

Presupposition and Context Sensitivity

Introduction

This paper is about a clash between the orthodox treatments of two phenomena – the context sensitivity of sentences such as in (1) and presupposition triggering as in (2).¹

- 1) Tipper isn't ready.
- 2) Tipper quit smoking.

With respect to the former phenomenon, most competent English speakers hold that a felicitous utterance of (1) will communicate a proposition of the form that Tipper isn't ready for X (where X is whatever Tipper isn't ready for). What gets communicated varies as a matter of context. With respect to latter, we observe that anyone who asserts (2) triggers the presupposition that she once smoked.

We will argue that all the currently favored (competing) treatments of context sensitivity are incompatible with the current orthodoxy about presupposition triggering. In consequence, we will urge a reconsideration of a much-maligned view about how best to represent the sort of context sensitivity associated with the incompleteness of (1). We begin by saying enough about context sensitivity and incompleteness (§1), presupposition (§2), and the data (§3) to present the clash (§4). In (§5)-(§8), we reply to obvious objections to our argument. We will conclude with comments about its scope.

§1 Treatments of Context Sensitivity

Controversy surrounding the context sensitivity of (1) enters into explaining how the information communicated by its uses is determined – semantically or pragmatically?

- a) According to *semantic* accounts, (1) is syntactically represented by a structure either with an unvoiced variable or in which the expression 'ready' itself is context sensitive. A felicitous utterance of (1), then, determines a semantic value for the variable or context sensitive expression (Stanley and Sazbo 2000; Lewis 1996), which in turn partially determines which proposition this use semantically expresses.

¹ A quick note about the use 'context sensitivity'. We are assuming here, along with what we take to be common usage, that if (1) expresses different propositions in different contexts and (1) is not ambiguous, then it is context sensitive --- 'it's raining' is often a paradigm example of this sort of context sensitivity. We are not enamoured with this usage of the term --- it may well be better to call the phenomenon simply 'incompleteness' but we also don't mind conforming to current usage. Our concern is with isolating a phenomenon that is much discussed: the phenomenon of a speaker meaning more by (1) than (1) seems to express. Thanks to an anonymous referee who rightfully pointed out that this usage of the term is of limited (if any) value.

- b) According *pragmatic* accounts, (1) expresses either an incomplete proposition (a propositional radical) or a proposition too absurd to plausibly be what the speaker wants to communicate. Rational, competent audiences try to work out which proposition, suitably related to this incomplete or absurd one, 'makes sense' in context (Sperber and Wilson 1986; Bach 1994, Cappelen and Lepore 2004).²

(a) and (b) are very different but both converge on an attempt to bypass linguistic form in favor of content – either semantically or pragmatically expressed.³ Since the goal of interpretation is to recover content, positing additional syntactic structure is but a detour. Stanley and Szabo (2000) argue strenuously against positing 'extra' words to accommodate incompleteness in explaining domain restriction (though they do argue for positing phonologically null variables in the syntactic structure).

A third sort of account, summarily dismissed by most, is neither semantic nor pragmatic, but rather *lexical*:

- c) According to a *lexical* account, felicitous uses of (1) determine (unvoiced) lexical items. Therefore, the very *sentence* that an utterance of (1) tokens can vary from context to context.

Each of (a)-(c) requires *supplementation* to determine what's communicated with a typical use of (1); with (a), it occurs where language meets context. (1) expresses distinct propositions in different contexts. With (b), instead, it relies on pragmatic supplementation; once language and context complete their collaboration, psychology takes over in determining which proposition best accommodates whatever is expressed by a use of (1).⁴ With (c), *sentential* identity itself becomes context sensitive; distinct utterances of the string (1) are of *distinct* sentences. Our interest is this debate lies with the anti-lexicalism of (a) and (b):

Anti-Lexicalism (AL): Context sensitivity is not to be accommodated by positing missing lexical items.

(AL) entails the denial of (c). We will be testing AL against a principle regarding presupposition triggering.

²This is a bit misleading. The proposition need not (normally) be absurd. It may just not be plausible as the interpretation of the sentence in the context.

³ On our way of cutting things up, even approaches to incompleteness such as Szabo and Stanley (2000) are content based accounts. Although they posit syntactic structure to deal with incompleteness worries, the posited structure consists in variables which are designed to bear a direct relation to content. Variables, however, (unlike pronouns) don't trigger presuppositions.

⁴ For some authors, such as Carston (1991), Sperber and Wilson (1986), Recanati (2002), it occurs before (and in some cases is required in order to determine) what's said is even determined.

§2 Presupposition

The term ‘presupposition’ is used to refer to a range of phenomena. Step 2 in a plan may only make sense given the presupposition that Step 1 succeeds. We might explain a councilman’s vote for the city to pay off its debt by citing his falsely presupposing the city has the money for it. And, as already noted, someone who asserts (2) presupposes that Tipper used to smoke. It is a matter of some controversy how these alleged cases of presupposition are alike. We assume the latter case is *linguistically* controlled, while the former two seem to rely on a coherence of actions with assumed backgrounds. Linguistic control is known as *presupposition triggering* – part of understanding the word ‘quit’ is knowing that it triggers the presupposition of a former state.⁵

There is good *prima facie* reason to treat presupposition triggering as a property of certain words and constructions, rather than as triggered by the contents they express. The clearest case for this is that apparently synonymous sentences differ in the presuppositions they trigger. For example, cleft constructions are typically thought to *presuppose* the existential generalization of their clefted content. The truth of both (3) and (4) require Ernie to have driven home.

- 3) Ernie drove home.
- 4) It was Ernie who drove home.

The difference is that a denial of (3), but not of (4), is felicitous even if no one drove home. In this regard, only (4) triggers the presupposition that someone drove home. Accordingly, sentences with shared truth conditions can differ with respect to the presuppositions they trigger. In fact, even sentences that don’t entail someone drove home can still trigger the presupposition that someone did; (5) triggers the presupposition that someone drove home, while (6) does not.

- 5) It wasn’t Ernie who drove home.
- 6) Ernie didn’t drive home.

If no one drove home, asserting (5) is as infelicitous as asserting (4).

Returning to (2), note that whereas (7) asserts that Tipper used to smoke, (2) merely presupposes it:

- 7) Tipper used to smoke but she didn’t smoke afterwards.
- 2) Tipper quit smoking.

⁵ We recognize, however, that philosophers and linguists have offered accounts on which both sorts reduce to a single notion, such as the pragmatics of planning, with discourse being but one of many types of plans.

Protesting, 'No she didn't!' in response to (2) cannot be construed as negating Tipper's former smoking, but it can, as a response to (7).⁶

And indeed, this behaviour of presuppositions persists is confirmed by other common tests for presupposition. Uses of (8) and (9) intuitively presuppose Tipper used to smoke (though it is neither explicitly asserted nor entailed by either):

- 8) If Tipper quit smoking, she hasn't told anyone yet.
- 9) Has Tipper quit smoking?

This phenomenon is known as 'projection' – presuppositions 'project' out of antecedents of conditionals and out of questions (and so, are not interpreted as falling under the scope of either). Presuppositions also project out of negations, modals (*might, could, should...*), and imperatives.

Most of this is familiar ground. Our interest lies with the claim that presuppositions arise from *how* content is introduced, not in the content itself. We will call this claim *Presupposition Triggering*:⁷

Presupposition Triggering (PT): Presuppositions are triggered by linguistic items, and not by their semantic values.

We will assume (PT) in what follows; it seems justified by the above evidence alone, but it also seems to be (pardon the pun) presupposed in most of the literature on presupposition.⁸

⁶ We grant that (7) and (2) aren't exactly truth conditionally equivalent – (2) suggests Tipper's actions were intentional while (7) doesn't. (2) is consistent with her quitting for a while only and then relapsing, while (7) isn't. We don't think these differences matter for the point at hand but if you are concerned, consider the more cumbersome:

- Tipper used to smoke but then intentionally avoided smoking for some period afterwards. 'No she didn't' can be construed as a refutation of Tipper's former smoking here too. Thanks to an anonymous referee for this point.

⁷ Even though the latter claim is orthodoxy, it has been challenged (see Simons (2001); Abrusan (2011)).

⁸ Statements of (PT) can be found in the opening sentences of the 'presupposition' entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

We discuss presupposition, the phenomenon whereby *speakers mark linguistically the information that is presupposed or taken for granted*, rather than being part of the main propositional content of a speech act. Expressions and constructions carrying presuppositions are called "presupposition triggers", forming a large class including definites and factive verbs. (Beaver and Guerts, 2013, italics ours)

Frege (1954), Strawson (1950), Searle (1969), Karttunen and Peters (1979), Abbot (2000), Abusch (2002), Glanzberg (2005), among many others, all assume some version of (PT). (PT) also seems required to make sense of the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' presupposition triggers, where the former seem cancellable in ways that the latter aren't without invoking PT (see Abusch (2010)).

We will assume one additional principle:

Pragmatic Presupposition (PP): Presupposition and presupposition failure are not semantic phenomena (and failure of presupposition does not result in truth-valuelessness).⁹

In effect (PP) requires that presupposition and presupposition failure are phenomena that pertain to updating the shared information in the context. For our purposes, (PP) only matters if the semantics provided for presupposition failure also explains presupposition triggering --- that is to say, if (PP) can replace (PT). So far as we can tell, (PP) and (PT) are perfectly compatible --- presuppositions are triggered by the presence of words like 'quit' and they contribute partial functions as their semantic value. We agree, however, that if (PP) can offer a viable alternative to (PT) in the cases at hand, then there is no direct clash between presupposition theory and orthodoxy in the incompleteness literature.

However, absent a viable story that connects (PP) to a failure of (PT), we will treat (PP) as irrelevant and ignore it from here on out.

§3 *The Set Up – Some Data*

With these sketches of presupposition triggering and context sensitivity in hand, we turn to the clash. To this end, suppose a conversation begins with utterances of (10) followed by (1):

10) Joe quit smoking.

(1), in this context, is *infelicitous* if Tipper never smoked, just as it would be had (10) been followed up with the more elaborate (11):

11) Tipper isn't ready to quit smoking.

This utterance of (1) not only asserts Tipper isn't ready to quit smoking, but also *presupposes* she used to.¹⁰ This intuition persists in confrontation with other common tests for presupposition. Uses of (12) and (13) as continuations of (10)

⁹ We don't have anything to add to Stalnaker (1984) or Simon (2001) regarding the preference for PP over trivalent theories that deny it. Frege (1954) suggests that presupposition failure results in a failure to assign truth value to the sentences uttered. Heim and Kratzer (1998) chapter 4 offer a model of a trivalent semantics for definite descriptions. See George (2008) for a modern account of trivalent semantics that can serve as an alternative to (PP).

¹⁰ It's well known infelicity can be mitigated by metalinguistic negation:

- Tipper isn't ready to quit smoking – she has never smoked!

Its felicity depends on focal stress on 'smoking'. This isn't surprising, given that its negation is meta-linguistic, which is used to call attention to pragmatic inappropriateness.

also presuppose that Tipper used to smoke (though this is neither explicitly asserted nor entailed by either):

- 12) If Tipper isn't ready, I doubt she'll succeed.
- 13) Isn't Tipper ready?

An obvious question is what triggers this presupposition in each of these cases? Are we simply facing a case of syntactic ellipsis? After all, in the case above, (14) sounds just as good as (1) in response to (10):

14) Tipper isn't ready to.

It's hard to deny that (14) is a case of ellipsis. However, this won't help with the puzzle at hand, for several reasons. First, the preposition is ungrammatical in non-assertoric contexts:

- 15) *Isn't Tipper ready to?
- 16) *Tipper, get ready to!

Second, we get the same effect without a linguistic antecedent. If we witness Tipper, leaving a stop-smoking program, crying and exhibiting withdrawal-like symptoms, it's no stretch to see that (1), discourse initially, will trigger the presupposition that Tipper has been a smoker. You can choose to describe this case as *ellipsis*, but if all that means is that there is unvoiced but semantically relevant linguistic material, then you are on board with denying (AL), at least in the relevant cases.

We can register the same point with other constructions. Consider the expression 'strong enough', in 'Steel is strong enough', used in a conversation about which materials to employ in building a tank. The information expressed clearly is that steel is strong enough to build a tank. Now take Tipper, exhibiting tobacco withdrawal symptoms, where we utter:

17) Tipper isn't strong enough.

This utterance triggers the presupposition that Tipper used to smoke. And it is clearly not a case of ellipsis over prior discourse.¹¹

¹¹ A few other cases to make the point:

- We are discussing new research that claims it is easier to quit smoking than was previously thought. I turn to you and say 'Maybe quitting isn't so hard. Try to persuade Sarah so she will live a longer life'. My utterance presupposes that Sarah smokes.
- We see an ad on the television for free transportation for vets who go to the Vietnam Memorial for a second time. I ask: 'Do you think Mary would make an attempt?' My question presupposes that Mary has been to the Vietnam Memorial before.

It may be tempting to read these as conversational implicatures derived using the maxim of relevance. But they are highly non-cancelable, they project out of the relevant contexts and we are thus suspicious of any attempt to treat them as such.

§4 The Puzzle: Lexicalism and the Incompleteness of 'She's ready'

The puzzle should already be clear, but we will state it explicitly. The data is that (1), (12), (13) and (17) trigger presuppositions. By (PT), this means there is a linguistic trigger for these presuppositions. (AL) denies there is any missing lexical material – the incompleteness in these cases is in content, not in linguistic representation. *Ergo*, either (PT) or (AL). If (AL) is false, which we believe is the correct conclusion, it looks like lexicalism (or a hybrid of lexicalism and either (a) or (b) should enjoy the status of default view.¹²

The reason (AL) has seemed so attractive is because of a mistaken fixation on truth conditional content to the exclusion of considerations regarding extra-truth conditional effects. Speakers exploit incomplete structures with expected results that go well beyond truth conditional effects. Some of these effects result from the interface between content and Gricean mechanisms, and as such, pose no trouble for (AL). However, some don't, and these ought to shake our confidence in (AL).

§5 Underdetermination

As we mentioned in §1, if the arguments for (AL) are any good, then they work against (PT). We turn to those arguments directly.

The first two arguments we will consider are intended to underwrite (AL) for any case of incompleteness. Stanley and Szabo (2000) argue for (AL) as follows.¹³

The main problem [c] faces is that of underdetermination. There are very few cases where there is a single plausible candidate for the role of the domain restricting predicate. Consider...the situation...where [18: Every bottle is empty] is uttered by Lisa. We assumed that the proposition

¹² Notice that our considerations scotch a certain hope one might have for explaining presuppositions *via* the maxim of manner. One might try to explain the presuppositional difference between (2) and (7) by recourse to the maxim of manner: (7) is a funny way to put things. The cases of (1), (12), (13) and (14) show that this route is not easy to extend since the presuppositions are seemingly triggered without the content being explicitly put forth. It's difficult to see how to use the maxim of manner to explain a presuppositional difference, therefore, *unless lexicalism is true* since only lexicalism allows that it is the recovery of words rather than content that allows interaction with the maxim of manner.

¹³ They state they are arguing against an *ellipsis* account, but their objections are clearly aimed less against *ellipsis* and more against an *underlying lexical account* like (c). Further, they tend to describe their worry as one of under-determination – namely, based on the evidence how does a hearer choose among the multitude of available lexical completions. Why this epistemic worry should be a concern to the semanticist is unclear to us. It's no more challenging than asking how audiences retrieve speaker intentions in general. On the assumption that the speaker intended the completion to be done with the lexical items "to quit smoking", the hearer has succeeded in understanding the speaker just in case he retrieves these items and not some others.

conveyed by Lisa's utterance was the same that she could have conveyed by uttering the sentence:

[19] Every bottle I just bought is empty.

It seems natural then to assume that F is simply the predicate 'was just bought by me'. *However, one might wonder whether this choice is somewhat arbitrary.* Why could F not be the predicate 'was recently purchased by me', or 'is one of those things that I bought at the store'? We need not even restrict ourselves to synonyms or near synonyms. It seems that, in the context of Lisa's utterance, F could equally be something like 'is one of those things you are looking for'. Since the sole function of F in communicating is to restrict the domain of the quantifier, it is hard to see how to select among predicates that apply to the same bottles (Stanley and Szabo 2000, pp. 237-238; our numbering and italicizing).

Though aimed specifically at treatments of domain restriction, the criticism extends to the described uses of (1). In the contexts described, when an utterance of (1) follows one of (10), the challenge is to determine which of (1a), (1b) or (1c) did the speaker token?

- 1a) Tipper isn't ready to quit smoking.
- 1a) Tipper isn't ready to stop smoking.
- 1b) Tipper isn't ready to put an end to her smoking.

Our first response is a sort of *tu quo que*. Stanley and Szabo argue that domain restriction generally is to be treated by positing variables in the syntactic structure that restrict the nominal of a quantifier phrase. Thus, (18) expresses in context what (19) expresses because the value of the variables yield a property that restricts provides a restriction on the extension of 'bottle'. So far so good, but as many have noted (see Buchanan (2010)), there are often multiple possible variable assignments compatible with any given context of use, each one of which will serve to fix the same domain restriction extensionally. Suppose that the very bottles which Lisa bought are the same bottles that she put on the shelf, that she provided at the party, that her mother helped her pay for... Under such circumstances, which of (19)-(19''') did her utterance of (18) express?

- 19') Every bottle I put on the shelf is empty.
- 19'') Every bottle I provided at the party is empty.
- 19''') Every bottle that my mother helped me pay for is empty

These all seem to serve the appropriate role of restricting bottle but all result from distinct assignments of values to the variables. Thus, anyone who holds that domain restriction is a matter of fixing the semantic value of a hidden indexical is stuck with under-determination. On our view, it may be underdetermined which lexical item is in the uttered sentence; on their view, it may be which semantic value the hidden variable takes. Short of an account of how we achieve the

miracle of interpersonal interpretation of inexplicit values, we don't see why our underdetermination is more embarrassing than theirs.

Indeed, in a sense, (c) has an advantage over (a)-(b): while lexicalism requires that any utterance of (1) that triggers a presupposition contain certain lexical items, their recovery need only achieve isomorphism of meaning *and* presupposition. It matters little for communicative purposes whether the hearer recovers the structure 'to quit smoking' or 'to stop smoking' or "to desist from smoking', 'to cease smoking'. The communicative goal for a co-operative audience is to work out the information (including presuppositions) that the speaker is putting forth as true. (c) is about how information is generated, not about how it is taken up by a hearer.

The verbs 'cease', 'stop', and 'quit' form an equivalence class with respect to meaning *and* presupposition triggering. These distinct lexical items isolate the same presuppositions. What's the counter-part for this liberalism for (a)? A posited hidden variable picks out a domain restrictor; but in any given context, there will be indefinitely many such co-extensive, even necessary co-extensive, but distinct, properties, and so, it is Stanley and Szabo who ought to worry about the perils of under-determination.

A second criticism Stanley and Szabo's (2000 p. 238) raise against (c) concerns *learnability*. They state that someone who learns the word 'ready' and the auxiliary verb 'is' can comprehend a use of (1) without any prior familiarity with the word 'quit'.¹⁴ And so, to the extent that (c) requires the presence of "quit" (or a synonym with the same presuppositional triggering properties) it challenges commonsense about learnability.

Our reply is straightforward: why think one can grasp what is communicated with the described use of (1) without prior knowledge of 'quit'? We've already established that truth conditional content alone can't trigger the presupposition, so it follows that no one can fully grasp what this use of (1) contributes if she does not already understand 'quit' (or some expression that triggers the same presupposed proposition). As long as a particular utterance of (1) is presumed to presuppose that Tipper used to smoke, then the sentence this utterance tokens must harbor *some* expression or other that preserves this presupposition. Of

¹⁴ They direct their argument against an indexical syntactic account of domain restriction for quantifier phrases:

Suppose that Max is not a fully competent speaker of English. In fact, he started to learn the language only a few weeks ago. As it happens, the first lessons in his language book focus on prepositions and the use of 'every' and 'some' as well as a few basic nouns like 'bottle'. The use of demonstrative pronouns is not discussed until unit 7 and Max is not there yet. We believe that under these circumstances Max could grasp the proposition meant by Lisa ['Every bottle is empty'] in the normal way. (Stanley & Szabo, 2000 p. 238)

We aren't sure what the 'normal way' is nor how we can be sure Max understands things in the normal way. We expect that part of learning how to use language in the normal way crucially involves learning how to navigate and detect presupposition triggering.

course, there's nothing wrong in interpreting the relevant utterance of (1) by positing 'cease' instead of 'quit', since the relevant presupposition is preserved.¹⁵ But (as (c) dictates) some item must be present.

A related objection to anti-AL views is worth mentioning: if the problems of incompleteness involve extra lexical material, what determines which lexical material is present? In other words, if (1) is a phonologically shortened version of a longer sentence, what determines which sentence it is a shortened version of? It's tempting to pin the job on the speaker's intentions but this may seem too glib: can't the speaker express (1) without specific intentions towards a specific linguistic formulation? Perhaps we could pin it on context, but it's a rather broad understanding of the job of context to allow it to contain determine unvoiced words.¹⁶

The question of what determines the relevant lexical structure is interesting and frankly, we don't know the answer to it. But so far as we can tell, this is a problem for everyone at whatever level they choose to resolve the incompleteness in cases such as (2). For Szabo and Stanley, it is the problem of determining values for the variables that they posit. Surely 'put on the shelf' and 'provided at the party' have different properties as their semantic values but both, in context, will express propositions satisfying the speaker's communicative needs and there is no straightforward evidence that the speaker always intends to select between these options. For the defender of views such as (b), the same problems arise except that the rigmarole of giving values to variables is bypassed --- its still true that something has to determine which unarticulated constituents are in the proposition expressed and a speaker's communicative intentions are typically more coarse grained. So we know that the meta-semantic explanations of what is going on tends to posit contents at a more fine grained level than speaker intentions seem to require or than context seems to provide. This is a problem; but it is a problem, so far as we can tell, for everyone.¹⁷

§6 Contextual Entailment?¹⁸

One may challenge our argument by reinterpreting the data, denying that relevant utterances of (1) *presuppose* Tipper used to smoke. Perhaps we've a *contextual entailment* for presupposition. Suppose contexts are bodies of information shared by conversational participants, updated as, *inter alia*, new assertions are made; then, on a view that takes the property expressed by 'quit smoking' to be an unarticulated constituent of the proposition expressed by a felicitous use of (1), the context should *already* contain the information that

¹⁵ Thanks to Stephen Neale for pushing this point.

¹⁶ Thanks are owed to an anonymous referee for pressing us on this point.

¹⁷ Perhaps this is a little strong. Views that allow for pluralism about incompleteness resolution may not suffer this problem. We are not particularly against pluralism with respect to the various sentences one might express by uttering (2).

¹⁸ Thanks to Michael Glanzberg for very helpful suggestions on this point.

Tipper used to smoke. That is, it is a precondition of interpreting (1) as we do that the context already entails Tipper used to smoke. This has nothing to do with presupposition.

In response, note, first, that it is difficult to tease apart presuppositions from contextual entailments, and even more difficult to determine which of the two provokes feelings of infelicity for specific uses of (1) where Tipper never smoked: is it that the context set isn't what the participants thought it was, or that the speaker triggered the relevant presupposition linguistically? However, there is *prima facie* good reason to think the context need *not* entail Tipper used to smoke in order to trigger the relevant presupposition.

Suppose we know the speaker believes Tipper used to smoke but we, as a matter of fact, know she never did, and suppose that quitting smoking is the topic under discussion. Now imagine, in this context, the speaker utters (1). It's natural to take the speaker to have said something that presupposes Tipper used to smoke, and hence, as issuing in the relevant infelicity, but clearly it was not the shared belief in this context that she used to smoke that provokes this sense of infelicity. Further, suppose the audience knows nothing about Tipper's former smoking habits; they will still interpret the described utterance of (1) as presupposing she used to smoke. In short, some uses of (1) can be understood as triggering the presupposition even if it is *not* already part of the context set. They can be accommodated --- but accommodation is defined as integrating a presupposition into the context set and thus the presuppositions of (1) can't be explained away as contextual entailments.

§7 Demonstrative Reference and Presupposition

A final objection concerns demonstrative reference and presuppositions.¹⁹ Notice that we can use a demonstrative in cases similar to ours to trigger presuppositions. Imagine watching someone throwing away an unopened pack of cigarettes. An utterance of (20) in this context seems to presuppose Tipper smokes.

20) Too bad that Tipper isn't ready to do that.

But how does the presupposition get triggered?

This data gives us some pause, but notice that this use of 'that' is somewhat special in referring to act or event *types*, and *not* to an act or event itself. It is thus somewhat like the situation where it is used anaphorically:

21a) A: John smoked and then didn't.

¹⁹ Thanks to Angelica Kratzer for this objection.

B: Tipper isn't ready to do that.²⁰

- 21b) A: John quit smoking.
B: Tipper isn't ready to do that.

Only (21b) exhibits presupposition failure given that Tipper never smoked.

It's worth noting that the demonstratives in (21a) and (21b) are not plausibly treated as rigid designator picking out an action or event. Such demonstrations are possible but in general if we tell you 'don't do that' pointing at someone's act of folly, we know that you aren't capable of performing the numerically identical action since it wasn't your action. We thus think that the usual arguments from Kaplan (1989) for the directly referential character of demonstratives don't apply to the demonstratives used in (21a) and (21b). But we acknowledge that the viability of (PT) depends on being able to give a treatment of triggering in cases such as (20).

§8 What's the Right View?

If one rejects (AL), various views remain acceptable. Lexicalism is one obvious choice to fill the gap. Alternatively, Neale (1990) introduced the notion of an *explicit approach* to denote sentences that underspecify the contents of their utterances in context. His idea was that we work out the semantic value of a sentence in which there are 'missing' items (such as the object of 'ready' in (1)) by counter-factually considering a longer sentence (or sentences) in which the 'missing' material is explicit. (11) expresses whatever is expressed by the relevant utterance of (1). Interpretation proceeds by working out which sentence the speaker could have, but didn't, utter to express the communicated proposition. The presupposition is generated lexically, but not by any de facto hidden syntax but rather by non-hidden syntax in a counter-factually uttered sentence. Neale's approach might be a tolerable *ersatz* version of lexicalism.

Recanati (2002) also presents a view on which content determination is determined by a process of free pragmatic enrichment, but on which the enrichment is of representations rather than contents. He observes:

On the syntactic conception, free enrichment is still free: nothing in the natural language sentence triggers that process, which takes place as part of an attempt to make sense of the utterance. But what the process delivers is unarticulated only in the sense that nothing in the natural language sentence encodes that element. It is unarticulated in the sense of not being articulated *in the natural language sentence*. Still the element in question may be 'linguistic': it is a constituent in a (mental) *representation*, not a constituent in a state of affairs represented by a representation.

²⁰ Thanks to Mark Migotti for helpful discussion about this example.

We have no particular truck with this view, but as long as enrichment is linguistic, it can trigger presuppositions. What's interesting is that the view is representational. It is hard to see just how speakers can recover linguistic items from another's language of thought; luckily, they don't have to. They merely have to recover linguistic material that overlaps in content and presupposition generation.²¹

Finally, one might opt for a 'hybrid' view. Perhaps, a variant of approach (a) can allow that posited variables are (sometimes) interpreted as ranging over *linguistic* items rather than as straightforward *contents*.²² This is easier said than done – for one, if you posit a fixed variable structure, there is only so much content each variable can take – and the structure with which 'ready' is completed may well be more complex than two variables – one object level, one functional – can permit. It's even more complex if one insists that the variable 'co-habit' the node in which the relevant lexical item sits.²³ But we have no in-principle challenge to this sort of approach.

We are somewhat indifferent as to which approach is preferable.

Conclusion

Taking stock, we have argued presupposition triggering is lexical and can occur in contexts in which (1), (12), (13) and (17) are used. But how widespread are these effects? We aren't sure; but, one counter-example suffices to show (AL) is false; and we have it.

Here's another bit of dovetailing evidence that has similar features to ours. Begin with the observation that if there is no jury, a use of (23) is infelicitous.

23) The jury found the defendant guilty.

But, as Ludlow (2005) notes, in cases like (24) there is ample evidence of deleted syntactic material.

24) Found guilty.

Of course, there is no unique lexical 'completion' of (24); it might be (23) or (25)-(26):

25) Those guys found him guilty.

26) The person on trial was found guilty.

²¹ We are grateful to an anonymous referee at *Mind and Language* for pressing us on this point.

²² This view was suggested to us by Zoltan Szabo Gendler.

²³ See Stanley and Szabo (2000) for a defense of both the dual variable structure and co-habitation claims. Stanley has given up the co-habitation story; see Stanley (2007: 249)

Any of these (and numerous others) is satisfactory.²⁴ We thus think that we are isolating an instance of a general phenomenon concerning triggering and phonologically null syntax.

We close with two points.

First, we have argued that (AL) should be reconsidered and that the data stemming from presupposition triggering weighs heavily against it. However, if the reasons supporting (AL) are as strong as proponents have taken it to be, we still think we win as (PT), as suggested, is orthodoxy in the treatments of presupposition and underpins most research in the area. Undermining it amounts to a major shift in contemporary thinking of a key part of the theory of linguistic communication. So you can take us to be arguing for a dilemma: one of two heavyweight orthodoxies must fall (and our money is on (AL)).

Second, notice that we have *not* argued that incompleteness-related context sensitivity *tout court* should be treated as deleted *lexical* material. Nor have we argued that even most semantic context sensitivity should be so accommodated. We have tried to make the denial of (AL) plausible, but denying (AL) does not establish (c) – that’s a leap, rather than a step. However, the preceding discussion does make a case for at least *some* cases of alleged semantic context sensitivity being best accommodated by positing lexical content pre-semantically. This should at least weaken the case against such approaches to context sensitivity intuitions in other contexts.²⁵

²⁴ Thanks to Michael Glanzberg for making this point.

²⁵ The authors would like to thank El Grupo de Acción Filosófica, SPAWN 2012, and University of Calgary who heard presentations of this paper and offered helpful suggestions. We also would like to thank well to Márta Abrusan, Michael Glanzberg, Allen Habib, Kepa Korta, Anglika Kratzer, Lana Jezic, Robert May, Rachel McKinnon, Mark Migotti, Stephen Neale, Ted Sider, Mandy Simons, Jason Stanley, Una Stojnic, Matthew Stone, and Zoltan Szabo-Gendler.

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