

Pragmatics Homework #1: Presuppositions

Word limit: 1500

Due Thursday 29 January

I. Consider the following sets of sentences in (1-3). In each of these examples, the (a) sentences presuppose and/or entail the other sentences. Specify which (of the non-(a) sentences) is a presupposition and which is a simple entailment. Explain (briefly!) what test(s) convinced you of your answer. (7 points)

- (1) a. That John was assaulted scared Mary.
b. Mary is animate.
c. John was assaulted.
d. That John was assaulted caused fear in Mary.
- (2) a. Carmen is no longer working at the University of Edinburgh.
b. Carmen used to work at the University of Edinburgh.
c. Carmen is not working at the University of Edinburgh.
- (3) a. John didn't manage to get the job.
b. It was kind of hard for John to get the job.
c. John didn't get the job.

II. What relationship holds between sentence (a) and sentence (b) in the following examples? (7 points)

- (4) a. It is false that everyone tried to kill Templeton.
b. Someone did not try to kill Templeton.
- (5) a. Someone cheated on the exam.
b. John cheated on the exam.
- (6) a. If John realizes that Mary is in New York, he will get angry.
b. Mary is in New York.

III. Presupposition Projection (10 points)

Presupposition projection is a phenomenon whereby a larger utterance carries the presupposition generated by a subclause. For example, the simple structure in utterance (7a) presupposes that there is a king of France. The more complex structures in (7b) and (7c) also carry this same existential presupposition.

- (7) a. The King of France is bald.
- b. It seems that the King of France is bald.
- c. Abe regrets that the King of France is bald.

Now consider the examples in (8):

- (8) a. If baldness is hereditary, then the king of France is bald.
- b. If there is a king of France, then the king of France is not bald.
- c. I beg you to stop going to Pragmatics.
- d. Either John has never eaten donuts for breakfast, or he has stopped doing so.
- e. Either John is exercising more or he has stopped eating donuts for breakfast.

For examples (8a-e), identify the presuppositions in the subclauses and discuss whether or not each presupposition projects. What generalization captures the pattern of projection?