Triggering verbal presuppositions

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Abstract

This paper offers a predictive mechanism to derive the presuppositions of verbs. The starting point is the intuition, dating back at least to Stalnaker (1974), that the information conveyed by a sentence that is in some sense independent from its main point is presupposed. The contribution of this paper is to spell out a mechanism for deciding what will become the main point of the sentence and how to calculate independence. It is proposed that this can be calculated by making reference to event times. As a very rough approximation, the main point of an utterance is what (in a sense to be defined) has to be about the event time of the matrix predicate and the information that the sentence conveys but is not (or does not have to be) about the event time of the matrix predicate is presupposed. The notion of aboutness used to calculate independence is based on Demolombe and Farinas del Cerro (2000).

Keywords

Presuppositions, aboutness, lexical semantics, factivity, sortal presuppositions

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Some Presupposition Triggers.  ■ Factive verbs (regret, realize, being aware, …) (1) John regrets that Pola is married ⇒ Pola is married (2) John realized that he was in debt ⇒ John was in debt. ■ Implicative verbs (manage to, forget to, …) (3) John forgot to close the door ⇒ John intended to close the door (4) John managed to close the door ⇒ John tried to close the door. 12. Some Presupposition Triggers. 5. Presupposition Triggers. The following structures have been isolated as sources of presuppositions. Of course presuppositions are not limited to these but these are common presupposition triggers. When presuppositions are embedded under certain kinds of verbs, namely verbs of saying (say, mention, tell, ask, announce, …) and verbs of propositional attitude (believe, think, imagine, dream, want, …), they also disappear. (44) a. John said that Mary managed to speak with a broad Irish accent. Predicting the presuppositions of soft triggers 513 1 3 class of true factive verbs. This section argues that they are factive after
all and fall under the scope of the present theory. Traditionally, emotive factives verbs were assumed to be just like cognitive factives in presupposing the truth of their complement (cf. Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Abrusan, M. (2011). Triggering verbal presuppositions. In N. Li & D. Lutz (Eds.), Semantics and linguistic theory (SALT) 20 (pp. 684701) (eLanguage). Abusch, D. (2002).