

Definitions

Entailment: Proposition *A* **entails** proposition *B* if the truth of *A* guarantees the truth of *B*.

Implicature: Proposition *A* is an **implicature** of proposition *B* if *B* is inferred from *A* given the context, but *B* is not necessarily true.

Presupposition: A proposition *B* is a **presupposition** of proposition of *A* if proposition *B* is a precondition on the truth / falsity of *A*.

Exercise: Determine whether the propositions are an entailment, implicature, presupposition or have no relation to the utterance in question.

Context: Shannon is an aspiring musician. He has spent the past year and a half developing a record of a genre that he calls ‘experimental classical’, where he takes famous classical music pieces, inverts the order of the notes, plays every instrument on a synthesizer and reads magical realism poetry over it. He says it’s the future. He calls his good friend Skip over to have a private listening party, just before he thinks he is going to take the world by storm. He plays the title track 9 Mahler for Skip, and he asks for Skip’s opinion. Skip says the following:

UTTERANCE: There are a lot of instruments playing here, and I noticed how you really took time to emphasize the synthesizer in this track.

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| 1. Skip didn’t like Shannon’s work. | IMPLICATURE |
| 2. Shannon took time to emphasize the synthesizer. | PRESUPPOSITION |
| 3. Shannon tried to collaborate with Zubin Mehta. | UNRELATED |
| 4. There was sound in the song. | ENTAILMENT |

Context: Shadow loves to eat. Cici (pronounced [sisi]) is Shadow’s friend and is inviting him over to her place for dinner for the first time. She knows he has a stomach on him, but she didn’t realize that it was basically bottomless. She makes him three full plates of spaghetti carbonara, which he devours, and they shared the plate of cornbread that he made for the dinner. By shared it, Shadow had seven of eight pieces. He then gets up and looks in her fridge for some more food, and she says the following:

UTTERANCE: I have fruit in the fridge, as well as ice cream in my mini-fridge if you are feeling dessert, but you must almost be full at this point, my friend.

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| 1. There is food in the fridge. | ENTAILMENT |
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| 2. Shadow actually doesn't like ice cream. | UNRELATED |
| 3. Cici has a mini-fridge. | PRESUPPOSITION |
| 4. Cici would like Shadow to stop eating. | IMPLICATURE |

Just for fun

. Show that the following sentences are ambiguous by coming up with a context where one reading is true and the other is false.

1. Some student passed every exam.
2. You can't trespass.

The first sentence is ambiguous with regard to the scope of quantification. The two readings are the following: (i) there was one student who passed every exam; and (ii) for every exam, at least one student passed that exam. With these in mind, you can come up with an appropriate context where one is true and the other false.

The second sentence is ambiguous with regard to the type of modality — deontic v. epistemic. The deontic reading happens when the speaker is referencing some set of rules; so, the reading is along the lines of 'you are not allowed to trespass'. The other reading is with regards to a speaker's world knowledge; this reading is along the lines of 'given what we know about the world, you are not able to trespass'. The deontic reading is probably more salient, so I'll give a context for the other: suppose there is a palatial estate with a moat that has alligators and sharks lurking in it, but a group of kids want to trespass so they can play on the grass tennis courts. If one kid said to the other sentence 2, we can see that it isn't the deontic reading.

. Given the context, is the sentence in question below true, false or can it be both?

Context: There is a certain man in a brown hat whom Ralph has glimpsed several times under questionable circumstances on which we need not enter here; suffice it to say that Ralph suspects he is a spy. Also there is a grey-haired man, vaguely known to Ralph as rather a pillar of the community, whom Ralph is not aware of having seen except once at the beach. Now Ralph does not know it, but the men are one and the same. Ralph knows the man seen on the beach by name, as Bernard J. Orcutt.

UTTERANCE: Ralph believes Mr. Orcutt is a spy.

This brilliant example is due to Quine (1956). The sentence can either be true or false, depending on whether or not you take into consideration the speaker's beliefs. The two readings are called *de re* and *de dicto*. Under the *de re* reading, we don't take Ralph's beliefs into account, and in that case it happens to be that the man in the brown hat and the man at the beach are the same people, so the sentence is true. Under the *de dicto* reading, we take into account Ralph's beliefs, and in this case Ralph doesn't think Mr. Orcutt, the man on the beach, is a spy, but he believes the man in the brown hat, who he has separate from and not associated with Mr. Orcutt, to be a spy, so the sentence is false in that sense.