

Presupposition Projection

Lecture Notes, LING 590

3/16/2009

1. PRESUPPOSITION DEATH AND SURVIVAL

Recall that:

- The meaning of a sentence is composed from the meanings of its parts.
- The presupposition of a sentence does not seem to be composed from the presuppositions of its parts.

(In particular: some presuppositions “survive” where entailments don’t, and some presuppositions “die” where entailments survive.)

1.1. Holes

For instance, suppose that P means p and presupposes q . Then in the “family of sentences”:

<u>Sentence</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Presupposition</u>
P	p	q
it is not the case that P	$\neg p$	q
perhaps P	$\diamond p$	q
is it the case that P?	$?p$	q
if P, then S	$p \rightarrow s$	q

The entailments disappear—e.g., $\neg p$ does not entail p or its entailments—but the presuppositions survive. Similarly for factive verbs:

- (1) Jesse stopped drinking.
presupposes: Jesse used to drink.
- (2) a. Sam knows that Jesse stopped drinking.
b. Sam regrets that Jesse stopped drinking.
c. Sam remembers that Jesse stopped drinking.
d. Sam is surprised that Jesse stopped drinking.
all presuppose: Jesse used to drink.

Note: the sentences in (2) may have other presuppositions!

- e.g., they all presuppose *Jesse stopped drinking*

Sam doesn’t know that Jesse stopped drinking.
Does Sam know that Jesse stopped drinking?
If Sam knows Jesse stopped drinking, she won’t offer him vodka.

...unlike 1), which asserts it.

The relevant fact, though, is that whatever *new* presuppositions the verbs introduce, they also allow the presuppositions of the embedded sentence to “percolate up” and become presuppositions of the whole sentence.

In the terminology of Karttunen and Peters, negation, factive verbs, etc. are *holes*:

- (3) A sentential operator R is a *hole* for presupposition if the presuppositions of *p* are also presuppositions of R(*p*).

1.2. *Plugs*

Some operators may be *plugs*:

- (4) A sentential operator R is a *plug* for presupposition if any presuppositions of *p* are not presuppositions of R(*p*).

For instance:

- (5) a. Sam believes that Jesse stopped drinking.
b. Sam announced that Jesse stopped drinking.
no presupposition about Jesse's drinking

Note that, again, these sentences may have some other presuppositions!

- (5a) seems to presuppose *Sam believes that Jesse used to drink*.
- (5b) seems to presuppose *Sam announced that Jesse used to drink...wait, no it doesn't*. (Sam can announce whatever she likes without believing any of it.)

Once again, the relevant fact: the presupposition of the embedded sentences don't become presuppositions of the matrix sentence.

To consider...

- (6) [Jesse]_F drinks too.¹
presupposes: Someone other than Jesse drinks. [arguably]
- (7) a. Sam believes that [Jesse]_F drinks too.
b. Sam announced that [Jesse]_F drinks too.

What do the sentences in (7) presuppose? That someone else drinks? That Sam believes (or announced) that someone else drinks? Both? Either? Neither?

¹ Where [...]_F is used to mark the focused (≈ “stressed”) element in the sentence.

1.3. *Filters*

And then the hard part: filters.

- (8) A sentential operator *R* is a *filter* for presupposition if presuppositions of *p* may or may not be presuppositions of *R(p)*.

e.g., the second clause in conditionals and conjunction:

- (9) a. If Jesse drinks too, then Sam bought tonic water.
presupposes: Someone else drinks.
(the antecedent of a conditional is a hole)
- b. If Sam said she'd bring tonic water for Jesse, then Jesse drinks too.
presupposes: Someone else drinks.
- c. If Sam drinks, then Jesse drinks too.
no presupposition!
- (10) a. Jesse drinks too and Sam bought tonic water.
presupposes: Someone else drinks.
- b. Sam bought tonic water and Jesse drinks too.
presupposes: Someone else drinks. (And: odd?)
- c. Sam drinks and Jesse drinks too.
no presupposition!

The presupposition *Someone other than Jesse drinks* survives in (a) and (b) but not (c).

2. EXPLAINING FILTERING

A possibility:

- (11) In a sentence of the form *if m then p* or *m and p*, where *p* presupposes *q*:
the whole sentence presupposes *q*, **unless** *m* entails *q*.

Hence “suspension”:

- (12) Jesse has stopped drinking, if indeed she ever did.
presupposition “Jesse used to drink” *is suspended*

≡ If Jesse ever drank, Jesse has stopped drinking.
where *q* presupposes *Jesse used to drink*, which is entailed by *p*

2.1. *Filters and disjunction*

Disjunction is a little different:

- (13) a. Either Sam is buying tonic water or Jesse has stopped drinking.
presupposes: Jesse used to drink.
- b. ^{?#} Either Jesse used to drink or Jesse has stopped drinking.
- c. Either Jesse never drank or Jesse has stopped drinking.
no presupposition
- (14) In a sentence of the form *m or p*, where *p* presupposes *q*:
the whole sentence presupposes *q*, **unless** $\neg m$ entails *q*.

2.2. *Is the “filtering rule” correct?*

Must *m* entail *q* in (11)?

p: The Vice-Chancellor will regret having invited an extreme left-winger to his table.
q: The Vice-Chancellor invited an extreme left-winger to his table.

- (15) If the Vice-Chancellor serves condor-stuffed veal in panda sauce, he'll regret having invited an extreme left-winger to his table.
presupposes: q
- (16) a. If the Vice-Chancellor invites Rush Limbaugh to dinner, he'll regret having invited an extreme left-winger to his table.²
presupposes: q
- b. If the Vice-Chancellor invites Noam Chomsky to dinner, he'll regret having invited an extreme left-winger to his table.³
no presupposition!

Does *m* entail *q* in (16b)?

m: The Vice-Chancellor invites Noam Chomsky to dinner.
q: The Vice-Chancellor invites an extreme left-winger to his table.

Not *exactly*...it's not the case that, in all worlds in which *m* is true, *q* is true.

² For the sake of the example: Rush Limbaugh is an extreme right-winger. It's reasonable to believe that the Vice-Chancellor would regret having an extreme left-winger and an extreme right-winger at the same meal, given the shouting match that would ensue.

³ For the sake of the example: Noam Chomsky is an extreme left-winger.

Another example:

p: Sue has stopped wearing temple garments (aka “holy underwear”).

q: Sue used to wear temple garments.

- (17) a. Sue drinks caffeine now and she has stopped wearing temple garments.
presupposition: r, as predicted
- b. Sue used to wear temple garments and she has stopped doing so.
presupposition: none, as predicted
- c. Either Sue never wore temple garments, or she has stopped doing so.
presupposition: none, as predicted
- (18) a. Sue is a Mormon, and she has stopped wearing temple garments.
b. If Sue is a Mormon, she has stopped wearing temple garments.
c. Either Sue has never been a Mormon or she has stopped wearing temple garments.

Once again: does *m* entail *q*?

m: Sue is/has been a Mormon.

q: Sue used to wear temple garments.

And once again: not *exactly*...