

POST-GRICEAN PRAGMATICS

AUTHOR: K.M. Jaszczolt

Paul **Grice** is generally regarded as the founding figure of the tradition in which utterance meaning is analyzed in terms of speaker's **intentions**. As Grice (1957: 219) put it in his seminal paper 'Meaning', "'A meant_{NN} something by *x*" is roughly equivalent to "A uttered *x* with the intention of inducing a belief by means of the recognition of this intention"', where meaning_{NN} stands for **non-natural meaning**, or what is communicated (**what is said** plus **implicatures**), as distinguished from **natural meaning** where meaning that *p* entails that it is the fact that *p*. In other words, the speaker means something by uttering *x* when he or she intends the addressee to produce a response, recognizing that this production of a response is what the speaker intends (see also Grice 1969). The view is further supported by Grice's account of rational communicative behaviour. This is spelled out in Grice's **cooperative principle** and **maxims of conversation** (Grice 1975) which capture the predictability of speaker's meaning, some aspects of which are context-free and some context-bound.

Post-Gricean research develops these two aspects of the theory of linguistic communication. It revises Grice's set of maxims in order to reduce redundancy and overlap and aims at a more cognitively adequate generalization. These revisions adopt various degrees of reductionism. **Neo-Gricean pragmatics** remains close to the spirit of Grice's original maxims which were reanalyzed as (i) Horn's (1984, 1988, 2007) maximization of information content (Q principle) and minimization of form (R principle) and (ii) its less reductionist variant in Levinson's (1987, 1995, 2000) three

heuristics: the Q principle (as above), aided by the minimization of content ('Say as little as necessary', I principle) and minimization of form ('Do not use a prolix, obscure or marked expression without reason', M principle). At the other end of the spectrum, **relevance theory** replaces the maxims with one principle defined separately for **communication** ('Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its optimal relevance') and for cognition ('Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance'; Sperber and Wilson 1995: 260). In spite of the differences in the number of principles, these post-Gricean endeavours are surprisingly similar in adhering to the overarching idea of the trade-off between informativeness and economy (expending the least effort). The principle of relevance is also spelled out in terms of a balance between two such driving forces: the processing effort and the cognitive effect in **conversation**, understood as minimizing the cost and at the same maximizing the information content.

Subsuming the generalizations under one principle is useful for discussing cognition and the psychology of utterance processing. On the other hand, detailed spelling out of interlocutors' rational behaviour in neo-Gricean pragmatics benefits attempts at formalization such as **optimality-theory pragmatics** (see Blutner and Zeevat 2004). It also aids applications to the study of semantic change, as for example in Traugott's principles of **historical pragmatics**, which are founded on neo-Gricean heuristics (Traugott and Dasher 2002; Traugott 2004). The main difference between neo-Griceans and relevance theory lies perhaps in 'whose meaning' they model: while the neo-Griceans follow the original perspective and consider utterance meaning, including implicature, to be speaker's intended meaning, relevance theorists discuss

intentional communication from the perspective of the addressee's reconstruction of speaker's assumptions (see also Saul 2002).

One of the main research topics in post-Gricean pragmatics concerns the influence of pragmatic meanings, be they inferred or automatically bestowed, on truth-conditional content. Following Grice's (1978) principle of Modified Occam's Razor which says that senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity, and since the so-called Atlas-Kempson thesis of semantic underdetermination in the 1970s (see Jaszczolt forthcoming a), many post-Griceans have subscribed to the view that **syntax** renders a semantically underdetermined **representation** of **meaning** which is further enriched, embellished, modulated, etc. by the output of pragmatic processing. What is said (Recanati 1989, 2004) and the relevance-theoretic notion of explicature (Carston 1988, 1998, 2001, 2002) exemplify such a pragmatics-rich unit which corresponds to the development of the **logical form** of the uttered sentence, even though their proponents offer different principles for its delimitation (availability principle and functional independence, respectively) and uphold different hypotheses concerning the psychology of utterance processing that allows addressees to arrive at such a unit (see Recanati 2007; Carston 2007; Jaszczolt 2006). The most radical form of this semantics-pragmatics mix is called **Contextualism**. It considers such **enrichment** (or, more generally, modulation of the output of syntax) to be always present. In Recanati's (2005: 179-180) words, '[c]ontextualism ascribes to modulation a form of necessity which makes it ineliminable. Without contextual modulation, no proposition could be expressed...'.

In a recent strand of post-Gricean research called Default Semantics, the question of the delimitation of what is said is revised more fundamentally. What is said is assumed to be the main, primary, or most salient meaning but its relation to the logical form of the sentence is less restrictive than on the previous accounts. We know from experimental evidence that in the majority of cases speakers communicate their main message (primary meaning) through implicit content (Nicolle and Clark 1999; Pitts 2005; Sysoeva and Jaszczolt 2007). *A fortiori*, the unit of meaning which relies on the development of the logical form (what is said, explicature) should not be of main interest to a true post-Gricean interested in intentional communication. Instead, what is needed is a unit of primary intentional meaning in which this reliance on syntactic representation can be relaxed. Primary meanings of Default Semantics, represented formally as so-called merger representations, offer such a unit. The syntactic constraint which stipulates that what is said or is explicit must be a development of the logical form of the sentence is abandoned. The truth-conditional content pertains to the main meaning intended by the model speaker and recovered by the model addressee, irrespective of its relation to the logical form of the sentence. In other words, the logical form can not only be enriched but in some cases can be overridden when the primary meaning corresponds to what is traditionally dubbed an implicature (see Jaszczolt 2005, 2006, forthcoming b).

Other new aspects of post-Gricean contextualism include debates about the unit on which pragmatic processes operate, where views range from Grice's original proposition-based (thought-based), 'global' **inference** (Jaszczolt 2005) to very 'local', sometimes even word- or morpheme-based inference (Levinson 2000). In the past few years, theoretical debates have begun to be supported with evidence from

experimental research. Cancellability of implicatures and aspects of what is said are also newly reopened topics in this paradigm (Weiner 2006; Blome-Tillmann 2008).

Not all post-Gricean pragmaticists subscribe to the contextualist semantics/pragmatics mix. Bach (2004, 2006) and Horn (2006) advocate an alternative construal in the form of radical minimalism in which the **proposition**, and thereby also truth conditions, are rejected. According to Bach, the semantic properties of a sentence are analogous to syntactic and phonological properties. The object of study of **semantics** is grammatical form rather than a proposition. Contextualists are accused of making a mistake in upholding propositionalism, the view that the grammatical form of a sentence, as in (1a), has to be completed to become fully propositional, as in (1b), evaluable by means of a truth-conditional analysis:

(1a) Tom isn't old enough.

(1b) Tom isn't old enough to stay alone in the house.

In general, questions which are currently at the forefront of post-Gricean research fall into the following categories:

(i) What principles govern **utterance interpretation**?

(ii) How does pragmatic content interact with semantic content?

and, for those who do not shun psychologism in **pragmatics**,

(iii) What are the properties of the interpretation process?

Question (i) concerns the **heuristics** for rational and intentional communicative behaviour. Question (ii) pertains to the boundary dispute between semantics and pragmatics in the contextualism-**semantic minimalism** debate (see Recanati 2002 on truth-conditional pragmatics, Recanati 2005, Jaszczolt 2005 on contextualism, and Borg 2004 and Cappelen and Lepore 2005 on minimalism). Question (iii) is spelled out as the debate over pragmatic inference vis-à-vis automatic interpretation. Cross-cutting questions (i) to (iii) is the controversy between the proponents (e.g. Stanley 2002; Stanley and Szabó 2000) of the grammatical basis of pragmatic enrichment ('bottom-up' process) and those (e.g. Recanati 2002, 2004) advocating the theory of free, not linguistically triggered, 'top-down' enrichment. This controversy is discussed predominantly with respect to quantifier **domain restriction** as in (2b):

(2a) Everybody submitted an article.

(2b) *Every pragmaticist invited to contribute to this Encyclopedia* submitted an article.

As Stanley (2002: 152) puts it, '[m]uch syntactic structure is unpronounced, but no less real for being unpronounced.' However, according to Recanati (2002: 302), enrichment is free, 'not linguistically triggered' but 'pragmatic through and through.'

Constructions and phenomena that are most frequently studied in post-Gricean pragmatics include those expressions which were traditionally regarded as giving rise to semantic **ambiguity**. They include **negation**, sentential connectives, definite and indefinite descriptions, various quantifying expressions, and **propositional attitude** reports.

See also: Ambiguity; defaults in utterance interpretation; enrichment; experimental pragmatics; explicit/implicit distinction; implicature; implicature; neo-Gricean pragmatics; scalar implicature; semantics-pragmatics interface; utterance-type meaning/utterance-token meaning

Suggestions for further reading:

Horn, L.R. (2007) 'Neo-Gricean pragmatics: a Manichaeian manifesto', in N. Burton-Roberts (ed.) *Pragmatics*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Huang, Y. (2007) *Pragmatics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 2, 6 and 7.

Jaszczolt, K.M. (2002) *Semantics and Pragmatics*, London: Longman. Chapters 10 and 11.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bach, K. (2004) 'Minding the gap', in C. Bianchi (ed.) *The Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction*, Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.

Bach, K. (2006) 'The excluded middle: semantic minimalism without minimal propositions', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 73: 435-42.

Blome-Tillmann, M. (2008) 'Conversational implicature and the cancellability test', *Analysis*, 68: 156-60.

Blutner, R. and Zeevat, H. (eds) (2004) *Optimality Theory and Pragmatics*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Borg, E. (2004) *Minimal Semantics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Cappelen, H. and Lepore, E. (2005) *Insensitive Semantics: A Defense of Semantic Minimalism and Speech Act Pluralism*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Carston, R. (1988) 'Implicature, explicature, and truth-theoretic semantics', in R.M. Kempson (ed.) *Mental Representations: The Interface between Language and Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carston, R. (1998) 'Postscript to "Implicature, explicature and truth-theoretic semantics"' in A. Kasher (ed.) *Pragmatics: Critical Concepts*, Volume 4, London: Routledge.

Carston, R. (2001) 'Relevance theory and the saying/implicating distinction', *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, 13: 1-34.

Carston, R. (2002) *Thoughts and Utterances: The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Carston, R. (2007) 'How many pragmatic systems are there?', in M.J. Frápolli (ed.) *Saying, Meaning and Referring: Essays on François Recanati's Philosophy of Language*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Grice, H.P. (1957) 'Meaning', *The Philosophical Review*, 66: 377-88; reprinted in *Studies in the Way of Words* (1989), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Grice, H.P. (1969) 'Utterer's meaning and intentions', *The Philosophical Review*, 78: 147-77; reprinted in *Studies in the Way of Words* (1989), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Grice, H.P. (1975) 'Logic and conversation', in P. Cole & J.L. Morgan (eds) *Syntax and Semantics*, Volume 3, New York: Academic Press; reprinted in *Studies in the Way of Words* (1989), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Grice, H.P. (1978) 'Further notes on logic and conversation', in P. Cole (ed.) *Syntax and Semantics*, Volume 9, New York: Academic Press; reprinted in *Studies in the Way of Words* (1989), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Horn, L.R. (1984) 'Toward a new taxonomy for pragmatic inference: Q-based and R-based implicature', in D. Schiffrin (ed.) *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Horn, L.R. (1988) 'Pragmatic theory', in F.J. Newmeyer (ed.) *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey*, Volume 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Horn, L.R. (2006) 'The border wars: a neo-Gricean perspective', in K. von Stechow & K. Turner (eds) *Where Semantics Meets Pragmatics: The Michigan Papers*, Oxford: Elsevier.

Horn, L.R. (2007) 'Neo-Gricean pragmatics: a Manichaean manifesto', in N. Burton-Roberts (ed.) *Pragmatics*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Jaszczolt, K.M. (2005) *Default Semantics: Foundations of a Compositional Theory of Acts of Communication*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jaszczolt, K.M. (2006) 'Defaults in semantics and pragmatics', in E.N. Zalta (eds) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford, CA: CSLI. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/defaults-semantics-pragmatics>> (accessed 2 August 2008).

Jaszczolt, K.M. (forthcoming a) 'Semantics and pragmatics: the boundary issue', in K. von Stechow, P. Portner & C. Maienborn (eds) *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Jaszczolt, K.M. (forthcoming b) 'Default semantics', in B. Heine & H. Narrog (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Levinson, S.C. (1987) 'Minimization and conversational inference', in J. Verschueren & M. Bertuccelli-Papi (eds) *The Pragmatic Perspective. Selected Papers from the 1985 International Pragmatics Conference*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Levinson, S.C. (1995) 'Three levels of meaning', in F.R. Palmer (ed.) *Grammar and Meaning. Essays in Honour of Sir John Lyons*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levinson, S.C. (2000) *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Nicolle, S. and Clark, B. (1999) 'Experimental pragmatics and what is said: a response to Gibbs and Moise', *Cognition*, 69: 337-54.

Pitts, A. (2005) 'Assessing the evidence for intuitions about *what is said*', unpublished manuscript, University of Cambridge.

Recanati, F. (1989) 'The pragmatics of what is said', *Mind & Language*, 4: 295-329; reprinted in S. Davis (ed.) (1991) *Pragmatics: A Reader*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Recanati, F. (2002) 'Unarticulated constituents', *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 25: 299-345.

Recanati, F. (2004) *Literal Meaning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recanati, F. (2005) 'Literalism and contextualism: some varieties', in G. Preyer & G. Peter (eds) *Contextualism in Philosophy: Knowledge, Meaning, and Truth*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Recanati, F. (2007) 'Reply to Carston 2007', in M.J. Frápolli (ed.) *Saying, Meaning and Referring: Essays on François Recanati's Philosophy of Language*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Saul, J.M. (2002) 'What is said and psychological reality: Grice's project and relevance theorists' criticisms', *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 25: 347-72.

Sperber, D. and Wilson, D. ([1986] 1995) *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Stanley, J. (2002) 'Making it articulated', *Mind & Language*, 17: 149-68.

Stanley, J. and Szabó, Z.G. (2000) 'On quantifier domain restriction', *Mind & Language*, 15: 219-61.

Sysoeva, A. and Jaszczolt, K. (2007) 'Composing utterance meaning: an interface between pragmatics and psychology', paper presented at the 10th International Pragmatics Conference, Göteborg, July 2007.

Traugott, E.C. and Dasher, R.B. (2002) *Regularity in Semantic Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Traugott, E.C. (2004) 'Historical pragmatics', in L.R. Horn & G. Ward (eds) *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Weiner, M. (2006) 'Are all conversational implicatures cancellable?', *Analysis*, 66: 127-30.