

Entailment, Implicature, and Ambiguity

1 Entailment vs. implicature

Do exercises 1 (pp. 23-24) and 2 (p. 27) in chapter 1 of Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet. Be sure to **justify** your claims by applying the appropriate tests for entailment vs. implicature (in particular (non-)cancellability and (non-)reinforceability) and giving the crucial examples that support your conclusions.

2 Semantic fieldwork

For the second part of the homework, you will need to do some ‘semantic fieldwork’. Specifically, I want you to search published English texts (books, magazines, newspapers, web pages, etc.) for sentences that illustrate two of the phenomena we have been discussing in class this week: implicature and ambiguity. I don’t care what you use as the source of your data, but be sure to **explicitly cite it**, whatever it is. For example, if you find your examples in a newspaper, give the name of the paper, date of publication, and article and page number of the example; if you find your examples online, give the url; etc.

2.1 Implicature

Find a naturally occurring example of a sentence that gives rise to a conversational implicature. Say what the implicature is, and show that it is an implicature by applying the relevant tests.

2.2 Semantic ambiguity

Find a naturally occurring example of a sentence that is semantically ambiguous — that can be associated with distinct truth conditions — based on something other than just the use of an ambiguous word. Provide unambiguous paraphrases of the two interpretations, and show that this is a real case of ambiguity by providing distinct contexts in which one interpretation is true and the other is false, and vice-versa.

For example, in our discussion of (1) in class on Monday, I said that the sentence is ambiguous between the interpretation in (1a) and the one in (1b).

- (1) The child didn’t eat two meatballs.
- a. the child ate fewer than two meatballs
 - b. there are two meatballs that the child didn’t eat

A context that makes (1a) true and (1b) false is one in which the child starts out with two meatballs on his plate and only eats one of them. A context in which (1a) is false and (1b) is true is one in which the child starts out with four meatballs on his plate and eats two of them, but leaves the other two alone.

To the extent that you can, try to say what is responsible for the ambiguity. This part is somewhat open-ended — we haven’t yet learned enough to be able to pinpoint the cause of different kinds of ambiguity. The point here is to for you to develop some initial ideas on your own about what might be involved in creating ambiguity.