

Kinds of Conversational Cooperation

Author's manuscript

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Abstract

The Cooperative Principle was the organizing principle in Grice's pragmatics. More recently, cooperation has played a reduced role in pragmatic theory. The principle has been attacked on the grounds that people are not always or generally cooperative. One response to that objection is to say that there are two kinds of cooperation and Grice's principle only applies to the narrower kind, which concerns linguistic or formal cooperation. I argue that such a distinction is only defensible if it is accepted that linguistic cooperation can be determined by an extra-linguistic goal. To make distinctions among types of cooperation is helpful but this strategy does not remove all concerns about speakers who are not fully cooperative and in particular the operation of the principle needs to be qualified in situations of conflict of interest. I propose that the principle, once qualified, can have a significant continuing role in pragmatic theory.

1. Conversational implicature and the cooperative principle

Here is one of Grice's (1989: 32) original examples of conversational implicature. A is a stranded motorist and B a passer-by.

A: I am out of petrol.

B: There is a garage round the corner.

In Grice's account, B *con conversationally implicates* that the garage may be open and may have petrol to sell. What that means is that B in some sense implies that, though does not explicitly say that, and nor do her remarks logically imply it. Grice's explanation of the generation and detection of such implicatures depends on a fundamental 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. One might label this the COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE." (Grice, 1989: 26)

The main idea is that the audience is able to interpret the speaker's remarks based on the assumption that she is following this principle. That is, the assumption allows the audience to detect what the speaker is conversationally implicating but not explicitly saying. The spirit is that the audience could in principle reason, "If the speaker is cooperating she must really be intending to convey ...". The audience arrives at what the speaker *is* saying and uses that in conjunction with the assumption of cooperativeness, various kinds of contextual information and background knowledge to work out what the speaker is conversationally implicating (Grice, 1989: 31). Grice maintains a keen interest in what the speaker is intending, which reflects his work on the theory of meaning, which is based in speakers' intentions, a point emphasized by Saul (2002). She opposes the approach of the Relevance Theorists, who she describes as taking Grice to be developing a theory of audience interpretation (Wilson and Sperber, 1981). In particular, Saul attacks Wilson and Sperber's (1981: 156) claim that "what is said is the proposition the utterance is taken to express." Saul is surely right to point out that the audience make be mistaken about what is said. But Wilson and Sperber are right to attribute an account of audience interpretation to Grice, even if he did not envisage the kind of cognitive theory they develop. His theory refers

both to the speaker's intention and the process by which the audience is able to work it out. Part of that process is to determine what the speaker said, even if a mistake can arise at that point. Both speaker and audience are on centre stage and knowledge that each have about the other's mental processes is part of the picture (Grice, 1989:31). Sperber and Wilson (1986: 19-20) attack the view that mutual knowledge is ever achieved between speaker and hearer and the view that decoding is part of the communicative process. Even so, their view is overtly inspired by Grice in central respects and leads to a focus on the speaker's communicative intentions, which they describe as 'ostensive-inferential' (Sperber and Wilson, 1986: 63), alongside their focus on the audience's cognitive processes that interpret such intentions.

The cooperative principle is elaborated by Grice, as is well known, in terms of maxims under the four headings of quantity, quality, relation and manner, containing various sub-maxims. For example, in the dialogue above about the petrol, B's remark about the petrol station is only relevant if B does indeed believe it may be open and have petrol to sell. If A takes B to be cooperating then A will take B to be following, amongst others, the maxim of relation (Be relevant!), which allows A to attribute that implicature. Here is Grice's reasoning behind his introduction of the cooperative principle. He says, "... our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of common purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction." (Grice, 1989: 26)

In attempting to define and explain his notion of conversational implicature, Grice is interested in an account of the coherence or unity of conversations at a rational level and when he says 'disconnected' he means disconnected at a rational level. There are various kinds of ways in which conversations may be attributed form and structure and thus in some sense be connected or disconnected. For example, there can be explanations of the process of turn taking (Sacks et al., 1974). There are explanations of accommodation of speech style (Bell, 1997). Grice's interest is the rational structure of a conversation, though. He is interested in how our remarks link up in the conversation in terms of their meaning and our reasons for saying what we do. It is true that the unity of a conversation may be only partial. For example, different

speakers may attempt to foster different topics (Brown and Yule, 1983: 88-89), but Grice can be taken to be working with a kind of ideal. Grice suggests that it is in our interests to cooperate in conversation. Thus, he speaks of cooperating as something “we *should* not abandon” (Grice, 1989: 29). Grice’s appeal to a common purpose or accepted direction is an important feature of his theory and is something to which we shall return in the next section.

The details of the maxims are contested. For example, Horn (1984) reduces them to three and Sperber and Wilson (1986) do away with the structure of maxims and base their theory totally on relevance. For Sperber and Wilson and in the subsequent development of Relevance Theory the notion of relevance provides an account of how the mind works to process information. A recent account of implicature that is generally closer to Grice’s own approach is found in Levinson (2000). In that work Levinson’s focus is on *generalized* conversational implicatures, which are implicatures that do not depend on particular features of context and operate as a kind of default reasoning, which can be defeated by particular features of context. Note that he operates with three inferential heuristics for the audience, which are counterparts to some of Grice’s maxims for speakers (Levinson, 2000: 35 ff). Grice’s own discussion incorporated both generalized and particularized conversational implicatures, and should not be interpreted as marginalizing generalized conversational implicatures (Levinson, 2000: 18). A good discussion of the various alternatives to Grice’s scheme of maxims is to be found in Bultinck (2005: 25 ff).

It is controversial whether the maxims are corollaries of the cooperative principle (Lycan, 1984: 75) or merely particular ways of being cooperative (Green, 1996: 95-96). What follows is a further consideration of the general notion of cooperation that is needed for Grice’s purposes. For purposes of illustration I shall, where necessary, refer to Grice’s original maxims, but my primary focus is the nature of Grice’s cooperative principle. While Grice’s work has been extremely influential, the level of importance that is placed specifically on the cooperative principle has diminished in favour of a focus on specific maxims or other principles. Levinson (2000: 14) who is closer to Grice’s view than Relevance Theorists are, for example, does outline Grice’s cooperative principle before moving on to quote the maxims, though there is scant mention of the cooperative principle later in the volume. It is true that the absence

could in part be explained by the focus on *generalized* conversational implicatures, which are governed by the specific maxims or heuristics, without the need to appeal to the overarching principle.

As explained above, in Grice's approach, in order to interpret an implicature the audience generally must *assume* the speaker is cooperating and following the maxims, and a variety of authors do not accept that we can make that assumption. As a preliminary to engaging with the issue of cooperation we should note some details of Grice's position. He does draw our attention to cases of implicatures in which a maxim is being flouted, that is, where the speaker blatantly fails to fulfill the maxim for particular effect. In Grice's (1989: 34) example, A, who has just been betrayed by X, says, "X is a fine friend." This blatantly fails to fulfill the maxim of quality and thus A is implicating that he is not a fine friend at all. Even in that case we could say that the maxim has been respected in that it has been exploited to special effect. Another case he mentions is where there is a clash of maxims, so that the speaker is unable to fulfill one in order to respect another (Grice, 1989: 30). He also mentions the case of violating a maxim, where there is hidden non-cooperation and where the audience can be misled (Grice, 1989: 30). In a situation where you wish to borrow my car, ask how it is running and I say, "I have just had it thoroughly checked," you would take me to be implicating that it is in good order. That depends on you supposing I am being cooperative and in particular am following the maxim of quantity, which amounts to providing the full amount of information. In the situation in which I know a dangerous fault has just developed, I have deliberately misled you by implicature.

In the case of flouting a maxim, the case of maxim clash and the case of violating a maxim, Grice takes the audience to assume the speaker is cooperating and is in some way respecting the maxims (mistakenly in the last case). Later I shall mention the cases of opting out, which could be described as a refusal to cooperate, on one level at least. In the cases where the audience *does* assume the speaker is cooperating why does she make that assumption? One reason Grice gives is just that we (mostly) are cooperative. With respect to the maxims he emphasizes, "it is just a well-recognized empirical fact that people do behave in these ways." (Grice, 1989: 29)

2. Opposition to the cooperative principle

As already noted, Sperber and Wilson see their principle of relevance as supplanting Grice's cooperative principle and maxims. They observe that, "It seems to us to be a matter of common experience that the degree of co-operation described by Grice is not automatically expected of communicators." (Sperber and Wilson, 1986: 162) That is the main focus of this section.

There is other opposition to the cooperative principle that can be mentioned briefly. Kasher (1977: 115) also supplants the cooperative principle and argues that "all theoretical achievements of the theory of conversational implicatures are derivable from appropriate applications of the principles of rationality to standard cases of linguistic activity." Kasher thus develops Grice's own emphasis on rationality and makes the cooperative principle redundant, and Davies (2000) takes a similar view. Sampson (1982) also attacks the cooperative principle and refers to Kasher (1977) approvingly. He works with a parallel between conversations and economic transactions. His view is that in both cases there is evolution of cultural institutions through which people can pursue their own aims, and thereby, perhaps unknowingly, foster the aims of others. I shall return later to some situations in which economic transactions are literally the focus of conversational interactions.

Let us return to Grice's incautious claim that it is an empirical fact that people in conversations are usually cooperative and follow the maxims. This can be attacked by focussing on particular unfavourable kinds of situations. For example, when Marie-Odile Taillard (2004: 247) remarks that, "Human communication rests on a tension between the goals of communicators and audiences," we should note that her interest is in persuasive communication such as we find in advertising. She is most interested in how the interests of a speaker can be served by *not* telling the truth and thus dismisses the Gricean approach. "However, as communicators, we behave in a way that is most advantageous to ourselves and, at times, this goal is not accomplished by providing truthful testimony, but rather by affecting the audience's attitudes to our own benefit. (This, by the way, is the main reason why a theory of communication cannot be based on a principle of cooperation.)" (Taillard, 2004: 254-255) I shall return to the theme of tension between goals later on.

Here is another example where a special kind of setting is used to cause trouble for Grice's claims about cooperation. Sarangi and Slembrouck (1992) attempt to apply a Gricean pragmatic approach to institutional discourse but criticize his view of the normality of cooperation. The moral they seek to draw is that Grice's approach needs to be broadened to include societal factors such as the social position of the communicators. Sarangi and Slembrouck build on work on power relations by Fairclough (1985) and Mey (1987). One of their cases is that of a postgraduate student from a Common Market country seeking free prescriptions in the UK from the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS). The gist of the situation is that the applicant declares he and his spouse are living off money loaned from their parents, not regarding that as income, while DHSS rules include that loaned money as income. The DHSS communications were minimal and presented on standard forms.

Sarangi and Slembrouck use this as an example of non-cooperation in institutional discourse and they use it as evidence against the Gricean claim of the normality of cooperation. Sarangi and Slembrouck (1992: 127) say, "If we are to follow the Gricean notion of cooperation, the institution, in such circumstances, would be expected to adopt, at least from the client's point of view the client's goal as its own, or act towards negotiating a 'mutually accepted goal'." One response to Sarangi and Slembrouck and to Taillard is to say that Grice was not intending his account to apply to advertising or to institutional discourse. Indeed, he does restrict himself to *conversations*. Even so, I believe that if we can handle the *full* range of conversations the same account may be able to be deployed in institutional and advertising settings.

Our main focus in this section is opposition to Grice's claim that it is an empirical fact that we normally cooperate. We could separate two claims that Grice makes about conversations:

1. a claim about the explanation of the use and detection of implicatures: that the audience needs to assume the speaker is cooperating in that particular situation (and the speaker expects the audience so to assume)
2. a claim about the nature of conversations: that they are usually cooperative

It is possible to attack claim 2 while maintaining claim 1. Thus we could imagine a society in which conversational implicature is not very common but, when it does occur, is explained by the required level of cooperativeness in those particular circumstances. This would require that there be some aspects of the setting or linguistic performance that indicate that the speaker is probably being cooperative in that situation. There is some evidence of variability in cooperation across societies. The Malagasy people do not appear to follow the maxim of quantity, though the best interpretation of that is a matter of controversy (Mey, 2001: 76-77). In the conversational settings with which I am familiar, on the other hand, conversational implicatures are commonplace and there is a good deal of cooperation of different varieties. Claim 2 has opened Grice up to attack and needs to be modified on the basis of further investigation into the nature of cooperation. Claim 1 is not touched by this line of objection. Grice's comments concerning the fact of cooperativeness misrepresent the subtlety of his position, for he discusses various ways in which a person may fail to follow a maxim, as discussed in section 1. Grice is well aware that cooperation is not a straightforward matter.

In cases where there *is* cooperation, however widespread they are, what is the nature of the cooperation to which Grice is alluding? That is my main topic. His examples show how a speaker can share a common purpose with an audience, as in the case of the motorist who is out of petrol. We could describe the motorist's purpose to purchase petrol as a practical goal beyond the conversation. Nevertheless, Grice (1989: 29) is well aware that not all conversations are like that and provides examples of an over-the-wall chat and quarrelling, where it is much harder to identify that kind of common further goal. This is why he adds to the phrase 'a common purpose or set of common purposes' the further option 'or at least a mutually accepted direction' (Grice, 1989: 26). The quarreller in Grice's theory does not need to share their opponent's point of view but they do need to stick to the point of the quarrel if they are to be understood. Focussing on the over-the-wall chat and the quarrel can suggest the following kind of strategy to defend Grice from the accusation that we are not always cooperative. The strategy is to apply the cooperative principle only to some constrained form of cooperation, a kind of cooperation *within* the conversation, as opposed to cooperation generally.

For example, Capone (2001) criticizes Asher (1999) for taking Grice's Cooperative Principle to require that a speaker's goal should be taken up by a recipient. He says, "[Asher] fails to understand that Grice's Cooperative Principle does not say anything about the speaker's extra-linguistic goals, but is a theory of the ways in which speakers maximize the efficiency of information transfer." (Capone, 2001: 446-447) Grice (1989: 28) does indeed say that his maxims are phrased as if the purpose of talk were 'the maximally effective exchange of information'. Because we rely on our audiences to interpret implicatures, we can speak more briefly. We should not take that as fully delimiting the nature of Grice's notion of cooperation, though, for he goes on to say, "this specification is of course too narrow and the scheme needs to be generalized to allow for such general purposes as influencing and directing the actions of others." (Grice, 1989: 28) The notion of communicative efficiency is an important one. Levinson (2000: 6, 28-29) suggests that in the process of communication the task of producing sounds that are distinguishable to an audience provides an information bottle-neck and thus there is every motivation to have a system of generalized conversational implicatures that allow us to speak more briefly for efficiency's sake. We have seen that Grice's interest does not stop with communicative efficiency, though. Also we inevitably need to engage with a broader kind of cooperation.

In the case of the motorist who is out of petrol, the notion of cooperation that we need is precisely one that *does* relate to extra-linguistic goals. In order to cooperate, the passer-by has to assess the motorist's immediate practical goals. Thinking of the maxims can help to underline this point. When the motorist interprets the passer-by to be saying something relevant it is relevant to her immediate extra-linguistic goal of purchasing some petrol in the near future. One conclusion we could draw from this kind of example is to say that Capone is wrong to say that Grice's cooperative principle only applies to linguistic cooperation. While that is one way of putting it, it may be preferable to say that the cooperative principle does indeed only apply to linguistic cooperation but in some cases the extra-linguistic goal determines linguistic cooperation. In such cases, what counts as a maximally effective exchange of information is relative to that extra-linguistic goal. This is a reformulation of the distinction between linguistic and extra-linguistic goals that is more adequate to the facts of communication. When an extra-linguistic goal determines the linguistic goal

it is on the presumption that the goal is shared. In other cases an extra-linguistic goal of one of the participants is clearly not shared by the other and thus it does not determine the linguistic goal.

Consider the young man who says to his mother, “I would like to join the army.”

Amongst the many possible reactions let us consider these two:

Mother 1: “I will make an appointment for you with a recruiting officer in the morning,”

Mother 2: “I have already lost a husband and two sons to that accursed army.”

Clearly in the first case the mother is fostering the son’s stated extra-linguistic goal (assuming there is no hidden strategic intent in the utterance) and thus it is this goal that guides her conversational contribution. In the second cases, she implicates that she does not support the goal, but even so she is cooperating in the conversation. We could take her to be following the cooperative principle and all of the maxims. Indeed that is required for the son to appreciate the implicature, which he very likely would. In this case linguistic cooperation is not governed by cooperation with that extra-linguistic goal. The goal is to debate the topic, recognizing the presence of conflicting opinions. Speaking of a linguistic goal can be imprecise. For example, mother and son might share the goal of engaging in a conversational act of emotional bonding. In a broad sense that is a linguistic goal, but a narrower sense may be more appropriate.

Amongst cases where there are no common extra-linguistic goals there are ones in which no significant extra-linguistic goals enter in to the conversation at all, so the issue of them being shared or not does not arise. Grice’s talk of an over-the-wall chat is consistent with this situation. In such a case, the only kind of cooperation is of a linguistic nature. Clearly, we need to be open to a range of cases displaying variation in the form and nature of the cooperation.

Various authors have drawn distinctions between different kinds of cooperation, which have been used to constrain the scope of Grice’s cooperative principle. Green (1996: 97-98) points out that Grice (1989: 29) refers to “a second order [common aim], namely that each party should, for the time being, identify himself with the transitory conversational interests of the other.” This is a somewhat different approach to applying the notion of cooperation in a constrained domain. Green

emphasizes that in order to interpret the remarks of a speaker we have to attribute some intention to them in making the remark and thereby have to come to understand them. She goes on to say, "... the purposes which the Cooperative Principle refers to are not so much shared or mutual as they are mutually modelled." That there is mutual modelling conducted by participants in a conversation is both undeniable and important but it overstates the case to suggest that Grice's cooperative principle is not concerned with practical extra-linguistic purposes. The quote about transitory interests concerns just one point in a spectrum of cases, for Grice is saying that *even* in the case of an over-the-wall chat there is *some* minimal kind of common aim, namely to identify with the other's topic. In the case of the motorist who is out of petrol we have already seen that the cooperation does involve a more practical common purpose. It is also unwise to build too much on this passage in an exegesis of Grice as it is one in which he describes an *earlier* view of his in which cooperation was seen as a quasi-contractual matter, that is, it depended on an implicit agreement to cooperate.

Pavlidou (1991: 12) distinguishes between *formal cooperation* and *substantial cooperation*. She explains formal cooperation as "cooperation in the Gricean tradition, i.e. acting according to the conversational maxims (or against them)." Substantial cooperation, in contrast, means "sharing common goals among communication partners, goals that go beyond maximal exchange of information." The distinction between formal and substantial cooperation appears broadly similar to the distinction between the kinds of cooperation that involve, on the one hand, linguistic and, on the other, extra-linguistic goals. A similar response is due. It is natural to take Pavlidou's distinction between formal and substantial cooperation to imply that formal cooperation can be defined independently of substantial cooperation, for she says, "... formal cooperation does not necessarily imply substantial cooperation (or vice versa)." (Pavlidou 1997: 12) In fact, formal cooperation cannot always be determined independently for the reason already given. In cases such as Grice's motorist case where there *is* a common practical goal, the interpretation of the maxims may be governed by that goal. We could say that linguistic cooperation can expand like an accordion to encompass what has been described as 'extra-linguistic cooperation', in cases where such a common goal guides the conversation. For a somewhat different application of the metaphor of the

accordion see Davidson (1980: 55), who follows Feinberg (1965). In other cases, linguistic cooperation has a narrow unexpanded character, as there is no such common greater goal.

The distinction between formal and substantial cooperation is important to Pavlidou, as she wishes to distinguish between different conversational settings, depending on whether they are predominantly cooperative or not. Thus, she is interested in different speech patterns to be found in, for example, faculty meetings and a women's conference and thus wishes to assess the degree to which the participants share common goals. While both settings involve a lot of talk, there are still practical actions that need to be coordinated and participants can differ in their goals with respect to them. She discusses syntactic indications of cooperativeness in Greek, which is something that can be expanded to a broader range of languages and contexts. Situations of conflicting goals will also be discussed in this article, but in a different way.

There are still further terminologies used by other authors to distinguish between a broader and a narrower notion of cooperation and their associated goals. Capone (2001) refers to Gu's (1999) distinction between communicative and extra-communicative goals. Sarangi and Slembrouck (1992: 120) refer to Thomas (1986) as distinguishing between the social goal sharing interpretation of cooperation and, as they say, the 'arguably vacuous notion of linguistic cooperation'. Thus Sarangi and Slembrouck express reservations about the possibility of a distinction being made between linguistic and social goal sharing cooperation. While not all the distinctions made between broader and narrower notions of cooperation need coincide precisely, they all appear to be subject to the point I have made: that where there *is* cooperation with a goal that is extra-linguistic, substantial, extra-communicative, or social this may determine cooperation within the conversation.

This section has addressed opposition to Grice's cooperative principle, mainly based on opposition to his claim that speakers normally are cooperative. It has also looked at the strategy of defining a narrower notion of cooperation, and applying Grice's principle and maxims just to that. The problem was that where there is cooperation with a broader goal it is this goal that appears to determine relevance and so forth in

the conversation. This leads to a new understanding of that kind of distinction, but the broad strategy is still helpful in defending Grice's cooperative principle, for it shows that where there is no extra-linguistic cooperation we can fall back on merely linguistic cooperation. The matter cannot rest there, though, for there are further cases which raise issues about the way the cooperative principle applies.

3. Opting Out and Conflicting Interests

Consider the case of a journalist who asks a politician a question that she does not wish to answer. For example, outside the British Prime Minister's residence when ministerial appointments were being made a press journalist yelled at Ruth Kelly, "Ere, love, you been sacked?" (Hoggart, 2006), and if she said anything she would have replied in essence, "No comment." Only the Prime Minister announces those decisions. Here the speaker is said to be opting out of the maxim of quantity (Grice, 1989: 30). In quieter and more dignified settings politicians are able to decline to comment with greater elegance and care. Clearly, insufficient information has been supplied but there is an evident reason for that. Thus, the speaker in effect acknowledges the deficiency while maintaining the general spirit of cooperation and indeed she does not violate the other maxims.

A similar case to that of the journalist and politician, but where the clash of goals is even more marked, is where a burglar asks, "What is the combination of your safe?" and the householder bravely responds, "I shan't tell you." There is no sign of cooperation with respect to extra-linguistic goals in these cases. The question arises as to whether there is cooperation with respect to linguistic goals. If cooperation is understood as just following the maxims then there is not, as the maxim of quantity is not satisfied. Even so, we might feel that the householder is doing what is required of them conversationally, for the response is remarkably direct and to the point. I want to place these kinds of cases in the context of a broader range of cases. We should not think of cases of opting out as merely exceptions to a general rule, but as one example of how participants in conversations handle a degree of conflict of interest.

The speaker who says 'no comment' is still 'playing the game' in a certain kind of way, while observing a restriction over what they can contribute. The person who is

frank about what they can and cannot contribute is surely doing what minimal conversational standards should require. Certainly, they do not satisfy the questioner's curiosity, but that is on account of not sharing goals with the questioner.

Cases of opting out, such as the 'no comment' situation, tend to be cases where the speaker and audience have conflicting interests. We can look at the issue of conflicting interests more generally by looking at a further hypothetical case that leads to different morals. You wish to buy a used car and are in a car yard speaking to a salesperson. At one level, you are focused on the same goal, a car purchase, but of course the two of you have different interests. You wish to get the best car for the least price whereas the salesperson wishes to sell for as much as she can, especially a vehicle that would be hard to sell to others.

Here is a case where the nature of the transaction limits the degree or nature of cooperation, but the participants have a common interest in striking a deal that is mutually agreeable. It is part of that process that you have different goals and neither will fully cooperate to achieve the other's goals. Each expects the other to be restrained about revealing their wishes and intentions. If the salesperson asks, "What is the most you would be prepared to pay for a vehicle?" you could be expected to fudge and hedge. Similarly, if you ask, "Are there any potential serious problems with the vehicle?" we might expect the salesperson to speak carefully, not revealing worst fears.

The balance of cooperation and conflict cannot be properly addressed if we were to restrict our attention to a narrow notion of cooperation like formal or linguistic cooperation. The shared and conflicting goals both go beyond cooperation in a narrow sense as the parties need to cooperate in a serious negotiation with financial consequences. How Grice's maxims are followed in order to achieve that result is a subtle matter. Neither party unreservedly wishes to further the other's goals and this affects the quantity of information and perhaps the quality and may lead to a narrow interpretation of relevance. Nevertheless, they are doing more than sticking to the topic in a formalistic way; they are working their way to a mutually agreeable result.

In the course of negotiation, the competitive nature of the situation makes itself felt in terms of what implicatures the parties would draw from the other's remarks. Suppose the salesperson says, "This little Peugeot would suit you perfectly." Suppose also that next to the Peugeot sits the cheapest car in the yard, a Lada. Would you draw the implicature that the Lada is not suitable? One possibility is that you would take the salesperson to be implicating that, while not trusting the implicated claim. Another possibility, though, is that you would not draw that implicature, taking the salesperson to be silent concerning the Lada, at the level of implicature as well as at the level of explicit speech. We could describe this situation by saying that the salesperson's own interests will limit the quantity of information she will provide, implicitly as well as explicitly. On the other hand, if a knowledgeable friend of yours were to say the same thing about the Peugeot, the implicature that the Lada is unsuitable may well be an appropriate one to draw and indeed to trust.

In employing these car yard examples I am relying on our common understanding of how people interact in such situations, which are common and vivid. Developing such examples could be a prelude to employing a pragmatic theory which incorporates the type of social setting into the nature of the speech act. For example, Mey (2001: 221 ff) and Capone (2005) discuss the notion of a pragmeme in which the meaning of a speech act is determined jointly by the rules of language and of society. Discussing the nature of car yard interactions could well be investigated profitably in that kind of framework. That is not my intention here, though. The car yard provides merely a familiar example and the general point applies across a broad variety of cases of interactions where there is conflict of interest. Similar points could apply to very different kinds of bargaining, such as hammering out an agreement concerning household chores in a shared living arrangement. I am suggesting a still greater degree of generalization, where we consider conversations involving conflicts of interest. A Gricean approach to pragmatics may not be totally incompatible with a societal approach to pragmatics (Turner, 2002). I want to re-emphasise the place of the cooperative principle, without foreclosing connections with other pragmatic approaches.

I am supposing that the conversational participants are mutually aware, or at least implicitly sense, that there is a conflict of interest and thus adjust their remarks and

interpretations of the other's remarks accordingly. This can be understood in terms of rationality. Grice talks of the rationality of cooperation. Here, what is relevant is the rationality of limited cooperation and the rationality of expecting that kind of limited cooperation in others. This basis in rationality does not dispense with the notion of cooperation as suggested by Kasher (1977), though, but rather emphasizes the way we need to be sensitive to situations of limited cooperation.

My emphasis on the speaker and audience having a sense of there being a conflict of interest presumably could be incorporated into some kind of approach in which the notion of relevance is central. An interpretation of the recommendation of the Peugeot as implicating that the Lada was not suitable might be recognized as relevant if the utterance was that of a friend and not relevant when it was that of a salesperson. My claim, though, is that such recognition of relevance would depend on sensitivity to the situation as one of conflicting interests. Relevance Theory has sidelined the cooperative principle and thus talk of sensitivity to situations of conflict of interest that qualify the extent of cooperation is out of line with the way the theory has been presented. What it would need to do is describe how the cognitive environments of the speaker and audience incorporate the nature of these conflict of interest situations in such a way as to suitably affect the communicative intentions of the speaker and the drawing of inferences by the audience. Sperber and Wilson (1986: 121) do claim as a virtue of their use of relevance that it is consistent with 'keeping secret something it would be relevant to the audience to know'. I am interested in when that occurs and when it does not.

Some authors might describe a situation involving the salesperson's utterance described above as one in which the maxim of quantity has been *suspended* (Thomas 1995: 76-8). While that is one possible description, my treatment tends to normalize that situation to a greater extent. Dealing with a degree of conflict of interest is familiar in a wide range of situations. Incidentally, it is certainly not true that the maxim of quantity is suspended for the whole interaction. If you were to ask, "Does it have air bags and ABS brakes?" and the salesperson said, "It has air bags," you would take her to be implicating that it did not have ABS brakes. That form of implicature has also been described as a clausal implicature and functions as a pattern of default reasoning, which makes it count as a generalized conversational implicature (Grice,

1989: 37; Gazdar, 1979; Levinson, 2000: 36). Generalized conversational implicatures can be cancelled by features of the context, though, and if the maxim of quantity had been suspended more generally through the interaction that should have been enough to cancel that generalized implicature.

I have been focusing especially on conversations in which there is a degree of trust between the parties, but with limits. I am not trading on the crude stereotype of the used car salesperson as a rogue and a confidence trickster. The situation depends just on the reality of a degree of conflict of interest between salesperson and the purchaser. It is my belief that, in spite of that conflict of interest, the degree of cooperation is sufficient to entertain the possibility of implicatures with a Gricean explanation.

4. Unhelpful speakers

We have looked at opting out situations where there were conflicts of interest. We have also seen a bargaining example, which provides a further illustration of conflict of interest. In this section we shall look at cases of unhelpful speakers, which could perhaps be described in terms of conflict of interest too. There, the speaker's interest lies in conserving time and effort, a matter which concerns pragmatics generally.

In a crowded train station, you ask an overstretched employee, "When is the next train to Newtown?" and they respond brusquely, "There are no more trains to Newtown today." Let us suppose that there are other possibilities that could have been mentioned: taking a bus to another station and then a train, or taking the train at five past midnight. In this situation, I want to suppose, the employee is providing a literal and machine-like response and so is not cooperating in the full sense that interests Grice most. If the audience appreciates that, then they will *not* take the speaker to be implicating that there are no other alternatives involving trains in the near future. While there is less than full cooperation, there is reasonable performance under the headings of quality, relevance and manner. Would it be correct to describe this case as one in which there is merely formal or linguistic cooperation and not substantial cooperation? That may be tempting but is not fully accurate as the utterance can be criticized with respect to the quantity maxim. If we were to take Pavlidou's account

of formal cooperation strictly this means that there is not even formal cooperation in this situation. It makes better sense to say that there is a reduced level of cooperation. Of course, in a different situation, where the speaker is a painstakingly helpful friend saying exactly the same thing, it *would* be appropriate to take them to be implicating that there is no way of getting to Newtown by train in the near future. The audience could correctly reason that if there had been some alternative she would have said so.

I have presented this case as one with a reduced level of cooperation owing to work pressure, but there would be similar cases where a passer-by simply feels unmotivated to help and gives minimal responses. This can lead to misunderstanding, where the audience implicitly reasons, “If there were a better way they would have said so,” but often enough we recognize an unhelpful manner and do not draw much from terse responses. While Grice does not dwell on cases of unhelpful speakers, he shows awareness of a range of cases in which cooperation is limited or does not obtain.

Now we have considered various kinds of conversations involving conflicting interests we can return briefly to the cases of advertising and institutional discourse. In both cases there are clearly conflicting interests, but not ones so thoroughgoing as to undermine effective communication. The advertiser attempts to convey a high opinion of the product or service and you as the audience appreciate the biased nature of the perspective. Implicatures can be detected and they can depend on a level of cooperation. The advertiser understands your goal of having clean clothes at an economical price, for example. But a discerning audience retains a lively scepticism about both explicit and implicit claims. Similarly, in the example of institutional discourse from Sarangi and Slembrouck, described earlier, the postgraduate student might expect the DHSS to be cautious in its financial dealings with applicants, and not make favourable judgements too readily. In this case it may be that we should not so much regard the DHSS as literally having its own interests, but we can say it has an interest in operating a fair and even handed policy towards all applicants. One would like to think even handedness could be combined with a degree of flexibility. Thus in this situation we don't have the two parties straightforwardly sharing an extra-linguistic interest, nor do we merely have them cooperating at a narrow linguistic level, but rather we have them jointly engaging in an extra-linguistic project, one in which there is a *kind* of conflict of interest.

I have now covered various kinds of cases in which the speaker's cooperation with regard to extra-linguistic goals is limited in ways that an audience, with luck, can appreciate and this modifies their reading of implicatures. In this way, an audience's assumption of cooperation is qualified by their assessment of the interests and degree of helpfulness of the speaker. The maxims are related to the cooperative principle and consequently the maxims should also be understood in this kind of qualified way.

5. Conclusion

I have conducted an investigation into Grice's cooperative principle and I have noted how authors have objected to his claim that, as a matter of fact, speakers are usually cooperative in conversations. I have discussed the strategy of restricting the application of the principle to cooperation of a narrower nature, linguistic or formal cooperation. That kind of distinction needs to be reformulated for, in cases where there is a shared extra-linguistic goal, that shared goal can determine the nature of the cooperation required. Even so, the strategy is helpful for it shows how, in cases where there is no shared extra-linguistic goal, implicatures can be understood on the basis of narrowly linguistic cooperation. The cooperative principle still faces challenges in cases where there is a conflict of interest between the conversational participants. In cases of opting out, a narrow view of linguistic cooperation based on Grice's maxims does not do justice to the way that it may be perfectly understandable and acceptable for someone to speak with discretion. In cases where there is a level of cooperation with a common extra-linguistic goal there may simultaneously be limitations to cooperation on account of conflicting interests. This means that the cooperation is of a constrained nature and that affects the implicatures that are intended and drawn. This requires the speaker and, especially, the audience to be sensitive to a context of conflicting interests. My recommendation is to bring the cooperative principle back more to centre stage while allowing that conversational participants need to be sensitive to limitations on cooperation in a range of situations.

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