MUSIC AND VISUAL NARRATIVES: THE ROLE OF IMPLICATURES

INTRODUCTION

Implicature is one of the tools that ease the flow of communication; it represents an implicit filler of information (Grice 1975).

Conversational implicatures: inferences that depend on features of the conversational context and are not determined by the conventional meaning of the sentences uttered.

Ex. Anne took off her shoes and she jumped on the bed.
= Anne took off her shoes before jumping on the bed.

CONTEXT

Iconicity: the ability to enrich the meaning of an utterance by replicating the same inferential typologies of natural language (Schlenker, 2019).

Motion pictures: the information is derived by means of inferences that can be drawn from
the spatial coherence of visual narratives (Kraft et al. , 1991)
the anaphoric power of free perception (Abusch and Root, 2017)
the consistency of viewpoint (Cumming, 2017)

Music: the information is derived by means of inferences that can be drawn from
musical properties of the tonal pitch space (Schlenker, 2019)
"its virtual sources" (Schlenker, 2018)
the pragmatic reconstruction of musical meaning aimed at preventing semantic contradictions (Reda, 2020)
expression of basic emotions (happy, sad, scared) in Western music can be recognized universally (Fritz, et al., 2009)

PROPOSAL

Conversational Implicatures may also derive from a violation of one (or more) Gricean maxims. Both motion pictures and music provide examples of these violations, allowing the information to be obtained by means of implicatures.
The violation of the Gricean maxim is understood through implicature while respecting the continuity principle.

1. MOTION PICTURES-ONLY IMPLICATURES

a) SPATIAL IMPLICATURES:
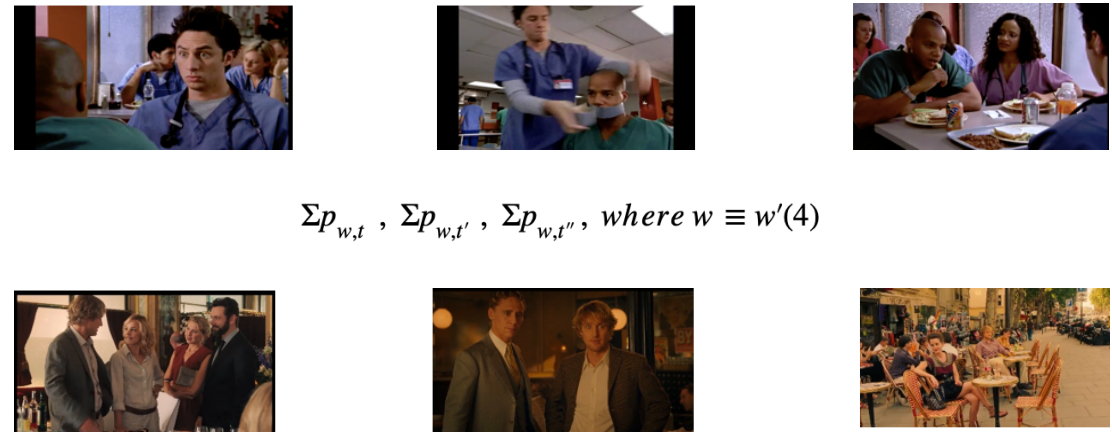[quantity violation] : the violation is caused by the fragmentary use of pictures.

$$\Sigma p_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t'} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t''} (1)$$

b) IMAGINATIVE IMPLICATURES:
[relation/quality violation] : the violation is caused by the contrast between different depicted worlds.

$$\Sigma p_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w',t'} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t''} (2) \qquad \Sigma p_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w',t'} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t'} (3)$$

$$\Sigma p_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t'} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t''} \ , \ where \ w \equiv w'(4)$$

2. MOTION PICTURES/LANGUAGE IMPLICATURES:

[quantity violation] – The violation is caused by the redundant use of language and pictures

$$\Sigma p_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t'} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t''} \qquad \Sigma l_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma l_{w,t'} \ , \ \Sigma l_{w,t''} \ where \ p = l$$

3. MOTION PICTURES/MUSIC IMPLICATURES:

[Relation violation] - The violation is caused by the contrast between what is shown in the frame and the sentiment of the soundtrack.

$$\Sigma p_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t'} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w,t''} \qquad \Sigma m_{w',t} \ , \ \Sigma m_{w',t'} \ , \ \Sigma m_{w',t''}$$


> **MUSIC**: it's meant more than what is played.

1. MUSIC-ONLY IMPLICATURES:

When some elements of the melody or tempo change, the listener's perception is pushed to believe that something in that world has changed too. In some ways, the change in the rhythm or in the melody itself enriches the meaning of the acoustic utterance.

[Quality/Relation violation]

Ex. "Death and all his friends" by Coldplay $\qquad \Sigma m_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma m_{w',t''} \ , \ \Sigma m_{w'',t''} \ , \ \Sigma p_{w',t''''}$
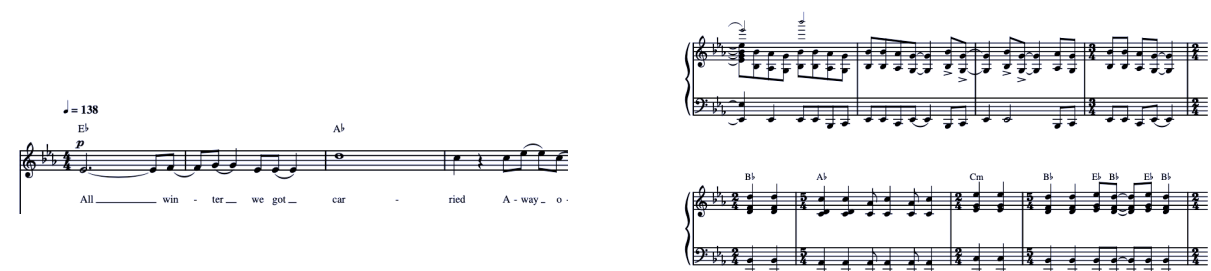
2. MUSIC/LANGUAGE IMPLICATURES:

The violation is derived from the contrast between musical segments and instrumental melodies.

[Quality/Relation violation]

Ex. Of Monsters and Men "Little Talks" $\qquad \Sigma m_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma m_{w,t'} \ , \ \Sigma m_{w,t''} \qquad \Sigma m_{w,t} \ , \ \Sigma m_{w,t'} \ , \ \Sigma m_{w,t''}$

OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Can we empirically test these intuitions?
2. Can we include gesture semantics into this framework? How?
3. Would it be possible to find a « cooperative principle » for music ?
4. How does language semantics work when considered along with music? Does it become more abstract?

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