

Mapping Verb Phrase Stereotypes through Implicatures

In this paper I present a methodology for mapping the lexically specified stereotypical information required to compute informativeness and quantity implicatures (Levinson 2000) of verb phrases. My approach builds on Andreotti (2022), where lexical stereotypes are approximated using lists of *defaults*. Defaults are expressions of expectations of normality (Kratzer 1991; Yalcin 2016) carried by a stereotype – e.g. the stereotype of “cat” carries the default “has a tail” – which can be identified using the diagnostics listed below (van Dijk 1979; Yalcin 2016; Thakral 2018):

- 1) **Conjunction Diagnostic** – The negation of a default licenses the conjunction *but*.
 - a) Tammy is a cat *but* she does not have a tail.
 - b) Tammy is a cat ??*but* she does not have wings.
- 2) **Weak necessity Diagnostic** – Defaults are acceptable with the modal *should*.
 - a) If Tammy is a cat, she *should* have a tail.
 - b) If Tammy is a cat, # she *should* have wings.
- 3) **Generic Diagnostic** – Defaults can be expressed by generics.
 - a) Cats have a tail.
 - b) # Cats have wings.

Defaults are contextually suppressed if they contradict information already accepted into a discourse or if they fail to be relevant at the moment of utterance, with the remainder being expressed as informativeness implicatures. Without defaults, Levinson’s informativeness heuristic can only compute as far as “Tammy is a cat” being pragmatically narrowed to “Tammy is a *typical* cat”; a separate, conventional body of presumptive information specifying the typical properties of cats is necessary to further compute the informativeness implicature that “Tammy has a tail”. This conventional body of presumptive information remains relatively understudied, particularly with respect to its role in the calculation of implicatures.

In order to extend Andreotti’s analysis to verb phrases, I employ a temporal partial order between subsets of the defaults of an expression. The precedence relation characterizing this partial order can be diagnosed using the three tests above (e.g. Anne published a paper, but she submitted it before proofreading it → proofreading a paper typically precedes submitting it in the stereotypical event of publishing a paper), but it is also possible to employ an additional test based on the quantity implicatures generated by the fact that the chains (totally ordered subsets) of this partial order form Hirschberg scales – orderings which trigger quantity implicatures despite not being characterized by entailment (Hirschberg 1985).

- 4) **Q-Implicature Diagnostic** – The negation of subsequent defaults can be q-implicated.

Billy: Have you published your paper?
Anne: I have proofread it.
 Q-Implicatures: Anne has not submitted her paper; Anne has not revised her paper;
 Anne has not published her paper.

The ordering of defaults is partial because there are some defaults which are incomparable with others in terms of precedence – e.g. “Anne published a paper” carries the default that Anne *tried* to publish the paper (trying to publish a paper typically precedes publishing it), but “Anne tried to publish a paper” does not clearly q-implicate the negation of anything other than “Anne published a paper”.

References

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