

Into the conventional-implicature dimension*

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Abstract

Grice coined the term ‘conventional implicature’ in a short passage in ‘Logic and conversation’. The description is intuitive and deeply intriguing. The range of phenomena that have since been assigned this label is large and diverse. I survey the central factual motivation, arguing that it is loosely unified by the idea that conventional implicatures contribute a separate dimension of meaning. I provide tests for distinguishing conventional implicatures from other kinds of meaning, and I briefly explore ways in which one can incorporate multiple dimensions of meaning into a single theory.

1 Origins

Paul Grice coined the term *conventional implicature* in his seminal paper ‘Logic and conversation’ (Grice, 1975). The ideas behind the label date to Frege (1892/1980) (Bach 1999:329–330), but Grice’s discussion is the usual modern point of departure. It lasts for just one paragraph. We get the label, some examples, and, implicitly, the central points of contrast with *conversational implicatures*, the pragmatic meanings that are Grice’s focus. Here is the passage in full:

In some cases, the conventional meaning of the words used will determine what is implicated, besides helping to determine what is said. If I say (smugly), *He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave*, I have certainly committed myself, by virtue of the meaning of my words,

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to its being the case that his being brave is a consequence of (follows from) his being an Englishman. But while I have said that he is an Englishman and said that he is brave, I do not want to say that I have *said* (in the favored sense) that it follows from his being an Englishman that he is brave, though I have certainly indicated, and so implicated, that this is so. I do not want to say that my utterance of this sentence would be, *strictly speaking*, false should the consequence in question fail to hold. So *some* implicatures are conventional, unlike the one with which I introduced this discussion of implicature.

It's just a brief departure from the main line of the paper. Immediately after this, Grice writes, "I wish to represent a certain subclass of nonconventional implicatures, which I shall call *conversational* implicatures". And then he is back to the project of distilling rational communication into a tractable theory.

Conventional implicatures (CIs) are on the agenda throughout the papers that grew out of Grice's 1967 William James Lectures (Grice 1989:§I), of which 'Logic and conversation' is the most important. But Grice never devotes his full energy to them. We are basically left with just the above passage, which is intuitive, deeply intriguing, and suggests many diverse paths forward.

Over the years, theorists have filled in (or exploited) its omissions in numerous ways, for numerous diverse purposes. The resulting literature often appears to lack cohesion. But I argue, in section 6, that these treatments are partially united by the notion that CIs define a dimension of meaning that, though conventionally encoded, is separate from the primary semantic content. The degree of separation varies from analysis to analysis, but this *multidimensionality* is in evidence throughout.

2 Factual motivation

It's hard to find a paper on CIs that doesn't trot out *but* as the shining exemplar. Its companions *therefore*, *still*, and *even* are usually close behind. For tradition's sake:

- (1) a. Thora is a baby, but she is quiet.
Descriptive = Thora is a baby, and she is quiet
CI \approx Babies are not usually quiet
- b. Isak is still swimming.
Descriptive = Isak is swimming
CI \approx Isak was swimming earlier
- c. Even Bart passed the test.
Descriptive = Bart passed the test
CI \approx Bart was among the least likely to pass the test

The descriptive meanings are those that Grice identifies with ‘what is said’. In [Potts \(2005\)](#), I call it ‘at-issue’, which gestures at the fact that it is typically the content that speakers offer as primary and also the content that they are most expecting to have to negotiate with their interlocutors before it is accepted into the common ground. [Roberts \(1996\)](#) uses ‘proffered content’ in a similar spirit. But probably the most common label for it is ‘truth conditional content’. This phrase must be understood in a specialized sense here. Researchers who use this term do not (typically) mean to assert that content falling outside of this rubric is neither true nor false. Rather, they are assuming, often implicitly, that the semantics of the language is given by a rigid definition of logical truth (satisfaction) and that this content, and only this content, should be involved in that definition.

I specify the *descriptive meanings* with confident equalities. About the CIs, I am much less certain, and thus I hedge with approximation signs. In some cases, it might be impossible to give accurate paraphrases of this sort (see [Blakemore 2001](#) on *but*). In others, it is certainly very hard (see [Francescotti 1995](#) on *even*). In any event, this sort of ineffability is common for CIs, and it might further bolster the case that they constitute a separate meaning dimension (section 6).

At this point, one is more likely to find *still* and *even* discussed under the rubric of *presupposition triggers*. The same is true for many once-central CI expressions: *only*, additive particles like *too*, and the adverbials *already* and *yet*; [Beaver 1997](#) contains brief analyses and references. This leaves just *but* and Grice’s *therefore* as (relatively) uncontroversial examples from the original data set (but see [Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 1990:353](#) and [Bach 1999](#)). I return to the always-controversial relationship between presuppositions and CIs in section 4.

Once the usual suspects have come and gone, the range of CI proposals opens up considerably. [Karttunen \(1973\)](#) and [Karttunen and Peters \(1979\)](#) analyze ‘implicative verbs’ like *manage* and *fail* (with infinitival complements) in these terms:

- (2) a. Bart managed to pass the test.
Descriptive = Bart passed the test
CI ≈ Bart tried hard to pass the test
- b. Bart failed to pass the test.
Descriptive = Bart did not pass the test
CI ≈ Bart tried hard to pass the test

As with the classics in (1), we seem able to tease apart two meanings from these examples. At the discourse-level, we find that if one objects to an assertion of, e.g., (2a), one is not construed as having objected to the CI meaning, which is liable to slip quietly into the common ground. Similarly, if one asks “Did Bart pass the test?”, one does not thereby ask about whether passing is or would be hard for Bart, but rather only about whether he passed. And here again it is prudent to hedge with approximation signs, as the CI meanings are hard to paraphrase, whereas the descriptive meanings seem straightforward.

[Potts and Kawahara \(2004\)](#) argue that Japanese honorifics (3) and antihonorifics (4) contribute CIs.

- (3) Sam-ga o-warai-**ninat**-ta. [\(Potts and Kawahara, 2004\)](#)
 Sam-NOM subj.hon-laugh-subj.hon-PAST
Descriptive = ‘Sam laughed’
CI ≈ ‘The speaker honors Sam’
- (4) Nesugoshi-**chimat**-ta. [\(Potts and Kawahara, 2004\)](#)
 overslept-**antihon**-PAST
Descriptive = ‘I overslept’
CI ≈ ‘It sucks that I overslept’

[Sells and Kim \(2006\)](#) argue along similar lines for Korean honorifics, though they do not extend their conclusions to antihonorifics.

In [Potts 2005](#), I analyze expressive modifiers like those in (5) as CI contributors (see also [Huddleston and Pullum 2002](#)).

- (5) a. I've just realised I've got to work out my bloody sales tax. (Huddleston and Pullum 2002:36)
Descriptive = I've just realized I've got to work out my sales tax
CI \approx I am in a heightened emotional state relating to sales tax
- b. Shut that blasted window! (Cruse 1986:272)
Descriptive = Shut that window!
CI \approx I am in a heightened emotional state relating to that window being open

For expressives, honorifics, and antihonorifics, it often feels inappropriate to try to paraphrase as I have done in (3)–(5), though there is little doubt that multiple meanings are involved (Frege, 1979; Kaplan, 1999; Potts, 2006; Williamson, 2007).

The most extended case for CIs in Potts 2005 is based on parentheticals like those in (6); see also Jayez and Rossari 2004.

- (6) a. Lance Armstrong, the cyclist, battled cancer.
Descriptive = Lance Armstrong battled cancer
CI = Lance Armstrong is a cyclist
- b. Max won the election, which surprised Ali.
Descriptive = Max won the election
CI = That Max won the election surprised Ali
- c. Thoughtfully, Jenny picked up her little sister at school.
Descriptive = Jenny picked up her little sister at school
CI = It was thoughtful of Jenny to pick up her little sister at school

For these parentheticals, the CI content seems reasonably clear, and thus I have used equal signs in giving paraphrases, implicitly assuming that the CI is just descriptive content expressed differently. This might, though, obscure systematic differences in overall information content; I return to this briefly in section 7.

In addition, Hawkins (1991) argues that aspects of the definite article's meaning are CIs. Ward and Hirschberg (1985) and Constant (2006) classify certain intonational effects in this way. Scheffler (2005) treats German *denn* ('because') as a CI-contributor. Hara (2006) argues that Japanese *dake-wa* constructions manifest CIs. The list goes on, and there are potential connections that remain relatively underexplored (e.g., evidential morphemes as CI contributors; discourse particles as CI contributors). I refer to Horn 2007 for a wide-ranging, historically and factually rich discussion of the current state of CI theory.

3 CIs and pragmatics

One must take care not to be misled by ‘implicature’ in the label ‘conventional implicature’. CIs are not pragmatic meanings. This is clear from Grice’s original definition, and it is, broadly speaking, a point of consensus among researchers. It is nonetheless worth reviewing the case. CIs are almost always discussed under the rubric of (Gricean) pragmatics, so it is easy to mistakenly conceive of them as importantly similar to conversational implicatures.

Conversational implicatures are *calculable*. When we discuss them, we escape the arbitrariness of the sign. General principles of rational communication work in conjunction with the encoded semantic meaning and the context (including speaker intentions) to deliver them. I illustrate in (7).

(7) A: What city does Sam live in?

B: Well, I know he lives in France.

B’s calculation:

- i. The city-level information is relevant in this context.
- ii. A cooperative speaker like B will generally provide all the relevant content she can within the limits of her knowledge.
- iii. Thus, B must be conversationally implicating that she does not have specific knowledge about where Sam lives in France.

In contrast, there is no hope of calculating any of the candidate CIs in section 2. They all represent more or less arbitrary facts about particular lexical items or constructions.

Conversational implicatures are *malleable*. That is, they are heavily influenced by the current context, the discourse participants’ knowledge, and any other available pragmatic information. For example, if we change A’s question in (7) just slightly, so that it is instead “What country does Sam live in?”, then B’s calculation changes completely and she no longer arrives at the same conversational implicature. (This property is often called *cancellability* or *deniability*, but these terms arrive with special senses that might not be appropriate for all cases or all theories. I use *malleable* in an attempt to remain noncommittal about the precise nature of this phenomenon.)

CIs, like regular semantic entailments, do not enjoy this flexibility. They can be semantically underspecified and thus have their meanings on occasions of use fixed in part by pragmatic information, but there is no escaping them the way we escape the conversational implicature in (7) simply by altering A's question slightly.

Conversational implicatures are *reinforceable*. Their malleability means that there can be some doubt about whether a given conversational implicature was actually intended, and thus speakers are free to specify them outright, thereby elevating them to the status of descriptive meanings. This is just to say that B could have elaborated a bit in (7), by continuing with "I don't know which city she lives in, though". However, comparable moves involving CI-contributors tend to give rise to a sense of redundancy, as in the following elaboration of (6a).

(8) Lance Armstrong, the cyclist, battled cancer. #He is (also) a cyclist.

There are exceptions to this pattern, to be sure. Horn (1991) is a general discussion, and Taranto (2003) discusses some important special cases. (I thank an anonymous reviewer for emphasizing the importance of this class of exceptions.)

These are the central reasons for distinguishing the two kinds of implicature. For further discussion, I refer to Levinson 1983, Horn 1989:145, Mey 2001:§3.2.4, Potts 2005:§2.4.1, and Bach 2006b. Taken as a whole, this research characterizes conversational implicatures as meanings arising from interactions between (i) the communicative goals of cooperative agents in specific discourses and (ii) basic principles governing rational communication. In contrast, CIs stem entirely from idiosyncratic lexical features. (One might find in here a challenge to the notion that 'what is implicated' forms a coherent class of meanings on par with 'what is said'.)

Before closing this section, it is worth pausing to address the relationship between CIs and *generalized* conversational implicatures, which are pragmatic meanings that hearers perceive in a wide variety of contexts. They are so common, and so effortlessly derived by speakers, that debates often erupt about whether they are truly conversational or whether they have become lexically encoded. Grice (1989) intermittently entertains the possibility that some conversational meanings might become conventionalized, and versions of the hypothesis are central to Levinson (2000) and Chierchia (2004). This is not the place to address this challenging issue. It is worth stressing, however, that these proposals for an integrated pragmatics can only minimally impact the autonomy of the theory of CIs. It

might be that some pragmatic meanings become conventionalized over time. But they do not lose the calculability property as a result of this grammatization. In contrast, as discussed above, CIs are never calculable. Thus, even if both CIs and conversational implicatures are derived in the compositional semantics, they will still demand different treatments.

4 CIs and presuppositions

CIs and presuppositions share a confusing history. Readers new to the literature should be aware that they might pick up a paper about “conventional implicatures” only to find that it is all about presuppositions, and the reverse is possible too. Some authors write “conventional implicature or presupposition”, and it is unclear what they are refusing to take a stand on: a substantive issue about meaning classification or a merely terminological dispute.

We can trace this terminological muddle to [Karttunen and Peters 1979](#), where it has a serious intellectual claim behind it. Prior to that article, presuppositions were almost invariably defined as preconditions on defined semantic values or on felicitous utterance. This remains a prevalent view ([Simons 2006:§3](#)). But K&P disputed it. They argued instead that presuppositions can be true or false independently of the main descriptive content. If one accepts this, then one does end up near to Grice’s original conception of CIs.

K&P’s work significantly influenced the direction of research on presuppositions. After all, though they used the term ‘conventional implicature’, they went after the main presupposition triggers, the factual backbone of presupposition theory, and they did so in a refreshing and provocative fashion. The upshot was that most of the field regarded K&P as having shown that all purported CIs are in fact presuppositions, and this blossomed into a license to use the two terms interchangeably.

However, their underlying factual claim — that descriptive meanings can survive presupposition failure — was not widely adopted. The older view of presuppositions as definedness conditions continued to dominate. (I return in section [6](#) to the issue of what this means for their multidimensional approach.)

Regardless of how this is resolved, there are some fundamental differences between items standardly viewed as presupposition triggers and at least some of the items discussed in [2](#). I now briefly review those differences. (For a more thorough introduction to presuppositions, see [Simons 2006](#).)

Backgrounded CIs are typically redundant. We caught a glimpse, in (8), of what happens when CI material is repeated. The facts are the same if the speaker first commits to a proposition *p* and then goes on to express *p* again as a CI, as illustrated in (9). (It is important, in examples like this, to take the commas seriously as intonation-break markers; the more prosodically integrated expression *Lance the cyclist* is different both syntactically and semantically (Potts 2005:§4.5.3).)

(9) Lance is a cyclist. #Lance, the cyclist, battled cancer.

In contrast, it is routine for presuppositions to be backgrounded in this fashion — it might, in fact, be the preferred option in many cases, to avoid the demands of accommodation:

(10) Lance is a cyclist. But the reporter did not realize that Lance was a cyclist until after their interview.

CIs routinely project out of attitude complements. Karttunen (1973) calls attitude predicates *presupposition plugs* because they seem to stop the flow of presuppositions from their complements. For example, in (11), the presupposition that Sue owns a kangaroo (triggered by this use of *Sam's kangaroo*) does not project up past the attitude context established by the verb *believe*, and thus the speaker is free to deny it (cf. #*Sam's kangaroo is sick, but that's ridiculous — Sam doesn't own a kangaroo*).

(11) Sue believes that Sam's kangaroo is sick, but that's ridiculous — Sam doesn't own a kangaroo.

CIs, or at least the subclass of CIs that are the focus of Potts 2005, do project past presupposition plugs, as exemplified in (12).

(12) Sue believes that Chuck, a confirmed psychopath, is a suitable babysitter — #but Chuck isn't a psychopath. (Potts, 2005)

The infelicity of the continuation indicates that the content of the parenthetical *a confirmed psychopath* cannot be trapped by the attitude context — it is interpreted as the speaker's contribution.

There are other potential points of contrast between these two classes of meaning, though they are more controversial. For instance, false CIs do not result in undefinedness for the whole. False presuppositions generally do, but K&P's discussion complicates this, as do the facts about the definite article analyzed by Horn (1996) and von Stechow (2001).

In addition, the class of presuppositions might have natural subclasses, and some of those might strongly resemble CIs. For discussion, see [Kadmon 2001](#), [Abbott 2006](#), [Abusch \(2002\)](#), [Simons \(2001\)](#), [Potts 2005](#):§2.4.3, §5.4, §5.7, and [Roberts 2006](#).

5 CIs and descriptive meanings

In making the case that CIs are neither pragmatic meanings nor mere presuppositions-by-a-different-name, I drew parallels with descriptive meanings. It's important, then, to review the case that CIs are not merely descriptive meanings.

CIs are assertorically inert ([Horn, 2002](#)). Parenthetical expressions like (6) provide easy illustration. If I object to (6a) with “No, that’s wrong” or “No, I disagree”, I am almost certain to be construed as denying the proposition that Lance Armstrong battled cancer. My interlocutor will assume that I accept the parenthetical’s content unless I work hard to specify that my quibble is with that content (as well). This inertness is not just a function of the parenthetical; all the examples mentioned in section 2 pattern this way to some nontrivial degree.

CIs are scopally inert. We saw, in (12) above, that CIs are not plugged by presupposition plugs. They also escape the full range of presupposition *holes* ([Karttunen, 1973](#)). This yields sharp contrasts with descriptive meanings. In (13), I illustrate using negation.

- (13) It is false that Archie is a zombie but also a first-rate jazz musician.
- a. \Rightarrow not(Archie is a zombie and a first-rate jazz musician)
 - b. \Rightarrow Being a zombie usually precludes being a first-rate jazz musician

The descriptive meaning is modified by the negation, as we see in (13a). But the purported CI is unaffected by this polarity-flipping operator. (13b) is the extra meaning we get from the positive version *Archie is a zombie but also a first-rate jazz musician*.

[Bach \(1999\)](#) challenges the notion that this is a distinguishing feature of CIs. The article is provocatively titled ‘The myth of conventional implicature’. It deals a blow to the usual factual motivation for CIs. Many of the examples in section 2 are thrown into doubt by his critical assessment.

In essence, Bach’s argument is that CIs are not distinguished from regular descriptive content. It is all part of ‘what is said’, in the sense of Grice (1975). Bach builds his case mainly by challenging the scopal inertness of CIs. His weapon is the *IQ-test* (the indirect quotation test), which involves placing purported CIs in the scope of verbs of saying, as indirect discourse, and seeing how they project. What he finds is that, in this environment, the shining exemplars of CI theory are not distinguished from descriptive content. He often illustrates with examples involving *but*, as in (14).

- (14) Marv: Shaq is huge but he is agile.
- a. Marv said that Shaq is huge but that he is agile.
 - b. Marv said that Shaq is huge and that he is agile.

What does it take, Bach asks (via the IQ-test) to give a complete and accurate paraphrase of (14) using an indirect quotation? His answer is that only (14a) suffices. Paraphrase (14b) leaves out the contribution of *but*. Moreover, if one asserts (14a), then one is committed to the claim that Marv said (14); if he said merely “Shaq is huge and he is agile”, then (14a) is partly untrue. Thus, though we saw *but* project through the presupposition holes in (13), it is plugged by the presupposition plugs. This might point us towards a presuppositional analysis, or it might be taken as evidence that it is descriptive content of a special sort. But it certainly complicates Grice’s assertions that CIs are excluded from what is “said (in the favored sense)”.

To many, Bach’s article sounded like a death knell for CIs. In addition to providing the IQ-test data, Bach also critically reviews much of the (pre-1999) literature on CIs, attempting to show that the overall case is very weak, that theorists embraced CIs before really determining whether they exist in natural language. The case is a powerful one, but I predict that the longterm effect of Bach’s article will not be to eliminate CIs but rather to rejuvenate their study. Bach’s article is factually very rich — full to overflowing with mostly overlooked classes of lexical items like parentheticals, utterance modifiers, and evaluative adverbials. His response to the examples is to deny the ‘one sentence, one proposition’ mantra that hovers over most of semantic theory. He proposes instead to allow individual sentences to express tuples of independent meanings. This characterization seems perfectly in line with Grice’s original proposal for CIs, and, thus, somewhat curiously, there is a direct line of positive influence from Bach 1999 to Potts 2005, the longest argument in favor of CIs to date. The two works provide different answers

to the question of whether Grice's label is appropriate for the facts at hand, but they agree on the substantive factual, logical, and theoretical issues, and these are the ones of interest anyway. I turn to them now.

6 Multidimensionality

The examples reviewed in section 2 are syntactically and semantically diverse. But one need only skim the example blocks to see that they have something noteworthy in common: each example is associated with more than one independent, nonpragmatic meaning. This is a feature of Grice's original description and, as far as I know, it is common to all proposals for CIs. As noted above, even Bach (1999), in the midst of his assault on CIs in general, works hard to establish that individual sentences can express multiple meanings.

I call this *semantic multidimensionality*. The sense of 'multidimensional' here is different from the sense it usually has in modal logic, where it generally means that formulae are evaluated at points with internal structure. This modal sense of multidimensionality is pervasive in linguistics as well: to determine the truth of *it's snowing*, we need to fix a world, a time, and a location, which amounts to evaluation at a multidimensional index.

For present purposes, individual meanings can be as complex as one can imagine. The overarching claim is that certain words and constructions map semantically to more than one of those meanings. This independence can, and often does, persist through the computation, so that we have pairs (or triples, or quadruples, ...) of meanings in the end. In linguistics, this idea dates to Karttunen and Peters 1979, who adapt the two-dimensional logic of Herzberger (1973) to a richer Montagovian intensional setting (see also Mergmann 1981). It is a hallmark of alternative semantics for focus (Rooth, 1985, 1992), it is the central premise of Potts 2005, and it has recently made its way into pragmatics (Levinson, 2000; Chierchia, 2004).

For Karttunen and Peters (1979), expressions have both descriptive ('extensional') and implicature dimensions. In this sense, they anticipate Bach's call for a 'one sentence, potentially many propositions' semantics. Their approach was widely discussed but met with critical resistance in virtue of the fact that, as they note in an appendix, it does not properly handle quantificational structures. This is often called the *binding problem*, and we can trace it to the fact that K&P's dimensions are too separated to permit binding across them. The details are quite technical, so I won't review them in full here (see Cooper 1983:151–152, Heim

1983, and Krahmer 1998:12, 21, 118ff). Suffice it to say that K&P’s semantics is fully compositional — the meanings for complex phrases are determined recursively by the meanings of their parts and the modes of composition — and when we use K&P’s logic to put the pieces together for a sentence like *Someone managed to pass the test*, we end up with two existential quantifications: roughly, *Someone passed the test* and *Someone tried hard to pass the test*. This pair is true in a situation with two test takers: one who struggles and fails and another who breezes through to high marks. But we judge the original false in this situation; we require for it that a single test-taker both struggle and succeed. That is, we require a single occurrence of the quantifier *someone* to bind into both dimensions.

It’s an unfortunate historical fact that the binding “problem” led to a general rejection of K&P’s approach. Recently, others have come to different conclusions about it. Dekker (2002) does the sensible thing: he in effect fixes it up, by defining a dynamic multidimensional logic for presuppositions that can handle quantificational binding. The result may well be useful for many of the facts discussed in section 2. My response in Potts 2005 is somewhat different. I argue that the binding problem is not a *problem* at all. It is instead a *feature* of K&P’s logic, one that guides us to proper applications for it. Many of the constructions cited above do not allow true quantificational binding across dimensions. Parentheticals and honorifics are prominent examples (Potts, 2003; Potts and Kawahara, 2004). For them, a logic like K&P’s derives the desired limitations. The empirical predictions of that kind of approach are very rigid, and they have recently been challenged (Karttunen and Zaenen 2005; Wang et al. 2005; Bach 2006a is a useful critical overview. The logic of Nouwen (2007) might help resolve some of the theoretical tensions here.) But the point is simply that the “problem” has led theorists to uncover new facts and engage new issues.

Once one gets thinking along these lines, one sees that there are many logical and theoretical senses of multidimensionality that might yield analyses of examples like those in section 2. I characterize three major subtypes in (15).

- (15) a. The dimensions contain the same kinds of content, and interdimensional interaction (binding, etc.) is quite free (Dekker, 2002; Chierchia, 2004; Nouwen, 2007).
- b. The dimensions contain the same kinds of content, but they are rigidly separated by the logical theory (Karttunen and Peters, 1979; Rooth, 1985, 1992; Potts, 2005).
- c. The dimensions contain radically different kinds of content (Kaplan, 1999; Potts and Kawahara, 2004; Potts, 2006).

It's of course a huge project to figure out which analysis-type is appropriate for which range of facts. For my part, I think (15a) is most suited to the traditional Gricean CI expressions (*but* and co.). However, it is arguably impossible to determine whether this is what Grice intended, since he did not do the sort of testing with attitude predicates and quantifiers that is necessary for selecting this option over the others. I argue in Potts 2005 that Grice's emphasis on speaker contributions points us to (15b), and I put a theory of that kind to use for parentheticals and expressives. I have come to think that the approach is suitable for parentheticals, but expressives seem fundamentally different from what we find in the descriptive realm, and so I have recently (Potts, 2006) sought to describe them using a theory of type (15c), which represents the deepest of the three senses of multidimensionality and suggests that there might be many diverse, uncharted dimensions of meaning requiring new exploratory tools and strategies.

7 Prospects

I emphasized in section 3 that CIs are not conversational meanings in the manner of conversational implicatures, and I placed them in the semantics. This is not to say, though, that CI theorists can afford to ignore the messy issues of language use. CI analyses are united in the sense that they place CIs in a distinct semantic dimension, but this is probably not the final word on the differences. CIs are also distinguished at the level of information structure — their assertoric interia (section 5) points us to this conclusion, as does the scopelessness of many of them (section 4). Thus, we should work to find theories that provide insight into these aspects of CIs. It would seem a natural fit; Grice (1989) ventures tentative connections with the theory of performatives, so the CI–use connection has been with us nearly from the start. Rieber (1997) develops such a case, and I refer to Bach and Harnish (1979) and Bach (1999) for important insights in this vein. The theory of information structure is steadily growing in coverage and precision (see the papers in Horn and Ward 2004, as well as Roberts 1996, 2006). We might see semantic multidimensionality replaced by deeper notions relating to the information-theoretic contours of discourse. If so, we are sure eventually to encounter claims that this is what Grice meant (though perhaps not what he “said (in the favored sense)”) with his original statement.

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