

Presupposition and Context Sensitivity

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Abstract: We argue there is a clash between the standard treatments of context sensitivity and presupposition triggering. We use this criticism to motivate a defense of an often-discarded view about how to represent context sensitivity, according to which there are more lexically implicit items in logical form than has been appreciated.

Introduction

This article 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 the 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

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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 enamored 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.

1 about how best to represent the sort of context sensitivity associated with the incom-
 2 pleteness of (1). We begin by saying enough about context sensitivity and incom-
 3 pleteness (§1), presupposition (§2), and the data (§3) to present the clash (§4). In
 4 (§5)–(§8), we reply to obvious objections to our argument. We will conclude with
 5 comments about its scope.

6 7 8 **1. Treatments of Context Sensitivity**

9
10 Controversy surrounding the context sensitivity of (1) enters into explaining how
 11 the information communicated by its uses is determined—semantically or pragmat-
 12 ically?

13 (a) According to *semantic* accounts, (1) is syntactically represented by a structure
 14 either with an unvoiced variable or in which the expression ‘ready’ itself is
 15 context sensitive. A felicitous utterance of (1), then, determines a semantic
 16 value for the variable or context sensitive expression (Stanley and Szabó,
 17 2000; Lewis, 1996), which in turn partially determines which proposition
 18 this use semantically expresses.

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

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

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

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

36
37
38
39 ² This is a bit misleading. The proposition need not (normally) be absurd. It may just not be
 40 plausible as the interpretation of the sentence in the context.


41 ³ On our way of *putting things up*, even approaches to incompleteness such as Stanley and Szabó’s
 42 (2000) are *contextualized* accounts. Although they posit syntactic structure to deal with incom-
 43 pleteness 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.

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

9
 10 *Anti-Lexicalism (AL)*: Context sensitivity is not to be accommodated by positing
 11 missing lexical items.

12
 13 (AL) entails the denial of (c). We will be testing AL against a principle regarding
 14 presupposition triggering.



16 2. Presupposition

17
 18 The term ‘presupposition’ is used to refer to a range of phenomena. Step 2 in a
 19 plan may only make sense given the presupposition that Step 1 succeeds. We might
 20 explain a councilman’s vote for the city to pay off its debt by citing his falsely pre-
 21 supposing the city has the money for it. And, as already noted, someone who asserts
 22 (2) presupposes that Tipper used to smoke. It is a matter of some controversy how
 23 these alleged cases of presupposition are alike. We assume the latter case is *linguisti-*
 24 *cally* controlled, while the former  seem to rely on a coherence of actions with
 25 assumed backgrounds. Linguistic control is known as *presupposition triggering*—part
 26 of understanding the word ‘quit’ is knowing that it triggers the presupposition of a
 27 former state.⁵

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

34 (3) Ernie drove home.

35 (4) It was Ernie who drove home.

36
 37
 38
 39 ⁴ For some authors, such as Carston (1991), Sperber and Wilson (1986) and Rec  (2002), it
 40 occurs before (and in some cases is required in order to determine) what’s said  en deter-
 41 mined.

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

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

7 (5) It wasn't Ernie who drove home.

8 (6) Ernie didn't drive home.


9
 10 If no one drove home, asserting (5) is as infelicitous as asserting (4).

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

13 (7) Tipper used to smoke but she didn't smoke afterwards.

14 (2) Tipper quit smoking.

15
 16 Protesting, 'No she didn't!' in response to (2) cannot be construed as negating Tip-
 17 per's former smoking, but it can, as a response to (7).⁶

18 And indeed, that behavior of presuppositions persists is confirmed by other com-
 19 mon tests for presupposition. Uses of (8) and (9) in (10) presuppose Tipper used
 20 to smoke (though it is neither explicitly asserted nor entailed by either):

21 (8) If Tipper quit smoking, she hasn't told anyone yet.


22 (9) Has Tipper quit smoking?

23
 24 This phenomenon is known as 'projection'—presuppositions 'project' out of
 25 antecedents of conditionals and out of questions (and so, are not interpreted as
 26 falling under the scope of either). Presuppositions also project out of negations,
 27 modals (*might, could, should ...*), and imperatives.

28 Most of this is familiar ground. Our interest lies with the claim that presupposi-
 29 tions arise from *how* content is introduced, not in the content itself. We will call this
 30 claim *Presupposition Triggering*.⁷

31
 32 *Presupposition Triggering (PT)*: Presuppositions are triggered by linguistic items,
 33 and not by their semantic values.

34
 35
 36 ⁶ We grant that (7) and (2) aren't exactly truth-conditionally equivalent—(2) suggests Tipper's
 37 actions were intentional while (7) doesn't. (2) is consistent with her quitting for a while only
 38 and then relapsing, while (7) isn't. We don't think these differences matter for the point at hand
 39 but if you are concerned, consider the more cumbersome:

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

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

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

4 We will assume one additional principle:

5
 6 *Pragmatic Presupposition (PP)*: Presupposition and presupposition failure are
 7 not semantic phenomena (and failure of presupposition does not result in
 8 truth-valuelessness).⁹
 9

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

19 However, absent a viable story that connects (PP) to a failure of (PT), we will
 20 treat (PP) as irrelevant and ignore it from here on out.
 21
 22

23 3. The Set Up—Some Data

24 With these sketches of presupposition triggering and context sensitivity in hand, we
 25 turn to the clash. To this end, suppose a conversation begins with utterances of (10)
 26 followed by (1):
 27
 28
 29

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

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

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

42 ⁹ We don’t have anything to add to Stalnaker (1974) or Simons (2001) regarding the preference
 43 for PP over trivalent theories that deny it. Frege (1954) suggests that presupposition failure
 44 results in a failure to assign truth value to the sentences uttered. Heim and Kratzer (1998, ch. 4)
 45 offer a model of a trivalent semantics for definite descriptions. See George (2008) for a modern
 46 account of trivalent semantics that can serve as an alternative to (PP).

1 (10) Joe quit smoking.

2 (1), in this context, is *infelicitous* if Tipper never smoked, just as it would be had (10)
3 been followed up with the more elaborate (11):
4

5 (11) Tipper isn't ready to quit smoking.

6 This utterance of (1) not only asserts Tipper isn't ready to quit smoking, but also
7 *presupposes* she used to smoke.¹⁰ This intuition persists in confrontation with other
8 common tests for presupposition. Uses of (12) and (13) as continuations of (10) also
9 presuppose that Tipper used to smoke (though this is neither explicitly asserted nor
10 entailed by either):
11

12 (12) If Tipper isn't ready, I doubt she'll succeed.

13 (13) Isn't Tipper ready?

14 An obvious question is what triggers this presupposition in each of these cases?
15 Are we simply facing a case of syntactic ellipsis? After all, in the case above, (14)
16 sounds just as good as (1) in response to (10):
17

18 (14) Tipper isn't ready to.

19 It's hard to deny that (14) is a case of ellipsis. However, this won't help with the puzzle
20 at hand, for several reasons. First, the preposition is ungrammatical in non-assertoric
21 contexts:
22

23 (15) *Isn't Tipper ready to?

24 (16) *Tipper, get ready to!

25 Second, we get the same effect without a linguistic antecedent. If we witness Tipper,
26 leaving a stop-smoking program, crying and exhibiting withdrawal-like symptoms,
27 it's no stretch to see that (1), discourse initially, will trigger the presupposition that
28 Tipper has been a smoker. You can choose to describe this case as *ellipsis*, but if all
29 that means is that there is unvoiced but semantically relevant linguistic material, then
30 you are on board with denying (AL), at least in the relevant cases.
31

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

37 (17) Tipper isn't strong enough.

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

41 Tipper isn't ready to quit smoking—she has never smoked!

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

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

5 4. The Puzzle: Lexicalism and the Incompleteness of ‘She’s Ready’


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


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




23 5. Underdetermination

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

29 ¹¹ A few other cases to make the point:

30  are discussing new research that claims it is easier to quit smoking than was previously
31 thought. I turn to you and say ‘Maybe quitting isn’t so hard. Try to persuade Sarah so she will
32 have a longer life’. My utterance presupposes that Sarah smokes.

33  see an advertisement on television for free transportation for war veterans who go to the
34 Vietnam Memorial for a second time. I ask: ‘Do you think Mary would make an attempt?’ My
35 question presupposes that Mary has been to the Vietnam Memorial before.

36  may be tempting to regard these as conversational implicatures derived using the maxim of
37  *quantity*. But they are  non-cancelable, they project out of the relevant contexts and
we are thus suspicious of any attempt to treat them as such.

38 ¹² Notice that our considerations scotch a certain hope one might have for explaining presup-
39 positions via the maxim of manner. One might try to explain the presuppositional difference
40 between (2) and (7) by recourse to the maxim of manner: (7) is a funny way to put things. The
41 cases of (1), (12), (13) and (14) show that this route is not easy to extend, since the presupposi-
42 tions are seemingly triggered without the content being explicitly put forth. It is difficult to
43 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.

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

3
 4 The main problem [c] faces is that of underdetermination. There are very few
 5 cases where there is a single plausible candidate for the role of the domain
 6 restricting predicate. Consider ... the situation ... where [(18) Every bottle
 7 is empty] is uttered by Lisa. We assumed that the proposition conveyed by Lisa's
 8 utterance was the same that she could have conveyed by uttering the sentence:



9 Every bottle I just bought is empty.

10 It seems natural then to assume that F is simply the predicate 'was just bought by
 11 me'. However, one might wonder whether this choice is somewhat arbitrary. Why could
 12 F not be the predicate 'was recently purchased by me', or 'is one of those things
 13 that I bought at the store'? We need not even restrict ourselves to synonyms or
 14 near synonyms. It seems that, in the context of Lisa's utterance, F could equally
 15 be something like 'is one of those things you are looking for'. Since the sole
 16 function of F in communicating is to restrict the domain of the quantifier, it
 17 is hard to see how to select among predicates that apply to the same bottles
 18 (Stanley and Szabó, 2000, pp. 237–8; our numbering and italicizing).

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

- 23 1a) Tipper isn't ready to quit smoking.
 24 1a) Tipper isn't ready to stop smoking.
 25 1b) Tipper isn't ready to put an end to her smoking.

26 Our first response is a sort of *tu quoque*. Stanley and Szabó argue that domain
 27 restriction generally is to be treated by positing variables in the syntactic structure
 28 that restrict the nominal of a quantifier phrase. Thus, (18) expresses in context what
 29 (19) expresses because the value of the variables yield a property that restricts
 30 a restriction on the extension of 'bottle'. So far so good, but as many have noted (see
 31 Buchanan, 2010), there are often multiple possible variable assignments compatible
 32 with any given context of use, each one of which will serve to fix the same domain
 33 restriction extensionally. Suppose that the very bottles which Lisa bought are the
 34 same bottles that she put on the shelf, that she provided at the party, that her mother
 35

36
 37 ¹³ They state they are arguing against an *ellipsis* account, but their objections are clearly aimed less
 38 against *ellipsis* and more against an *underlying lexical account* like (c). Further, they tend to describe
 39 their worry as one of under-determination—namely, based on the evidence, how does a hearer
 40 choose among the multitude of available lexical completions. Why this epistemic worry should
 41 be a concern to the semanticist is unclear to us. It's no more challenging than asking how
 42 audiences retrieve speaker intentions in general. On the assumption that the speaker intended
 43 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.

1 helped her pay for... Under such circumstances, which of (19)–(19'') did her
2 utterance of (18) express?

3 19') Every bottle I put on the shelf is empty.

4 19'') Every bottle I provided at the party is empty.

5 19''') Every bottle that my mother helped me pay for is empty

6 These all seem to serve the appropriate role of restricting bottle but all result from
7 distinct assignments of values to the variables. Thus, anyone who holds that domain
8 restriction is a matter of fixing the semantic value of a hidden indexical is stuck with
9 under-determination. On our view, it may be underdetermined which lexical item
10 is in the uttered sentence; on their view, it may be which semantic value the hidden
11 variable takes. Short of an account of how we achieve the miracle of interpersonal
12 interpretation of inexplicit values, we don't see why our underdetermination is more
13 embarrassing than theirs.


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

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

29 A second criticism Stanley and Szabó (2000 p. 238) raise against (c) concerns
30 *learnability*. They state that someone who learns the word 'ready' and the auxiliary
31 verb 'is' can comprehend a use of (1) without any prior familiarity with the word
32 'quit'.¹⁴ And so, to the extent that (c) requires the presence of 'quit' (or a synonym


34
35 ¹⁴ They direct their argument against an indexical syntactic account of domain restriction for
36 quantifier phrases:

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

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

1 with the same presuppositional triggering properties) it challenges commonsense
2 about learnability.

3 Our reply is straightforward: why think one can grasp what is communicated
4 with the described use of (1) without prior knowledge of ‘quit’? We’ve already
5 established that truth-conditional content alone can’t trigger the presupposition, so
6 it follows that no one can fully grasp what this use of (1) contributes if she does not
7 already understand ‘quit’ (or some expression that triggers the same presupposed
8 proposition). As long as a particular utterance of (1) is presumed to presuppose that
9 Tipper used to smoke, then the sentence this utterance tokens must harbor *some*
10 expression or other that preserves this presupposition. Of course, there’s nothing
11 wrong in interpreting the relevant utterance of (1) by positing ‘cease’ instead of
12 ‘quit’, since the relevant presupposition is preserved.¹⁵ But (as (c) dictates) some
13 item must be present.

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

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

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38

39 ¹⁵ Thanks to Stephen Neale for pushing this point.

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

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

6. Contextual Entailment¹⁸

One may challenge our argument by reinterpreting the data, denying that relevant utterances of (1) *presuppose* Tipper used to smoke. Perhaps we have 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 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.

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

¹⁹ Thanks to Angelika Kratzer for this objection.

1 But how does the presupposition get triggered?

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

- 5 21a) A: John smoked and then didn’t.
6 B: Tipper isn’t ready to do that.²⁰
7 21b) A: John quit smoking.
8 B: Tipper isn’t ready to do that.
9

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

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

AQ1

21 8. What’s the Right View?

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

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

38 On the syntactic conception, free enrichment is still free: nothing in the natural
39 language sentence triggers that process, which takes place as part of an attempt to
40

41

42 _____

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

1 make sense of the utterance. But what the process delivers is unarticulated only
 2 in the sense that nothing in the natural language sentence encodes that element.
 3 It is unarticulated in the sense of not being articulated *in the natural language*
 4 *sentence*. Still the element in question may be ‘linguistic’: it is a constituent in
 5 a (mental) representation, not a constituent in a state of affairs represented by a
 6 representation.


7
 8 We have no particular truck with this view, but as long as enrichment is linguistic, it
 9 can trigger presuppositions. What is interesting is that the view is representational. It
 10 is hard to see just how speakers can recover linguistic items another’s language of
 11 thought; luckily, they don’t have to. They merely have to recover linguistic material
 12 that overlaps in content and presupposition generation.²¹

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

21 We are somewhat indifferent as to which approach is preferable.

23 Conclusion


24
 25 Taking stock, we have argued presupposition triggering is lexical and can occur in
 26 contexts in which (1), (12), (13) and (17) are used. But how widespread are these
 27 effects? We aren’t sure; but, one counter-example suffices to show (AL) is false; and
 28 we have it.

29 Here’s another bit of dovetailing evidence that has similar features to ours. 
 30 with the observation that if there is no jury, a use of (22) is infelicitous.

31
 32 (22) The jury found the defendant guilty.

33 But, as Ludlow (2005) notes, in cases like (23) there is ample evidence of deleted
 34 syntactic material.

35
 36 (23) Found guilty.

37
 38
 39
 40 ²¹ We are grateful to an anonymous referee at  & Language for pressing us on this point.

41 ²² This view was suggested to us by Zoltan Szabó Gendler.

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

1 Of course, there is no unique lexical ‘completion’ of (23); it might be (22) or
 2 (24)–(25):

- 3
 4 (24) Those guys found him guilty.
 5 (25) The person on trial was found guilty.

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

9 We close with two points.

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

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

26
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 43 ²⁴ Thanks to Michael Glanzberg for making this point.

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QUERIES TO BE ANSWERED BY AUTHOR

Queries from the Copyeditor:

- AQ1.** A reference has been added to reflect citation Kaplan 1989. Is it correct?
- AQ2.** Because there is no example 22, examples 23–26 have been re-numbered 22–25 (and text changed). Is this correct?
- AQ3.** This reference has been added to match citation Abusch 2002 in note 8. Is it correct?
- AQ4.** Fiengo and May 1994 is not cited in text. Please delete it from the reference list or indicate where it should be cited.
- AQ5.** This reference has been added to match citation Heim and Kratzer 1998 in note 9. Is it correct?
- AQ6.** Sennet 2011 is not cited in text. Please delete it from the reference list or indicate where it should be cited.
- AQ7.** Simons et al 2011 is not cited in text. Please delete it from the reference list or indicate where it should be cited.
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