

Notes on Presupposition

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Table of contents

- 1 Presupposition
- 2 Philosophers
- 3 Pragmatic presupposition
- 4 Accomodation
- 5 Putting it all together
- 6 Bibliography

Base case

- 1 The king of France is a great Go player. \Rightarrow There is a king of France.
- 2 The king of France is not a great Go player. \Rightarrow There is a king of France.

Presupposition triggers (pp. 181-184)

- 1 Definite descriptions (*the man with two heads, ...*)
- 2 Factive verbs, adjectives (*regret, know, be aware of, notice, be odd that, be sad/happy that, ...*)
- 3 Implicative verbs (*manage, forget, happened to, avoided Ving, ...*)
- 4 Change of state verbs (*stop, start, continue, ...*)
- 5 Iteratives (*again, anymore, too*)
- 6 Temporal clauses (*before, while, after, ...*)
- 7 Cleft sentences (*It was Marie who first added coconut milk*), questions,

Definition

Classic: Negation

- 1 The king of France is bald \Rightarrow There is a king of France.
- 2 The king of France is not bald \Rightarrow There is a king of France.
- 3 Fido is a dog \Rightarrow Fido is a mammal.
- 4 Fido isn't a dog \nRightarrow Fido is a mammal.

Karttunen

- 1 If the king of France is bald he wears a wig \Rightarrow There is a king of France.
- 2 If Fido is a dog, then he barks \nRightarrow Fido is a mammal.

Defeasibility (like implicatures?)

Levinson (1983) pp. 187–189

- 1 I don't know that the King of France is wise. There is no King of France!
- 2 I don't know that Reynaldo is the culprit.
- 3 At least John won't have to regret that he didn't finish his dissertation.
- 4 She died before she finished her thesis.
- 5 If the Vice-Chancellor invites the U.S. president to dinner, he'll regret having invited a feminist to his table.

Philosophical background

- 1 Russell : *On Denoting*. What is presupposed is (always) part of what is being asserted. Negation is more complicated than we think.
- 2 Strawson, Frege: When presuppositions fail, no assertion has been made. Truth-value gaps.
- 3 Stalnaker: Presuppositions are requirements on the common ground of conversations: **Pragmatic presuppositions**. Can presupposition phenomena be explained by pragmatic principles?
- 4 **Gazdar (1979)**: Presupposition: a kind of conventional implicature?

Truisms about Communication

Quote

Communication, whether linguistic or not, normally takes place against a background of beliefs or assumptions which are shared by the speaker and his audience, *and which are recognized by them to be shared*. When I discuss politics with my barber, we each take the elementary facts of the current political situation for granted, and we each assume that the other does . . . the more **common ground** we take for granted, the more efficient our communication will be.

Definition of pragmatic presupposition

“A proposition p is a pragmatic presupposition of a speaker in a given context just in case the speaker assumes or believes that p , assumes or believes that his addressee believes that p , and assumes or believes that his addressee recognizes that he is making these assumptions.”

S knows that A knows that S assumes or believes that p .

Pragmatic presupposition

	Entailed	Presupposed*
She realized that p	p	
She didn't realize that p		p
She was surprised that p	p	
She wasn't surprised that p		p

Contextual variation

What is presupposed is determined by the interaction of the context with what is said. “What is presupposed seems to be a matter of degree. Sometimes no sense at all can be made of a statement unless one assumes that the speaker is making a certain pretain presupposition.”

	Asserted	Presupposed
My cousin isn't a boy anymore	My cousin has grown up	My cousin is male.
	My cousin has changed sexes	My cousin is young.

Stalnaker's common ground

Stalnaker (1973), Stalnaker (1974), Stalnaker (1978), Stalnaker (1998),
Stalnaker (2003)

*The common ground of a conversation at any given time is the set of propositions that the participants in that conversation mutually assume to be taken for granted . . . The common ground describes a set of worlds, **the context set**, which are those worlds in which all the propositions in the common ground are true.*

von Stechow (2006)

Presupposition and dynamic context

Sentences change context (Stalnaker and Lewis)

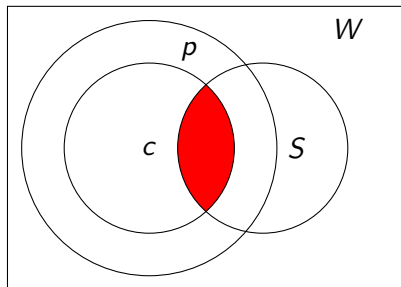
- All Fred's children are asleep. # (And) Fred has children.
- Fred has children. (And) All Fred's children are asleep.

The conclusion is that as the context is updated utterance by utterance, the presuppositions of later assertions may be satisfied because of information added by earlier assertions. This is an insight into why *and* is a filter (discussed below).

Common ground and presupposition

If a sentence S presupposes p

All contexts that admit S entail p .



Stalnaker

Proper names are indexicals

- Sentences express (**partial**) functions from contexts to contexts (**Context Change Potentials**); these functions impose requirements on the contexts.
- A proper name places a requirement on the context: that the referent be unique, and identifiable, and a **rigid designator** across worlds
- In different contexts, nevertheless, the name may rigidly designate different entities.
- This makes proper names “sorta” like indexicals, like *I*, and *that*, but Stalnaker actually doesn't subscribe to that term.

Sherlock Holmes (Stalnaker 1978)

Sherlock Holmes does not exist expresses a necessarily true proposition

		i	j	k
i	SH is a fictional detective ACD writes up	T	T	T
j	SH is a real-life detective ACD writes up	T	F	T
k	ACD is a detective named SH	F	F	F

Stalnaker applies the idea that the context determines the proposition expressed (Kaplan 1978) to a true negative existential statement with a name, adopting an analysis that makes proper names indexical-like. Nevertheless, both Stalnaker and Kaplan endorse Kripke's (Kripke 1980) causal theory of names (this is an explanation of the cognitive significance of names, not necessarily their linguistic meaning).

Descriptive preliminaries: Filters, plugs, holes

Karttunen (1973)

Operator P, (Q)

Holes	Inherit the presuppositions of P	Negation, Conditional antecedent clause
Plugs	Suspend presuppositions of P	Verbs of saying, belief, imagination
Filters	Inherit some presuppositions of P, suspend others	and, or, if ... then, ..

The Projection problem

How are the presuppositions of complex sentences inherited from the presuppositions of their parts?

- a. If the King of France does linguistics, he will regret doing it.
- b. Either John will not do linguistics or he will regret doing it.
- c. John studied linguistics and he regretted studying it.

If John studied linguistics and he regretted studying it, **that** would be a tragedy.

Karttunen: Projection for filters is complex

The inherited presuppositions in conditional clauses are **conditional presuppositions**. If the presupposition of q is r , then the presuppositions of $p \Rightarrow q$ is $p \Rightarrow r$.

If John gets married, his spouse will soon leave him.

presupposes

If John gets married, he will have a spouse.

Can the fact that the sentence as a whole does not presuppose that John has a spouse be explained by a Stalnakerian theory?

Summarizing the conditional filter

If A then B uttered in context c

- The presuppositions of A must be satisfied by c .
- The presuppositions of B must be satisfied by $c + A$
- *If . . . then* is a **filter** because if B presupposes p and A entails p , then *If A then B* does not presuppose p .

Karttunen and Peters

Three semantic properties for an item I (Karttunen and Peters 1979), as summarized in presupposition Heim (1983).

property

content	purely truth conditional content of I , e.g., material conditional for <i>if . . . then</i>
presupposition	what I contributes as a presupposition, e.g., for <i>the</i> the noun it combines with must have a non-empty extension.
heritage	I 's permeability for the presuppositions of its arguments. E.g., for <i>if . . . then</i> , the information that <i>if</i> lets through the full presupposition of its left argument, as well as as much of the presupposition of its right argument as doesn't follow from the left argument.

Gazdar and Heim

- **Gazdar (1979)** tries to construct a theory in which the heritage property is **derived from** the content and presupposition properties.
- **Heim (1983)** acknowledges Gazdar's contribution, but cites a number of issues with his account discussed in the literature.
- Proposes an account based on Stalnaker's and Lewis's view of context, and Karttunen's (**Karttunen 1974**) "linguistic context" account of presupposition.
- Shows how a Stalnakerian approach **can** account for the complex properties of filters.

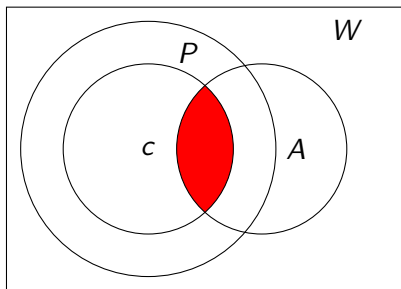
Context Change Potential: Heim

Sentence meanings are context (= Common Ground) updates

- 1 If “A, B” in uttered in context c , then the local context of B is $c + A$ (c incremented with the information in A).
- 2 A context **entails** a proposition p if and only p is true in all worlds in p .

The update of a simple sentence

A sentence meaning for “A” has a set of worlds we’ll just call A and in addition, requirements on the contexts that admit it, call them P. Let A be the CCP of “The king of France has a son”. Then P is the requirement that there be a King of France, and $c + A$ is defined only if c entails P, namely there is a king of France (in all worlds in c there is a king of France).



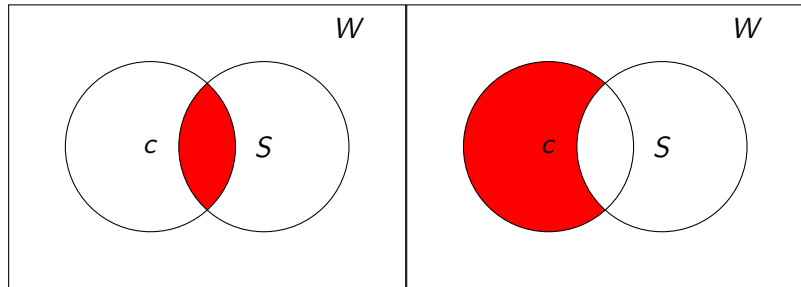
The update of a negated sentence

$$C + \text{Not } S = c \setminus c + S$$

$c + \text{Not } S$ is defined only when $c + S$ is defined.

Negation as a hole explained

All the presuppositions of S must be satisfied by c



The update of a conditional

Conditional update

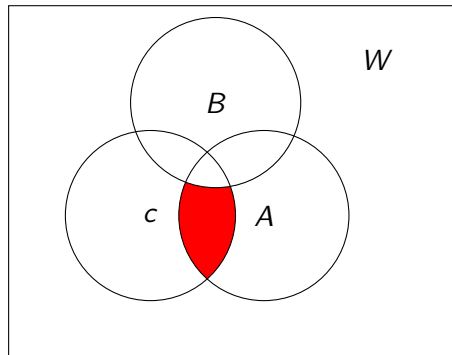
$$c + \text{If } A, B = c \setminus (c + A \setminus c + A + B)$$

Take away the worlds in c in which the truth of A is compatible with B not being true.

$c + \text{If } A, B$ is defined only when both $c + A$ is defined, and when $c + A + B$ is defined.

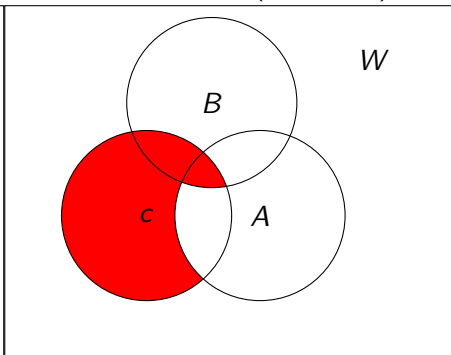
Conditional Update; If A then B

equiv to update with $A \ \& \ \sim B$



$$c + A \setminus c + A + B$$

update with $\sim (A \ \& \ \sim B)$



$$c \setminus (c + A \setminus c + A + B)$$

Note that in the updated c , A can be true or false, as can B . But any world that makes A true also makes B true.

Presupposition projection for Heim

$c + \text{If } A, B$ is defined only when both $c + A$ and $c + A + B$ is defined.

So c will have to satisfy the presuppositions of A . (“antecedent of conditional is a hole” explained)

But notice that the only context in which B has to be evaluated is $c + A$. So if A has an entailment which satisfies a presupposition of B , c does not need to have that entailment. (“If B presupposes p , If A, B presupposes If A, p ” explained)

Conditionals as a filter explained

Presupposition accommodation

Presupposition accommodation is the process by which the context is adjusted quietly and without fuss to accept the utterance of a sentence that puts certain requirements on the context in which it is processed.

Bicycles, sisters, pronouns, etc.

- 1 The thief jumped on his bicycle and rode away.
- 2 I'd like you to meet my sister, Evelyn.
- 3 He entered the storage locker by breaking the padlock.
- 4 It was Margaret who broke the keyboard.

Lewis's (Lewis 1979) view

- (1)
 - a. Fred has children. All Fred's children are asleep.
 - b. All Fred's children are asleep. # Fred has children.
 - c. [The cat]₁ is in the carton. [He]₁ will never meet our other cat, who lives in New Zealand. Our New Zealand cat lives with the Cresswells. And there he'll stay because Miriam would be sad if [the cat]₂ went away.
 - d. [The cat]₁ is going to pounce on you!

Conclusion

Both the saliency rankings and the common ground (which is the resource that satisfies presuppositions) are part of the **conversational score** (conversational state) and change throughout the conversation.

The conversational score is the context

Anchor for <i>come</i>	When the beggars [came] ₁ to town, the rich folks went to the shore. But soon the beggars [came] ₂ after them, so they went home.
standards of precision	France is hexagonal. The pavement is flat. That my hand is there is certain.
Relevant possibilities	You can put the public interest first for once!
Performatives	[are a kind of accomodation, e.g. to the relation that pairs names with referents]

Local/global accommodation

What happens in the case of an impossible update? c fails to entail p , a presupposition of S . Fix c . But how?

The King of France doesn't wear a wig.

Global $c \& p \setminus (c \& p + S)$ The context now entails that there is a King of France.

Local $c \setminus (c \& p + S)$ The context entails that there isn't. (...because there is no King of France).

Universal quantification

- (2) a. Every nation cherishes its king.
b. Every nation has a king.

SKH predicted (local) accommodation

Every nation has a king.

Stalnaker/Karttunen/Heim approach (SKH)

If Theo hates sonnets, so does his wife.

According to SKH, sentence as a whole places the following requirement on the CG:

If Theo hates sonnets, he has a wife.

Is this good enough? (The proviso problem). No, says **Geurts (1996)**.
Theo has a wife is what gets accommodated!

What gets added to the common ground?

von Stechow (accepting the SKH approach): Not the weakest proposition that satisfies the presuppositions as a whole. But then what?

- 1 The common ground does not contain the proposition that Theo has a wife.
- 2 *If Theo hates sonnets, he has a wife* is asserted, and is only “legal” if *Theo hates sonnets but doesn't have a wife* is ruled out. So we need to adjust the CG to rule that out. Two salient possibilities, and we ask which is more likely to be the speaker's intention:
 - 1 Add $HS \rightarrow W$ [local accommodation]
 - 2 Add W [Global accommodation]

Which is it more likely that the speaker knows?

Other examples

Various CG updates

- a. If John gets married, his spouse will soon leave him.
 Local: If John gets married, he will have a spouse.
 Global: John has a spouse.
- b. If John gets married, his spouse will find his loud chewing annoying.
 Local: If John gets married, he will chew loudly.
 Global: John chews loudly.
- c. Every man loves his wife.
 Every man in C loves his wife. (what is said)
 Every man in C has a wife. (intermediate?)
 Every man with a wife loves his wife. (local)

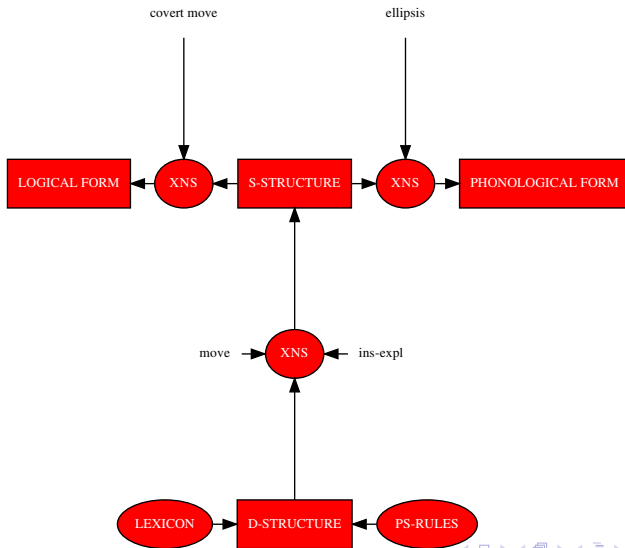
Scope ambiguity

- (3)
- a. Everyone in this room speaks two languages.
 - b. Everyone in this room is bilingual.
 - c. There are two specific languages (namely English and Spanish), such that everyone in this room speaks both of them.

b. $\forall x [x \text{ is in this room} \rightarrow [\text{Two } y (y \text{ is a language})] x \text{ speaks } y]$

c. $[\text{Two } y (y \text{ is a language})] \forall x [x \text{ is in this room} \rightarrow x \text{ speaks } y]$

T-model



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