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## **EGG 2018: Intro to pragmatics (week 2)**

Session 5: Conventional implicatures

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## 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



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# 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):

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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



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- ▶ **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)



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- (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)



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## 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)

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- ▶ **The utterance conveys in addition:**  
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⇒ 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

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- (8) #Peter is a linguist and, therefore, smart; but the reason for his smartness is not that he is a linguist.



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⇒ 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”)



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**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.”





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**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



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**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.



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- ▶ **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.



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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





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- *A asserts*: Mary is a student
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  - *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)



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