Information Structure and Interpretation in Context

What do sentences mean in context?

Conveyed meaning includes also entailments, presuppositions, implicatures

Lecture Plan:

- IS and presupposition
- IS as a source of quantification restriction
- IS as a source of antecedents for anaphors

Some reading: Partee (1991); Partee (1995); Hajičová et al. (1998)

IS and Presupposition

ϕ (semantically) presupposes ψ iff both ϕ and $\neg\phi$ entail ψ.

(1) Harry caused our victory.
(2) Harry didn't cause our victory.
(3) We won.

But consider:

(4) Harry didn't cause our victory. He caused our defeat.

IS and Presupposition

- Presupposition is there but is cancelled?
- Negation blocks presupposition projection?
- Scope of negation is ambiguous?

Possible interplay with IS:

- scope of negation "in line" with IS-partitioning (Prague School)

- global accommodation of material presupposed in Theme$_{is}$ vs.
  local accommodation of material presupposed in Rheme$_{is}$ (Partee)

- Theme$_{is}$ is presupposed (Krifka, Steedman, Peregrin)

Focus-sensitive Constructions

Change of IS results in different truth-conditions!

- adverbs of quantification, e.g., always
- "focus-sensitive" particles, e.g., only, even, also
- counterfactual conditionals
- modals
- frequency adverbs, e.g., mostly, often
- generics
- why-questions
- emotive factives and attitude verbs
- superlatives

Tripartite Structure

Partee proposed tripartite structures consisting of *operator, restrictor and nuclear scope* as a uniform meta-construct useful in capturing the semantics of quantification constructions.

IS interacts with the tripartite structure roughly as follows:

- Theme$_{is}$ contributes to the restrictor
- Rheme$_{is}$ (or Rheme$_{is}$-Focus?) contributes to the nuclear scope

IS and Anaphora: "otherwise"

- Webber et al. (1999): In "otherwise β", "otherwise" is an anaphor that maps its antecedent α to a context complementary w.r.t. α, in which β is then interpreted.

(5) If you have brought a dog, you must pay 50p.
  a. Otherwise you will not be allowed to enter.
  b. Otherwise you can come in for free.

(6) a. *If you have brought a dog and you do not pay 50p, you will not be allowed to enter.*
  b. *If you have not brought a dog, you can come in for free.*

- Different interpretations depending on how the anaphor is resolved.

"Otherwise" and IS Variation

- Even when antecedent is a simple clause, there are different possibilities!

(7) You must CARRY a dog. Otherwise you might get HURT.
  H* LL% H*LL%
  If you do something other with a dog than carry it you might get hurt.

(8) You must carry a DOG. Otherwise you might get HURT.
  H*LL% H*LL%
  If you carry something other then a dog than you might get hurt.

- The IS of previous sentences affects what antecedents are available for "otherwise β" and hence, what complementary contexts.

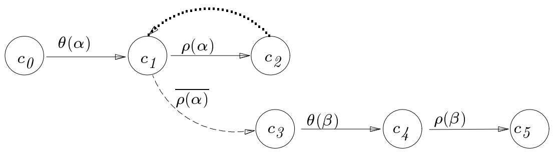
"Otherwise β" with a simple-clause antecedent

- IS-sensitive analysis adds new possibilities to Webber et al.'s analysis :
- IS of the antecedent makes two conditions available for "otherwise" to pick up anaphorically:
  - *full Theme$_{is}$-complement condition*
  - *full Rheme$_{is}$-complement condition*
- The resolved "otherwise β" can be asserted with respect to one of two contexts:
  - context c_0 prior to antecedent
  - context c_1 consistent with (or: restricted by) antecedent's Theme$_{is}$

Full Rheme$_{is}$-complement condition

Condition that "otherwise" appeals to may derive from antecedent's Rheme$_{is}$

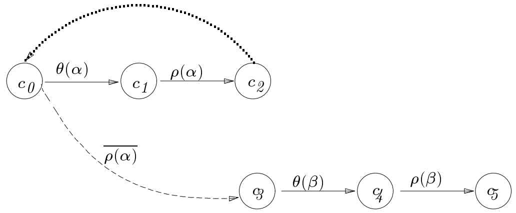
(10) α: $\underbrace{\text{At a red light,}}_{Theme_{is}}$ $\underbrace{\underline{\text{STOP}}\text{. H*LL\%}}_{Rheme_{is}}$ β: Otherwise you will get a ticket.



If the light is red and you do not stop, you will get a ticket.

Updating c_0 with "otherwise β"

(12) α: $\underbrace{\text{Stop}}_{Theme_{is}}$ $\underbrace{\underline{\text{at a red LIGHT}}\text{. H* LL\%}}_{Rheme_{is}}$ β: Otherwise you can go straight on.

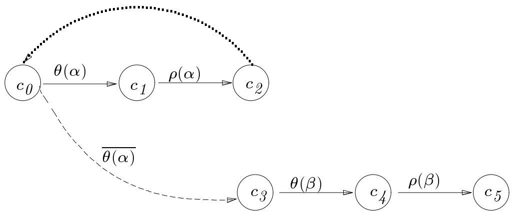


If the light is not red (i.e., in other conditions than being at a red light), you can go straight on.

Full Theme$_{is}$-complement condition

Condition that "otherwise" appeals to may derive from antecedent's Theme$_{is}$

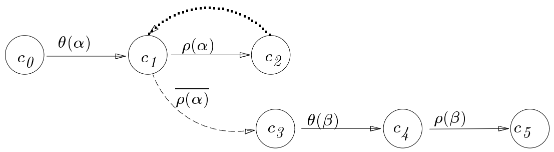
(9) α: $\underbrace{\underline{\text{At a red light}}\text{,}}_{Theme_{is}}$ $\underbrace{\text{STOP. H*LL\%}}_{Rheme_{is}}$ β: Otherwise you can go straight on.



If the light is not red, go straight on.

Updating c_1 with "otherwise β"

(11) α: $\underbrace{\text{Stop}}_{Theme_{is}}$ $\underbrace{\underline{\text{at a red LIGHT}}\text{. H* LL\%}}_{Rheme_{is}}$ β: Otherwise you might get rear-ended.



If you stop and the light is not red, you might get rear-ended.

Wrapping Up

- IS is relevant for sentence interpretation.
- IS in combination with certain constructions gives rise to truth-conditional effects, otherwise (in)felicity effects.
- IS interacts with presuppositions, and therefore, with context update.
- IS seems relevant to interpretation beyond sentence boundary, as it seems to interact with (at least some kinds of) discourse anaphora.

"Otherwise β" with a simple-clause antecedent

Summary:

- IS of the antecedent makes two additional conditions available for "otherwise" to pick up anaphorically:
  - *full Theme$_{is}$-complement condition*
  - *full Rheme$_{is}$-complement condition*
- The resolved "otherwise β" can be asserted with respect to one of two contexts:
  - context c_0 prior to antecedent
  - context c_1 consistent with (or: restricted by) antecedent's Theme$_{is}$