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Accommodation in Linguistic Interaction *

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 - in mechanisms underlying accommodating context-changes;
 - in motivating interlocutors to accommodate each other.

PLAN:

1. Examples and preliminary characterization of accommodation;
2. existing frameworks:
 - 2.1. Lewis's score-keeping model,
 - 2.2. Stalnaker's model of sequential update,
 - 2.3. Thomason's model of intention-recognition;
3. towards a speech-act based framework.

1. Examples and preliminary characterization of accommodation

Assumption:

- speech acts are “context-changing social actions” (Sbisà 2002, p. 421);
- “a speech act is a function from contexts into contexts” (Gazdar 1981, p. 68).

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For example:

- a binding promise to *A* changes a context in which the speaker is not committed to *A* into a context in which she is so committed;
- a successful assertion updates the context in which it is made by adding the asserted content to it.

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- (*d*) Phoebe has a cat.

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→ **deontic presupposition**

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→ the *dynamic* function

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Score components:

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Lewis's key idea:

- the dynamics of conversational score is rule-governed;
- there are *rules of score-change* or *kinematics rules*.

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kinematics rules

→ determine how the performance of a given speech act affects the context of its production;

rules of direct kinematics

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General pattern for rules of accommodation:

If at time t something is said that requires component s_n of conversational score to have a value in the range r if what is said is to be **true***, or otherwise acceptable; and if s_n does not have a value in the range r just before t ; and **if such-and-such further conditions hold****; then at t the score-component s_n takes some value in the range r . (Lewis 1979, p. 347)

* truth as the designated aspect of appropriateness;

** e.g., if nobody blocks the accommodating change (Langton *forthcoming*).

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Rule of accommodation for presuppositions:

If at time t something is said that requires presupposition P to be acceptable, and if P is not presupposed just before t , then – *ceteris paribus* and within certain limits – presupposition P comes into existence at t .
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- (3) *Even* George could win.
>> George is not a leading candidate.
- (4) Tonight, John is having dinner in New York, *too*. (Kripke 1990)
>> Some specific and contextually salient person (or group)
is having dinner in New York.

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- Lewis says nothing about the source of presuppositional requirements;
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We need not ask just what sort of unacceptability results when a required presupposition is lacking. Some say falsehood, some say lack of truth value, some just say that it's the kind of unacceptability that results when a required presupposition is lacking; and some say it might vary from case to case. (Lewis 1979: 739)

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Rule of accommodation for permissibility facts:

If at time t something is said about permissibility by the master to the slave that requires for its truth the permissibility or impermissibility of certain courses of action, and if just before t the boundary is such as to make the master's statement false, then – *ceteris paribus* and within certain limits – the boundary shifts at t so as to make the master's statement true. (Lewis 1979: 341)

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(5) You are now permitted to cross the white line. (Langton *forthcoming*)

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Rule of accommodation for performative utterances “I name...”:

If at time t something is said that requires for its truth that X bear name n ; and if X does not bear n just before t ; and if the form and circumstances of what is said satisfy certain conditions of felicity; then X begins at t to bear n . (Lewis 1979: 356)

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Note:

- every type of performative utterance requires a separate rule of its own.

(7) I now pronounce you husband and wife.

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- (Q₄) → falsehood or other type of inappropriateness;
- (Q₅) → no definite answer.

2.2. Stalnaker's model of sequential update

- Unlike Lewis, Stalnaker limits his analysis to presuppositional requirements and presupposition accommodation;
- like Lewis, however, he is interested in how presuppositions behave and how they are accommodated, rather than in how they arise.

2.2. Stalnaker's model of sequential update

- Stalnaker represents context not as conversational score, but as common ground: a social object “definable in terms of the propositional attitudes of the members of some group” (Stalnaker 2014: 25);
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The notion of **common ground** in a propositional attitude concept. (...) it is a concept with an iterative structure: a proposition is common ground between you and me if we both accept it (for the purposes of the conversation), we both accept that we we both accept it, we both accept that we both accept that we both accept it, and so on. (Stalnaker 2014: 25)

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We can (...) define the individual propositional attitude of **speaker presupposition** in terms of common ground: An agent A presupposes that ϕ if and only if A accepts (for purposes of the conversation) that it is common ground that ϕ . (*ibid.*)

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A manifest event is something that happens in the environment of the relevant parties that is obviously evident to all. A goat walks into the room, or all of the lights suddenly go out. In such a case, it immediately becomes common knowledge that the event has happened (...). (Stalnaker 2014: 47)

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Central idea:

- speech acts are manifest events.

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- When (1) is uttered, it becomes a manifest event that a certain utterance with a certain **set of properties** has been made.

↑ ?

- It is a manifest event that in uttering (1b) Phoebe:
 - (i) performs a speech act with a **certain meaning**
 - (ii) and a **certain force**;
 - (iii) **presupposes** that she has a cat;

in short, Phoebe manifestly presupposes that she has a cat.

(i) & (ii) → in virtue of the fact that the semantics of the language Phoebe speaks is common ground;

(iii) → in virtue of ?

2.2. Stalnaker's model of sequential update

The “triggering problem” (Schwarz 2014: 13):

- How do presuppositions arise?
- What is the source of presuppositional requirements?

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von Stechow (2008: 138):

- “Stalnaker himself is non-committal and pluralistic on this question. (...) I assume that there is a presuppositional component of meaning hardwired in the semantics of particular expressions.”

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von Stechow (2008: 138):

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It is a manifest event that in uttering (1b) Phoebe:

- (i) performs a speech act with a certain meaning
- (ii) and a certain force;
- (iii) presupposes that she has a cat;

(i), (ii) & (iii) → in virtue of the fact that the semantics of the language Phoebe speaks is common ground.

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Stalnaker 2002: 705

If it is mutually recognized that a certain utterance type is standardly used, in some **conventional linguistic practice**, only when some proposition is (or is not) common belief, it will be possible to exploit this recognition, sometimes to bring it about that something is (or is not) common belief, sometimes to create a divergence between a **conventionalized common ground** and what speaker and hearer take to be the beliefs that they actually hold in common. The phenomenon of presupposition accommodation, much discussed in the literature about presupposition, is like the phenomenon of conversational implicature in that it is an inevitable feature of any practice the point of which is to mean things.

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Stalnaker 2014

“(...) presupposition requirements may have diverse explanations.” (70)

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- “too” means “in addition to x ” (following Heim; cf. Stalnaker 2014: 71);

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- “too” means “in addition to x ” (following Heim; cf. Stalnaker 2014: 71);
- therefore, the use of “too” involves tacit reference to a contextually salient x ;

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Hypothesis:

- the presuppositional or contextual requirement imposed by (4) is determined by a rule of reference (construed of as a speech act);
- the rule says that the information needed to determine the reference must be available in the context
(→ Searle 1969 on the ‘axiom of existence’ and the ‘axiom of identification’).

2.2. Stalnaker's model of sequential update

Sequential update involves two steps:

- [1] accommodation as a cooperative response to a manifest speech event
(that a certain speech act, e.g. an assertion, is made);
- [2] the production of the 'essential effect' of the act
(e.g., adding the asserted content to the common ground).

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- (Q₄) → no definite answer; 'appropriateness' as a descriptive category;
- (Q₅) → contextual requirements are determined pragmatically (hypothesis: they are determined by speech act rules).

2.3. Thomason's model of intention-recognition

- Richmond H. Thomason, R. (1990). Accommodation, meaning, and implicature: Interdisciplinary foundations for pragmatics.
- Richmond H. Thomason, Matthew Stone, and David DeVault (2006), Enlightened Update: A Computational Architecture for Presupposition and Other Pragmatic Phenomena.

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(8) Susan regrets that she bought a ferret. (Roberts 2015)

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- (9)
- a. Susan doesn't regret that she bought a ferret.
 - b. Does Susan regret that she bought a ferret?
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Roberts 2015:

- the compliment of the factive in (8) is not a presupposition, since the appropriateness of the act made in uttering (8) does not require that the projective content was part of CG before the utterance was made.

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Informative presupposition arises as a problem in the presence of a pragmatic rule requiring an utterance involving a presupposition to be appropriate only if its presuppositions are mutually supposed at that stage of the conversation. We are not committed to such a rule; ...

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... the alternative rules (...) would rather be (1) that an utterance involves a presupposition *P* if the intention underlying the utterance is committed to the presupposition, and (2) that an utterance is only appropriate to the extent that its presuppositions can be recognized and added to the common ground. (Thomason et al. 2016: 33)

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- Public action *versus* tacit though publicly recognizable action, what is asserted *versus* **what is supposed or assumed** in (10):

(10) Georgina, who hails from Alabama, won a Pulitzer this year.
(Roberts 2015)

- (11)
- a. It is not the case that Georgina, who hails from Alabama, won a Pulitzer this year.
 - b. Did Georgina, who hails from Alabama, win a Pulitzer this year?
 - c. If Georgina, who hails from Alabama, won a Pulitzer this year, that proves they don't discriminate against southerners.

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- Accommodation:
 - as “a special case of obstacle elimination” (Thomason 1990: 343)
 - and an ‘enlightened update’ (Thomason et al. 2006).

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A is standing by an obviously immobilized car and is approached by B.
The following exchange takes place:

(12) A: I'm out of petrol.

B: There is a garage around the corner.

(Grice 1989: 32; cf. Thomason 1990: 347)

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Following Roberts (2015), we can distinguish between three types of accommodation:

- cases that involve the use of projection triggers and explicit expression of what is to be accommodated; the projective content is “taken for granted without being asserted”, but not presupposed;

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But they all involve ‘enlightened update’ and ‘obstacle elimination’.

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3. Towards a speech-act based framework

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Two approaches to appropriateness rules (Sbisà *forthcoming*):

- the set of appropriateness rules is complete (Searle),
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- the set of appropriateness rules is complete (Searle),
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[Unlike Searle, Austin does not present his rules A, B, and Γ] as (templates for) jointly sufficient conditions, but leaves the performance of illocutionary act tokens open to unforeseen forms of defeasibility.

(Sbisa, forthcoming)

3. Towards a speech-act based framework

Central idea (borrowed from Sbisà):

- mechanisms underlying accommodation involve pattern-recognition, and are guided by default assumptions of appropriateness;
- there are no rules of accommodation.

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- mechanisms underlying accommodation involve pattern-recognition, and are guided by default assumptions of appropriateness;
- there are no rules of accommodation.

Accommodation, then, is (...) governed by general principles, one of which concerns pattern recognition (a pattern can well be recognized from the presentation of some of its parts) and the other the by-default recognition of other minds or subjects. (...) It is indeed quite obvious that a pattern that is partially presented may be completed by the observer if the part presented suffices to make it emerge.

3. Towards a speech-act based framework

Intention = a complex information structure that involves:

- a **goal**, i.e., a state of affairs to be achieved;
- a **plan**, i.e., a partially specified way of achieving the goal;
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Hypothesis:

- the rules or appropriateness are built into the structure of intentions and correlate **goals** and **plans** with the **preconditions** of their achievement.

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Accommodation involves:

- default evaluation of the speaker's utterance as an appropriate act of a certain type, i.e., as the act that achieves its goal
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- The set of these preconditions is open: studding new 'breakdown cases' we can discover new requirements;
- but at least some of them have been explicitly formulated.

3. Towards a speech-act based framework

- (2) Go and pick up wood.
- (5) You are now permitted to cross the white line.
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- (7) I now pronounce you husband and wife.

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Lewis’s ‘reductionist’ approach:

- truth is the designated aspect of appropriateness;
- the functioning of the exercitive act made in (5) and the ceremonial acts made in (6) and (7) involves accommodation guided by the presumption that (5), (6), and (7) are true.

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Alternative approach (Witek 2013, 2015):

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- the functioning of the exercitive act made in (5) and the ceremonial acts made in (6) and (7) involves the operation of respective kinematics rules (akin to Searle’s essential rules);
- interpretation of these acts involves the recognition (or even establishment) of their deontic preconditions (by accommodation involving rules akin to Searle’s preparatory conditions).

3. Towards a speech-act based framework

Questions:

- (Q₁) What guides and motivates the accommodating mechanism?
- (Q₂) What type of context does it affect?
- (Q₃) What kind of redressive action does it involve?
- (Q₄) What sort of inappropriateness would ensue without it?
- (Q₅) What is the nature and source of the contextual requirements whose recognition motivates the accommodating context-change?

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(Q₅) → schemas and patterns that constitute the structure of intentions.

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