Innocent implicatures

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1. Introduction

It seems to be a common assumption that conversational implicatures arise only when one of the so-called conversational maxims is violated. Bach (2006), for example, explicitly states that "implicatures (and implicitures) arise only when one or another maxim is flouted or violated". This is not to say, of course, that, whenever there is an implicature, a maxim is violated *at the level of what the speaker overall conveys*. Such a view would be bizarre. Rather, the thesis is that implicatures arise only if a maxim is violated *at the level of what is said*. (I will say more about the notion of observing a maxim at a given level below.) The basic idea behind this thesis is that, unless a maxim is violated at the level of what is said, nothing can trigger the search for an implicature. Thus, non-violating implicatures wouldn't be calculable. As Bach puts it immediately after the just quoted passage, "when no maxim is flouted or violated, one can infer that the speaker means what he says. That is, there is nothing to trigger the sort of inference that Grice sketches out for when there is an apparent breach of a maxim."

As far as I can see, Bach is the only one to explicitly endorse the above position. Many other authors, however, seem implicitly committed to it. DeRose (2009:122), for example, argues as follows against the presence of an alleged implicature in a given scenario: "[T]he speaker asserts what would be an extremely relevant thought. So, how can relevance concerns securely lead the listener to the conclusion that what the speaker intends to convey is not that extremely relevant thought he has asserted, but rather some other proposition?" The basic idea here seems to be that, unless the maxim of Relation is violated at the level of what is said (or, in DeRose's terminology, at the level of what is asserted), this maxim at least cannot lead the listener to start fishing around for possible implicatures. In a similar context, Blome-Tillmann (2013b:4303) argues that assuming an implicature in a given case is implausible because "there are simply no convincing reasons to accept the view that [the utterance in question]

is, when taken literally, overly informative or uninformative, evidentially unfounded, conversationally irrelevant or overly imprecise, prolix or convoluted." Again, this suggests that a violation of the maxims at the level of what is said (the "literal" level) is required for the presence of an implicature.[1]

Whatever the considered views of the just quoted authors turn out to be in the end, the thesis that implicatures require maxim violations at the level of what is said undoubtedly is attractive, and one may easily get in the mood of writing in its spirit. Moreover, as will become apparent below, it is not at all trivial to coherently deny this thesis. The goal of this paper is to show that, even so, the thesis cannot be taken for granted and that there is a genuine alternative to it. Along the way, I hope to clarify various aspects of the idea that implicatures are calculable. I think that these clarifications help to elucidate certain debates in philosophy (particularly, the one DeRose and Blome-Tillmann engage in in the just quoted passages), but I will not spell out these consequences here.

The plan for this paper is as follows: As a first step (section 2), I will outline an intuitively very plausible distinction drawn in Grice (1989) and Levinson's (1983) classic introductions to implicatures; namely, the distinction between what I will call *observation* and *exploitation* implicatures. I will then argue (sections 3 – 5) that, on its most plausible interpretation, this distinction is a distinction between, on the one hand, implicatures that don't involve the violation of a maxim at the level of what is said and, on the other hand, implicatures that do involve the violation of a maxim at the level of what is said. I will thus conclude that Grice and Levinson held that many implicatures—namely, all observation implicatures—arise even though no maxim is violated at the level of what is said. Furthermore, I will have presented one *prima facie* coherent way of spelling out the idea of non-violating implicatures. Finally (section 6), I will defend these implicatures against the just indicated worry that they aren't calculable because, unless a maxim is violated at the level of what is said, nothing can trigger the search for an implicature. Once this worry is out of the way, there is at least no obvious reason anymore to be suspicious of observation implicatures.

[1] See also Bianchi (2013:112).

2. Observation and exploitation implicatures

Conversational implicatures are standardly considered calculable. For Grice, this is even a defining characteristic of conversational implicatures (by means of which they are set apart from conventional implicatures).[2] Correspondingly, I will take it for granted in this paper that conversational implicatures are calculable, at least in central cases of successful communication. What does it mean to say that a given implicature is calculable? Roughly, it means the implicature can be derived from the assumption that the speaker is being cooperative (in a yet to be specified sense) by making the corresponding utterance. The notion of cooperativeness here can be spelled out in various ways.[3] I will follow Grice (1989:26f) in assuming, roughly, that a speaker is being *cooperative* (in the relevant sense) just if she observes the following *(conversational) maxims*:

> *Quality$_1$*: Do not say what you believe to be false.
> *Quality$_2$*: Do not say that for which you lack evidence.
> *Quantity$_1$*: Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange).
> *Quantity$_2$*: Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
> *Relation*: Be relevant.
> *Manner*: Be perspicuous.

In what sense are implicatures supposed to be *derivable* from the assumption that a speaker is being cooperative, that is, observes the above maxims?

According to Levinson, these "inferences come about in at least two distinct ways" (1983:104). On the one hand, implicatures may "arise directly from the assumption that the speaker is observing the maxims." (1983:105) On the other hand, implicatures may "come about by overtly and blatantly *not* following some maxim, in order to exploit it for communicative purposes." (1983:109) (See below for examples.) Levinson's distinction seems based on a corresponding distinction

[2] See e.g. Grice (1989:31).

[3] See Blome-Tillmann (2013a:176) for a brief discussion of options.

drawn by Grice. On the one hand, Grice says, there are cases of implicatures "in which no maxim is violated, or at least in which it is not clear that any maxim is violated" (1989:32). On the other hand, he says, there are cases of implicatures in which, "though some maxim is violated at the level of what is said, the hearer is entitled to assume that that maxim, or at least the overall Cooperative Principle, is observed at the level of what is implicated." These latter cases, Grice holds, "involve exploitation, that is, a procedure by which a maxim is flouted" (1989:32f). I will refer to the first kind of implicatures as *observation* implicatures, and to the second as *exploitation* implicatures.

To get an initial grasp on the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures, it is useful to consider specific examples of each kind of implicature. The following case provides an example of an observation implicature based on the maxim of Relation:[4] Someone responds to the question of where to get petrol by saying, "There is a garage around the corner." She thereby implicates that the garage (most likely) sells petrol. This implicature is supposed to be observational very roughly for the following reason: The implicature can be calculated as follows: The hearer assumes that the speaker is observing the maxims. She realizes, however, that the speaker would not be observing the maxims—in particular, Relation—if she did not think the garage (most likely) sells petrol. Thus, the speaker believes and implicates that the garage sells petrol. This calculation is based on the assumption that the speaker is observing the maxims. Hence, the implicature is observational. (The reasoning described in this paragraph will be further clarified below.)

The following case provides an example of an exploitation implicature also based on the maxim of Relation:[5] Someone responds to the question of what to do about John's absence by saying, "John will come or he won't." She thereby implicates that nothing can be done about John's absence. This implicature is

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[4] See Grice (1989:32).

[5] See Levinson (1983:111). To be precise, Levinson considers the above implicature as based on Quantity_1. I think, however, that it can just as well be treated in terms of Relation. The subsequent discussion should make this clear.

supposed to be exploitational very roughly for the following reason: The implicature can be calculated as follows: The hearer realizes that what the speaker says is a mere logical truth and, thus, irrelevant for the purposes at hand. Hence, what the speaker says "overtly and blatantly" fails to comply with the maxims, in particular, Relation. Consequently, the hearer concludes, the speaker must have meant to convey something other than what she said; and the most plausible candidate here is that nothing can be done about John's absence. So this is what the speaker implicates. This calculation is based on the observation that the speaker "overtly and blatantly" fails to follow the maxims. Thus, the implicature is exploitational. (Again, the reasoning described will be further clarified below.)

Even given these examples, many details concerning the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures remain obscure. In what follows, I will try to point out these obscurities and remove them as far as possible in order to arrive at a definition of observation and exploitation implicatures that plausibly captures Grice and Levinson's thoughts. The basic upshot will be that observation implicatures should be defined as implicatures involving no maxim violation at the level of what is said.[6] Throughout the discussion, I will focus on the two example cases just described. What I say, however, should straightforwardly apply to other cases as well. Some further examples will be discussed by the end of the paper.

Before we go on, a clarificatory remark might be in order. It may be tempting to identify the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures with another distinction sometimes drawn in the literature on implicatures; namely, the

[6] Levinson says of implicatures that they "come about" or "arise" because the maxims are being observed or violated. This may be a controversial way to put it. Arguably, it is the *audience's inference* to the implicature that comes about because the maxims are being observed or violated. The implicature itself may have been there all along (for example, because of certain communicative intentions on the part of the speaker). Correspondingly, I will distinguish observation from exploitation implicatures based on whether they *involve* the observation or violation of a maxim (following Grice). This leaves open whether the observations and violations involved in a given case of implicature give rise to the implicature itself or only the audience's inference to it.

distinction between what we may call *additive* and *substitutional* implicatures (following (Meibauer, 2009:374)).[7] Additive implicatures are implicatures where the speaker means what is said and something else in addition. Thus, the speaker in the petrol case means that there is a garage around the corner *and* that it sells petrol. Substitutional implicatures, on the other hand, are implicatures where the speaker doesn't mean what is said, but something else instead.[8] Thus, in the case of John's absence, the speaker plausibly does not mean the logical truth she expresses, but merely the implicature that nothing can be done about John's absence. (I am assuming here that meaning that *p* entails intending to make one's audience believe that *p*.) This distinction is interestingly related to the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures, but the categories do not coincide: While I do think that all observation implicatures are additive, it is not the case that all exploitation implicatures are substitutional. To see this, consider Grice's (1989:33) letter of recommendation case, where an advisor writes about her philosophy student, "She has a nice handwriting," thus implicating that the student is no good at philosophy. This case is standardly assumed to involve an exploitation implicature. Still, the implicature may be additive because the advisor may well mean that the student in fact has a nice handwriting *and* that there is nothing more commendable to be said about her (see below for some further discussion of this example).[9]

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[7] Bianchi (2013:120) suggests such an interpretation.

[8] Note that, for Grice, such implicatures cannot exist because he holds that saying something entails meaning it. On his account, substitutional implicatures would be implicatures where the speaker is only "making as if to say." See e.g. Grice (1989:30). See Bach (1994:Sec. 5) for to my mind compelling reasons to deny that saying entails meaning.

[9] Note that the distinction between indirect speech act contents and nonliteral speech act contents drawn in Bach and Harnish (1979:Ch. 4) coincides neither with the distinction between additive and substitutional implicatures nor with the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures. The handwriting case shows that some indirect speech act contents are exploitation implicatures. The following case (discussed in Bach and Harnish (1979:70)) shows that some indirect speech act contents are substitutional implicatures: A mother says sarcastically to the son, "I'm sure the cat likes having its tail pulled." This utterance involves a nonliteral speech act

3. Observing the maxims at the level of what is said or conveyed

How should we understand the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures? Here is a first obscurity besetting its initial characterization. Consider the implicature in the case about John's absence. Given that the case is supposed to involve an exploitation implicature, Levinson, for example, has to maintain that the speaker is "overtly and blatantly *not* following some maxim." However, there is at least a sense in which the speaker does not fail to observe any maxim at all. For, in saying, "John will come or he won't," the speaker conveys that nothing can be done about John's absence. And this latter claim is perfectly relevant, the speaker presumably believes it, etc.

The proper response to this worry should be relatively obvious and has been indicated already: We must distinguish between observing the maxims at the level of what is said and observing the maxims at the level of what is conveyed. To sustain this response, however, the idea of observing the maxims at different levels must be clarified. What does it mean to observe the maxims at a given level? To begin with, note that the maxims as quoted from Grice above seem somewhat mixed: While some maxims refer to what is said (Quality_1, Quality_2), some maxims refer to what is "contributed" (Quantity_1, Quantity_2) and some maxims are neutral in this regard (Relation, Manner). We arrive at a more coherent picture if we state all maxims neutrally:

Quality_1: Be sincere.

Quality_2: Be justified.

Quantity_1: Be as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange).

Quantity_2: Don't be more informative than is required.

Relation: Be relevant.

(with the content that the cat *doesn't* like having its tail pulled) and an indirect speech act (with the content that the son should stop what he's doing). Still, it only involves substitutional implicatures because what is said is not meant.

Manner: Be perspicuous.[10]

Once the maxims are stated in this way, we can straightforwardly define what it means to observe individual maxims at a given level. Consider the maxim of Relation. This maxim says that you should be relevant. To observe this maxim at the level of what is said (or conveyed respectively) is to say (convey) something relevant. Similarly, to observe the quality maxims at the level of what is said (conveyed) is to say (convey) what one believes and is in a position to justify. And to observe the quantity maxims at the level of what is said (conveyed) is to say (convey) something informative, but not too informative.

Manner is special. For it is not clear how to make sense of the idea that one should be perspicuous at the level of what is said as opposed to the level of what is conveyed. Rather, it seems that one can be perspicuous only at the sentence level. In a similar vein, Grice (1989:27) says of Manner that it should be seen "as relating not (like the previous categories) to what is said but, rather, to *how* what is said is to be said". For example, the submaxim of Manner, "Avoid ambiguity," (Grice, 1989:27) clearly relates neither to what is said nor to what is conveyed but only to the sentence used. Consequently, I will assume in what follows that one cannot distinguish between observing Manner at the level of what is said and observing Manner at the level of what is conveyed. Manner can only be observed simpliciter.

Given this account of what it means to observe individual maxims at different levels, we can define what it means for a speaker to observe *the maxims* (as a whole) at a given level: A speaker observes the maxims at the level of what is said (conveyed) just if she observes each individual maxim except for Manner at the level of what is said (conveyed) and she observes Manner.

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[10] Bach (2015:56f) also notes the mixed nature of the maxims as presented by Grice. Instead of amending them by stating them neutrally, however, he opts for a construal where all maxims refer to the "conversational contribution". The neutral interpretation seems more straightforward at least insofar as we want to allow that the maxims can be observed not only at the level of what is contributed but also at the level of what is said.

To respond to the worry above, we can now construe exploitation implicatures as implicatures where the speaker fails to observe the maxims *at the level of what is said*. The case of John's absence thereby comes out as involving an exploitation implicature because, in *saying* something irrelevant, the speaker fails to observe Relation at the level of what is said.

4. Observing the maxim of Relation

So much for the first unclarity. Here is a second unclarity. Consider observation implicatures. Grice says of observation implicatures that they occur in cases in which there is "no maxim that is violated, or at least in which it is not clear that any maxim is violated." Levinson says that, in these cases, implicatures "arise directly from the assumption that the speaker is observing the maxims."[11] Obviously, we must understand these claims as claims about observing or violating the maxims *at the level of what is said*, for we have seen that, even in the case of exploitation implicatures, no maxim is violated *at the level of what is conveyed*. But given that, why should the petrol case above turn out to involve an observation implicature? What the speaker says in this case is that there is a garage around the corner. The question on the table is where to get petrol. Now, of course, there are garages that don't sell petrol, so what the speaker says at least does not entail an answer to the question on the table. In a sense, then, what the speaker says is not relevant. Hence, in a sense, the speaker does violate Relation at the level of what is said, and, it may seem, the relevant implicature is exploitational rather than observational, contrary to what Grice and Levinson say. How should we deal with this problem?

One potential response would be the following: We could grant that the speaker in the petrol case violates Relation at the level of what is said. In order to maintain the idea that, nevertheless, the case features an observation implicature, we could further admit that observation implicatures involve the violation of

[11] Note here that I will understand "observing a maxim" in a non-intentional way. Thus, someone observes e.g. Relation if she says something relevant, whether or not she *intends* to say something relevant. Correspondingly, "observing a maxim" and "not violating a maxim" are interchangeable.

a maxim at the level of what is said. In order to maintain the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures, we could then define exploitation implicatures as implicatures where the speaker not only violates, but *overtly and blatantly* violates or *flouts* a maxim at the level of what is said. We would thus arrive at the position I am calling into question in this paper, according to which all implicatures involve the violation of a maxim.

Note that this interpretation of the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures is not in direct tension with the passages quoted from Grice and Levinson above. Neither Grice nor Levinson directly says that, in the case of observation implicatures, no maxim is violated at the level of what is said. Grice adds the disjunct "or at least in which it is not clear that any maxim is violated," which opens up a lot of room for interpretation. Levinson only says that these implicatures "arise directly from the assumption that the speaker is observing the maxims." And one may argue that even if an implicature arises from this assumption, this does not entail that the assumption is correct. Still, the above interpretation is problematic in various ways.

First, it is in direct tension with what Grice says on other occasions. For example, he distinguishes exploitation from observation implicatures on the grounds that they are "achieved by real, as distinct from apparent" (1989:35) violations of a maxim. Thus, according to Grice, observation implicatures only involve *apparent* maxim violations.[12] Second, and more importantly, it is unclear why the speaker in the petrol case should not be said to overtly and blatantly violate or flout Relation. After all, it does seem fairly obvious that what she says does not entail an answer to the question at hand. Unless this latter challenge is met, the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures collapses if defined

[12] Note that the violation of a maxim in the case of observation implicatures cannot be apparent in the sense that, while a violation occurs at the level of what is said, no violation occurs at the level of what is conveyed. For, as argued above, this would not distinguish observation from exploitation implicatures.

along the above lines.[13] It is possible, of course, that Grice and Levinson simply failed to pick out a sensible distinction, but a more charitable interpretation is available as I will subsequently show.

I will start out with the definitions already used, according to which observation implicatures are implicatures where the speaker observes the maxims at the level of what is said, while exploitation implicatures are implicatures where the speaker fails to observe the maxims at the level of what is said. This prompts the worry again that, contrary to Grice and Levinson, the petrol case turns out to involve an exploitation implicature. In order to respond to this worry, I will proceed as follows: I will first clarify the notion of relevance. Second, I will restate Relation in terms of this clarified notion. Finally, I will show that, given this clarified version of Relation, the speaker in the petrol case turns out to be observing Relation at the level of what is said.

So, what is relevance? Providing a general, informative definition of relevance goes beyond the scope of this paper. Correspondingly, I will, first, restrict my view to simple conversations such as the one in the petrol case, where a specific question is on the table, and people contribute to the conversation by making claims

[13] It might be tempting to respond that, while in the case of John's absence we would straightforwardly acknowledge that what is said is irrelevant, we would intuitively say that what is said in the petrol case is relevant. Thus, in this sense, the maxim violation is overt and blatant in the former but not the latter case. Such a response, however, seems self-undermining. If it is true that we would intuitively say that what is said in the petrol case is relevant (as I think we would), then this speaks strongly for the assumption that what is said in this case indeed is relevant and, thus, that there is no maxim violation after all. So, the relevant implicature would come out as neither observational nor exploitational on the present understanding of these terms. Another potential response might be that, other than in the petrol case, the irrelevance in the case of John's absence psychologically stands out in some way when interpreting the utterance in question. This, again, may be taken to underwrite the idea that the violation of the maxims is overt and blatant only in the case of John's absence. Such a response is implausible because in many cases of exploitation implicatures, maxim violations do not stand out at all. For example, when I say, "Can you pass me the salt?" I will exploitationally implicate that you should pass me the salt. The calculation of this implicature, however, may go entirely unnoticed. (This seems true in general for so-called "standardized" or "generalized" implicatures.)

rather than asking questions, issuing commands, etc. Second, I will only try to clarify the logical form of the notion of relevance and suggest a tentative way of filling out that form. This will leave many questions open, but for our purposes, we will make progress enough.

Clearly, relevance is at least a two-place relation. The relevance of a given claim will always be relative to the question on the table. Thus, we preliminarily arrive at the following logical form:

Claim *P* is relevant for question *Q*.

This, however, is not enough, for whether a given claim is relevant very often depends on our background beliefs. If I, for example, believe that all garages sell petrol, the claim that there is a garage around the corner will be relevant for me regarding the question of where to get petrol. For somebody else who, for whatever reason, believes that garages never sell petrol, the same claim will be irrelevant regarding the same question. Therefore, it seems that we need a further argument place along the following lines:

Claim *P* is relevant for question *Q* relative to a set of beliefs *B*.

Even further argument places may be required, but since they will be immaterial to the project at hand, I will stick to the logical form above.

Given this logical form, we can provide the following rough and ready definition of what it means for a claim to be relevant:

Claim *P* is relevant for question *Q* relative to a set of beliefs *B* just if there is a possible answer to *Q* such that *P* together with *B* makes the truth of that answer more likely than *B* alone.

Given this definition, we can use the three-place relation of relevance to clarify what it means to observe Relation at the level of what is said. Here is my proposal:

A speaker *S* making an utterance *u* in a conversational context *C* *observes Relation at the level of what is said* just if what *S* says by uttering *u* is relevant for the question on the table in *C* relative to the mutual beliefs of *S* and her audience in *C*.[14]

With this definition at hand, we can return to the question of why the speaker in the petrol case doesn't violate Relation at the level of what is said. The answer should now be clear: The speaker and her audience presumably share the belief that garages generally sell petrol. If we add to this belief the claim that there is a garage around the corner, it becomes more likely that one can get petrol around the corner. The latter claim is an answer to the question of where to get petrol. Hence, the speaker's claim is relevant relative to the beliefs she shares with her audience as regards the question on the table. As a result, she observes Relation at the level of what is said according to the just stated definition.

To be clear, the present definitions also yield the right result for the case of John's absence. The question on the table in this case is what to do about John's absence. Possible answers to this question are that one should call him, that one should call his parents, that one should just ignore it, etc. Clearly, none of these answers becomes more likely to be true if we add the logical truth that John will or will not come to the mutual beliefs of the speaker and her audience in this case. Correspondingly, the speaker turns out to be violating Relation at the level of what is said, just as she should.

Before we go on, note that the present interpretation of Relation presumably constrains the interpretation of other maxims, in particular, the quantity maxims. Quantity$_1$, for example, says that one should be as informative as is required. This seems at least roughly equivalent to saying that one should provide enough

[14] On the present definition, responses like "I don't know" or "Ask Sally" to a given question invariably turn out to violate Relation at the level of what is said. I don't think this result is problematic. Such responses plausibly amount to admitting that one doesn't have anything relevant to say and, hence, is opting out of the maxims (or, at least, the particular obligation to say something relevant to the specific question one is being asked). See Dorst (2014) for a related proposal.

relevant information. Hence, given that relevance operates only against the backdrop of a set of beliefs, the same should go for informativeness. The details, though, do not promise further insights into the issues addressed in this paper, so I will leave them for another occasion.

5. Observing one maxim at the cost of another

So far, then, we can accept the following definitions:

(Def$_E$) *Exploitation implicatures* are implicatures where the speaker fails to observe the maxims at the level of what is said.

(Def$_O$) *Observation implicatures* are implicatures where the speaker observes the maxims at the level of what is said.

But the following case seems problematic: We want to send a letter to Frankie, and you respond to the question of where he lives by saying, "Somewhere in the south of France." Presumably, you will thereby implicate that you don't know where exactly Frankie lives.[15] Does this case involve an observation or an exploitation implicature? We may want to say that it involves an exploitation implicature, for you clearly say less than would be required and thus violate the quantity maxims at the level of what is said. Such a case, however, is standardly considered to involve an observation implicature.[16] How do we get this verdict?

There are at least two ways to go. I don't know which of these ways is ultimately preferable, so I will just state them in turn. Here is the first: We modify our above definitions of observation and exploitation implicatures along the following lines:

(Def$_E$*) *Exploitation implicatures* are implicatures where the speaker, *S*, fails to observe the maxims at the level of what is said, *and* there is a proposition *p* available to *S* such that, if *S* had said that *p*, she would

[15] See Grice (1989:32f) for a similar case.

[16] See Levinson (1983:107). Grice (1989:32) assumes that implicatures of the above type belong to a third category, the category of implicatures involving "clashes" between maxims. I side with Levinson in distinguishing only two kinds of implicatures. See below.

have been closer to observing the maxims at the level of what is said than she actually is.[17]

(Def_O*) *Observation implicatures* are implicatures where *either* the speaker, *S*, observes the maxims at the level of what is said, *or* there is no proposition *p* available to *S* such that, if *S* had said that *p*, she would have been closer to observing the maxims at the level of what is said than she actually is.[18]

Some clarificatory remarks: Why the restriction to *available* propositions in both definitions? The basic idea behind this restriction is just that we wouldn't want to ascribe an exploitation implicature just because a speaker failed to say what didn't even come to her mind. Further details are unnecessary for the purpose of this paper.[19]

What does it mean to be *closer* to observing the maxims? Take $Quality_2$. This maxim says you should be justified. I take it that justification comes in degrees and that, to be justified simpliciter, one's degree of justification must lie above a certain threshold. Correspondingly, one is closer to observing $Quality_2$ the closer one's degree of justification is to this threshold. The closest one can get to observing $Quality_2$ is just to observe that maxim and, hence, to be justified simpliciter. Similar things can be said about the other maxims.

One thing is very important to note here. To be justified simpliciter does not mean to be maximally justified. One can be justified even if one's justification could be better. Thus, in order to observe $Quality_2$, one needs to be justified, but

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[17] This definition captures at least one sense in which speakers in the case of exploitation implicatures not only fail to observe the maxims but "flout" them.

[18] One may worry about the disjunctive nature of this definition (and thus prefer the above-indicated three-partite classification of implicatures by Grice). To respond, note that (Def_O*) is unified in the following sense: It seems to capture at least roughly the previously mentioned intentional notion of observing a maxim, where one observes the maxims just in case one is doing one's best to satisfy all maxims. Even if one fulfills only the second disjunct of (Def_O*), one can still be said to be observing the maxims in this sense.

[19] See Tversky and Kahneman (1973) for a notion of availability that seems to serve my purposes.

not maximally justified. Similarly, to observe Relation, one needs to be relevant but not as relevant as possible, to observe Manner, one needs to be perspicuous but not perspicuous to the highest degree, etc. Unless we keep this in mind, there is at least the threat that every implicature will turn out to be exploitational on the present definitions: Speakers would hardly if ever observe the maxims at the level of what is said because, for example, their justification for the relevant claim could almost always be better. Thus, the first conjunct of (Def_E*) would almost always be satisfied. The second conjunct would also be satisfied for the following reason: Instead of implicating something, one could always directly say it. Thereby, one would presumably score higher on the Manner scale and, thus, be closer to observing the maxims at the level of what is said.[20] These consequences do not follow once we appreciate that, to observe a maxim, one need not satisfy that maxim to the highest degree. Given that, people can observe $Quality_2$ even if their justification could be better. Moreover, saying something directly instead of implicating it need not get one closer to observing the maxims at the level of what is said (even granted that it makes one score higher with regard to some maxims). For one may have observed the maxims at the level of what is said already in the first place and, thus, be already as close as one can get to observing the maxims at that level.

Take the petrol case. Of course, the speaker in this case could have uttered, "There is a garage around the corner *which sells petrol*." This utterance would arguably have been more perspicuous than the original utterance, "There is a garage around the corner." But since, with the second utterance, the speaker already observed the maxims at the level of what is said (for example, she already passed the threshold for perspicuity[21]), the first utterance cannot get her closer to observing the maxims. This contrasts with the case of John's absence. As we

[20] Wilson (2006:1727) expresses a similar worry when she writes that "whatever implicature is derived, the resulting interpretation would irrevocably violate the Manner supermaxim ('Be Perspicuous'), since the most straightforward way of conveying this implicated information would have been to express it directly."

[21] As Grice (1989:32) says about Manner in the petrol case, "there seems to be no case for regarding that supermaxim as infringed in this example."

have seen, the speaker in this case violates Relation at the level of what is said. Moreover, she could have been closer to observing Relation at the level of what is said (she could even have fully observed that maxim) by saying, for example, that nothing can be done about John's absence.

One last clarification regarding the notion of being close to observing the maxims: Whether a speaker is close to observing the maxims as a whole depends not only on the sum of the distances to observing each individual maxim (as it were). It depends on a *weighted* sum of these distances. As Grice puts it, it "is obvious that the observance of some of these maxims is a matter of less urgency than is the observance of others" (1989:27). In particular, the distance to the quality maxims will be weighted more strongly than the distance to the other maxims.

With these definitions at hand, we can easily see why the France case above involves an observation rather than an exploitation implicature: The speaker in this case provides less information than is required and thus fails to observe the quantity maxims at the level of what is said. But this is presumably so only because, if she were to provide more information by saying, say, that Frankie lives in Cannes, she would say something she doesn't justifiably believe and thus fail to observe the quality maxims at the level of what is said. So, even though the speaker fails to observe a maxim at the level of what is said, there is nothing she could have said to come closer to observing the maxims. The first disjunct of (Def_O*) is not satisfied, but the second is.

The above proposal yields the right results for the relevant cases. However, it also makes the present framework much more cumbersome and difficult to handle. In particular, we can no longer test whether an implicature is observational by simply looking at whether the speaker observes all individual maxims. Instead, we now have to check whether she observes all individual maxims and, if she doesn't, whether there is anything she could have said that would have brought her closer to observing the maxims. So here is a second, somewhat simpler way to deal with the France case.

We stick to the simple definitions (Def_E) and (Def_O). However, we slightly modify the content of $Quantity_1$. So far, this maxim says that one should be as informative as is required. Instead, we say that, according to $Quantity_1$, one should

be as informative as is required, *but only to the extent that this is compatible with the quality maxims*. More precisely:

> A speaker *S* making an utterance *u* in a conversational context *C* *observes Quantity$_1$ at the level of what is said* just if *either* what *S* says in uttering *U* is as informative as is required in *C*, *or*, of all the propositions available to *S* that *S* justifiably believes, what *S* says in uttering *u* is closest to being as informative as is required in *C*.[22]

Given this interpretation of Quantity$_1$, the France case turns out to involve an observation implicature even if we stick to (Def$_E$) and (Def$_O$): Of all the things the speaker in this case justifiably believes, what she actually says is closest to being as informative as is required (keeping to the side all those propositions the speaker justifiably believes but which just didn't come to her mind). Correspondingly, she observes Quantity$_1$ at the level of what is said in the sense just defined.

As I said, I don't know which of the above two accounts of the France case is ultimately correct. In what follows, I will stick to the second account because, for the purposes of the present paper, it is easier to handle.

I hope to have established by now that the most plausible interpretation of the distinction between observation and exploitation implicatures, as it figures in Grice and Levinson's work, entails that there are implicatures involving no maxim violation at the level of what is said. In particular, Grice and Levinson seem to hold that all observation implicatures are non-violating at the level of what is said. Furthermore, I hope to have clarified one *prima facie* coherent way of spelling out the thesis that there are such implicatures.

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[22] The quality maxims could be incorporated into Quantity$_2$ and Relation in an analogous fashion. Grice (1989:27) seems to express sympathies for such a proposal: "it might be felt that the importance of at least the first maxim of Quality is such that it should not be included in a scheme of the kind I am constructing; other maxims come into operation only on the assumption that this maxim of Quality is satisfied."

6. Calculating observation and exploitation implicatures

In this section, I will address what seems to be the most pressing worry for the thesis that there are observation implicatures in the sense just defined: Observation implicatures, on the present understanding, do not involve the violation of a maxim at the level of what is said. Thus, nothing can trigger the search for such implicatures. In what follows, I will respond to this worry by proposing the following view: While the calculation of exploitation implicatures is triggered when the speaker doesn't hold a belief she needs to hold to observe the maxims at the level of what is said, the calculation of observation implicatures is triggered when the hearer doesn't share one of these beliefs (and the belief in question does not coincide with what is said). To substantiate this response, I will supplement it with at least a rough approximation of the calculation patterns for observation and exploitation implicatures.

Let's start with observation implicatures and the petrol case. How do we calculate the implicature in this case? The hearer could go through the following reasoning: The speaker is observing the maxims at the level of what is said when she says, "There is a garage around the corner." The speaker can be observing the maxims, in particular Relation, at the level of what is said only if she holds the belief that garages generally sell petrol (because what the speaker says is relevant for the question on the table relative to the mutual beliefs of speaker and audience only if this proposition is mutually believed). Nothing speaks against this assumption. Thus, the speaker believes that garages generally sell petrol. Correspondingly, she also believes that the mentioned garage is likely to sell petrol ("*p*"). I do not yet believe *p*. The speaker knows (and knows that I know she knows) that I can figure out that she believes *p*. She has done nothing to stop me from believing *p*. Thus, she intends me to believe, or is at least willing to allow me to believe, *p*. Hence, she has implicated *p*.[23]

[23] The reasoning described closely follows the reasoning Grice (1989:31) himself describes as a means to calculate implicatures. Even though Grice suggests that all implicatures can be calculated along the lines of this pattern, he uses a very different pattern when he later considers

The implicature in the above France case can be calculated in a similar way: The speaker observes the maxims at the level of what is said when she responds, "Somewhere in the south of France," to the question of where Frankie lives. She can be observing the maxims, in particular (the modified version of) Quantity$_1$, at the level of what is said only if she cannot justifiably be more specific and, hence, presumably believes that she cannot justifiably be more specific. Nothing speaks against this assumption. Thus, the speaker believes that she cannot justifiably be more specific ("*q*"). I do not yet believe *q*, etc. Thus, the speaker implicates *q*. For another straightforward example of observational calculation, consider the following case: Someone says, "Katie got drunk and drove home." In a standard context, she thereby implicates that the events happened in the order in which they are stated (that is, Katie *first* got drunk and *then* drove home).[24] The calculation of this implicature could go as follows: The speaker is observing the maxims at the level of what is said. In particular, she is observing Manner. If she is observing Manner, she must believe that the events she refers to happened in the order in which she refers to them. Nothing speaks against this assumption. Thus, the speaker believes that the events she refers to happened in the order in which she refers to them ("*r*"). I do not yet believe *r*, etc. Thus, the speaker implicates *r*.

Before we go on to address the question of what triggers calculations of the sort just described, let's first consider the calculation pattern for exploitation implicatures. How do we calculate the implicature in the case of John's absence? The hearer could reason as follows: The speaker observes the maxims at the level of what is said when she says, "John will come or he won't." The speaker can be observing the maxims, in particular Relation, at the level of what is said only if she holds beliefs such that adding the logical truth that John will or will not come makes a particular answer to the question of what to do about John's absence more likely. Clearly, the speaker doesn't hold such beliefs. Thus, contrary

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examples of implicatures where a maxim is flouted (see esp. Grice's discussion of irony on p. 34). The pattern Grice uses there is closely related to the pattern I will present below for the calculation of exploitation implicatures. See Hugly and Sayward (1979) for a similar observation.

[24] See Levinson (1983:108) for a related example.

to the initial assumption, the speaker doesn't observe the maxims at the level of what is said. Still, she observes the maxims at the level of what is conveyed (she neither refuses to be cooperative nor is inadvertently uncooperative (e.g. due to some kind of misunderstanding) nor is trying to deceive). Correspondingly, what the speaker means to convey must differ from what is said. All things considered, the most plausible candidate conveyed content is that nothing can be done about John's absence. So the speaker implicates that nothing can be done about John's absence.

The implicature in the above letter of recommendation case can be calculated along similar lines: The writer observes the maxims at the level of what is said when she writes, "The student has a nice handwriting." She cannot observe the maxims, in particular Quantity$_1$, at the level of what is said unless she cannot justifiably provide further relevant information and, thus, presumably believes that she cannot justifiably provide further relevant information. Clearly, the writer doesn't hold that belief (for, clearly, a student's advisor should be able to provide further relevant information). Thus, contrary to the initial assumption, the writer doesn't observe the maxims at the level of what is said. Still, she observes them at the level of what is conveyed. Thus, she must mean to convey something other than what is said. And, all things considered, the most natural candidate here is that the student has a nice handwriting *and* there is nothing more commendable to be said about her.[25]

Admittedly, both the calculation pattern for observation implicatures and the calculation pattern for exploitation implicatures stand in need of further clarification. In the case of exploitation implicatures, the "all things considered" reasoning at the end of the pattern remains obscure. In the case of observation implicatures, the steps from the realization that the speaker holds beliefs the hearer does not share to the conclusion that the content of these beliefs is implicated could be

[25] Note that, as indicated already, in this case we have an exploitation implicature that is additive: The reader realizes that the writer doesn't observe the maxims at the level of what is said. As the example shows, however, this does not force her to altogether discard what is said; what is said may still be one conjunct of what is overall conveyed.

clearer. Independently of how these steps are spelled out, however, the worry that nothing can trigger the search for observation implicatures can now be dispelled.

To begin with, we can ask where the first premise in the above calculation patterns comes from, according to which the speaker observes the maxims at the level of what is said. I take this to be a (defeasible) default assumption that every hearer initially holds with respect to every utterance she faces. Given this default assumption, what triggers the inference to an implicature? In order to maintain the default assumption, the hearer has to ascribe all sorts of beliefs to the speaker; for example, a belief in what is said, background beliefs required for the relevance of what is said, some obvious consequences of these beliefs, etc. If the speaker can plausibly hold all of these beliefs and, apart from the belief in what is said, the hearer shares these beliefs, the hearer just takes what is said as what is conveyed and no inference to an implicature is triggered. An inference to an implicature is triggered only if either of the following happens: The hearer realizes that the speaker cannot plausibly hold the required beliefs, or the hearer realizes that, even though the speaker plausibly does hold the required beliefs, the hearer does not (yet) share them (again, leaving to the side the belief in what is said). In the first kind of case, the hearer calculates an exploitation implicature if she can plausibly follow the steps subsequent to the realization that the speaker is not observing the maxims at the level of what is said in the calculation pattern described above for exploitation implicatures (i.e. if the speaker can be assumed to be observing the maxims at the level of what is conveyed, etc.). In the second kind of case, the hearer calculates an observation implicature if she can plausibly follow the steps subsequent to the realization that the speaker holds a belief the hearer does not share in the calculation pattern described above for observation implicatures (i.e. if the speaker can be assumed to know that the hearer can figure out the relevant belief, etc.).

Most importantly, the inference trigger in the case of observation implicatures by no means entails that the speaker is not observing the maxims at the level of what is said. To the contrary, in the case of observation implicatures, the speaker holds all the beliefs she needs to hold to observe the maxims at the level of what

is said. Hence, she does observe the maxims at the level of what is said. The inference trigger, in such cases, is that *the hearer* does not already hold the beliefs in question. And this is not a condition on observing the maxims at the level of what is said for *the speaker*. (Of course, in cases of *exploitation* implicatures, the speaker does violate the maxims at the level of what is said, for in these cases she doesn't hold the required beliefs.)[26]

7. Conclusion

I have shown that Grice and Levinson, two eminent figures in the debate on implicatures, assume that there are observation implicatures, that is, implicatures that arise even though no maxim is violated at the level of what is said. In doing so, I have outlined one seemingly coherent way of spelling out the thesis that there are such implicatures. Moreover, I have defended the idea of observation implicatures against the pressing worry that observation implicatures cannot be calculated. It should thus be safe to conclude that we cannot just assume that such implicatures don't exist. We should rethink this common assumption.

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[26] Note that, given that in the case of observation implicatures no maxim is violated at the level of what is said, the hearer has no reason to doubt that what is said is supposed to be conveyed. So, at least in successful communications, all observation implicatures are additive. (We have seen above that the converse does not hold, that is, some exploitation implicatures are additive as well.)

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