

## 24.900: Introduction to Linguistics

3/14/05

- I. **Use of references textual, personal etc.**  
Whenever you consult outside sources, and we encourage this, please cite the text you consulted and/or the persons you talked with if you use any of the ideas from these sources.
- II. Quiz #1: Wednesday, March 16. Be on time. You will have the entire class period to complete the quiz.
- III. Reminder: Draft #1 of the Squib proposal is due on Friday, 3/18.
- IV. Guest lecturer today: Tamina Stephenson

### Semantics cont.

(Saeed, J. *Semantics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2003. Blackwell Publishers, England).

What kind of knowledge about the meaning of his/her language does the native speaker have?

1. Sentence Relations and Truth
  - a. Semantic relations that may hold between sentences of a language
  - b. May be the result of the meaning of particular words in a sentence or the result of the syntactic structures themselves or more often than not, a combination of word meanings and syntactic structure.
  - c. As an example of an attempt to represent these relations, we will look at an approach to meaning based on the notion of **truth**, which has grown out of the study of logic.
  - d. Specifically, we will consider **entailment** and **presupposition**
2. **Entailment:**
  - A below entails B.
    - A. The anarchist assassinated the emperor.
    - B. The emperor is dead.
  - A entails B: we know that if A then automatically B.

3. More formal definition:

Entailment defined by truth:

A sentence **p** entails a sentence **q** when the truth of the first (**p**) guarantees the truth of the second (**q**) and the falsity of the second (**q**) guarantees the falsity of the first (**p**).

**Step 1:** If **p** (The anarchist assassinated the emperor) is true, is **q** (The emperor died) automatically true? **YES**

**Step 2:** If **q** (The emperor died) is false, is **p** (The anarchist assassinated the emperor) also false? **YES**

**Step 3:** Then **p** entails **q**. Note if **p** is false then we can't say anything about **q**; it can be either true or false.

**4. Problem:**

X = Alvin kissed Elvina passionately.

Which of the Ys are entailed by X?

1. Y= Alvin kissed Elvina.
2. Y= Alvin kissed Elvina many times.
3. Y= Alvin did not kiss Elvina.
4. Y= Elvina was kissed by Alvin.
5. Y= Alvin touched Elvina with his lips.
6. Y= Elvina kissed Alvin.
7. Y= Elvina was kissed.

**5. Presupposition:**

-A presupposes B, as C does D.

- A. The mayor of Manchester is a woman.
- B. There is a mayor of Manchester.

- C. I regret eating your sandwich.
- D. I ate your sandwich.

A presupposes B: B is part of the assumed background against which A is said.

6. A more formal definition of presupposition as a truth relation:

**Step 1:** If **p** (the presupposing sentence) is true, then **q** (the presupposed sentence) is true.

**Step 2:** If **p** is false, then **q** is still true.

**Step 3:** If **q** is true, **p** could be either true or false.

- A. John's brother has just returned from Texas.
- B. John has a brother.

If it is true that John's brother has come back from Texas, it must be true that John has a brother. Similarly, if it is false that John's brother has come back from Texas (if he is still there, for example), the presupposition that John has a brother still survives. Finally, if it is true that John has a brother, it doesn't tell us anything about whether he has come back from Texas or not; we just don't know.

8. Difference between entailment and presupposition:

- a. I saw my father today.
- b. I saw someone today.

If we negate 8a to form 8a', then it no longer entails 8b, repeated below.

- 8a'. I didn't see my father today.
- b. I saw someone today.

8b no longer automatically follows from the preceding sentence; it might be true, we just don't know. Compare this with the presupposition pair:

- 9a. The mayor of Liverpool is in town.
- b. There is a mayor of Liverpool.

If we negate 9a to form 9a', the resulting sentence still has the presupposition, shown in 9b.

- 9a'. The mayor of Liverpool isn't in town today.
- c. There is a mayor of Liverpool.

Negating the presupposing sentence does not affect the presupposition, whereas negating an entailing sentence destroys the entailment.