

How Lies Can Help Us Understand:  
The Role of Deception in Discourse Modelling

*I think that's at the centre of it  
all, telling the truth, always  
trying to find out the truth, not  
tolerating any lie or any half-lie  
– it's the half-lies that kill the  
spirit.*

(Murdoch, 1976, p. 249)

BA Thesis English Language and Culture, Utrecht University

Stella Verkijk

5716365

British English

Supervisor: Nynke de Haas

Second reader: Loes Koring

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## Abstract

This thesis considers multiple definitions of deception and tests Gricean pragmatics and Austin's Speech Act Theory on their ability to account for different forms of deception than false assertion, namely false implicature and presupposition faking. It also analyses the ability of several representations of the common ground to account for deception. It shows that Grice's maxim of quality and Searle's sincerity condition are not adequately defined, and that multiple representations of the common ground do not make explicit which belief sets can enter the common ground when an interlocutor deceives another.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	4
2. Definitions of deception .....	5
3. The representation of deception in existing theories of pragmatic communication .....	13
3.1 Gricean pragmatics .....	13
3.2 Speech Act Theory .....	16
4. Deception and common ground .....	19
4.1 Common Ground .....	19
4.2 Krifka's strict division between pragmatic and semantic content .....	23
5. Discussion .....	25
References .....	28

## 1. Introduction

Deception is universally present in human behaviour across cultures. It is not only part of everyday personal life, but also of society. Whether it is commercials, a political debate, reality shows, or a polite conversation with a teacher: they all involve some sort of deception. In recent history, with many people fixated on fake news in social media, the involvement of deception in everyday life has become more and more apparent to the public. This thesis will not focus on the question whether deception is morally defensible, but it will elaborate on the part deception plays within the modern field of linguistics. Even though lies are conveyed through language, they have not received much attention from theoretical linguists (Meibauer, 2005). This thesis will discuss how pragmatic theories, such as Gricean pragmatics and Austin's Speech Act Theory, fail to consider deception in enough detail. Additionally, I will analyse the role of deception within several representations of the common ground and make explicit what becomes part of the common ground in a deceptive context. It will be shown that deceptive acts that involve implication are more meaningful than is usually assumed, and it will consider what this means for the semantics-pragmatics distinction.

The main question I aim to answer with this thesis is: How can the notion of deception help us formulate adequate theories on common ground and information structure? In my thesis, I use a broad definition of information structure (IS), and thus move away from the kind of IS that distributes information across a sentence. IS will refer to the whole spectrum of how interlocutors convey information in a conversation. Common ground and information structure are linked: they both deal with the status of information in discourse. How an interlocutor structures the information they want to convey depends on what is embedded in the common ground. This interaction and the position lying takes up within this interaction is the focus of the paper. The content of this paper is twofold: on the one hand, it reviews the existing literature on the topic, with the intention of identifying problems and shortcomings.

On the other hand, the paper aims to resolve these problems.

The first question that needs to be answered is: How can deception be defined? In section 2, light will be shed on the different shapes that deception can take and I will aim to give a complete overview of what is said about this in literature. This section will consider the positioning of lying at the semantic-pragmatic interface. Subsequently, in section 3, I will elaborate on the ineffectiveness of parts of the Cooperative Principle, Speech Act Theory, and the sincerity condition because of their lack of consideration for the role of deception, considering criticism by Galasinski (2002) and Meibauer (2014). I will also discuss how some of the problems that arise due to this ineffectiveness can be resolved. This will answer the second sub-question: Do existing theories on information structure consider deception in enough detail? In section 4, I will consider the effect that lies have on the common ground, in order to answer the following sub-questions: How does the notion of deception help us to define what common ground is? Should linguistic theories on verbal communication make a strict distinction between pragmatics and semantics? Finally, there will be some conclusions, recommendations for further research and limitations in section 5.

## 2. Definitions of deception

According to Falkenberg (1982), a thorough theory of deception should not only be linguistic, but also include human behaviour studies, psychology and social sciences. Since the nature of lying cannot be fully described by a purely linguistic approach, different perspectives on the definition of lying will be offered. The first distinction that ought to be considered is between lying and other forms of deception. According to the philosopher Adler (1997), all forms of deception have the objective to make the victim believe something false, “but only lying does so through asserting what one believes false” (p. 435). Assertion is one of the most common speech acts. It involves uttering a proposition in a declarative sentence which presents the world as being in a certain way (cf. Stalnaker, 1978). Thus, according to Adler, all forms of

deception can take place outside of an assertion, except for lying, and lying has to do with a distinction between true and false. Galasinski (2000) claims that a notion of deception should not be based on a definition within the concepts truth and falsity, because there are utterances that are deceptive but to which the criterion of falsity or truth does not apply, like “Have you stopped beating your wife?” (p. 19). Adler’s view on deception is in line with Falkenberg’s (1982) five properties of lying:

- Lies are personal: they are always the speaker’s lies
- Lies are social: they are always directed at a hearer
- Lies are temporal: they can become dated
- Lies are intentional: they happen on purpose
- Lies are verbal: they consist in the expression of words (Falkenberg, 1982, p. 14)

Adler also notes that many forms of deception are part of widely accepted aspects of everyday conversations, such as politeness, as is visible in the following example (S = speaker, H = hearer)<sup>1</sup>:

(1) S1: #incidentally would you excuse me for about two #minutes

S2: #\*y\es\*

S1: #\*I’ve just\* got to go and see a man upstairs and #I’ll be back genuinely within  
three minutes

[Pause]

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<sup>1</sup> All the non-constructed examples of speech come from the London Lund Corpus of Spoken English (Svartvik, 1990). I manually searched through the London Lund Corpus text file in order to provide relevant natural language examples that support the exposition. In favour of readability not all coding from the original transcriptions remains. The retained coding is as follows: # onset of tone unit; \*x\* \*y\* overlapping speech; / rising tone; \ falling tone; [...] additions made by me for reasons of clarity

#very sorry to

S2: #that's all r\ight

S1: #have kept you (Svartvik, 1990)

The hearer (or S2) does not seem to have problems with the fact that S1 firstly tells him it is going to be two minutes, and later three. Unfortunately, it is not known how long S1 stayed away, but S2 at any rate does not appear to have a problem with the incongruent information that is given to them. Also, it is questionable if S1 is indeed “very sorry” for leaving S2 for a few minutes. Both interlocutors know that S1 is exaggerating up to a level where what is said does not match the feelings of S1 and some kind of deceptive strategy has thus been put into play, but S2 accepts the apology nevertheless. Apparently, there is a certain level up to which humans accept deception.

In line with Falkenberg, Meibauer (2014) points out that lying is always verbal, while other forms of deception can take place on a non-verbal level. The philosopher Kant gave the most famous example of this: someone packs their luggage to make bystanders believe they are leaving even though they are not (as cited in Meibauer 2014, p. 25). This person has now deceived the bystanders into believing they are leaving without saying anything.

For the sake of clarity, I offer two more examples of (non-) deceptive utterances. In (2), the speaker is not telling the truth, though without deceiving the hearer:

- (2) [Speaker is describing walking through a corridor following a very slow-walking woman, who is being compared to the fictional character Arabella] S: #poor Arabella was l\ame #and w\alked #you kn/ow #slower than a sn\ail #so we all had to walk at Arab\ella's p\ace #so we proc\eeded #took about f\ive hours #going along the c\orridor (Svartvik, 1990)

In reality, it of course did not take five hours to walk through the corridor. The speaker here assumes that the hearers understand that it did not actually take five hours to walk through the corridor, and is therefore not using any deceptive strategy. The next example is more complicated. A speaker is telling people a story about a child they take care of, Pansy, and her other caretaker Edward.

(3) S1: #Pansy s/aid #that there were no such things as f\airies #this that and the other #well #the night she p\ut her tooth under the pillow #we forgot to put the m\oney there #and take it aw\ay #we forgot all about it #im\agine #she got up in the m\orning #t\ooth's not g\one #there's n/o m\oney #there he [Edward] said well there you \are you see #you y\ou said #you didn't bel\ieve in fairies #so how can you expect the fairies to come and see you if #[Pansy said] oh #but I d\o believe in f\airies #you kn\ow #I r\eally do #so Edward said well #try again ton\ight #so that night thank goodness we rem\embered #so the next morning she gets /up #all happy #oh they've been they've b\een #I've got my m\oney #and Edward said well there you \are # that just shows that you #if they hear you s\aying you don't believe # no m\oney # she says she says w\ell #I know you're only s\aying that #because you forgot to p\ut it there #and now #she r\eckons that she says #she comes in #and she'll grin all over she'll say #just out of the bl\ue she said #I do bel\ieve in Father Chr\istmas you know #with a grin from ear to \ear #and it's perfectly obvious that she doesn't but she's not going to s\ay it #just in c\ase #there's no toys (Svartvik, 1990)

Even though the speaker is aware that Pansy is lying when she says that she believes in Father Christmas, she is still executing a deceptive act, because she aims to change her caretaker's behaviour, or in this situation retain his behaviour of giving her gifts, by telling him something that is not correct. In the terms of Vincent and Castelfranchi (1981), Castelfranchi and Poggi (1984) and Galasinski (2000), her communicative act has the goal of deceiving her



father. Her utterance, *I do believe in Father Christmas* can be seen as direct lying (in Vincent & Castelfranchi's framework), or, more generally, as lying in the form of an assertion.

To understand what lying is and is not, two important terms should be defined: implicature and presupposition. Implicature is a term introduced by Grice (1975), and refers to the suggested meaning of a sentence. This means that implicature is not something that is stated literally, nor something that is entailed by a statement. Entailment happens when something follows logically from the utterance, situation, or context: if A, then B. Implicature is a pragmatic meaning of an utterance. An example: imagine a situation where S asks H to do the dishes and H answers by saying *I've done the dishes three times already today*. By saying this, H implicates 1) their belief that they should not have to do the dishes, and 2) the unfairness of having to do the dishes four times a day. S can infer all these things, even though H does not state them literally. Deliberately falsely implicating, then, is making the hearer infer wrong information not by saying it literally but by suggesting something that is false. Grice differentiates between "what is said" and "what is implicated" (as cited in Saul, 2002, p. 28): when a speaker says "someone shot my parents" (Saul, 2002, p.228), they implicate, but do not say, that it was not them who shot their parents. In this paper, a division will be made between speaker meaning and sentence meaning, which is essentially the same as Grice's distinction. The speaker meaning includes the things that are implicated, while the sentence meaning only refers to the semantic meaning of the words and syntax. Speaker meaning embodies what the speaker wants the hearer to believe. Presuppositions are tied to the sentence meaning (cf. Strawson), but also have a pragmatic function (cf. Stalnaker). The presupposition of a sentence is the information that is needed to understand the most important information in the sentence, but is not asserted (cf. Stalnaker). Presuppositions have everything to do with context, as we can see in example (4), which states that the content of a presupposition of an utterance can be entailed from the context:

- (4) Surface sentence A pragmatically presupposes a logical form L, if and only if it is the case that A can be felicitously uttered only in contexts which entail L. (Karttunen, 1974, p. 181)

Uttering *My brother was sleepwalking last night* presupposes that the speaker has a brother. This utterance can only be true (and felicitous<sup>2</sup>) if the speaker has a brother, and the context of the utterance, which asserts that the brother of the speaker was walking in the night, entails that the speaker has a brother. Presuppositions can be recognised by the fact that they remain under negation and under becoming interrogative. *My brother was not sleepwalking last night* and *Was my brother sleepwalking last night?* still presuppose that the speaker has a brother. Presuppositions often contain information that is already known by speaker and hearer and can therefore function as background information. However, it is also possible that a presupposition offers new information, about which the speaker thinks the hearer does not need more explanation. The speaker then expects the hearer to accept the presupposition as new background information. This also means that false information can be uttered through presupposition. If one is at a party and none of the guests have been offered cake nor know about the existence of a cake, and one says *too bad there is no more cake*, people are made to believe there was a cake in the first place, without saying that explicitly. Vincent and Castelfranchi (1981) call this presupposition faking.

These notions are important to understand, because scholars differ in their view on the categorization of deceiving, lying, falsely implicating and presupposition faking. Vincent and Castelfranchi (1981) propose a typological definition where they divide deception into two

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<sup>2</sup> In Austin's terminology, a sentence cannot be true or false but felicitous or infelicitous (Austin, 1962). Each type of speech act has its own felicity conditions, but in general, an utterance is felicitous when the speech act is successful: when it is semantically and pragmatically coherent and fitting in the context (cf. Austin).

parts: on the one hand there is lying, further branching into direct and indirect lying, and on the other hand there is pretending/faking. Direct lying, then, is uttering a false assertion. There are a number of things that Vincent and Castelfranchi classify as indirect lying, such as insinuations, half-truths, deliberate ambiguity, and obfuscation. All these notions are however some form of false implicature (as cited in Meibauer, 2014). For example, when a speaker tells a hearer a half-truth, the hearer will infer that this is the whole truth, which is a false implicature. Pretending/faking, then, includes precondition or presupposition faking, pretending to lie, and pretending to act or joke. In opposition to this, Meibauer (2014) claims that “a comprehensive notion of lying should include lying by deliberately using false implicatures and presuppositions” (p. 275). This means he disagrees with Vincent and Castelfranchi about the fact they classify presupposition faking as pretending. Meibauer stresses the importance of considering presupposition faking and false implicature as forms of lying because they are a proper part of the speaker meaning, and the task of a hearer is to find out what the speaker meaning is. He says that “[i]n particular, lying is located at the semantics-pragmatics interface, since it has to do with the manipulation of truth as well as with speech acts and pragmatic inferences (2014, p. 8). Meibauer categorizes presupposition faking under indirect lying within Vincent and Castelfranchi’s framework, as he does evaluate their distinction of direct and indirect lying as fruitful. It can be argued that presupposition faking leads to a false implicature, which would make it logical to categorize it under indirect lying. If we take the example of the cake again, where the sentence *too bad there is no more cake* is uttered, the speaker uses a fake presupposition to make the listeners infer the false implicature that there was cake, even though there was not. Adler (1997) says that “[i]n falsely implicating, rather than lying, the outcome is still directly intended, not merely a foreseen consequence. Additionally, the deceiver performs an act that originates the deception, rather than merely allowing it to befall the victim” (p. 446). He also states that

lying by giving a false assertion “is just easier” (p. 439) than falsely implicating. This all suggests that false implicature, and thus also fake implicature, should not be underestimated as deceptive acts.

The most important claim springing from the different definitions of Vincent and Castelfranchi (1981), Meibauer (2005; 2014), and Adler (1997) is not the terminology, but the idea that all deceptive acts, and not only false assertion, are important for understanding communication through language. False assertions, fake presuppositions and false implicatures all essentially belong to the same category, namely, the category of utterances that lead to the hearer making wrong assumptions. The claim that false implicature and fake presupposition are just as meaningful as false assertion has to do with pragmatics, the philosophy of language, and semiotics. The study of pragmatics has proven that there is meaning in linguistics beyond semantic meaning. Searle, in an interview about the philosophy of language (Magee, 1978), stresses that speaker intentions are meaningful. Therefore, theories about communication should account for false implicature and presupposition faking just as they do for false assertion, as with these strategies it is the speaker’s intention to provide false information to the hearer. Galasinski, relying on studies by Bradac (1973) and Bok (1968), points out that

“(…)lying is related not so much to falsity of information but, rather, to the speaker’s beliefs. It does not matter whether the statement is or is not false, as long as the speaker believes it to be false. It is the intention to lie and the speaker’s beliefs about reality that are constitutive of lying. Lies are statements that the speaker believes to be false and that are intended to mislead the addressee”. (p. 97)

This thesis will stress the importance of evaluating false implicature and fake presupposition as equally deceptive as false assertions. It will use the label of verbal deception for false assertion, false implicature, and fake presupposition.

### 3. The representation of deception in existing theories of pragmatic communication

#### 3.1 Gricean pragmatics

Interlocutors have certain expectations about how others will act in conversation, which makes it possible to communicate efficiently. Because language is very ambiguous, speakers adhere to certain rules and hearers expect these rules to be met by the speaker. In this way the hearer is able to infer the right information. Grice has gathered these ideas under what he calls the Cooperative Principle, which is a rule for any interlocutor that goes as follows: “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (1975, p. 45). This is then worked out into four maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These maxims can be explained using an example where someone says *I have five chairs in the garden*. The hearer expects this person to mention all chairs, and not mention only a subset of the chairs they have. Strictly speaking, it could be the case that the speaker has more chairs, because if the speaker has eight chairs, this means they also have five. Because of the maxim of quantity, the hearer infers that this is not the case and that the speaker has five chairs and not more. The hearer might also expect the speaker to tell the truth, and not say they have five chairs when they actually have four. The hearer also does not expect the speaker to say they have five chairs in the garden when in reality they are not sure at all whether there are chairs or not. This is the maxim of quality. Because the hearer expects the speaker to implicitly know about these two maxims, the hearer infers that the speaker has exactly five chairs in the garden. In a situation in which there is a barbecue going on with many people on the front porch and the speaker is asked if they have any items people can sit on, the sentence *I have five chairs in the garden* is expected to mean that the hearer can get those chairs and use them, even though the speaker does not say this literally. This is the maxim of relevance. The

maxim of manner has to do with the expectation that a conversational partner speaks clearly.

For a study on lying, the most important maxim is the one of quality:

(5) Maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true

1. Do not say what you believe to be false

2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (Grice, 1975, p. 46)

Firstly, I would like to consider the universality of this maxim. Grice presents it as a universal rule that every interlocutor is expected to follow. It can be argued, however, that an interlocutor might not expect the truth from a conversation partner who is known to have lied several times before. Also, the maxim might become less relevant in the current changing society. Fake news has been a part of society for ages, but only recently have people started to fixate on it, trying to eliminate false information and being hesitant to believe anything that is put forward in the media. Meanwhile, the president of the United States is presenting alternative facts and being accused of lying, often very rightly so, almost daily. It can be argued that this changes people's conception of communication and makes them less willing to expect the truth. This does not entail a change in the status of the maxim as a default expectation in typical communication between individuals: communication runs most smoothly when interlocutors have this expectation and the expectation is met. The point is that there are many conversations where interlocutors do not feel confident in this expectation, or where the expectations are not met, and that these situations need modelling too.

At first sight, (5) looks fairly straightforward and logical. But in fact, it might be too simple: the maxim does not explicitly account for those instances of deceiving where the sentence meaning is not deceptive but the speaker meaning is, which is the case when there is an instance of presupposition faking or falsely implicating. In other words, verbally deceiving

can be done without explicitly saying something that you believe to be false or do not have enough evidence for. Hence, Grice's maxim of quality does not restrict people in making these type of deceptive utterances, even though all deception goes against the Cooperative Principle. Also, the maxim is not able to account for Galasinski's (2000) view on how to define a deceptive act: Galasinski points out that many utterances cannot be qualified as false or true, like "Have you stopped beating your wife?" (p. 19). It seems that the maxim of quality is not defined well enough and is not detailed enough to be able to account for all types of deception. The definition could be amended as follows:

(6) New Maxim of Quality

Try to make a contribution that is coherent with what you believe

1. Do not say, implicate or presuppose what you do not believe
2. Do not say, implicate or presuppose that for which you lack evidence

There is at least one other study that has also found Grice's maxim on quality alone inadequate for analysing lies. McCornak, Morrison, Paik, Wisner & Zhu (2014) take Grice's maxim of quality as their basis for a study on lying, but also incorporate cognitive neuroscience, and studies of speech production and artificial intelligence. With their Information Manipulation Theories, the authors have tried to contest the "tacitly presumed production model dominating deception research" (p. 349) that suggests that when someone is asked a question directly, and the recipient is considering whether to reply by telling the truth or not, they will choose between either a bald-faced lie (BFL) or a bald-faced truth (BFT). Hence, they will either say something that they believe to be false (an utterance of which the semantics can be qualified as false in relation to the world), or they will tell the truth. Contesting this dichotomy is in line with the claim of this thesis that lying can take many forms. To do this, the authors evaluate Grice's maxim as the basis, but not as sufficient.

Attardo (1997) also claims that the Cooperative Principle cannot function in its

original representation, due to the fact that Grice does not recognise that there are two different levels of cooperation. He points out that speakers cooperate within the linguistic exchange, in order to convey the right linguistic meaning, but also outside the linguistic exchange, in order to convey the goal that the speaker wants to achieve. In order for the Cooperative Principle to function in all contexts, two different levels should be recognised: locutionary cooperation and perlocutionary cooperation (p. 756). In Attardo's theory, when a speaker is deceiving, this means that they are being cooperative on the locutionary level, but not on the perlocutionary level.

### 3.2 Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory, invented by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1969), sidesteps the problematic false/true dichotomy. Instead of putting truthfulness forward as a condition for communication, Searle (1969) stresses the importance of sincerity. It could be argued that an insincere promise is a deceptive act, since it forms false information in the hearer's mind. If S tells H: *I promise to bring you bread from the supermarket* even though S does not intend to bring bread from the supermarket, then H has falsely inferred that S intends to bring bread. According to Searle, to successfully promise something, the promise has to adhere to the sincerity condition, which is given in example (7):

#### (7) Searle's Sincerity Condition

S intends to do A

The distinction between sincere and insincere promises is that, in the case of sincere promises, the speaker intends to do the act promised; in the case of insincere promises, he does not intend to do the act. Also, in sincere promises, the speaker believes it is possible for him to do the act (or to refrain from doing it), but I think the proposition that he intends to do it entails that he thinks it is possible to do (or refrain from doing)



it, so I am not stating that as an extra condition. I call this condition the sincerity condition. (Searle, 1969, p. 60)

In Searle's terminology, lying is an act of insincere assertion, given that in the case of a normal assertion, the speaker believes the proposition they utter (as cited in Meibauer, 2014, p. 87).

According to Austin, an utterance like a promise consists of three acts:

(8) The locutionary act: the act of making a sentence and uttering words, which leads to the creation of something that is phonetically and syntactically coherent and is semantically meaningful. (as cited in Sbisà, 2013, pp. 26-27).

B) The illocutionary act: illocutionary acts cannot easily be confined to one class, but the most important thing to know is that it is at this point where the pragmatic force of the utterance is shaped, which creates a psychological significance. In uttering an illocutionary act, one is doing something, like promising. This is where the value of the promise is created. (as cited in Sbisà, 2013, p. 31)

C) The perlocutionary act: perlocution occurs only when the utterance has some kind of effect on the listener. With a promise, the effect on the listener can be that they are reassured. With a lie, the speaker wants the effect on the hearer to be that they believe the lie (as cited in Sbisà, p. 35).

It is in this distinction that Reboul (1994, p. 297) discovers a paradox when it comes to the speech act of lying: “[i]f a speaker produces an utterance which is a lie, it is necessary for the success of the lie that the illocutionary act of assertion should be successful. But if the perlocutionary act of lying is successful, then the illocutionary act of assertion is not successful” (as cited in Meibauer, 2014, p. 91). The first thing that Reboul claims, is that if you want to lie, you have to assert something. Then she states that if the assertion is

successful, something has successfully been proposed as true. Then she points out that if the lie is successful, this means that the hearer believes a false statement. This means that the assertion was false, which means that the illocutionary act of asserting is no longer successful: and that is where the paradox lies. It seems that Austin's speech act theory cannot comfortably account for false assertions.

After analysing false assertions in Austin's framework, it is important to analyse an example of a promise that includes false implicature to see if Searle's sincerity condition remains useful. We will see if Searle's sincerity condition will redeem a promise with a false implicature as unsuccessful, and therefore as a lie. Suppose a context in which A promises B to gather money to pay them back, without having the intention to pay them back. In the proposed context, A will receive money next week, which will enable them to pay B back, but A does not plan to use the money to pay B back. Now, A turns to B and says *I promise I will have the money next week*. With uttering this sentence, A implicates, but does not say, that they will pay B back very soon. B will infer that A will pay them back very soon, even though A is not planning to, and so the false implicature has taken shape. We will now look at the sentence as a speech act. By A uttering *I promise I will have the money next week*, the locutionary act has been completed. Now, for the illocutionary act of the promise to be successful, A must have the intention to do the act promised. In this case, the act promised might be identified as *having the money next week* or *being able* to pay B back very soon, according to Searle's sincerity condition. Since this is the case, the illocutionary act is successful, and therefore classified as non-deceptive in Searle's framework, although it is. There is also a successful perlocutionary act: B is reassured that A will pay them back very soon (since that is what they have inferred). It seems that Searle's sincerity condition is also problematic when it comes to accounting for false implicature. It can be debated whether one can have the intention to own something, such as is the case in the used example. It is

however worth noting that the sincerity condition does not explicitly state that the act promised cannot be interpreted in this way, nor does it make explicit that the act promised can be implicated as well as stated literally, as can be seen in (7).

In a broader sense, it is Searle's claim that the intention with which something is said is meaningful that mainly serves the goal of this paper. According to Searle, "it is the speaker's intentional state that gives any particular utterance its meaning and force" (Richland, 2013, p. 344). The sincerity condition that Searle proposes implies that when a speaker has the intention of doing what they promise, this shapes the meaning of the sentence. This adds to the argumentation that deceptive acts that are uttered implicitly, namely in fake presuppositions and in false implicature, but carry the speaker's intention to misinform, should also be considered in any theory that aims to model human communication.

#### 4. Deception and common ground

##### 4.1 Common Ground

The discourse model that an interlocutor has depends heavily on what is called the common ground. The technical notion 'common ground' was proposed by Stalnaker (1978; 2002) and refers to "the presumed background information shared by participants in a conversation" (Stalnaker, 2002, p. 701). For a study on deception, it is relevant to know how deception can fit in with the modern beliefs about what common ground is, because the common ground shapes the discourse model an interlocutor has. In a field of research that takes a body of shared information as the basis for communication, incongruent information shaped by deception has to be accounted for since deception is such a universal part of human communication. There seems to be a complex paradox when it comes to this issue. Clark says that "[t]wo people's common ground is, in effect, the sum of their mutual, common, or joint knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions" (1996, p. 93). A lie is not a shared piece of knowledge, belief, or supposition between S and H, because S believes something else than they make H

believe. This would mean the lie cannot become part of the common ground. However, it does not seem fruitful to assume that lies are never added to the common ground, as this would classify deceptive utterances as meaningless. Also, at least some aspect of the lie has to become part of a body of information that is existent between the speakers in order for the conversation to be able to continue without an interlocutor asking for clarification. In this section, it will be discussed whether any of the representations of common ground that have been introduced over the years can account for this paradox.

There have been multiple editions of the notion common ground. According to Clark (1996), three main formal representations of common ground have been ( $p$  stands for a proposition):

A)  $p$  is common ground for members of community  $C$  if and only if

- every member of  $C$  has information that basis  $b$  holds

-  $b$  indicates to every member of  $C$  that every member of  $C$  has information that basis  $b$  holds

-  $b$  indicates to members of  $C$  that  $p$

(From Lewis, 1969, p. 56, as cited in Clark, p. 94)

B)  $p$  is common ground for members of  $C$  if and only if

- ( $i$ ) the members of  $C$  have information that  $p$  and that  $i$ .

(From Harman, 1977 and Cohen, 1978, as cited in Clark, p. 95)

In the notation above, ( $i$ ) has a recursive function. Written out, it says here that *the members of  $C$  have information that  $p$  and the members of  $C$  have information that the members of  $C$  have information that  $p$ .*

C)  $p$  is common ground for members of  $C$  if and only if

- members of  $C$  have information that  $p$

- members of C have information that members of C have information that  $p$
- members of C have information that members of C have information that members of C have information that  $p$ , and so on ad infinitum

(From Green, 1989; Radford, 1966; Schiffer, 1972; Sperber & Wilson, 1986, as cited in Clark, p. 95)

Clark rejects the third representation because of two problems. Firstly, representation C requires an endlessly large mental capacity, which humans do not have (p. 95). The scholars who proposed representation C, after recognising its inevitable problems, interestingly enough rejected the notion of common ground entirely (Clark, p. 99). Secondly, Clark claims that lies require a more complicated representation, which is possible in the first two approaches to common ground, but not in the third one. However, his explanation is not very clear. He gives the example of a mother (A) lying to her son (B) that the neighbours want to show him their new dog, in order to lure him to their neighbours, where a surprise party is waiting for him. Clark then claims that this leads to the following representation of mutual belief:

- (9) B believes that (*i*) A and B believe that the neighbours have a new dog and that *i*.
- A believes that B believes that (*i*) A and B believe that the neighbours have a new dog and that *i*.
  - A believes that the neighbours do not have a new dog (p. 97)

There are some problems with this representation of mutual belief, because it does not become clear what is part of the common ground and what is not. From (9) it follows that the two interlocutors have different representations of what they suspect to be the common ground, and a clearer representation of what part of the lie is shared is needed. Clark does not give an example like this using the first approach, which he also claims to be able to deal with deception. If we take his framework of the first approach to common ground as shown above

(Clark, p. 94), filling in only the information that can be shared, and using “believe that” instead of “have information that”, like Clark does in (9), the outcome is the following:

(10) A and B believe that *b*

- *b* indicates to A and B that A and B believe that *b*

- *b* indicates to A and B that B believes that the neighbours have a new dog

Although this representation of the common ground does not represent all the belief sets that are apparent in the situation, it now captures only the belief set that is shared, namely: *A and B believe that A and B believe that B believes that the neighbours have a new dog*. Meibauer (2014) gives the formal representation of this set-theoretical approach to the common ground, in which the common ground is the intersection of the ‘belief sets’  $BS_S$ : {*p*: S believes *p*} and  $BS_H$  {*p*: H believes *p*}. This leads up to the following logical formula:

(11)  $CG \{S, H\} = \{p: p \in BS_S \ \& \ p \in BS_H \ \& \ p \text{ is mutually believed by both S and H}\}$  (p. 107)

This means that the content of the lie, i.e. *the neighbours have a new dog* cannot become part of the common ground. The part of the lie that can become part of the common ground is the hearer’s belief in the lie. Both the hearer themselves and the speaker believe that the hearer believes the lie. Meibauer’s set-theoretical representation of the common ground seems more helpful for modelling verbal deception than representations A, B and C. However, now that we know which part of the lie enters the common ground, we can also place that within the second framework that Clark provides:

(12) (i) A and B believe that B believes that the neighbours have a new dog and that *i*.

Written out, it says in (12) that *A and B believe that B believes that the neighbours have a new dog and A and B believe that B believes that A and B believe that the neighbours have a new*

*dog.*

Stalnaker (2002) claims that lies can become part of the common ground, but mainly because his definition of common ground relies heavily on his notion of presupposition, which reads: “To presuppose something is to take it for granted, or at least to act as if one takes it for granted, as background information – as common ground among the participants in the conversation” (p. 1). Stalnaker says that as soon as one accepts something to be part of the common ground, even if one knows that what one accepts is not true, it is common ground. This would mean that communication is based on some form of acting, and it makes lying, and knowing when one is lying and when not, all the more complicated. This is not an acceptable way to deal with deception, as the deceiver needs to be aware of their deception and the false believe that the victim has, in order to build further on the lie in subsequent conversations.

This section has aimed to show that the frameworks of common ground that have been provided do not make clear how acts of deception can be represented in the common ground. One interesting thing that is now clear is that mutual belief is more about what each believes about the other and the other’s beliefs, and what each believes to be shared, rather than belief shared between both parties. It is important to note that it is questionable whether one can believe in their own belief. This is however the only way in which the theory of common ground can account for deception. It seems important to make the difference between beliefs and beliefs about beliefs explicit when working out how a specific belief set enters the common ground during deception. Studies that differentiate semantic content in the common ground from pragmatic content may be able to offer a solution.

#### 4.2 Krifka’s strict division between pragmatic and semantic content

Krifka (2008) relies on the original notion of common ground as proposed by Stalnaker (1978), but adapts it by making a distinction between pragmatic and semantic aspects of the

common ground. Krifka makes a distinction between common ground content (CG content) and common ground management (CG management). Everything that has to do with the truth-conditional information in the common ground falls under CG content, and everything that relates to the pragmatic use of expressions falls under CG management. In CG management, the communicative goals of the participants are represented, such as asking a question. Here it is decided what is added to the common ground and how this happens. For example, asking a question is a CG management strategy: it is made clear by an interlocutor that more information is needed. The semantic content of the answer to the question, such as noun phrases, pronouns, and anything else that triggers truth conditions, will subsequently be added to CG content. Krifka makes this distinction to support his theory of focus, in which he distinguishes semantic uses of focus from pragmatic uses of focus. Staying with the example of questions, this means that according to Krifka's theory, topic constituents that answer a *wh* question are categorized under pragmatic focus. Krifka himself states "[t]he two uses of focus cannot always be neatly separated, but there are prototypical cases that clearly belong to one or to the other category" (p. 250). This view on common ground might help us understand how lies can be added to the common ground without having the hearer asking for clarification. With this distinction, it can be made explicit how the lie allows the speaker to create an imbalance of information by extensively engaging in CG management and adding to the CG content, thus leaving the hearer in a position where they are unaware of the imbalance so they do not engage in CG management strategies to address it. False assertions can then be differentiated from false implicatures and fake presuppositions in the way that false assertions would be associated with CG content and false implicatures and fake presuppositions with CG management. False assertions, then, would directly be unable to enter CG content, whilst false implicature and fake presuppositions first engage in a process of CG management.



## 5. Discussion

Analysing deception has helped us to make more adequate formulations of theories and rules that include common ground and information structure. After considering multiple definitions of deception and analysing different typologies categorizing various kinds of deception, it has become clear that the relevance of these typologies does not lie in the name that is given to different kinds of deceptive acts, but in the importance that is ascribed to different kinds of deception. Intuitively, false assertion is seen as the most prototypical act of lying. When studying human communication and pragmatics, however, attention must be paid to deceptive utterances that are semantically false in relation to the real world, like false assertion, as well as to utterances that provoke wrong information in the hearer's mind without saying it explicitly. Therefore, false assertion, fake presuppositions and false implicatures should all be accounted for in theories on discourse modelling.

It seems that parts of Gricean pragmatics are not detailed enough to account for different forms of deception. Firstly, the Cooperative Principle lacks modelling for situations in which the hearer does not trust the speaker to tell the truth. Secondly, the maxim of quality can account for false assertion, but it fails to account for other forms of deception. With the current definition of the maxim of quality, fake presuppositions and false implicatures do not violate the maxim, even though the messages that use these constructions are deceptive and ensure the formation of false information in the hearer's mind. It might be fruitful to consider Attardo's distinction of locutionary cooperation and perlocutionary cooperation in order to account for deception within Gricean pragmatics.

Austin's Speech Act Theory becomes problematic when analysing the speech act of lying (false assertion), because the illocutionary act of assertion and the perlocutionary act of making the hearer believe something that is not true, which both need to be successful to lie, cannot both be successful at the same time when following Austin's terminology (Reboul,

1994, p. 297, as cited in Meibauer, 2014, p.91). Searle's sincerity condition is useful for sidestepping the false/true dichotomy, which is problematic because some utterances cannot be classified as either true or false (Galasinski, 2000). However, it seems that the sincerity condition still does not explicitly account for false implicature, as it is not made explicit that the intention to do the act promised can also be about an implied act.

The notion of deception does not help to formulate what common ground is or what it should be, but it does help to identify and make explicit what can be shared in a conversation and what cannot. After analysing different representations of the common ground, it seems that in several of those representations, it is not made explicit what becomes shared when a lie is uttered. The set-theoretical representation by Meibauer (2014), that takes belief sets as its basis, seems the most useful for identifying the shared belief set in a deceptive context. It seems that a conscious difference should be made between belief and belief about belief when considering what becomes part of the common ground. Common ground does not consist of beliefs that are incidentally shared, but only of beliefs that are believed to be shared among all the participants by all participants. At least in some instances, namely in a deceptive context, it should theoretically be possible for an interlocutor to believe in their own belief in order to stay within a theory of discourse modelling that involves common ground. Linguistic theories on verbal communication should consider the fact that semantics and pragmatics are interrelated. Considering the difference between semantics and pragmatics can help to show dynamics that otherwise would stay implicit, but it is this interrelation that should not be ignored.

In the future, it would be useful to continue to build on the argumentations offered in this thesis to formulate and consider new representations of the common ground. It might be interesting to create a representation of the common ground that includes a period of negotiation, in which the process of eliciting certain subsets of belief sets that can become

shared is made explicit. This can be done in line with the notion of CG management by Krifka (2008). It would also be fruitful to investigate how we can provide modelling for situations in which the hearer does not trust the speaker within the Cooperative Principle. It might also be interesting to analyse Attardo's distinction of locutionary and perlocutionary cooperation within Gricean pragmatics in combination with false implicatures, to see if Attardo's theory can account for different forms of deception. Additionally, it might be fruitful to describe the sincerity condition in more detail, so it can also account for false implicature. This thesis has its limitations: there is a vast amount of literature on deception that could not be considered in its entirety. It is important to look further than the references in this paper when testing (new) representations of the common ground. Also, this thesis has not checked the consequences of the reformulation of the maxim of quality: it should not be the case that the maxim cannot account for other communicative goals apart from deception anymore. Finally, this thesis has only focused on English, and it would be interesting to see if the argumentations provided in this thesis would also be applicable to other languages.

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