

- List as many classic indexicals as you can, and specify what feature of the speech situation they depend on for their meanings.
- List as many items which, like pronouns, can be either anaphoric or depend on a hearer's ability to infer what the speaker intends.
- List as many types of demonstratives as you can.
- Take a letter to the editor from your favorite newspaper, and locate some examples of each of these types of context-dependent elements.

10.2 Presupposition³

If someone utters (1), they take for granted that John has left work early before:

(1) John left work early again.

But of course speakers take things for granted all the time. Linguistic presupposition occurs when the utterance of a sentence tells the hearer that the speaker is taking something for granted. It seems that the presence of *again* in (1) signals what the speaker is taking for granted.

Let's have a typographical conventions for this chapter:

For any sentence S, S^P will refer to the presuppositions of S.

(2) It stopped raining.

(2)^P = the proposition that it was raining before (which is presupposed by (2)).

The presuppositions of a sentence are different from its ordinary entailments. Ordinary entailments are a function of the literal, semantic meaning of a sentence. So (2) entails (3):

(3) There was a time (after the reference time of (2)) during which no drops of water were falling from the sky.

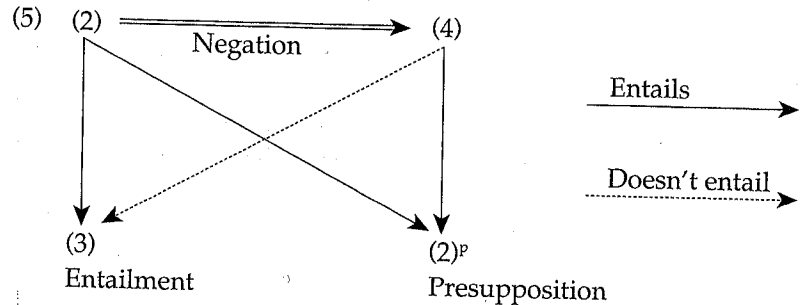
Though we want to say that presuppositions contrast with entailments, notice that, technically speaking, presuppositions are entailments: if (2) is true, (2)^P must be true too. This shows that presuppositions are really a special species of entailment. They are entailments which are "taken for granted." This concept of being "taken for granted" is rather fuzzy, and we would do well to come up with some clearer criteria for identifying presuppositions.

Over the years, linguists have noticed that those pieces of meaning which give the feeling of being taken for granted have some special properties. They "survive" embedding in certain linguistic contexts where entailments don't "survive." For example:

Negation

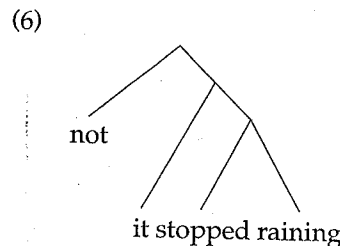
(4) It didn't stop raining.

(4) is the negative version of (2). Notice that, if (4) is true, we still know that (2)^P must be true. We can say that the presupposition survives negation. But, if (4) is true, we do not know that (3) is true. The entailment does not survive negation.



The reason for this difference between presupposition and entailment is that negation denies the semantic meaning of a sentence. For this reason, entailments (which are due to semantic meaning) don't survive negation. Negation leaves the presuppositions of a sentence intact, since they are part of pragmatic meaning, not semantic meaning.

Sometimes we talk about presupposition in terms of "inheritance" rather than "survival." We say that the presuppositions of a sentence are *inherited* by the negation of the sentence, while entailments are not. The reason for this terminology is apparent if we think about the structure of the sentence:



Think of this as an upside-down family tree. The topmost node is the child of *not* and *it stopped raining*. Likewise, *it stopped raining* is the child of *it* and *stopped raining*. By itself, *it stopped raining* presupposes that it was raining before. The child of this sentence, *it didn't stop raining* (*not* + *it stopped raining*), "inherits" the presupposition from its parent. But it doesn't inherit the entailment (3).

Other constructions allow inheritance of presuppositions too, for example:

If clauses

- (7) John left work early again, he will be fired.

Modals

- (8) Maybe John left work early again.

We can use the fact that negation, *if* clauses, and modals allow inheritance of presuppositions as a presupposition detector. Suppose we wonder whether *Noah stopped crying* presupposes anything. We can just negate it (*Noah didn't stop crying*), put it in an *if* clause (*If Noah stopped crying, we could sleep*), and modify it with a modal (*Maybe Noah stopped crying*). Notice that each of these shares with the original sentence the implication that Noah was crying before. This indicates that Noah's crying before is a presupposition.

- Use the inheritance tests to show that (1) really does presuppose that John left work early before.

This exercise has an answer, no. 10, in the appendix.

- What do the following sentences presuppose? Provide arguments using the inheritance tests.
 - Mary regrets that she ate an apple.
 - It was John who brought an apple to the party.
 - Frank_i ate an apple too.
(α_i indicates that α is pronounced with intonational focus.)
 - Frank ate_i an apple too.
 - Frank ate an apple_i too.
 - Each student from Mexico did well on the exam.
 - The King of France is bald.
 - Even Jill likes Frank.
- Name at least one entailment of each sentence in (a)–(h).

How do presuppositions fit into a more general view of meaning? There are two major views on this question within the modern linguistics literature:

- The two-component model.* Presuppositions have a special status. Sentences have two kinds of content, their ordinary semantic content and their presuppositional (pragmatic) content. (Gazdar; Karttunen and Peters)
- Pragmatic presupposition.* Presuppositions are admittance conditions for sentences into a context. (Stalnaker; Heim; van der Sandt)

10.2.1 The projection problem

In order to understand the differences between "the two-component model" and "pragmatic presupposition," we need to consider the primary empirical problem which has exercised presuppositionologists. We noticed already that certain constructions (negation, *if* clauses, modals) inherit the presuppositions of their parts. Do all constructions behave this way? Consider these data:

- (9) It stopped raining and then it started raining.
- (10) It started raining and then it stopped raining.
- (11) If it was raining, then it stopped raining by noon.
- (12) If John came to the party, then it stopped raining by noon.
- (13) Either it stopped raining or Mary had an umbrella.
- (14) Either it stopped raining or it never was raining in the first place.

Even though all of these sentences contain *it stopped raining* as a part, it seems that only (9), (12), and (13) presuppose what *it stopped raining* presupposes: that it was raining before. Thus we cannot say that presuppositions are always inherited. The issue of which constructions inherit the presuppositions of their parts and which do not is called the *projection problem for presuppositions*.