Extra exercises Horn and Relevance Theory

For each of the conversational implicatures below (indicated with +>), determine what type of implicature is it according to Horn (Q or R). (If you want to practise with Grice as well, also determine through which Gricean maxim the implicature can be explained.)

Example 1
A: Have you read the Harry Potter books?
B: I have seen a number of films. +> *I did not read the books*

Example 2
A: Have you read the Harry Potter books?
B: I have seen a number of films. +> *I haven't seen all the films*

Example 3
A (interviewer): Did the US Government play any part in Jones's departure? Did they, for example, actively encourage him to leave?
B (government official): I would not try to steer you away from that conclusion. +> *Yes, they did*

Example 4
Opel Ampera, electrically powered, goes 500 km +> *The Opel Ampera can drive 500 km on its electric motor*

Example 5
This building is under 24h surveillance +> *Behave yourself/abide the law/don't do anything illegal*

Example 6
That cake is expensive but delicious +> *We are buying it*

Example 7
That cake is delicious but expensive +> *We are not buying it*

Example 8
It's chilly outside +> *It is not freezing cold*

Example 9
James is married to Sarah and has two kids +> *Sarah is the mother of the kids*

Example 10
A: Do you want to go to the movies tonight?
B: I have a lot of homework. +> *I cannot go to the movies with you*

See next page for more exercises.

For each of the inferences below (indicated with +>), answer the following questions:
- *In terms of Grice/Horn: is it part of 'What is said', a conventional implicature or a conversational implicature (either generalized or particularized)?*
- *If it is a conversational implicature: is it a Q-implicature or R-implicature, according to Horn?*
- *In terms of Relevance Theory: is it part of the coded meaning, an explicature or an implicature?*

Example 11
I met a man yesterday +> *Not my partner/friend/brother*

Example 12
We're going to get lunch +> *Do you want to join us for lunch?*

Example 13
It's cold in here +> *Can you close the windows for me?*

Example 14
There's no more milk in the fridge +> *Can you buy milk?*

Example 15
I broke my finger +> *I didn't break my thumb*

Example 16
They didn't have children, therefore they were happy +> *Their happiness was caused by them not having children*

Example 17
David felt too sick to go to school +> *David didn't go to school*

Example 18
All of William's kids are asleep +> *William has kids*

Example 19
It will be difficult to complete this assignment +> *It is possible to complete this assignment*

Example 20
Even Margret likes olives +> *It is exceptional that Margret likes olives*

See next pages for model answers.

Model answers

Example 1
A: Have you read the Harry Potter books?
B: I have seen a number of films. +> *I did not read the books*

This is an R-implicature: B doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, A can infer (that it is obvious) that B did not read the books. In other words, what B does not say explicitly (I did not read the books), *is the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Relation, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

Example 2
A: Have you read the Harry Potter books?
B: I have seen a number of films. +> *I haven't seen all the films*

This is a Q-implicature: B is as specific as possible by saying 'some' (B says as much as they can). Therefore, A can infer that B did not see all the films, otherwise B would have said so, because that would be more specific than 'a number of'. In other words, what B does not say (I have seen all the films) *is not the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the first submaxim of Quantity (it is a scalar implicature), so it makes sense that it is a Q-implicature.)

Example 3
A (interviewer): Did the US Government play any part in Jones's departure? Did they, for example, actively encourage him to leave?
B (government official): I would not try to steer you away from that conclusion. +> *Yes, they did*

This is an R-implicature: B doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, A can infer (that it is obvious) that the US Government played a part in Jones's departure. In other words, what B does not say explicitly (The US government played a part in Jones's departure), *is the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxims of Relation and Manner, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

Example 4
Opel Ampera, electrically powered, goes 500 km +> *The Opel Ampera can drive 500 km on its electric motor*

This is an R-implicature: The commercial doesn't say more than it must (or at least, that's what the viewer assumes). Therefore, the viewer can infer (that it is obvious) that the Opel Ampera can drive 500 km on its electric motor. In other words, what B does not say explicitly (The Opel Ampera can drive 500 km on its electric motor), *is the case*. **(Note: In this case, the makers of the commercial are uncooperative. Therefore, the implicature turns out to be false. But in a 'normal' situation, it would go as described.)**

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Relation, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

Example 5
This building is under 24h surveillance +> *Behave yourself/abide the law/don't do anything illegal*

This is an R-implicature: The sign doesn't say more than it must. Therefore, the viewers can infer (that it is obvious) that they should behave themselves. In other words, what the writer does not say explicitly (Behave yourself/abide the law/don't do anything illegal), *is the case.*

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Relation, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

Example 6
That cake is expensive but delicious +> *We are buying it*

This is an R-implicature: The speaker doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, the listener can infer (that it is obvious that) we are buying the cake. In other words, what the speaker does not say explicitly (we are buying it), *is the case.*

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Manner, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

Example 7
That cake is delicious but expensive +> *We are not buying it*

This is an R-implicature: The speaker doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, the listener can infer (that it is obvious) that we are not buying the cake. In other words, what the speaker does not say explicitly (We are not buying it), *is the case.* **(Note: Although the implicature contains a negation, this is not a negative inference. If it were a negative inference, the following would be the case: What the speaker does not say, is not the case. That logic does not apply to this example.)**

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Manner, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

Example 8
It's chilly outside +> *It is not freezing cold*

This is a Q-implicature: The speaker is as specific as possible by saying 'chilly' (they say as much as they can). Therefore, the hearer can infer that it is not freezing cold, otherwise the speaker would have said so, because that would be more specific than 'chilly'. In other words, what B does not say (It is freezing cold) *is not the case.*

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the first submaxim of Quantity (it is a scalar implicature), so it makes sense that it is a Q-implicature.)

Example 9
James is married to Sarah and has two kids +> *Sarah is the mother of the kids*

This is an R-implicature: The speaker doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, the hearer can infer (that it is obvious) that Sarah is the mother of the kids. In other words, what the speaker does not say explicitly (Sarah is the mother of the kids), *is the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Relation, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

Example 10
A: Do you want to go to the movies tonight?
B: I have a lot of homework. +> *I cannot go to the movies with you*

This is an R-implicature: B doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, A can infer (that it is obvious) that B cannot go to the movies with A. In other words, what the speaker does not say explicitly (I cannot go to the movies with you), *is the case*. (Similar to example 7, the implicature does contain a negation, but that does not make it a negative inference; see explanation example 7.)

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Relation, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

Example 11
I met a man yesterday +> *Not my partner/friend/brother*

This is a (generalized) conversational implicature, according to Grice/Horn. You can cancel the implicature by saying: I met a man yesterday, in fact, he is my partner/friend/brother/etc. This is a bit weird, because it would make more sense to immediately say that you met your partner/friend/brother/etc., but it is possible, for example if you want to make a joke about it.

This is a Q-implicature: The speaker is as specific as possible by saying 'a man' (the speaker says as much as they can). Therefore, the hearer can infer that the speaker did not meet their partner/friend/family member, otherwise B would have said so, because that would be more specific than 'a man'. In other words, what B does not say (I met my partner/a friend/a family member) *is not the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the first submaxim of Quantity, so it makes sense that it is a Q-implicature.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this is an explicature. 'A man' is ambiguous, it can refer to anyone. That is doesn't refer to a specific man (i.e. a partner, friend or brother) is something that you have to add to the utterance (an 'enrichment') to get a proposition with truth conditions: I met a man [that isn't my partner/friend/brother] yesterday.

(Check: In Grice's theory this is a generalized implicature, so it makes sense that it is an explicature.)

Example 12
We're going to get lunch +> *Do you want to join us for lunch?*

This is a (particularized) conversational implicature, according to Grice/Horn: the implicature is highly context-dependent. In different situations, the utterance 'We're going to get lunch' can have different implicatures, for example: 'Do you want us to get you something' or 'Let's finish our work later'.

This is an R-implicature: The speaker doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, the hearer can infer (that it is obvious) that the speaker wants them to join for lunch. In other words, what the speaker does not say explicitly (I'm inviting to you to join us for lunch), *is the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Relation, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this is also an implicature. It obviously is not coded meaning (it is not the semantic meaning of the sentence 'We're going to get lunch'). It is also not an explicature: It is not an 'enrichment' of the literal utterance (examples of explicatures would be: We [*speaker and someone else*] are going to get lunch [*now*]). Instead, it is an inference that is derived from the whole (fully understandable) utterance, based on the context.

(Check: In Grice's theory this is a particularized implicature, so it makes sense that it is an implicature according to RT as well.)

Example 13
It's cold in here +> *Can you close the windows for me?*

This is a (particularized) conversational implicature, according to Grice/Horn: The implicature is highly context-dependent. In different situations, the utterance 'It's cold in here' can have different implicatures, for example: 'Can you get me a blanket' or 'Can we go somewhere else'.

This is an R-implicature: The speaker doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, the hearer can infer (that it is obvious) that the speaker wants them to close the windows. In other words, what the speaker does not say explicitly (Can you close the windows for me?), *is the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Relation, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this is also an implicature. It obviously is not coded meaning (it is not the semantic meaning of the sentence 'It's cold in here'). It is also not an explicature: It is not an 'enrichment' of the literal utterance (examples of explicatures would be: It is [*present tense: now*] cold in here [*location where the conversation takes place*]). Instead, it is an inference that is derived from the whole (fully understandable) utterance, based on the context.

(Check: In Grice's theory this is a particularized implicature, so it makes sense that it is an implicature according to RT as well.)

Example 14
There's no more milk in the fridge +> *Can you buy milk?*

This is a (particularized) conversational implicature, according to Grice/Horn: The implicature is highly context-dependent. In different situations, the utterance 'There's no more milk in the fridge' can have

different implicatures, for example: 'You should take yoghurt for breakfast instead' or 'You cannot make pancakes right now'.

This is an R-implicature: The speaker doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, the hearer can infer (that it is obvious) that the speaker wants them to buy milk. In other words, what the speaker does not say explicitly (Can you buy milk?), *is the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Relation, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this is also an implicature. It obviously is not coded meaning (it is not the semantic meaning of the sentence 'There's no more milk in the fridge'). It is also not an explicature: it is not an 'enrichment' of the literal utterance (examples of explicatures would be: There is [*present tense: at this moment*] no more [*cow/goat/oat/etc.*] milk in the fridge [*in our kitchen*]). Instead, it is an inference that is derived from the whole (fully understandable) utterance, based on the context.

(Check: In Grice's theory this is a particularized implicature, so it makes sense that it is an implicature according to RT as well.)

Example 15
I broke my finger +> *I didn't break my thumb*

This is a (generalized) conversational implicature, according to Grice/Horn. You can cancel the implicature by saying: I broke my finger, in fact, I broke my thumb. This is a bit weird, because it would make more sense to immediately say that you broke your thumb, but it is possible, for example if someone asks you (specifically) if you broke a finger. (Did you break your finger? / Yeah, I broke my thumb.)

This is a Q-implicature: The speaker is as specific as possible by saying 'finger' (the speaker says as much as they can). Therefore, the hearer can infer that speaker did not break their thumb, otherwise the speaker would have said so, because that would be more specific than 'finger'. In other words, what the speaker does not say (I broke my thumb) *is not the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the first submaxim of Quantity, so it makes sense that it is a Q-implicature.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this is an explicature. 'A finger' is ambiguous, it can refer to any finger (index finger, middle finger, etc.), but probably not the thumb, because that one has a more specific name (that does not include the word 'finger'). That it doesn't refer to the thumb is something that you have to add to the utterance (an 'enrichment') to get a proposition with truth conditions: I broke a finger [not my thumb]. (Note: A more specific explicature would be to specify which finger you broke, for example: I broke *my index* finger.)

(Check: In Grice's theory this is a generalized implicature, so it makes sense that it is an explicature.)

Example 16

They didn't have children, therefore they were happy +> *Their happiness was caused by them not having children*

This is a conventional implicature, according to Grice/Horn. It is not part of 'What is said', because it is not truth-conditional. According to Grice, the only two truth conditions for this utterance would be 'they didn't have children' and 'they were happy'. The idea that there is a causal relation between the two, is not part of these truth-conditions (in other words, does not refer to something in reality). The implicature is not cancellable ('They didn't have children, therefore they were happy, but there is no relation between having kids and being happy' does not make sense). Therefore, it must be a conventional implicature.

(Q-/R-principle is only relevant for conversational implicatures.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this is part of the coded meaning: It simply is the semantic meaning of the words 'therefore' that there is a causal relation between two things.

(Check: In Grice's theory this is a conventional implicature, so it makes sense that it is coded meaning.)

Example 17
David felt too sick to go to school +> *David didn't go to school*

This is a conversational implicature, according to Grice/Horn. You can cancel the implicature by saying: David felt too sick to go to school, but he went anyway. It is quite a strong implicature and I would argue that it is not (highly) context-dependent: if someone feels too sick for something, it usually means they didn't do that something. Therefore I would say that it is a generalized conversational implicature (although I could understand why you could think that it is a particularized implicature).

This is an R-implicature: The speaker doesn't say more than they must. Therefore, the listener can infer (that it is obvious) that David didn't go to school. In other words, what the speaker does not say explicitly (David didn't go to school) *is the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the maxim of Relation, so it makes sense that it is an R-implicature.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this would probably be an explicature (although it is a tricky one). It is not part of the coded meaning, because 'felt too sick to' does not by definition (semantically) mean 'didn't'. It can be considered an 'enrichment' that you need to add to the literal utterance to get to a complete, fully understandable utterance. (You could however argue that it is an implicature; if you gave a good explanation, it would also accept that answer.)

Example 18
All of William's kids are asleep +> *William has kids*

This is part of 'What is said', according to Grice/Horn. The utterance 'All of Williams kids are asleep' has several truth conditions, among which: 'The kids are William's' (i.e. William has kids) and 'the kids are all asleep'. Since it is truth-conditional, this inference must be part of the semantic meaning (in part 2 we will learn that this is called a presupposition).

(Q-/R-principle is only relevant for conversational implicatures.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this is part of the coded meaning: It simply is the semantic meaning of the words 'All of William's kids' that the kids are William's (i.e. that William has kids).

(Check: In Grice's theory this is part of 'What is said', so it must be coded meaning.)

Example 19
It will be difficult to complete this assignment +> *It is possible to complete this assignment*

This is a (generalized) conversational implicature, according to Grice/Horn. You can cancel the implicature by saying: It will be difficult to complete this assignment, in fact, I think it will be impossible. The implicature is not context-dependent: 'difficult' generally means 'not impossible'. Therefore it is a generalized implicature, more specifically, a scalar implicature (scale: difficult – impossible).

This is a Q-implicature: The speaker is as specific as possible by saying 'difficult' (the speaker says as much as they can). Therefore, the hearer can infer that the speaker did not think it was impossible, otherwise they would have said so, because that would be more specific than 'difficult'. In other words, what the speaker does not say (It is impossible to complete this assignment) *is not the case*.

(Check: In Grice's theory this would be an implicature via the first submaxim of Quantity, so it makes sense that it is a Q-implicature.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this is an explicature. It is an enrichment that you can add to the literal utterance: It will be difficult [*but not impossible*] to complete this assignment. You need this explicature to determine the truth-conditions of the utterance (i.e. is the utterance true or not true if the assignment is impossible to complete).

(Check: In Grice's theory this is a generalized implicature, so it makes sense that it is an explicature.)

Example 20
Even Margret likes olives +> *It is exceptional that Margret likes olives*

This is a conventional implicature, according to Grice/Horn. It is not part of 'What is said', because it is not truth-conditional. According to Grice, the only truth condition for this utterance would be 'Margret likes olives'. The idea that this is exceptional, is not part of the truth-conditions (in other words, does not refer to something in reality). The implicature is not cancellable ('Even Margret likes olives, but there is nothing special about Margret liking olives' does not make sense). Therefore, it must be a conventional implicature.

(Q-/R-principle is only relevant for conversational implicatures.)

In terms of Relevance Theory, this is part of the coded meaning: It simply is the semantic meaning of the word 'even' that something is exceptional.

(Check: In Grice's theory this is a conventional implicature, so it makes sense that it is coded meaning.)