

INTRODUCTION

Observation

- Standard presuppositions sometimes don't project when there is Contrastive Focus (CF) on the trigger (see, e.g., Simons et al. 2016 on factive verbs):

- (1) a. John doesn't know that Mary is pregnant.
→ Mary is pregnant.
b. John doesn't **[know]_F** that Mary is pregnant, he only **[thinks]_F** that she is.
↗ Mary is pregnant.

- Schlenker (2016) argues that co-speech gestures trigger assertion-dependent presuppositions (*cosuppositions*) of the form *if p, g*, where *p* is the verbal expression the gesture co-occurs with and *g* is the content of the gesture (2a). Such cosuppositions sometimes don't project under CF either (observation due to Rob Pasternak (p.c.)), in particular, when the CF-ed gesture-word clusters have identical verbal content and differ in gestural content only (2b).



- (2) a. None of these ten soldiers **[killed]_{SHOOT}** himself.
→ For each of these ten soldiers, if he was to kill himself, he would shoot himself.

- b. None of these ten soldiers **[killed]_{SHOOT}** himself, each of



them **[killed]_{STAB}** himself.

↗ For each of these ten soldiers, if he was to kill himself, he would shoot himself.

Question

- Non-projection in (1b) and (2b) can be derived via local accommodation as a last resort operation (e.g., Heim 1983, Schlenker 2009) — but a last resort for what?

PROPOSAL

- I argue that CF doesn't automatically cause non-projection, rather presupposition behavior under CF depends on the nature of the relevant alternatives. I propose the following principle:

(3) Alternative Assertability Principle (AAP)

All relevant Focus alternatives should be assertible with respect to the same common ground.

- Consequence: if a presupposition of an alternative hinders assertability of some other alternative, it can't project and should be treated as part of the assertion, hence local accommodation.

MORE DATA

Standard triggers

- Non-projection obtains under CF for:
 - know* vs. *think*: same assertive content, different presuppositional content (1b);
 - stop* vs. *start*: different assertive content, contradictory presuppositional content (4a).
- Non-projection doesn't obtain for:
 - stop* vs. *take a break from*: different assertive content, same presuppositional content (4b);
 - stop* vs. *hate*: different assertive content, non-contradictory presuppositional content (4c).

- (4) a. If John **[stopped]_F** smoking, I'll give you \$10, but if he **[started]_F** smoking, I won't.
↗ John used to smoke.

- b. If John **[stopped]_F** smoking, I'll give you \$10, but if he's just **[taking a break]_F** from smoking, I won't.
→ John used to smoke.

- c. Although John didn't **[stop]_F** smoking, he began to **[hate]_F** smoking.
→ John used to smoke.

- Even "strong" triggers can exhibit the relevant contrast:

- (5) a. If John **[regrets]_F** cheating on his wife, I'll remain friends with him, but if he **[takes pride]_F** in it, I won't.
→ John cheated on his wife.

- b. Context: a psychotherapy group whose participants all either regret cheating on their wives or (i) lie / (ii) claim that they cheated.

Does John **[regret]_F** cheating on his wife or does he [(i) lie / (ii) **claim]_F** that he cheated on his wife?

↗ John cheated on his wife.

Co-speech gestures

- Same verbal content: cosuppositions don't project (2b), (6a).
- Contrastive verbal content: cosuppositions project (6b).



- (6) a. If you bring me a **[beer]_{SMALL}**, I'll finish it, but if



you bring me a **[beer]_{LARGE}**, I'll have to share it.

↗ If you bring me a beer, it will be small/large.

- b. If you bring me a **[beer]_{LARGE}**, I'll finish it, but if you bring me a **[cocktail]_{SMALL}**, I'll have to share it.

→ If you bring me a beer, it will be large; if you bring me a cocktail, it will be small.

APPLYING AAP

Standard triggers

- Contradictory presuppositional content (*stop* vs. *start*): the same common ground can't entail both *p* and *not p*, thus, both presuppositions have to be treated as part of the assertion.
- Same assertive content, different presuppositional content (*know* vs. *think*):
 - Think that p* gives rise to an anti-factive inference, typically attributed to some version of *Maximize Presupposition* (e.g., Sauerland 2008), but it's unclear how it would apply here (if at all).
 - I propose that CF is interpreted exhaustively with respect to the salient alternatives: if *p* is the presuppositional content, and *p'* is the assertive one, *p'* and *not pp'* (= *p'* and *p* and *not p'*) is a contradiction. Thus, *p* should be treated as part of the assertion (*p'* and *not (p and p')* is not a contradiction and entails *not p*).

Co-speech gestures

- Both explanations above can apply to examples like (2b) and (6a):
 - The assertive (verbal) content of the alternatives is the same; *pp'* and *not qp'* is a contradiction, *p* and *p'* and *not (q and p')* isn't.
 - The inferences triggered by the gestures are mutually exclusive and cannot be entailed by the same common ground.
- Examples with contrastive gestures triggering non-mutually-exclusive inferences are hard to construct, and I leave exploration of them for future research.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION

- Potential alternative principle:

- (7) Contrast cannot be due to non-at-issue content.

- Possibly relevant: non-restrictive relative clauses and post-speech gestures (also analyzed as supplements in Schlenker 2016):

- (8) a. I like beer that is alcoholic, and I like beer that is foamy.
b. #I like beer, which (by the way) is alcoholic, and I like beer, which (by the way) is foamy.

- (9) a. Some soldiers **[killed]_{SHOOT}** themselves, and some soldiers **[killed]_{STAB}** themselves.

- b. #Some soldiers killed themselves — SHOOT, and some soldiers killed themselves — STAB.

- AAP doesn't derive (8b), but (7) doesn't derive (4a).

SELECTED REFERENCES

Heim. 1983. On the projection problem for presuppositions. Sauerland. 2008. Implicated presuppositions. Schlenker. 2009. Local contexts. Schlenker. 2016. Gesture projection and cosuppositions. Simons, Beaver, Roberts, and Tonhauser. 2016. The best question: explaining the projection behavior of factives.