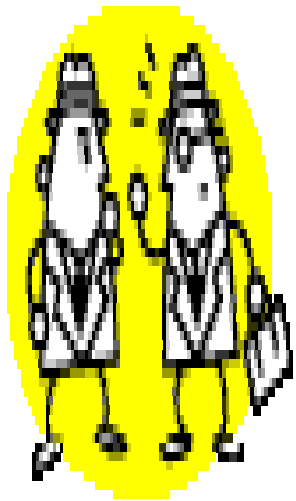
COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

The idea that people cooperate with each other in conversing is generalized by Grice (1975) as the **cooperative principle**.

cooperative principle : Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. Specifically, there are **four maxims** under this general principle.

THE MAXIMS

1. QUANTITY:
 (i) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of exchange.
(ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
2. QUALITY: Try to make your contribution one that is true.
    (i) Do not say what you believe to be false.
    (ii) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
3. RELATION: BE RELEVANT;
4. MANNER:
    (i) Avoid obscurity of expression.
    (ii) Avoid ambiguity.
    (iii) Be brief.
    (iv) Be orderly.

Man: Does your dog bite?

Woman: No.

The man reaches down to pat the dog. The dog bites the man's hand.)

Man: Quch! Hey! You said your dog doesn't bite.

Woman: He doesn't. But that's not my dog.

Asking the question, the man assumes that the dog belongs to the woman. The woman's answer provides less information than expected. The **maxim of quantity** is **flouted**. Is the woman willing to talk with the man? If your answer is *No*, you have rightly figured out the implicature.

When making a statement, certain expressions can be used to indicate the **degree of certainty** concerning the information given. These expressions are called **hedges**:

- **As far as I know**, they are getting married.
- He couldn't live without her, **I guess**.

Conversational implicature: The basic assumption in conversation is that the participants are adhering to the **cooperative principle** and the **maxims**.
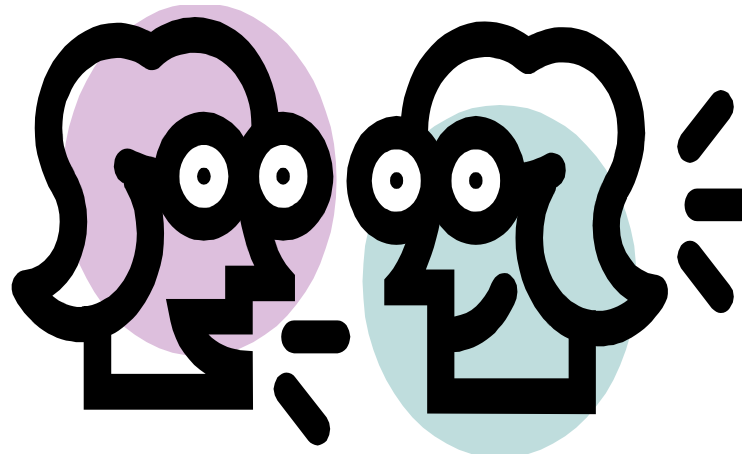
Wife: I hope you brought the bread and the cheese.
Husband : Ah, I brought the bread.

In this case, **the husband** did not mention the cheese. Then, he must intend that **the wife** infers what is not mentioned was not brought. **The husband** has conveyed more than he has said via a **conversational implicature**.

Using the symbol **+>** for an implicature, we can represent the additional conveyed meaning:

**Wife: b & c?**
Husband: b   (+> NOT c)

Through this example, it is possible to perceive that there is no special background knowledge required in the context to calculate the additional conveyed meaning. Thus, it is called a **generalized conversational implicature**.

Scalar implicatures occur when certain information is communicated by choosing a **word** which expresses **one value** from **a scale of values.**
From the highest to the lowest :
■ **<all, most, many, some, few>**
■ **<always, often, sometimes>**
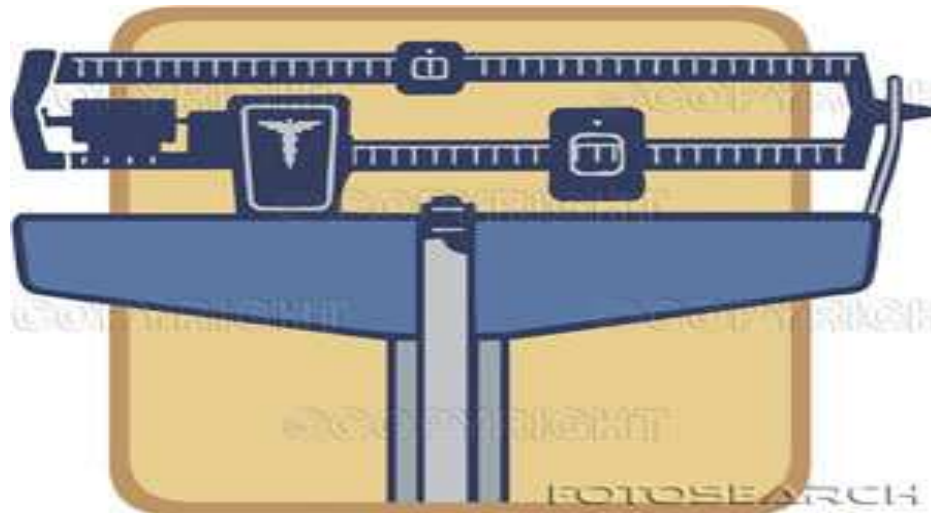
The basis of the scalar implicature is that when any form in a scale is asserted, the negative of all forms higher on the scale is implicated.

■ I'm studying linguistics and I've completed **some** of the required courses.

♦ By using **(some of the required courses)** , the speaker creates an implicature **(+> not all),** but this is only one of the scale:

♦**<all, most, many, some, few>**

♦In fact, the speaker creates the implicatures **(+> not all, +> not most, +> not many).**

Particularized conversational implicatures occur when a conversation takes place in a very specific context in which locally recognized inferences are assumed.

■ Rick: Hey, coming to the wild party tonight?
  Tom: My parents are visiting.

In order to make Tom's response relevant, Rick has to draw on some assumed knowledge that one college student in this setting expects another to have. Tom will be spending that evening with his parents, and time spent with parents is quiet (consequently **+>** **Tom not at party**).

Bert: Do vegetarians eat hamburger?
Ernie: Do chickens have lips?

In the above example, Ernie's response does not provide a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Bert must assume that Ernie's response means '**of course not!**'.

Properties of conversational implicatures: All the implicatures taken into consideration are part of what is communicated and not said. Thus, speakers can always deny that they intended to communicate such meanings. Conversational implicatures are deniable. They can be explicitly denied (or alternatively, reinforced) in different ways. The example below can illustrate this idea:

■ You have won only five dollars! (+> ONLY five)

It is quite easy for a speaker **to suspend** the implicature (**only**) using the expression '**at least**' (You've won **at least** five dollars!), or **to cancel** the implicature by adding further information, often following the expression '**in fact**' (You've won five dollars, **in fact**, you've won ten!), or **to reinforce** the implicature with **additional information**, as in: You've won five dollars, **that's four more than one**!

We have already noted with many of the previous examples that implicatures can be calculated by the listeners via inference. In terms of their defining properties, then, **conversational** **implicatures** **can be calculated, suspended, cancelled, and reinforced.** However, in **conventional implicatures**, these properties are not applied.

Conventional implicatures are **not** based on the cooperative principle or the **maxims**. They do not have to occur in conversation, and they do not depend on special contexts for their interpretation.

Conventional implicatures are associated with specific words and result in additional conveyed meanings when those words are used. The English **conjunction** '**but**' is one of these words.

YET

BUT   **EVEN**

■ **Mary suggested black, but I chose white.**

In this sentence, '**Mary suggested black**' is contrasted, via the **conventional implicature** of **'but'**, **with my choosing white**.

Other English words such as **'yet'** also have **conventional implicatures**:

■ **Dennis isn't here yet.**

In uttering this statement, the speaker produces an implicature that she/he expects the statement 'Dennis is here'. The **conventional implicature** of **'yet'** is that **the present situation is expected to be different, or perhaps the opposite, at a later time.**