Presupposition and Entailment

**Two aspects of what is communicated
but not said**

After the first linguists landed on the Moon....

- When a speaker uses referring expressions like this, he or Shakespeare in normal circumstance, she/he is working with an assumption that the hearer knows which referent is intended.
- In a more general way, speakers continuously design their linguistic messages on the basis of assumptions about what the hearer already knows. These assumptions may be mistaken of course, but they underlie much of what we say in the every day use of language.

- **Presupposition and entailment describe two different aspects of information that need not** be stated as speakers assume it is already known by listeners [these concepts used to be much more central to pragmatics than they are now, but they are still important to understand the relationship between pragmatics and semantics]

- **presupposition: something the speaker assumes to be the case before making an utterance**
- Speakers, not sentences, have presuppositions!! not the same meaning as in ordinary usage ('John wrote Harry a letter, presupposing he could read')!!

Presupposition

- What speaker assumes as true or is known by the hearer, can described as presupposition

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  For example, if someone tell you " your brother is waiting outside for you there is an obvious supposition that you have a brother.

- **Entailment: something that logically follows from what is asserted in the utterance**
- Sentences, not speakers, have entailments
- 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 three animals, two horses, one horse etc.

- entailments follow from the sentence regardless of whether the speaker's beliefs are right or wrong

- [Because of its logical nature, entailment is not generally discussed as much in contemporary pragmatics as the
- more speaker-dependent notion of presupposition]

- **Speakers have presuppositions while sentences have entailments.**

- **Example:**
- *Susan's sister bought two houses.*
- **This sentence *presupposes* that Susan exists and that she has a sister.**
- **This sentence has the *entailments* that Susan's sister bought something; now she has 2 houses, a house, and other similar logical consequences. The *entailments* are communicated without being said and are not dependent on the speaker's intention.**

- P*resupposition* is what the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance. *Entailment*, which is not a pragmatic concept, is what logically follows from what is asserted in the utterance.

- **Constancy under negation:**

- One of the tests used to check for the presuppositions underlying sentences involves negating a sentence with a particular presupposition and considering whether the presupposition remains true

- *The presupposition of a statement will remain true even when that statement is negated.*

- When I say that Debora's cat is cute, this sentence presupposes that Debora has a cat. In

- *Debora's cat is not cute*. (NOT p)

- the same thing holds true, that is, it presupposes that she has a cat. This property of presupposition is generally described as constancy under negation. Basically, it means that the presupposition of a statement will remain constant (i.e. still true) even when that statement is negated.

- Take the sentence ***My car is a wreck***. Now take the negative version of this sentence: *My car is not a wreck*. Notice that, although these two sentences have opposite meanings, the underlying presupposition, I have a car, remains true in both. This is called *the constancy under negation test for presupposition*. If someone says I want to do it again and I don't want to do it again
both presuppose that the subject has done it already one or more times, the presupposition (do again) remains constant even though the verb <u>want</u> changes from being affirmative to being negative.

the constancy under negation

- Other examples of **constancy under negation**:
- p: Dave is angry because Jim crashed the car.
- q: Jim crashed the car
- p >> q
- NOT p: Dave isn't angry because Jim crashed the car
- q: Jim crashed the car
- NOT p >> q

Presupposition:

- **p: Mr. Singleton has resumed his habit of drinking apple juice**

- **q: Mr. Singleton had a habit of drinking stout.**

- **p >> q**

- **NOT p: Mr. Singleton hasn't resumed his habit of drinking apple juice**

- **q: Mr. Singleton had a habit of drinking stout.**

- **NOT p >> q**

Linguistic forms (words, phrases, structures are indicators (or **triggers) of potential** presuppositions which can only become actual presuppositions in contexts with speakers.

- 1. existential
- 2.factive
- 3. Non-factive
- 4.lexical
- 5. structural
- 6. counterfactual

Types of Presupposition

1-*Existential presupposition: it* is the assumption of the existence of the entities named by the speaker.

- For example, when a speaker says "Tom's car is new", we can presuppose that Tom exists and that he has a car.

Existential presupposition

- 2-*Factive presupposition: it* is the assumption that something is true due to the presence of some verbs such as "know" and "realize" and of phrases involving "glad", for example.
- Thus, when a speaker says that she didn't realize someone was ill, we can presuppose that "someone is ill". Also, when she says "I'm glad it's over", we can presuppose that " it's over."

Factive presupposition

certain verbs/construction indicate that something is a fact

- *She didn't REALIZE he was ill*   *(>> He was ill)*
- *We REGRET telling him*   *(>> We told him)*
- *I WASN'T AWARE that she was married*   *(>> She was married)*
- *It ISN'T ODD that he left early*   *(>> He left early)*
- *I'M GLAD that it's over*   *(>> It's over)*

- 3-*Lexical presupposition: it* is the assumption that, in using one word, the speaker can act as if another meaning (word) will be understood. For instance:
- Andrew stopped running. (>>He used to run.)
- You are late again. (>> You were late before.)
- In this case, the use of the expressions "*stop*" and "a*gain"* are taken to presuppose another (unstated) concept.

Lexical presupposition

- The use of a form with its asserted meaning is conventionally interpreted with the presupposition that
- another, non-asserted, meaning is understood
- *He MANAGED to repair the clock*   *(>> he tried to repair the clock)*
- Asserted meaning: he suceeded
- *He didn't MANAGE to repair the clock*   *(>> he tried to repair the clock)*
- Asserted meaning: he failed
- *He STOPPED smoking*   *(>> he used to smoke)*
- *They STARTED complained*   *(>> they weren't complaining before)*
- *You're late AGAIN*   *(>> You were late before*

Lexical Presupposition

- *4-Structural presupposition:*

- *it* is the assumption associated with the use of certain words and phrases. For example, wh-question in English are conventionally interpreted with the presupposition that the information after the wh-form (e.g. when and where) is already known to be the case.

- When did she travel to the USA?   (>> she traveled)
- Where did you buy the book?   (>> you bought the book)
- *When did he leave?*   *(>> he left)*
- *Where did you buy the bike?*   *(>> You bought the bike)*

The listener perceives that the information presented is necessarily true rather than just the presupposition of the person asking the question**.**

Structural presupposition

- **5- *Non- factive presupposition:*** *it* is an assumption that something is not true.
- For example, verbs like "dream", "imagine" and "pretend" are used with the *presupposition* that what follows is not true.

- I dreamed that I was rich.   (>> I am not rich)
- We imagined that we were in London.   (>> We are not in London)
- *He PRETENDS to be ill*   *(>> He is not ill)*

Non- factive presupposition

- ## *6-Counterfactual presupposition:*

- *it* is the assumption that what is presupposed is not only untrue, but is the opposite of what is true, or contrary to facts.
- For instance, some conditional structures, generally called counterfactual conditionals, presuppose that the information, in the if- clauses, is not true at the time of utterance.

 If you were my daughter, I would not allow you to do this. (> you are not my daughter)

Counterfactual presupposition

SUMMARY

Type	Example	Presupposition
existential	the X	>> X exists
factive	I regret leaving	>> I left
non-factive	He pretended to be happy	>> He wasn't happy
lexical	He managed to escape	>> He tried to escape
structural	When did she die?	>> She died
Counterfactual	If I weren't ill	>> I am ill

Entailment

- In <u>pragmatics</u> *entailment* is the relationship between two sentences where the truth of one (A) requires the truth of the other (B).
- For example, the sentence (A) *The president was assassinated.* entails (B) *The president is dead.*

- Generally speaking, entailment is not a pragmatic concept (i.e. having to do with the speaker meaning), but it is considered a purely logical concept.

Observe the examples below:

1)Bob ate three sandwiches.
  a) Something ate three sandwiches.
   b)Bob did something to three sandwiches.
  c) Bob ate three of something.
  d)Something happened.