HE'S DEAD (TO ME)

THE PRAGMATIC COMPLEXITIES OF LIFETIME EFFECTS

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ABSTRACT

Adopting much of Musan's (1997) framework and incorporating the work of Arche (2006), Stalnaker (2002), and Altshuler & Schwarzschild (2012), in this thesis, I argue that lifetime effects are fundamentally a pragmatic phenomenon. I argue that lifetime effects in out-of-the-blue sentences cannot be adequately explained without recognizing how the addressee must recover missing information via presupposition accommodation and inference. I propose that lifetime effects result from a disparity between the information that a speaker intends to communicate and the information that the addressee ultimately recovers. In order to explain why certain individuals and utterance contexts affect the generation of lifetime effects, I introduce the concept of *personal relevance*, the extent to which an individual's present status is expected to be known by the speaker. Inferences about the personal relevance of the subject determine whether a lifetime effect is generated.

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1. WHAT IS A LIFETIME EFFECT?

This thesis is concerned broadly with the times associated with individuals in utterances and, more narrowly, with lifetime effects and the contextual, pragmatic considerations that impact them. In order to set the stage for the question at hand and subsequent analysis, a number of concepts must be introduced and briefly explained.

1.1 *Individual- and stage-level predicates*

In order to understand lifetime effects, it is first necessary to discuss the distinction between different types of predicates. From Carlson (1977), predicates can be classified as individual-level (IL), stage-level (SL), or kind-level (KL). Often, as in the works to be referenced in this thesis, only the distinction between IL and SL predicates is discussed, as this distinction is most relevant to the topic of lifetime effects. Much has been said about the specific details that distinguish IL from SL predicates, and the ways in which one type can be coerced into acting as another (Carlson, 1977; Kratzer, 1995; Arche, 2006). These details do not concern the topic at hand, and thus a brief overview of the basics of these two types will suffice.

A stage-level predicate is a predicate which holds only over some temporal stage of its subject. An example of this type of predicate is *available*, as in the following sentence.

(1) The chair is available.

Sentence (1) can be true over many different temporal stages of the chair's existence, but it can likewise be false over many stages of the chair's existence. The limit of such a temporal stage can be expressed with a temporal phrase as in (2).

(2) The chair was available for twenty minutes.

On the other hand, individual-level predicates are essentially properties of the individual's existence itself, rather than a stage of that individual's existence. (3) illustrates an example of such a predicate.

(3) The chair is wooden.

Unlike a stage-level predicate, IL predicates are usually (but not necessarily) permanent, and thus their duration cannot be limited by a temporal phrase.

(4) ??The chair was wooden for an hour.

Though permanence seems a particularly useful attribute to distinguish IL predicates, it is a little more slippery upon further examination. Predicates like *tall*, *blond*, or *beautiful* are not necessarily permanent. A tall person was most likely not tall when they were born, a blond person may have dyed their hair, and a beautiful person's appearance could change. Nonetheless, these are all IL predicates. The distinction between permanent and non-permanent IL predicates will become especially relevant later in this thesis.

1.2 *Conversational implicatures*

The next important concept is conversational implicatures. Conversational implicatures are implications that arise during the course of a conversation which stem from pragmatic considerations related to Grice's (1975) cooperative principle and four maxims. The cooperative principle states that participants in a conversation act cooperatively to advance the conversation. In particular, participants adhere to the four maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The maxim of quantity states that participants should contribute exactly as much information as the conversation requires, not more nor less. The maxim of quality states that the contributions of participants should be true to their knowledge. The maxim of relation states that contributions

should be relevant to the conversation. The maxim of manner states that the contributions should not be unclear or obscure.

Based on these principles, participants in a conversation can work out certain implicatures from each other's statements. That is, they can draw conclusions about things that were not made explicit by the other party. For example, the following sentence implicates that not all rectangles are squares.

(5) Some rectangles are squares.

This arises due to a scalar implicature. A scalar implicature occurs when some set of speech choices can be arranged on a scale of informativeness. In this example, *some* means more than one rectangle is a square. If there are ten rectangles, (5) tells us in the literal sense that anywhere from 2-10 of them are squares. However, the following sentence is another claim that could potentially be made about the rectangles.

(6) All rectangles are squares.

If (6) is true, then we would know something about every single rectangle (that it is a square), and we would know that there is only one possible true outcome (every rectangle is a square) rather than the nine possible outcomes described by (5) (e.g. 2 rectangles are squares, 3 rectangles are squares, etc.). For these reasons, (6) can be considered to be more informative than (5); it can be arranged on a scale of informativeness above (5). Then, if a speaker utters (5), the addressee can infer that (6) must not be true; otherwise the speaker would have said it to obey the maxim of quantity and be more informative.

Conversational implicatures will be useful in understanding the interpretation of lifetime effects.

1.3 *Lifetime effects*

With the above two concepts explained, it is now possible to turn to lifetime effects. Lifetime effects, as described by Musan (1997), occur when an individual-level predicate is used in the past tense to describe a person. The lifetime effect is an implicature that the subject is dead.

(7) Gregory was from America. (Musan, 1997:271)

Many examples similar to (7) show the same effect.

(8) Alex was French.

(9) Robin was blond.

(10) Kim was kind.

It is important to note that whether a predicate is IL or SL is not enough to predict the strength of a lifetime effect. Some IL predicates (*be from America, be French*) produce stronger lifetime effects than others (*be blond, be kind*). If a predicate is permanent, or at least very unlikely to be changed, it will exhibit a stronger lifetime effect. I will refer to this type of predicate as a *lifetime predicate*, after Arche (2006). Lifetime predicates in this sense are not a different kind of predicate from IL or SL, but rather they are a subset of IL predicates.

Musan suggests that lifetime effects are caused by a conversational implicature based on the informativeness of the past versus present tense. If one uttered (7) in a situation in which Gregory is still alive, it would sound quite unusual. Musan points out that a typical response would be, "…and he still IS from America – he is still alive… (1997:279)" In other words, more information would be given about the duration of Gregory's being from America to correct the inappropriate statement (7). Therefore, (7) is less informative in this situation than the present

tense counterpart. Musan notes that not all sentences have a present tense counterpart that is more informative than the past. Whether or not a present tense sentence is more informative than a past tense sentence can be affected by lexical aspect, among other things. However, states–both stage- and individual-level–are affected by this scalar relationship. As such, if the past tense is used with a state, it implies that the state no longer holds, because if the present tense were true, the speaker would use it. Musan theorizes that, due to the nature of IL predicates, the addressee would reason that for an IL predicate to no longer hold, the subject of the sentence must be dead.

Additionally, Musan addresses the blocking of lifetime effects in certain contexts. She notes that particular contextual information can block the triggering of a lifetime effect, as in the following sentence:

(11) On that day, I was introduced to Gregory and Eva-Lotta. Gregory was from America, and Eva-Lotta was from Switzerland. (Musan, 1997:286)

Musan suggests that the reason this sentence does not generate a lifetime effect is that, because the day in question ('that day') is over at the time of utterance, the time during which the speaker is making a claim that Gregory is from America is also over. Thus, the speaker has no alternative tense to choose, and so the addressee does not interpret the past tense as being less informative. In other words, because the implicature is only generated when there is a choice between past and present tense, if the time of the sentence does not allow a choice of tense, there will be no implicature.

1.4 *More context*

Musan mentions briefly that the first sentence in (11) could reasonably be followed up with the present tense forms of the second sentence, but she does not discuss this in depth. However, Arche (2006) points out that in some contexts, the present tense is not merely one of

the two possible choices of tense, but the only appropriate choice. Arche presents the following example.

(12) *Situation: My Portuguese friend João and I are talking to another guy, Felipe, at a party. We are telling Felipe about a trip that João and I made some years ago to Brazil.*

—Felipe: Oh, and, were you able to handle it with the language over there?

—Me: Of course! Don't you realize João is (#was) from Portugal?!

(Arche 2006:217)

If Musan's theory is true, *was from Portugal* should be a valid choice in this situation, as Felipe establishes the topic time as when the speaker was in Brazil. This can be made clear with a slight modification:

(12') —Felipe: Oh, and, were you able to handle it with the language *when you were in Brazil*?

—Me: Of course! Don't you realize João is (#was) from Portugal?!

Arche picks up on Musan's comment that in a present tense follow-up such as in (12), the time under discussion has been shifted to the time of existence of Gregory. She argues that, like quantifiers, individuals bring their own contextual restrictions into a discourse. In this case, João carries the context of being the present friend of the speaker, and so the corresponding time restriction is João's entire lifetime. For this reason, the past tense is infelicitous, because it would locate João's time of existence in the past, which would generate a lifetime effect. Arche theorizes that lifetime effects occur when the topic time of the sentence is the time of existence of the individual and a past tense lifetime predicate is used.

With this example, Arche demonstrates a critical gap in Musan's account which will be explored in this paper: what is the role of the context of an individual in the generation of lifetime effects? As was shown in (12), there is something more going on here that Musan's theory does not explain.

To understand this question, it will first be useful to consider a more basic one: when do lifetime effects actually occur? After answering this, we can explore more data that shed light on how different factors related to a person's context can affect the generation of lifetime effects. Then, drawing from other theories, I will work towards a unified account of lifetime effects in context.

2. When do lifetime effects actually occur?

Musan's (1997) investigation of lifetime effects begins from out-of-the-blue sentences. The key observation is that some out-of-the-blue sentences, such as (7), have an easily accessible lifetime effect, while some, such as (11), do not.

(7) Gregory was from America. (Musan, 1997:271)

(11) On that day, I was introduced to Gregory and Eva-Lotta. Gregory was from America, and Eva-Lotta was from Switzerland. (Musan, 1997:286)

These examples are "out-of-the-blue" because they are not being uttered within a discourse. The first sentence in (11) does provide some more information that can serve as the context for the second sentence, but ultimately the whole utterance is out-of-the-blue because it is not being uttered within a discourse. This is clear from the fact that, to the reader, *Gregory* and *Eva-Lotta* have unknown referents.

Of course, in almost all contexts other than presented as text examples in a scholarly article, these sentences would not be out-of-the-blue. If I said (7) to a friend, their response would probably be along the lines of, "Who's Gregory?" As it turns out, this question is the key to understanding lifetime effects in these out-of-the-blue sentences.

2.1 *Who's Gregory?*

The interesting thing about out-of-the-blue sentences is that they usually are missing some information that would be supplied by context. In (7), this information is the referent of *Gregory*. There are many Gregories in the world, but in order for us to interpret the meaning of (7), we must know to which one the speaker is referring. If one person uttered (7) to another person in a context in which *Gregory* referred to one of their friends, the sentence would be easily interpreted (and would generate a lifetime effect). But these examples are explicitly not uttered in such a context, which significantly changes the interpretational process.

First, it will be useful to introduce a few concepts. The context that speakers take for granted in a conversation is the *common ground* (Stalnaker, 2002). The common ground contains all of the presuppositions and beliefs the interlocutors have. Often, the common ground is considered to be shared between the interlocutors, either because their presuppositions and beliefs are all identical or because in order to communicate effectively with each other they must assume the same common ground. In most conversations, there are discrepancies between the perceived common grounds of different speakers.

Utterances alter the common ground, using information provided by it and adding new information to it. Sometimes, an utterance is made which cannot be interpreted given the information in the common ground, as is the case with (7) above. In such an instance, the addressee may accommodate the presupposition(s) made by the speaker, so that the meaning of

the utterance can be recovered. This idea was introduced by Lewis (1979), and expanded upon by Stalnaker (1998), among others. The following example illustrates this phenomenon.

(13) My brother is American.

The speaker of (13) is presupposing that the person they are referring to exists, and that that person is their brother. Nonetheless, when uttered out-of-the-blue, (13) is still easily interpretable, because, even though the referent of *my brother* is not in the common ground, the addressee can easily infer that *my brother* exists and add the speaker's brother to the common ground. This is what happens with Gregory.

When interpreting the sentence *Gregory was from America* out of context, the addressee must figure out a way to accommodate presuppositions about *Gregory*. One such presupposition is that Gregory exists, which is readily accommodated, because the alternative is dismissing the utterance entirely. At this point, any other information about Gregory that could be added to the common ground is essentially conjecture. One such piece of information is the answer to the question, "what is the status of Gregory now?" The addressee knows, based on the informativeness of past and present tense lifetime predicates, that the speaker is implying that the present tense claim *Gregory is from America* is not true. As Musan predicts, the logical conclusion from this inference is that Gregory is dead. However, there is an alternative path to interpreting this utterance. If, for example, the speaker has no current knowledge about Gregory, does not know if Gregory is alive or dead in the present moment, then the same informativeness consideration cannot be made. Assuming the speaker is not violating the maxim of quality, *Gregory was from America* is the most informative possible statement. If this is the path that the addressee chooses, the conclusion will be that Gregory is no longer a part of the speaker's life; for some reason or other, the speaker no longer has access to information about Gregory's status

and therefore is not implying that Gregory is dead. Although Musan treats the former conclusion as the only interpretation of (7), both are accessible, though it appears true that the former is preferred.

It is easy to see now why (11) does not produce a lifetime effect. Gregory and Eva-Lotta are added to the common ground by the first sentence, *On that day, I was introduced to Gregory and Eva-Lotta.* This eliminates the need to fully accommodate their existence in the next sentence, as was required in the standalone (7). Furthermore, the past interval established by the first sentence provides the addressee with evidence about the temporal status of the two. The first sentence establishes that there was a definite past interval during which the speaker and the two individuals were introduced. Because the second sentence contains a lifetime predicate, it gives no new temporal information regarding the individuals. As such, the addressee assumes that the speaker's information regarding the individuals is confined to that past interval given in the first sentence, because no other, more relevant interval is supplied. The addressee can then conclude that the present tense was not an option, and therefore no lifetime effect is generated.

The fact that the addressee must guess what the speaker is implying about the status of the subject now is supported by the variability in judgments of (7) and (11). These examples are presented by Musan with the judgments that (7) produces a lifetime effect and (11) does not. However, some of the people I have received informal judgments from said they got no strong lifetime reading from (7), or that it was not the only option. This inconsistency supports an analysis based on the addressee lacking information that must be recovered to interpret the sentence.

Context is everything. The same sentences, uttered in a different context, such as a funeral, obviously means that the subjects are dead. This introduces a new issue. If someone

uttered (7) or (11) at a funeral, everyone (hopefully) would already know that Gregory and Eva-Lotta are dead. The speaker can't really "imply" that they are dead if this knowledge is already in the common ground. Does this still count as a lifetime effect? This turns out to be a rather significant problem.

2.2 *What is a lifetime effect, again?*

Musan mentions that if (7) were uttered in a scenario in which Gregory was alive, it would either be false or a case of presupposition failure (1997:271). However, because her investigation deals only with out-of-the-blue sentences, the more interesting scenario in which Gregory is dead and everyone knows it does not come up. Arche (2006) likewise discusses examples in which the subject is known to be alive, but does not explore the obverse situation. Then, what happens in this situation?

Consider first an example:

(14) *Situation: My friend Gregory has just died, and I am talking to another of his friends.*

–Me: Gregory was so smart.

Does this utterance generate a lifetime effect? Regarding this term, Musan states, "Since the past tense seems thus to limit the lifetime of the subject, I will call effects like the one observed in (7) lifetime effect. (1997:272)" The active phrase, "past tense seems thus to limit the lifetime of the subject," suggests that the lifetime of the subject is not already limited by something else. For this reason, I will proceed with the assumption that *lifetime effects* occur when the information that the subject is dead is communicated via implicature. If the subject is already known to be dead, any informativeness implicature will cease, because the knowledge of the subject's status is already in the common ground. Therefore, a lifetime effect occurs when the use of a past tense

lifetime predicate implicates that the subject individual is dead, and furthermore, adds this information to the common ground.

Thus, a lifetime effect occurs in situations where the addressee could reasonably accommodate the implicature that the subject individual is dead. If the individual is physically present in the conversation, as in (12), such an implicature will fail. If the individual is already known to be dead, as in (14), there is no implicature to be generated.

2.3 *Adding (even more) context*

The out-of-the-blue sentences presented by Musan illustrate that there is some predictable behavior to lifetime effects. However, as mentioned, out-of-the-blue sentences don't actually occur in natural conversation, and thus the use of them may obfuscate the mechanism behind lifetime effects. To illustrate this point, let us return to Musan's examples, adding different information about the subjects to the common ground.

We will start with the simplest sentence, (7).

(7) Gregory was from America. (Musan, 1997:271)

The crucial information here is the present status of Gregory. Suppose first that Gregory is, as far as we know, a present friend of the speaker.

(15) *Situation: Gregory is the present friend of the speaker.*

Gregory was from America.

As expected, this generates a strong lifetime effect. Now suppose that Gregory was the speaker's college roommate many years ago, and they are no longer in touch.

(16) *Situation: Gregory is the speaker's former college roommate many years ago. They are no longer in touch.*

Gregory was from America.

In this case, no lifetime effect is generated. As mentioned in the previous sections, in (11), if the addressee thinks that Gregory and Eva-Lotta are the present friends of the speaker, they will interpret a lifetime effect, even though there is a past interval which Musan predicted would license the past tense without generating a lifetime effect.

(11) On that day, I was introduced to Gregory and Eva-Lotta. Gregory was from America, and Eva-Lotta was from Switzerland. (Musan, 1997:286)

(17) *Situation: Gregory and Eva-Lotta are the present friends of the speaker and the addressee.*

On that day, I was introduced to Gregory and Eva-Lotta. Gregory was from America, and Eva-Lotta was from Switzerland.

Note that it would be odd for someone to tell a friend that their mutual friends are from America and Switzerland, as both would probably already know this. Nonetheless, the effect is the same.

Previously, I mentioned that the reason the addressee would interpret no lifetime effect in an out-of-the-blue utterance of (7) is that they may infer that the speaker has no current knowledge about the subject in question, and therefore the veracity of the present tense is unknown, and it is not an appropriate choice. This is supported by Arche's example (12), in which the subject is physically present, and the addressee has no other way to interpret the past tense than as implicating a lifetime effect. Things are not so clear cut in examples (15-17). The fact that the subject individual is the present friend of the speaker and addressee seems to be enough to prevent the interpretation based on level of knowledge. Yet, the speaker and addressee technically have just as little knowledge about the present status of this friend as they do about the speaker's college roommate from years ago. Clearly present knowledge about the situation is not the whole story.

3. Personal relevance

Although there seems to be more to the puzzle than the speaker and addressee's current level of knowledge about the subject individual, it serves as a good place to start the investigation.

Consider the following situations.

(21) *Situation: I am walking along a trail with a friend. A very old man walks past us. I turn around to watch him and say:*

–Me: Look, that guy is so old!

(22) *Situation: I am walking along a trail with a friend. A very old man walks past us. I turn around to watch him. As he rounds a corner out of sight, I say:*

–Me: That guy was so old!

In the first situation, the speaker has visual evidence that the man is old during the utterance. Thus, a present tense statement is appropriate. However, in the second situation, even though the man has been out of sight for just a moment, the past tense is preferred. It seems a reasonable assumption that the man didn't stop being old one moment after rounding the corner, yet the present tense is not suitable here. On the other hand, it would be very odd for someone to describe a current friend in the past tense with the sentence in (22). If current level of knowledge is the determining factor here, something does not add up.

Considering the extent to which lifetime predicates are determined by world knowledge and shared beliefs, it is reasonable to investigate this situation from a similar angle. Rather than absolute level of knowledge, perhaps the socially expected level of knowledge plays a role here. To evaluate this possibility, it will first be useful to test what types of people seem to consistently generate a lifetime effect in the past tense.

3.1 *Who matters?*

As we have observed, present friendship is sufficient to produce consistent lifetime effects. The following two examples from Arche (2006) illustrate this.

(23) *Situation 1: My friend Eva and I are Portuguese. We went to Brazil three years ago and got a tourist guide for our excursion through the jungle. This morning Eva ran into my office and told me:*

–Eva: You remember João, the tourist guide we got in Brazil? (It turns out that) he grew up in Lisbon.

–Me: Oh! So he was from Portugal! (Arche, 2006:216)

(24) *Situation 2: My friend Eva and I are Portuguese. We went to Brazil three years ago and got a tourist guide named João. He happened to be moving to Lisbon, and, since we got along with him, we […] hang out with him very often. This morning Eva ran into my office and told me:*

–Eva: You know what? João grew up right here in Palmela!

–Me: Oh, really? So he is (#was) from Portugal! (Arche, 2006:216)

In the first situation, João is not currently a friend of the two, so there is no lifetime effect. In the second situation, he is currently their friend, so the past tense is inappropriate.

We can expect that closer relationships than friendship should likewise generate strong lifetime effects, and this is supported by the evidence.

(25) My mother was French.

(26) My brother was from Pennsylvania.

Both sentences generate a strong lifetime effect. These examples are also quite interesting, as even when uttered fully out-of-the-blue, they produce lifetime effects much more consistently than (7) from previous sections. This will be discussed more later.

There are also some more peculiar cases. Celebrities or famous people also generate strong lifetime effects.

(27) Joe Biden was from America.

It is logical to expect someone to know whether or not a family member or friend is still alive, but why does this extend to the president? One explanation is that the news of the passing of a famous person would likely reach most people quickly, especially for someone as well-known as the president. If Joe Biden died, most Americans would likely hear about it quickly. For this reason, no news is good news, and everyone can be relatively certain that Joe Biden is alive based on the fact that they haven't heard news of his death. In contrast, if someone is talking about their third grade friend, even though they have just as much absolute knowledge about the present status of that friend as they do about Joe Biden at that very moment, they would be far less likely to hear of that friend's passing if they were no longer in touch with them. This raises some interesting questions that go beyond the scope of this thesis: would the lifetime effect in a sentence about the president have been as strong before the invention of real-time communication methods? At what level of fame do you stop being treated linguistically as a regular person and become famous enough that everyone expects you to be alive?

Perhaps most interesting of all, strangers can become present-tense-worthy in the right circumstance. Consider the following two situations.

(28) *Situation: I have just gone to a restaurant with a friend for the first time. As we are leaving, I say:*

–Me: Wow, that waiter was so tall.

(29) *Situation: I have just gone to the same restaurant a week later, with the same friend. We had the same waiter. As we are leaving, I say:*

–Me: Wow, that waiter is (?was) so tall.

In the case that the past tense is used in the second situation, it would be much more appropriate with an IL predicate like *be nice*, or *be friendly*, which can be coerced into applying to a specific past temporal interval, rather than the individual itself. Additionally, it is interesting to note that the past tense in (29) doesn't necessarily generate a strong lifetime effect. Although the waiter has graduated to present tense eligibility, there seems not to be sufficient expectation that the speaker would have knowledge about the waiter's present status.

3.2 *Tying it all together*

The examples above illustrate that there is something significant about the relationship the speaker has with the subject. I will call this phenomenon *personal relevance*. If the subject is currently personally relevant to the speaker, a strong lifetime effect is generated. Then, the key to interpreting a lifetime effect in an out-of-the-blue sentence is making an assumption about the personal relevance of the subject to the speaker. Let us return to example (25).

(25) My mother was French.

As mentioned above, presuppositions regarding *my mother* do not need to already be in the common ground for this sentence to be interpreted. In fact, this sentence is a perfect case for presupposition accommodation. Not only can the addressee easily accommodate the presupposition that the referent of *my mother* exists, but also the use of the label *my mother* gives

the addressee critical information to deduce whether or not the subject is personally relevant to the speaker, and therefore whether or not to interpret a lifetime effect. Armed with the socially-informed belief that a person's parents are usually very personally relevant, the addressee can strongly interpret a lifetime effect in (25).

Consider now another out-of-the-blue sentence that can easily be accommodated.

(30) My lawyer was French.

This sentence can generate a lifetime effect, but it is certainly not as strong as that of (29). We would predict that this could be explained by the fact that *my lawyer* is not expected to be as personally relevant as *my mother* is. Yet, the fact that the speaker describes the lawyer as *my* lawyer suggests that the subject is personally relevant. Why does this sentence not generate as strong of a lifetime effect? *Be my mother* is a lifetime predicate; it is as permanent as any predicate can be. *Be my lawyer*, on the other hand, is not permanent, and therefore is not a lifetime predicate. This can be demonstrated with the following two examples.

(31) ??That woman was my mother.

(32) That woman was my lawyer.

Sentences (25) and (30) each have two predicates applying to the subject in question (*be my mother/be my lawyer* and *be French*). The defeasibility of the lifetime effect in (32) then results from a slightly different interpretive process compared to (25). The crucial step in reasoning which leads to the lifetime implicature is the assumption that the present tense is more informative than the past tense, and that if the speaker believed the present tense were true, they would use the present tense over the past tense (Musan, 1997). Thus, in the process of interpreting sentence (25) or (30), the addressee concludes that the present tense alternative of the statement is not true. Then, there are two truth conditions of the sentence which could be

false in the present: 1) the individual is my mother/my lawyer, and 2) the individual is French. In sentence (25), both *be my mother* and *be French* are permanent lifetime properties. Regardless of which of the two properties no longer holds, the result is a lifetime effect. On the other hand, in sentence (30), *be French* is permanent, but *be my lawyer* is not. If *be French* is false in the present, a lifetime effect is generated, but if *be my lawyer* is false, a lifetime effect is not generated. Which of the two the addressee chooses determines whether or not a lifetime effect is generated.

4. Wrapping up

The previous sections explored the key factor in interpreting lifetime effects, presupposition accommodation, and investigated how assumptions about personal relevance are critical to predicting the strength of a lifetime effect, particularly in out-of-the-blue sentences. In this section I summarize these points, refine the account, and conclude.

4.1 *Accommodation*

Accommodation is the critical step in interpreting out-of-the-blue sentences. Such sentences lack important information about the subject in question, most importantly their present status, and their personal relevance to the speaker. In order to interpret the sentences, the addressee must attempt to recover this information with informed assumptions. Different details can affect which assumptions seem to be most plausible and salient. If the subject is introduced with only a name, there is no information on which to base these assumptions, and therefore such sentences can have considerably variable interpretations. If the subject is introduced within the context of a past interval, the addressee will be less likely to assume that the subject is still personally relevant, and therefore less likely to interpret a lifetime effect. Some remaining

questions to investigate in future include: how do the specific details used to introduce a new individual (e.g., what predicate is used, what temporal adverbial is used) in an out-of-the-blue sentence affect the likelihood of a lifetime effect being interpreted? To what extent can specific names affect the generation of lifetime effects?

4.2 *Personal relevance*

The assumption which most affects the interpretation of lifetime effects concerns the personal relevance of the subject to the speaker. Personal relevance has to do with the level of knowledge someone would be expected to have of some person, like a friend or relative. This seems to be heavily socially informed, and there are many interesting factors left to investigate. For example, do different cultures or societies have different expectations about friends, family, or strangers that would affect the interpretation of lifetime effects? How much are these expectations affected by technology or the general ability of people to gather information about the people in question?

4.3 *Refining the account*

One of the important observations to be made about lifetime effects is that they are extremely reliant on world knowledge and are thus heavily influenced by social factors. To emphasize this, it is useful to show that the phenomenon of *lifetime effects* is actually a rather small additional step taken from another more common interpretational effect, *cessation implicatures*.

Musan's explanation of lifetime effects can be linked to a broader observation from Altshuler & Schwarzschild (2012) about what they term *cessation implicatures*. They propose the hypothesis that for any moment *m* such that a proposition *φ* is true at *m*, there exists some moment *m'* preceding *m* at which *φ* is also true and a moment *m'* following *m* at which *φ* is also

true (Altshuler & Schwarzschild, 2012:45). Altshuler & Schwarzschild argue that from this hypothesis can be derived the fact that a past tense statement implicates that a present tense statement is false: the proposition expressed in the past tense has ceased. This is a cessation implicature. In other words, because the present statement entails the past statement (based on the aforementioned hypothesis), then the present tense is strictly more informative than the past tense. Therefore, the two form a scale of informativeness, and can thus generate scalar implicatures such as the cessation implicature.

While Musan only argues that present tense is more informative in IL clauses due to the nature of IL predicates, Altshuler & Schwarzschild claim that present tense is always more informative.

(33) My father was sick.

Sentence (33) implicates that my father is no longer sick. This can quite easily be connected to the lifetime effect implicatures observed throughout this thesis.

Musan's explanation of the logic underlying the interpretation of lifetime effect implicatures illustrates this. Musan gives the following line of reasoning to explain the lifetime effect in the sentence *Gregory was from America*.

(34) (a) The speaker has expressed the proposition that **Gregory was from America**.
(b) Thus, the speaker is maximally informative about Gregory's being from America – in particular about the duration of Gregory's being from America.
(c) If the speaker thought that Gregory's being from America is not over, he would have expressed the proposition that Gregory **is** from America, since that would have been a more informative alternative utterance about the duration of Gregory's being from America.

> (d) Thus, the speaker couldn't have been maximally informative about Gregory's being from America unless he thought that Gregory's being from America is over.
> (e) Thus, the speaker has implicated that Gregory's being from America is over.
> (f) Since being from America is a property that, if it holds of an individual at all, holds of that individual over its entire lifetime, and since the speaker has implicated that Gregory's being from America is over, the speaker has implicated furthermore that Gregory is dead. (Musan, 1997:282)

Following the logic only through (34e), it appears no different from a cessation implicature like the one in (33). The only difference between the interpretation of *My father was sick* and *Gregory was from America* is (10f), because *be sick* is a stage-level predicate, while *be from America* is an individual-level lifetime predicate.

Then, the interpretational process for a lifetime effect sentence is not special; it is rather an additional inference made due to the nature of lifetime predicates. If a sentence generates a cessation implicature, and the predicate is a lifetime predicate, the addressee will conclude that in order for the predicate to cease holding, the subject must be dead.

This theory also supports the fact that not all IL predicates are lifetime predicates. Any IL predicate will generate a cessation implicature, but only lifetime predicates will generate lifetime effects from those cessation implicatures. It is not just any IL predicate that is special, but rather the ones that are considered so permanent that the only way for them to no longer be true is for the subject to die.

4.4 *Conclusion*

This thesis argues that lifetime effects are fundamentally a pragmatic phenomenon, adopting much of Musan's framework. It also argues that lifetime effects in out-of-the-blue

sentences cannot be adequately explained without recognizing how missing information can be recovered via accommodation and inference. Furthermore, it proposes that lifetime effects are the result of a disparity between the information intended to be communicated by a speaker and the information ultimately recovered by the addressee. In the process of recovering this information, the addressee attempts to determine the level of personal relevance of the subject to the speaker, which ultimately determines whether a lifetime effect is interpreted.

Considering the degree to which this phenomenon and the related topics discussed in this paper are socially informed and culturally centered, a reasonable next step in research would be to investigate how lifetime effects are interpreted in different languages and societies. Furthermore, investigating the ways in which specific word choices and syntactic patterns inform the inferences made during the interpretation of out-of-the-blue sentences would provide a better understanding of this phenomenon and the process of out-of-the-blue interpretation in general.

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