

Presuppositions

- Presuppositions are elements of the meaning of sentences that are necessary to make sense of the sentences at all.
- They are not 'negotiable'.
- A test for a presupposition is that if you change the polarity of the sentence, the presupposition is still present.

Presuppositions

- A test for a presupposition is that if you change the polarity of the sentence, the presupposition **is still present**.

$$p \rightarrow q \wedge (\neg p) \rightarrow q$$

“The police ordered the minors to stop drinking”

the police ordered the minors to stop drinking \rightarrow the minors were drinking

the police **did not** order the minors to stop drinking \rightarrow the minors were drinking

Presuppositions

- A test for a presupposition is that if you change the polarity of the sentence, the presupposition is still present.

$$p \rightarrow q \wedge (\neg p) \rightarrow q$$

“Please take me out to the ball game again.”

Please take me out to the ball game again \rightarrow we went to the ball game before

Please don't take me out to the ball game again \rightarrow we went to the ball game before

The difference between presupposition and entailment

Entailment

- a. I saw my father today. **p**
- b. I saw someone today. **q**

p entails q

if I saw my father today, then I saw someone today

if I did not see someone today, then I did not see my father today

$(p \rightarrow q) \wedge (\neg q \rightarrow \neg p)$

The difference between presupposition and entailment

Entailment

- a. I didn't see my father today. $\neg p$
- b. I saw someone today. q

p entails q

if I didn't see my father today, then I may or may not have seen someone today

q can be T or F, we don't know

The difference between presupposition and entailment

Presupposition

- a. The mayor of Liverpool is in town. **p**
- b. There is a mayor of Liverpool. **q**

p 'entails' q

if the mayor of Liverpool is in town, then there is a mayor of Liverpool
if there is no mayor of Liverpool, then he is not in town

$(p \rightarrow q) \wedge (\neg q \rightarrow \neg p)$

presupposition failure

The difference between presupposition and entailment

Presupposition

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

$\neg p$
 q

p presupposes q

if the mayor of Liverpool isn't in town, then actually we would normally still say that there is a mayor of Liverpool!

$(\neg p \rightarrow q)$

The difference between presupposition and entailment

Presupposition

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

p
q

p entails q

if the mayor of Liverpool is in town, then there is a mayor of Liverpool
if there is no mayor of Liverpool, then he is not in town

$(p \rightarrow q) \wedge (\neg q \rightarrow \neg p)$

Presupposition

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

$\neg p$
q

p presupposes q

if the mayor of Liverpool isn't in town, then actually we would normally still say that there is a mayor of Liverpool!

$(\neg p \rightarrow q)$

$(p \rightarrow q) \wedge (\neg p \rightarrow q)$

What are the presuppositions?

- The police ordered the minors to stop drinking.
- Please take me out to the ball game again.
- That her pet turtle ran away made Emily very sad.
- The administration forgot that the professors support the students.
- Did the United States invade Cambodia in 1970?
- Isn't it strange that the United States invaded Cambodia in 1970?

We note from our records that you did not have an eye check-up as advised and we would recommend that you contact your eye doctor or Community Clinic for a test at your earliest convenience.

If you have any enquiries regarding this service please telephone 456-7890 and ask for the ophthalmatory clerk.

NO FURTHER REMINDER WILL BE SENT.

Presuppositions and Accommodation

<i>Phrase</i>	<i>Presupposition</i>	<i>Entity/Fact</i>
our records	(we) have records	E
we note that you did not have an eye test	you did not have an eye test	F
a test as advised	we told you to have one	F
your eye doctor	you have an eye doctor	E
this service	this is a service	E
the ophthalmatory clerk	there exists an ophthalmatory clerk	E

Presuppositions are very difficult to negotiate:

“When did you stop beating your wife?”

More likely to evoke yes/no responses:

“Did you see a broken headlight?”

vs. “Did you see the broken headlight?”