IMPLICATIVE VERBS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

Prerna Nadathur, Stanford

English and Finnish contain a class of *implicative* verbs, which entail the truth of their infinitival complements (Karttunen 1971). These are distinguished from *factuals* (Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1970) in that the polarity of the implication changes with upstairs negation (compare English *manage* (*to*)).

(1)a. Hän *eht-i ampua karhu-n.*
    he-NOM have.time-PST.3sg shoot-INF bear-GEN/ACC
    ‘He had the time to shoot the bear.’

(1)b. ⊢ He shot the bear.

(2)a. Hän *e-i ehti-nyt ampua karhu-n.*
    He-NOM neg-3sg have.time-PP.sg shoot-INF bear-GEN/ACC.
    ‘He did not have the time to shoot the bear.’

(2)b. ⊢ He did not shoot the bear.

The problem (*ala* Karttunen) is to explain what is contributed by the upstairs verb to block the “intuitively unacceptable” conclusion that (1)a is logically equivalent to (1)b. Baglini & Francez (2013) offer an account of English *manage* as (a) presupposing the existence of a *causally necessary but insufficient*¹ catalyst for the downstairs event and (b) asserting that the catalyst was sufficient in the relevant situation. This provides an explanation for many of the puzzles surrounding *manage* (including its infelicity in certain contexts), but it leaves open a second problem, posed by the existence of *one-way* implicatives (in both languages; e.g. English *be able* (*to*), Finnish *ujostella* (*be too shy to*)), which entail their complements under only one polarity.²

The Baglini & Francez account can be generalized to handle implicatives as a class via a simple extension: I propose that two-way implicatives carry a secondary (circumscriptive) presupposition to the effect that the (specified) catalyst is the *only* thing in question for the accomplishment of the complement event. This is difficult to see with semantically-bleached *manage*, but is supported by more specific Finnish data. For instance, (1)a is infelicitous and/or contradictory in a context where the speaker has previously established that the shooter’s strength/ability to pull the trigger was uncertain. One-way implicatives lack this second presupposition: thus (3) is by contrast acceptable.

(3) Hän *e-i ujostel-lut náyttää kwu-a-nsa, hänellä*
    He-NOM neg-3sg be.shy-PP.sg show-INF photo-PAR-POSS he-ADE
    e-i *ol-lut yh-tä-ään kopro-ła*
    neg-3sg be-PP.sg one-PAR-any copy-PAR
    ‘He was not too shy to show his picture, he did not have a copy’

This extension first of all captures the empirical differences between one- and two-way implicatives. Secondly, it provides a natural explanation of the fact that one-way implicatives are interpreted in many contexts as if they strongly imply their unentailed directions (cf. Karttunen 2012): circumscription can be derived as a (defeasible) conversational implicature in contexts where one might expect the speaker to make explicit mention of other necessary and sufficient conditions for the action or event in question.

¹See Schulz (2011).

²If they share the presuppositions of two-way verbs, entailment should go both ways; if they do not, the upstairs verb makes no contribution.
References


