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An action-based model of projective content recognition

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Panel “Pragmatic inference: The role of inferences and inferencing
in pragmatic models of communication”

AIM

- To develop an action-based model of presupposition recognition,
which is part of an action-based solution (\rightarrow ABS) to the triggering problem.

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Presuppositions as pragmatic implications

- projective,
- (in most cases) lexically triggered,
- presented as given,
- susceptible to accommodation.

The triggering problem (\rightarrow TP)

- the question of *where* presuppositions come from (Schwarz 2019)
- or, alternatively, of *how* and *why* they arise (Simons 2013a).

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PLAN

1. TP: aspects and solutions
2. ABS
3. Examples of presupposing utterances
4. The epistemic aspect of ABS

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TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

- Presuppositions are *neither* coded *nor* inferred along the Gricean lines.

1. TP: aspects and solutions

Two aspects of TP

(*TP*) What determines the presupposition of an utterance?

Bach 2001:

- ‘determine’ is ambiguous;
- it can mean *either* ‘constitute’ *or* ‘ascertain’.

1. TP: aspects and solutions

Two aspects of TP

(*TP*) What determines the presupposition of an utterance?

Bach 2001:

- ‘determine’ is ambiguous;
- it can mean *either* ‘constitute’ *or* ‘ascertain’.

(*TP_C*) What constitutes the presupposition of the speaker’s speech act?

(*TP_E*) What enables the hearer to recognize the speaker’s presupposition?

1. TP: aspects and solutions

Two solutions to TP

The Semantic View

- Presuppositions are coded.

Gazdar 1979; Heim 1988; van der Sandt 1992; von Stechow 2008;

Domaneschi and Di Paola 2018

The Conversational View

- Presuppositions are pragmatically determined aspects of meaning.

Stalnaker 1999, 2014; Simons 2013a; Beaver et al. 2017; Geurts 2017

→ Interpretation Principle (Simons 2013a);

→ principles posited by QUD model (Beaver et al. 2017).

2. ABS

Key ideas:

- Presuppositions as preconditions of *actions* (Thomason et al. 2006: 11) or *events* (Simons 2013a: 345);
- Austinian presuppositions of illocutionary acts (Witek 2013, 2015, 2019).

2. ABS

- [1] Every atomic presupposing utterance corresponds to a certain action in that it *constitutes, expresses, or describes* its successful performance.
- [2] The propositions presupposed by an utterance are determined by the structure of its corresponding action and coincide in content with its preconditions.

Three types of presupposing utterances:

- constitutive,
- expressive,
- descriptive.

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances that *constitute* or *describe* illocutionary acts:

- (1) ANN: I *order* you to pick up wood.
- (2) Ann stands in an appropriate authority relation to Tom.
- (3) ANN: Go and pick up woods.

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

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- (4) ANN: I ordered Tom to pick up wood.
- (5) PAUL: Ann ordered Tom to pick up wood.

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Conclusion:

- presupposition (2) shared by utterances of (1), (4) and (5) is not determined by the semantics of the verb ‘order’;
- it is determined by the procedure for performing their corresponding actions.

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances that *constitute* or *describe* illocutionary acts:

- (6) ANN: a. I will come to your lecture.
 b. I promise I will come to your lecture.
 c. I promised Tom to come to his lecture.
PAUL: d. Ann promised Tom to come to his lecture.
- (7) a. Ann is able to come to Tom's lecture.
 b. It is not obvious for both Ann and Tom that Ann will come to Tom's lecture in the normal course of events.
 c. Tom would prefer Ann's coming to his lecture to her not doing it.

(Searle 1969; cf. Simons 2013b: 147)

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances that *constitute* or *describe* illocutionary acts:

- (8) SUE: a. I warn you that Roger is in the meeting room.
 b. Roger is in the meeting room.
 c. I warned Don that Roger was the meeting room.
JACK: d. Sue warned Don that Roger was in the meeting room.
- (9) Roger's presence poses a threat to Don.

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances that *express* or *describe* mental acts:

- (10) SUE: a. I regret that I bought a ferret.
b. It's a pity that I bought a ferret.
c. I regretted that I bought a ferret.
PAUL: d. Sue regrets that she bought a ferret.
- (11) Sue bough a ferret.

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances that *express or describe* mental acts:

- (10) SUE: a. **I regret that** I bought a ferret.
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PAUL: d. Sue regrets that she bought a ferret.

- (11) Sue bough a ferret.

→ **nondetachability of presuppositions** (see Simons 2013a)

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances that *describe* mental acts:

(12) James found out that Harry is having a graduation party.

(Beaver et al. 2017: 275)

(13) Harry is having a graduation party

→ *factive implication*

(14) Prior to the event described in this utterance
James did not know that Harry is having a graduation party

→ *aspectual or change-of-state implication*

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances whose syntactically distinguished parts constitute sub-locutionary acts:

- (15) a. A boy went to school.
b. *He* is clever.
- (16) a. Jacqueline's getting married.
b. *He* is a soccer coach.

(Roberts 2015: 351)

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

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- (16) a. Jacqueline's getting married.
b. *He* is a soccer coach. (Roberts 2015: 351)
- (17) There is an available **male** discourse referent with which the referent introduced by 'he' can be identified.
→ existential or availability implication (Tonhauser et al. 2013: 72)
→ **'referential constraint' implication** (Bach 1987, 2001)
- (18) Jacqueline's getting married to *a certain male person*.
→ bridging assumption; accommodation

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances that involve no linguistic trigger in particular:

(19) OK, it's 3 o'clock. (Simons 2013b: 149)

(20) It is time to start the seminar.

→ conversational implicature

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances that involve no linguistic trigger in particular:

(19) OK, it's 3 o'clock. (Simons 2013b: 149)

(20) It is time to start the seminar.

→ conversational implicature

(21) The seminar starts at 3 o'clock.

→ contextual presupposition

or conversationally implicated premise

(Simons 2013b)

(Wilson and Sperber 2012: 15)

3. Examples of presupposing utterances

Utterances that involve no linguistic trigger in particular:

- (22) a. Smith will win the race.
b. Smith won't win the race.
c. Will Smith win this race? (Simons 2013a: 337-339)

- (23) Smith will participate in the race.

[T]here is something unsatisfying about saying, for example, that the observed implications of the sentences in [(22)] are due to a presuppositional specification associated with the verb 'win'. It seems much more plausible that some general principle is involved.

(Simons 2013a: 339)

4. The epistemic aspect of ABS

ABS enables us to explain a number of phenomena characteristic of presupposing (Witek, in preparation):

- (a) contextual presuppositions (\rightarrow (19)),
- (b) intralinguistic and interlinguistic non-detachability of presuppositions (\rightarrow (10)),
- (c) local effects of presupposition triggers used in explicit ignorance contexts,
- (d) presuppositions “are apparently tied to particular aspects of surface structure”.

(Levinson 1983: 186)

(a) & (b) – problem for the Semantic View;

(c) & (d) – problem for the Conversational View.

4. The epistemic aspect of ABS

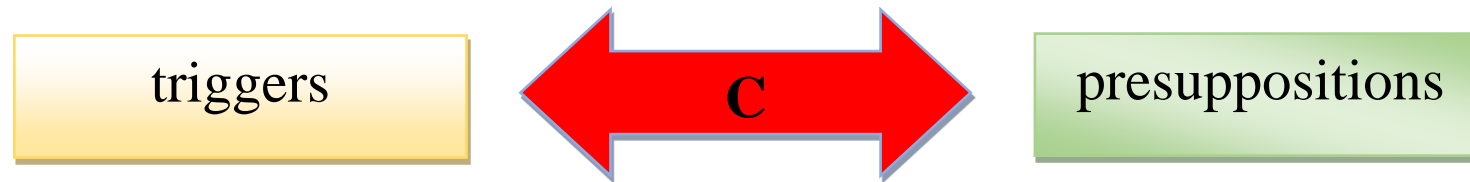
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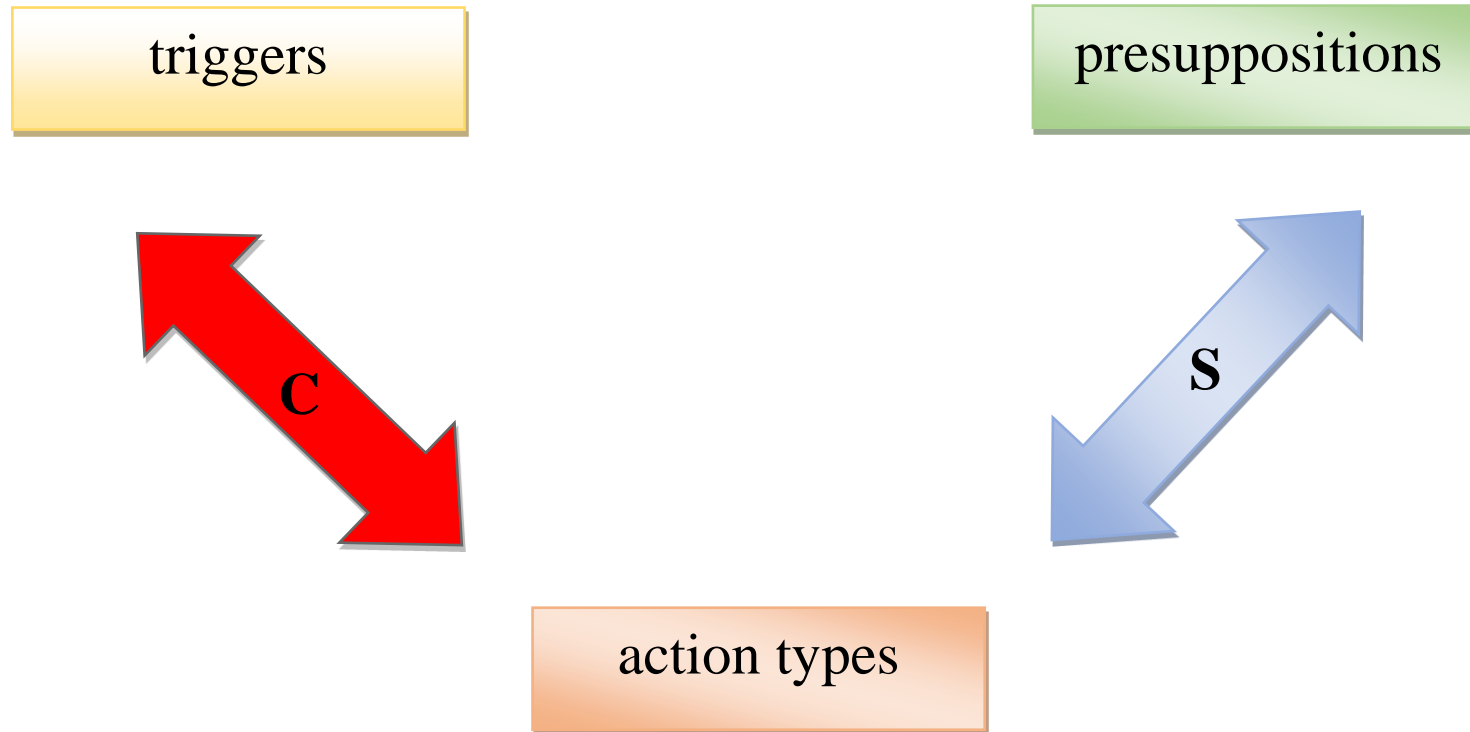
4. The epistemic aspect of ABS

Standard Semantic View:



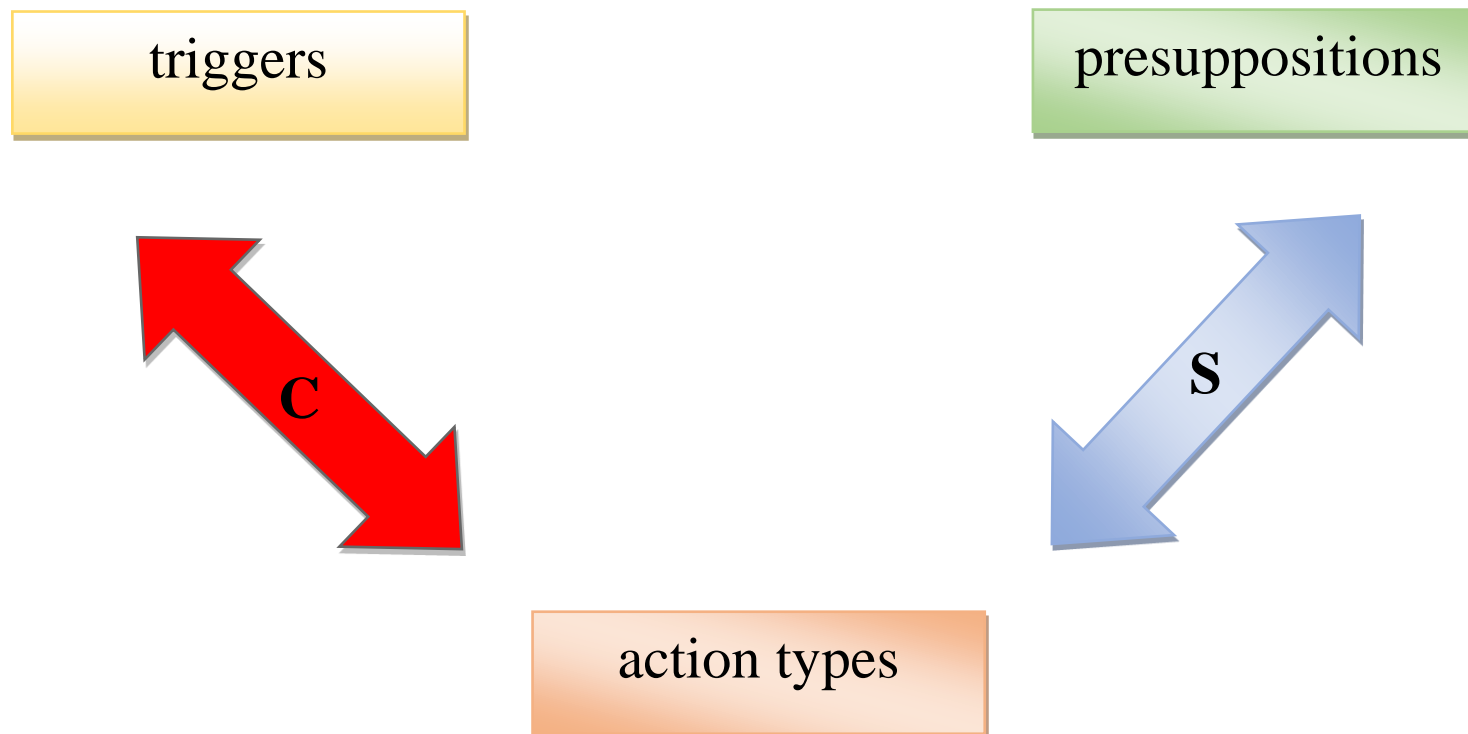
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ABS:



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ABS:



(TP_E) What enables the hearer to recognize the speaker's presupposition?

→ **The semantic knowledge** & **the general social-pragmatic competence.**

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