



Semantics & Pragmatics SoSe 2020

Lecture 17: Presupposition

30/06/2020, Christian Bentz



Q&A

Tutorial 8

- ▶ *Exercise 1: What exactly do you mean by ‘discuss’? Should we use only English examples or examples from different languages?*
 - ‘Discuss whether ...’ here means ‘give arguments for or against’.
- Since I ask you to consider three different definitions of pragmatics, it is advisable to start with a brief paraphrase of the definitions to make sure you have understood what they mean. Then you ‘discuss’ how modal markers and evidential markers relate to these, i.e. give arguments for or against considering them part of pragmatics or semantics. If examples from different languages are given in the lecture, then this implies that not only English examples are relevant. However, I would ask you explicitly to give examples, if this was part of the task.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Q&A

Tutorial 8

- ▶ *Exercise 1: Regarding the truth-conditional definition, you assumed that evidential markers cannot be part of pragmatic concepts because they do not contribute to the truth value of the sentence, but how about propositional evidential markers?*

– Yes, this is a good point, and exactly the kind of point I would like to see in such a discussion. If you follow the definitions by Aikhenvald (and the three claims derived from them), then evidential markers do not bear truth-conditional content, but if you follow the distinction between illocutionary versus propositional evidential markers, then at least the latter might be said to carry truth-conditional meaning, and hence belong in the domain of semantics.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Q&A

Tutorial 8

- ▶ *Exercise 3: The equal signs you used in the answers are not consistent with the use on the slides which are (=). Which one is the correct one? Or it does not matter?*
 - I have changed all the signs to equal signs (=), rather than equality signs (\equiv). In a set-theoretic context, *equal* means that the two sets have the same elements (while the order is not relevant). *Equality*, on the other hand, is a less “strict” relationship, just meaning that two sets have the same number of elements. I would say the equal sign is more appropriate for merging of DRSs.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Updated Schedule (2020)

09/06/2020	Lecture 12	Further Topics in Semantics: Evidentiality
11/06/2020		Corpus Christi (Fronleichnam)
16/06/2020	Lecture 13	Introduction Pragmatics
18/06/2020	Lecture 14	Discourse Representation Theory I
23/06/2020	Lecture 15	Discourse Representation Theory II
25/06/2020	Lecture 16	Implicatures
30/06/2020	Lecture 17	Presupposition
02/07/2020	Lecture 18	Speech Acts
07/07/2020	Lecture 19	Summary: Pragmatics
09/07/2020	Lecture 20	Test Exam
14/07/2020	Lecture 21	Further Topics in Pragmatics I
16/07/2020	Lecture 22	Further Topics in Pragmatics II
21/07/2020	Lecture 23	Overview and Discussion
23/07/2020	Exam	

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Exam on 23rd of July 2020

- ▶ **Online exam on moodle** (we will try this out in the test exam on 09.07.2020)
- ▶ From this term (Summer 2020) onward, you will have to **register for exams online on ALMA!**
- ▶ You also have to **register for your tutorial** in order to get the 3ECTS.
- ▶ **Important dates:**
Begin of registration period: **7. July 2020**
End of registration period: **20. July 2020**
Deadline for stepping back from exam: **26. July 2020**

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



ALMA Registration

ie sind hier: [Startseite](#) > [Studienangebot](#) > [Veranstaltung](#) [Deutsch](#)

[Veranstaltungen suchen](#)

Tagesaktuelle Veranstaltungen anzeigen

Vorlesungsverzeichnis anzeigen

← [Veranstaltungen suchen](#)

705: Semantik & Pragmatik

Leistung wird angerechnet auf: Freiwillige Leistung

i Bitte wählen Sie einen Prüfungstermin

Aktionen & Meldungen	Termine & Räume	Bemerkung
Keine Anmeldung möglich i Die Anmeldefrist hat noch nicht begonnen. Die Frist läuft vom 07.07.2020 bis zum 20.07.2020 23:59:59.	Semantics and Pragmatics - Tutorium IV Prüfungsperiode 1, Sommersemester 2020 y Keine Uhrzeit festgelegt Prüfungsform: Schriftlich oder Mündlich	
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[Abbrechen](#)

[Rechtliche Hinweise nochmal ansehen](#)

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 16

Section 2: Historical Background

Section 3: Presupposition

Section 4: Identification of Presuppositions

Section 5: Accommodation and Failure

Summary

References



Overview

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 16

Section 2: Historical Background

Section 3: Presupposition

Common Ground

Formal Definition

Presupposition Triggers

Section 4: Identification of Presuppositions

Criteria and Tests

Section 5: Accommodation and Failure

Presupposition Accommodation

Presupposition Failure

Summary

References



Section 1: Recap of Lecture 16

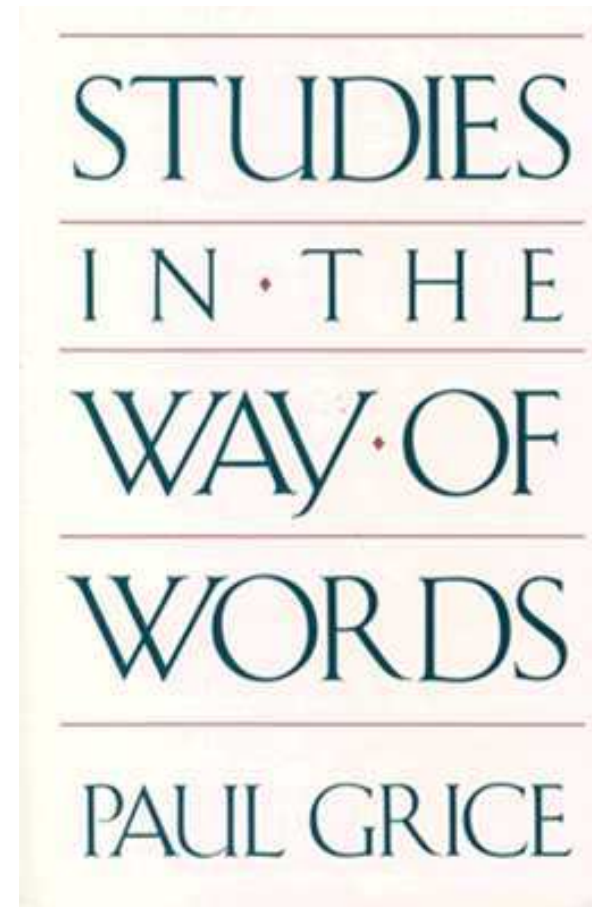


Historical Overview

Grice, Paul (1975). *Studies in the way of words*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

“[...] while it is no doubt true that the formal devices [of formal semantic frameworks] are especially amenable to systematic treatment by the logician, it remains the case that there are very many inferences and arguments, expressed in natural language and not in terms of these devices, which are nevertheless valid. [...] I shall therefore inquire into the general conditions that, in one way or another, apply to conversation as such [...]”

Grice (1975), p. 23-24.



Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Grice's Maxims

- ▶ The Maxim of **QUALITY**
- ▶ The Maxim of **QUANTITY**
- ▶ The Maxim of **RELATION (or RELEVANCE)**
- ▶ The Maxim of **MANNER**

Grice (1975), p. 26-28.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Failure to Fulfill a Maxim

There are different ways in which a participant of a communicative interaction might fail to fulfill a given maxim:

- ▶ They might **quietly violate a maxim**; in some cases, they will be liable to mislead.
- ▶ They might **opt out** from adhering to either the maxim, or the cooperation principle more generally (or both).
- ▶ They might be faced by a **clash**, i.e. it is impossible to adhere to one maxim without not adhering to another, e.g. a clash between Quality and Quantity.
- ▶ They might **flout** a maxim, that is obviously failing to fulfill it. If none of the above ways of failure to fulfill a maxim seems relevant, the hearer has to take this last possibility into account.

Grice (1975), p. 30.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Conversational Implicature

Conversational implicatures are a type of *pragmatic inference* about *what is said* by the speaker (literal meaning) in relation to what they actually *intend to convey* (communicative intention).

- (1) A: Can you tell me where the post office is?
B: I'm a stranger here myself.

Pragmatic inference by A:

- ▶ I assume that B is participating in a *rational conversation*, i.e. adhering to the cooperative principle and the maxims.
- ▶ B seems to be violating the maxim of relevance.
- ▶ We both know (it is part of our common ground) that strangers are unlikely to know the locations of particular places.
- ▶ I come to the pragmatic inference that the conversational implicature of B's statement is a more polite way of saying: "No, I cannot."

Kroeger (2019), p. 143.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Examples of Conversational Implicatures

Grice (1975), p. 31-37 gives a range of examples to illustrate the workings of conversational implicature. He therefore distinguishes three “groups” of conversational implicatures:

- ▶ **Group A:** Examples in which **no maxim is violated**, or at least in which it is not clear that any maxim is violated.
- ▶ **Group B:** Examples in which **a maxim is violated**, but its violation is to be explained by a clash with another maxim.
- ▶ **Group C:** Examples which involve **exploitation**, i.e. a *maxim is flouted* for the purpose of deliberately creating a conversational implicature.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

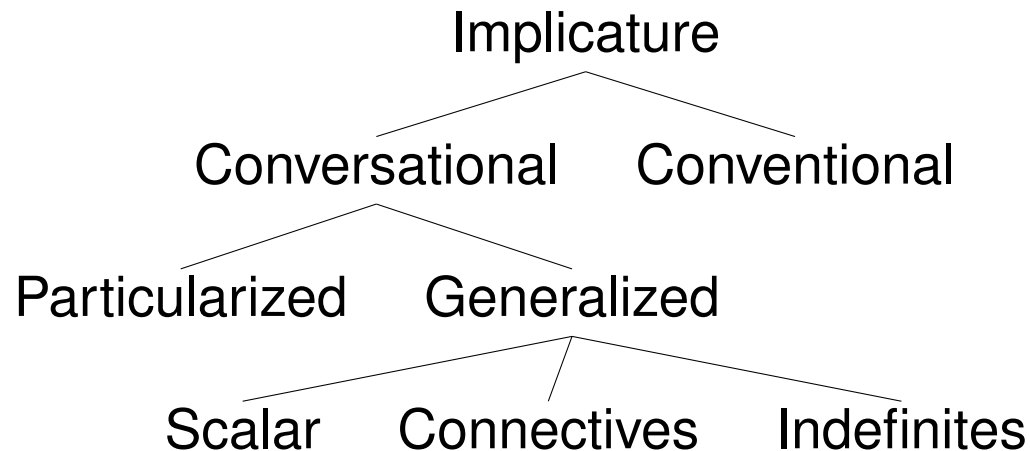
Summary

References



Types of Implicature

The following types of implicature are discussed in Kroeger (2019), p. 146-147.



Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

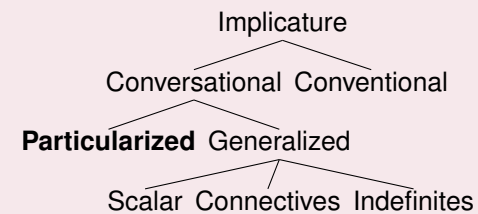
References



Particularized Conversational Implicatures

“[...] the intended inference depends on particular features of the **specific context** of the utterance.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 146.



- (2) A: Can you tell me where the post office is?
B: I'm a stranger here myself.
- (3) A: C managed to brake his car and get arrested for arrousing public annoyance when he was drunk last night.
B: Yeah, he is smart like that.
- (4) A: Where does C live?
B: Somewhere in the South of France.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



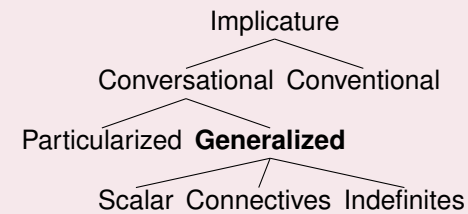
Generalized Conversational Implicatures

“This type of inference **does not depend on specific features of the utterance context**, but is instead normally implied by any use of the triggering expression in ordinary contexts.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 146.

We will discuss three subtypes of Generalized Conversational Implicatures here:

- ▶ **Scalar** Implicatures
- ▶ Implicatures of Sentence **Connectives**
- ▶ Implicatures of **Indefinite** Noun Phrases



Section 1: Recap of Lecture 16

Section 2: Historical Background

Section 3: Presupposition

Section 4: Identification of Presuppositions

Section 5: Accommodation and Failure

Summary

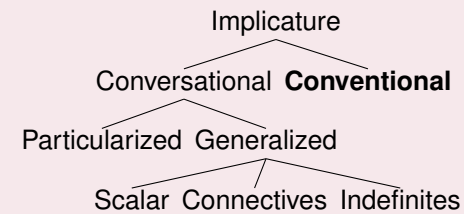
References



Conventional Implicatures

“[...] **conventional implicatures** are part of the **conventional meaning of a word or construction**. This means that they are not context-dependent or pragmatically explainable [in contrast to conversational implicatures], and must be learned on a word-by-word basis.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 148.



Section 1: Recap of Lecture 16

Section 2: Historical Background

Section 3: Presupposition

Section 4: Identification of Presuppositions

Section 5: Accommodation and Failure

Summary

References

- (5) Susan was born in Stuttgart *and* Peter was born in Entringen.
IMPLICATURE: – (natural language “and” is here used like \wedge).
- (6) Susan gave Peter the key *and* Peter opened the door.
GENERALIZED CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE: She gave him the key *and then* he opened the door.
- (7) Susan was born in Stuttgart *but* Peter was born in Entringen.
CONVENTIONAL IMPLICATURE: In contrast to what was said before, Peter was born in Entringen.¹

¹Remember that both *but* as well as *and* are translated into standard logic as \wedge .



Entailment, Presupposition, and Implicature

Given that we have established the difference between linguistic and non-linguistic inferences, **implicature** is one of several possible **linguistic inferences**. The others we will discuss are **entailment** and **presupposition**.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

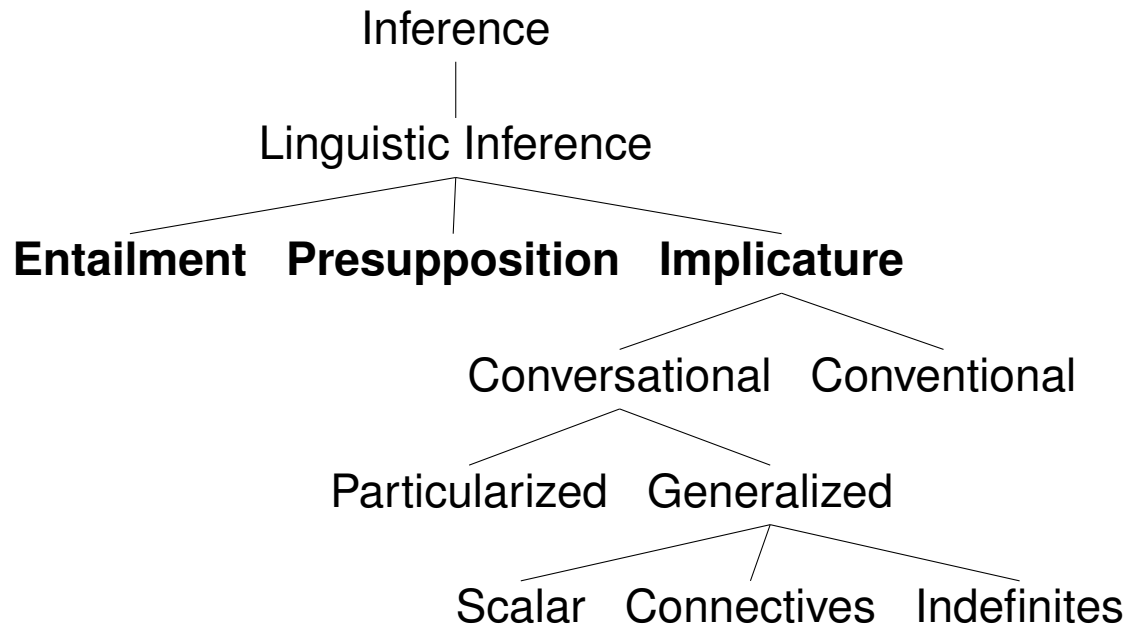
Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References





Entailment

“**Entailment** is a type of [linguistic] inference. We say that proposition p “entails” proposition q if p being true **makes it certain** that q is true as well.”

Entailments thus require that:

1. whenever p is true, it is logically necessary that q is also true;
2. whenever q is false, it is logically necessary that p is also false;
3. these relations follow from the meanings of p and q , independent of the context of utterance.

Kroeger (2019), p. 36-38.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Entailment: Examples

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

- (8) John *killed* the wasp. (lexical)
ENTAILMENT: The wasp died.
- (9) I *broke* your Ming dynasty jar. (lexical)
ENTAILMENT: Your Ming dynasty jar is broken.
- (10) Hong Kong is *warmer than* Beijing in December. (comparative)
ENTAILMENT: Beijing is cooler than Hong Kong in December.
- (11) Ringo Starr is my *grandfather*. (lexical)
ENTAILMENT: Ringo Starr is a relative of mine.
- (12) John saw Mary and Bill. (logical)
ENTAILMENT I: John saw Mary.
ENTAILMENT II: John saw Bill.
- (13) John saw *either* Mary *or* Bill. (logical)
ENTAILMENT: John did not see both Mary and Bill.



Criteria and Tests

In the following, we establish a **battery of overall five tests**, which can be used to distinguish entailments from implicatures (and presuppositions in the next step).

Kroeger (2019), p. 151 pp.

	Entailment	Conversational Implicature ²
a. Cancellable ³	NO	YES
b. Suspendable	NO	YES
c. Reinforceable	NO	YES
d. Negation	NO	NO
e. Question	NO	NO

²Note that here only *conversational implicature* is included, as it is unclear whether *conventional implicatures* will behave the same, or whether these would rather fall with presuppositions.

³Also called *defeasible*.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Test Summary

We then summarize the test results for each inference and compare it to the template given for **entailments** and **conversational implicatures** to decide if it falls in either category.

(14) John killed the wasp.
INFERENCE: The wasp died.

cancellable: **NO**
suspendable: **NO**
reinforceable: **NO**
preserved under negation: **NO**
preserved in question: **NO**

→ **entailment**

(15) A: I ran out of petrol.
B: There is a garage around the corner.
INFERENCE: One can buy petrol there.

cancellable: **YES**
suspendable: **YES**
reinforceable: **YES**
preserved under negation: **NO**
preserved in question: **NO**

→ **conversational implicature**

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Section 2: Historical Background



Historical Background

“[...] There is more literature on presupposition than on almost any other topic in pragmatics. [...] The volume of work is in part accounted for by a **long tradition of philosophical interest** [...] In addition presupposition was a **focal area in linguistic theory during the period 1969-76**, because it raised substantial problems for almost all kinds of (generative) linguistic theories [...]”

Levinson (1983), p. 167.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

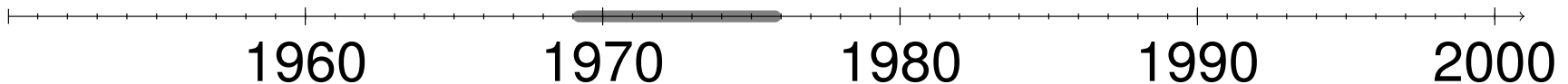
Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

Presupposition





Frege's View on Presupposition

“If anything is asserted there is always an obvious presupposition⁴ that the **simple or compound proper names used have a reference**. If one asserts ‘Kepler died in misery’, there is a presupposition that the name ‘Kepler’ designates something.”

Levinson (1983), p. 169 citing Frege (1892), p. 69.

- (16) Kepler died in misery.
PRESUPPOSITION: The name ‘Kepler’ denotes an individual.
- (17) Kepler did *not* die in misery.
PRESUPPOSITION: The name ‘Kepler’ denotes an individual.
- (18) *After* the separation of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark, ...
PRESUPPOSITION: Schleswig-Holstein separated from Denmark.

⁴Frege used the German term *Voraussetzung* here.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Frege's View on Presupposition

Given these and further examples, Frege came to the conclusion that a theory about presuppositions would somehow integrate the following propositions:

1. **Referring phrases and temporal clauses** (for example) carry presuppositions to the effect that they do in fact refer,
2. A sentence and its **negative counterpart** share the same set of presuppositions,
3. In order for an **assertion** (as he put in the Kepler case) or a **sentence** (as he put in the Schleswig-Holstein case) to be either true or false, its **presuppositions must be true or satisfied**.

Levinson (1983), p. 170.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Section 3: Presupposition



Informal Definition

“As a first approximation, let us define **presupposition as information** which is **linguistically encoded** as being part of the **common ground** at the time of utterance [...]
Speakers can choose to indicate, by the use of certain words or grammatical constructions, that a certain piece of information is part of the common ground.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 40.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

- (19) “Take some **more** tea,” the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly. “I’ve had nothing yet,” Alice replied in an offended tone, “so I can’t take **more**.”

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll.

Note: The word *more* is here seen as *triggering* the presupposition *you already had some tea*. This, however, is not true according to the hearer (i.e. Alice). Hence, this is a case of *presupposition failure*.



Common Ground

“The term **common ground** refers to everything that **both the speaker and hearer know or believe**, and know that they have in common.”

This could include:

- ▶ **general world knowledge** of speaker and hearer (e.g. names normally refer to individuals),
- ▶ **knowledge observable in the speech situation** (e.g. what the speaker is wearing or carrying),
- ▶ **facts mentioned** earlier in the conversation.

Kroeger (2019), p. 40.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Formal Definition

“A statement A presupposes a statement B iff:

- (i) if A is true, then B is true,
- (ii) if A is false, then B is [still] true.”

Levinson (1983), p. 175, citing Strawson (1952).

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

- (20) Statement A: Kepler died in misery.
PRESUPPOSITION B: The name ‘Kepler’ denotes an individual.
- (21) Statement $\neg A$: Kepler did *not* die in misery.
PRESUPPOSITION B: The name ‘Kepler’ denotes an individual.



Presupposition Triggers

Over the years, a large number of **presupposition triggers** have been identified (for English). These include but are not limited to:

- (a) Definite descriptions:
 - ▶ definite noun phrases
 - ▶ possessive phrases
 - ▶ restrictive relative clauses
- (b) Factive predicates
- (c) Implicative predicates
- (d) Aspectual predicates
- (e) Temporal clauses
- (f) Counterfactuals
- (g) Comparisons
- (h) Scalar terms

Kroeger (2019), p. 43.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Triggers: Definite Descriptions

The usage of a **definite noun phrase** (just as the usage of a proper noun) presupposes that there is an individual that the noun phrase refers to. The usage of a **possessive phrase** presupposes the existence of the possessee. A restrictive relative clause presupposes the existence of an individual with a property described in the relative clause.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

(22) The King of France is wise.

PRESUPPOSITION: There is an individual that is the King of France.

(23) My cat is wise.

PRESUPPOSITION: The speaker has a cat (i.e. there is a cat which is owned by the speaker).

(24) I'm looking for the man who killed my father.

PRESUPPOSITION: There is a man of whom it holds true that he killed the speaker's father.



Triggers: Factive Predicates

The usage of **factive predicates** (*regret, be aware, realize, be sorry, etc.*) presupposes that the proposition of the complement clause is true.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

- (25) John *regrets* that he lied.
PRESUPPOSITION: John lied.
- (26) The president is perfectly *aware* that lobbying is not legal.
PRESUPPOSITION: Lobbying is not legal.
- (27) Jumbo *realized* that the mountain is insurmountable.
PRESUPPOSITION: The mountain is insurmountable.
- (28) I *know* she is *appalled* that John lied.
PRESUPPOSITION 1: She is appalled that John lied.
PRESUPPOSITION 2: John lied.
- (29) I'm *sorry* for causing you trouble.
PRESUPPOSITION: I caused you trouble.



Triggers: Implicative Predicates

So-called **implicative predicates** (*manage to*, *forget to*, etc.) presuppose certain other predicates to hold true, (*try to*, *intend to*, etc.).

- (30) Mary didn't *manage to* come.
PRESUPPOSITION: Mary *tried to* come.
- (31) John *forgot to* buy rice.
PRESUPPOSITION: John *intended to* buy rice.
- (32) I'm sure John will *forget to* buy rice.
PRESUPPOSITION: John *intends to* buy rice.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Triggers: Aspectual Predicates

Aspectual predicates express the *beginning, stopping, continuing* etc. of events. As such they also presuppose a certain status of the event at the time of speaking.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

- (33) Mary *stopped* dating that cowboy.
PRESUPPOSITION: Mary dated that cowboy.
- (34) My neighbour *has begun* doing sports regularly.
PRESUPPOSITION: My neighbour hasn't done sports before.
- (35) Despite what the doctors said she *continues* to smoke.
PRESUPPOSITION: She has smoked before.
- (36) We will *resume* classroom teaching.
PRESUPPOSITION: We have done classroom teaching and then stopped doing it.⁵

⁵This could potentially be split into two presuppositions: *We have done classroom teaching before*; *We stopped classroom teaching*.



Triggers: Temporal Clauses

The usage of **temporal clauses** presupposes the truth of the subordinate clauses.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

- (37) *Before* I became a teacher, I worked as a chef.
PRESUPPOSITION: The speaker became a teacher.
- (38) *After* we kissed everything changed.
PRESUPPOSITION: We kissed.
- (39) *By the time* the company fired him, he had done the damage.
PRESUPPOSITION: The company fired him.
- (40) *While* his wife was in hospital, John worked a 40 hour week.
PRESUPPOSITION: John's wife was in hospital.



Triggers: Counterfactuals

Counterfactuals presuppose that their antecedents (typically introduced with *if*) are false.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

(41) If I were king, I would paint all bridges pink.

PRESUPPOSITION: The speaker is not the king.

(42) If you had not written that letter, I would not have fired you.

PRESUPPOSITION: You have written that letter.

However:

(43) If it rains today, I will stay home.

PRESUPPOSITION: # It does not rain today.

(44) If you don't go, I won't go either.

PRESUPPOSITION: # I will go.

Note: Having an antecedent with *if* in English is not a necessary condition for a counterfactual, rather, the past tense has to be used as well in the antecedent.



Triggers: Comparisons

Comparisons presuppose that the statement for which the comparison is formulated holds true for *the object of the comparison* (but not necessarily for the subject).

- (45) Peter isn't as unreliable as John.
PRESUPPOSITION: John is unreliable.

However:

- (46) Peter isn't as tall as John.
PRESUPPOSITION: #John is tall.
- (47) Peter isn't as smart as John.
PRESUPPOSITION: ?John is smart.
- (48) Compared to yesterday, today was a successful day.
PRESUPPOSITION: ?Yesterday was not a successful day (at least when compared to today).

Note: Presuppositions in *as x as* constructions only seem to work when *x* is *not* about a clearly scalable property.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Triggers: Scalars

Usage of a **scalar terms** presupposes a particular status on the scale.

- (49) Please, take *more* tea.
PRESUPPOSITION: You already had some tea.
- (50) Please, take *some* tea.
PRESUPPOSITION: You haven't had tea.
- (51) She is *less* likely to be elected now.
PRESUPPOSITION: She was more likely to be elected before.

Note: While Kroeger (2019), p. 40, takes scalar terms as opening example to presuppositions, he does not further discuss them as triggers.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Section 4: Identification of Presuppositions



Entailment, Presupposition, and Implicature

Given that we have established the difference between linguistic and non-linguistic inferences, **presupposition** is one of several possible **linguistic inferences**. The others we have discussed are **entailment** and **implicature**.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

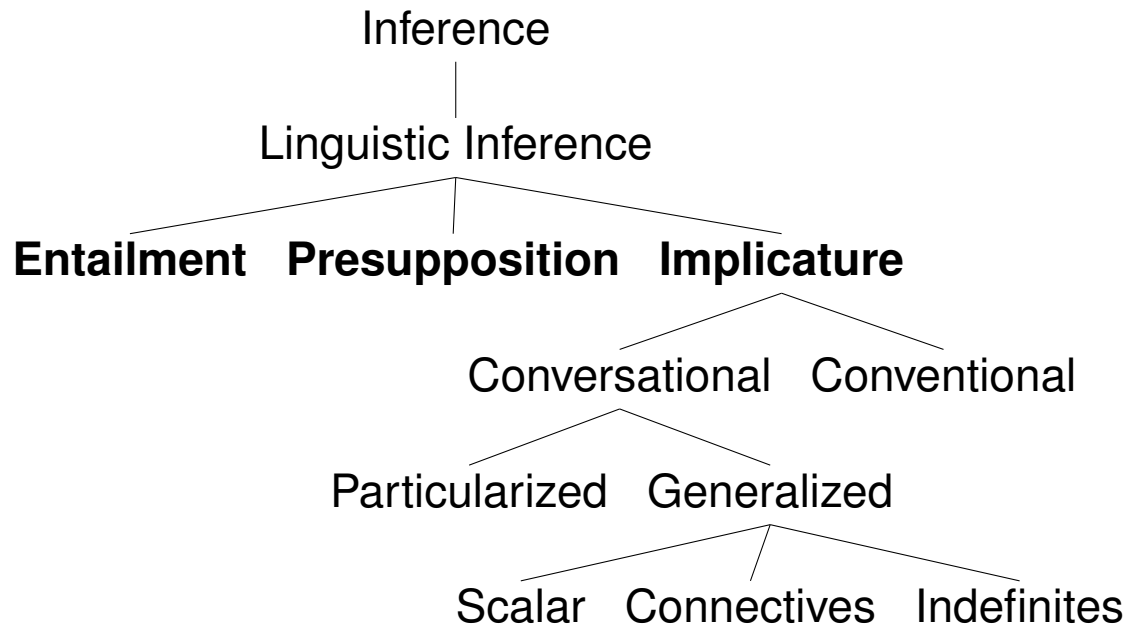
Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References





Tests: Entailment and Conversational Implicature

The tests relevant to distinguish **entailments** from **conversational implicatures** are mainly the *Cancellation Test*, the *Suspension Test*, and the *Reinforcement Test*.

Kroeger (2019), p. 151 pp.

	Entailment	Conversational Implicature ⁶
a. Cancellable ⁷	NO	YES
b. Suspendable	NO	YES
c. Reinforceable	NO	YES
d. Negation	NO	NO
e. Question	NO	NO

⁶Note that here only *conversational implicature* is included, as it is unclear whether *conventional implicatures* will behave the same, or whether these would rather fall with presuppositions.

⁷Also called *defeasible*.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Tests: Presuppositions

The tests relevant to distinguish **entailments** and **conversational implicatures** from **presuppositions** are mainly the *Negation* and the *Question Test*.

Kroeger (2019), p. 152.

	Entailment	Conversational Implicature	Presupposition
a. Cancellable	NO	YES	sometimes ⁸
b. Suspendable	NO	YES	sometimes
c. Reinforceable	NO	YES	NO
d. Negation	NO	NO	YES
e. Question	NO	NO	YES

⁸According to Kroeger (2019), p. 152, some presuppositions seem to be cancellable, “but only if the clause containing the trigger is negated. Presuppositions triggered by positive statements are generally not cancellable.”

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 16

Section 2: Historical Background

Section 3: Presupposition

Section 4: Identification of Presuppositions

Section 5: Accommodation and Failure

Summary

References



Example Utterances

Assume we have the three example utterances and respective inferences below. We will run through the different tests to establish whether these **inferences** are **entailments**, **conversational implicatures**, or **presuppositions**.

- (52) John killed the wasp.
INFERENCE: The wasp died.
- (53) A: I ran out of petrol.
B: There is a garage around the corner.
INFERENCE: One can buy petrol there.
- (54) John regrets that he lied.
INFERENCE: John lied.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



The Cancellation-Test

If the inference can be **cancelled** by the speaker **without creating a contradiction**, we say that the inference is cancellable.

- (55) #John killed the wasp, but the wasp didn't die.
(cancellable: NO)
- (56) There is a garage around the corner, but unfortunately you cannot buy petrol there.
(cancellable: YES)
- (57) #John regrets that he lied, but he didn't lie.
(cancellable: NO)

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



The Suspension-Test

If an inference is not outright cancelled (i.e. said to be false) by the speaker, it is still possible to **“suspend” a commitment to the truth or falsehood** of the inference.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

(58) #John killed the wasp, but I'm not sure if it died.
(suspendable: NO)

(59) B: There is a garage around the corner, but I'm not sure if you
can buy petrol there.
(suspendable: YES)

(60) ?John regrets that he lied, but I'm not sure he lied.
(suspendable: NO?)



The Reinforcement-Test

If the inference can be explicitly stated by the speaker **without creating redundancy**, then the inference is said to be **reinforceable**.

- (61) #John killed the wasp, and it died.
(reinforceable: NO)
- (62) B: There is a garage around the corner, and you can buy petrol there.
(reinforceable: YES)
- (63) #John regrets that he lied, and he lied.
(reinforceable: NO)

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



The Negation-Test

If the inference is **preserved under negation**, then it is said to pass the negation test.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

- (64) John did *not* kill the wasp.
INFERENCE: #The wasp died.
(preserved under negation: NO)
- (65) B: There is *no* garage around the corner.
INFERENCE: #You can buy petrol there.
(preserved under negation: NO)
- (66) John does not regret that he lied.
INFERENCE: John lied.
(preserved under negation: YES)



The Question-Test

If the inference is **preserved when a question is formulated** rather than a declarative sentence, then it is said to pass the question test.

- (67) Did John kill the wasp?
INFERENCE: #The wasp died.
(preserved in question: NO)
- (68) B: Is there a garage around the corner?
INFERENCE: #You can buy petrol there.
(preserved in question: NO)
- (69) Does John regret that he lied?
INFERENCE: John lied.
(preserved in question: YES)

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Test Summary

We then summarize the test results for each inference and compare it to the test-template (in the table above) to decide if it falls in either category.

(70) John killed the wasp.
INFERENCE: The wasp died.

—

cancellable: **NO**
suspendable: **NO**
reinforceable: **NO**
preserved under negation: **NO**
preserved in question: **NO**

→ **entailment**

(71) A: I ran out of petrol.
B: There is a garage around the corner.
INFERENCE: One can buy petrol there.

cancellable: **YES**
suspendable: **YES**
reinforceable: **YES**
preserved under negation: **NO**
preserved in question: **NO**

→ **conversational implicature**

(72) John regrets that he lied.
INFERENCE: John lied.

—

cancellable: **NO**
suspendable: **NO?**
reinforceable: **NO**
preserved under negation: **YES**
preserved in question: **YES**

→ **presupposition**

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Section 5: Accommodation and Failure



Informal Definition (repeated from above)

“As a first approximation, let us define **presupposition as information** which is **linguistically encoded** as being part of the **common ground** at the time of utterance [...]

Speakers can choose to indicate, by the use of certain words or grammatical constructions, that a certain piece of information is part of the common ground.”

Kroeger (2019), p. 40.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References

- (73) “Take some **more** tea,” the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly. “I’ve had nothing yet,” Alice replied in an offended tone, “so I can’t take **more**.”

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll.

Note: The word *more* is here seen as *triggering* the presupposition *you already had some tea*. This, however, is not true according to the hearer (i.e. Alice). Hence, this is a case of *presupposition failure*.



Accommodation

It is a **common misunderstanding** about presuppositions that they *have to be* part of the common ground. This is not necessarily true. If it turns out that the presupposition is not actually part of the common ground, then hearers often **accommodate** in the sense of accepting the presupposition as true, or they might ask for confirmation to “officially” establish the presupposition as common ground.

- (74) A: My cat got stuck on the roof last night.
PRESUPPOSITION: The speaker has a cat.
- (75) B (who doesn't know that A has a cat): Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. / Oh, you have a cat?

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Presupposition Failure

Genuine **presupposition failure** only occurs when the hearer downright **rejects** the presupposition.

- (76) A: Take some more tea.
PRESUPPOSITION: The hearer had some tea already.
B: I actually haven't had any tea yet.
- (77) A: Are you a good witch or a bad witch?
PRESUPPOSITION: The hearer is some kind of witch.⁹
B: Who, me? I'm not a witch at all. I'm Dorothy Gale, from Kansas.

Kroeger (2019), p. 44, citing from the movie *The Wizard of Oz*.

⁹This is yet another kind of presupposition which we haven't discussed above. Also, it is a problematic one, as it doesn't preserve under negation: *You are not a good witch or a bad witch*.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Summary



Summary

- ▶ **Presuppositions** are a third major category of **linguistic inference** besides *entailments* and *conversational implicatures*.
- ▶ They have been researched extensively in both the philosophy and linguistics (pragmatics) literature.
- ▶ They are associated with – and encoded by – certain **structural and lexical triggers** (e.g. definite descriptions, possessive phrases, temporal clauses, counterfactuals etc.)
- ▶ There are tests to distinguish them from *entailments* and *conversational implicatures*. In particular, the **negation and question tests**.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



References



References

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Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 16

Section 2:
Historical
Background

Section 3:
Presupposition

Section 4:
Identification of
Presuppositions

Section 5:
Accommodation
and Failure

Summary

References



Thank You.

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