



EGG 2018: Intro to pragmatics (week 2)

Session 5: Conventional implicatures

Sarah Zobel
August 10, 2018



Yesterday's class

- ▶ **Updated discourse model:**
 - ▶ list of interlocutors
 - ▶ their common ground
 - ▶ a list of their open questions
 - ▶ list of possible discourse moves
- ▶ **Discourse moves:** the different ways in which an utterance affects the discourse components
 - ▶ **Assertion:** proposal to update the common ground with the content of the utterance
 - ▶ **Polar question:** addition of a new open question to the list of open questions

Today: take a closer look at the role of questions in discourse and introduce conventional implicatures

⇒ this session is partly based on Roberts 2012 and Potts 2015



Roadmap

Intro

Questions and their role in structuring discourse

Conventional implicatures

Further topics



Cooperative principle and questions – I

The Cooperative Principle makes reference to a **shared discourse goal**:

(1) **Cooperative principle:**

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

Previous classes:

the shared discourse goal is to “maximize the common ground” = to jointly establish more truths about the world (if we have a belief norm)

How could this discourse goal be reformulated as a question? Which general question do the interlocutors aim to settle (at least partly)?



Cooperative principle and questions – II

The most general “question under discussion” (QUD):

What is the world like? / What are the facts? (if we have a belief norm)



Cooperative principle and questions – II

The most general “question under discussion” (QUD):

What is the world like? / What are the facts? (if we have a belief norm)

For single, specific conversations, the purpose of the talk exchange (= the main QUD) is a sub-purpose/sub-question:

- ▶ Two friends meeting to have a chat:

“What has the world been like since we last talked?”

- ▶ Doctor and patient:

“What is the patient’s problem and how can it be resolved?”

- ▶ A traveller and a local:

“Where is the central bus station?”

⇒ the accepted purpose of the talk exchange can be represented as the question that the interlocutors aim to settle (= their main QUD)



Main QUDs and sub-QUDs – I

Most main QUDs cannot be answered by one interlocutor with one utterance, because e.g.,

- ▶ the full answer would be too long (or infinite)
- ▶ the answer depends on information that they are missing

Usual strategy:

answer the main QUD (maybe jointly) via its sub-questions

(2) A question Q is a **sub-question** of a question Q' iff an answer to Q is also an answer to Q' .

⇒ strategies of this kind provide the **guiding structure for discourses**



Main QUDs and sub-QUDs – II

Context: A really liked the rakija that was served at yesterday's party. He wants to know where he can get any. A approaches B and C, who were in charge of the bar.

- (3) A: Who brought the rakija? (A's question makes the QUD explicit)
 B: I remember that Maria brought some.
 C: Yes, but Peter did, too. Only Paul brought just beer.

B and C answer the QUD set by A in stages via its sub-questions:

Who (of the guests) brought the rakija?

Did Mary bring the rakija? Did Peter bring the rakija? Did Paul bring the rakija?



The QUD and the discourse model

- ▶ **General desideratum:** represent the accepted purpose in the discourse model
 - ⇒ use a new discourse component QUD
 - ⇒ QUD = a list/stack of open questions



The QUD and the discourse model

- ▶ **General desideratum:** represent the accepted purpose in the discourse model
 - ⇒ use a new discourse component QUD
 - ⇒ QUD = a list/stack of open questions

- ▶ **Considerations of interrogative utterances:** discourse moves can also target QUD
 - (4) If a speaker S asks a **question** with content $?p$, S adds the content $?p$ to QUD.
 - ⇒ $?p$ becomes the new “**current QUD**”
 - ⇒ **current QUD:** the next question to be settled (in stages)



The current QUD and relevance

In connection with the current QUD, we can give a definition for “relevance” as referred to in the Maxim of Relation:

- (5) A move m is **relevant** to the current QUD Q iff m either introduces a partial answer to Q (m is an assertion) or is part of a strategy to answer Q (m is a question). (Roberts 2012: 21)



The current QUD and relevance

In connection with the current QUD, we can give a definition for “relevance” as referred to in the Maxim of Relation:

- (5) A move m is **relevant** to the current QUD Q iff m either introduces a partial answer to Q (m is an assertion) or is part of a strategy to answer Q (m is a question). (Roberts 2012: 21)
- (6) A: Who brought the rakija? (→ new current QUD)
 B: I remember that Maria brought some. (→ partial answer)
 C: Yes, but Peter did, too. (→ partial answer)
 Only Paul brought just beer. (→ partial answer)

Note: This notion of relevance is not the same as used in Relevance Theory!

(see Sperber & Wilson 1986)



Roadmap

Intro

Questions and their role in structuring discourse

Conventional implicatures

Further topics



Conventional implicatures in Grice 1975 – I

Grice 1975 introduced **conventional implicatures** in a side comment:

(7) He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave. (Grice 1975: 25)

- ▶ **Main point of the utterance:** he is an Englishman and he is brave



Conventional implicatures in Grice 1975 – I

Grice 1975 introduced **conventional implicatures** in a side comment:

(7) He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave. (Grice 1975: 25)

- ▶ **Main point of the utterance:** he is an Englishman and he is brave
- ▶ **The utterance conveys in addition:**
his being brave is a consequence of his being an Englishman
⇒ this is not the main point of the utterance / what is asserted



Conventional implicatures in Grice 1975 – I

Grice 1975 introduced **conventional implicatures** in a side comment:

(7) He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave. (Grice 1975: 25)

- ▶ **Main point of the utterance:** he is an Englishman and he is brave
- ▶ **The utterance conveys in addition:**
his being brave is a consequence of his being an Englishman
⇒ this is not the main point of the utterance / what is asserted
- ▶ **Furthermore:** whenever we have *therefore*, we get additional content of the same form
⇒ the content is conventionally connected to *therefore*



Conventional implicatures in Grice 1975 – II

Importantly:

conventional implicatures are not derived based on the Gricean Maxims, they are contributed via some linguistic expression

Conversational implicatures vs. conventional implicatures (CIs):



Conventional implicatures in Grice 1975 – II

Importantly:

conventional implicatures are not derived based on the Gricean Maxims, they are contributed via some linguistic expression

Conversational implicatures vs. conventional implicatures (CIs):

- ▶ Conversational implicatures can be cancelled – CIs cannot!
- (8) #Peter is a linguist and, therefore, smart; but the reason for his smartness is not that he is a linguist.



Conventional implicatures in Grice 1975 – II

Importantly:

conventional implicatures are not derived based on the Gricean Maxims, they are contributed via some linguistic expression

Conversational implicatures vs. conventional implicatures (CIs):

- ▶ Conversational implicatures can be cancelled – CIs cannot!
 - (8) #Peter is a linguist and, therefore, smart; but the reason for his smartness is not that he is a linguist.
- ▶ Conversational implicatures are context dependent – CIs are not!



Conventional implicatures in Grice 1975 – II

Importantly:

conventional implicatures are not derived based on the Gricean Maxims, they are contributed via some linguistic expression

Conversational implicatures vs. conventional implicatures (CIs):

- ▶ Conversational implicatures can be cancelled – CIs cannot!
 - (8) #Peter is a linguist and, therefore, smart; but the reason for his smartness is not that he is a linguist.
- ▶ Conversational implicatures are context dependent – CIs are not!
- ▶ Conversational implicatures are detachable (= do not depend on specific lexical items) – CIs are tied to certain lexical items!



Conventional implicatures in Grice 1975 – II

Importantly:

conventional implicatures are not derived based on the Gricean Maxims, they are contributed via some linguistic expression

Conversational implicatures vs. conventional implicatures (CIs):

- ▶ Conversational implicatures can be cancelled – CIs cannot!
- (8) #Peter is a linguist and, therefore, smart; but the reason for his smartness is not that he is a linguist.
- ▶ Conversational implicatures are context dependent – CIs are not!
- ▶ Conversational implicatures are detachable (= do not depend on specific lexical items) – CIs are tied to certain lexical items!

⇒ they do not really have anything in common



Conventional implicatures and presuppositions – I

Conventional implicatures (CIs) share properties with presuppositions:

- ▶ Both can be **conventionally linked to lexical items**.
- ▶ Both are **not affected by entailment-cancelling operators**:

- (9) Peter is smart, but nice.
- *main content*: Peter is smart and nice.
 - *CI content*: Smart people are usually not nice.
- a. It's not true that Peter is smart, but nice.
 - b. Is Peter smart, but nice?
 - c. Perhaps, Peter is smart, but nice.

⇒ presupposed and CI contents both “**project**”

(see Simons et al. 2010, Tonhauser et al. 2013 on “projective content”)



Conventional implicatures and presuppositions – I

Conventional implicatures (CIs) share properties with presuppositions:

- ▶ Both can be **conventionally linked to lexical items**.
- ▶ Both are **not affected by entailment-cancelling operators**:

- (9) Peter is smart, but nice.
- *main content*: Peter is smart and nice.
 - *CI content*: Smart people are usually not nice.
- a. It's not true that Peter is smart, but nice.
 - b. Is Peter smart, but nice?
 - c. Perhaps, Peter is smart, but nice.

⇒ presupposed and CI contents both “**project**”

(see Simons et al. 2010, Tonhauser et al. 2013 on “projective content”)

Is there a difference?



Conventional implicatures and presuppositions – II

Main difference: The truth of CI content is **not a precondition for the truth-evaluability of the main content.**

(10) He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave.

Grice 1975: “I do not want to say that my utterance of this sentence would be, *strictly speaking*, false should the consequence in question fail to hold.”



Conventional implicatures and presuppositions – II

Main difference: The truth of CI content is **not a precondition for the truth-evaluability of the main content.**

(10) He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave.

Grice 1975: “I do not want to say that my utterance of this sentence would be, *strictly speaking*, false should the consequence in question fail to hold.”

Same intuition with *but*:

(11) Peter is smart, but nice.

⇒ even if it's false that smart people are usually not nice, it will be true that Peter is smart and nice



Conventional implicatures and presuppositions – II

Main difference: The truth of CI content is **not a precondition for the truth-evaluability of the main content.**

(10) He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave.

Grice 1975: “I do not want to say that my utterance of this sentence would be, *strictly speaking*, false should the consequence in question fail to hold.”

Same intuition with *but*:

(11) Peter is smart, but nice.

⇒ even if it's false that smart people are usually not nice, it will be true that Peter is smart and nice

Complication: it is often hard to determine whether projective content has precondition status



More examples of CI content

The following expressions are assumed to contribute CI content:

(see Potts 2015 for more and references)

- ▶ **parentheticals**: appositive relative clauses, nominal appositives, ...

(12) Mary, who we met in the mall yesterday, is also a student at EGG.



More examples of CI content

The following expressions are assumed to contribute CI content:

(see Potts 2015 for more and references)

- ▶ **parentheticals**: appositive relative clauses, nominal appositives, ...

(12) Mary, who we met in the mall yesterday, is also a student at EGG.

- ▶ **expressives**: curse words, epithets, honorifics

(13) My horse refused to gallop again. I'll have to put down that old nag.



More examples of CI content

The following expressions are assumed to contribute CI content:

(see Potts 2015 for more and references)

- ▶ **parentheticals**: appositive relative clauses, nominal appositives, ...

(12) Mary, who we met in the mall yesterday, is also a student at EGG.

- ▶ **expressives**: curse words, epithets, honorifics

(13) My horse refused to gallop again. I'll have to put down that old nag.

- ▶ **discourse particles** (e.g., in German)

(14) Heute ist ja der letzte Tag.
today is JA the last day
'It's the last day today.' + (\approx as you know)



Connection: CIs and the discourse components – I

Observation: CI content cannot be used to answer a question = to address the current QUD

- (15) A: Who is Mary?
B: Mary, who we met in the mall today, is also a student at the EGG.
- (16) A: Where did we meet Mary?
B: #Mary, who we met in the mall today, is also a student at the EGG.



Connection: CIs and the discourse components – I

Observation: CI content cannot be used to answer a question = to address the current QUD

- (15) A: Who is Mary?
B: Mary, who we met in the mall today, is also a student at the EGG.
- (16) A: Where did we meet Mary?
B: #Mary, who we met in the mall today, is also a student at the EGG.

New distinction between types of contents:

- ▶ **At-issue content:** (Simons et al. 2010: 317)

(17) Content is **at-issue** relative to a question Q iff it is relevant to Q .

- ▶ **Not-at-issue content:** content that is not at-issue

⇒ linguistic expressions contribute not-at-issue content if that content is usually/always not-at-issue when it is used



Connection: CIs and the discourse components– II

CI content (and presupposed content) is **not-at-issue content**:

- ⇒ CI-content is directly added to the common ground
- ⇒ similar updating process as in the case of accommodation

- (18) A: Mary, who we met in the mall today, is also a student.
- *A asserts*: Mary is a student
 - *A presupposes*: there is a salient other person who is a student
 - *A conveys the CI content*: A and B met Mary at the mall today



Connection: CIs and the discourse components– II

CI content (and presupposed content) is **not-at-issue content**:

- ⇒ CI-content is directly added to the common ground
- ⇒ similar updating process as in the case of accommodation

- (18) A: Mary, who we met in the mall today, is also a student.
- *A asserts*: Mary is a student
 - *A presupposes*: there is a salient other person who is a student
 - *A conveys the CI content*: A and B met Mary at the mall today

⇒ to protest, the addressee has to step outside the line of discourse

- (19) B: No, that's not true. (can only target the asserted content)
 B': Wait, I thought we met Susan at the mall, not Mary.



Further topics for independent reading

▶ Sensitivity to QUD and QUD-strategies:

- ▶ information structure and strategies (e.g., Büring 2003, Roberts 2012)
- ▶ discourse particles (e.g., McCready 2006, Rojas-Esponda 2014)
- ▶ ellipsis (e.g., AnderBois 2010)

⇒ more literature: <https://www.asc.ohio-state.edu/roberts.21/QUDbib/>

▶ Formal treatments of (not-)at-issue contents and effects:

- ▶ **“Two-dimensional semantics”**: semantic systems that formally distinguish an at-issue level of meaning and a not-at-issue/expressive level of meaning (e.g., Potts 2005, McCready 2010, Gutzmann 2012)
- ▶ **Dynamic semantic proposals**: dynamic systems that distinguish various types of semantic context effects (e.g., AnderBois, Brasoveanu & Henderson 2015, Murray 2017)



Literatur

- AnderBois, Scott. 2010. Sluicing as anaphora to issues. In: Nan Li & David Lutz (eds.), *Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 20*. Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications.
- AnderBois, Scott, Adrian Brasoveanu & Robert Henderson. 2015. At-issue Proposals and Appositive Impositions in Discourse. *Journal of Semantics* 32: 93–138.
doi:10.1093/jos/fft014
- Büring, Daniel. 2003. On d-trees, beans, and B-accent. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 26: 511–545.
- Grice, H. Paul. 1975. Logic and Conversation. In: P. Cole & J. Morgan (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics, vol.3*, Academic Press. Reprinted as Ch2 of Grice 1989, 22–40.
- Gutzmann, Daniel. 2012. *Use-conditional Meaning – Studies in multidimensional semantics*. PhD Dissertation: University of Frankfurt.
- McCready, Eric. 2010. Varieties of conventional implicature. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 3, Article 8: 1–57. doi: 10.3765/sp.3.8



Literatur (contd.)

McCready, Eric. 2006. Japanese *yo*: Its semantics and pragmatics. *Sprache und Datenverarbeitung* 30:25–34.

Murray, Sarah. 2017. *The semantics of evidentials*. Oxford University Press.

Potts, Christopher. 2015. Presupposition and implicature. In: Shalom Lappin and Chris Fox (eds.) *The Handbook of Contemporary Semantic Theory*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 168–202.

Potts, Christopher. 2005. The Logic of Conventional Implicatures. Oxford Studies in Theoretical Linguistics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roberts, Craige. 2012. Information structure in discourse: Towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 5, Article 6: 1–69, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3765/sp.5.6>

Rojas-Esponda, Tania. 2014. A discourse model for *überhaupt*. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 7, 1: 1–45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3765/sp.7.1>



Literatur (contd.)

Simons, Mandy, Judith Tonhauser, David Beaver & Craige Roberts. 2010. What projects and why. In: Nan Li & David Lutz (eds.) *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 20*. Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications. 309–327.

Sperber, Dan & Deirdre Wilson. 1986. *Relevance: communication and cognition* (The Language and Thought Series). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tonhauser, Judith, David Beaver, Craige Roberts & Mandy Simons. 2013. Toward a taxonomy of projective content. *Language* 89: 66–109.