Presuppositions

– Implicatures, Information Structure, etc.

Seminar für Sprachwissenschaft
Universität Tübingen

Christian Ebert
Wilhelmstr. 19
room 1.19
phone 07071/29-77315

office hours: tuesdays, 1-2pm

christian.ebert@uni-tuebingen.de

http://www2.sfs.uni-tuebingen.de/~cebert/
plan for the seminar

Reminders & Preliminaries:
03.11. Presuppositions I – tests, triggers, projection, common ground
10.11. Presuppositions II – dynamic theories, local vs. global accommodation
24.11. Implicatures, Information Structure & all the rest...

Accommodation & Triggers:
01.12. Jolantha Genne

08.12. Praxides Klimatz
von Fintel (2008). What is presupposition accommodation, again?

15.12. N.N.
plan for the seminar

Presupposition Failure & Definite Descriptions:
12.01. *Vladimir Kolbatov*

19.01. *Jason Quinley*

Maximize Presuppositions:
26.01. *Nomi Meixner*

02.02. *Carine Tchonta*

*N.N.*

Schlenker's Theories:
09.02. *Roland Mühlenbernd*

implicatures

Paul Grice (1913-1988):

communication is a **cooperative action**

overarching **maxim of cooperation**: Be cooperative!

*Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.*

interlocuters produces/interpret utterances with this maxim in mind:

under the assumption that the speaker is cooperative, the hearer may reinterpret the literal meaning of the utterance

additional meaning components that are inferred due to this type of reinterpretation are called **implicatures**
implicatures

unfolds into four conversational maxims:

(1) **maxim of quality**
    try to make your contribution true:
    I. do not say what you believe to be false
    II. do not say that for which your lack adequate evidence

(2) **maxim of quantity**
    I. make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange
    II. do not make your contribution more informative than is required

(3) **maxim of relevance**
    make your contribution relevant

(4) **maxim of manner**
    be perspicacious, and specifically
    I. avoid obscurity   III. be brief
    II. avoid ambiguity   IV. be orderly
implicatures – examples

(1) A: „Tübingen has a university.“
    vs. A: „Tübingen has a university, but I don't believe it.“ (moore's paradox)

(2) in a thunderstorm; A: „Great weather!“

(3) A: „Where does Maria live?“ B: „Somewhere in Bavaria.“

(4) A: „John tried to climb the Zugspitze.“

(5) A: „Pat is quite o.k.“

(6) A: „The wall is green.“

(7) A: „I need cigarettes!“ B: „There's a restaurant up the road.“

(8) mother to father in front of the (illiterate) children:
    A: „Let's go and get ourselves an I-C-E-C-R-E-A-M“

(9) A: „John produced a series of sounds that had some resemblance to the melody of Jingle Bells.“

(10) A: „Peter stopped the car.“ vs. A: „Peter made the car stop.“

division of pragmatic labour: (un)marked expression ↔ (un)marked meaning
implicatures

important characteristic: they can be cancelled/suspended

(4) „John tried to climb the Zugspitze.“
    suspension: „But I don't know whether he succeeded.“
    cancellation: „And actually he managed to reach the top.“

entailments cannot be cancelled:

(11) „The Queen of Swasiland greeted all delegates.“

    # „But/and I am not sure whether she greeted any female delegates.“
    # „But/and she didn't greet any female delegates.“

neither can presuppositions:

    # „But/and I don't know whether there is a queen of Swasiland.“
    # „But/and there is no queen of Swasiland.“
scalar implicatures

are quantity (I) implicatures based on a (conventional) scale ordered by strength/informativity

one > two > three > four > five > ... try > succeed
warm > hot sometimes > often > always
few > some > many > most > all/every possibly > probably > certainly

Due to the maxim of quantity: speaker chose most informative item on the scale → proposition not true for all more informative items (for all the speaker knows)

„John has three children“ (John does not have four, five, ... children)
„the water is warm“ (the water is not hot)
„Pat will probably come to the party“ (It's not certain that Pat will come)
„some students passed the exam“ (not many/most/all students passed)
clausal implicatures

**clausal implicature**: inference concerning the truth of an embedded proposition.

(12) A: „If John comes to the party, we will all have fun.“
implicates: A is unsure about the truth of „John comes to the party.“

Gerald Gazdar's (1979) explanation of presuppositional behaviour in terms of order of enrichment of literal information with entailments, implicatures and presuppositions

Most crucially:
entailments and implicatures are added *before* presuppositions and may cause these to be cancelled

(12) A: „If I realize that I have not told the truth, I will confess it.“

clausal implicature: A is unsure whether (he realizes that) he has told the truth

presupposition (cancelled by conflicting CI): A has not told the truth
information structure

topicality marks the entity the sentence is about

(13) (What about Peter?) \([Peter/he]_T\) kissed Mary
(What about Mary?) Peter kissed \([Mary/her]_T\)

topicality is marked differently in various languages, e.g. by certain constructions (e.g. left dislocation in German):

(14) \([Der\ Peter]_T\), der hat die Maria geküsst.
    \([Die\ Maria]_T\), die hat der Peter geküsst.

there is a strong tendency for the subject to be the topic

Strawson's (1964) hypotheses again: only topical definites presuppose

(15) „Der König von Frankreich, der besuchte die CeBit.“
(presupposition failure)
    „Die CeBit, die besuchte der König von Frankreich.“
(false)
information structure

**focus** marks the new information in the sentence (very, very roughly speaking)

(16) (Who ate the cookies?) \([\text{Péter}]_F \text{ ate the cookies}\)
     (What did Peter eat?) \(\text{Peter ate [the cóokies]}_F\)
     (What did Peter do?) \(\text{Peter [ate the cóokies]}_F\)

focus is also marked in various ways across languages, e.g. by an accent on some of the focussed material (e.g. in English).

Beaver (2005) gives various examples that illustrate an interplay between focus and presupposition (cancellation):

(17) „*If my TA realizes that you cheat during the exám, I will have to fail you.*“
     „*If my TA réalizes that you cheat during the exam, I will have to fail you.*“

Gazdar's account predicts no cancellation:

clausal implicature: I am unsure whether my TA realizes that you cheat ...

presupposition (no conflict with CI): you cheat during the exam
literature

