

Focus and presupposition

This class will revolve around two issues in the syntax/semantics/pragmatics interface.

Presuppositions can be loosely defined as follows: a Sentence S1 is a presupposition of a sentence S2, if S1 has to be true for S2 to have a truth value. Presuppositions can be contributed in a number of morpho/syntactic ways and we will study some of them. In addition, we will explore the problem of "presupposition projection", namely if and when presuppositions of a sentence can be predicted from presuppositions of the sentence's component parts.

Focus can be (extremely) loosely defined as the effects that information structure has on a sentence, in particular the distinction between old and new, or pragmatically highlighted, information. Focus affects phonological, syntactic and semantic properties of a sentence but we will have time only to concentrate on the latter two.