Pragmatics Homework #1: Presuppositions

Exam Number B018520

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Part I

1. **Propositions b. and c. are presupposed**, while **proposition d. is entailed**, assuming

$$\forall x. \Diamond scared(x) \rightarrow animate(x)$$

My reasoning for **b.** is as follows: consider the negation test, i.e.

That John was assaulted did not scare Mary. (1)

as applied to an inanimate object, e.g.

That John was assaulted did not scare the table.[1] (2)

Sentence 2 implies a table capable of being scared. To support this, a context can be constructed which in my evaluation triggers accommodation of the table being animate, e.g.

> Bursts of light erupted from Mickey's wand as he made the broomsticks dance; this did not scare the table.

My reasoning for **c.** stems primarily from the negation test as performed in (1): John's assault survives negation. The contrapositive test can be used to show **a.**'s entailment relationship with **d.**. Given

> That John was assaulted did not cause fear in Mary.

Mary was also not scared by John's assault, assuming causing fear in and being scared are roughly synonymous.

2. **Proposition b. is presupposed; proposition c. is entailed.** The presupposition relationship of **a.** to **b.** can be demonstrated using a denial test: contrast

> That's false; Carmen still works at the University of Edinburgh.

with

> # That's false; Carmen never worked at the University of Edinburgh.

Contraposition holds for **c.** and **a.**, demonstrating an entailment relationship:

[1] The symbol # throughout this work is used to indicate my own evaluation.

It's not the case that Carmen is not working at the University of Edinburgh.
∴
It's not the case that Carmen is no longer working at the University of Edinburgh.

3. **Proposition b. is presupposed; proposition c. is entailed.** The presupposition relationship with **b.** can be demonstrated via the negation test: in

   John managed to get the job.

   John's finding it difficult to get the job survives. It should be noted, however, that this may be partially contingent on how strictly the use of "managed" is constrained by the difficulty of the task; this is to say, in my evaluation, this could plausibly be considered a case of implicature, e.g.

   Did John manage to get the job?
   Yes, he managed to get it, in fact, he found it quite easy.

   Contraposition can again be used to demonstrate that **a.** entails **c.**, e.g.

   It's not the case that John didn't get the job.
   ∴
   It's not the case that John didn't manage to get the job.

Part II

4. **Proposition a. entails b.**, and vice-versa. Simply stated,

$$\neg\forall x.\, one(x) \rightarrow try(x, kill(Templeton, x))$$

   is equivalent to

$$\exists x.\, one(x) \wedge \neg try(x, kill(Templeton, x))$$

   following from the well-established equivalences

$$\neg\forall x.\, P(x) \equiv \exists x.\, \neg P(x)$$

   and

$$\neg(p \rightarrow q) \equiv p \wedge \neg q$$

5. **Proposition b. entails a.**, as demonstrated by contraposition:

   It's not the case that someone cheated on the exam.
   ∴
   It's not the case that John cheated on the exam.

6. **Proposition a. presupposes b.**. This can be clearly demonstrated by using the negation test: in

   It's not the case that if John realizes that Mary is in New York, he will get angry.

, proposition **b.** survives. Alternatively, this can also be demonstrated using the denial test, by contrasting the following responses to **a.**:

No, John won't get angry.
No, Mary isn't in New York.

Part III

8. (a) i. Baldness exists.
ii. Heredity exists.
iii. France exists.
iv. The king of France exists.

All of the above are projected presuppositions, as demonstrated by the following denial examples:

No, there isn't such a thing as baldness.
No, there isn't such a thing as heredity.
No, France isn't a place.
No, there is no king of France.

(b) The presuppositions from the former subclause are as follows:

i. France exists.

The presuppositions from the latter are:

i. France exists.
ii. The king of France exists.
iii. Baldness exists.

Of the presuppositions in both the former and latter subclauses, only ii. from the latter is not projected - a reasonable response might take a form along the lines of

I don't think there is a king of France.

without, in my evaluation, derailing the discourse.

(c) i. "I" (the speaker) exist.[2]
ii. "You" (the listener) exist.
iii. Pragmatics exists.
iv. "You" are going to Pragmatics.

Of these, presuppositions iii. and iv., which stem from the subclause "stop going to Pragmatics.", are projected into the larger utterance, as evidenced through the denial test:

No, Pragmatics isn't being offered.
No, I don't go to Pragmatics.

(d) From the former subclause:

i. John exists.

[2]Admittedly, a bit of a given.

ii. Breakfast exists.

From the latter subclause:

i. "He" (John) exists.

ii. Breakfast exists, as linked to from the former subclause.

iii. Donuts exist.

iv. John, at least one point, ate donuts for breakfast.

Only iv. from the latter subclause is not projected, and can be readily accessed in a response by the listener:

I don't think John did ever eat donuts, no.

(e) From the former subclause:

i. John exists.

ii. John exercises.[3]

From the latter:

i. "He" (John) exists.

ii. Donuts exist.

iii. Breakfast exists.

iv. John, at least at one, point ate donuts for breakfast.

In this instance, all presuppositions are projected.

Of the above, only **b.** and **d.** are examples where a presupposition from a subclause is prevented from being projected to the utterance as a whole. In both cases, a logical structure similar to

$$\neg P \oplus (P \wedge Q)$$

is employed. This is to say, **d.** might be plausibly formulated in first-order logic as

$$\neg eaten(John, donuts) \oplus (eaten(John, donuts) \wedge \neg eats(John, donuts))$$

, and **b.**'s logical form might resemble

$$\neg(\exists x.king(x, France)) \oplus (\exists x.king(x, France) \wedge bald(x))$$

In both instances, an initial "out" is supplied in the initial subclause, which allows the listener to select the negation of a presupposition from the latter subclause.

[3]This, arguably, could instead be a case of implicature: "Yes, you could say John is exercising more - he didn't exercise in the first place".