

Some “pragmatic fieldwork”

Linguist 130A/230A Section

February 9, 2015

Here are several dialogues or interactions, mined from the web, that demonstrate one or another of Grice’s maxims in action. For each one, try to do the following:

- (a) Give a paraphrase of the implicature
- (b) Provide your evidence for the implicature
- (c) It’s an important aspect of Grice’s theory that implicatures are *intentionally* generated. What evidence do you have for the intention to implicate?
- (d) What maxim is involved here, and how is it being used/flouted?
- (e) Describe the steps involved in calculating the implicature (on the listener’s end).
- (f) What sort of calculation might be involved on the speaker’s end? (Thinking about the in-class experiment with the three faces might be helpful here)

Data:

For each of the following data points, the whole interaction is relevant context, but you should focus on the part in bold.

Example 1. *Source: “Hills Like White Elephants,” by Ernest Hemingway*

“They look like white elephants,” she said.

“I’ve never seen one,” the man drank his beer.

“No, you wouldn’t have.”

“I might have,” the man said. “Just because you say I wouldn’t have doesn’t prove anything.”

The girl looked at the bead curtain. **“They’ve painted something on it,”** she said.

Example 2. *Source: CBS transcript of Katie Couric’s one-on-one with Sarah Palin*

Sarah Palin: I can give you examples of things that John McCain has done, that has shown his foresight, his pragmatism, and his leadership abilities. And that is what America needs today.

Katie Couric: I’m just going to ask you one more time – not to belabor the point. Specific examples in his 26 years of pushing for more regulation.

Sarah Palin: **I’ll try to find some and I’ll bring them to you.**

Example 3. *Source: Rotten Tomatoes review of the movie Twilight*

“It’s like an actual grownup movie, all serious and important. Like you can tell how beautiful the vampires are supposed to be because everything gets slow and sparkly when they walk by – and I mean even when they’re not in sunlight LOL!”

Example 4. *Source: Mark Steyn of the Wall Street Journal on the prose style of Sarah, Duchess of York.*

“... a fatal freeway pileup of random metaphors, a grisly shooting spree of meaningless analogies.”

Can you find some of your own? What about for the “missing maxim” (politeness)?