

# Introduction to Linguistics: Homework 5 — Semantics and Pragmatics

Spring 2020

Assigned: May 18th, 2020

Due: May 25th, 2020 by 11.59p Central Time on Canvas

## Problem 1: Distinguishing inferences (25 points)

For each pair of sentences below, the (b) sentence describes an inference that may be conveyed by the (a) sentence. For each sentence write whether this is an entailment, presupposition or implicature. If the inference in the (b) sentence is not conveyed at all by the (a) sentence, write 'none'. Run the appropriate tests **for only two of them** to justify your answers.

1. (a) Jackson's hoverboard burst into ashes.

(b) Jackson had a hoverboard.

2. (a) Max jumped.

(b) Max's feet left the ground.

3. (a) Marcus danced or sang

(b) Marcus sang.

4. (a) Abby regrets eating that popcorn.

(b) Abby ate that popcorn.

5. Bonus (1 point for identification and 1 point for explanation)

(a) Drew thinks that Ellen likes salmon.

(b) Ellen likes salmon.

## Problem 2: Grice's maxims and Gricean reasoning (25 points)

First, write the implicature present; second, state which Gricean maxim(s) is (are) violated; last, **for one of them** go through the Gricean reasoning to derive the implicature.

1. Speaker A: Do you want to go to the movies tonight?  
Speaker B: My little sister is coming for a visit.

2. Speaker A: How was the movie yesterday?  
Speaker B: The background music was good.

## Problem 3: Model-theoretic semantics (40 points)

### Checking against a model (10 points)

Consider the following model for world  $M$ . In world  $M$ , let's assume that there are only four individuals.

$a$ : Abigail     $b$ : Bertrand     $c$ : Cecily     $d$ : Daniel

The following are some of the sets for some predicates in world  $M$ .

violinist:  $\{d, a\}$   
pianist:  $\{b\}$   
singer:  $\{c\}$   
tall:  $\{a, b\}$   
from the East coast:  $\{c, d\}$   
know:  $\{\langle b, a \rangle, \langle b, d \rangle, \langle d, b \rangle, \langle d, a \rangle\}$

Are the following statements true? Briefly explain why. (Please feel free to use prose; your answers don't have to be expressed in formal terms.)

- (i) Cecily is a tall.
- (ii) Bertrand knows Daniel.
- (iii) Abigail knows someone from the East coast.

### Modification (20 points)

1. What are the truth conditions for the following? (What has to hold in the model for the following to be considered true?)
  - (i) Cecily is a tall singer?
  - (ii) Daniel is a violinist from the East coast.
  
2. How does the above modification seem to behave? (How did you model the truth conditions of the previous two sentences?)
  
3. Does this way of doing modification work for the adjectives *fake*, *former*, and *false*? Briefly explain why or why not. If it doesn't work, there is no need to try to fix it here, just an explanation of why is the only thing we would want. (You can consider the phrase *fake banknote* to help build your intuition.)

### Some more on quantifiers (10 points)

Consider the following sentence.

*Only witches cast spells.*

1. For now, treat *only* as a determiner just like *all*, *some* and *no*. What is the meaning of *only* — i.e. under what conditions is a sentence of the form *Only N VP* true? You can draw a (some) Venn diagram(s) to illustrate your answer.

2. When comparing *only* to the determiner *the*, do the following data support the view that *only* is also a determiner (so, something of category D)? Briefly explain your answer. (This is a question about the syntax.)

- (1) the witches cast spells
- (2) \* the the witches cast spells
- (3) only witches cast spells
- (4) only the witches cast spells
- (5) witches only cast spells
- (6) \* witches the cast spells

#### **Problem 4: Presupposition accommodation (10 points)**

Accommodating a presupposition is when a new piece of information gets inserted into the shared state of knowledge for people in the conversation (often called the ‘common ground’) via a presupposition and that new information is not questioned by the listener. With this in mind, consider the following:

- 1. The sentence *My daughter passed her driving exam* presupposes that the speaker has a daughter. Suppose a random stranger uttered this sentence to you in line at the grocery store. Briefly explain why it is easy to accommodate the presupposition.
  
- 2. Suppose you’re walking down the street and an 8-year-old boy says *My daughter passed her driving exam*. Briefly explain why it would be difficult to accommodate the presupposition in this case.