

Conventional Implicature

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Introduction

„Conventional Implicature“

- ❖ Authors: Lauri Karttunen and Stanley Peters
- ❖ Published in “Syntax and Semantics” Volume 11 in 1979

Responsible for the “transformation” of many former called presuppositions into conventional implicatures.

Presuppositions

- ❖ Lexical items or syntactic constructions, that convey implicit assumptions about the world or background belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted
- ❖ Propositions, which the sentences are not primarily about
- ❖ Have to be established prior to the utterance to ensure successful communication
- ❖ Aspect of meaning distinct from ordinary truth-conditional semantics

Example: *Jane no longer writes fiction.*

Presupposition: *Jane once wrote fiction.*

Presupposition Vs. Entailment

Presupposition: Something the speaker assumes to be the case before making an utterance (Speaker oriented)

Entailment: something that logically follows from what is asserted in the utterance (Sentence oriented)

Example analysis: *Mary's brother bought three horses.*

Presuppositions: *Mary exists, Mary has a brother, Mary has only one brother, Mary's brother is rich*

→ Speaker's subjective presuppositions, all can be wrong

Entailments: *Mary's brother bought something, bought t three animals, two horses, one horse etc.*

→ Entailments follow from the sentence regardless of whether the speaker's beliefs are right or wrong

Conversational Implicature

- ❖ Particularized
- ❖ Generalized

→ Generated by general rules of conversation, as applied to a particular conversational circumstance

- A speaker's presumed adherence to the Cooperative Principle (Grice)
- Pragmatic Phenomenon

Pragmatics

Presuppositions

Conventional Implicature

→ Generated by meanings of words used

→ Semantic phenomenon

Semantics

Subjunctive Conditional Construction

(1) *If it were raining outside, the drumming on the roof would drown out our voices*

→ Antecedent is false, Conditional is true, consequent clause is false

(2) *If Mary were allergic to penicillin, she would have exactly the symptoms she is showing*

→ Antecedent is true, conditional is true, consequent clause is true

Speaker concludes the truth condition of the antecedent from the truth condition of the consequent and vice versa

→ Similarity to conversational implicatures and the Gricean Maxims (Speak the truth!)

Subjunctive Conditional Construction

(3) *If Shakespeare were the author of Macbeth, there would be proof in the Globe Theater's records for the year 1605*

❖ Particularized subjunctive conditionals are highly context dependent (Shakespeare the author of Macbeth?)

→ Come and go by working alternations in the context surrounding the utterance

(4) *If Mary were allergic to penicillin, she would have exactly the symptoms she is showing. But we know that she is not allergic to penicillin*

→ Doctor is not willing to approve the „Truth“ of the former consequent clause of (2)

Presuppositions Vs. Conversational Implicature

Special case: Verbs of judging

(5) *John criticized Harry for writing the letter.*

→ Harry is responsible for writing the letter

(6) *John criticized Harry for writing the letter. Since the letter was actually written by Mary, it was unfair of John.*

Presupposition bares the feature of cancelability

→ **Generalized conversational implicature**

Conventional Implicatures

Definition:

“[...] in uttering a sentence **S**, a speaker implies that **p** is the case if, by having been uttered, **S** suggests as its conclusion **p**, without **p** having been literally said. If the conclusion rests exclusively on the conventional meaning of the words and grammatical constructions that occur in **S**, then the conclusion is called a ‘conventional implicature.’ Since Karttunen and Peters (1979) most presuppositions are interpreted as conventional implicatures“ (Bussmann, 2006, p. 221)

Conventional Implicatures

Large set of presuppositions are actually conventional implicatures:

- ❖ Presuppositions associated with particles like *too, either, also, even, only...*
- ❖ Presuppositions of certain factive verbs like *forget, realize, take into account...*
- ❖ Presuppositions of implicative verbs like *manage* and *fail*
- ❖ Presuppositions of cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions

→ Examples share the feature that there is a rule of the language that associates a presupposition with a morpheme or grammatical construction.

Conventional Implicatures

An example of a word that explicitly demonstrates the difference between what is said and what is conventionally implicated is *even* :

(7) *Even Bill likes Mary.*

(8) *Bill likes Mary.*

- ❖ Both have the same proposition
- ❖ *even* plays no role in the truth conditions of the sentence. (7) is true if (8) is true

Conventional Implicatures

But the word *even* adds something to the ordinary meaning:

(9)a) *Other people besides Bill like Mary.*

b) *Of the people under consideration, Bill is the least likely to like Mary.*

(10) *I just noticed that even Bill likes Mary*

(11) *If even Bill likes Mary, then all is well*

❖ (9) a or b (consequent) could be false, while (8) (antecedent) is still true

❖ If (8) is false, 9 a or b can still be true

→ ***even* bares a meaning but has no effect on the truth conditions**

How to... Describe The Attached Aspects of Meaning

Montague's version of model theory

- ❖ Each syntactic category consists of phrases that are either listed in the lexicon (basic phrase) or generated by syntactic rules (derives phrases)
- ❖ Principle of compositionality: meaning of complex phrases are determined by the meanings of their parts and the particular syntactic rule
- ❖ Meaning represented by logical expression (intensional logic); Reference to objects

Extension of Montague's system to describe the twin aspects of meaning:

1. Meaning EXPRESSED by the phrase
2. What the phrase conventionally IMPLICATES

Example:

Bill managed to catch a fish

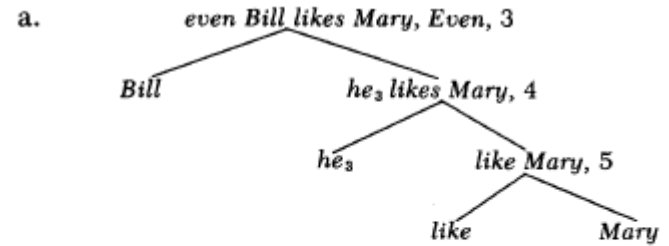
$\hat{\text{manage-to}}^1 = \hat{\lambda P \hat{x} \neg \text{easy}^e(\hat{P}\{x\})}$

Analysis of Particles

- ❖ Particle dependent on FOCUS and SCOPE
- ❖ Comparing the truth conditions
- ❖ Analyzing the implicature brought in by a particle by regarding the derivation and the translation

Bill likes even MARY.
 Focus of *even*: *Mary*
 Scope of *even*: *Bill likes x*
 Existential implicature: *There are other x under consideration besides Mary such that Bill likes x.*
 Scalar implicature: *For all x under consideration besides Mary, the likelihood that Bill likes x is greater than the likelihood that Bill likes Mary.*

Example:



- b. $even - Bill - likes - Mary^e = Bill^e(\hat{x}_3 he_3 - likes - Mary^e) \equiv like^e(b, m)$
 c. $even - Bill - likes - Mary^i = [[Bill^i(\hat{x}_3 he_3 - likes - Mary^e) \wedge Bill^h(\hat{x}_3 he_3 - likes - Mary^i)] \wedge even^i(\hat{Bill}^e, \hat{x}_3 he_3 - likes - Mary^e)]$

References

Bussmann, H. Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics (2006) London:
Routledge.

Karttunen, L. & Peters, S. (1979). Conventional Implicature. *Syntax and Semantics* ,11,
p.1–56.