

THE IMPLICATURE OF CONTRAST - CONVENTIONAL OR CONVERSATIONAL?

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1. Introduction

In English, contrast is typically expressed by the so-called marked (information) focus, which may be realized either by prosodic means or by a combination of prosody and such syntactic constructions as clefting and topicalization. In his description of the function of clefting, Jespersen (1949/1974: 147f.) writes that "a cleaving of a sentence by means of *it is...* serves to single out one particular element of the sentence and very often, by directing attention to it and bringing it, as it were, into focus, to mark a contrast". Similarly, Quirk et al. (1972/1976: 951) associate clefting with what they characterize as "the full implication of contrastive focus"; a similar effect is according to them also achieved by fronting some constituent with nuclear stress, i.e., by topicalization (op.cit.: 945f.). Quirk et al. also propose an operational test by which the contrastiveness of any given sentence may be confirmed: for instance, a sentence like *It was John who wore his best suit to the dance last night* is shown to be contrastive by adding an "implied negative" to yield *It wasn't Jim, but John, who...* (op.cit.: 951). The same kind of test is used by Chafe (1976: 33ff.).

My aim in this paper is to clarify the status of the "implied negative", i.e., the status of the implied proposition which gives rise to the effect of contrast. More specifically, I shall explore the possibility of accounting for contrastiveness in terms of the Gricean distinction between "conventional" and "conversational" implicatures. As is well known, the former type of implicature derives from the conventional meaning(s) of the words or constructions used, whereas the latter is based on certain general principles guiding communicative interaction (the so-called maxims of conversation), and as such, it does not depend on the meanings of the words or constructions used, but rather on what

is "said" (i.e., asserted) by the sentence and on what the hearer can **infer** on the basis of this in a given situation (see, e.g., Grice 1978, 1981 and the discussion below for further elaboration).

Besides the literature on the subject, the following discussion will make use of my own observations on actual usage of (British) English, which, I hope, will help to settle some of the crucial issues.¹ As most of the relevant literature on the problem of contrastiveness is primarily concerned with the cleft construction, I shall also concentrate on the implicatures associated with this sentence-type.

2. Cleft sentences in terms of conventional implicatures

One of the first to discuss the meanings associated with cleft sentences in terms of the Gricean distinction is Halvorsen (1978). His analysis of the English cleft construction leads to a conclusion according to which a cleft sentence such as (1) below **conventionally implicates** both (2) and (3) (op.cit.: 14f.):

- (1) It was John that Mary kissed.
- (2) Mary kissed somebody.
- (3) John was the only person that Mary kissed (or: Mary kissed only one person).

In Halvorsen's terminology, the proposition expressed by (2) is further called an **existential** implicature, whereas the one conveyed by (3) is referred to as an **exhaustiveness** implicature. Both are, however, conventional implicatures, not conversational ones. As proof of this, Halvorsen mentions the behaviour of this type of sentence under negation:

- (4) It wasn't John that Mary kissed.

The negative sentence (4) continues to implicate both (2) and (3), i.e., these implicatures are **non-cancellable**, and they must therefore be seen to form part of the conventional meaning of the cleft construction.

Besides non-cancellability, which was already established by Grice as one of the crucial criteria for conventional implicature, Halvorsen further considers the cleft sentence at issue to fulfil the other major criterion, viz., **detachability** of the implicature from what is being said (asserted): while (1) asserts the same as the unclefted *Mary kissed John*, only the former gives rise to the conventional implicatures expressed by (2) and (3). Note again that conversational implicatures cannot generally be detached from what is said by the sentence, which means that it is impossible to find another way of asserting the same proposition which would lack the implicature in question. (For a more detailed discussion, see Halvorsen 1978: 14-18.)

Halvorsen's account does not leave any room for the traditional concept of (semantic) **presupposition**, which in the above case would be *Mary kissed somebody*, i.e., the same as Halvorsen's existential implicature given in (2). Indeed, Halvorsen's view is to be understood as representing a more general attempt to reduce presupposition to conventional implicature. The main proponents of this trend have been Karttunen and Peters (1975) and (1979). They, too, consider presuppositions of cleft (and pseudocleft) sentences to be "genuine examples of conventional implicature" (see, e.g., Karttunen and Peters 1979: 11).

More recently, the "reductionist" programme has entered a new phase in which some cases of alleged presuppositions or even conventional implicatures have come to be viewed as **conversational implicatures** in the Gricean sense. Thus Grice himself, in a paper dealing with the relationship between presupposition and conversational implicature, explores the possibility of deriving, for instance, the existential presupposition attached to definite expressions such as *the king of France* from general conversational principles (for further discussion, see Grice 1981). It is also noteworthy - and perhaps symptomatic of the current direction of research - that Karttunen and Peters (1979), despite their general emphasis on matters of conventional implicature, recognise that some of the supposed presuppositions are best treated as instances of conversational implicature. These include the so-called counterfactual presupposition (of subjunctive conditionals) and the presuppositions associated with verbs of judging (for discussion and examples, see Karttunen and Peters 1979: 6-11).

While these revisions are not directly relevant to the problem of contrast, they have been followed by others encroaching more clearly on the areas at issue. Of particular interest are the proposals put forward by scholars working within the "school" of Radical Pragmatics. I shall here concentrate on the ideas expressed by Atlas and Levinson (1981), followed up by Levinson (1983) and (1987), because they are directly concerned with the status of the implicatures associated with cleft sentences.

3. From conventional to conversational implicature

As their starting-point, Atlas and Levinson (1981) present a detailed criticism of Halvorsen's account: instead of conventional implicatures, cleft sentences such as (1) above are argued to give rise to **entailments**, and - in some of the negative transforms - to **conversational implicatures** of the "generalized" variety. In contrast to "particularized" conversational implicatures, which depend on specific features of the context of the utterance, generalized conversational implicatures arise without such particular contextual conditions being necessary. In Grice's words (from whom the distinction originates), the latter "will be implicatures that would be carried (other things being equal) by any utterance of a certain form, though, as with all conversational implicatures, they are not to be represented as part of the conventional meaning of the words or forms in question" (Grice 1981: 185).

To show that the implicatures expressed by (2) and (3) above cannot be of the conventional type, as Halvorsen claims, Atlas and Levinson adduce evidence from the negated versions of (1). First, they note that Halvorsen's existential implicature *Mary kissed somebody* is not, in fact, always preserved under negation, i.e., it can be shown to violate the condition of non-cancellability set for conventional implicatures. The crucial example is (5) below. Whereas Halvorsen (1978: 14) claims that it is unacceptable, Atlas and Levinson (1981: 24) consider it quite acceptable, especially in its variant form presented in (6):

- (5) It wasn't John that Mary kissed - she didn't kiss anybody.
- (6) It certainly wasn't John that Mary kissed - in fact Mary didn't kiss anyone.

Secondly, Atlas and Levinson attack Halvorsen's exhaustiveness implicature expressed by (3), i.e. *John was the only person that Mary kissed (or Mary kissed only one person)*. Again, the negative form (7) shows that the supposed implicature (3) cannot be true (Atlas and Levinson 1981: 25):

- (7) It wasn't John that Mary kissed - it was Mart and Rick.

Atlas and Levinson conclude that, because of the cancellability of both types of implicata, they cannot be regarded as conventional implicatures attached to the cleft construction. They say, instead, that the affirmative sentence (1) **entails** (2), i.e. *Mary kissed somebody* (a fact not denied by Halvorsen either, see op.cit.: 14), and that it **also entails but does not implicate** *Mary kissed (exactly) one person*. In the negative form *It wasn't John that Mary kissed*, these entailments do not survive (witness (5)-(7) above!), and it is here that Atlas and Levinson bring in the concept of conversational implicature: they argue that the mentioned negative form **con conversationally implicates** *Mary kissed somebody*. On the other hand, the exhaustive meaning *Mary kissed (exactly) one person* is on their analysis neither entailed nor implicated by the negative cleft (Atlas and Levinson 1981: 30f.).

To sum up so far, what was on the earlier accounts either a presupposition or a conventional implicature is interpreted by Atlas and Levinson either as an entailment (in the case of the affirmative clefts) or as a conversational implicature (in the case of the negative clefts). This revision, if it proves to be tenable, could well be extended to explain the nature of contrastiveness, too. As will be seen below, contrastiveness is also cancellable in the same way as conversational implicatures. However, as Atlas and Levinson themselves emphasise, more important than cancellability (or non-detachability) as the crucial test for conversational implicature is a proper **derivation** of the implicature from some general pragmatic principle(s) (op.cit.: 34f.; cf.

also Grice 1981: 187, who stresses the same point). For the conversational implicature carried by the negative cleft (4), Atlas and Levinson suggest the following type of derivational analysis (in the exposition of their argument I have also made use of Levinson 1983: 218-22).

To show that *Mary kissed somebody* is conversationally implicated by the negative statement *It wasn't John that Mary kissed* it needs to be shown that the truth of the former can somehow be inferred on the basis of the Gricean principle of co-operation² or one of its associated maxims (or something equivalent to these). However, as Atlas and Levinson note, the standard Gricean account runs into trouble because of the fact that the negative cleft (4) is ambiguous between two possible readings, depending on the scope of negation.

First, there is the **external (wide-scope) negation** reading (8) where the scope of negation is the whole proposition. This can be given the following logical form:

- (8) $\sim(\exists x(\text{Kissed}(M,x) \ \& \ (x=J)))$
 'It is not the case that it was John that Mary kissed.'

From this logical form it does **not** follow that Mary kissed somebody because of the placement of the negative operator (which leaves open the possibility that she did not kiss anybody, as in (5) and (6)). Secondly, there is the **internal negation** reading with a narrow scope of negation, and now the logical form is:

- (9) $\exists x(\text{Kissed}(M,x) \ \& \ (x \neq J))$
 'There is a person such that Mary kissed him, and this person was not John.'

From this form it **does** follow that Mary kissed somebody (the first part of the predication is not under negation), and the implicature *Mary kissed somebody* would accordingly be licensed, provided that there is some **pragmatic** reason for choosing this reading instead of the external negation one. The internal reading can be said to be the **more informative** of the two, because it gives rise to the same set of entailments as the former **plus** *Mary kissed somebody*.

Atlas and Levinson argue that the Gricean Maxim of Quantity predicts the choice of the **less informative** reading out of the two available ones. However, as they say, it is even more likely that the speaker wanted to convey the more informative reading, but this is barred by the Maxim of Quantity, which states: "Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange". Now, given that we have available two alternative expressions (of roughly equal brevity) - one of which is less informative and the other more informative - the speaker's failure to indicate that the more informative reading is meant conveys, by inference from the Maxim of Quantity, that the speaker is not in a position to use it. In other words, if the speaker intended to convey the more informative proposition, he should have **said** so; as he has not done it, it follows that he is not in a position to make the stronger statement, and consequently, the hearer is not licensed to infer it either.

Thus the Maxim of Quantity works here in the wrong direction: it **delimits** the meaning of what is said by leading to the less informative proposition (by telling us to be no more informative than is necessary), whereas what would be required is some pragmatic principle which would **augment** or **enrich** the meaning of what is said by licensing the stronger, more informative, proposition (expressed here by (9)).

Atlas and Levinson endeavour to solve this problem by introducing a new principle of **Informativeness**, which allows the hearer to choose the more (or most) informative proposition among the competing interpretations. In order for this principle to apply, the proposition chosen must be "**consistent with the common ground**", i.e., consistent with the set of presumptions shared by the interlocutors and thus **noncontroversial** (1981: 40f.).

Another essential feature of their approach is that pragmatic principles such as that of Informativeness are assumed to interact with the logical form of sentences. Here the authors argue for more complex ("richer") logical forms than are usually adopted in the literature. In the case of clefts, for instance, they reject in the end logical forms like the ones given in (8) and (9), because they do not suffice to bring out the difference between the clefted *It was John that Mary kissed* and the unclefted *Mary kissed John*, or that between their negative counterparts. Hence, the whole point of using the cleft construction instead of the

"normal" clause pattern remains unexplained. According to Atlas and Levinson, the fact that these sentences have the same truth conditions does not mean that they should have the same logical form, too. While the unclefted sentence basically expresses a **relation between Mary and John**, which can be represented by forms like (8) or (9) above, and which can be reduced to the simple logical form (10) below, the clefted version requires a considerably more complex form, which is based on the idea of "**aboutness**" (familiar from various brands of Functional Grammar). This they represent by (11).

(10) Kiss(Mary,John)

(11) $\lambda x(x = \text{John})(\forall x \text{Kiss}(\text{Mary}, x))$

Instead of a simple two-place predicate-symbol like the one in (10), which is true of **Mary and John**, the use of the "**lambda**"-operator λ and of the special "**collection operator**" \forall makes (11) a complex one-place predicate-symbol true of what is here considered the **logical subject** of (11), viz., 'a group of individuals kissed by Mary'. In other words, the cleft sentence is understood as being "about whom Mary kissed", and the logical representation given in (11) may be paraphrased by (12):

(12) A group of individuals kissed by Mary is identical to John.

Aboutness is further linked with yet another general pragmatic principle which states that if a sentence is "about" some thing or person, then the **existence** of this thing or person can be assumed to be "noncontroversial", i.e., it is consistent with the presumptions of the common ground (see, esp., op.cit.: 40 ff.). This principle - termed the "**Convention of Noncontroversiality**" - affects the interpretation of our cleft sentences *It was John that Mary kissed* and *It wasn't John that Mary kissed* as follows.

Recall that the positive sentence is "about a group of individuals kissed by Mary", which constitutes its logical subject. The logical form of this sentence - expressed by (11) - yields three **entailments**, viz., *Mary kissed somebody*, *Mary kissed John*, and also *Mary kissed (exactly) one person*.³

The negative cleft can likewise be said to be "about a group of individuals kissed by Mary", but as was noted above, the negation itself may be either external (wide-scope) or internal (narrow-scope). Now, since the negated cleft is also "about" those kissed by Mary, the existence of someone that Mary kissed can, by the newly-introduced pragmatic Convention of Noncontroversiality, be assumed to be one of the noncontroversial presumptions, and therefore, the logical subject can be left outside the scope of negation. The way is now open for the Principle of Informativeness to apply: instead of the relatively uninformative external negative form, the logical form of which is given in (13), the hearer is licensed by the Principle of Informativeness to choose the more informative form (14) with internal negation (because it is consistent with the common ground):

- (13) $\sim(\lambda x(x = \text{John})(\forall x\text{Kiss}(\text{Mary}, x)))$
 'It is not the case that a group that Mary kissed has the property of being identical to John.'
- (14) $\lambda x(x \neq \text{John})(\forall x\text{Kiss}(\text{Mary}, x))$
 'A group that Mary kissed has the property of not being identical to John.'

To sum up Atlas and Levinson's analysis: since (14) **entails** *Mary kissed someone* (which is left outside the scope of negation), and since (14) is in turn **conversationally implicated** by uttering the negative cleft *It wasn't John that Mary kissed*, the proposition *Mary kissed someone* is itself conversationally implicated. This completes the rather complex derivation of the conversational implicature associated with negative clefts (for a more detailed discussion, see Atlas and Levinson 1981: 50-55; Levinson 1983: 218-22).

In his later work, Levinson has further developed his ideas concerning the apparent conflict between the Gricean Quantity implicatures and those deriving from the Principle of Informativeness. In Levinson (1987), an attempt is made to resolve the clash by formulating two interdependent pragmatic principles, termed the "**Q-Principle**" and the "**I-Principle**". In essence, the former states what is already expressed by Grice's Maxim of Quantity but adds a special "Recipient's corollary", which says: "Take it that the speaker made the

strongest statement consistent with what he knows." This allows the hearer to infer, in particular, that if the speaker asserted a weaker proposition instead of a stronger alternative (equally available), 'the speaker knows that the stronger statement would be false' (Levinson 1987: 67-68).

The I-Principle then replaces the Principle of Informativeness, but again has a Recipient's corollary, which allows the hearer to **enrich** or "**amplify**" the informational content of the speaker's utterance in those cases where the Q-Principle fails to operate. Apart from negative clefts, these include a fair number of other contexts, e.g. "Conjunction buttressing", "Conditional perfection", "Bridging", "Membership categorization", etc. (for further discussion and examples, see Levinson 1987: 65f.).

4. Contrastiveness as conversational implicature

As has become evident, the most recent approaches leave no room for the concept of presupposition; matters previously subsumed under it are now reduced to matters of entailment and implicatures of either type. However, I shall not go into this problem here. I have elsewhere (see Filppula 1986: 54f.) defended the model proposed by Gazdar (1979), which accommodates both presupposition and entailment relations, and furthermore, has a place for implicatures. In this connection it is more important to note that the accounts of cleft sentences suggested by Halvorsen, Karttunen and Peters, and Atlas and Levinson leave the very notion of contrastiveness unexplained.

To begin with, I would argue that contrastiveness is **not** the same thing as exhaustiveness (or uniqueness, if that term is preferred). This is most clearly shown by the behaviour of negative sentences. Example (7) above (*It wasn't John that Mary kissed - it was Mart and Rick*) was already used as evidence to ascertain that negative clefts cannot be said to implicate exhaustiveness (at least in the conventional sense), but the same sentence is certainly contrastive, which is confirmed by applying the "implied negative" test:

(15) It wasn't John, **but** Mart and Rick, that Mary kissed.

The exhaustiveness implicature cannot even be rescued by reformulating it to cover any definite number besides 'just one' or 'the only one', because the number of the items (members of the set) which could possibly fill the focus position can be left open as well. Witness (16), for example, which further bears out the difference between exhaustiveness and contrastiveness:

- (16) It wasn't John, but Mart and Rick **and possibly some others too**, that Mary kissed.

On the other hand, the affirmative *It was John that Mary kissed*, although it entails *Mary kissed (exactly) one person*, need **not** convey contrast. It may constitute a **noncontrastive** answer to a simple "search" (WH-) question like *Who was the person that Mary kissed?* To show that this type of sentence does occur in actual discourse, I present an analogous (i.e., noncontrastive but exhaustive) instance of a cleft sentence from my corpus of spoken British English. The exchange in (17) below is an extract from an interview with the editor of a newspaper (for explanation of the transcription symbols, see the Appendix at the end):⁴

- (17) a: What = makes you decide that that will be the main news = item?
 KN: Well, it = **it's something** = err = **rather pompously called news sense** = hmh = **which really i=** it's almost impossible to teach someone.
 (KN, l. 236)

Here the focus constituent of the cleft, i.e., *news sense*, simply provides the required missing information or "value" for the "variable" expressed by the question word *what*. There is no implication of choosing one item out of a set of alternatives **and contrasting** this item with those excluded from consideration. Besides, the existence of a set of alternatives was not discussed prior to this exchange, and hence it could not be assumed to have been part of the "common ground" built up so far between the interlocutors. The noncontrastive nature of the answer is further borne out by the inapplicability of the implied negative test;

no *but-* or *rather than* -phrase could be felicitously inserted in this context:

(17a) ??Well, it's something rather pompously called news sense, but not the opinion of my colleagues, that...

In the following I shall quote a few more examples from actual discourse to show not only that exhaustiveness must be kept apart from contrastiveness, but also that contrastiveness cannot be regarded as an inherent part of the (conventional) meaning of the cleft construction; in other words, that it cannot be explained as a conventional implicature nor as an entailment.

The first example, drawn from Svartvik and Quirk (1980: 397), is an extract from a conversation between "B" and "a". "B" is looking for an academic post, and he is here explaining his efforts to "a", from whom he expects to obtain a letter of recommendation:⁵

- (18) B: But I certainly got the feeling from = the day I spent in York that they were very = = very much disposed = = towards <having me>.
 a: Did you meet <Fuller>?
 B: Yes, **it was he who invited me.**
 (S.2.1.: tg. 1121)

Again, the application of the implied negative test produces a reading which is incompatible with the context and the presumptions of the common ground:

(18a) ??It was he, but not (rather than) Mr N., who invited me.

Nonetheless, noncontrastiveness does not exclude exhaustiveness; "B's" response in (18) entails (18b):

(18b) I was invited by (exactly) one person, namely Fuller.

My second example is from the same text (Svartvik and Quirk 1980: 376). This time the focus of the cleft sentence is an adverbial expression (*very shortly after that interview*):

- (19) a: I've heard from a number of sources that you have said in a <3 to 4 sylls> that you think you did not get the job here because of me.
 B: Oh no, I have never said that...In fact, **it was very shortly after that interview = that I = sent my circular letter around to various scholars**, and I sent you a copy.
 (S.2.1.: tg.180-83)

Far from contrasting the events leading up to the interview with those following it, the adverbial expression simply sets the "**temporal scene**" for the action described by the following *that*-clause. The cleft sentence could thus be said to provide an answer to the implicit question *What happened after the interview?* And as in the case of the previous example, the insertion of an implied negative makes the noncontrastive nature of the cleft sentence in this context quite clear:⁶

- (19a) ??In fact, it was very shortly after that interview, but not before it, that I sent my circular letter around...

Yet another example would be (20), in which the topic of conversation is Australia's participation in the Vietnam war. The cleft construction is here introduced by *that* instead of the more usual *it*:

- (20) b: That's right, I'd forgotten the Australians were there [in the Vietnam war] =
 A: Hmh, yes. We = we had a small presence. = All very embarrassing = = = didn't do any good one way or the other. = Bloody silly = that was.
 b: But it goes much further than Vietnam, it's = general anti-militarism.
 A: **That was our Right-wingers who got us into that**, you see.
 (S.1.3., tg. 1187-1188)

Again, "A's" last contribution does not convey contrastiveness for the obvious reason that there is nothing in the previous discourse to contrast it with; the topic of who exactly was to blame for Australia's participation in the war is only introduced by "A's" last utterance, and therefore the *that*-clause does not carry information which could be assumed to be compatible with the presumptions of the common ground. In Filppula (1986), following the distinction suggested by Prince (1978), I chose to call this type of cleft sentence "**informative-presupposition**" clefts, because, as Prince aptly puts it, "the whole point of these sentences is to inform the hearer of that very information" (Prince 1978: 898; Filppula 1986: 92ff.). In fact, of the examples cited so far (18) and (19) could also be classified under the same heading.

The dependence of contrastiveness on contextual rather than semantic (conventional) factors is further confirmed by comparing the above examples with ones which pass the implied negative test. In the following extract from Svartvik and Quirk (1980: 427) the topic of conversation is "A's" job as a stockbroker:

- (21) A: I don't see very many people =
 a: But your customers I mean your clients <2 sylls >
 A: Yes they don't = not very many of them come = really =
 a: You don't need very many if they've all got a hundred and fifty thousand.
 A: Yes, but it doesn't really make any difference you see = what they've got. **It's how much they move it that counts.**
 (S.2.2.: tg. 653-61)

In this case, the insertion of the negative phrase yields (21a), which is perfectly compatible with the presumptions of the common ground; contrastiveness is inferred on the basis of "A's" last utterance containing the cleft construction and the immediately preceding statements by "a" and "A", which serve to establish the necessary common ground:

- (21a) It's how much they move it, but not what they've got, that counts.

Sometimes the hearer's job is made even easier by an explicit spelling out of the contrastiveness implicature. This happens in (22), where "PT" (a primary school teacher) voices his concern over the quality of children's food; this example is drawn from my corpus of British English:⁷

- (22) PT: And so you can't say that they're getting a balanced meal. There's a lot of bread rolls eaten which obviously aren't = aren't good for you day after day. **It's very much junk-food now rather than a balanced meal.**
(PT, l. 504)

The data discussed so far suggest strongly that, instead of conventional implicatures, we are here dealing with **conversational** implicatures of some type. As the examples from actual discourse show, the implicature of contrast arises ultimately on the basis of contextual considerations, and it is thus cancellable unlike conventional implicatures. Whether it fulfils the other criterion, viz., nondetachability from what is actually said, is less clear, but it should be remembered that contrast in English can be conveyed by other means than the cleft construction, too. In other words, contrastiveness cannot be said to be attached directly to the cleft construction.

5. How is contrastiveness inferred?

As was already noted above, it is not enough to show that a given implicature is defeasible; a satisfactory account of its **derivation** must be seen as the crucial test for the theoretical status of the implicature. For the case at hand this means that some pragmatic principle or principles must be found which enable the hearer to infer contrast between two or more alternatives. Comparing once more the noncontrastive examples with the contrastive ones above, it emerges that in the case of the latter, one is not only licensed to infer **more** than what is actually "said" (asserted) by the sentence, but also more than what is conveyed by the noncontrastive sentences of a similar form which in their final interpretation lack the additional proposition expressing the implied

negative. There is now a pragmatic principle which would seem to have precisely this effect, viz., the Principle of Informativeness and its more recent variant, the I-Principle, as formulated by Atlas and Levinson (1981) and Levinson (1987).

Suppose that something like the Principle of Informativeness could be used to account for the implicature of contrast. Then our next task would be to try and capture the **contextual conditions** under which this principle operates. As will be remembered, in Atlas and Levinson's treatment the operation of this principle and the resultant existential (conversational) implicature for negative clefts depended on their **Convention of Noncontroversiality**. To recapitulate briefly, this convention states that if a sentence is "about" some thing or person, or more precisely, "about" a singular term, a set or a state of affairs, then the existence of this term etc. can be assumed to be noncontroversial, i.e., consistent with the presumptions of the common ground.⁸ To provide an account of the implicature of contrast along similar lines, we must once more look into the contextual differences between contrastive and noncontrastive cleft sentences.

On the basis of the data gathered from actual discourse, the essential difference seems to be that contrastive cleft sentences involve as their common ground a **set of alternatives** one of which (and only one of which) is the "right" one to fill the focus position. Contrastive cleft sentences can thus be said to be "**about a set of alternatives**" (and not merely "about" any type of set), the right one of which is then specified or identified by the speaker as being the referent of the focus constituent.⁹ Noncontrastive sentences lack such a presumption of the common ground. Therefore, the presumption of a common ground containing a set of alternatives can be said to be the contextual condition for the application of the Principle of Informativeness, leading to a more informative reading for cleft sentences satisfying this condition, i.e., to a reading which conveys the implicature of contrast.

For example, in (21) above (*It's how much they move it that counts*) two of the alternatives which could fill the focus position have been explicitly mentioned (although explicit mention is not necessary as long as the presence of a set of alternatives can be inferred), and thus, by the Principle of Informativeness, the stronger proposition containing the implied negative is chosen as the preferred interpretation for the cleft sentence. This example may now be compared with either

(18)(*Yes, it was he who invited me*) or (19)(*In fact, it was very shortly after that interview...*), in which the common ground does not contain a set of alternatives, and consequently, the Principle of Informativeness does not apply leaving these sentences without the implicature of contrast. The noncontrastive reading would thus be, by inference from the **Q-Principle**, 'the strongest statement consistent with what the speaker knows'. However, as was noted above, this does not prevent these utterances from entailing (or implicating as in the negative cases) exhaustiveness and existence of the thing or person referred to by the focus constituent.

On the account sketched here, contrastiveness is explained as deriving from an interplay between a special **contextual feature** and **the semantic representation** of the sentence uttered. Although it is hard to see what could be an appropriate logical form for my notion of a "set of alternatives", it should be evident from the foregoing that my approach follows the line of inquiry suggested by Atlas and Levinson (1981) and Levinson (1987). What also follows from this is that the implicature of contrast must be seen as one of the "**generalized**" variety: it arises (more or less) regularly as the joint effect of a certain type of context and the constructions discussed, and is not inferred from features particular to each context.

Of course, the objection could now be raised that since contrastiveness has something to do with the semantic representation of the constructions used, it is after all dependent on **conventional** meanings and should therefore be accounted for as a conventional implicature, defeasible under certain contextual conditions. While this is, in theory at least, another possible way to view contrastiveness, the above observations have already revealed the decisive role played by contextual features, which makes it more justified to start from that end and try to derive contrastiveness as a conversational implicature.

What complicates the issue, though, is the obvious difficulty in drawing a definite line between conventional implicatures and generalized conversational implicatures. As Atlas and Levinson themselves note, the latter type of implicature "is 'conventional' in the sense that it is not calculated at each occasion of use of a sentence", and that "conversational inferences may well have degrees of conventionalization" (Atlas and Levinson 1981: 5). The conventionalized aspects of conversational implicatures need not, however, make the

distinction uninteresting: as has been emphasised throughout this paper, the ultimate distinguishing criterion must be the derivation of the implicature. The present analysis has relied crucially on the pragmatic principle of Informativeness, and if this principle is vindicated, as it already seems to have happened, by further work on pragmatic theory, it will undoubtedly provide a useful means of accounting for a whole range of phenomena formerly subsumed under the heading of conventional implicature. The existential implicature conveyed by negative clefts may well be one of these, as is claimed by Radical Pragmatics, and on the basis of the evidence discussed in this paper, the implicature of contrast also suggests itself as belonging to the same category.

NOTES:

1. The examples from actual discourse are drawn from a corpus of Educated Spoken British English, which I collected for my doctoral dissertation (Filppula 1986). It consists of approx. 40,000 words of recorded speech from 10 speakers, whose ages varied from 25 to 73 years. Six of the speakers were selected, interviewed and openly recorded by John A. Stotesbury of the Department of English, University of Joensuu, in Britain in 1979 and 1980. The remaining four texts are clandestine recordings of individual speakers carried out by the staff of the Survey of English Usage, and made available in transcribed form in Svartvik and Quirk (eds.) (1980).
2. "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" (Grice 1975: 45).
3. Note that the last-mentioned entailment distinguishes the cleft sentence from its unclefted counterpart *Mary kissed John*, which does not have the exhaustiveness entailment (cf. Levinson 1983: 221).

4. There is no *that*-clause here, i.e., the cleft sentence is "elliptical", but this does not affect my argument.

5. The examples from Svartvik and Quirk are presented here in a much simplified form. E.g., tone-group division, pitch direction and the placement of intonation foci have been omitted.

6. Whether the cleft sentence in (19) entails exhaustiveness (or uniqueness) seems to me disputable at least, but since this problem does not directly affect my argument here, I leave it open.

7. Notice that the cleft construction is here elliptical, i.e. it lacks the usual *that*-clause, but fulfils all the other syntactic and contextual criteria set for clefts.

8. The notion of "common ground" figures centrally in Karttunen and Peters' account, too. They define it as follows: "Imagine a group of people engaged in an exchange of talk. At each point in their conversation there is a set of propositions that any participant is rationally justified in taking for granted, for example, by virtue of what has been said in the conversation up to that point, what all the participants are in a position to perceive as true, whatever else they mutually know, assume, and so on. This set of propositions is what we call the common ground or the common set of presumptions" (Karttunen and Peters 1979: 13).

9. Cf. Carlson's (1983) "dialogue game" approach, in which contrastive sentences are interpreted as providing answers to disjunctive questions (see, e.g., *op.cit.*: 209).

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APPENDIX: Transcription symbols

- = = = = hesitation or pause(s) of different lengths)
- = omission of irrelevant parts of text
- <3 to 4 sylls> = unclear or incomprehensible word(s) or syllable(s)
- A, B, a, KN, PT = discourse participants
- S.2.1., KN = text and speaker identification symbols
- l. 236, tg. 1121 = line or tone group number(s) indicating the place where the feature at issue is to be found

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