

Gestural Cosuppositions within the Transparency Theory*

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(an error pertaining to the predictions of (5) was corrected)

Abstract: It has been argued that the sentence *None of these 10 guys SLAP_punished his son* (where *SLAP* is a slapping gesture co-occurring with the verb) triggers a presupposition that *for each of these 10 guys, if he had punished his son, slapping would have been involved* (Schlenker 2015a,b). We argue that the conditional nature of this presupposition can be derived within an extension of the Transparency Theory (Schlenker 2008), one in which the target sentence competes with an 'articulated' competitor of the form: *None of these 10 guys punished his son like SLAP_this* (or some other post-verbal modifier).

Schlenker_2008 argues that the presupposition d of a (predicative/propositional) trigger $\underline{dd'}$ is a normal entailment that 'wants' to be articulated as a separate conjunct:

(1) Be Articulate

In any syntactic environment, express $\dots \underline{dd'} \dots$ as: $\dots (d \text{ and } \underline{dd'}) \dots$ (unless independent pragmatic principles rule out the full conjunction).


If possible, then, one should say $\dots \textit{it's raining and John knows it} \dots$ rather than $\dots \textit{John knows that it's raining} \dots$. *Be Articulate* is controlled by a Gricean principle of manner, *Be Brief*, which prohibits unnecessary prolixity, and takes precedence over *Be Articulate* – thus ruling out *If it is raining, it is raining and John knows it*:

(2) Be Brief - Incremental Version


Given a context set C , a predicative/propositional occurrence of d is infelicitous in a sentence that begins with a (d and if for any expression g of the same type as d and for any sentence completion b' , $C \models a (d \text{ and } g) b' \Leftrightarrow a d b'$).

In the end, $\underline{dd'}$ is acceptable in a sentence $a \underline{dd'} b$ just in case the attempt to be 'articulate' satisfies the boldfaced equivalence in (2), thus violating *Be Brief*. Schlenker_2007 proves that this 'Transparency theory' derives the results of Heim 1983 for a fragment with generalized quantifiers, *modulo* technical assumptions.


(1)-(2) are tailored to the case of 'articulated' competitors of the form $\dots (d \text{ and } \underline{dd'}) \dots$. We argue that (i) for gestural presuppositions (Schlenker_2015a,b), illustrated in (3)a, the 'articulated' competitor takes a different form, $\dots (d d') \dots$, where d' is a post-verbal modifier; and that (ii) this explains why gestural presuppositions are conditional in nature. (*Notation:* the gesture co-occurs with the expression that immediately follows the picture).

(3) a. None of these 10 guys _punished his son.

=> for each of these 10 guys, **if he had punished his son**, slapping would have been involved

b. None of these 10 guys punished his son like _this / by slapping him.


(3)a triggers a universal inference that *for each of these 10 guys, if he had punished his son, slapping would have been involved*. Given results about universal presupposition projection under *none* (Chemla_2009),

this is explained if x _punished x 's son triggers a conditionalized presupposition – called 'cosupposition' in Schlenker_2015b – that *if x punished x 's son, slapping was involved*. But why this conditionalization? We suggest that this because the natural 'articulated' competitor comes with a post-verbal modifier, as in (3)b. Schematically, in 'standard' cases, $\dots \underline{dd'} \dots$ competes with $\dots (d \text{ and } \underline{dd'}) \dots$, but here $\dots G d' \dots$ (e.g.


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_punished...) competes with ...*d' g*..., where *g* is a post-verbal modifier with the same content as *G* (e.g.

punished...like  *this*). If *d' g* is conjunctively interpreted, dynamic semantics predicts that *g* is trivial in its local context (and violates *Be Brief*) just in case the local context *c'* of *d'* guarantees that *c'[d']* entails *g*, i.e. $c' \models d' \Rightarrow g$ – hence the conditionalized presupposition we observe.

Within the Transparency theory, the post-posed nature of the modifier¹ explains why the gestural presupposition is conditional, *modulo* the extension of (1)-(2) sketched in (4)a-b. (4)b rules out the articulated

competitor ...*punished his son like*  *this*... just in case no matter which further modifier is added, no matter how the sentence ends, the *like*-phrase can be eliminated without affecting the truth conditions. This means that the post-verbal modifier must be trivial *after* the verbal meaning has been computed.

(4) Consider a sentence *a G_d' b*, where *G* is a gesture co-occurring with a (modifier-compatible) expression *d'*.

a. **Modified Be Articulate**: Say *a (d' g) b* rather than *a G_d' b*, unless this is in violation of (b).

b. **Modified Be Brief – Incremental Version**: Given a context set *C*, do not say *a (d' g) b* if *g* is incrementally trivial, in the sense that for any modifier *g'*, for any sentence completion *b'*, $C \models a ((d' g) c') b' \Leftrightarrow a (d' c') b'$.

Assuming that the modifiers are intersective, (4)b is equivalent to the acceptability conditions predicted by (1)-(2) for *a (d' and gd*) b*, where *d** is an arbitrary assertive component:

(5) Predictions of (1)-(2) for the acceptability of *a (d' and gd*) b*

For any *g* of the same type as *d*, for any sentence completion *b'*, $C \models a (d' \text{ and } (g \text{ and } c')) b' \Leftrightarrow a (d' \text{ and } c') b'$.

As shown in Schlenker_2015b (Appendix I), (5) predicts the same result as a conditional presupposition $d' \Rightarrow g$ in the propositional case and under *[No NP]* – but slightly weaker inferences in other cases.

(One could ask – following suggestions by Kennedy and Szabolcsi – whether this analysis extends to verbs that encode manner modifications, as in (6)a, which might compete with (6)b.

(6) a. None_F of these 10 guys drove / swam to the bridge.

b. None_F of these 10 guys got to the bridge by driving / got to the bridge by swimming.

Extending *Be Articulate* to (6)a would predict an inference that *for each of these 10 guys, if he had gone to the bridge, he would have done so by driving / swimming*. It is unclear that this holds.)

¹ We follow Schlenker_2007,2008 in framing the discussion in terms of linear order, but more structural notions could be used instead – as long as they are independently motivated. Languages in which the modifier can come pre-verbally (e.g. German) might well cause problems for a simple-minded analysis based on linear order alone.

References

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