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Pragmatic Intrusion Into What Is Said

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Pragmatic Intrusion into what is said

This chapter mostly deals with Levinson's view on how pragmatic intrusion is to be looked at. Levinson says that pragmatic intrusion neither is an explicature, nor an implicature, but a neo-Gricean conversational implicature. Levinson argues that conversational implicatures can intrude upon truth-conditional content. Because pragmatic intrusion into what is said is engendered by the same Gricean inferential mechanism that yields conversational implicature.

Reference resolution

Identifying who is actually meant:

- a. John said that he won the ten metres platform diving yesterday
- b. John said that the young man won the ten metres platform diving yesterday.

This example involves **anaphoric reference**. While the pronoun *he* is preferably co-referential with *John*, the definite description the *young man* is disjoint in reference with *John*. In **a** the I-principle is used, so the anaphoric expression *he* is a specific interpretation *he = John*. In **b** the M-principle is used. To avoid obscurity and ambiguity the disjoint reference makes clear that the *young man* is not *John*.

Deixis fixing

According to Levinson, neo-Gricean parameters often fix deictic or indexical parameters.

Time deictic expressions like "tomorrow" or "yesterday" can make the use of calendrical terms unnecessary. The following utterance, for example, engenders the $Q_{\text{-scalar}}$ implicature that the mentioned Sunday is, in fact, NOT tomorrow:

(Said on a Saturday)

„We'll go to church on Sunday“

<tomorrow, Sunday>

Sunday +> ~ tomorrow

Normally, if the Sunday in question were tomorrow, speakers would say "tomorrow", since this expression is semantically more detailed and informative than "Sunday"

Disambiguation

Neo-Gricean conversational implicatures can intrude on the disambiguation of syntactic structures, which means that different interpretations theoretically are possible but only one is logical:

"I am an indiscriminate cat-lover: I love some dogs and cats."

- a) I like [some dogs] and cats
 - ⊙ I like some dogs and cats in general
- b) I like [some [dogs and cats]]
 - ⊙ I like some dogs and some cats

Here, the sentence is disambiguated by a $Q_{\text{-scalar}}$ implicature.

However, the second interpretation is incorrect, as the semantic content of the first clause clearly is that I love cats indiscriminately, ergo that I love **all** cats.

Verb Phrase Ellipsis

The resolution of VP-Ellipsis sometimes has to be effected pragmatically. The interpretation of the elided VP is context-dependent, which means that one has to know the surrounding physical context in order to understand it.

“I will, if you will”

Possible context: In a pub

“I will [order another beer], if you will [order another beer].”

Generality narrowing

Generality narrowing can be divided into two groups: based on Q-implicature and I-implicature.

Example Q-Implicature:

- a. The soup is warm

This utterance is Q-narrowed to following proposition:

- a. The soup is[n't hot]

Example I-Implicature:

- a. She had two eggs for breakfast this morning
- b. The FBI agent is talking to his secretary
- c. The watermelon is red

These utterances are I-narrowed to following propositions:

- a. She had two [hen's] eggs for breakfast this morning
- b. The FBI agent is talking to his [female] secretary
- c. The watermelon is red[in its inside flesh]

This means that the utterances in the first set are giving information but leave room for further interpretations and speculations.

Conclusion: Neo-Gricean conversational implicatures are involved in generality narrowing.

The five analyses compared

Grice

Grice's concept of what is said is largely semantic. What is said in the sense of Grice is minimally yet fully propositional and he uses a set of preconditions to determine such propositions:

1. Identifying reference. 2. Completing deixis. 3. Disambiguating expressions.

So what is said in the Gricean sense is fully semantic. What is conversationally implicated is to handle enriched and additional propositions. Within the classical Gricean paradigm semantic representations and minimal propositions fall under semantics whereas enriched and additional propositions are the concern of pragmatics.

Relevance theorists

Broader, more pragmatic notion of “what is said” (but do not use this term). “What is said” divided into explicatures (pragmatics) and semantic representations (semantics).

Bach

What is said has to be closely related to the conventional meaning of the sentence and has to correspond to the sentence elements, including their order and syntactic character (= syntactic correlation constraint) Grice's dichotomy between what is said and what is implicated is to be replaced by a trichotomy between what is said, what is implicit and what is implicated.

Recanati

Recanati has a broader pragmatic conception of what is said. On his view what is said has a semantic part, like semantic representation or sentence meaning and also a pragmatic part, like the pragmatically enriched said. He says that reference assignment, deixis identification, disambiguation and minimal and

expanded propositions all belong to the pragmatically enriched said. Only additional propositions are the output of conversational implicatures.

Levinson's view

Levinson retained the classical Gricean characterization of what is said. So he also says that what is said consists of semantic representations, a set of preconditions to determine the propositions expressed, and minimal propositions. **However, unlike Grice, he allows conversational implicature to intrude on the assignment of truth-conditional content. So conversational implicatures are needed to account for additional propositions as well as required pre-semantically to determine reference, deictic resolution, disambiguation, ellipsis unpacking and generality narrowing.** Hence, he only categorizes semantic representations as the proper domain of semantics. The rest is dealt with in pragmatics.

Grice's circle

Levinson argues that conversational implicature can contribute to propositional content. This gives rise to the problem known as Grice's circle: How what is implicated can be defined on the basis of what is said, given that what is said seems to both determine and be determined by what is implicated. Levinson suggests that one should drop the traditional received view that semantics and pragmatics are autonomous with respect to each other as well as that the output of semantics is input to pragmatics. One should rather treat both as two overlapping and interrelated fields of study.

The five analyses compared in a chart

Author	Semantic representation	Deictic and reference resolution	Minimal proposition	Enriched proposition	Additional proposition
Grice	What is said			Implicature	
Relevance theorists		Explicature			Implicature
Recanati		Pragmatically enriched said			Implicature
Bach	What is said		Implicature		Implicature
Levinson	What is said				
		Implicature			

Pragmatics

- *According to Huang, the distinction between semantics and pragmatics constitutes two different domains of inquiry, but both are so intertwined and their boundaries so fuzzy that it is difficult to keep them apart clearly.*