Contrastive Focus and (non-)at-issueness across modalities

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Overview

1. Introduction
   - Original debate: semantic status of gestures
   - Observation: at-issue uses of co-speech gestures under CF
   - Questions
   - Anticipating the main conclusion

2. NAI content under CF
   - Caveat: two levels of interaction with CF
   - NAI content w/o a separate time slot
   - NAI content with a separate time slot
   - Elucidating the differences b/n the two types of NAI content
   - Sketching a story
   - Further questions: disambiguating uses of NAI content

3. Conclusions
Original debate: semantic status of gestures

What is the status of the inferences triggered by (informative, non-emblematic) co-speech gestures, illustrated in (1)?

(1)  a. John ordered a beer\textsuperscript{LARGE}.  
    \rightarrow The beer that John ordered was large.

   b. John killed\textsuperscript{STAB} himself.  
    \rightarrow John stabbed himself.
Ebert & Ebert (2014) claim co-speech gestures act like supplements. Schlenker (to appear), based on the projection and distribution facts, argues co-speech gestures trigger *cosuppositions*, i.e., assertion-dependent presuppositions of the form \( P \Rightarrow G \), where \( P \) is the verbal expression, \( G \) is the content of the gesture, and \( \Rightarrow \) is generalized entailment:

\[
\begin{align*}
(2) & \quad \text{a. John didn’t order a beer}^{\text{large}}. \\
& \quad \rightarrow \text{In the local context of } beer^{\text{large}}, \text{ beer } \Rightarrow \text{large, i.e., roughly, if John was to order a beer, it would be large.} \\
& \quad \text{b. Context: a video game in which the characters routinely kill themselves; sometimes characters can only kill themselves in one predetermined way, in other cases they have options. If John kills}^{\text{stab}} \text{ himself, I'll win.} \\
& \quad \rightarrow \text{In the local context of } kill^{\text{stab}}, \text{ kill } \Rightarrow \text{stab, i.e., roughly, if John kills himself, he will stab himself.}
\end{align*}
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Ebert & Ebert (2014) claim co-speech gestures act like supplements. Schlenker (to appear), based on the projection and distribution facts, argues co-speech gestures trigger *cosuppositions*, i.e., assertion-dependent presuppositions of the form $P \Rightarrow G$, where $P$ is the verbal expression, $G$ is the content of the gesture, and $\Rightarrow$ is generalized entailment:

\[(2)\]

a. John didn’t order a beer$^{\text{LARGE}}$.
   $\Rightarrow$ In the local context of beer$^{\text{LARGE}}$, beer $\Rightarrow$ large, i.e., roughly, if John was to order a beer, it would be large.

b. Context: a video game in which the characters routinely kill themselves; sometimes characters can only kill themselves in one predetermined way, in other cases they have options.
   If John kills$^{\text{STAB}}$ himself, I’ll win.
   $\Rightarrow$ In the local context of kill$^{\text{STAB}}$, kill $\Rightarrow$ stab, i.e., roughly, if John kills himself, he will stab himself.

Schlenker further argues post-speech gestures are supplements:

\[(3)\]

a. ??John didn’t order a beer — LARGE.

b. ??John didn’t kill himself — STAB.
Sometimes at-issue uses of co-speech gestures obtain under CF (Rob Pasternak, p.c., a.o.):

(4)  a. **Context: We are in a bar and making bets on who of our colleagues is going to order what.**
If *John* orders a **beer** \textsubscript{small} and *Bill* orders a **beer** \textsubscript{large}, I’ll win.
\[ \not \rightarrow \] If John/Bill orders a beer, it will be small/large.

b. If *John* **kills** \textsubscript{shoot} himself and *Bill* **kills** \textsubscript{stab} himself, I’ll win.
\[ \not \rightarrow \] If John/Bill kills himself, he will shoot/stab himself.
Observation: at-issue uses of co-speech gestures under CF

- Sometimes at-issue uses of co-speech gestures obtain under CF (Rob Pasternak, p.c., a.o.):

  (4) a. Context: We are in a bar and making bets on who of our colleagues is going to order what.
      If John orders a beer$^{\text{small}}$ and Bill orders a beer$^{\text{large}}$, I’ll win.
      ↗ If John/Bill orders a beer, it will be small/large.

     b. If John kills$^{\text{shoot}}$ himself and Bill kills$^{\text{stab}}$ himself, I’ll win.
      ↗ If John/Bill kills himself, he will shoot/stab himself.

- Further observation (often made for factive verbs, e.g., in examples with know vs. think — see, e.g., Simons et al. to appear): sometimes standard presuppositions don’t project under CF either:

  (5) If John stopped smoking but Bill [never used to smoke]/[never smoked], I’ll win.
      ↗ John used to smoke.
Questions

- How do different types of non-at-issue (NAI) content (co- and post-speech gestures, presuppositions, supplements) interact with CF?
- How can we explain any differences in behavior under CF among different types of NAI content?
- Do those differences shed any light on the status of co-and post-speech gestures?
Anticipating the main conclusion

There are differences between NAI content that shares a time slot with some at-issue (AI) content (presuppositions, co-speech gestures) and NAI with a separate time slot (supplements, post-speech gestures) — factor deemed important in Schlenker (to appear):
Anticipating the main conclusion

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  - NAI content can’t bear CF without losing its NAI status. Tentative explanation: when NAI content shares a time slot with AI content, it competes with the latter for association of CF markers and always loses unless it’s made at-issue.
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- NAI content with a separate time slot can bear CF markers without losing its NAI status, but that CF has to be NAI, too (such CF-ed content can’t address the question under discussion).
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- NAI content with a separate time slot can bear CF markers without losing its NAI status, but that CF has to be NAI, too (such CF-ed content can’t address the question under discussion).
- AI/restrictive uses of content with a separate time slot are readily available; such uses of NAI content w/o a separate time slot arise as a last resort and are typically marginal. That’s in line with Schlenker’s claim that NAI content w/o a separate time slot has to be trivial.
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- Questions
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- Caveat: two levels of interaction with CF
- NAI content w/o a separate time slot
- NAI content with a separate time slot
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- Further questions: disambiguating uses of NAI content

3 Conclusions
Caveat: two levels of interaction with CF

- AI uses of NAI content can obtain globally, by reasoning on propositional alternatives, or locally, at the level of focused elements.

(6)  
  a. If John **stopped** smoking, I’ll win, but if he **started** smoking, I won’t.  
     \[\neg \rightarrow \text{John used to smoke/not smoke.}\]
  b. If John **stopped** smoking, I’ll win, but if he never **used** to smoke, I won’t.  
     \[\neg \rightarrow \text{John used to smoke.}\]

(7)  
  a. If John **stopped** smoking and Bill **started** smoking, I’ll win.  
     \[\rightarrow \text{John used to smoke; Bill used to not smoke.}\]
  b. If John **stopped** smoking but Bill [never **used** to smoke]/[never smoked], I’ll win.  
     \[\neg \rightarrow \text{John used to smoke.}\]
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  \[ \text{John used to smoke.} \]

(7)  
  a. If **John stopped** smoking and **Bill started** smoking, I’ll win.  
  \[ \text{John used to smoke; Bill used to not smoke.} \]
  b. If **John stopped** smoking but **Bill [never used to smoke] /[never smoked]**, I’ll win.  
  \[ \text{John used to smoke.} \]

- We’ll set aside the AI uses due to global reasoning (intuition: all Focus alternatives must be assertable wrt the same common ground).
1 Introduction
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2 NAI content under CF
- Caveat: two levels of interaction with CF
- **NAI content w/o a separate time slot**
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NAI w/o a separate time slot: generalizations

- AI uses of NAI content w/o a separate time slot emerge when the AI content of a mixed/two-dimensional (NAI+AI content) expression under CF is not enough to assure the licitness of the Focus alternatives: e.g., beer vs. beer; doesn’t vs. never used to; doesn’t vs. doesn’t (see Katzir 2014 and references therein on what makes good Focus alternatives) — so CF has to target the NAI content to make the alternatives licit, but that necessarily makes that NAI content AI.

(8)  

a. If John orders a beer^{SMALL} and Bill orders a beer^{LARGE}, I’ll win.  
→ If John/ Bill orders a beer, it will be small/large.

b. If John stopped smoking but Bill [never used to smoke]/[never smoked], I’ll win.  
→ John used to smoke.

c. %If John doesn’t smoke but Bill stopped smoking, I’ll win.
→ Bill used to smoke.
If the AI content of the focused elements is contrastive enough no such effect obtains:

(9)  

a. If *John* orders a *beer*\textsuperscript{LARGE} and *Bill* orders a *cocktail*\textsuperscript{SMALL}, I’ll win.  
   → If John orders a beer, it will be large.
   → If Bill orders a cocktail, it will be small.

b. If *John* stopped smoking and *Bill* is taking a *break* from smoking, I’ll give you $10.
   → John/Bill used to smoke.

c. If *John* stopped smoking and *Bill* started to *hate* smoking, I’ll give you $10.
   → John used to smoke.
- If the CF is placed elsewhere, no such effect obtains:

(10) a. (i) If John orders a beer^{SMALL} and Bill orders a beer^{LARGE}, I’ll win.
(ii) If John orders a beer^{SMALL} now and Bill orders a beer^{LARGE} in an hour, I’ll win.
→ If John/Bill orders a beer, it will be small/large.

b. (i) If John stopped smoking and Bill never used to smoke, I’ll win.
→ John used to smoke.
(ii) If John stopped smoking tobacco and Bill never used to smoke weed, I’ll win.
→ John used to smoke tobacco.
(iii) If John doesn’t smoke tobacco and Bill stopped smoking weed, I’ll win.
→ Bill used to smoke weed.
Introduction
- Original debate: semantic status of gestures
- Observation: at-issue uses of co-speech gestures under CF
- Questions
- Anticipating the main conclusion

NAI content under CF
- Caveat: two levels of interaction with CF
- NAI content w/o a separate time slot
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Conclusions
Non-restrictive RCs

- Placement of CF markers on identical nouns isn’t acceptable, regardless of whether they are modified by restrictive or non-restrictive restrictive relative clauses (RCs) — since beer is a non-mixed/one-dimensional expression, there is nothing in (11) that could make beer and beer licit Focus alternatives to one another:

(11) *John ordered a beer that/, which was small, and Bill ordered a beer that/, which was large.
CF markers within non-restrictive RCs are acceptable w/o making them AI, even if the two DPs they modify are identical, but this “NAI” CF can’t be addressing the question under discussion:

(12) A: Who ordered a beer of which size?
   a. B: John ordered a beer that was small, and Bill ordered a beer that was large.
   b. *B: John ordered a beer, which was small, and Bill ordered a beer, which was large.

(13) a. A: Who ordered a beer?
    B: John ordered a beer, which was small, and Bill ordered a beer, which was large.
    b. A: Who ordered a beer when?
    B: John ordered a beer, which was small, yesterday, and Bill ordered a beer, which was large, today.
Post-speech gestures

- NAI CF is available for post-speech gestures (to the extent to which we believe in focusing standalone gestures):

(14) a. A: Who ordered a beer?
   B: John ordered a beer — SMALL, and Bill ordered a beer — LARGE.

   b. A: Who ordered a beer when?
   B: John ordered a beer — SMALL yesterday, and Bill ordered a beer — LARGE today.
Post-speech gestures

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(14) a. A: Who ordered a beer?
    B: John ordered a beer — SMALL, and Bill ordered a beer — LARGE.

b. A: Who ordered a beer when?
    B: John ordered a beer — SMALL yesterday, and Bill ordered a beer — LARGE today.

- Yet, restrictive uses of post-speech gestures are unavailable or constrained, which might be due to prosodic reasons (restrictive modifiers are typically grouped together with what they modify):

(15) A: Who ordered a beer of which size?
    B: ?? John ordered a beer — SMALL, and Bill ordered a beer — LARGE.
Elucidating the differences b/n the two types of NAI content

- Crucially, NAI CF, available for non-restrictive RCs, is unavailable for NAI content w/o a separate time slot.

(16) a. (i) If John/??John orders a \textit{beer}^{\text{SMALL}} and Bill/??Bill orders a \textit{beer}^{\text{LARGE}}, I’ll win.
\[\Leftrightarrow\] If John/Bill orders a beer, it will be small/large.
(ii) If John orders a beer, which will be \textit{small}, and Bill orders a beer, which will be \textit{large}, I’ll win. \[\rightarrow\] If John/Bill orders a beer, it will be small/large.

b. (i) If John orders a \textit{beer}^{\text{SMALL}} \textit{now} and Bill orders a \textit{beer}^{\text{LARGE}} \textit{in an hour}, I’ll win.
\[\Leftrightarrow\] If John/Bill orders a beer, it will be small/large.
(ii) If John orders a beer, which will be \textit{small, now}, and Bill orders a beer, which will be \textit{large, in an hour}, I’ll win. \[\rightarrow\] If John/Bill orders a beer, it will be small/large.
1. Introduction
   - Original debate: semantic status of gestures
   - Observation: at-issue uses of co-speech gestures under CF
   - Questions
   - Anticipating the main conclusion

2. NAI content under CF
   - Caveat: two levels of interaction with CF
   - NAI content w/o a separate time slot
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3. Conclusions
Sketching a story

- So how do the differences b/n the two types of NAI content emerge?
Sketching a story

- So how do the differences b/n the two types of NAI content emerge?
- (Tentative) proposal:

- When CF markers occur on a mixed/two-dimensional expression, the two types of content compete for the association of the CF markers, and NAI content always loses unless it's made AI.
- Furthermore, making NAI content w/o a separate time slot AI is costly (assumed for local accommodation in the presupposition literature — e.g., Heim 1983; Schlenker 2009; explainable by Schlenker's (to appear) triviality generalization), so it can only be done when association of the CF markers with the NAI content is the only way to make the Focus alternatives licit (and is often marginal).

Example (NAI content underlined):

\[
\text{beer} \quad \text{large} \quad \text{is the default configuration, beer} \quad \text{large} \quad \text{is available, but only as a last resort, beer} \quad \text{large} \quad \text{is unavailable.}
\]

NAI with a separate time slot doesn't compete for the association of the CF markers with anything, so it can bear NAI CF. Nor does it have to be trivial, hence the free availability of restrictive RCs.
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Example (NAI content underlined):

\[ \underline{beer} \] large \( f \) is the default configuration, \( \underline{beer} \) [\( large \)] \( f \) is available, but only as a last resort, \( \underline{beer} \) [\( large \)] \( f \) is unavailable.

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- Example (NAI content underlined): $[\text{beer}_F^{\text{LARGE}}]$ is the default configuration, $\text{beer}_F^{[\text{LARGE}]}$ is available, but only as a last resort, $\text{beer}_F^{[\text{LARGE}]}$ is unavailable.
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- Example (NAI content underlined): \( [\text{beer}_{F}^{\text{LARGE}}] \) is the default configuration, \( \text{beer}_{F}^{[\text{LARGE}]} \) is available, but only as a last resort, \( \text{beer}_{F}^{[\text{LARGE}]} \) is unavailable.
- NAI with a separate time slot doesn’t compete for the association of the CF markers with anything, so it can bear NAI CF. Nor does it have to be trivial, hence the free availability of restrictive RCs.
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- Original debate: semantic status of gestures
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- Questions
- Anticipating the main conclusion

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- Caveat: two levels of interaction with CF
- NAI content w/o a separate time slot
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Disambiguating uses of NAI content

- NAI content can be used to distinguish between two referents that are otherwise indistinguishable, seemingly without losing its NAI status. In (17)–(20) the relevant inferences project, none of them is good under the ‘two referents’ reading.

(17) If you invite John\textsuperscript{TALL}, I’ll be happy, but if you invite John\textsuperscript{SHORT}, I won’t.
→ The first John is tall, the second John is short.

(18) If you invite John the linguist, I’ll be happy, but if you invite John the philosopher I won’t.
→ The first John is a linguist, the second John is a philosopher.
(19) %If you invite John who’s a **linguist**, I’ll be happy, but if you invite John who’s a **philosopher**, I won’t.

→ The first John is a linguist, the second John is a philosopher.

(20) John is considering inviting Bill or Mary. If he invites **him**, I’ll be happy, but if he invites **her**, I won’t.

→ The referent of **him** is male, the referent of **her** is female.
(19) %If you invite John who’s a linguist, I’ll be happy, but if you invite John who’s a philosopher, I won’t.
→ The first John is a linguist, the second John is a philosopher.

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→ The referent of him is male, the referent of her is female.

Also, those inferences can’t be directly negated in the discourse, e.g.:

(21) A: I want to invite John\textsuperscript{TALL}, and Mary wants to invite John\textsuperscript{SHORT}.
B: #No, the first John isn’t tall/this\textsuperscript{TALL} tall.

(22) A: I want to invite John the linguist, and Mary wants to invite John the philosopher.
B: #No, the first John isn’t a philosopher.
Questions raised by disambiguating uses of NAI content

For *him* vs. *her* we could say that $x_i$ and $x_j$ are licit Focus alternatives to one another, so CF markers don’t have to associate with the gender features, thus, local accommodation isn’t enforced. The gender features help distinguish the referents, but remain unfocused and NAI.

Further questions: disambiguating uses of NAI content
Questions raised by disambiguating uses of NAI content

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- We could assume that proper nouns come with indices, too (*John*$_i$ and *John*$_j$ would be licit alternatives to one another). But:
  - The CF in (18) and (19) is definitely not NAI (the CF-ed elements can clearly address the question under discussion).
  - The prosody in those examples is that of restrictive modifiers.
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  - The CF in (18) and (19) is definitely not NAI (the CF-ed elements can clearly address the question under discussion).
  - The prosody in those examples is that of restrictive modifiers.
- An alternative approach to proper nouns:
  - Assume they are decomposable into a determiner and its restriction (along the lines of Matushansky 2008).
  - At the NP level *John* and *John* are identical, and the NAI content is forced into the restrictive use ($e.g., \lambda x.\textit{john}(x) \land \textit{tall}(x)$).
  - At the DP level the existence + uniqueness presupposition is triggered and “masks” the at-issueness of the restrictor.
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- NAI content w/o a separate time slot can’t bear NAI CF. I proposed that it competes with the AI content it co-occurs with for association of CF markers and can only win if it’s made AI, which is a costly process, since such NAI content normally has to be trivial.
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- NAI content w/o a separate time slot can’t bear NAI CF. I proposed that it competes with the AI content it co-occurs with for association of CF markers and can only win if it’s made AI, which is a costly process, since such NAI content normally has to be trivial.
- NAI content with a separate time slot doesn’t have the constraints above and can bear NAI CF as well as have freely available restrictive uses, modulo additional prosodic considerations.
Further questions have to do with:

- Disambiguating uses of NAI content under CF.
- Additional prosodic constraints. (Prominence markers on identical phonological strings should be dispreferred; we then expect examples of the beer small vs. beer large kind to be even worse than local accommodation of ordinary presuppositions.)
- Additional syntactic (?) constraints on restrictive uses. (Appositives.)
- One-dimensional presupposition triggers like too and again.

So what about the status of gestures?

Nothing in the data on the interaction with CF so far independently supports existence of a lexical presupposition-triggering mechanism for co-speech gestures and anaphoric-like elements (akin to relativizers in non-restrictive RCs) in post-speech gestures. Both co- and post-speech gestures can still be treated as two kinds of supplements, whose differences in interaction with CF are attributable solely to their configurational properties (shared vs. separate time slot). Further differences b/n the two have to with their "embeddability"/anaphoricity restrictions. Could they, too, be explained via the time slot parameter? I'm working on it...
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- One-dimensional presupposition triggers like \textit{too} and \textit{again}.

So what about the status of gestures?
Conclusions

- Further questions have to do with:
  - Disambiguating uses of NAI content under CF.
  - Additional prosodic constraints. (Prominence markers on identical phonological strings should be dispreferred; we then expect examples of the $\text{beer}^{\text{SMALL}}$ vs. $\text{beer}^{\text{LARGE}}$ kind to be even worse than local accommodation of ordinary presuppositions.)
  - Additional syntactic (?) constraints on restrictive uses. (Appositives.)
  - One-dimensional presupposition triggers like *too* and *again*.

- So what about the status of gestures?
  - Nothing in the data on the interaction with CF so far independently supports existence of a lexical presupposition-triggering mechanism for co-speech gestures and anaphoric-like elements (akin to relativizers in non-restrictive RCs) in post-speech gestures.
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- Further differences b/n the two have to with their “embeddability”/anaphoricity restrictions. Could they, too, be explained via the time slot parameter? I’m working on it...


Notational conventions

- A gesture co-occurring with a verbal expression is added as a superscript: word\textsuperscript{GESTURE}.
- New gestures are illustrated with pictures after an underscore: word\textsuperscript{GESTURE}_picture.
- A gesture following a verbal expression is placed after a dash: word — GESTURE.
- **Bold** indicates prosodic Contrastive Focus marking ((L+)H\textsuperscript{*} pitch accent and lengthening on the stressed syllable, hyper-articulation, raised eyebrows, head nod, acceleration and/or increased amplitude of the gesture, etc.).
- A subscript \textsubscript{F} on a bracketed expression indicates that it is semantically in Focus.