Abstract: Pragmatics is the study of the interaction between linguistic structure and context. This chapter focuses on two topics which are generally thought to fall under the umbrella of pragmatics. First, implicatures, which are aspects of sentential meaning that are suggested when a sentence is used in a particular discourse context (conversation, speech, story, etc.) and which go beyond the sentence’s literal meaning. I consider some of the kinds of meanings conveyed by implicature in North American languages and discuss evidence that languages may use the same general principles to determine implicatures. Second, I discuss presuppositions associated with certain expressions and grammatical constructions. Presuppositions are the background assumptions that must hold in order for the expression or construction to be used appropriately. I discuss evidence from North American languages that has been argued to challenge theories of presuppositions developed for widely spoken languages like English.

Keywords: Pragmatics, implicatures, presuppositions

1 Introduction

When one encounters a sentence in isolation, one must ask what aspects of meaning are obscured by taking that sentence out of its context. Consider (1):

(1) Mary drove back to Window Rock this morning.

The sentence was part of a conversation, speech, or story. While we might find dictionary entries for each of the words used in this sentence, there are parts of the sentence’s meaning that we can only understand if we understand its discourse context: When is this morning? Should the sentence be understood literally, or is there a hidden layer of meaning? The sentence also holds clues about the context: If someone is described as going back to Window Rock, you can conclude that she has been there before.

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that addresses some of these aspects of meaning by investigating interactions between language and context. This chapter
Elizabeth Bogal-Allbritten focuses on two topics within pragmatics namely conversational implicature and presupposition.\(^1\)\(^2\) There is a long research tradition for these topics in well-studied languages like English. More recently, linguists have asked whether theoretical models developed within this tradition are crosslinguistically applicable. Investigation of indigenous languages of North America has played an important role here, and this chapter summarizes some of the main findings.

Section 2 discusses conversational implicatures, which are aspects of meaning suggested by a sentence in certain contexts and which go beyond the literal meaning of the sentence. Literally, refwindowrock describes Mary returning by car to Window Rock, but it can convey a variety of other messages — implicatures — depending on the context of utterance. Imagine hearing it as part of a conversation about whether Mary will come to a meeting in Tuba City: You might interpret (1) to convey that Mary cannot come, since the cities are far apart. Or, imagine it in a discussion about whether Mary got a job in the government: In this context, you might understand (1) to convey that Mary got the job, since Window Rock is the capital of the Navajo Nation. Although the world knowledge used to calculate these two implicatures is rather location- or culture-specific, von Fintel and Matthewson (2008) suggest that the general framework used to calculate implicatures (principles, reasoning strategies) originally proposed for well-studied languages like English seem to be broadly crosslinguistically applicable. I summarize evidence for this which Fernald et al. (2000) present for Navajo (a.k.a. Diné, Athabaskan). I then discuss some of the meanings that North American languages convey through implicature, including meanings related to evidence, mirativity (surprise), and time.

Section 3 turns to presuppositions, defined as background assumptions that must hold in order for the expression or construction to be used appropriately. As

---

\(^1\) Linguistic structure interacts with discourse context in far more ways than what we can discuss here. Related topics addressed in this volume include information structure (the arrangement of information in sentences; Berge This volume), conversation structure (the arrangement of information and turns in shared discourse; Sammons This volume), speech acts (the use of language to perform actions, such as making requests; Lovick This volume), and deixis (the interpretation of certain expressions, e.g. last week, relative to the time and place of the utterance; Chen and Matthewson This volume, Berez-Kroeker and Holton This volume).

\(^2\) Some linguists would disagree as to whether implicature and presupposition are pragmatic or semantic phenomena. solid residents of the domains of pragmatics, or whether they occupy the boundary of pragmatics and semantics, or perhaps even should count as purely semantic phenomena. For recent discussion, see Jaszczolt (2012) and Gutzmann (To appear). For discussion of implicature and presupposition, see Beaver and Geurts (2012); Jaszczolt (2012); Potts (2015), and Gutzmann (To appear).
the sentence stands in (1), it would not feel appropriate to utter this sentence if the addressees did not know Mary had been in Window Rock before. We can therefore say that (1) presupposes this meaning by virtue of the word *back*. Other expressions and constructions that generally seem to induce presuppositions across languages include counterparts to *again*, *too*, *stop* or *prevent*, and the cleft construction (e.g. *It is Mary who went to Window Rock*). However, a number of authors have found that some North American languages seem to treat presuppositions differently from what we find in well-studied languages like English. I present evidence to this effect from Matthewson (2006) and others who have studied presuppositions in languages of the Pacific Northwest.

2 Conversational implicatures

2.1 Introducing conversational implicature

In their investigation of the pragmatics of Navajo, Fernald et al. (2000) observe that much like in English, Navajo sentences can sometimes carry meanings or functions that go beyond their literal meaning. Such meanings are referred to as *conversational implicatures*. One characteristic of conversational implicatures is that they may only arise in certain discourse contexts, for example:

(2) a. A: Díísh Chímljį́góó atiin?
    this.Q Chinle.DIR road
    ‘Does this road lead to Chinle?’

   b. B: Mm, jó o’oolléézh.
      well well AREAL_SBJ.be_paved
      ‘Well, it’s paved.’

   *Implicature:* Yes, the road leads to Chinle.

(Fernald et al., 2000, (9))

The authors observe that listeners from Navajo country can draw this implicature since they know that Chinle is a large town and that large towns are served by paved roads.

The literal meaning conveyed by this sentence does not change from context to context: The verb *o’oolléézh* always describes an entity that has been coated or

---

painted in some substance. By contrast, context may play a role in how a sentence containing this verb is intended to be interpreted. In this context, the sentence is intended to answer a question about the road's destination, but we can imagine many other conversations in which the same sentence lacks this aspect of meaning: Imagine, for example, that you have asked me to describe a building's parking lot.

We can further contrast conversational implicatures with literal meaning if we think about literal meaning in terms of the other sentences that are entailed by the original sentence. Sentence \( A \) entails sentence \( B \) if it is impossible to imagine a state of affairs in which \( A \) is true while \( B \) is false.\(^4\) Consider the following:

\( (3) \)  
\[
\text{Masdéeł alnúdóó yíyáą́'}.
\]
\[
\text{pie \hspace{1em} half} \hspace{1em} 3\text{OBJ.1SBJ.eat.PFV}
\]
\[
'\text{I ate half the pie.'}
\]

\( \text{Navajo} \) \( (\text{Fernald et al. , 2000, (4)}) \)

By uttering this sentence, I commit myself to the truth of other sentences, for example \( (4) \):

\( (4) \)  
\[
\text{Masdéeł la' yíyáą́'}.
\]
\[
\text{pie \hspace{1em} some} \hspace{1em} 3\text{OBJ.1SBJ.eat.PFV}
\]
\[
'\text{I ate some pie.'}
\]

\( \text{Navajo} \) \( (\text{Fernald et al. , 2000, (5)}) \)

As Fernald et al. (2000) discuss, \( (3) \) entails \( (4) \): If you ate half of the pie, then you also ate some of the pie along the way. In other words, you cannot tell me \((3)\) is true and then deny that \((4)\) is true without contradicting yourself:

\( (5) \)  
\[
\text{I ate half the pie, but it’s not true that I ate some of the pie.}
\]

But you may draw other conclusions from \((3)\), including:

\( (6) \)  
\[
\text{Masdéeł t’áá sii’ánít’éé’ doo yíyáą́'}
\]
\[
\text{pie \hspace{1em} just all} \hspace{1em} \text{NEG} \hspace{1em} 3\text{OBJ.1SBJ.eat.PFV} \hspace{1em} \text{NEG}
\]
\[
'\text{I didn’t eat the whole pie.'}
\]

\( \text{adapt. Fernald et al. 2000, (14)} \) \( \text{Navajo} \)

\(^4\) Entailment is more accurately a relationship between propositions expressed by sentences.
But while (6) might be a natural conclusion of (3), it is not an entailment. We can imagine a situation where (3) is true but (6) is false. Unlike entailments, conversational implicatures can be cancelled; the following is not a contradiction:5

(7) I ate half the pie...in fact, I ate the whole pie.

If implicatures are not part of the logical and literal meaning of a sentence, how and why do they arise? A very widely adopted model of the process is due to Grice (1975, 1989).6

(8) a. **Cooperative Principle:** Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.
   b. **Maxim of Quality:** Try to make your contribution one that is true and something for which you have good evidence.
   c. **Maxim of Quantity:** Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.
   d. **Maxim of Relation:** Be relevant.
   e. **Maxim of Manner:** Express yourself in a way which is clear and easily understood.

The maxim of Relation is key to (2). Speaker A’s question is not directly answered by Speaker B. However, Speaker A assumes that B is abiding by the cooperative principle and the four maxims. Thus, A concludes that B’s response must have been relevant, even though it does not answer the question directly. Using the local knowledge described above, A understands what B said as conversationally implicating that the road goes to Chinle.

The reasoning for (3) is shown below, following Fernald et al. (2000).

(9) a. The speaker said *I ate half the pie*.
   b. There is another sentence which could have just as easily been uttered, namely *I ate all the pie*.

---

5 This is a *scalar implicature* (Horn, 1989). It is debatable whether scalar implicatures are pragmatic or semantic phenomena; see Gazdar (1979), Sauerland (2004), Chierchia (2006), Russell (2006), Geurts (2009), and Chierchia et al. (2012), among others. To my knowledge, evidence from indigenous languages of North America has not yet been brought to bear on this question.

6 This is not the only model of conversational implicature. Horn (1984, 2004) and Levinson (1983, 2000) collapse Grice’s maxims into fewer principles. Sperber and Wilson (1986) propose that two concepts of relevance — one cognitive, one communicative — can best handle the phenomena.
c. By the Maxim of Quantity, *I ate all the pie* would have been better to say in any context where it’s important to know how much pie was eaten, and where the whole pie was eaten.

d. Thus, the speaker must have had some reason to say *I ate half the pie* rather than *I ate all the pie*.

e. One obvious possible reason is to avoid violating the Maxim of Quality: The speaker does not think that *I ate all the pie* is true.

f. Therefore, the listener concludes that *I ate all the pie* is false.

The reasoning seen above for Navajo sentences would have been equally well applied to these sentences’ English counterparts. How universally applicable is this process of calculating conversational implicatures? von Fintel and Matthewson (2008, 187) predict that Grice’s model should be universally applicable. Grice’s principle and maxims are merely ways of specifying what it means to use language rationally in order to achieve conversational goals.\(^7\) Of course, this does not rule out the possibility that culturally specific knowledge may be drawn upon to generate a particular conversational implicature: A person who has lived her entire life in rural Norway, for instance, is unlikely to draw the intended implicature about the road in (2). But the reasoning process is still expected to be universal and language-independent: If our Norwegian were told the relevant facts, we expect she would draw the implicature in the same way a Navajo person would. In the case studies discussed below, North American languages are shown to apply certain maxims in ways that feel familiar to me — a native English speaker — even when they are not the kinds of meaning that I would express with implicatures. However, Fernald et al. 2000 is, to my knowledge, the only study that systematically confirms this intuition for all maxims in a single North American language.

### 2.2 Conversational implicatures in North American languages

This section exemplifies some of the kinds of information that linguists have been argued to be conveyed through conversational implicature in other North American languages.

\(^7\) von Fintel and Matthewson (2008) note that they have only seen one attempt to argue against the universal applicability of Grice’s program, namely Keenan’s 1974 claim that Malagasy (Austronesian) speakers do not abide by the maxim of Quantity. However, Keenan’s conclusions are reconsidered by Prince (1982).
languages. The set of case studies is by no means exhaustive, but gives an idea of some of the work that has been done.\(^8\)

### 2.2.1 Evidential meaning in Nuu-chah-nulth

Nuu-chah-nulth (a.k.a. Nootka, Southern Wakashan). Nuu-chah-nulth has a series of sensory evidentials, including the auditory evidential *naʔaat* shown in the example below.\(^9\) Waldie reports that this sentence was accepted in the context shown, where Kay heard Ken yelling with her own ears.

\[
\begin{align*}
(10) & \quad a. \text{Scenario: Kay and Bill were walking past Ken’s house, and they could hear him yelling, but they couldn’t see him. Kay said this to Bill.} \\
& \quad b. \quad \text{Waldie reports that this sentence was accepted in the context shown, where Kay heard Ken yelling with her own ears.} \\
& \quad \text{(Waldie, 2012, (383))}
\end{align*}
\]

Waldie proposes that direct perception is an implicature derived by the application of Grice’s maxim of Quantity. The reasoning goes like this. Nuu-chah-nulth has other morphemes to indicate what kind of support there is for the sensory event described, including morphemes that indicate reportative or inferential evidential support. In the absence of one of these morphemes, the implicature arises that there was direct support for the sensory event: Kay herself perceived Ken yelling and did not, for example, read a report of him being heard to yell. The Gricean reasoning process proceeds similarly to what we saw above. One can reason that if Kay had reportative or inferential support for Ken’s yelling, using one of the appropriate markers would have better satisfied the maxim of Quantity by providing as much information as possible. Kay must have had a reason not to use one of these morphemes, namely a desire to avoid violating the maxim of Quality by uttering something untrue. Thus, Kay must have intended to express that she directly perceived Ken.

---

\(^8\) For example, Chen and Matthewson (This volume) discuss non-culminating accomplishments in North American languages including Sk̓wx̱wú7mesh (a.k.a. Squamish, Central (Coast) Salish). Bar-el (2005) demonstrates that Sk̓wx̱wú7mesh counterparts to sentences like *He fixed his canoe but he didn’t finish (fixing) it* are non-contradictory, in contrast with English. She argues that culmination of accomplishments like *He fixed his canoe* is an implicature in Sk̓wx̱wú7mesh, not an entailment as it is in English.

\(^9\) See Peterson (This volume) for more discussion for more discussion of evidentials.
2.2.2 Surprise in Gitksan

Peterson (2010) explores the functions of sentences with the following shape in Gitksan (a.k.a. Gitxsan, Tsimshian).

(11) ʾnakwhl witxwt John
EVID.CND arrive.PND John

*Sensory evidential (default):* ‘John must be here.’ ‘Looks like John’s here.’
*Mirative (implicature):* ‘John’s here!’

(Peterson, 2010, (5.60))

This sentence contains the indirect sensory evidential ʾnakw. Under normal circumstances, a sentence of the form seen above would express that the speaker has indirect evidence for the truth of the sentence, here *John is here*. Such a meaning would be a natural fit for a context in which the speaker saw John’s car in the driveway but had not yet seen John himself. But something unexpected happens if this sentence is used in a context in which the speaker has, in fact, seen John. In such a context, the sentence has a mirative interpretation, which expresses the speaker’s surprise at John’s presence. Peterson (2010) argues that this meaning arises in such a context when the hearer reasons that the speaker of (11) must be making a cooperative contribution to the conversation, and not saying something uninformative or redundant. The hearer reasons that “the speaker must be conversationally implicating that they were previously unaware of [the truth of p], and its discovery possibly counters their expectations” (Peterson, 2010, 254).

2.2.3 Temporal meaning in Navajo

In an English sentence like *Mary walked to the park*, the shape of the verb *walked* tells the listener that the event of walking took place prior to speech time. This temporal information is part of the basic, truth-conditional meaning of this sentences, in the terms we used above. The picture that emerges for Navajo is rather different. As Smith et al. (2007) show, linguistic forms that relate event and utterance time are optional in Navajo. Instead, Navajo verbs are obligatorily marked for viewpoint aspect, which only indicates whether the event described is bounded or unbounded relative to some salient reference time. As shown below, however, Navajo verbs do not obligatorily locate these events relative to speech time. In principle, the verbs shown below can describe events characterized by any of the English translations shown. Other expressions (e.g. adverbs, temporal nouns, subordinate clauses) can
be added to these verbs to tell the listener explicitly how the event described relates to speech time. But as already noted, these expressions are optional in Navajo.

(12)  
  [INDEF OBJ.1SBJ.eat.PFV]
  Unbounded event of eating (i.e., ‘I was eating’, ‘I am eating’, ‘I will be eating’)
  Default interpretation: ‘I am eating’ (ongoing at speech time)

Navajo

However, Smith et al. (2007) show that while the verb in (12) may in principal have any of the interpretations shown, a present tense interpretation arises by default in the absence of optional temporal expressions. Similarly, while a verb marked for perfective aspect simply describe a bounded event, a past tense interpretation arises by default.

(13)  
  [INDEF OBJ.1SBJ.eat.IPV]
  Bounded event of eating
  Default interpretation: ‘I ate’ (completed at speech time)

Navajo

Smith et al. (2007) propose that these default present and past ‘tense’ interpretations arise as implicatures, and are not part of the basic meaning encoded by the verbs themselves. The central piece of their pragmatic account relies on a very general principle of interpretation, linked to Grice’s maxim of Quantity:

(14)  
  *Simplicity Principle of Interpretation:* “Choose the interpretation that requires the least information added or inferred...People often utter sentences that underdetermine an interpretation: they say the minimum necessary.”
  (Smith et al., 2007, 60)

The authors add two more pragmatic principles: First, that situations are by default located with respect to speech time. Second, that bounded events are not located in the present. The collective effect is that Navajo verbs marked for particular aspects are by default interpreted in terms of particular tenses. Imperfective aspect-marked verbs are by default interpreted with present tense, whereas perfective aspect-marked verbs are by default interpreted with past tense.
2.2.4 Polite questions in Navajo

Navajo sentences with the particle daats’į typically express epistemic uncertainty. I might utter (15) in a context where I had not recently been outside or looked out a window and, as a result, lack evidence regarding the truth of it is raining.

(15) Nahałtin daatsí.
AREAL_SBJ.rain.IPFV PRT
‘Maybe it’s raining.’

Navajo

When the sentence is one in which the addressee is the subject, speakers report that the result is a ‘polite’ or ‘indirect’ question. The polite flavor disappears if usual question markers are used instead.

(16) Dichin daats’į nínízin.
hunger PRT 2SBJ.feel.IPFV
‘Are you hungry?’

Navajo

One can imagine a number of different explanations for the interpretation of a daats’į sentence as a polite question. One might be that it is rather odd to say ‘You might be hungry,’ given that the addressee (most likely) knows whether or not this is true. It is pragmatically odd to express epistemic uncertainty in the presence of a person who can resolve this uncertainty. Under these conditions, (16) is permitted to have an alternative interpretation — as a question. But this alternative form is perceived as more polite than the more usual question form.¹⁰

3 Presuppositions

3.1 Introducing presuppositions

When we consider conversational implicatures, we ask how discourse context shapes the interpretation of a sentence. We now turn to presupposition, which we can think

¹⁰ This example ties into the broader issue of speech acts, or how an utterance of one sort (e.g. a declarative sentence) can come to serve some other function in a discourse (e.g. a question) (Grice, 1957; Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). See Lovick (This volume) for discussion of directive speech acts in North American languages.
of as sentences (or words within them) shaping aspects of the discourse context. Consider the following example from Western Abenaki (Eastern Algonquian):

(17) nąwat=øka no-noci-ttol-i-n.
    be.long.time-(3)=FOC 1-regularly-canoe-AI-N
    ‘It is a long while since I have regularly made canoes.’

Presupposition: I regularly made canoes in the past.

(LeSourd , 2015, (8b))

Western Abenaki

The speaker does not directly say that he made canoes regularly in the past, but this sentence would not be appropriate if this were not part of the discourse context. In other words, appropriate (or felicitous) use of nąwat requires the discourse to include past canoe making as established knowledge. If this were not established knowledge in the discourse context, I would be well within my rights as a discourse participant to express confusion and say something along the lines of “Wait a minute, I didn’t know you used to be a canoe maker!”. This backgrounded meaning is a presupposition. One way of characterizing presuppositions is as aspects of meaning contained within the common ground of a discourse, which includes the assumptions and beliefs that discourse participants share — or which the speaker believes are shared — and some topic of inquiry (Stalnaker , 2002; Roberts , 2012).11,12,13

In the example from Western Abenaki, nąwat is the presupposition trigger. Other well-studied presupposition triggers include verbs like stop and prevent, determiners like the, expressions like again, also, and still, and clefts (e.g. It was John who spoke).

Presuppositions persist even when sentences are changed in certain ways, such as with negation or question marking (Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet , 1990; Tonhauser et al. , 2013). Each sentence presupposes that John regularly made canoes in the past:

(18) a. It has been a long time since John regularly made canoes.
    b. It has not been a long time since John regularly made canoes.
    c. Has it been a long time since John regularly made canoes?

---

11 I follow Stalnaker ’s characterization of presuppositions as a pragmatic, rather than semantic, phenomenon. Presuppositions fit our broad definition of pragmatics as concerning the interaction of linguistic structure and context.

12 Many of the meanings that we treat here as presuppositions are called ‘conventional implicatures’ by other authors, as noted by Potts (2015).

13 Information structure is a related notion. For discussion, see Berge (This volume) and Littell (2016).
The following example from Navajo represents this diagnostic for presupposition. The expression t’ahdii ‘still’ triggers a presupposition when used in a question. As Fernald et al. (2000) discuss, this sentence presupposes that the addressee stole turquoise in the past. In a context where the speaker has no reason to believe the addressee has stolen turquoise previously, (19) is an odd question to ask.

(19) Da’ t’ahdiísh dootl’izhii ní’íjih?
Q still.FOC.Q turquoise 3OBJ.2SBJ.steal.IPVF
‘Are you still stealing turquoise?’
Presupposition: You stole turquoise in the past.
(Fernald et al., 2000, (27))

Navajo

By contrast, entailments do not persist when the sentence is changed. Recall, for example, how Navajo sentence (3) (‘I ate half the pie’) entailed the truth of (4) ‘I ate some of the pie.’ If we negate the first sentence, the entailment no longer goes through: We can imagine a situation in which (20) is true but (4) is false, such as a situation in which I ate no pie at all.

(20) Masdéél alníídóó doo yíyáąq’ da.
pie half NEG 3OBJ.1SBJ.eat.PFV NEG
‘I did not eat half the pie.’
(adapt. (Fernald et al., 2000, (4))

Navajo

Since presuppositions are aspects of meaning that are taken for granted by the speaker, presuppositions must be objected to in very particular ways. For example, one cannot object to the presupposition in (19) by simply responding Ndaga’ ‘no’. As in English, this means that the speaker is no longer stealing turquoise: The presupposition that the speaker used to steal turquoise remains intact. Instead, presuppositions must be objected to using a phrase by “Wait a minute! I didn’t know that...”, as noted above:

(21) A: It has been a long time since I regularly made canoes.
    B: Hey, wait a minute! I didn’t know you had been a canoe-maker!

von Fintel (2001, 171) uses the availability of this response as a diagnostic for presupposed meaning. We return to it below.
3.2 Presuppositions in North American languages

A central question for the crosslinguistic study of presuppositions is whether the same presuppositions arise in all languages. We have already seen an example from Navajo in which both the Navajo lexical item (t’ahdii) and its English counterpart (still) impose the same presuppositions. Another example comes from Menominee (Eastern Great Lakes Algonquian). Johnson et al. (2015) write that this sentence was used in a context where other items put into the kettle had already been named. ‘Potatoes’ are added as new information with the particle mesek.

(22) Ohpāenyak mesek nepōnāwak ahkāehkoh; potatoes also 1SG_SBJ.3OBJ.put_in_pot kettle.LOC ‘I also put potatoes in the kettle.’

(Johnson et al., 2015, (4b))

Menominee

A crosslinguistic difference emerges when we consider languages of the Pacific Northwest, where supposed presupposition triggers are not challenged by consultants in the contexts where the presupposition is missing from the common ground. St’át’imcets (a.k.a. Lillooet, Interior Salish) illustrates:

(23) Context: Addressee has no knowledge of anyone planning a trip to Paris.
A: nas t’it áku7 Paris-a kw s-Haleni go also DEIC Paris-DET DET NOM-Henry lh-klísmes-as HYP-Christmas-3CONJ ‘Henry is also go to Paris at Christmas.’
B: o áma ‘Oh good.’

(Matthewson, 2006, (11))

St’át’imcets

Clefts in St’át’imcets also fail to trigger a presupposition of exhaustivity as they would in English:

(24) nilh i sk’wemk’úk’wmi7t-a q’7-áł’men, múta7 i FOC DET.PL children-DET eat-want and DET.PL lalíl’tem-a t’it adult-DET also ‘It’s the children who are hungry, and also the adults.’

(Davis et al., 2004)

St’át’imcets
Littell (2016) shows similar effects for Kwak'wala (Northern Wakashan):

(25) Context: We are barbecuing a large salmon for a feast, but after leaving it unattended for some time we return and see that it is gone. After investigation, we discover:

a. yudûx da gi?gong?nanom
   be.3MED=DET=3MED DET REDUP-REDUP-young-person
   hóm’x?ida  xa  k’uťa... eat-CHANGE ACC salmon
   ‘It’s the children who ate the fish...’

b. ...?ugʷaq̓om’i da gi?gigə?ənlukʷ hóm’x?i
   other-go=VERB=3DIST DET REDUP REDUP-parent
   xa  k’uťa eat-CHANGE ACC salmon
   ‘...The parents ate the fish, too.’

(Littell, 2016, (206))

Similar evidence has been presented for other languages of the Pacific Northwest, including Northern Straits Salish (Coast Salish, Davis et al. 2004; Matthewson 2006), Nle?kemuxcin (a.k.a. Nlaka’pamuxtsn or Thompson River Salish, Northern Interior Salish; Koch 2008), and Okanagan Salish (Interior Salish, Lyon 2013).

One possible response to these observations is that the lexical items and constructions in question are not presupposition triggers. Littell (2016) goes this route, arguing that Kwak’wala clefts fail to presuppose exhaustivity. To the extent that exhaustivity is strongly suggested when clefts are uttered out of the blue, this meaning is a conversational implicature, not a presupposition. Like conversational implicatures — and unlike presuppositions — the exhaustiivity implicature carried by Kwak’wala can be canceled:

(26) Context: We are barbecuing a large salmon for a feast, but after leaving it unattended for some time we return and see that it is gone. After investigation, we discover:

a. yudûx da gi?gong?nanom
   be.3MED=DET=3MED DET REDUP-REDUP-young-person
   hóm’x?ida  xa  k’uťa... eat-CHANGE ACC salmon
   ‘It’s the children who ate the fish.’

b. ...?ugʷaq̓om’i da gi?gigə?ənlukʷ hóm’x?i
   other-go=VERB=3DIST DET REDUP REDUP-parent
   xa  k’uťa eat-CHANGE ACC salmon
‘The parents ate the fish, too.’

(Littell, 2016, (206))

Matthewson (2006) presents a different account for Stát’imcets. She argues that Stát’imcets still encodes presuppositions, but they impose different requirements on the discourse context.  

Whereas English presuppositions impose restrictions on the common ground, Stát’imcets presuppositions only reflect the speaker’s perception of the context. As such, presupposed content may be news to the hearer in Stát’imcets.

4 Conclusions and the view ahead

At the intersection of linguistic structure and discourse context, we find both variation and commonality across languages. We can see this illustrated clearly by indigenous languages of North America, even when we limit our attention to conversational implicature and presupposition, as we have done here. Questions that arise when we consider these topics suggest many more questions worthy of investigation: How can discourse context shape parts of language use beyond sentential meaning, such as word order? Do we find further differences between languages that differ in the requirements they impose through presuppositions on the common ground? Do non-linguistic contextual factors such as cultural conventions affect the interpretation of linguistic structure? Some of these questions are addressed, directly or indirectly, by other chapters in this volume, but there is much work left to be done.

The study of pragmatics does not only have potential value for linguistics, however. Understanding the pragmatics of one’s language means understanding how to use language appropriately, a skill which can be especially challenging for those acquiring a language later in life or outside of a community context. More thorough documentation and understanding of the pragmatics of indigenous languages can help language teachers to develop lessons or create classroom situations designed

\[14\] Matthewson presents evidence that points away from the hypothesis that Stát’imcets elements in question fail to introduce presuppositions at all: While consultants did not volunteer “Wait a minute” responses in the scenarios described above, they did provide commentary that one “should not say” such a sentence in that context. Matthewson remarks that such responses point away from another hypothetical difference between Stát’imcets and English, namely that only English consultants find it acceptable to challenge and correct a linguist’s apparent errors.
to introduce language learners to the many aspects of language which go beyond grammatical rules alone.

**Acknowledgment:** to be added

**References**


