RELEVANCE THEORY

DRAFT TO BE SUBMITTED TO CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER ONE:

*EXERCISE 1.1:*

Exercise 1.1 encourages you to think about the kinds of expectations created by communicators and how we understand each other.

* The chapter discussed the impossibility of being taken seriously if you ask someone not to pay attention to something you express in a language they know. This follows because producing the utterance automatically creates the assumption that you have something in mind to communicate which you believe the addressee will be interested in. The example with the cough medicine showed that these expectations can arise in the same way for verbal and nonverbal communication. Imagine you walk into a public space, say a coffee bar, where several people are sitting around. Consider:

1. other things you might do to make clear to one or more people in the room that you are attempting to communicate something to them
2. how you might behave in order to avoid the possibility that someone will think you are trying to communicate with them

* The first example in the chapter was about how we create expectations of relevance, i.e. how we make clear implicitly that we are trying to communicate with someone. Sometimes we indicate explicitly that we are doing this, even when it is obvious, e.g. when it is clear what we are in the middle of a conversation with someone, we might say things to them such as:

*‘I’m talking to you’*

*‘This is me talking’*

Can you explain why we do this?

* The chapter distinguished things which are ‘directly’ communicated and things which are ‘indirectly’ communicated. However, it did not offer clear definitions of either kind of communication. Consider Ellen’s utterance in this exchange:

Billy: Do you know how often the bus to town goes by?

Ellen: They don’t run one on a Sunday

Make a list of things which you think Ellen is communicating here. Sort them into those you think she is ‘directly’ communicating and those you think she is ‘indirectly’ communicating. Suggest a way of defining the difference. (Don’t worry if the ideas you have seem quite loose for now. We’ll look at this in more detail later in the book).

* The chapter discussed a shop assistant making clear that an item was on a ‘3 for 2’ offer when I was buying it. In a similar situation, a shop assistant once said something different to me:

*‘You can have another one of these if there is one’*

Can you explain why he might have decided to say this rather than *‘they’re three for two just now’*?

* Pragmatic theories should explain why we sometimes misunderstand each other as well as how we often manage to arrive at an interpretation that’s fairly close to what communicators have in mind. Consider this example:

Billy: Would you like a piece of cake?

Ellen: I really shouldn’t, after such a big meal.

Billy: OK, I’ll save it for later then.

Can you explain how this might count as an example of a misunderstanding?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.2:*

Exercise 1.2 asks you to note questions you have at this stage about relevance theory in particular or about language and meaning in general.

* The main aim of this book is to help you to understand relevance theory more fully. This means discussing a wide range of topics, many of which are quite complicated. I hope that you will be aware of your understanding developing as you read the book and that you will become more confident to discuss some of the general and specific arguments and issues as you work through the book. To help you to think about this, and to be aware of how you are developing your understanding, make a list now of questions you have about how relevance theory works or about linguistic meaning in general. Later exercises will ask you to return to this list, adding to it where new questions emerge and noting the extent to which existing questions have been answered as you work through the book. Make a list now in any format which you think is useful and keep it in an accessible place so you can refer to it, add to it and edit it as you work through the book. Don’t wait to be prompted by exercises, though. Have a look at your list whenever you think it would be useful, or when you come across something in the book or elsewhere which you think is relevant to any of these questions. I don’t expect to have answered all of your questions by the end of the book, but I do hope to have answered some, partially answered others, and suggested the lines along which answers could be developed to others. I would be very happy to receive emails from readers asking questions, commenting on how well you think I have answered questions, or raising any other issues. If you have questions now or later, please get in touch: [billylinguist@gmail.com](mailto:billylinguist@gmail.com)

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*EXERCISE 1.3:*

Exercise 1.3 encourages you to explore your understanding of the terms *‘word’, ‘sentence’, ‘utterance’* and *‘proposition’*.

* We saw in the chapter that we use terms such as *word, sentence, utterance* and *proposition* loosely in everyday speech. We use some of these more often than others, of course. The difference between everyday and technical uses of *sentence* is easier to illustrate than the others. To begin with see if you can explain why I must be speaking loosely if I underline part of a student essay and write the following in the margin:

*’This is not a sentence’*

* Propose a technical definition for each of the four terms:

*word:* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*sentence:*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*utterance:* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*proposition:* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* There is a very useful exercise in Hurford, Heasley and Smith’s (2007, pp.23-24) coursebook which helps readers to develop their understanding of three of the four terms we are looking at here (if you have access to a copy, have a look at it now). Students do not agree about the answers to all of the questions there. In particular, it seems that the answer to each of these questions can be ‘yes’ or ‘no’ depending on how you understand them:

‘A sentence can be grammatical or not’

‘An utterance can be true or false’

‘A sentence can be true or false’

‘An utterance can be in a particular language’

Can you explain why there is more than one possible answer to each of these?

* Despite some of the difficulties in differentiating the terms, it might be possible to find properties of each of the four terms which can not be applied to any of the others. See if you can find some for each term:

*words* are: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*sentences* are: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*utterances* are: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*propositions* are: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Each of the following written utterances could be taken to represent an error in discussing one of the four terms we are considering here:

‘I heard a really funny sentence this morning’

‘He’s always using ungrammatical sentences’

‘I know what that word means cos I looked it up in the dictionary’

Critique each utterance, making clear what exactly you take to be the possible error that the writer has made.

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*EXERCISE 1.4:*

Exercise 1.4 encourages you to think about different kinds of linguistic and non-linguistic communication.

* In any situation, we can choose whether or not to produce an act of linguistic communication, an act of non-linguistic communication, or an act which includes linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. In the chapter, we considered a number of utterances which the speaker could have used to ask the person who had just come in to turn the light on. First, consider any possible ways in which you think she might have done this without using words. Now consider any non-linguistic behaviour she might have used alongside her words. Finally, consider different ways in which the person who has just come into the room might respond linguistically, non-linguistically, or with a combination of the two.

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*EXERCISE 1.5:*

Exercise 1.5 encourages you to think about the differences between codes and inference.

* We saw in the text that the distinction between *‘code’* and *‘inference’* is important in understanding linguistic communication. First, consider how reasonable it would be to describe each of the following activities as involving a code:

A thermostat causes a central heating system to begin operating when the room reaches a certain temperature.

A traffic light turns amber then red, causing car drivers to stop.

A man stands in the road waving his arms to cause cars to stop.

A piece of html markup code causes some characters on a web page to appear in bold.

A child holds up an empty food plate and shows it to her parents after they ask how she’s getting on with her meal.

Now consider Ellen’s utterance in the following exchange:

Billy: Will you be in tomorrow evening? I’m expecting a package.

Ellen: It’s my swimming evening.

How much of what Ellen communicates can we think of as *‘encoded’*? How much do you think is *‘inferred’*?

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*EXERCISE 1.6:*

Exercise 1.6 asks you to think about what kinds of things can encode meanings.

* We will be looking at a range of things which can have linguistically encoded meanings. Words are, perhaps an obvious example. Before doing this, think about what kinds of things you think can encode meanings and make a list of them. This might be difficult to tackle as an open question, and on your own. Discuss the question with someone else if you can. After noting your initial thoughts, consider each of these more specific questions and make a note of anything they suggest about what kinds of things can encode meanings:
  1. Think of cases where anyone you know (including yourself) has been unsure about the precise meaning of something. See if you can identify exactly what it is in each case which has a meaning that you are unsure about.
  2. Think of cases where you have noticed that someone else is using something with a different meaning from the meaning you would assume it has. Again, see if you can identify exactly what it is in each case which has a different meaning for different people.
  3. Think of any cases where there have been debates about exactly what something means. These could be formal or legal debates as well as less formal, more everyday arguments.
  4. For each case you thought of, consider whether it would seem right to say that the debate is about a linguistic or encoded meaning.

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*EXERCISE 1.7:*

Exercise 1.7 focuses on how to establish how much of the meaning of an utterance is linguistically encoded.

* If we think that there is a principled distinction between linguistically encoded and inferred meanings, it should be possible to come up with tests to help us decide whether a particular meaning is encoded or not. In practice, this is not always easy. An encoded meaning should be accessed every single time we encounter the expression which carries that meaning. If we can imagine contexts where a particular meaning is not accessed, then that would count as evidence that it was not an encoded meaning. Test the following hypotheses about encoded meanings by trying to imagine contexts in which the suggested meaning does not seem to be accessed.

The word *yes* encodes ‘I agree with you’

*That’s great* encodes ‘I am happy’

*You’re a genius* encodes that I think you are very clever

*Fantastic* encodes a positive attitude

Rising intonation encodes a question

Before deciding for sure that the hypotheses you’ve rejected are wrong, consider whether it is possible to develop an alternative explanation where the meaning is indeed encoded but there is some other reason which might explain why the meaning is rejected in a particular situation.

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*EXERCISE 1.8:*

Exercise 1.8 encourages you to think about what kinds of inferences we need to make in order to understand utterances.

* There are a number of different kinds of inference involved in working out what a speaker intends on a particular occasion. In each of the examples consider some of the inferences the hearer will need to make in understanding the utterance (in the cases with two utterances, focus on what B has said and how A will understand it):

1. This vacuum cleaner really sucks.
2. John thinks the underground is closed and there’s a night bus stop round the corner
3. My teacher says we can.
4. Looks like it’s too late.
5. Sarah thinks we’re all going to die.
6. A: Do you think Bob will like cheese?

B: He’s Welsh.

1. I think everyone’s here now.
2. My new flat is near the shops.
3. You’re not having dinner.
4. That’s probably not the brightest star in the galaxy.
5. A: What did Frieda say?

B: You look sad.

1. A: Ozzy Ozbourne’s coming to dinner.

B: I’ll bring a bat.

Now see if you can organise the inferences into types, e.g. there might be some inferences about the sense of an ambiguous word, others about the overall aim of the speaker, and so on.

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*EXERCISE 1.9:*

Exercise 1.9 asks you to look more closely at a number of examples and to consider what is involved in understanding them.

* For each of the following examples, identify TWO inferences which the hearer needs to make in order to understand them (again, focus on B’s utterance where there are two speakers):

1. I think you are being economical with the truth there.
2. Reading your essay is like talking to someone on the phone in a neighbourghood with patchy coverage
3. *(while playing cards to indicate that the dealer should deal the speaker another card)*

Hit me.

1. A: Did John tell you what he thought of the song I wrote.

B: It’s rubbish.

1. A: Would you like a piece of this cake?

B: Are there nuts in it?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.10:*

Exercise 1.10 encourages you to explore your understanding of the notion of relevance and the two principles of relevance.

* In each of the following examples, consider which of the two options would be most relevant in the given context and why (note that the answer might not be totally clear in every case):

1. A: What did you do at school this afternoon?

B: a. We did some maths and then the teacher read us a story.

b. First, we sat on the carpet at the front and the teacher spoke to us all about what we’d be doing for the rest of the day. Then she got us to sit at our tables and we got our maths books out. . .

1. *(to a bus conductor as the speaker gets on to a bus)*
2. One to the town centre please.
3. Can I have a ticket to the town centre please? My friend John is visiting today so I’m meeting him at the station and taking him to the shops before we go out for the evening.
4. A: Do you fancy a coffee?

B: a. I don’t drink coffee.

b. Beyoncé’s playing a gig in London next week.

* Now here’s something a bit more formal for you to try. Imagine the set of propositions you know includes the following:

(i) P

(ii) not Q

(iii) R & S

(iv) if T then V

Illustrate the three kinds of contextual effect discussed in the chapter by suggesting one new proposition which would be relevant by *strengthening* an existing assumption, one which would *contradict* an existing assumption, and one which would *contradict* an existing assumption. (This is not easy so don’t be surprised if you feel you have to say quite a lot to explain why each example counts).

* Now try an adapted version of the same exercise as you have just done. This time (i)-(iv) are actual propositions expressed in English which someone is entertaining and your task is to suggest an utterance which would be relevant by *strengthening* an existing assumption, one which would *contradict* an existing assumption, and one which would *contradict* an existing assumption:

1. It’s Thursday
2. There are no linguistics lectures today
3. Billy is going swimming and Ellen is working ion her essay
4. If Ellen stays at home, she can collect the package Billy is expecting

Did you find this task easier than the previous one or harder? Why?

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*EXERCISE 1.11:*

Exercise 1.11 asks you to explain the interpretation of a few examples in relevance-theoretic terms, based on the Presumption of Optimal Relevance.

* Suggest a relevance-theoretic explanation of the interpretation of the following utterances (where there is more than one utterance, focus on the final one in the exchange). Make reference to the presumption of optimal relevance and to the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic in your answers.

1. A: Got any plans for tonight?

B: Andy’s in town for the evening.

1. A: Billy and Ellen asked me if those biscuits are sweet or savoury.

B: They’re crackers.

1. That’s the worst meal I’ve ever had.
2. *(on a sign on a motorway)*

Delays possible.

*EXERCISE 1.12:*

Exercise 1.12 asks you to look at the list of questions you have come up with so far and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to each one.

* Exercise 1.2 asked you to make a list of questions you had about relevance theory in particular and about linguistic meaning in general. Have a look at the list now and consider whether you think you are in a better position to answer any of them now than you were before. Make a note of any ways in which your understanding has developed. If you feel that you are a little closer to an answer without actually having an answer, make a not of that too (e.g. you might feel that you know more about where to look for particular answers without actually knowing what the answers are).

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COMMENTS ON AND ANSWERS TO EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER ONE:

*EXERCISE 1.1:*

Exercise 1.1 encourages you to think about the kinds of expectations created by communicators and how we understand each other.

* The chapter discussed the impossibility of being taken seriously if you ask someone not to pay attention to something you express in a language they know. This follows because producing the utterance automatically creates the assumption that you have something in mind to communicate which you believe the addressee will be interested in. The example with the cough medicine showed that these expectations can arise in the same way for verbal and nonverbal communication. Imagine you walk into a public space, say a coffee bar, where several people are sitting around. Consider:

1. other things you might do to make clear to one or more people in the room that you are attempting to communicate something to them

**Possible answer:**

Here you might think about other kinds of linguistic or non-linguistic behaviour. Linguistically, you might say something more or less explicit, e.g. ‘I have something to say’. Non-linguistically, there are a wide range of options, including some kinds of relatively conventional behaviour such as clearing your throat ostentatiously. As we will see later in the book, the best way to make clear that you intend to communicate is to do something that it is hard to understand any other way (which is partly why linguistic stimuli work so well).

1. how you might behave in order to avoid the possibility that someone will think you are trying to communicate with them

**Possible answer:**

Here the challenge is only to do things which have an obvious explanation which has nothing to do with communication. If I see you focusing on fastening your jacket, for example, I will assume that you are absorbed in this and have no intentions directed at me.

* The first example in the chapter was about how we create expectations of relevance, i.e. how we make clear implicitly that we are trying to communicate with someone. Sometimes we indicate explicitly that we are doing this, even when it is obvious, e.g. when it is clear what we are in the middle of a conversation with someone, we might say things to them such as:

*‘I’m talking to you’*

*‘This is me talking’*

Can you explain why we do this?

**Possible answer:**

The most likely answer is that we are aiming to make our addressee think about things which follow from the fact that we are talking to them (rather than informing them of something they already know). If I am talking to you, for example, it follows that I have something in mind which I think you should pay attention to. We might produce utterances like this when we think someone is not paying appropriate attention to what we are saying.

* The chapter distinguished things which are ‘directly’ communicated and things which are ‘indirectly’ communicated. However, it did not offer clear definitions of either kind of communication. Consider Ellen’s utterance in this exchange:

Billy: Do you know how often the bus to town goes by?

Ellen: They don’t run one on a Sunday

Make a list of things which you think Ellen is communicating here. Sort them into those you think she is ‘directly’ communicating and those you think she is ‘indirectly’ communicating. Suggest a way of defining the difference. (Don’t worry if the ideas you have seem quite loose for now. We’ll look at this in more detail later in the book).

**Possible answer:**

The most likely proposition which Ellen is directly communicating is:

The local bus company does not run a bus to town on Sundays

Indirectly, she is likely to be communicating a range of things, from relatively strongly communicated propositions such as:

Billy was wrong to assume that the bus runs on Sundays

Billy can’t take the bus to town today

If Billy wants to go to town, he’ll need to find another way to get there

To more weaky communicated propositions such as:

Ellen is sorry Billy is inconvenienced.

The bus company does not run an ideal service

And so on

You may well have thought of others. At the same time, you might not agree that all of these are communicated (which reflects the fact that communication is a matter of degree, i.e. that we always give a certain amount of evidence for what we communicate rather than it always being clearly exactly which set of propositions we are intending to communicate).

* The chapter discussed a shop assistant making clear that an item was on a ‘3 for 2’ offer when I was buying it. In a similar situation, a shop assistant once said something different to me:

*‘You can have another one of these if there is one’*

Can you explain why he might have decided to say this rather than *‘they’re three for two just now’*?

**Possible answer:**

There is more than one risk associated with the simpler utterance. First, it might see a bit brusque and implicate negative assumptions such as that I am unobservant not to have noticed the ‘3 for 2’ offer, that I need the assistant to help me notice things, and so on. This would argue for a different utterance such as the one I reported here. Another risk specific to this instance is that there might not be a third item in stock. The assistant must have been aware of this possibility and not have wanted to irritate me by sending me back to the shelves to find that I can’t take up the offer. This less definite utterance also implicates more deference towards me since the speaker does not seem confident about all of the facts.

* Pragmatic theories should explain why we sometimes misunderstand each other as well as how we often manage to arrive at an interpretation that’s fairly close to what communicators have in mind. Consider this example:

Billy: Would you like a piece of cake?

Ellen: I really shouldn’t, after such a big meal.

Billy: OK, I’ll save it for later then.

Can you explain how this might count as an example of a misunderstanding?

**Possible answer:**

Ellen has not said that she does not want a piece of cake or that she will not eat a piece. She has simply indicated that there are reasons why she shouldn’t have piece, given that she has just eaten a big meal. She might well be about to decide that she will have a piece anyway (if she wasn’t going to have a piece, she could have said ‘no thanks’ or ‘not after that big meal, thanks’). Billy has identified one possible implicature of Ellen’s utterance (that she does not want a piece of cake) and ac ted as if the matter was resolved. A more appropriate response from Billy might have been to as ‘are you sure?’ or maybe to suggest that she try a little piece.

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*EXERCISE 1.2:*

Exercise 1.2 asks you to note questions you have at this stage about relevance theory in particular or about language and meaning in general.

* The main aim of this book is to help you to understand relevance theory more fully. This means discussing a wide range of topics, many of which are quite complicated. I hope that you will be aware of your understanding developing as you read the book and that you will become more confident to discuss some of the general and specific arguments and issues as you work through the book. To help you to think about this, and to be aware of how you are developing your understanding, make a list now of questions you have about how relevance theory works or about linguistic meaning in general. Later exercises will ask you to return to this list, adding to it where new questions emerge and noting the extent to which existing questions have been answered as you work through the book. Make a list now in any format which you think is useful and keep it in an accessible place so you can refer to it, add to it and edit it as you work through the book. Don’t wait to be prompted by exercises, though. Have a look at your list whenever you think it would be useful, or when you come across something in the book or elsewhere which you think is relevant to any of these questions. I don’t expect to have answered all of your questions by the end of the book, but I do hope to have answered some, partially answered others, and suggested the lines along which answers could be developed to others. I would be very happy to receive emails from readers asking questions, commenting on how well you think I have answered questions, or raising any other issues. If you have questions now or later, please get in touch: [billylinguist@gmail.com](mailto:billylinguist@gmail.com)

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*EXERCISE 1.3:*

Exercise 1.3 encourages you to explore your understanding of the terms *‘word’, ‘sentence’, ‘utterance’* and *‘proposition’*.

* We saw in the chapter that we use terms such as *word, sentence, utterance* and *proposition* loosely in everyday speech. We use some of these more often than others, of course. The difference between everyday and technical uses of *sentence* is easier to illustrate than the others. To begin with, see if you can explain why I must be speaking loosely if I underline part of a student essay and write the following in the margin:

*’This is not a sentence’*

**Possible answer:**

On the technical definition, nothing the student could have written would have been a sentence. The best the student can hope of is to produce a sequence of typographical symbols which can be understood as representing a sentence. Of course, I can defend myself by saying that I am not using the term technically but in the everyday sense where some sequences of typographical symbols count as ‘sentences’ in writing.

* Propose a technical definition for each of the four terms:

*word:* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*sentence:*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*utterance:* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*proposition:* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Possible answers:**

There are several different ways in which you might define these terms.

I’d expect the definition of *word* to indicate that this is an abstract or psychological entity understood as part of a linguistic system. It will consist of one or more morphemes and to contribute to a phrase which might consist of just this word or or more words in combination with this one.

The definition of *sentence* should also make clear that it is an abstract or psychological entity understood as a grammatical sequence consisting of one or more phrases. (Actually *‘sentence’* is quite tricky since some linguists will think that we should differentiate it from the notion of a *‘clause’* while others will treat these two terms as synonymous. On the latter approach, a grammatical sequence may consist of less than a clause (a noun phrase can be seen as grammatical, for example) or containing one or more clauses.

The definition of *utterance* should reflect the fact that this is a concrete, physical entity which exists in a particular time and space. It will be understood as representing linguistic phenomena and it may be written, spoken or signed. A key aspect of the difference between *sentences* and *utterances* is that utterances take place in a particular situation. *Utterances* are interpreted in particular situations and in the light of particular contextual assumptions. *Sentences* are not tied to a particular time or space so their meaning is fixed and not contextual.

The definition of *proposition* should reflect the notion that these are abstract entities. Propositions represent states of affairs and so they can be true or false. One thing we need to do when interpreting utterances is to decide which propositions are being expressed. On the relevance-theoretic approach, sentences do not express propositions but utterances do.

* There is a very useful exercise in Hurford, Heasley and Smith’s (2007) coursebook which helps readers to develop their understanding of three of the four terms we are looking at here (if you have access to a copy, have a look at it now). Students do not agree about the answers to all of the questions there. In particular, it seems that the answer to each of the following questions can be ‘yes’ or ‘no’ depending on how you understand them:

‘A sentence can be grammatical or not’

‘An utterance can be true or false’

‘A sentence can be true or false’

An utterance can be in a particular language’

Can you explain why there is more than one possible answer to each of these?

**Possible answers:**

Given what we said in the previous answer, sentences are by definition grammatical. If a sequence is not grammatical, then it is not a sentence. The notion of an ‘ungrammatical sentence’ is a contradiction in terms. If we understand the term *sentence* more loosely, to refer to a sequence of linguistic forms, then we can say that linguistic strings can be grammatical or not.

To say that an utterance can be true or false must mean that one or more of the propositions expressed by that utterance can be true or false. The utterance itself is an act of producing sounds, signs or written symbols intended to be taken as representing linguistic forms and to provide evidence for some propositions.

A sentence is as an abstract or psychological phenomenon. It linguistically encoded meaning is schematic and not enough to express a proposition. Therefore it can not be true or false. The sentence *It’s here*, for example, could express any of a wide range of propositions, each one of which could be true or false. Even sentences which are interpretable as expressing one general proposition (e.g. *whales are mammals*) is context-dependent (we could be making a claim about the world as we know it today or about or about an alternative world, e.g. in a science fiction book or film).

An utterance can be in a particular dialect or not, but it is less clear what we mean when we refer to the notion of a ‘language’. If we adapt this to say that an utterance can be in an accent or in a dialect, this is more plausible, but there is still an issue about exactly what counts as falling within a particular accent or dialect and many utterances will have features associated with more than one accent or dialect.

Note: This exercise uses Hurford, Heasley and Smith’s exercise as a starting point but should not be understood as critical of that exercise. The point is that these are complicated issues and that there is more than one way of understanding these statements.

* Despite some of the difficulties in differentiating the terms, it might be possible to find properties of each of the four terms which can not be applied to any of the others. See if you can find some for each term:

*words* are: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*sentences* are: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*utterances* are: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*propositions* are: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Possible answers:**

Based on the answers above, we might expect the terms you have suggested to include some of the following:

*words* are: abstract, psychological, linguistic, . . .

*sentences* are: abstract, psychological, linguistic, . . .

*utterances* are: physical, concrete, associated with a particular time and place, produced with the intention of performing an act of linguistic communication. . .

*propositions* are: abstract, philosophical, representational, capable of being true or false, . . .

* Each of the following written utterances could be taken to represent an error in discussing one of the four terms we are considering here:

‘I heard a really funny sentence this morning’

‘He’s always using ungrammatical sentences’

‘I know what that word means cos I looked it up in the dictionary’

Critique each utterance, making clear what exactly you take to be the possible error that the writer has made.

**Possible answers:**

You can’t ever hear (or read) a sentence. You must mean that you heard an interesting utterance today.

Sentences are grammatical by definition. You must mean that he produces utterances which do not correspond to grammatical strings (it’s possible, though, that you mean that he is always producing utterances which do not fit your idea of what is acceptable in your language variety)

Dictionaries can not be relied on to provide authoritative ‘facts’ about meanings. Rather, they attempt to describe meanings which speakers associate with linguistic expressions at a particular time. As language is always changing, dictionaries are always out of date to some extent.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.4:*

Exercise 1.4 encourages you to think about different kinds of linguistic and non-linguistic communication.

* In any situation, we can choose whether or not to produce an act of linguistic communication, an act of non-linguistic communication, or an act which includes linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. In the chapter, we considered a number of utterances which the speaker could have used to ask the person who had just come in to turn the light on. First, consider any possible ways in which you think she might have done this without using words. Now consider any non-linguistic behaviour she might have used alongside her words. Finally, consider different ways in which the person who has just come into the room might respond linguistically, non-linguistically, or with a combination of the two.

**Possible answers:**

There are, of course, a number of possibilities here. The person who is reading needs to produce salient behaviour which can only be understood as an attempt to communicate. She might, for example, crane her neck ostentatiously over what she is reading, squeezing up her eyes, or maybe even produce sounds reflecting significant effort in trying to focus. She might point to the light or the light switch. And so on.

There are also many ways in which the addresse of this request might respond. Possible utterances include:

‘Do you want the light on?’

‘Is it too dark for you here?’

‘I’ll put the lights on, shall I?’

Non-linguistically, she might, of course, just put the light on. She might also produce various kinds of non-linguistic signals of obedience, including ironic behavious such as an ostentatious bow or curtsey. There are a number of mixed mode options too. She might put the light on and say something like:

‘Is that better?’

Or point t the light or light switch and say:

‘Shall I?’

And so on.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.5:*

Exercise 1.5 encourages you to think about the differences between codes and inference.

* We saw in the text that the distinction between *‘code’* and *‘inference’* is important in understanding linguistic communication. First, consider how reasonable it would be to describe each of the following activities as involving a code:

A thermostat causes a central heating system to begin operating when the room reaches a certain temperature.

A traffic light turns amber then red, causing car drivers to stop.

A man stands in the road waving his arms to cause cars to stop.

A piece of html markup code causes some characters on a web page to appear in bold.

A child holds up an empty food plate and shows it to her parents after they ask how she’s getting on with her meal.

**Possible answers:**

The thermostat’s behaviour can be understood as coded inasmuch as the same event always leads to the some effect. However, the fact that this can be understood purely in terms of cause and effect means that it only counts as ‘communication’ in a very broad sense. If we are interested specifically in coded communication, then this would not count.

The traffic light itself implements a kind of coded communication (‘red’ means ‘stop’ and so on). Strictly speaking, though, drivers still need to make inferences to understand it. We can see this from the fact that drivers do not always ‘obey’ the traffic lights. This may be because the driver chooses to ignore the light. In some cases, this may be because the driver has decided that the light must have malfunctioned. In the former case, the coded ‘message’ is communicated as usual but the driver decides to ignore it. In the latter case, it is less clear how we should account for this.

The man waving his arms is clearly intending to communicate but arm-waving does not encode a request to stop (we can see this because there are situations where arm-waving would not communicate this). So this counts as a case of inferential communication.

The html markup is similar to the thermostat. The browser’s software is designed in such a way that particular digital information leads to particular results. Again, though, we would only say that this counts as communication (between one computer or piece of software and another) in a very broad sense.

Like the arm-waving, there is no code linking the showing of an empty plate with any particular meaning. In another case, the same behaviour could be intended to communicate that a lost plate has been found, that it has been cleaned properly, and so on. This, then, is a case of inferential communication.

Now consider Ellen’s utterance in the following exchange:

Billy: Will you be in tomorrow evening? I’m expecting a package.

Ellen: It’s my swimming evening.

How much of what Ellen communicates can we think of as *‘encoded’*? How much do you think is *‘inferred’*?

**Possible answer:**

The linguistically encoded meaning of Ellen’s utterance is extremely vague. We might characterise it along lines such as:

‘whatever *it* refers to is the ‘swimming evening’ (whatever that is) of whoever *my* refers to’

Everything else which Billy takes Ellen to communicate is inferred. You might have suggested very specific inferences such as:

‘*it* refers to *‘tomorrow evening’*

‘*my* refers to Ellen’

Or more general propositions such as the one recovered by developing the propositional content of her utterance, e.g.:

‘Ellen is saying that the evening after this one is the evening of the week on which she regularly goes swimming’

Finally, you might have suggested some of the impicatures of her utterance, e.g.:

‘Ellen will not be in tomorrow evening’

‘Ellen cannot accept the package tomorrow evening’

‘Billy will have to make some other kind of arrangement’

And so on.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.6:*

Exercise 1.6 asks you to think about what kinds of things can encode meanings.

* We will be looking at a range of things which can have linguistically encoded meanings. Words are, perhaps an obvious example. Before doing this, think about what kinds of things you think can encode meanings and make a list of them. This might be difficult to tackle as an open question, and on your own. Discuss the question with someone else if you can. After noting your initial thoughts, consider each of these more specific questions and make a note of anything they suggest about what kinds of things can encode meanings:
  1. Think of cases where anyone you know (including yourself) has been unsure about the precise meaning of something. See if you can identify exactly what it is in each case which has a meaning that you are unsure about.
  2. Think of cases where you have noticed that someone else is using something with a different meaning from the meaning you would assume it has. Again, see if you can identify exactly what it is in each case which has a different meaning for different people.
  3. Think of any cases where there have been debates about exactly what something means. These could be formal or legal debates as well as less formal, more everyday arguments.
  4. For each case you thought of, consider whether it would seem right to say that the debate is about a linguistically encoded meaning.

**Possible answers:**

Of course, these are open questions and so I cannot make any strong assumptions about how you might have answered. Here are suggestions of the kinds of things which have occurred to me when thinking about this.

1. Here you might have thought of words with vague or debatable meanings, e.g. what exactly does it mean to say that someone is *edgy*? Or *lugubrious*? This could be to do with shades of meaning or to do with not being sure exactly what a term means. I was unsure about *lugubrious* the first time I heard it, for example. A friend of mine told me that she used the word *lacunae* incorrectly and felt silly when the person she was talking to pointed this out.
2. Again there are many possibilities. This could arise because someone is unaware of a new meaning. The word *gay* used to mean ‘bright’ or ‘colourful’. It can still be used with this sense but it can also mean homosexual and is now often used to mean something like ‘unfashionable’ or ‘not cool’. The word ‘long’ is now a generally negative adjective for many speakers and not necessarily to do with length. There may also be misunderstandings based on matters of degree. One person might judge that someone else as *‘blind drunk’* while another would describe them as *‘tipsy’*. And so on.
3. The most likely cases for me here are public utterances, e.g. in advertisements or artworks in various media.

A recent example involved a British politician, Kenneth Clarke, who responded in a radio interview to the statement that ‘Rape is rape’ by stating ‘No it’s not’ and going on to suggest that some rapes were ‘more serious’ than others (see report at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/justice-secretary-ken-clarke-sorry-for-rape-controversy-2286631.html>)

Another example involved the term *gay* which we mentioned above. The radio 1 DJ Chris Moyles was accused of making a homophobic remark when he said he did not want a particular ringtone on his phone, saying ‘I don’t want that one. It’s gay’. (See discussion of this and similar cases at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/jun/07/bbc.gayrights>)

1. Most of the cases I thought of for (i)-(ii) were about linguistic meanings. My first example in (iii) is about the speaker’s intentions and therefore what people might infer based on them. Discussion of the second example in (iii) will need to consider both the meaning of the term and Chris Moyles’s intentions when producing this utterance.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.7:*

Exercise 1.7 focuses on how we can try to establish how much of the meaning of an utterance is linguistically encoded.

* If we think that there is a principled distinction between linguistically encoded and inferred meanings, it should be possible to come up with tests to help us decide whether a particular meaning is encoded or not. In practice, this is not always easy. An encoded meaning should be accessed every single time we encounter the expression which carries that meaning. If we can imagine contexts where a particular meaning is not accessed, then that would count as evidence that it was not an encoded meaning. Test the following hypotheses about encoded meanings by trying to imagine contexts in which the suggested meaning does not seem to be accessed.

The word *yes* encodes ‘I agree with you’

*That’s great* encodes ‘I am happy’

*You’re a genius* encodes that I think you are very clever

*Fantastic* encodes a positive attitude

Rising intonation encodes a question

Before deciding for sure that the hypotheses you’ve rejected are wrong, consider whether it is possible to develop an alternative explanation where the meaning is indeed encoded but there is some other reason which might explain why the meaning is rejected in a particular situation.

**Possible answers:**

There are a range of possibilities here and your discussion may well be quite open-ended. Things you might have considered include:

That *‘yes’* can sometimes be uttered to indicate that the speaker is considering something, or encouraging the speaker to carry on talking.

That *‘that’s great’* can be uttered by someone who feels very negatively towards something.

That *‘you’re a genius’* can be uttered when the addressee has done something considered far from clever.

That the word *‘fantastic’* has more than one sense and a one-word utterance of this word might be used to ask whether someone else considers that something is *‘fantastic’.*

That rising intonation is used in many contexts, including when the speaker is making a statement or telling someone a story.

For some of these, you might decide that the suggestion about encoded meaning is right but that there is also another explanation. For example, you might argue that an ironic utterance of *‘you’re a genius’* embeds the encoded meaning under an indication that the speaker is expressing an attitude to the idea that you’re a genius. (We will discuss irony more fully in chapter 10 below).

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.8:*

Exercise 1.8 encourages you to think about what kinds of inferences we need to make in order to understand utterances.

* There are a number of different kinds of inference involved in working out what a speaker intends on a particular occasion. In each of the examples consider some of the inferences the hearer will need to make in understanding the utterance (in the cases with two utterances, focus on what B has said and how A will understand it):

1. This vacuum cleaner really sucks.
2. John thinks the underground is closed and there’s a night bus stop round the corner
3. My teacher says we can.
4. Looks like it’s too late.
5. Sarah thinks we’re all going to die.
6. A: Do you think Bob will like cheese?

B: He’s Welsh.

1. I think everyone’s here now.
2. My new flat is near the shops.
3. You’re not having dinner.
4. That’s probably not the brightest star in the galaxy.
5. A: What did Frieda say?

B: You look sad.

1. A: Ozzy Ozbourne’s coming to dinner.

B: I’ll bring a bat.

Now see if you can organise the inferences into types, e.g. there might be some inferences about the sense of an ambiguous word, others about the overall aim of the speaker, and so on.

**Possible answers:**

There are too many inferences involved in these to mention them all here. To give you an idea of the kinds of answers I was imagining, here are some things you might have said about example (i):

* You need to infer what is the referent of *‘this vacuum cleaner’*
* You need to decide what sense of *‘sucks’* is intended (e.g. ‘brings in air’ or ‘is thought of negatively’)
* You need to decide what exactly *‘really’* means (e.g. does it mean that it’s true that it sucks or that it sucks very strongly?)
* You need to infer things that follow from the previous inferences, e.g. that the speaker is happy with the vacuum cleaner, or not happy with it, and so on

There are a number of ways in which you might sort the inferences. One is to do with whether they are about what proposition has been expressed or about what follows from that proposition. The inference about the referent of *‘this vacuum cleaner’* is about what proposition has been expressed. The inference about the happiness (or unhappiness) of the speaker is about what follows from the speaker having expressed that proposition.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.9:*

Exercise 1.9 asks you to look more closely at a number of examples and to consider what is involved in understanding them.

* For each of the following examples, identify TWO inferences which the hearer needs to make in order to understand them (again, focus on B’s utterance where there are two speakers):

1. I think you are being economical with the truth there.
2. Reading your essay is like talking to someone on the phone in a neighbourhood with patchy coverage
3. *(while playing cards to indicate that the dealer should deal the speaker another card)*

Hit me.

1. A: Did John tell you what he thought of the song I wrote.

B: It’s rubbish.

1. A: Would you like a piece of this cake?

B: Are there nuts in it?

**Possible answers:**

Again, there are many possibilities here. They cover a similar range of possibilities to those in exercise 1.8, including inferences about what *‘economical with the truth’* means (is it a conventional way of saying someone is lying?), what the speaker implies by asking about the possible presence of nuts, and so on.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.10:*

Exercise 1.10 encourages you to explore your understanding of the notion of relevance and the two principles of relevance.

* In each of the following examples, consider which of the two options would be most relevant in the given context and why (note that the answer might not be totally clear in every case):

1. A: What did you do at school this afternoon?

B: a. We did some maths and then the teacher read us a story.

b. First, we sat on the carpet at the front and the teacher spoke to us all about what we’d be doing for the rest of the day. Then she got us to sit at our tables and we got our maths books out. . .

1. *(to a bus conductor as the speaker gets on to a bus)*
2. One to the town centre please.
3. Can I have a ticket to the town centre please? My friend John is visiting today so I’m meeting him at the station and taking him to the shops before we go out for the evening.
4. A: Do you fancy a coffee?

B: a. I don’t drink coffee.

b. Beyoncé’s playing a gig in London next week.

**Possible answers:**

In most contexts, the (a) examples will seem more relevant. The second option in (i) and (ii) probably seems to give too much information so that the hearer has to process material which does not contribute to the overall interpretation. In (iii), the second option does not obviously help A to decide whether or not B would like some coffee. In relevance-theoretic terms, this is about processing effort being used but not contributing to the derivation of cognitive effects.

* Now here’s something a bit more formal for you to try. Imagine the set of propositions you know includes the following:

(i) P

(ii) not Q

(iii) R & S

(iv) if T then V

Illustrate the three kinds of contextual effect discussed in the chapter by suggesting one new proposition which would be relevant by *strengthening* an existing assumption, one which would *contradict* an existing assumption, and one which would lead to a new *contextual implication*. (This is not easy so don’t be surprised if you feel you have to say quite a lot to explain why each example counts).

**Possible answers:**

The hardest option here is to illustrate strengthening. You might imagine that someone comes across the proposition:

P & R

This follows deductively from the propositions above but is presumably more strongly evidence with direct evidence than when it is deduced. (Note that this is not strictly correct in terms of formal logic since the propositions above enable the derivation of ‘P & R’ so it is already fully evidenced).

A contradiction follows from any proposition which contradicts any of the assumptions above or an assumptions which follows from them. Here are two possibilites, with the third one contradicting a conclusion derivable from, rather than expressed by, these propositions:

not P

Q

not (P & R)

For *contextual implication*, you need to suggest a proposition which would combine with above set to enable the derivation of something new. Here is an example:

if P then W

From this, we can derive the new proposition:

W

* Now try an adapted version of the same exercise as you have just done. This time (i)-(iv) are actual propositions expressed in English which someone is entertaining and your task is to suggest an utterance which would be relevant by *strengthening* an existing assumption, one which would *contradict* an existing assumption, and one which would *contradict* an existing assumption:

1. It’s Thursday
2. There are no linguistics lectures today
3. Billy is going swimming and Ellen is working on her essay
4. If Ellen stays at home, she can collect the package Billy is expecting

Did you find this task easier than the previous one or harder? Why?

**Possible answers:**

Here are translations of the ‘propositional variables in the previous answers:

(i) It’s Thursday and Billy is going swimming

(ii) It’s not Thursday

(iii) If it’s Thursday then there’s a party at Jill’s house.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.11:*

Exercise 1.11 asks you to explain the interpretation of a few examples in relevance-theoretic terms, based on the presumption of optimal relevance.

* Suggest a relevance-theoretic explanation of the interpretation of the following utterances (where there is more than one utterance, focus on the final one in the exchange). Make reference to the presumption of optimal relevance and to the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic in your answers.

1. A: Got any plans for tonight?

B: Andy’s in town for the evening.

1. A: Billy and Ellen asked me if those biscuits are sweet or savoury.

B: They’re crackers.

1. That’s the worst meal I’ve ever had.
2. (*on a sign on a motorway)*

Delays possible.

**Possible answers:**

These are challenging questions. In each case, you need to assume that the hearer is presupposing that the utterance gives rise to enough effects to justify the effort involved in processing it. As with previous questions, you could say quite a lot to explain each answer. Here are the beginnings of an answer for each one:

(i) B’s utterance would not be consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance unless it gave rise to enough effects to justify the effort involved in processing it. If A can see a way in which Andy’s presence in town helps to answer the question, that would be consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance. A is likely, then, to assume that B is saying she will be doing something with Andy tonight.

(ii) B’s utterance would be consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance if it answered the question by indicating that these biscuits are of the type known as ‘crackers’ and therefore savoury, or if it indicated the Billy and Ellen were ‘crackers’ (‘foolish’) if they asked this question. In most contexts, the former is more likely. If A sees that both are possible but does not know how to decide between them, B’s utterance will not be relevant and A will have to ask B to explain what she intended more fully.

(iii) It is unlikely that the hearer of this utterance will decide that the speaker has assessed every single meal she has ever consumed and has made a systematic comparison of them. She is likely, then. To decide that the speaker wants to communicate that this was a terrible meal, much worse than she expected, and so on, without assuming that it is literally the worst she has ever experienced. (We will discuss examples like this in more detail in chapter 10).

(iv) Delays are always possible, of course. The sign can not be indicating simply that delays are possible. Anyone who sees the sign, then, will infer that the sign refers to delays caused by a particular issue affecting that stretch of road at the current time and probably that delays are more likely than usual. (Thanks to Kersti Börjars for this example).

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 1.12:*

Exercise 1.12 asks you to look at the list of questions you have come up with so far and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to each one.

* Exercise 1.2 asked you to make a list of questions you had about relevance theory in particular and about linguistic meaning in general. Have a look at the list now and consider whether you think you are in a better position to answer any of them now than you were before. Make a note of any ways in which your understanding has developed. If you feel that you are a little closer to an answer without actually having an answer, make a not of that too (e.g. you might feel that you know more about where to look for particular answers without actually knowing what the answers are).

RELEVANCE THEORY

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER TWO:

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 2.1:*

Exercise 2.1 encourages you to think about the distinction between natural and non-natural meaning

* Consider whether each of the following examples should count as an example of Gricean ‘natural’ or ‘non-natural’ meaning. Give reasons for each answer. In some cases, you might think that there are elements of natural and non-natural meaning in the same act of communication. Indicate where you think this is so and, again, explain why:

1. Your flatmate’s shoes by the front door indicating to you that she has come home from work.
2. Whistling loudly to your friend on a crowded beach so that they can find you.
3. A cyclist screaming as a car almost drives into her.
4. A letter to your local library asking not to be fined for returning a book after its due date.
5. Holding up a book and waving it at someone who lost it earlier and has been frantically searching for it.

* Consider Grice’s example of the child allowing her paleness to be noticed by her mother. What would the child have to do differently for this to count as an example of non-natural rather than natural meaning?
* Discuss the problematic example with the photograph. Make sure you are clear on exactly why it is problematic and consider how we might make things clearer, either by thinking of the example in a different way or by refining the definitions of natural and non-natural meaning.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 2.2:*

Exercise 2.2 asks you to consider how a range of examples might be taken to support Grice’s suggestion that notions such as informativeness, truthfulness and relevance play a role in how we understand utterances

* B’s utterance in each of the following examples could be seen as faulty with regard to how closely they follow Gricean assumptions about informativeness, truthfulness or relevance, i.e. they seem to fail to be appropriately informative, truthful or relevant:

1. A: Have you had breakfast?

B: I got up at 6 o’clock like I do every morning and had my usual meal. I started with a glass of orange juice and then had a cup of strong coffee and a bowl of cereal. Then I had an apple before I finished getting ready for work.

1. A: What did you do last night after you got home from work?

B: Stuff.

1. A: Do you enjoy working with Fred?

B: He’s a dinosaur.

1. A: Why do you think this director’s films are always so gloomy?

B: When she was young, she was always the last to be picked for sports. And when they played star wars, they always made her be Jarjar Binks.

1. A: Any chance you could help me dig the garden this weekend?

B: I think salted caramels are my favourites sweet.

For each example:

1. describe the ways in which the utterance seems to depart from the expectation that it will be informative, truthful and relevant
2. suggest possible ‘implicatures’ which the hearer might derive in order to preserve the assumption that these maxims are being observed

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 2.3:*

Exercise 2.3 encourages you to explore Grice’s ideas in more detail.

* Attempt an explanation of how A might understand B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges:

1. A: The train I take to work has just been cancelled.

B: My car’s still out of action.

1. A: I bought you a ticket for that concert on Saturday.

B: But I hate classical music!

1. A: Do you think the new Zadie Smith book’s any good?

B: John’s been reading it.

1. A: How did you manage to break the toaster?

B: I just pressed the ‘cancel’ switch and it cut out.

1. A: Do you think you could look after my dogs for me while I’m away?

B: I will, although I can’t say I’ll enjoy it.

In each case, your account should say ‘what is said’. ‘what is implicated’ and how the hearer works out what is implicated. Make a note of any problems you have in applying Grice’s ideas and of any problems you think these examples raise for Grice’s approach.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 2.4:*

Exercise 2.4 encourages you to explore some of Wilson and Sperber’s proposals about how Grice’s approach should be modified

* B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges illustrates at least one problem for Grice’s theory of conversation:

1. A: I reckon John should represent us at the union meeting on Saturday.

B: Well, he’s definitely got the guts for it.

1. A: Does that new student talk in class?

B: Too much, if you ask me.

1. A: You really do far too much for everyone, and now they want you to take on more at work.

B: Life!

1. A: Did you see how John lost it when they told him he’d lost his job? He screamed the place down.

B: You could say he’s unhappy.

See if you can identify the nature of the problem and how Wilson and Sperber might propose to solve it.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 2.5:*

Exercise 2.5 asks you to consider whether the communicative principle of relevance really makes redundant all of the maxims which are not independently problematic.

* A’s likely interpretation of B’s utterance in each of the examples in exercise 2.3 (repeated here below) could be explained with reference to Grice’s maxims:

1. A: The train I take to work has just been cancelled.

B: My car’s still out of action.

1. A: I can’t believe John. He just slammed the phone down on me in the middle of a conversation.

B: You could say that was slightly rude.

1. A: I bought you a ticket for that concert on Saturday.

B: But I hate classical music!

1. A: Do you think the new Zadie Smith book’s any good?

B: John’s been reading it.

1. A: Do you think you could look after my dogs for me while I’m away?

B: I will, although I can’t say I’ll enjoy it.

For each one, consider how you could explain the interpretation with reference to the Communicative Principle of Relevance. Make a note of any problems you come across in trying to do this.

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*EXERCISE 2.6:*

Exercise 2.6 asks you to look at a new range of examples and compare a relevance-theoretic approach with a Gricean one.

* Consider how A is likely to interpret B’s utterance in each of the following examples:

1. A: I thought you might fancy going for a run along the beach while you’re here.

B: I haven’t done any running for over a year.

1. A: John says you’re fed up with having to work such a long shift today?

B: Give me a break.

1. A: Do you think I was wrong to ask John to help at the party?

B: Well, it’s not the best idea you’ve ever had.

1. A: Do you think I was wrong to ask John to help at the party?

B: Not at all! That’s the best idea you’ve ever had!

1. A: They’re saying John didn’t show up for work today.

B: How could they tell?

For each one, propose both a Gricean and a relevance-theoretic account. Compare the two approaches and consider how we might compare them and decide which offers the best explanation.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 2.7:*

Exercise 2.7 encourages you to explore some of the ideas of Keenan and of the ‘Neo-Gricean’ approaches mentioned here.

* Consider Keenan’s suggestion that the Gricean maxim of quantity is not universal, based on the conversational behaviour of Malagasay speakers. First, make sure that you understand why she has made this claim and why other pragmatists are not convinced that her evidence does cast doubt on the universality of Grice’s maxims. What kinds of evidence would be more problematic for Grice’s approach?
* Speakers often suggest that different groups can vary in terms of conversational practice. For example, some groups of speakers indulge in ‘banter’ (ironic utterances which seem rude on the surface but help to establish bonds among speakers) more than others, as illustrated by the two examples in (i) below. Some groups of speakers are more likely to give direct answers than others, as illustrated by the two examples in (ii) below.

1. A: Fancy going down the pub tonight?

B: (‘banter’ response) Get lost, you twit. Why would I want to go out with an old duffer like you?

B: (‘non-banter’ response) I’d love to. Thanks.

1. A: Any chance you could pick up my kids from school for me today?

B: (more direct response) I’m sorry. I can’t today.

B: (less direct response) I’d really like to. I have a few errands to run just at that time, though.

How might evidence such as this be seen as relevant to Keenan’s arguments?

* Suggest the lines along which you might develop an account of each of the following within Horn’s and Levinson’s ‘neo-Gricean’ frameworks:

1. A: Did you flatten the poppies when you cut the grass?

B: I might have.

1. A: What did you think of Flo’s stand-up routine?

B: Some of it was funny.

1. A: How’s John getting on in his new job?

B: He arrives every morning and takes part in the day’s activities before heading home.

1. (This fictional example comes from the television series ‘Yes, Minister’. Speaker A is a very slippery character who is an expert at obfuscation. Here he is reluctantly admitting responsibility for a major error in the past).

A: The identity of this official whose alleged responsibility for this hypothetical oversight has been the subject of recent speculation is not shrouded in quite such impenetrable obscurity as certain previous disclosures may have led you to assume, and, in fact, not to put too fine a point on it the individual in question was, it may surprise you to learn, the one to whom your present interlocutor is in the habit of identifying by means of the perpendicular pronoun.

B: I beg your pardon?

A: It was I.

(Lynn, J. and A. Jay. 1987. The Complete Yes Minister. The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Salem, London: page 511)

Make a note of any problems you have in applying these ideas.

* Larry Horn has claimed that his neo-Gricean theory can be applied to explain why many languages have a word corresponding to English *‘none’*, synonymous with the phrase *‘not one’*, but no language has a word, which we might christen *‘nall’*, synonymous with the phrases *‘not all’.* Can you explain how this might be seen to follow from Horn’s approach?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 2.8:*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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RELEVANCE THEORY

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER TWO:

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*EXERCISE 2.1:*

Exercise 2.1 encourages you to think about the distinction between natural and non-natural meaning

* Consider whether each of the following examples should count as an example of Gricean ‘natural’ or ‘non-natural’ meaning. Give reasons for each answer. In some cases, you might think that there are elements of natural and non-natural meaning in the same act of communication. Indicate where you think this is so and, again, explain why:

1. Your flatmate’s shoes by the front door indicating to you that she has come home from work.
2. Whistling loudly to your friend on a crowded beach so that they can find you.
3. A cyclist screaming as a car almost drives into her.
4. A letter to your local library asking not to be fined for returning a book after its due date.
5. Holding up a book and waving it at someone who lost it earlier and has been frantically searching for it.

**Possible answer:**

The answer to each of these is not easy. It depends not only on exactly how you understand Grice’s distinctions but also on how you understand each example.

Example (i) is likely to be taken as a case of natural meaning since the shoes provide direct evidence that your flatmate has come home.

Example (ii) would be seen by many people as an act of intentional communication. However, if we decide that the whistle alone provides evidence of where you are, this might count as a case of natural meaning. If we decide that your friend needs to recognise as intentionally communicating your presence, then this will seem to be a case of non-natural meaning.

Example (iii) seems to be a case of natural meaning since the requirement of intentionality does not seem to apply as it might do in (ii).

Example (iv) is a case of linguistic communication so this is definitely non-natural meaning for Grice.

Example (v) seems to be like Grice’s photograph example since seeing you holding the book will be enough to provide evidence of where it is. However, any assumptions along the lines that you have been helpful or that the person who lost it did not look very effectively will count as non-natural since they only follow from recognition of an intention to communicate.

* Consider Grice’s example of the child allowing her paleness to be noticed by her mother. What would the child have to do differently for this to count as an example of non-natural rather than natural meaning?

**Possible answer:**

One key aspect of this is that the child needs to be making clear that she is communicating something to her mother. For Grice, though, we would need to go further and change the example so that the mother could not have worked out that the child is ill unless she recognises this intention. Intentionally revealing paleness would not count if the conclusion would have followed from the sight of the paleness alone. Given this, we would presumably need to remove this direct evidence and have the illness revealed through an utterance or other act of intentional communication (such as showing the mother a drawing) alone.

* Discuss the problematic example with the photograph. Make sure you are clear on exactly why it is problematic and consider how we might make things clearer, either by thinking of the example in a different way or by refining the definitions of natural and non-natural meaning.

**Possible answer:**

This is tricky. Part of the answer overlaps with the previous one. It is important to understand exactly what Grice is getting at with the idea that the potential for the photograph alone to communicate the unfaithful behaviour rules this out as an example of non-natural meaning. See Wharton (2009: 18-37) for a fuller discussion of this example.

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*EXERCISE 2.2:*

Exercise 2.2 asks you to consider how a range of examples might be taken to support Grice’s suggestion that notions such as informativeness, truthfulness and relevance play a role in how we understand utterances

* B’s utterance in each of the following examples could be seen as faulty with regard to how closely they follow Gricean assumptions about informativeness, truthfulness or relevance, i.e. they seem to fail to be appropriately informative, truthful or relevant:

1. A: Have you had breakfast?

B: I got up at 6 o’clock like I do every morning and had my usual meal. I started with a glass of orange juice and then had a cup of strong coffee and a bowl of cereal. Then I had an apple before I finished getting ready for work.

1. A: What did you do last night after you got home from work?

B: Stuff.

1. A: Do you enjoy working with Fred?

B: He’s a dinosaur.

1. A: Why do you think this director’s films are always so gloomy?

B: When she was young, she was always the last to be picked for sports. And when they played star wars, they always made her be Jarjar Binks.

1. A: Any chance you could help me dig the garden this weekend?

B: I think salted caramels are my favourites sweet.

For each example:

1. describe the ways in which the utterance seems to depart from the expectation that it will be informative, truthful and relevant
2. suggest possible ‘implicatures’ which the hearer might derive in order to preserve the assumption that these maxims are being observed

**Possible answer:**

Again, there is no one clear answer to any of these questions, so I can only suggest the lines along which your discussion might go.

I hope, though, that you think that B’s utterance in example (i) seems overinformative, that in (ii) it seems to be underinformative, in (iii) it is false, in (iv) it is going beyond what B is likely to have evidence for (although, of course, we can imagine B knowing all of these things about the film director being discussed), and that the answer in (v) does not seem relevant. There are a range of possible things which these departures from informativeness, truthfulness and relevance might suggest, including rudeness in (i) and (ii), metaphor in (iii), a kind of facetiousness or playfulness in (iv) and avoiding a clear response (and implicating unwillingness to help) in (v).

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*EXERCISE 2.3:*

Exercise 2.3 encourages you to explore Grice’s ideas in more detail.

* Attempt an explanation of how A might understand B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges:

1. A: The train I take to work has just been cancelled.

B: My car’s still out of action.

1. A: I bought you a ticket for that concert on Saturday.

B: But I hate classical music!

1. A: Do you think the new Zadie Smith book’s any good?

B: John’s been reading it.

1. A: How did you manage to break the toaster?

B: I just pressed the ‘cancel’ switch and it cut out.

1. A: Do you think you could look after my dogs for me while I’m away?

B: I will, although I can’t say I’ll enjoy it.

In each case, your account should say ‘what is said’. ‘what is implicated’ and how the hearer works out what is implicated. Make a note of any problems you have in applying Grice’s ideas and of any problems you think these examples raise for Grice’s approach.

**Possible answer:**

These are even more complicated. Before saying more, I think I should say that I have always found that students struggle to come up with Gricean explanations at first. I remember coming up with explanations which did not conform to Grice’s suggestions when I first studied his work. If your answers are quite different from mine, you should not be too concerned. But do work on developing your understanding of the kinds of explanations which Grice had in mind. Here are suggestions for each of these examples:

1. B’s utterance here seems not to be relevant at the level of ‘what is said’ since it is not obvious how it connects with A’s utterance. We assume, though, that B’s utterance must be intended to be seen as conforming to the maxims. If we assume that B has taken A to be implicating that B might help A to deal with the train cancellation, then we can see B’s utterance as implicating an inability to help.
2. The use of the word *but* here gives rise to a conventional implicature. There has been considerable discussion of exactly how to account for the encoded meaning of *but*. For now, though, we might suggest that *but* gives rise to a conventional implicature along the lines that the proposition it introduces is not expected (ignoring, for now, details of how this proposition connects with earlier discourse). Given this, we can suggest that the hearer derives the implicature that B’s dislike of classical music is unexpected and the particularised implicature that B will not want to go to the concert.
3. What B has said here is not clearly relevant. However, we assume that B’s utterance must be relevant overall and so she must be implicating something relevant. In this case, we can take the utterance to implicate that John must find it interesting enough to read it and that it might be a good idea to ask John about it. This fits the pattern of Grice’s notion of a ‘clash’ of maxims. B cannot conform to the maxim of quantity (being as informative as is required) without violating the maxim of quality (by saying something for which she does not have adequate evidence). So she compromises and at least provides some information which might be useful.
4. Part of this answer will involve the idea that utterances of the form ‘X and Y’ often give rise to a generalised conversational implicature based on assumptions we make about how the world works. The implicature here is that the toaster cut out as a result of B pressing the ‘cancel’ button. We can also suggest a particularised conversational implicature along the lines that B is not too much at fault since she did not do anything unusual in operating the toaster.
5. B here agrees to look after the dogs, but also uses another expression, *although*, which Grice saw as giving rise to a conventional implicature, here that something we would not expect follows from B looking after the dogs (that she won’t enjoy it) or that something we would expect (that she’ll enjoy it) does not in fact follow.

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*EXERCISE 2.4:*

Exercise 2.4 encourages you to explore some of Wilson and Sperber’s proposals about how Grice’s approach should be modified

* B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges illustrates at least one problem for Grice’s theory of conversation:

1. A: I reckon John should represent us at the union meeting on Saturday.

B: Well, he’s definitely got the guts for it.

1. A: Does that new student talk in class?

B: Too much, if you ask me.

1. A: You really do far too much for everyone, and now they want you to take on more at work.

B: Life!

1. A: Did you see how John lost it when they told him he’d lost his job? He screamed the place down.

B: You could say he’s unhappy.

See if you can identify the nature of the problem and how Wilson and Sperber might propose to solve it.

**Possible answer:**

Again, there are a number of different comments you might have made here and no definite set of ‘correct’ answers.

In example (i), you might focus on the claim that the maxims (or other pragmatic principles) are involved in recovering ‘what is said’ as well as ‘what is implicated’, i.e. that we need to infer the intended referents of ‘he’ and ‘it’, and the intended sense of ambiguous term ‘guts’. You might have gone on to discuss what is implicated here. This probably not seriously problematic for Grice’s approach. It is likely that this would be treated as representing a ‘clash’ of maxims. The speaker does not know for sure whether John should represent ‘us’ and says something which provides some evidence in the hope of being as relevant as possible despite this.

Example (ii) represents the same issue as (i) about the maxims being involved in assigning reference. It also illustrate the fact that there is more to recovering ‘what is said’ than just disambiguation and reference assignment. Here A also needs to supply the ellipsed material, i.e. that B is ‘saying’ that ‘that new student talks’ too much in class. You might also have discussed some of the complexities around the phrase ‘if you ask me’. We might treat this as an idiom which mainly indicates the speaker’s expression of an opinion. We might also discuss how it would be interpreted if not idiomatic. Presumably B think the student talks too much even if ‘you don’t ask me’.

Example (iii) illustrates these same issues but is also even more problematic. The utterance of a noun on its own means that the hearer needs to make inferences about a larger proposition which contains that noun as a sub-part. Here, though, it is not clear exactly what that proposition might be. ‘Life is difficult’? ‘I am constantly surprised at the complexities of life’? And, of course, there are other possibilities. There is also vagueness here at the level of implicature and so we should discuss the range of possible implicatures which the speaker might have in mind and the fact that a successful interpretation might not have narrowed this range down very much.

Example (iv) is perhaps the most problematic example here. It’s clear that B is being ironic since this utterance is far weaker than would be appropriate given John’s behaviour. Grice suggested that ironical understatement could be treated as a violation of the maxim of quality, i.e. that the speaker is saying something false in order to implicate something stronger. However, B has only said something false here if we assume that ‘unhappy’ is inconsistent with ‘very unhappy’, ‘extremely angry’ or some other more forceful proposition. The introductory ‘you could say’ also complicates things as it is not clear how exactly the maxim of quality applies to an utterance like this. This demonstrates issues with applying Grice’s ideas, since it is not clear whether or not Grice’s approach handles this example, or how exactly we need to adapt his approach for example such as this.

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*EXERCISE 2.5:*

Exercise 2.5 asks you to consider whether the communicative principle of relevance really makes redundant all of the maxims which are not independently problematic.

* A’s likely interpretation of B’s utterance in each of the examples in exercise 2.3 (repeated here below) could be explained with reference to Grice’s maxims:

1. A: The train I take to work has just been cancelled.

B: My car’s still out of action.

1. A: I can’t believe John. He just slammed the phone down on me in the middle of a conversation.

B: You could say that was slightly rude.

1. A: I bought you a ticket for that concert on Saturday.

B: But I hate classical music!

1. A: Do you think the new Zadie Smith book’s any good?

B: John’s been reading it.

1. A: Do you think you could look after my dogs for me while I’m away?

B: I will, although I can’t say I’ll enjoy it.

For each one, consider how you could explain the interpretation with reference to the Communicative Principle of Relevance. Make a note of any problems you come across in trying to do this.

**Possible answer:**

Again, there are a range of ways in which you might tackle these. The key thing in each case is that we should be able to arrive at the same interpretation as envisaged by Grice’s approach simply by assuming that the hearer is following the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure. In each case, it should be the case that the intended interpretation is the first one the hearer could have arrived at which the speaker could have intended to be consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance, i.e. which gives rise to enough positive cognitive effects to justify the processing effort required to process it and which is consistent with the speaker’s preferences and abilities.

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*EXERCISE 2.6:*

Exercise 2.6 asks you to look at a new range of examples and compare a relevance-theoretic approach with a Gricean one.

* Consider how A is likely to interpret B’s utterance in each of the following examples:

1. A: I thought you might fancy going for a run along the beach while you’re here.

B: I haven’t done any running for over a year.

1. A: John says you’re fed up with having to work such a long shift today?

B: Give me a break.

1. A: Do you think I was wrong to ask John to help at the party?

B: Well, it’s not the best idea you’ve ever had.

1. A: Do you think I was wrong to ask John to help at the party?

B: Not at all! That’s the best idea you’ve ever had!

1. A: They’re saying John didn’t show up for work today.

B: How could they tell?

For each one, propose both a Gricean and a relevance-theoretic account. Compare the two approaches and consider how we might compare them and decide which offers the best explanation.

**Possible answer:**

Again, the relevance-theoretic account depends on the interpretation derived being the first plausible account which would be arrived by an interpreter following the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure. There are different kinds of account for each example if we assume a Gricean approach. Briefly, here is an indication of which maxims you might assume to be involved for each example:

In (i), B’s utterance is not clearly informative enough or relevant at the level of what is said.

In (ii), B’s utterance is ambiguous. B could be using an idiom expressing a negative response to what A has said or an unidiomatic request for a ‘break’ in the sense of some respite from work. In the former case, B’s utterance might be argued to be irrelevant since not connecting directly with A’s utterance. In the latter case, there is no violation of maxims and so this might just be explained as a case where the speaker follows the maxims at the level of what is said and of what is implicated.

Example (iii) is problematic for Grice as the speaker has not said anything which clearly violates a maxim, e.g. the utterance is presumably true. However, the hearer needs to see that B intends something stronger, i.e. to suggest that this was not a good idea at all.

In (iv), B’s utterance could be sincere or ironic. If sincere, again it is a case where the maxims are observed at the level of what is said and at the level of what is implicates. If ironic, this is a violation of the maxim of quality at the level of what is said and this is what generates the search for an implicature.

In (v), B’s utterance is clearly ironic. This is problematic for Grice since irony is supposed to follow from a violation of the maxim of quality. However, it is not possible for a question to make a direct commitment to the truth of anything and so it is not possible for the hearer to think that the speaker has said something false.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 2.7:*

Exercise 2.7 encourages you to explore some of the ideas of Keenan and of the ‘Neo-Gricean’ approaches mentioned here.

* Consider Keenan’s suggestion that the Gricean maxim of quantity is not universal, based on the conversational behaviour of Malagasay speakers. First, make sure that you understand why she has made this claim and why other pragmatists are not convinced that her evidence does cast doubt on the universality of Grice’s maxims. What kinds of evidence would be more problematic for Grice’s approach?

**Possible answer:**

This is a fairly open question. You should make sure you understand the issue raised by Keenan and how this data could seen as unproblematic if we assume either that ‘informative enough’ depends on the cultural context as well as other contextual assumptions. There are a number of suggestions you might have come up with for more problematic data. Can you imagine, for example, a culture where speakers are not expected to be informative at all?

* Speakers often suggest that different groups can vary in terms of conversational practice. For example, some groups of speakers indulge in ‘banter’ (ironic utterances which seem rude on the surface but help to establish bonds among speakers) more than others, as illustrated by the two examples in (i) below. Some groups of speakers are more likely to give direct answers than others, as illustrated by the two examples in (ii) below.

1. A: Fancy going down the pub tonight?

B: (‘banter’ response) Get lost, you twit. Why would I want to go out with an old duffer like you?

B: (‘non-banter’ response) I’d love to. Thanks.

1. A: Any chance you could pick up my kids from school for me today?

B: (more direct response) I’m sorry. I can’t today.

B: (less direct response) I’d really like to. I have a few errands to run just at that time, though.

How might evidence such as this be seen as relevant to Keenan’s arguments?

**Possible answer:**

This question is mainly inviting you to further develop your previous answer. Again, this might be dealt with by considering that notions such as ‘informative enough’ vary indifferent contexts. You might also suggest adapting the Gricean account of irony. Note that Grice suggested that irony might involve an element of ‘pretence’ and this could be relevant here. Notice, by the way, that these cultural differences may apply within groups who speak the same language and even people who share the same regional variety of a language (e.g. younger and older speakers of the same dialect might vary in these kinds of ways).

* Suggest the lines along which you might develop an account of each of the following within Horn’s and Levinson’s ‘neo-Gricean’ frameworks:

1. A: Did you flatten the poppies when you cut the grass?

B: I might have.

1. A: What did you think of Flo’s stand-up routine?

B: Some of it was funny.

1. A: How’s John getting on in his new job?

B: He arrives every morning and takes part in the day’s activities before heading home.

1. (This fictional example comes from the television series ‘Yes, Minister’. Speaker A is a very slippery character who is an expert at obfuscation. Here he is reluctantly admitting responsibility for a major error in the past).

A: The identity of this official whose alleged responsibility for this hypothetical oversight has been the subject of recent speculation is not shrouded in quite such impenetrable obscurity as certain previous disclosures may have led you to assume, and, in fact, not to put too fine a point on it the individual in question was, it may surprise you to learn, the one to whom your present interlocutor is in the habit of identifying by means of the perpendicular pronoun.

B: I beg your pardon?

A: It was I.

(Lynn, J. and A. Jay. 1987. The Complete Yes Minister. The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Salem, London: page 511)

Make a note of any problems you have in applying these ideas.

**Possible answer:**

There are again a number of possibilities here. Here are brief indications of possible accounts:

In (i), B has said something in an unusual way and this might suggest a ‘marked’ interpretation. Another possible account would treat this as saying something the hearer already knows and so this could be lacking in informativeness.

(ii) is a standard case of ‘scalar implicature’ and so falls neatly into Horn’s and Levinson’s frameworks.

(iii) illustrates under-informativeness since we assume A already assumes this and so the implicature follows straightforwardly for both accounts.

In (iv) is very much departing from a stereotypical formulation and so generates implicatures based on assumptions about why he doing this. At one level, we could say that Sir Humphrey is implicating discomfort and a reluctance to be clear about his culpability. Alternatively, we might focus on what the writer is doing in writing these words for the character of Sir Humphrey and thus generating implicatures about the character and about politicians and political discourse more broadly.

* Larry Horn has claimed that his neo-Gricean theory can be applied to explain why many languages have a word corresponding to English *‘none’*, synonymous with the phrase *‘not one’*, but no language has a word, which we might christen *‘nall’*, synonymous with the phrases *‘not all’.* Can you explain how this might be seen to follow from Horn’s approach?

**Possible answer:**

The answer to this is quite complicated. In brief, though, the assumption is that languages do not need to lexicalise the concept ‘not all’ because this is easily implicated by utterances containing a term equivalent to ‘some’ or expressed in the phrase ‘not all’. You might ask, then, why languages need to contrast utterances containing ‘not one’ with utterances containing ‘none’. What are the interpretive differences between these two and why is such a contrast not needed between ‘not all’ and a word equivalent to ‘nall’?

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*EXERCISE 2.8:*

Like the final exercise in each chapter, exercise 2.8 asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER THREE:

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*EXERCISE 3.1:*

Exercise 3.1 encourages you to consider evidence relevant to Fodor’s view that the mind is modular and that one module is specialised for linguistic processing.

* Fodor suggests a range of properties characteristic of modules understood as input systems. These include: speed (processes are very fast), mandatoriness (we cannot choose not to perform modular processes or not to process modular input), domain specificity (they apply to a delimited range of input types), informational encapsualtion (modular processes cannot be affected by input from other sources.

1. Consider the Müller-Lyer illusion and make sure you understand why the processes involved in viewing seem to have the above properties and so to demonstrate modular input.
2. See how many other varieties of modular processing you can think of,
3. Consider what evidence you can find that linguistic processing is modular.

* Chomsky has rejected the view that linguistic processing is modular in Fodor’s sense. One reason he gives for this is that ‘language is also an output system’. How convincing do you find this argument? How might linguistic output be handled within a broadly Fodorian approach?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.2:*

Exercise 3.2 encourages you to consider a range of scenarios which might involve ostensive-inferential communication.

* Consider to what extent and how the behaviour described in the following examples involve ostensive-inferential communication:

1. After you ask me whether my knee is better after I hurt it playing football, I stand up, squat down and stand up again.
2. Walking down a busy street, I stop, pick up a sweet wrapper and drop it into a nearby bin.
3. After you have dropped a sweet wrapper in the street, I tap you on the shoulder and then pick up the sweet wrapper and put it in the bin.
4. While you and I are having a conversation, I slap my neck trying to hit a fly which has landed there.
5. While you and I are having a conversation, I cover my mouth and cough.
6. After you ask me how I am feeling, I cover my mouth and cough.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.3:*

Exercise 3.3 encourages you to consider the difference between contextual effects and cognitive effects.

* Write a paragraph informally defining the notion of a ‘contextual effect’ and give an example to illustrate it.
* Write a paragraph informally defining the notion of a ‘cognitive effect’ and give an example to illustrate it.
* Give an example of each of the following varieties of cognitive effect (and make a note of any difficulties you have in doing this):

1. new information strengthening an existing assumption
2. new information contradicting and leading to the elimination of an existing assumption
3. new information leading to the derivation of a contextual implication

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.4:*

Exercise 3.4 explores the connection between relevance and positive cognitive effects.

* In each of the following examples, consider which of the two possible responses by B would give rise to more positive cognitive effects (and make a note of any difficulties you have in judging this):

1. A: What do you do for a living?

B: a. I teach in a university.

b. I teach pragmatics at university.

1. A: Do you fancy a muffin?

B: a. I missed breakfast, actually.

b. The traffic’s terrible today.

1. A: Where do you live?

B: a. In Finsbury Park.

b. In Stroud Green, just north of Finsbury Park.

* Consider which response in each case is likely to be the more relevant of the two (and make a note of any difficulties you have in judging this).

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.5:*

Exercise 3.5 encourages you to explore the relationship between relevance and cognitive effort.

* In each of the following examples, consider which of the two possible responses by B would give require more processing effeort (and make a note of any difficulties you have in judging this):

1. A: What do you do for a living?

B: a. I teach in a university.

b. I’m employed in a teaching role in a university.

1. A: Do you fancy a muffin?

B: a. I missed breakfast, actually.

b. I missed breakfast and the traffic’s terrible today.

1. A: Where do you live?

B: a. In Finsbury Park.

b. I live in Finsbury Park.

* Consider which response in each case is likely to be the more relevant of the two (and make a note of any difficulties you have in judging this).

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.6:*

Exercise 3.6 encourages you to explore the Presumption of Optimal Relevance in more detail.

* Consider how A will interpret B’s utterance in the following exchanges. How will A go about finding an interpretation? What makes the interpretation they have arrived at consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance:

1. A: How were things at work today?

B: Busy enough.

1. A: I’ve boiled the kettle.

B: Great! Do you fancy a cup?

1. A: Have you seen the paper?

B: John was reading it earlier.

1. A: Do you want me to nip out for more milk?

B: The shops are a distance from here.

* Most discussion within relevance theory (and most other approaches to pragmatics) focuses mainly on how interpreters arrive at an interpretation. So far, this exercise has asked you to consider how the addressee follows a processing path guided by the presumption of optimal relevance. However, the presumption of optimal relevance involves assumptions about decisions the communicator must have made in formulating her utterance or other communicative act. Consider again each of the examples you have just discussed. This time, see if you can say what the speaker has done to shape her utterance so that it will give rise to a relevant interpretation.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.7:*

Exercise 3.7 encourages you to explore Grice’s notion of meaning-NN and the relevance-theoretic notion of ostensive-inferential communication.

* Consider again each of the following examples, which were the focus of exercise 2.1 in the previous chapter. This time, consider whether or not each example counts as an example of ‘ostensive-inferential communication’:

1. Your flatmate’s shoes by the front door indicating to you that she has come home from work.
2. Whistling loudly to your friend on a crowded beach so that they can find you.
3. A cyclist screaming as a car almost drives into her.
4. A letter to your local library asking not to be fined for returning a book after its due date.
5. Holding up a book and waving it at someone who lost it earlier and has been frantically searching for it.

* Compare the answers you have just given to your answers to exercise 2.1. Does this indicate differences between Gricean ‘meaning-NN’ and ‘ostensive-inferential communication?
* Consider again Grice’s example of the child allowing her paleness to be noticed by her mother and the problematic example with the photograph. How would an account in terms of ostensive-inferential communication differ from an account in terms of natural and non-natural meaning?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.8:*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER THREE:

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*EXERCISE 3.1:*

Exercise 3.1 encourages you to consider evidence relevant to Fodor’s view that the mind is modular and that one module is specialised for linguistic processing.

* Fodor suggests a range of properties characteristic of modules understood as input systems. These include: speed (processes are very fast), mandatoriness (we cannot choose not to perform modular processes or not to process modular input), domain specificity (they apply to a delimited range of input types), informational encapsualtion (modular processes cannot be affected by input from other sources.

1. Consider the Müller-Lyer illusion and make sure you understand why the processes involved in viewing seem to have the above properties and so to demonstrate modular input.
2. See how many other varieties of modular processing you can think of,
3. Consider what evidence you can find that linguistic processing is modular.

* Chomsky has rejected the view that linguistic processing is modular in Fodor’s sense. One reason he gives for this is that ‘language is also an output system’. How convincing do you find this argument? How might linguistic output be handled within a broadly Fodorian approach?

**Possible answer:**

It is easy to show that visual processing, like other kinds of sensory perception, is very fast. It is mandatory in that we cannot choose not to perceive visual input. It is domain-specific in that it deals only with visual data. Perhaps most importantly for this example it is informationally encapsulated in that no other information can affect what we perceive. I can ‘know’ that the two lines are the same length because I have established this by measuring them. Despite this, every time I look at them, I ‘see’ them as different lengths.

The most obvious other potential candidates for modularity are the input systems related to our other senses: hearing, smell, taste and touch. Each of these seem to share Fodorian modular properties. We perceive objects quickly, cannot choose not to perceive them and cannot make ourselves perceive things differently. An apple which smells like a banana will still smell like a banana even if I know it is an apple.

It is easy to show that linguistic processing is very fast indeed. Fodor cites evidence from ‘binaural shadowing’ where subjects are asked to repeat aloud utterances which they are listening to. The output from subjects is typically only some hundredths of a second behind the input. Within those hundredths of second, subjects are going through all the complex processes involved in processing the input and preparing to produce output based on what they have heard. You can test this informally for yourself by trying to say back linguistic input you are hearing as quickly as you can. Be careful not to do this for long enough to seriously irritate your friends!

Domain specificity is perhaps the hardest property to demonstrate in this informal discussion. Without investigating more closely, we cannot see whether modular processes are indeed domain specific. Evidence of informational encapsulation is relevant here. Another kind of evidence comes form cases where subjects have problems with particular processes. It is possible, for example, that one module is affected by a phenomenon and not others. People with Williams syndrome, for example, suffer breakdown in some areas but perform very well linguistically. People with Specific Language Impairment have particular issues with linguistic processing.

There a range of possible answers which you might have suggested to Chomsky’s comment, including the existence of separate modular processes for output or overlap between modules for dealing with input and those for dealing with output.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.2:*

Exercise 3.2 encourages you to consider a range of scenarios which might involve ostensive-inferential communication.

* Consider to what extent and how the behaviour described in the following examples involve ostensive-inferential communication:

1. After you ask me whether my knee is better after I hurt it playing football, I stand up, squat down and stand up again.
2. Walking down a busy street, I stop, pick up a sweet wrapper and drop it into a nearby bin.
3. After you have dropped a sweet wrapper in the street, I tap you on the shoulder and then pick up the sweet wrapper and put it in the bin.
4. While you and I are having a conversation, I slap my neck trying to hit a fly which has landed there.
5. While you and I are having a conversation, I cover my mouth and cough.
6. After you ask me how I am feeling, I cover my mouth and cough.

**Possible answer:**

None of these scenarios is fully clear. In each case, it will depend on the extent to which an intention to communicate is salient. The clearest ostensively communicated behaviour occurs when there is no other explanation for a particular act. Tapping you on the shoulder, for example, is bound to be treated as an ostensive act unless I go on to say that I did it by mistake. The details of the accessibility of particular contextual assumptions are also relevant. Example (vi) is much more likely to be treated as ostensive than example (v), given that it follows a question about how I am feeling.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.3:*

Exercise 3.3 encourages you to consider the difference between contextual effects and cognitive effects.

* Write a paragraph informally defining the notion of a ‘contextual effect’ and give an example to illustrate it.
* Write a paragraph informally defining the notion of a ‘cognitive effect’ and give an example to illustrate it.
* Give an example of each of the following varieties of cognitive effect (and make a note of any difficulties you have in doing this):

1. new information strengthening an existing assumption
2. new information contradicting and leading to the elimination of an existing assumption
3. new information leading to the derivation of a contextual implication

**Possible answer:**

The key thing you should mention in defining a contextual effect is that it is a logical conclusion derivable from the union of two sets of propositions and not derivable from one set alone. ‘Q’ is a contextual effect of the union of ‘P’ and ‘if P then Q’ but is not derivable from either ‘P’ alone or ‘if P then Q’ alone. We could say that ‘Q’ follows from ‘P’ in the context of ‘if P then Q’ or that it follows from ‘if P then Q’ in the context of ‘P’.

A cognitive effect is simply a contextual effect which takes place within a cognitive system.

You should be able to come up with examples of your own based on the discussion in the chapter. Just in case, here is a new set of examples:

Contextual effect:

Context: ‘P or Q’

New assumption: ‘not P’

Contextual effect (contextual implication): ‘Q’

Cognitive effects:

For each example, assuming that Sylvia is entertaining or can access the following contextual assumptions:

‘Rob is visiting London tonight’

‘Sylvia is planning to take Rob out to dinner’

‘Rob visited Japan earlier this year’

‘Sylvia thinks that Rob might like to eat sushi’

‘Rob loves seafood’

‘There’s a fabulous but expensive new seafood restaurant’

‘If Rob can afford it, Sylvia should take Rob to the new seafood restaurant’

1. strengthening:

New assumption:

(Rob tells Sylvia that) Rob loves sushi

Strengthened assumption:

Rob likes sushi

1. contradiction and elimination

New assumption:

(Rob tells Sylvia that) Rob hates sushi

Contradicted and eliminated assumption:

Rob likes sushi

1. contextual implication

New assumption:

(Rob tells Sylvia that) Rob is not worried about expense as he has just come into some money and feels like splashing out.

Contextual implications:

Rob can afford to eat in the new seafood restaurant\*\*

Sylvia should take Rob to the new seafood restaurant

\*\* Note that not all of the required assumptions for this implication have been stated above. Can you supply what is missing?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.4:*

Exercise 3.4 explores the connection between relevance and positive cognitive effects.

* In each of the following examples, consider which of the two possible responses by B would give rise to more positive cognitive effects (and make a note of any difficulties you have in judging this):

1. A: What do you do for a living?

B: a. I teach in a university.

b. I teach pragmatics at university.

1. A: Do you fancy a muffin?

B: a. I missed breakfast, actually.

b. The traffic’s terrible today.

1. A: Where do you live?

B: a. In Finsbury Park.

b. In Stroud Green, just north of Finsbury Park.

* Consider which response in each case is likely to be the more relevant of the two (and make a note of any difficulties you have in judging this).

**Possible answer:**

There are some complications in answering these. In particular, the answer in each case depends partly on what range of contextual assumptions are accessible to A.

In example (i), utterance (b) will have more positive cognitive effects provided that A knows what pragmatics is, since everything which follows from (a) also follows from (b) and (b) provides evidence for some other conclusions as well.

In example (ii), utterance (b) is likely to be less relevant since nothing follows from it which is relevant to A’s question. It could, however, give rise to more positive cognitive effects if contextual assumptions mutually manifest to A and B can interact with the proposition expressed to give rise to them, e.g. if A and B have established that bad traffic means no time to stop off for breakfast en route to work and therefore that B will be hungry. You might also imagine nonverbal cues which could help A to arrive at a relevant interpretation.

In example (iii), utterance (b) provides more information and therefore might give rise to a greater number of positive cognitive effects. However, utterance (a) will be more relevant if nothing follows from knowing that B’s neighbourhood is called ‘Stroud Green’ or knowing its location relative to Finsbury Park.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.5:*

Exercise 3.5 encourages you to explore the relationship between relevance and cognitive effort.

* In each of the following examples, consider which of the two possible responses by B would give require more processing effeort (and make a note of any difficulties you have in judging this):

1. A: What do you do for a living?

B: a. I teach in a university.

b. I’m employed in a teaching role in a university.

1. A: Do you fancy a muffin?

B: a. I missed breakfast, actually.

b. I missed breakfast and the traffic’s terrible today.

1. A: Where do you live?

B: a. In Finsbury Park.

b. I live in Finsbury Park.

* Consider which response in each case is likely to be the more relevant of the two (and make a note of any difficulties you have in judging this).

**Possible answer:**

As with exercise 3.4, there are some complications in answering these and the answer in each case depends partly on what range of contextual assumptions are accessible to A.

In each case, utterance (b) is more wordy than utterance (a) and therefore requires more processing effort from A. If nothing follows from the extra wording, then utterance (a) will be more relevant. However, the presumption of optimal relevance should lead A to derive further effects which will justify this increased effort. Possible extra effects include:

In (i), that there is something unusual about B’s teaching role.

In (ii), that there are further effects derivable from the union of the two conjuncts, e.g. that B is having a particularly terrible day today.

In (iii), that A should have known where B lives as she has told him before. It is also possible that B just tends to produce longer utterances such as this, or perhaps that she is trying to make sure that A hears and understands her reply.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 3.6:*

Exercise 3.6 encourages you to explore the Presumption of Optimal Relevance in more detail.

* Consider how A will interpret B’s utterance in the following exchanges. How will A go about finding an interpretation? What makes the interpretation they have arrived at consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance:

1. A: How were things at work today?

B: Busy enough.

1. A: I’ve boiled the kettle.

B: Great! Do you fancy a cup?

1. A: Have you seen the paper?

B: John was reading it earlier.

1. A: Do you want me to nip out for more milk?

B: The shops are a distance from here.

**Possible answer:**

Again, there is room for discussion around the answers here. In each case, part of the key is to consider which assumptions will be accessible to A. The first interpretation A comes up with, and which A assumes that B could have intended to be relevant, is the one which A should assume B intended.

In example (i), there may be an element of ironical comment in B’s utterance. A needs to make an inference about what ‘things at work’ were ‘busy enough’ for. One explanation would be along the lines that B will not be complaining that things could have been busier. This also suggests a kind of cynical point of view, on which B thinks of work as routinely uninspiring and busy, that the question and the topic of conversation are not particularly exciting, and so on. As ever, this is consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance if it is the first one which the hearer comes up with which he thinks A could have intended to give rise to enough effects to justify the effort involved in processing it. A more detailed account should run through some of the stages in the interpretation process. The use of the word *‘enough’* means that the hearer has to work out what the day was busy enough for. This suggests that someone would be assessing the day in terms of whether it was busy enough for something. As long as there is no reason for A to think that B had a special reason for assessing how busy things were, then this will be the interpretation A arrives at. The interpretation will be different if there is a motivation for wondering whether work was busy enough, e.g. if B works in a shop which she owns, she might go to work every day hoping that things will be busy enough for her to make a living. If A knows this, then the interpretation will be along the lines that B is quite happy since enough customers came to the shop and bought things to reassure her that the shop is doing OK. The interpretation will not go further since busy enough indicates a kind of minimum level of ‘busy-ness’ and B should have saved the hearer effort by making clear if the level of busy-ness was higher than this.

In example (ii), B starts by saying ‘great!’ which indicates positive response to the news that A has boiled the kettle. She then offers to make a cup of tea or coffee for A. This suggests a range of implicatures about the relationship between A and B, B’s helpfulness, and so on. Accessing these implicatures will justify the effort involved in processing B’s utterance and clearly B could have intended her utterance to be relevant in this way. So A should accept this as the intended interpretation as soon as she has accessed it. As ever, we can imagine adjustments to the range of mutually manifest contextual assumptions which will in turn affect the likelihood of particular interpretations. Suppose, for example, that B is constantly complaining that A is not helpful enough. Perhaps she has even identified one trait which involves doing part of a job and leaving the rest to B. Perhaps even boiling the kettle but not making the tea is one example B has mentioned before. In this case, A is likely to assume that B is ironically commenting on A’s behaviour and the apparent offer to make A some tea is, in fact, a negative comment on A’s behaviour.

In example (iii), it is highly mutually manifest that A would like to locate the paper. B’s utterance does not make this possible but it does give A an idea of what to do in order to find it. A should assume, therefore, that B does not know where the paper is but thinks John might know. A more detailed account should explain how A works out the referent of *‘it’* and so on. Note that this case would have been described as involving a ‘clash’ of maxims for Grice.

In example (iv), B again fails to give a direct answer to A’s question. A will no doubt be envisaging his trip to the shops and B’s utterance provides more information about what this trip will be like. A key aspect of understanding the utterance will involve deciding what is represented by ‘a distance’. It cannot just be any distance as A no doubt already knew that there must be some distance to the shops. Relevance theory predicts that A will look for a representation of this distance which provides enough effects to justify the effort involved in processing the utterance. If the shops are further than A would have thought otherwise, this will provide enough effects for the utterance to be relevant. Note that the distance should be based on B’s assumptions about what A will be thinking rather than what A is thinking. If A knows how far the shops are, he will not change his assessment based on B’s utterance but will think that B is trying to say they’re further than A would have thought and so A will be aware of this mismatch. Note also that A cannot think they are any further than would be enough to make this information relevant (by implicating that A might want to reconsider the offer to get the milk). If the shops are extremely far, then B would need to have indicated this to save A’s effort. This example demonstrated the idea often expressed in relevance-theoretic work that the first interpretation which the hearer finds which could have been consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance is the only one which could be.

* Most discussion within relevance theory (and most other approaches to pragmatics) focuses mainly on how interpreters arrive at an interpretation. So far, this exercise has asked you to consider how the addressee follows a processing path guided by the presumption of optimal relevance. However, the presumption of optimal relevance involves assumptions about decisions the communicator must have made in formulating her utterance or other communicative act. Consider again each of the examples you have just discussed. This time, see if you can say what the speaker has done to shape her utterance so that it will give rise to a relevant interpretation.

**Possible answer:**

This is a tricky question and one which has only been addressed occasionally by relevance theorists (see, for example, Clark and Owtram forthcoming on inferences involved in writing. One thing which Clark and Owtram point out is that the central notions of relevance theory do, in fact, say something about the speaker as well as the hearer. The hearer looks for an interpretation which the speaker could have intended. This suggests, in turn, that the speaker must be making a judgement about what the hearer will do. So there is a kind of reflexivity built into the account. A fuller account will need to say something about his these inferential processes work.

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*EXERCISE 3.7:*

Exercise 3.7 encourages you to explore Grice’s notion of meaning-NN and the relevance-theoretic notion of ostensive-inferential communication.

* Consider again each of the following examples, which were the focus of exercise 2.1 in the previous chapter. This time, consider whether or not each example counts as an example of ‘ostensive-inferential communication’:

1. Your flatmate’s shoes by the front door indicating to you that she has come home from work.
2. Whistling loudly to your friend on a crowded beach so that they can find you.
3. A cyclist screaming as a car almost drives into her.
4. A letter to your local library asking not to be fined for returning a book after its due date.
5. Holding up a book and waving it at someone who lost it earlier and has been frantically searching for it.

**Possible answer:**

The answers here depend on the extent to which the behaviour described makes manifest an intention to communicate. In each case, the behaviour is ostensive to the extent that it makes an intention to communicate **mutually** manifest. Leaving my shoes by the front door is explainable purely in terms of an intention to relax when I get home so this is not likely to be taken as ostensive. This could count as ostensive in some cases, e.g. if you and your flatmate have agreed that she will lave her shoes there when she’s in to indicate that she’s at home. Notice that this would not count as ostensive even if your flatmate left them there with the intention that you notice them and infer that she is at home. This is only ostensive communication if it is clear that she intended to communicate in this way.

Each of the other examples could count as ostensive depending on details of the behaviour and of the range of mutually manifest contextual assumptions at the time. Example (iv) is, of course, the most clearly ostensive since the letter clearly counts as n attempt to communicate with its addressee. It could, however, be left in sight of someone unostensively in the hope that they notice it without thinking that the letter-placer intended anything.

* Compare the answers you have just given to your answers to exercise 2.1. Does this indicate differences between Gricean ‘meaning-NN’ and ‘ostensive-inferential communication?

**Possible answer:**

The two sets of answers should suggest differences. Perhaps the key one is that Grice requires recognition of the intention to be necessary for the inference to be made whereas relevance theory requires only that it is mutually manifest that the act is intended to communicate. You might also focus on the notion of ‘manifestness’ which is not present in Grice’s account. A key feature of this change is that it means that this account avoids problems with the notion of ‘mutual knowledge’. The most famous of these problems is that mutual knowledge requires a kind of infinite regress since e don’t mutually know something unless I know it, you know it, I know that you know it, you know that I know it, I know that you know that I know it, and so on ad infinitum. The notion of mutual manifestness avoids this since an assumption can be manifest without being entertained. I may be capable of thinking that it is manifest to you that it is manifest to me that it is manifest to you (and so on!) that X, even if I have not actually entertained this assumption.

* Consider again Grice’s example of the child allowing her paleness to be noticed by her mother and the problematic example with the photograph. How would an account in terms of ostensive-inferential communication differ from an account in terms of natural and non-natural meaning?

**Possible answer:**

Again, this comparison should highlight the fact that Grice requires recognition of the intention to inform to play a key role in communicating such that the assumption could not have been inferred otherwise, while this is not a requirement for the relevance-theoretic account.

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*EXERCISE 3.8:*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER FOUR:

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*EXERCISE 4.1:*

Exercise 4.1 encourages you to explore the nature of deductive inferences more closely.

* Each of the following series of inferences involves a logical error:

1. Premises:

P 🡺 Q

P

Q v R

Conclusion:

R

1. Premises:

P 🡺 Q

Q

Conclusion:

P

1. Premises:

P & (Q 🡺 R)

P 🡺 ¬ R

Conclusion:

Q

1. Premises:

P v ¬ Q

Q 🡺 R

R 🡺 S

¬ S

Conclusion:

Q

First, see if you can spot the error in each case. Second, see if you can explain it with reference to any of the inference rules discussed in the chapter.

* Some of the following series of inferences are valid while others are based on an error. See if you can identify which is which:

1. Premises:

P

Conclusion:

P v (Q 🡺 R)

1. Premises:

P v (P 🡺 Q)

Q 🡺 R

¬ R

Conclusion:

¬ (P 🡺 Q)

1. Premises:

P & (P 🡺 Q)

Q 🡺 R

Conclusion:

R

1. Premises:

(P & Q) 🡺 ¬ R

¬ R

Conclusion:

P & Q

* Here are examples of conversational exchanges. See if you can find any examples of deductive inferences being made here.

1. A: John says that new Seth Rogan film isn’t bad.

B: Do you want to see it?

A: Not unless somebody else recommends it.

1. A: There’s no rubbish collection this week.

B: Oh no! That is so annoying.

A: It’s not such a big deal is it?

B: It is if you’re having a party at the weekend.

1. A: It’s bound to rain on Saturday.

B: The forecast is good.

A: Yeh, but it always rains when we go camping.

1. A: Do you want to try the cake I brought?

B: Does it have nuts in it.

A: Oh yeh, it does. Sorry.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.2:*

Explore 4.2 encourages you to explore the nature of inductive inferences more closely.

* Here are examples of conversational exchanges. See if you can find any examples of inductive, or at least non-deductive, inferences being made here.

1. A: Here comes John.

B: OK. Get ready for fireworks!

1. A: So you’ve been teaching at Middlesex this year?

B: Yeh, it’s been great fun.

A: John says the students there are fantastic.

B: That’s right. I forgot he used to teach there.

1. A: Did you put salt in that pan?

B: Yeh, why?

A: You shouldn't put salt in with beans. It makes them go hard.

1. A: Do you fancy going to that concert on Saturday.

B: I love bluegrass.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.3:*

Exercise 4.3 encourages you to explore the nature of the deductive and non-deductive inferences involved in utterance interpretation.

* Give as full an account as you can of some of the inferences involved in the following exchanges:

1. A: Is that chocolate the kids are eating?

B: Yeh. Their granny gave them two bars each.

A: Oh boy.

B: And some sweets.

A: Hit the panic button.

1. A: Have you seen Blue Valentine?

B: I went with John last week.

A: Did you cry?

B: I always cry.

1. *(Context: Mark Zuckerberg is defending himself against the claim that he ‘stole’ the idea for the social networking site Facebook from Camron and Tyles Winklevoss)*

Mark Zuckerberg: You know, you really don’t need a forensics team to get to the bottom of this. If you guys were the inventors of Facebook, you’d have invented Facebook.

1. *(From an article about the food critic and restaurant guide writer Egon Ronay)*

‘Once I was having lunch with a lady, having a difference of opinion, and she said ‘But Egon Ronay says. . .’, and I replied ‘But you’re talking to him’, and she said ‘No, I don’t mean you, I mean in *Egon Ronay*’. It’s traumatic.’

(From ‘Olives with Egon Ronay’, John Hind, The Observer, 15 May 2011. Available at: http:www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/jul/13/egon-ronay-food-tales)

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.4:*

Exercise 4.4 encourages you to explore more closely how the presumption of optimal relevance constrains interpretations.

* Suggest an interpretation for B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges which is consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance. In each case, also suggest an interpretation which is likely to be less relevant because it would not give rise to enough effects and one which is likely to be less relevant because it would not be accessed first.

1. A: Have you heard about the party?

B: I’ve just seen John.

1. A: That new Terrence Malick film looks weird.

B: Everybody says it’s really good.

1. A: Did you put salt in that pan?

B: What if I did?

1. A (Edina): Have you had breakfast?

B (Patsy): Yes, in 1963.

(From *Absolutely Fabulous*, BBC TV)

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.5:*

Exercise 4.5 looks at how specific interpretations are constrained by the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic.

* Consider again the same examples you looked at in exercise 4.4. This time try to explin their interpretation with reference to the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic.

1. A: Have you heard about the party?

B: I’ve just seen John.

1. A: That new Terrence Malick film looks weird.

B: Everybody says it’s really good.

1. A: Did you put salt in that pan?

B: What if I did?

1. A (Edina): Have you had breakfast?

B (Patsy): Yes, in 1963.

(From *Absolutely Fabulous*, BBC TV)

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.6:*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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RELEVANCE THEORY

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER FOUR:

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.1:*

Exercise 4.1 encourages you to explore the nature of deductive inferences more closely.

* Each of the following series of inferences involves a logical error:

1. Premises:

P 🡺 Q

¬ P

Q v R

Conclusion:

R

1. Premises:

P 🡺 Q

Q

Conclusion:

P

1. Premises:

P & (Q 🡺 R)

P 🡺 ¬ R

Conclusion:

Q

1. Premises:

P v ¬ Q

Q 🡺 R

R 🡺 S

¬ S

Conclusion:

Q

First, see if you can spot the error in each case. Second, see if you can explain it with reference to any of the inference rules discussed in the chapter.

**Possible answer:**

In example (i), R would follow from ¬ Q since ‘Q v R’ guarantees the truth of one of these propositions. However, nothing follows from the premises here about whether or not Q. The fact that P is false is consistent with either Q or ¬ Q (‘P 🡺 Q’ rules out ‘P & ¬ Q’).

In example (ii), the error seems toinvolve ‘strengthening’ the force of the conditional. As just pointed out, ‘P 🡺 Q’ rules out ‘P & ¬ Q’. It is quite consistent with ‘¬ P & Q’. The biconditional represented by a double arrow ‘🡰🡲’. ‘P 🡰🡲 Q’ (roughly equivalent to ‘P if and only if Q’) is logically equivalent to ‘(P 🡲 Q) & (Q 🡺 P)’. P would follow from Q if there was a biconditional relationship between P and Q but not in the case of a simple material conditional.

In example (iii), Q must, in fact, be false. Line 1 includes ‘P’ in a conjunction. A logical rule of ‘&-elimination’ licenses the conclusion ‘P’. From line 2, we can infer (by ‘modus ponendo ponens’) that ‘¬ R’. From ‘¬ R’ and ‘Q 🡺 R’ (also derivable by ‘&-elimination’ from line 1), we can infer that ‘¬ Q’.

In example (iv), Q must again be false. From ‘¬ S’ and ‘R 🡺 S’, we can conclude ‘¬ R’. From ‘¬ R’ and ‘Q 🡺 R’ we can conclude ‘¬ Q’. (We can conclude P on the basis of ‘¬ Q’ and ‘P v Q’.

* Some of the following series of inferences are valid while others are based on an error. See if you can identify which is which:

1. Premises:

P

Conclusion:

P v (Q 🡺 R)

1. Premises:

P v (P 🡺 Q)

Q 🡺 R

¬ R

Conclusion:

¬ (P 🡺 Q)

1. Premises:

P & (P 🡺 Q)

Q 🡺 R

Conclusion:

R

1. Premises:

(P & Q) 🡺 ¬ R

¬ R

Conclusion:

P & Q

**Possible answer:**

The conclusions in (i) and (iii) are valid.

Some people are surprised at first by examples such as (i). This conclusion from follows from ‘v-introduction’ which allows us to derive a disjunction of a valid premise and any other proposition. ‘P v Q’ is true if one of the disjuncts is true. Therefore, we can disjoin ‘P’ with anything at all if P is true.

In example (ii), a fairly complicated series of steps leads, in fact, to the conclusion that ‘P 🡺 Q’. From ‘¬ R’ and ‘Q 🡺 R’, we can conclude that ‘¬ Q’. From ‘P 🡺 Q’ and ‘¬ Q’ we can derive ‘¬ P’. From ‘¬ P’ and ‘P v (P 🡺 Q) we can derive ‘P 🡺 Q’.

Example (iii) involves a straightforward sequence of inferences. We can derive ‘Q’ from line 1, since these two conjuncts are the required inputs for modus ponendo ponens. ‘Q’ then combines with ‘Q 🡺 R’ to derive ‘R’.

In example (iv), we cannot know whether ‘P & Q’. The negative operator raises processing complexity and makes it easier to make mistakes. It is quite possible, though, for both the antecedent and the consequent in a conditional to be true. At the same time, it is possible for the antecedent to be false and the consequent true. All that this conditional rules out is the simultaneous truth of the antecedent and the falsity of the consequent.

* Here are examples of conversational exchanges. See if you can find any examples of deductive inferences being made here.

1. A: John says that new Seth Rogan film isn’t bad.

B: Do you want to see it?

A: Not unless somebody else recommends it.

1. A: There’s no rubbish collection this week.

B: Oh no! That is so annoying.

A: It’s not such a big deal is it?

B: It is if you’re having a party at the weekend.

1. A: It’s bound to rain on Saturday.

B: The forecast is good.

A: Yeh, but it always rains when we go camping.

1. A: Do you want to try the cake I brought?

B: Does it have nuts in it.

A: Oh yeh, it does. Sorry.

**Possible answer:**

There are a number of things you might have pointed out here. Here are a few possibilities:

Example (i):

A’s final utterance can be translated into a biconditional statement of the form ‘P 🡰🡲 Q’. A is saying that she will want to see the film if and only if someone other than John recommends it. You might also have made comments about earlier parts of the exchange but the deductive parts are less clear there.

Example (ii):

We could represent B’s final utterance as a material conditional along the lines of ‘if you’re having a party this weekend then the cancelled rubbish collection is a big deal. If we represent this as ‘P 🡺 Q’, then we can represent A’s previous utterance as suggesting that ‘¬ Q’.

Example (iii):

A’s final utterance could be represented as a material conditional along the lines of ‘if we go camping then it rains’ or, in a more complicated way, as stating that ‘for all occasions when we go camping, it rains’. This latter can be represented formally but we have not considered how to do this here.

Example (iv):

Deductive inferences are less transparent here. Suppose we translate ‘you want a

to try the cake’ as ‘Q’ and ‘it has nuts in it’ as ‘P’, then we can think of A’s initial utterance as asking whether Q and B’s response as asking whether P. This implicates that B thinks that ‘P 🡺 Q’, i.e. that B will not want to try the cake if it has nuts in it.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.2:*

Explore 4.2 encourages you to explore the nature of inductive inferences more closely.

* Here are examples of conversational exchanges. See if you can find any examples of inductive, or at least non-deductive, inferences being made here.

1. A: Here comes John.

B: OK. Get ready for fireworks!

1. A: So you’ve been teaching at Middlesex this year?

B: Yeh, it’s been great fun.

A: John says the students there are fantastic.

B: That’s right. I forgot he used to teach there.

1. A: Did you put salt in that pan?

B: Yeh, why?

A: You shouldn't put salt in with beans. It makes them go hard.

1. A: Do you fancy going to that concert on Saturday?

B: I love bluegrass.

**Possible answer:**

Once again, there are a number of things you might have pointed out here. Here are a few possibilities:

Example (i):

B makes clear her that she thinks there will be ‘fireworks’ when John arrives. This suggests an inductive inference about John and ‘fireworks’, i.e. B has noticed ‘fireworks’ whenever John arrives and inferred that there will always be ‘fireworks’ whenever John is there.

Example (ii):

Here you might focus on John’s reported view that the students at Middlesex are fantastic which is inductively inferred from working with students on a number of occasions. There are also a number of non-deductive, but not necessarily inductive, inferences which you might mention, e.g. that the fantastic students are an important part of what makes teaching at Middlesex fun, or that B has inferred that John used to work at Middlesex from A’s report of his comment.

Example (iii):

An inductive inference is behind the idea that salt makes bans go hard. You might also mention B’s inference that A must have asked about the salt for a reason and that salt might be problematic, B’s possible negative inference based on A ‘correcting’ her. And so on.

Example (iv):

Here, B’s utterance implicates that she wants to go to the concert. This conclusion depends on a non-deductive inference that the band playing on Saturday play bluegrass. This, together, with the proposition that B loves bluegrass, enables a deductive inference that B wants to go to the concert.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.3:*

Exercise 4.3 encourages you to explore the nature of the deductive and non-deductive inferences involved in utterance interpretation.

* Give as full an account as you can of some of the inferences involved in the following exchanges:

1. A: Is that chocolate the kids are eating?

B: Yeh. Their granny gave them two bars each.

A: Oh boy.

B: And some sweets.

A: Hit the panic button.

1. A: Have you seen Blue Valentine?

B: I went with John last week.

A: Did you cry?

B: I always cry.

1. *(Context: Mark Zuckerberg is defending himself against the claim that he ‘stole’ the idea for the social networking site Facebook from Camron and Tyles Winklevoss)*

Mark Zuckerberg: You know, you really don’t need a forensics team to get to the bottom of this. If you guys were the inventors of Facebook, you’d have invented Facebook.

1. *(From an article about the food critic and restaurant guide writer Egon Ronay)*

‘Once I was having lunch with a lady, having a difference of opinion, and she said ‘But Egon Ronay says. . .’, and I replied ‘But you’re talking to him’, and she said ‘No, I don’t mean you, I mean in *Egon Ronay*’. It’s traumatic.’

(From ‘Olives with Egon Ronay’, John Hind, The Observer, 15 May 2011. Available at: http:www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/jul/13/egon-ronay-food-tales)

**Possible answer:**

There is lots to say here and you might spend a long time discussing each example. Here are a few thoughts on each one.

Example (i):

This example is made complicated by the presence of utterances which are not representations of declarative sentences which means that it is not easy to see them as expressing a single proposition. *‘Oh boy’* is a kind of exclamative or expressive utterance. *‘And some sweets’* has ellipsis. *‘Hit the panic button’* is an imperative. In each case, there are inferences to be made to flesh these out. Particular inferences you might mention include: the implicature that there is trouble ahead if the kids eat chocolate and sweets (which has presumably come from an inductive inference based on the behaviour of these children or of children in general and can be stated in a material conditional along the lines of ‘if the children eat chocolate, they become over-excited and behave badly’); the complex, non-deductive inference from the metaphorical utterance *‘hit the panic button’* to the conclusion that the speaker is indicating that when the children have consumed sweets and chocolate, we are in a situation where ‘hitting the panic button’ (metaphorically) is appropriate.

Example (ii):

Two inferences I’d expect you to mention here are: that the question *‘Did you cry?’* is asking specifically whether B cried when watching Blue Valentine with John; that *‘I always cry’* should be fleshed out to express a proposition such as that B always cries when watching films which are emotional, about relationships, etc.

Example (iii):

The first part of Mark Zuckerberg’s utterance implicates that there is some simple reasoning to be done here. The second part has the form ‘P 🡺 P’. Of course, this can’t be what he intends. We need to enrich the first proposition to mean something such as ‘if you were correct in claiming that you invented Facebook and therefore that you should win this lawsuit’ and the second one to mean something such as ‘you would have created a site called Facebook and be the registered owners so that this lawsuit would not have arisen’. Of course, the fact that the utterance appears to express a proposition of the form ‘P 🡺 P’ contributes to the effect of the utterance. This is an example where the nature of an utterance makes the nature of the inferences we make in understanding it more salient.

Example (iv):

This example has to do with understanding who or what is being referred to by the noun phrase *‘Egon Ronay’*. The woman intends *‘Egon Ronay’* to refer to one of the restaurant guides written by Egon Ronay rather than the man she is dining with. Implicitly, she is saying she trusts what he decided to write at a previous time more than she trusts what he says while sitting opposite her. It is easy to see wy he was traumatised!

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.4:*

Exercise 4.4 encourages you to explore more closely how the presumption of optimal relevance constrains interpretations.

* Suggest an interpretation for B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges which is consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance. In each case, also suggest an interpretation which is likely to be less relevant because it would not give rise to enough effects and one which is likely to be less relevant because it would not be accessed first.

1. A: Have you heard about the party?

B: I’ve just seen John.

1. A: That new Terrence Malick film looks weird.

B: Everybody says it’s really good.

1. A: Did you put salt in that pan?

B: What if I did?

1. A (Edina): Have you had breakfast?

B (Patsy): Yes, in 1963.

(From *Absolutely Fabulous*, BBC TV)

**Possible answer:**

Again, there are several ways in which you might answer these. Here are some indicative answers.

Example (i):

Possible interpretation:

B knows about the party. She has just seen John and he has told her about it.

Interpretation with fewer effects (not enough to justify the processing effort involved):

B has just seen John.

(Note: it would not be relevant enough here for B just to be communicating that she had seen John and not to be communicating anything about whether she has heard about the party).

Interpretation not accessed first (and therefore not consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance):

B has seen John and he has told her about the party and some other exciting news he’s just received.

(Note: A could go on to speculate about other things John might have told B. However, the party interpretation is relevant enough and so any other conclusion are more A’s responsibility than B’s. This would change if B did something to indicate that there was more to be inferred, e.g. with a facial expression or unusual intonational structure.)

Example (ii):

Possible interpretation:

A significant number of people who have seen the new Terrence Malick film have said it’s good so it may be that the film is worth seeing after all.

Interpretation with fewer effects (not enough to justify the processing effort involved):

A significant number of people who have seen the new Terrence Malick film have said it’s good.

(Note: unless A derives the implicature that the film might be worth seeing, the utterance will not be relevant enough to justify the effort involved in processing it. The presumption of optimal relevance ensures that A will draw this conclusion.)

Interpretation not accessed first (and therefore not consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance):

There are many possibilities here. Anything which occurs to A beyond that the film might be worth seeing goes beyond what is guaranteed by the presumption of optimal relevance. These might include specific assumptions about what makes people say it’s good, which A will not be responsible for. There are different positions on how expressions such as *‘everybody’* are interpreted. One view might be that this encodes something quite strong, e.g. ‘all people in the world’, which is then weakened to a narrower scope (‘all people who have seen the film’). If that were so, then our suggested interpretation above comes ‘after’ the initial one. Suppose, however, that *‘everybody’* is quite loose and always has to be interpreted relative to a context. In this case, we might argue that a stronger interpretation such as ‘everybody in the world’ comes later and so this stronger interpretation is ruled out because it goes beyond a relevant interpretation accessed earlier. We might also discuss here the ‘looseness’ involved in understanding *‘everybody’*, i.e. that it is neither everybody in the world nor even everybody who has seen the film. In fact, it probably refers here to a small number of people who have reported their opinion directly to A or written or bradcast reviews of the film.

Example (iii):

Possible interpretation:

B wants to know why A wants to know whether B put salt in the pan, and is implicating that B is annoyed by the question.

Interpretation with fewer effects (not enough to justify the processing effort involved):

B wants to know why A wants to know whether B put salt in the pan.

(Note: this is actually a plausible interpretation and in some contexts this might be enough to justify the effort involved in processing the utterance. So it is a challenge to explain why the fuller interpretation above might be the one A goes for. If A accesses this weaker interpretation first, then there is no reason to go further and derive the negative implications. If the stronger interpretation comes first, then A should go for that one. A few things make it likely that the stronger interpretation will be accessed quickly, including that there is an element of conventionalisation in structures of the form *‘what if. . .’*, i.e. that we often use this form to imply that we are offended by a question.

Interpretation not accessed first (and therefore not consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance):

B is extremely worried that there will be serious consequences from having added salt to the pan.

(Note: this goes beyond ether of the interpretations above and so A should not derive this conclusion unless B has done something to suggest that A should go further than the initial interpretation, e.g. through body language or paralinguistic clues, such as using affective intonation).

Example (iv):

Possible interpretation:

Patsy is saying that she has breakfast at least once in her life and that this was in 1963. This also implicates that eating breakfast is not something she considers important and that her lifestyle makes eating breakfast a very unusual occurrence.

Interpretation with fewer effects (not enough to justify the processing effort involved):

Patsy is saying that she has breakfast at least once in her life and that this was in 1963

(Note: it would be odd to think simply that Patsy is letting us know about one occasion on which she has had breakfast. Nothing follows from it being in 1963 as opposed to at any other time. Therefore, we need to derive a humorous effect from the contrast between the way we might expect someone to answer this question and Patsy’s response. Part of the humour comes from the formulation of the reply. When we hear *‘Yes’* we are likely to think Patsy is letting us know that she had breakfast today and that she is not interested in eating just now. When we hear the rest of the utterance we realise that she is saying something different, which still implicates that she has no interest in breakfast just now).

Interpretation not accessed first (and therefore not consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance):

Anything which follows from the breakfast being in 1963 specifically is ruled out, e.g. that Patsy’s breakfast experience happened in the same year as the first Beatles album was released. This would be going beyond an accessible and plausible interpretation.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.5:*

Exercise 4.5 looks at how specific interpretations are constrained by the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic.

* Consider again the same examples you looked at in exercise 4.4. This time try to explain their interpretation with reference to the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic.

1. A: Have you heard about the party?

B: I’ve just seen John.

1. A: That new Terrence Malick film looks weird.

B: Everybody says it’s really good.

1. A: Did you put salt in that pan?

B: What if I did?

1. A (Edina): Have you had breakfast?

B (Patsy): Yes, in 1963.

(From *Absolutely Fabulous*, BBC TV)

**Possible answer:**

In these answers, you might choose to go into considerable detail, e.g. you might consider every single inference in each case, i.e. hypotheses about reference assignment, recovery of ellipsed material and so on. Or you might keep your discussion at the level of communicated propositions. The key thing in each case is to make clear how going down a path of least effort, the hearer arrives at a certain point at an interpretation which gives rise to enough effects to justify the effort involved in processing the utterance, and then stops. I will not go through each answer here, but here is a possible account of the interpretation of example (i):

A will be forming hypotheses continuously before, during and after B’s utterance. Before B speaks, A is expecting a response which indicates whether or not A knows about the party. When B says *‘I’*, A will assume that this refers to B. When B says she has seen *‘John’*, A will think abut people called John that he knows. As soon as he thinks of a John who knows about the party and will be likely to have mentioned it to B. he can access an interpretation on which B is saying that she has just seen that John and that he has told her about the party. This gives rise to enough effects to justify the effort involved in processing the utterance (answering the question, indicating how B knows about the party, and so on). At this point, then A has reached an interpretation which B could have intended to be consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance and can assume that he has reached the interpretation which the speaker intended.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 4.6:*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

. . . . .

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER FIVE:

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 5.1:*

Exercise 5.1 focuses on inferences we make in working out what Grice referred to as ‘what is said’.

* Spell out some of the inferences involved in working out ‘what is said’ by B in the following exchanges. Organise your answers into the disambiguation and reference assignment processes which Grice might have envisaged as contributing (although it is not clear whether he thought of these as inferential processes) and those which go beyond what Grice envisaged.

1. A: What does John do for a living?

B: He operates cranes on building sites.

1. A: I really can’t face the dishes after all the cooking I did earlier.

B: Fair enough.

1. A: Any idea what John might want to do after he leaves school.

B: I don’t know. He loves painting.

1. A: I wonder why they’re not asking John to look after their house when they’re on holiday this year.

B: He forgot to water the tomato plants last time and they all died.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 5.2:*

Exercise 5.2 asks you to explain what is involved in interpreting utterances from the point of view of a Gricean and a relevance-theoretic approach.

* Suggest an explanation of each utterance in the exchange in example (27) first on a Gricean approach and then on a relevance-theoretic one:

(27) Ellen: Good time last night?

Billy: Not exactly.

Ellen: What happened?

Billy: I drank too much, threw up and went home early.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 5.3:*

Exercise 5.3 asks you to think in more detail about the actual processes involved in disambiguation and reference assignment.

* Understanding B’s utterance in the following exchange involves more than one kind of disambiguation and more than one instance of reference assignment. First, see if you can identify each one. Then propose a Gricean and a relevance-theoretic account.

A: I her John had an interview at another university last week.

B: Yes. They offered him a chair with a good pension but he didn’t take it because of the money.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 5.4:*

Exercise 5.4 asks you to consider how to explain the interpretation of some elliptical utterances and to think further about the possibilities for ‘pro-drop’ in English.

* Propose a relevance-theoretic account of how B’s elliptical utterances in the following exchanges might be interpreted:

1. A: John just loves opera. Especially Verdi.

B: Really? Leaves me cold.

1. A: When’s your exam again?

B: Friday.

1. A: You made a right mess of the kitchen yesterday.

B: I didn't mean to.

1. A: You don’t mind that I ate the last brownie, do you?

B: Honestly!

* English is usually thought of as a language which does not allow ‘pro-drop’, i.e.. the systematic omission of subject pronouns. In languages such as Italian or Portuguese, most utterances which would have subject pronouns in English do not have overt pronouns. In Italian, ‘I speak’ is ‘parlo’, ‘they laugh’ is ‘ridono’, and so on. The fact that verb endings indicate the person and number of the verb is clearly relevant here. However, as we have seen, pro-drop is possible in English in some contexts. Can you suggest what is common to cases where subject pronouns can be omitted in English?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 5.5:*

Exercise 5.5 explores some of the enrichment processes involved in arriving at the explicatures of utterances.

* Identify some of the inferences hearers need to make in working out the explicatures of B’s utterances in the following exchanges and suggest an account of their interpretation from a relevance-theoretic point of view.

1. A: I only made around 20 brownies for the party. Do you think that’ll be enough?

B: Everyone doesn’t love chocolate.

1. A: Do you know who ate my chocolates?

B: John ate two of them.

1. A: Right, I’m off to my singing exam.

B: Remember to breathe.

1. A: I thought I’d just walk to the beach tomorrow morning.

B: That’s a walk

1. A: Can you play twelve-string guitar?

B: It’s the same.

1. A: Do you think I’m getting too anxious about my dentist appointment?

B: Well, you’re not going to die.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 5.6:*

Exercise 5.6 asks you to suggest relevance-theoretic explanations of a wider range of cases which a Gricean approach might handle with reference to the notion of generalised conversational implicature.

* In a Gricean approach, B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges is likely to be seen as communicating a generalised conversational implicature. Identify the generalised conversational implicature in each case and then suggest a relevance-theoretic account of how the utterance is likely to be understood.

1. A: Have you offered Bob a coffee?

B: He’s had three cups.

1. A: Do you think John’s ever tried sushi?

B: He’s been to Japan.

1. A: Have you spoke to John about his smoking?

B: I suggested he should cut back a bit and he bit my head off.

1. A: What do you think of John’s new book?

B: Some of it’s pretty good!

1. A: What did you do when you got back home last night?

B: It was a pretty wild evening! I had a cup of tea and went to bed.

1. A: Did you finish all the ice cream?

B: I might have done.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 5.7:*

Exercise 5.7 encourages you to think further about how to account for examples of ‘scalar implicature’ in general and on inferences associated with expressions of number in particular.

* Unlike Horn, Levinson and others, relevance theorists have not followed Grice in assuming that there is a distinction between ‘generalised’ and ‘particularised’ conversational implicatures. For relevance theorists, all implicatures arise because of a combination of specific factors, including the accessibility of particular assumptions at a particular moment and the presumption of optimal relevance. Make a note of any arguments you might find for or against the view that there are ‘default inferences’ as suggested by Grice and the ‘neo-Griceans’.
* Here are three things you might consider in considering the evidence for or against the notion of default inferences. Consider each one in turn, thinking about the extent to which it supports or disconfirms the relevance-theoretic view:

1. Noveck and others have explored the notion of ‘scalar implicature’ in a series of experiments (for discussion, see Sperber and Noveck 2002??, Noveck and Sperber 2007). One piece of evidence which has been replicated is that children tend to accept utterances such as the following while adults reject them:

‘Some elephants are mammals’

1. There are some utterances which seem to have en established conventional way of being understood. Here are two examples in British English:

To say that someone has been ‘economical with the truth’ is usally understood to mean that they have lied or been deceitful.

To say that someone is ‘tired and emotional’ is usually taken to mean (in a mock-euphmistic way) that they are drunk.

1. Noel Burton-Roberts (2010) has explored the notion of ‘cancellability’ which Grice proposed as a criterion to test whether as particular conclusion was a conversational implicature. Burton-Roberts suggests both that Grice only intended this notion to apply to generalised conversational implicatures and that the notion is not coherent if applied to particularised implicature.Burton-Roberts suggests that a speaker either intended something or she did not. If she notices that something might be concluded by an utterance and explicitly ‘cancels’ it, we should see this instead as a case of ‘clarification’. The notion might make sense, however, if we claim that some linguistic formulations automatically give rise to particular conclusions.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 5.8:*

Exercise 5.8 asks you to explore differences between relevance-theoretic and other approaches to the pragmatics of ‘what is said’.

* Propose a relevance-theoretic account for B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges:

1. A: How many students do you think will come to the revision class at the end of term?

B: They’ve all lost interest.

1. A: How do you think my talk went?

B: Well, nobody died.

1. A: Could you look after my kids next Saturday afternoon?

B: That’s asking something.

* Now consider how an account based on each of the following approaches would differ from the relevance-theoretic account:

1. a ‘minimalist’/’literalist’/’semantic’ approach
2. Bach’s approach assuming ‘what is said’ plus two levels of communicated content
3. Borg’s or Cappelen and Lepore’s approach with a notion of semantic content, a pragmatic notion of ‘what is said’ and implicatures
4. Kaszczolt’s ‘default semantics’ approach

* Consider what you think we might do to help decide which of the accounts discussed here is the most successful.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 5.9*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER SIX

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*EXERCISE 6.1:*

Exercise 6.1 asks you to consider the range of higher-level and lower-level explicatures conveyed by a range of utterances.

* Identify the some of the higher-level and lower-level explicatures which A is likely to derive in interpreting B’s utterance in the following exchanges:

1. *(A and B are in the living-room. B is reading a book)*

A: How did you get on at school today?

B: I’m reading.

1. A: What did John’s teacher say at the parents evening?

B: He’s reading at level 6.

1. A: What do you think John told Sue about the party?

B: It’ll be great fun. She should come.

1. A: I went to see that experimental theatre group last night. I’m going again tomorrow.

B: You enjoyed it?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 6.2:*

Exercise 6.2 asks you to consider the contribution made to the interpretation of utterances by a number of different kinds of linguistic expressions

* Consider each of the following kinds of linguistic expressions. What do each of them encode? What does each expression contribute to?

1. *this* as in *this delightful movie*
2. *please* as in *please get back to me*
3. *let’s* as in *let’s go to the pub*
4. imperative syntax (e.g. *talk to me*)

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 6.3:*

Exercise 6.3

Asks you to consider a range of examples which vary in terms of the strength of the range of explicatures they communicate and to consider the effects these give rise to.

* Identify explicatures likely to be communicated by B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges. How strong is each explicature? What kinds of effects do these ranges of explicatures give rise to?

1. A: Where’s the salt and pepper?

B: On the table.

1. A: Did you give the students their courseework exercise?

B: It looks really difficult! There’s so many questions! I haven’t studied all of this? Why’s the deadline so soon?

1. A: What’s your favourite poem?

B: Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 6.4*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

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*EXERCISE 7.1:*

Exercise 7.1 asks you to consider the difference between implications and implicatures and some of the social and other effects which follow from the range of implications and implicatures communicated by particular utterances.

* Consider B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges. Make a list of conclusions which A might derive from each one. Decide for each one whether it is an implicature or a non-communicated implication. Indicate where it is not clear how to categorise a particular conclusion and consider how variations in the accessibility of particular contextual assumptions affects the status of the conclusions:

1. *(A and B live together. B usually leaves for work at 8am)*

A: Do you want me to bring you up a coffee?

B: It’s ten past eight.

1. *(A and B live together. A and B had a major argument and have not spoken for two weeks)*

A: Do you fancy a cuppa?

B: I’d love one.

1. A: Did you see the end of the test match?

B: I don’t really watch sports.

1. A: Do you recycle cardboard?

B: I think it’s really important to think about what we do to the planet.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 7.2:*

Exercise 7.2 asks you to consider the distinctions and connections among contextual assumptions, implicated premises and implicated conclusions

* Identify the implicated premises and implicated conclusions communicated by B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges. Propose an explanation of how each of these would be derived by A in interpreting the utterance.

1. A: Fancy going for a walk?

B: It’s raining.

1. A: I thought I’d do a risotto for when John and Sue come on Saturday.

B: Parmesan isn’t vegetarian.

1. A: Do you think the kids will come to my concert?

B: On a Saturday?

1. *(B is A’s boss. A has accidentally copied B in to an email complaining about his job and B. B sends the following email to A and copies in the colleague A emailed with his complaint*)

B: I just received your email. Thank you so much for keeping me informed of attitudes in the workplace.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 7.3:*

Exercise 7.3 asks you to consider the derivation of particular implicatures in particular contexts, how the relative accessibility of particular assumptions affects interpretations, and how far we might diverge from this idealised account.

* Suggest an account of how B’s utterances will be understood in the following exchanges. In each case, make clear how the relevance-guided comprehension procedure gives rise to the interpretation and how the interpretation depends on the accessibility of particular contextual assumptions.

1. *(A and B have spent the night together. At the end of the evening they approach B’s home)*

B: Do you want to come up for a coffee?

A: I don’t drink coffee.

B: I haven’t got any!

(from the film *Brassed Off*, 1996, dir. Mark Herman)

1. A: I’m just going to make some coffee. Do you want some?

B: The kettle’s just boiled.

1. A: What’s Sally’s house like?

B: Hard to say. What do you think of china dogs and garden gnomes?

1. A: How did your exam go?

B: [starts to whistle ‘Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life’]

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 7.4:*

Exercise 7.4 asks you to consider how the relative strength of implicatures varies according to which contextual assumptions are accessible in particular situations and at some of the effects which arise because of variation in strength of implicatures.

* Consider again example (54):

*(At a summer garden party, Billy is cooking over a barbecue grill)*

Billy: Would you like a burger?

Ellen: I’m vegetarian.

Look at the list of possible implications and implicatures suggested in the chapter. First, consider whether you agree that these are possible conclusions which Billy might derive. Consider any others which might occur to him. For each one, consider how Ellen might have adjusted her utterance to make that conclusion more likely or less likely to be derived as an implicature.

* Here are some literary examples, all of them from poetry. For each one, consider how wide you think the range of potential implicatures is. Could you arrange these in order of how wide the range of implicatures could be? To what extent does a discussion of weak implicatures help to explain how the poem is understood

1. *This Be The Verse*

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.

They might not mean to, but they do.

They fill you with the faults they had

And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn

By fools in old-style hats and coats,

Who half the time were soppy-stern

And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.

It deepens like a coastal shelf.

Get out as early as you can,

And don't have any kids yourself.

(Philip Larkin)

1. They tuck you up, your mum and dad.

They read you Peter Rabbit, too.

They give you all the treats they had

And add some extra, just for you.

They were tucked up when they were small,

(Pink perfume, blue tobacco-smoke),

By those whose kiss healed any fall,

Whose laughter doubled any joke.

Man hands on happiness to man.

It deepens like a coastal shelf.

So love your parents all you can

And have some cheerful kids yourself

(Adrian Mitchell)

1. *Sixty One*

Sixty-one and on a diet.

Will I end up thin or fat

When my heart and brain go quiet

Sixty-one and on a diet

Yet again. My hopes run riot:

Better life, new start – all that.

Sixty-one and on a diet.

Will I end up thin or fat?

(Wendy Cope)

1. *Earthy Anecdote*

Every time the bucks went clattering

Over Oklahoma

A firecat bristled in the way.

Wherever they went,

They went clattering,

Until they swerved

In a swift, circular line

To the right, because of the firecat.

Or until they swerved

In a swift, circular line

To the left,

Because of the firecat.

The bucks clattered.

The firecat went leaping,

To the right, to the left,

And bristled in the way.

Later, the firecat closed his bright eyes

And slept.

(Wallace Stevens, Selected Poems, 1953, Faber and Faber, London: 9)

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 7.5:*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER EIGHT

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*EXERCISE 8.1:*

Exercise 8.1 asks you to explain as many of the inferences involved in understanding (1)-(4) as you can, and to consider how the likelihood of each of these inferences is affected by contextual assumptions.

* Consider each of (1)-(4). Suggest a set of contextual assumptions which might be accessed by someone interpreting each one. With reference to the relevance-guided comprehension heuristic, propose as full an account as you can of how you think an utterance of each one might be interpreted given these assumptions.

1. Here.
2. It’s the same.
3. You’re too late.
4. You’re going to die.

* Now suggest a different set of contextual assumptions for each one and propose an account of how the utterane might be interpreted given these new assumptions.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 8.2:*

Exercise 8.2 asks you to consider some examples containing expressions which have been thought to encode procedural meanings.

* Each of these expressions have been considered to encode procedural meanings. For each one, consider what you think the encoded procedure might be. What kinds of evidence can be seen as confirming or disconfirming the view that theior meanings are procedural? How might you find out more?

1. *this*
2. *however*

1. *well*
2. *oh*
3. falling and rising tones (as in the contrast between *‘You don’t want coffee’* said with a falling or a rising prosodic contour)

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 8.3:*

Exercise 8.3 asks you to consider a range of examples, focusing on the contribution of particular expressions with conceptual and procedural meanings.

* Propose an account of how B’s utterance might be understood in each of the following exchanges. In proposing your account, identify which terms you think have encoded procedural meanings.

1. A: I’ve asked John to be careful driving home tonight.

B: But he won’t.

1. A: Will it rain tonight, do you think?

B: Oh I doubt it.

1. A: Do you want to go and find John? He’s out walking in the field behind the house.

B: In these shoes? I don’t think so.

1. A: John seems happy enough watching telly while we all slave away in here.

B: Don't let’s start that again. Please!

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 8.4:*

Exercise 8.4 asks you to consider what is encoded by a range of expressions in English.

* Propose a semantic analysis for each of the following terms:

1. *moreover*
2. *hopefully*
3. imperative syntax
4. marked contrastive stress (e.g. *‘I don’t LIKE cheese. I love it’*)

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 8.5:*

Exercise 8.5 asks you to consider you to consider how to decide whether a range of phenomena might encode procedural meanings.

* Here is a brief description of four phenomena. In each case, consider whether it would make sense to treat these as encoding procedural meanings. How could we test the hypothesis that these are examples of procedural meaning.

1. Some English speakers around Glasgow use the word *but* at the end of an utterance. Here are three examples which would sound natural to a speaker of this variety:

*‘This is a nice restaurant but’*

*‘I’m really thirsty but’*

*‘Lend us a couple of quid but’*

1. In the African language Sissala (spoken in parts of Ghana), a marker *re* has been analysed by Regina Blass (1990) as a marker of interpretive use. Simplifying greatly, we might include the marker *re* in utterances such as the following:

*‘They say it’s going to rain tomorrow’*

*[In response to a question about what someone else thought of something]*

*‘He didn’t like it’*

1. For speakers of English, spreading your mouth and intaking your breath sharply indicates that you think something is dangerous or ill-advised.
2. Universally, i.e. for all cultural groups where this has been considered, people ‘flash’ their eyebrows when they see someone they recognise. The ‘eyebrow flasher’ directs their face towards the other person and ‘flashes’ their eyebrows up and then down.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 8.6:*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER NINE

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*EXERCISE 9.1:*

Exercise 9.1 focuses on some of the inferences involved in understanding words in context.

* Consider the words in bold in each of the following examples. Describe the concept which you think this word usually encodes and then explain how it is likely to be adjusted to have a particular sense in this context.

1. A: Here, I made you a cup of coffee.

B: You’re an **angel**.

1. A: I really tried to annoy John yesterday but nothing I said bothered him

B: I know. He’s a **sponge**.

1. A: I finished two articles this week and prepared the talk for next week’s conference.

B: Wow, you’re **flying** right now.

1. A: Fancy meeting up next week sometime?

B: Sure. I’ll see if I’ve got any **windows** and get back to you.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 9.2:*

Exercise 9.2 asks you to explore examples which involve concept broadening and narrowing.

* Consider the emboldened word in each of the following exchanges. Describe how you think the encoded concept will be adjusted in understanding this utterance and decide whether this counts as a case of narrowing, of loosening, or of both simultaneously.

1. A: I looked for George in the canteen but I couldn't see him. Which table does he usually sit at?

B: The **round** one in the corner.

1. A: Did you see that outfit Fred was wearing? Talk about bling!

B: I know. He’s a **rock god**.

1. A: Did you pick up a copy of that new novel you were talking about?

B: No, they didn’t have any with a **hard** cover.

1. A: Did you read John’s thesis?

B: Yes, it was interesting, but what a lot of **holes** in the argument!

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 9.3:*

Exercise 9.3 asks you to compare ‘ad hoc’ concept accounts of lexical meaning with earlier relevance-theoretic accounts.

* Consider B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges. First, propose an account based on the earlier relevance-theoretic account, which assumes a less than literal relationship between the proposition expressed and the speaker’s thought. Then propose an account based on the more recent ‘ad hoc concept’ approach.

1. A: What do you think of the new version of the script?

B: It’s OK, but it’s a bit flat.

1. A: Did you crucify John for being late?

B: I’m not a dalek.

1. A: I hear they’ve invite Pauline and Peggy to the party.

B: Fasten your seat belts. It’s going to be a bumpy night.

1. A: What did Flaubert say about that other guy’s writing?

B: His ink is pale.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 9.4:*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER TEN

??include Jimmy Connors on someone was dying out there??

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*EXERCISE 10.1:*

Exercise 10.1 asks you to consider Grice’s account of non-literal utterances and some problems with the Gricean approach.

* Consider the metaphorical and ‘loose’ uses of language in the following exchanges. Hoe might they be handled on Grice’s approach? To what extent does each example raise problems for Grice’s approach?:

1. *(B is about to sing a solo in front of a large audience for the first time)*

A: Are you nervous?

B: My legs are jelly.

1. A: Do you think John will be nervous before the match on Saturday.

B: Of course! He’ll be playing in front of 50,000 people

1. A: Do you know anybody who’s been around a long time and might know why we started having staff meetings on Wednesday afternoons?

B: John should know. He’s been here since the beginning of time.

1. A: I asked John whether he knew how to use an interactive whiteboard and he went ballistic!

B: I think you’ve upset him.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 10.2:*

Exercise 10.2 asks you to consider examples which illustrate the distinction between descriptive and interpretive interpretation.

* Consider B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges. Decide whether the utterance is likely to be understood representing a thought which is a description or an interpretation. In some cases, you might decide that both options are likely. Explain what makes each one likely to be descriptive, interpretive, or vague between the two:

1. A: What did John say when you told him they’d asked you to work overtime at the weekend?

B: Not to do it.

1. A: Did you say John’s refusing to help?

B: He’s tired after a long day at work.

1. A: They’re saying we should coach students directly on specific exam topicsa now.

B: Fantastic. What a great idea.

1. A: That actress we were talking about has pulled out of filming to go on a meditation holiday.

B: It’s not easy being the nation’s sweetheart.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 10.3:*

Exercise 10.3 asks you to consider some literal and less-than-literal utterances and account for them based on the approach just outlined on which the hearer’s task is to identify the communicated implications of an utterance without first considering whether the utterance is to be understood as literal.

* Explain as fully as you can how B’s utterance is likely to be understood with reference to the account of literal and non-literal interpretation just presented in this chapter:

1. A: Are you pleased that your partner is pregnant?

B: I’m over the moon.

1. A: Are the Filth Fairies still your favourite band?

B: Nobody likes them any more.

1. A: Did you say you and John don't understand each other very well?

B: My signal breaks up every time I speak to him.

1. A: What did Flaubert say about Leconte de Lisle?

B: His ink is pale.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 10.4:*

Exercise 10.4 asks you to apply the weak implicature account to some literal and non-literal utterances, including relatively conventional and more creative metaphors.

* Consider again the same examples presented in the previous exercise. Explain as fully as you can how B’s utterance is likely to be understood with reference to the weak implicature account just presented in this chapter ?????:

1. A: Are you pleased that your partner is pregnant?

B: I’m over the moon.

1. A: Are the Filth Fairies still your favourite band?

B: Nobody likes them any more.

1. A: Did you say you and John don't understand each other very well?

B: My signal breaks up every time I speak to him.

1. A: What did Flaubert say about Leconte de Lisle?

B: His ink is pale.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 10.5:*

Exercise 10.5 asks you to account for a number of examples with reference to the notion of ad hoc concept construction, to compare these accounts with earlier relevance-theoretic accounts and accounts based on other approaches, and to consider possible ways of accounting for ‘emergent properties’ in understanding metaphorical and non-metaphorical utterances.

* First, consider the same examples from the previous exercises one more time. Explain how these would be handled on the ad hoc concept account. Compare the three accounts we have looked at so far. Identify any problems the examples raise for this account, contrast this account with accounts based on other approaches we have considered so far, and consider which account seems to handle each example most successfully:

1. A: Are you pleased that your partner is pregnant?

B: I’m over the moon.

1. A: Are the Filth Fairies still your favourite band?

B: Nobody likes them any more.

1. A: Did you say you and John don't understand each other very well?

B: My signal breaks up every time I speak to him.

1. A: What did Flaubert say about Leconte de Lisle?

B: His ink is pale.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 10.6:*

Exercise 10.6 asks you to suggest accounts of a number of examples based on the assumption that irony involves interpretive use which is implicitly attributive and which expresses an implicitly dissociative attitude.

* With reference to the approach which treats irony as involving attributive use, propose an account of B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges, assuming that it is taken to be an ironic utterance:

1. *(A has just spilled red wine on B’s carpet)*

A: Oh damn! I’m really sorry. I hope you’re not too upset about it.

B: I’m not upset at all. I love it.

1. A: What do you think if I invite Fred on Friday?

B: I'd say that’s the best idea you’ve ever had.

1. A: I hope you’re not offended that I didn’t make it to your party last week?

B: Not at all. Only the very best people have the courage to behave like that.

1. A: I’m going to make myself a cuppa. Make one yourself if you fancy one.

B: Hooray! The age of chivalry is not dead.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 10.7:*

Exercise 10.7 asks you to consider how Grice’s account might explain a range of examples, some of which raise problems for his approach.

* Consider B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges. Consider how Grice’s account would explain their interpretation and identify any problems they raise for his approach:

1. *(A has just spilled red wine on B’s carpet)*

A: Oh damn! I’m really sorry. I hope you’re not too upset about it.

B: Don’t worry. I love the effect. Why don’t you spill another glass or two?

1. A: What do you think if I invite Fred on Friday?

B: Well, it’s not the best idea you’ve ever had.

1. A: I hope you’re not offended that I didn’t make it to your party last week?

B: Why stand on ceremony when you’re clearly a superior breed?

1. A: I’m going to make myself a cuppa. Make one yourself if you fancy one.

B: Who says the age of chivalry is dead?

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 10.8:*

Exercise 10.8 asks you to consider how a pretence account might explain a range of examples, some of which raise problems for this approach.

* Consider B’s utterance in each of the following exchanges. Consider how a pretence account would explain their interpretation and identify any problems they raise for his approach:

1. A: Get your car out of my driveway right this minute! I don't care how ill your father is!

B: Thanks so much for your consideration.

1. A: This is the day you’ve got that double dentist appointment.

B: Hooray! My lucky day!

1. *(Based on a reported utterance by Dorothy Parker)*

A: The President has passed away.

B: How could they tell?

1. A: I hear you arrested four people this morning and scared off some burglars from a jewellery store.

B: Oh yes. Another boring day at the office.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 10.9:*

Exercise 10.9 asks you to consider some of the evidence from mind-reading tasks which are relevant to different accounts of metaphorical and ironic processing.

* Happé’s work suggests that the ability to understand metaphorical utterances correlates with ‘first-order’ mind-reading ability and the ability to understand ironic utterances correlates with ‘second-order’ mind-reading ability, i.e. subjects who have problems with first-order mind-reading are likely to find metaphors difficult to process and subjects who have problems with second-order mind-reading are lilely to find ironic utterances difficult to process.

1. First, explain what counts as ‘first-order’ mind reading.
2. Second, explain what counts as ‘second-order’ mind-reading
3. Now explain what Happé’s results suggest
4. What other questions does this raise? You might approach this by considering what other kinds of tests it would be interesting to try or by considering how exactly mind-reading abilities might be involved in understanding metaphor and irony.

. . . . .

*EXERCISE 10.10:*

As in every chapter, this final exercise asks you to adjust the list of questions you have come up with so far by compiling new questions which have occurred to you while reading this chapter and to think about the kinds of things which might count as answers to any questions you have come up with so far. First, add new questions to your ongoing list. Second, consider all of your questions and think about possible ways of answering them.

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EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER ELEVEN:

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EXERCISE 11.1:

Exercise 11.1 asks you to consider questions and topics you have looked at throughout the book as a whole and to think about how far you have developed your understanding while working in it.

* Look at the list of questions and comments on them which yo have been working on throughout the book. Consider for each one how far you have come in developing answers to them. Second, consider what you might do now in order to find out more about each one.

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EXERCISE 11.2:

Exercise 11.2 asks you to think about specific topics raised in the chapter and elsewhere and to consider possible projects you might develop in order to find out more.

* Run through the list of research topics mentioned in this chapter. Make a list for each one of new questions they raise and consider how you might find out more in order to develop answers.
* Finally, consider what you have discovered about Relevance Theory as a whole and pragmatics from reading this book. How much do you think your understanding has developed from reading this book? How well do you think Relevance Theory answers the questions which any pragmatic theory aims to answer.
* I hope you have enjoyed reading this book, thinking about the questions it discusses, and working on the exercises. If you have any remaining questions about anything discussed in the book, or about how to find out more on specific topics, please contact me at: [billylinguist@gmail.com](mailto:billylinguist@gmail.com)

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