IMPLICATURE

Clarifying summaries of the material to help fill in the gaps and build confidence in our understanding of the core concepts...

(Initial) Defintions

Implicature   information conveyed by a speaker but not literally expressed; notably, not truth-conditional => their truth does not influence the truth of the utterance; otherwise, we have an *entailment**

Conventional Implicature   the implicature is not dependent on the context and cannot be cancelled; otherwise, we have a *conversational implicature*

He spared me the journey +> I did not want to make the journey.

Generalised Implicature   a conversational implicature that can be described in a general sense; however, can be cancelled; otherwise, a *particularised implicature*

This tea is good. +> This tea is not great.
(but also could utter) This tea is good; in fact, it's great.

* Technically, we have either an entailment or a presupposition.

Gricean Maxims

Quality   do not say what you belive to be false or unsupported

Quantity   (a) give as much information as needed; but
(b) give no more information than is needed

Relation   be relevant

Manner   (a) avoid obsurity, ambiguity; (b) be brief and orderly

Gricean Maxims

Quality   do not say what you belive to be false or unsupported

"I am wearing slippers" +> I believe that I am wearing slippers.

Quantity   (a) give as much information as needed; but
(b) give no more information than is needed

"I have two brothers" +> I do not have three brothers.

Relation   be relevant

Q: "What kind of ice cream do you like?" A: "I love chocolate."
+> I love chocolate ice cream.

Manner   (a) avoid obsurity, ambiguity; (b) be brief and orderly

"I was born in Paris"
+> I was born in Paris, France (said outside of Maine)

Horn (1984, 2012)

Quality is consider external to the other maxims and everything else is replaced with two:

Q-principal   make contribution sufficent
say as much as you can (given R-principal)
addressee/hearer-based

R-principal   make your contribution necessary
say no more than you must (given Q-principal)
speaker-based

Horn (1984, 2012)

Note that the principals tell us how a particular implicature would be made, but not always what implicature would be made. For example, from last time, note that there are often multiple implicatures that are possible from a single utterance:

"Dave broke a finger yesterday"
    +> Dave broke his own finger.

R-principal
    Implicates missing information

"Dave broke a finger yesterday"
    +> Dave broke someone else's finger.

Q-principal
    Implicates negative of a stronger statement

Both of these are possible depending on the surrounding discourse and cultural setting of the utterance!

Levinson (1987, 2000)

A slightly different re-formulation than Horn, with three principals based on speaker/addresse differences rather than an opposition between two features:

Q-principal   *Speaker*: Do not say less than required (modulo the I-principal).
Addressee: What is not said is not the case.

I-principal   *Speaker*: Do not say more than required (modulo the I-principal).
Addressee: What is generally said is specifically exemplified.

M-principal   *Speaker*: Do not use a marked expression without reason.
Addressee: What is said in a marked way conveys a marked meaning.

Difference between I- and M-principals is that first is the content and second is the manner of the utterance.

Levinson (1987, 2000)

Some specific sub-types of Q-implicature.

HORN SCALES

The tea is warm +> The tea is not hot.
John tried to give up smoking +> John did not succeed in giving up smoking.

RANK ORDER

My father was a lieutenant during WWII +> My father was not a general during WWII.

HIRSCHBERG SCALES

Q: Have they gotten divorced? A: They got seperated +> They are not yet divorced.

INCLUSION-EXCLUSION

The University offers language courses in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Latin
    +> The University does not offer courses in Italian

Levinson (1987, 2000)

Some specific sub-types of I-implicature.

CONJUNCTION BUTTRESSING

John pressed the button and the bell rang.

+> John pressed the button and then the bell rang.

+> John pressed the button causing the bell to ring.

+> John pressed the button in order to make the bell ring.

CONDITION PERFECTION

If you buy me pizza, I will help you with your math homework.

+> I will not help you with your math homework if you do not buy my pizza.

LEXICAL NARROWING

John doesn't drink.

+> John doesn't drink alcohol.

Levinson (1987, 2000)

More examples of I-implicature; and these are just a few of the many identified categories!

MIRROR MAXIM

      Bob and Laura bought a BWM +> Bob and Laura together bought a single BMW.

INDIRECT SPEECH ACT

      Have you got a watch? +> Do you know what time it is and please tell me?

BRIDGING-CROSS REFERENCE

      She toured the centre of the town. The Hus monument is stunning.
           +> The Hus monument is in the town centre.

Levinson (1987, 2000)

M-implicture only exists if there are two equivalent ways of denoting the *exact same thing* but one is more common than the other. I don't know of any general subtypes of these, but here are two examples:

"The timetable is reliable" (unmarked)
    +> The timetable is at least as reliable as one would expect.
"The timetable is not unreliable" (marked)
    +> The timetable is less reliable than you would expect.

"I waited for the student in my office." (unmarked)
    +> I waited a reasonable amount of time for the student.
"I waited and waited for the student in my office." (marked)
    +> I waited an unreasonable amount of time for the student.

Relevance Theory (Wilson & Sperber, 1986)

Part of a more expansive cognitive theory about how communication works. Built on two principals:

– the hearer assumes what is said is relevant enough to be worth processing
– the utterance is the most relevant communication that would convey the desired information

The theory also adds a third level of processing:

– **what is said**: the semantic layer of what is literally communicated
– **what is explicated**: enriching utterance with information to make it truth-evaluable
– **what is implicated**: non-truth conditional meaning intended by the speaker

Relevance Theory (Wilson & Sperber, 1986)

Here is a common example of how relevance theory might interpret an utterance:

Q: "Do you want to see a movie tonight?" A: "I need to take a math test Friday."

(explicated) I need to take a mathematics test <u>this</u> Friday.
(implicated) I cannot go to the movies because I am studying for the test.

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The differences between **explicature/implicature** and semantics/pragmatics can be subtle and are often debated. The same can be said for the four implicature theories we have explored. Try to understand the different approachs and how they may be useful for understanding pragmatic meanings, but don't feel that you should be able fit every implicature neatly into each framework.