



THE PLACE OF IMPLICATURE IN GENERATING MEANING

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ABSTRACT

The place of implicature in generating meaning in a conversation offers an insight into the relationship between language and context. The paper employed the study of pragmatics as systematic relation between language and context. That is, how utterances convey meaning in real life situation. In some case, a listener generates meaning from the speaker's utterances beyond the context, this type of meaning is implied but not stated and is referred to as implicature.

In this paper, we will look at the meaning of implicatures, and differentiate implication from implicature; also consider two types of implicatures, convention and conversational.

Furthermore, the paper will draw attention to cooperative principles use in communication and finally make suggestions on how to interpret meaning beyond the semantic content of the sentences uttered.

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INTRODUCTION

The notion of implicature is that, it provides some explicit account of how it is possible to mean (in some general sense) more than what is actually said (that more than what is literally expressed by the conventional sense of the linguistic expression uttered). Some meanings cannot be determined by the context or by its semantic content; this kind of meaning is what we are interested in this paper.

"If a friend asks me,
When is my son's birth day?
It makes perfectly good sense for
me to answer.
We will be celebrating Nigeria's
Independence on Thursday".

In this particular context of conversation, the fact is that, there is only one day that was set aside for the celebration of Nigeria's Independence each year. Furthermore, that my interlocutor is aware of this

and takes my answer in the spirit in which it was given via, a hopeful relevant answer.

It should be noted that, if we limit pragmatic explanations to be strictly grammatical, we should have to exclude relevant answers, since there are no grammatical items in this interchange that can carry the required information about the user and their contexts.

In interpretation of meaning in a situation like this, misunderstanding is always possible and sometimes seems to be the rule rather than exception. Sometimes, the interpretation of an utterance may be a matter of guess work. In Blakemore's (2002) procedural process, he states that a hearer follows certain clues in the uttered expressions to grasp the contextual assumption and effects that are intended by the speaker. The more we know about context, the more qualified to follow certain clues. The reason why people normally do qualify as guessers, have a lot to do with the fact

that their interlocutors are guessable, and that their common context, including their language which predisposes them for certain guesses.

Meaning of implicature

The term implicature is used to account for what a speaker can imply, suggest or mean, as distinct from what the speaker literally says. What is said is the intended sense and reference of the utterance than what is tacitly implicated.

For instance, I introduce my sister to a friend of mine, and my friend knows quite alright that I am from Owerri, in Imo state, Nigeria. Then, my friend after a careful look at my sister commends her as a pretty and charming young lady. Then pause, and ask me a question like this. "Why is it that young girls from Owerri preferred dressing in trouser and high-heeled shoes?"

The implied meaning here is that my sister is dressed in trouser and high-heeled shoes. Although, my friend didn't mention it, the tendency that he might deny that, it wasn't what he meant is there, but there is an implied meaning of what he said. That is the reason why pragmatics is interested in the phenomenon that cannot be captured in simple syntactic or semantic rule, but has to be accounted for in other ways using some pragmatics principles, like implication and implicature.

The word implicature is derived from verb 'to imply' as its cognate, to imply means to fold something into something else, hence that, which is implied is folded in and has to be unfolded in order to be understood.

Implications

The term implications define a logical relationship between two propositions. Let these propositions be symbolized as 'p' and 'q'; then the logical implication is the relation "if p, then q, the relationship must be well known in daily life and can be expressed in everyday language.

Suppose, I am a teacher, and I have some students in my class; let be the proposition be, if you do your assignment very well: be symbolized by 'p'

You score good marks by 'q'

Then the logical express $p \rightarrow q$ will stand.

If you do your assignment very well, you will score good marks, suppose I say this to my students, they will have a rightful grudge against me, if they meet

the criteria of very well, in their assignment; yet, I refuse to make good on what I consider to be a promise. In this case, their grudges will not only be rightful, it is also logical $p \rightarrow q$ or p implies q .

But, what if my students did not meet my criteria of "very well" in their assignment? Then, it will be right for me not to give them good marks and they will have no claims. However, logical speaking, I could still give them good scores from the non-truth of the first proposition (p). I cannot conclude to the non-truth of the second (q) logically, none 'p' does not imply non q.

As we have seen from the above example, a logical implication does not have to, correspond to what in everyday life we understand by 'implies'. In the above example, we would say that my students, not doing their assignment "very well" implied their not scoring good marks. However, logical and everyday life does not always look at things the same way. That is why; we need term to generate meanings in addition to logical implication. This term is refers to as implicature which is the interest of this paper.

Types of Implicatures

There are two types of implicatures;

- a. Convention Implicatures
- b. Conversational Implicatures

Convention Implicatures

Convention Implicatures refers to the conventional meaning of a word, they are non-truth conditional inferences, that are not derived from super-ordinate pragmatics principles like maxims, but are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items. This attachment may take the form of unavoidable, almost logical conclusion. The convention which governs the use of conventional implicatures are historically developed, culture specific and class-related, it may also clash with conventional uses. For example, the word "bachelor" in the sentence: He is a bachelor, implicates that he is not married but a full grown man.

Conversational Implicature

A conversation implicature is therefore, something which is implied in conversation that is, something which is left implicit in actual language use. It refers to the inferences that the addressee

(listener) generates from the speaker's utterances beyond the semantic content of the sentences uttered. This kind of inference, as noted earlier on, enables the addressee to understand the speaker's implied meaning.

Meaning is largely determined by linguistic rule while what is implicated, the intended meaning, is largely determined by conversational maxims.

For instance, a female student took permission to travel from her teacher in order to meet up with her medical appointment and collect her glasses, a week later she returned and the following conversation took place between the teacher and the student.

Teacher: You really enjoyed yourself.

Student: No, Ma.

Teacher: After one week?

Student: I didn't collect the glasses.

Teacher: Why?

Student: It was not ready.

Teacher: It means you will have reason for another enjoyment?

Student: No Ma, my mum will bring it.

From the above conversation, the teacher felt that the student took permission to visit her boyfriend, although the teacher didn't categorically say so. The Implicature generated here is that; students took permission to travel for many reasons which they don't normally state.

Maxims

Maxim is a cooperative principle coined by Grice (1975) as regulative conventions that must be adhered to in conversation. Thus, when people agree to enter into conversation, they tacitly agree to cooperate towards mutual communication ends, by obeying the cooperative principle and its regulative conventions. As implicatures refers to a kind of indirect, context- determined meaning, what is implicated is determined by conversational maxims.

Kinds of Maxims

Maxims are not strongly regulative as grammatical rules. For instance, when a grammatical rule is not adhered to, it leads to an ill-formed utterances but deviation from the maxims produces implicatures, because the maxims are meant to ensure effective communication, but its deviation

cannot bring about ill-formed utterance, rather it generates intended meaning. These maxims are:-

1. The maxim of quality: which states that participant in a conversation should be as informative as necessary.
Maxim of quality, states that contributors should be accurate with backing up evidence.
2. The maxim of relevance, which states "be relevant". This means that, the information in a conversation should be relevant to the matter being discussed.
3. The maxim of manner, which states that contributors should be brief, orderly and avoid ambiguity.

Sometimes, these maxims are infringed due to non-observance which stems from imperfect linguistics performance rather than the desire to generate conversational implicature.

It is difficult to differentiate between the desire to generate conversational implicature from a speaker's incompetence in a language, which will display cognitive weakness, psycho-social problem or speech impairment of various forms. That is why, there must be mutual agreement between two or more people before conversation can take place, the background of the interlocutors should be put into consideration. This mutual understanding/agreement enables, the listener to work out the intentions of the speaker. Thus the participants must adhere to co-operative principles, which each one must obey. Any derivation from the stated principle which generates implicature should be able to be interpreted in accordance with what the speaker expects to hear. Thus, if we ask a question, a response which on the face of it doesn't make sense can very well be an adequate answer. For example; "A" Is your husband around?

"B" the time is 10 pm.

The implied meaning can be as follows:

- a. The husband doesn't attend to visitors before 10pm
- b. The husband stop attending to visitors at 10pm
- c. The husband goes to bed immediately it is 10pm
- d. The husband comes back from work after 10pm etc.

The implicature here is that nobody should ask about the husband before or after 10pm.

Context and Language

Crystal's (1971), states that some people find language a fascinating aspect of human behavior and they are delighted. In examining it from various perspectives, it is of course, not mere delight in prodding it from different point of view, but most times, they do this in an effort to find answer to problems arising in the course of the use of the language.

English language is very important because it teaches to analyze language at many levels – smallest unit of written language, word formation, word meaning, different kinds of language use, pragmatically, semantically and otherwise. Crystal (2003), says, knowing about language means, being able to talk about what it is that we are able to do, when we construct sentences to describe what the rules are, and what happens when they fail to apply. That is why the researcher is interested in interpreting meaning of utterances in a language, using the context, in order to bring out the relationship between language and context. An utterance is made in a particular language and in a particular context and needs a particular clue in order to interpret it so as to bring out the meaning of both spoken and unspoken words.

Context on the other hand does not exist in a vacuum, but in consideration of utterances. Daniel and James (2000), see utterances as the correlate of sentence in spoken language. They continued by saying utterances may be diffluent, containing filled pauses like “um” and “uh” restarts and repairs. Stephen .C. Levinson (2001), states that, the distinction between sentence and utterance is of fundamental importance to both semantics and pragmatics. “Essentially, we want to say that a sentence is an abstract theoretical entity defined within a theory of grammar, while an utterance is the issuance of a sentence, a sentence – analogue, or sentence in an actual context”. Peter Grundy (2008), sees “An utterance type of meaning as a predictable type of utterance which has a regular inferred interpretation across a range of context. Jacob .L. Mey (2001), trying to differentiate a

sentence from an utterance, says that, sentences are repeatable but utterances are not.

“It is not the case that I can utter a sentence twice in the same way utterances are not repeatable, but are always different depending on who says them and under what conditions. By the very fact of being uttered the utterances indexes a person, who utters, this indexicality is, however, implicit, has to be brought out by an analysis of the discourse in which the utterance takes place”.

He stressed further by saying that these implicit properties of the utterance reflect on the utterance itself by indexing its user relation, that is to say, they tell us something about how the utterances is produce. With the explanation above, we discovered that utterances cannot exist in a vacuum; there must be a context in order to interpret their meaning. We will conclude here by saying that semantic is concerned with sentence – meaning while pragmatics with utterance – meaning. Empirically, the relation between an utterance and corresponding sentence may be elliptical, or contain sentence fragments of false – starts, but it is customary to think of an utterance as the pairing of a sentence and a context, namely the context in which the sentence was uttered.

The interpretation of meaning using Grice theory of implicature depends mostly on the context. Leech (1994) states that the relationship between the forms of utterances and the types of meaning they can express is a complex one which is based on the principle that what the speakers say makes sense in the context in which they are saying it. Meaning can be well interpreted successfully when the context of situation is well examined within the speech events.

Communication in whatever context is an interactive process through which meaning is negotiated (Amodu 2013). He stressed further by saying that, the cardinal goal in pragmatics is to explain how utterances convey meaning in context and in a particular situation. That situation in which meaning cannot be conventionally interpreted and how context contributes to the encoding and

decoding of meaning how speakers and hearers of utterances interpret them, how speakers say one thing and mean something else, how deduction are made in context with respect to what meaning has been encoded in a particular utterance. Leech (1983) characterize context as any background knowledge assumed to be shared by the speakers and the hearers and which contributes to the hearers interpretation of what the speaker means by a given utterance.

We are looking at the place of implicature in generating meaning. Grice develops the concept of implicature, which he says is basically a theory about how people use language. His suggestion is that as "there is a set of over-arching assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation. These arise; it seems from basic rational considerations and may be formulated as guideline for the efficient and effective use of language in conversation to further co-operative ends".

Implicature seems to offer some significant functional explanations of linguistic facts than other theories of meaning; it provides some explicit account of how it is possible to main (in some general sense) more than what is actually said (i.e. more than what is literally expressed by the conventional sense of the linguistic expressions uttered). Implicature is essentials, if various basic facts about language are to be accounted for properly, for examples; particles like "well", "anyway", 'by the way' require some meaning specification in a theory of meaning just like all other words in English.

For instance, a man of seventy years applied for a job as a security man in a car manufacturing company, and the following conversation occurred:

Applicant: Good day Sir.

Manager: Welcome Papa, what can we do for you?

Applicant: I am looking for a job; I saw your advert for a security man.

Manger: Yes Sir, do you want to get the job for your son?

Applicant: No Sir, for myself.

Manager: Yourself? How old are you papa?

Applicant: 'Hum' my age has nothing to do with this.

Manager: em... em... Sir you need to come back next time.

The sound 'hum' 'em' has no grammatical interpretation but can be analyze pragmatically as having implied meaning. The implicature generated here is that the man knows that he is too old for the job, the work is not for people of his age, hence the sound 'hum' on the other hand, the manager didn't want to hurt him, that is why he sounded...em...em.. and ask him to come back next time. But when we come to considering meaning of the particles, we shall find ourselves referring to the pragmatic mechanisms that produce implicatures. We also see that certain syntactic rules appear at least to be sensitive to implicature and that implicature puts interesting constraint on what can be a possible lexical item in natural language.

The principles that generate implicatures have a very general explanatory power, a few basic principles provides explanatory for a large array of apparently unrelated facts. Kasper (1965), notes that "a statement spoken in real life is never detached from the situation in which it has been uttered", the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation.

Finally, it is discovered that implicature stands as a paradigmatic example of the nature and power of pragmatic explanations of linguistic phenomena. The source of these species of pragmatic inference can be shown to lie outside the organization of language, in some general principles for co-operative interactions, and yet these principles have a pervasive effect upon the structure of language.

Despite occasional misinterpretations, people in most situations manage to understand utterances essentially as they were intended. The reason is that without cause to expect otherwise, interlocutors normally trust that they and their conversational partners are honoring the same interpretive conventions. Hearers assume simply that speakers have honored the conventions of interpretation in constructing their utterances, speakers, on the other hand, must make a twofold assumption, not only that hearer will be guided by

the convention but also, that hearer will trust speaker's to have honored those conventions in constructing their utterances. There is an unspoken part that people will co-operate in communicating with each other, and speakers rely on this co-operation to make conversation efficient. This is one of the first attempts to account for meaning as it develops in conversation. To this end, Grice distinguishes between what a sentence mean and what someone means by uttering that sentence. For instance;

A. Did you enjoy the meal?

B. Your children are very friendly.

It is quite apparent that "B" is saying in an indirect and relatively polite way that he did not enjoy the meal, even though he does not actually say so. In ordinary language terms, we might say that "B" implies that he did not like the meal even though he did not say so. In order to avoid confusion over the term 'imply' which has a more technical use within philosophical logic. Grice coins the term "Implicature" for this kind of indirect, context-determined meaning.

Leech, (1983), identified three elements in analyzing the context of situation as the field of discourse, tenor of discourse and mode of discourse. The fields of discourse, they say, comprise two situational factors, the setting and the topic. The setting of any literary text enhances our critical evaluation and understanding of the text. The tenor of discourse is the basis for the actual interaction of the speakers, their social roles, personal attitude and intentions. According to Halliday (1994) language has functions in a social structure, and the organization of behavioural meaning should give same insight into its social foundation. Mode of discourse referred to the channel of the conversation, it can be written or spoken.

Implicature gives account of how meaning can be interpreted in the absence of any conventional means for expressing the intended message using the context.

Conclusion/Recommendation

Surely, there is no semantic or logical criteria that can be use in interpreting implicature neither will just guessing bring out the meaning, rather, the interpreter must be conversant with the

circumstances of the conversation, the person involved, the situation, their background, the context and so on. Indeed, the knowledge of the background of the speaker will also help the listener to know if the speaker is trying to generate an implicature or he/she has speech impairment, cognitive weakness or psycho-socio problems.

Most importantly, the interpretation of meaning should not be strictly grammatical because some discussions have no grammatical items required for the interpretation especially as some develop to be implicatures.

In order to understand more about implicatures, we need to study the cooperative principles as well as to know its deviation, compared it to cognitive weakness, psycho-social problems and generating implicatures.

There is no existing rule to capture the implied meaning in a conversation; work should be focused on creating pragmatic rules as we have syntactic and semantic rules in grammar.

More work should be done on implication and implicature as means of interpreting meaning. Means of interpretation of meaning should be simplified rather than looking at is as guess-work, or following a clue.

Although much work have been done on speech and hearing impairment but much need to be done as it relates to implicatures. Researchers are encouraged to differentiate implicatures as a result of impairment and implicatures as intended meaning.

Pragmatics as a branch of linguistics is never a dry area of research, there are a lot of resources that we can dig out from it, so researchers are advised to work on this area rather than syntax and semantics and phonology.

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