

Presuppositions

1 On Monday ...

- Conversational implicatures are consequences of a **cooperative principle** that the discourse participants follow the **conversational maxims** (Quantity, Quality, Relevance, Manner)
- Unlike entailments, implicatures are cancellable.
- Scalar implicatures (see Sauerland 2012 for a review)
 - Lexical approach
 - Pragmatic approach
 - Grammatical approach

2 Scalar implicatures in downward-entailing contexts

- Scalar implicatures are not evoked in (1a) and (2a).
 - (1) *Under the semantic scope of negation*
 - a. John didn't invite Andy or Billy.
 - i. × Not that [John invited Andy or Billy **but not both**].
 - ii. ✓ Not that [John invited Andy or Billy or both].
 - b. Andy or Billy wasn't invited by John.
 - (2) *In the antecedent of a conditional*
 - a. If John read some of the books, he will get full credits.
 - i. × If John read some **but not all** of the books, he will ...
 - ii. ✓ If John read at least of the books, he will ...
 - b. If John hands in the homework by tomorrow, he will get some of the credits.
- The **scale of strength** is reversed in downward-entailing context. For instance, the exclusive reading of *or* is stronger in positive statements, whereas the inclusive reading is stronger in negative statements.
 - (3) a. $p \vee_{excl} q \Rightarrow p \vee_{incl} q$.
b. $\neg[p \vee_{incl} q] \Rightarrow \neg[p \vee_{excl} q]$.
 - (4) **Maximize Strength Hypothesis**
In a sentence that contains a scalar clause, the strengthening of the scalar clause is licensed only if this strengthening operation does not weaken the meaning of the entire sentence.

3 Presupposition

3.1 Presuppositions and presupposition triggers

- The possessive phrases (a **presupposition trigger**) trigger an existential inference that “John has a daughter” (a **presupposition**). In conversations, this existential inference is taken for granted (i.e., being part of the background).
 - (5) a. John’s daughter will come.
b. John’s daughter won’t come.
- More presupposition triggers:
 - (6) a. John **knows** that Mary hates Bill. Cognitive factive verbs
b. Mary hates Bill.
 - (7) a. John **is happy** that Mary agrees to marry him. Emotive factive verbs
b. Mary agrees to marry John.
 - (8) a. Mary bakes cookies **again**. Additive adverbs
b. Mary has baked cookies before.
 - (9) a. **The** student is smart. Definite determiners
b. There is an unique student in the context.
 - (10) a. **It was JOHN who** broke the computer. Clefts
b. Someone broke the computer.
 - (11) a. **She** is brave! Gender features
b. The person pointed at is a female.

Exercise: Find out the presupposition triggers in the following sentence:

- (12) He is surprised that even the neighbor whom he met only in the parking lot is willing to help his son.

3.2 Presupposition projection

- If ϕ presupposes p , the presupposition p is inherited by “ $\neg\phi$ ”, “if ϕ , then ψ ”, “perhaps ϕ ” and “ $\phi?$ ”.
 - (13) a. John’s daughter is coming.
b. John’s daughter is not coming.
c. If John’s daughter is coming, then we will have a party tonight.
d. Perhaps John’s daughter is coming.
e. Is John’s daughter coming?
Presupposition: John has a daughter.

Exercise: Use the projection test, demonstrate that an *it*-cleft triggers an existential presupposition.

Exercise: Identify whether the presupposition of “John’s daughter is coming” is projected in each of the following complex sentences or not.

- (14) a. If the train arrives on time, then John’s daughter is coming.
 b. If John has a daughter, then his daughter is coming.
 c. Either John’s daughter is coming, or John doesn’t have a daughter.

Discussion: Both (a-b) yield the inference (c). Based on the projectability of presuppositions, can we conclude that (c) is a presupposition of (a) and (b)? Why or why not?

- (15) a. All of the students left.
 b. Not all of the students left.
 c. Some of the students left.

3.3 Presupposition accommodation

- A presupposition of a sentence must normally be part of the common ground of the utterance context in order for the sentence to be felicitous. This process of an addressee assuming that a presupposition is true (even in the absence of explicit information that it is), is called **presupposition accommodation**.
- If the presupposition cannot be properly accommodated (i.e., the presupposition is not true in the common ground), then we say that there is a **presupposition failure**.

- (16) a. # John’s daughter is coming, but John doesn’t have a daughter.
 b. [There are two TFs for LING 106.] # The TF of LING 106 is very helpful.

- In third-value logic, if a sentence suffers a presupposition failure, its value is ‘#’ (undefined).

- (17) If p is a presupposition of ϕ , then ϕ is undefined whenever p is not true.

p	ϕ_p
1	1 or 0
0	#
#	#

- We know that presuppositions project over negation. But, in the following sentence, the presuppositions from the negative clause isn’t true. Why is it that this sentence is felicitous?

- (18) John’s daughter is not coming, since John doesn’t have a daughter.

The existential presupposition of *John’s daughter* is accommodated under the semantic scope of negation.

- (19) a. # **John has a daughter**, and it is not the case that [his daughter is coming], since he doesn’t have a daughter. Global accommodation
 b. ✓ It is not the case that [**John has a daughter** and his daughter is coming], since he doesn’t have a daughter. Local accommodation

4 Distinguish presuppositions, entailments, and implicatures

- Definitions:
 - p entails q (written as " $p \Rightarrow q$ ") means: whenever p is true, q is true.
 - p presupposes q (written as " p_q ") means: q is backgrounded and taken for granted by p .
 - p (conversationally) implicates q means: q follows from the interaction of the truth conditions of p together with general principles of conversational exchange.
- If p has an inference q , we can use the following tests to identify whether q is an entailment/ presupposition/ implicature of q .
 - Contradiction test
If p entails q , then " p but not q " should be intuitively contradictory.
 - Projection test
If p presupposes q , then q should be inherited by " $\text{not } p$ ", " $\text{if } p, \text{ then } r$ ", " $\text{perhaps } p$ " and " $p?$ "
 - Cancellability test
If p conversationally implicates q , then q should be cancellable.

Exercise: In each of the following examples, the a sentence presupposes and/or entail the other sentences. Specify which sentence is a presupposition, which is a simple entailment, and which is both an entailment and a presupposition. (C&M 2000: pp. 32)

- (20) a. That John was assaulted scared Mary.
b. Mary is animate.
c. John was assaulted.
d. That John was assaulted caused fear in Mary.
- (21) a. That John was assaulted didn't scare Mary.
b. Mary is animate.
c. John was assaulted.
d. That John was assaulted didn't cause fear in Mary.