

Zimmermann and Sternefeld (2013) *IntoSem*
Chapter 9: Presuppositions

Exercises

Exercise 1: Definiteness: Existence and Uniqueness

Presuppositions tend to be triggered by some morpheme – and “the” is one: it triggers the double presupposition that

- (i) there is at least one element of the extension of the N it combines with,
- (ii) there is at most one element of the extension of the N it combines with.

Consider (1)–(5) and assess

- (i) which condition they violate, (i) or (ii), and
- (ii) whether they are false, neither true nor false, or true.

- (1) I have played the fool in Hamlet.
- (2) I have played the witch in Macbeth.
- (3) The moon of Jupiter has enough oxygen to sustain life.
- (4) Chet Baker was never the trumpeter in Dave Brubeck’s Quartet.
- (5) Cordelia, the innermost moon of Uranus, was named after the daughter of King Lear.

Exercise 2: Inception, Continuation, Repetition, Restitution

Assume the semantics (7) for the verb *stop* as occurring in (6):¹

- (6) I have stopped having sex with my ex, but we remain good friends.

$$(7) \quad \llbracket stop \rrbracket_t(p) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{iff } p([t_1, t_2]) = 1 \text{ and } p((t_3, t_4]) = 0 \\ 0 & \text{iff } p([t_1, t_2]) = 1 \text{ and } p((t_3, t_4]) = 1 \\ \text{undefined} & \text{else} \end{cases}$$

for some time points t_1 and t_4 and for $t = [t_2, t_3]$.

¹ p is a variable for sentence intensions as partial functions from intervals to truth values

How could $\llbracket \textit{start} \rrbracket_t(p)$ and $\llbracket \textit{continue} \rrbracket_t(p)$ be defined?

Next consider the following simple semantics for the adverb *still*:

$$(8) \quad \llbracket \textit{still} \rrbracket_t(p) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{iff } p(t) = 1 \text{ and } p([t_1, t_2]) = 1 \\ 0 & \text{iff } p(t) = 0 \text{ and } p([t_1, t_2]) = 1 \\ \text{undefined} & \text{else} \end{cases}$$

for some time point t_1 and for $t = [t_2, t_3]$ for some t_3

Comment on a – solvable – problem with using the negation test here.

What might a corresponding definition of $\llbracket \textit{again} \rrbracket_t(p)$ look like?

Finally, comment on what makes a case like the following problematic:

(9) A child has fallen ill with measles but recovered again.

Exercise 3: Nominalization, Existence and Factivity

Consider the contrast between (10) and (11).

(10) Many will be surprised at a Sunderland win over Chelsea.

(11) Many will be surprised at the Sunderland win over Chelsea.

One sentence has a presupposition that the other lacks – what is that?

Paraphrase the two sentences by substituting embedded clauses for the two prepositional phrases.

What is the source of the presupposition, in the sentence and its paraphrase?

Exercise 4: ‘De re’ under Factive Attitudes

A sentence like (12) can be analyzed in such a way that the proposition we plug into the extension of the report verb *report* at a world w is (13):

(12) Women tend to report that the number of times they have sex is lower than it is.

(13) $\{w' : \text{the number of times } x \text{ has sex at } w' \text{ is lower than it is at } w\}$

But what then is wrong with (14)?

(14) #Women tend to suppress the fact that the number of times they have sex is higher than it is.