Pragmatics and Prosody of Implicit Discourse Relations: The Case of Restatement

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Outline of the approach

Motivation and Critique

A Gricean approach to discourse interpretation:

- A discourse must be relevant; i.e., SU is communicative goal
- Each utterance is associated with a goal/plan (QUD)
- Denoting coherence relations from relations between topics
- Explaining other than postulating coherence

Aster and Lascarides (2000) critique:

- Lacking formalisation
- Sentential character of Gricean theories
- Reasoning with speakers' intonational is generally unnecessary for the reference of discourse relations
- Speakers' intonational is not generally accessible to the hearer

Grice, Neo-Griceans, Relevance Theory, Groos & Safer (1986), etc.

Topic Continuity: By default, the discourse topic (QUD) does not change.

Exhaustivity: By default, an utterance is interpreted exhaustively.

The Question under Discussion - QUD

Who smokes in the hallway?

Sue has a suspicion: A few weeks ago she met a charming guy called Bill, who she perhaps would not tell on, no matter in which department he is. The identity of the person(s) that smoke(s) in the hallway; and to which departments those persons belong.

However, even Sue has a soft spot for Bill. An hour ago she met a charming guy called Bill, who she perhaps would not tell on, no matter in which department he is. In fact, Sue can reasonably think he is the person who smokes in the hallway. In other words, Bill is irrelevant as a possible culprit.

Nakajima & Allen (1993) compare utterance-final pitch at “elaboration proper” with utterance-final pitch at “restatement”.

Relevance Orderings

Relevance order $r_{on}$ on propositions:

$R(\phi) \Rightarrow R(\psi) \Rightarrow R(\chi) \Rightarrow R(\eta)$

Relevance order $r_{on}$ on worlds:

$W(\phi) \Rightarrow W(\psi) \Rightarrow W(\chi) \Rightarrow W(\eta)$

And in Spontaneous Speech

The conjunction is a much more frequent in spoken than in written narrative (Chafe, 1982).

Prosody in Spontaneous Speech

Nakajima & Allen (1993) compare utterance-final pitch at “elaboration proper” with utterance-final pitch at “restatement”.

Empirical issues

Implicit Discourse Relations

Restatement vs. List:

1. A. Always broke her ski (.)
   - She lost her main transportation means (.)
   - She lost her main transportation means (.)
   - They were enacting the plan (.)

2. B. Always broke her ski (.)
   - They were enacting the plan (.)
   - They were enacting the plan (.)

Nominal restatement vs. List:

A. Two linguists (.)
   - John and Mary (.)
   - They were enacting the plan (.)

B. Two linguists (.)
   - John and Mary (.)
   - They were enacting the plan (.)

Restatement vs. Elaboration proper:

1. A. ?? The council built the bridge (.)
   - ?? The council built the bridge (.)
   - ?? The council built the bridge (.)

2. B. ?? The council built the bridge (.)
   - ?? The council built the bridge (.)
   - ?? The council built the bridge (.)

Narration:

1. A. ?? The lone ranger jumped on his horse (.)
   - ?? The lone ranger jumped on his horse (.)
   - ?? The lone ranger jumped on his horse (.)

2. B. ?? The lone ranger jumped on his horse (.)
   - ?? The lone ranger jumped on his horse (.)
   - ?? The lone ranger jumped on his horse (.)