

## CLPS 1383A: The Boundary of Semantics and Pragmatics

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The classic "Gricean" picture of conversational implicature has been a mainstay in linguistic theory for decades. This view is that in (1), for example, a hearer is likely to conclude that "not all of the players are sick" by Gricean reasoning: if the speaker is knowledgeable and if (2) were true then the speaker should have said (2) as it is stronger than (1). If she didn't, it must be that (2) is false (assuming a 'knowledgeable' speaker), and so hearers will conclude (3) on hearing (1)

- (1) Some of the players are sick
- (2) All of the players are sick.
- (3) Not all of the players are sick.

The view that these kinds of inferences are the result of rational beings making inferences about cooperative communication is simple and appealing, and as such has had widespread acceptance. There are, to be sure, many well-known problems in formalizing exactly what implicatures arise when (for example, sometimes there are competing demands) - but the basic picture seems - or at least seemed - unquestionably correct.

But nothing is simple, and in the last 10 years or so there has been a group of challengers to this: researchers who instead place the implicature calculation in the grammar itself, rather than having it be the consequence of rational human behavior. This began (in a somewhat different guise) with work of Stephen Levinson, and was then put forth in a variety of works of Gennaro Chierchia, and a newer version of the "grammatical computation of implicature" hypothesis is articulated in Chierchia, Fox and Spector. On the other side, many have continued to advocate for the standard view against the "grammatical" view, and the debate continues.

The purpose of this course is to examine the issues and to focus on one or two interesting constructions which can exemplify the debate between semantic vs. pragmatic accounts. This includes "Neg Raising" phenomena, and also the distribution of Negative Polarity items. The literature on all of these related topics has become huge (it is very trendy), and so we will in no way attempt to cover all of it. Much of it is also quite technical, and uses rather technical tools either in the grammar or with respect to rational computation, and many of the students in this course (and myself in some cases) probably do not have the appropriate background to thoroughly understand all of the tools that have been brought to bear on this. But we will *all* do our best to come to grips with the literature, even when it is quite challenging.

Depending on class interest, we might also look at some other topics in the general domain of the interaction of pragmatic(like) things and grammar. For example, there is a large literature trying to account for certain apparent grammatical phenomena on the basis of a speaker (or, in some cases, the actual "grammar") computing competing utterances. Just what part of this makes sense as a purely pragmatic strategy vs. what part makes sense in terms of the architecture of the grammar is a possible issue to consider.

### Course expectations.

(1) The course will be run partially like a seminar, although not in all respects. If you are enrolled in the course *you are required to keep up with the readings*. In order to ensure this, each week students will be asked to hand in a paragraph or so with questions for class discussion about the reading. *If you don't completely understand the reading, that is okay. Then say so in your questions - and say what you did understand and just where it got over your head. I don't want people repeating stuff they don't understand - I'd rather find out ways to work through what we need to in order to make sure we are on the same page.*

(2) Each student will present some paper from the literature later on in the semester. Most likely I will have you work in "teams" for this.

(3) The final project will be a paper presented at a "miniconference". You will hand in an abstract ahead of time, circulated to the whole class, and everyone should make suggestions on everyone else's abstracts. Then we will schedule a morning or a day for approximately 20-minute talks (with 10 minutes for discussion) of relevance to the course. The time allotted for the "conference talks" might vary, depending on both the topics and the final enrollment in the course.

*A tentative outline of topics with some of the readings; we will "follow our noses" as the course progresses*

1. Background: Early version of the grammaticized or conventionalized hypothesis:

Levinson, *Presumptive Meanings*, MIT Press, 2000.

At least chapters 1 and 3; as much of chapter 2 as is needed.

2. Grammaticization of (Scalar) Implicatures hypothesis.

Chierchia, Gennaro, "Scalar Implicatures, Polarity Phenomena, and the Syntax/Pragmatics Interface", in A. Beletti et al. (eds.), *Structure and Beyond*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

available on-line at:

<http://stuff.mit.edu/afs/athena/course/24/24.954/OldFiles/www/files/chierchia.scalarimplicature.pdf>

### 3. Replies: (very very partial list)

Russell, Benjamin, "Against Grammatical Computation of Scalar Implicatures", *Journal of Semantics* 23, 2006.

Sauerland, Uli, "Scalar Implicatures in Complex Sentences", *Linguistics and Philosophy* 27, 2004.

Geurts, Bart, "Scalar Implicature and Local Pragmatics", in *Mind and Language* 24, 2009.

### 4. Newer versions

Chierchia, Gennaro, Danny Fox and Benjamin Spector, "The Grammatical View of Scalar Implicatures and the Relationship between Semantics and Pragmatics".

available at:

[http://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/WMzY2ZmY/CFS\\_EmbeddedSIs.pdf](http://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/WMzY2ZmY/CFS_EmbeddedSIs.pdf)

### 5. Neg Raising

readings to be announced; will include classic work by Horn, Bayer and Horn on "short-circuited implicature", and recent work by Gajewski

### 6. Negative Polarity Items

readings to be announced; will include classic papers by Linebarger and by Kadmon and Landman in *Linguistics and Philosophy*, and recent work addressing the question of whether the "licensing" conditions for NPIs need to be stated locally and therefore do not follow entirely from semantic/pragmatic conditions

Other topics to be determined as time and interest warrant