Gestural Cosuppositions within the Transparency Theory*  

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Revised, March 22, 2017

Abstract: It has been argued that the sentence None of these 10 guys UP_helped his son (where UP is a lifting gesture co-occurring with the verb) triggers a presupposition that for each of these 10 guys, if he had helped his son, lifting would have been involved (Schlenker 2015, to appear). 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 helped his son like UP_this (or some other post-verbal modifier).

Schlenker_2015, to appear argues that in (1)a the VP triggers an assertion-relative presupposition ('cosupposition') of the form: if x helped, x lifted; no such inference is triggered by the at-issue modifier control in (1)b. (Notation: the gesture co-occurs with the expression that immediately follows the picture). As other presuppositions (Chemla_2009), it arguably projects universally under none, as established experimentally by Tieu_et_al._2017.

(1) a. None of these 10 guys helped his son.  
   => for each of these 10 guys, if he had helped his son, lifting would have been involved

   b. None of these 10 guys helped his son like this / by lifting him.

But why is the presupposition conditionalized on the content of the VP? While Schlenker, to appear essentially stipulates this, we argue that it can be made to follow from an extension of the Transparency theory (Schlenker 2008).

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

(2) Be Articulate  
In any syntactic environment, express \( d_d \) as: \( (d \text{ and } d') \) (unless independent pragmatic principles rule out the full conjunction).

If possible, then, one should say \( \text{it's raining and John knows it...} \) rather than \( \text{John knows that it's raining....} \) 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:

(3) Be Brief - Incremental Version  
Given a context set C, a predicative/propositional occurrence of \( d \) is infelicitous in a sentence that begins with \( a(d \text{ and } g) \) for any expression \( g \) of the same type as \( d \) and for any sentence completion \( b' \).  
\( C \models a(d \text{ and } g) b' \iff a d b' \).

In the end, \( d_d \) is acceptable in a sentence \( a \ d_d \ b \) just in case the attempt to be 'articulate' satisfies the boldfaced equivalence in (3), 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.

(2)-(3) are tailored to the case of 'articulated' competitors of the form \( (d \text{ and } d') \). But we propose that a further option (not explored in Schlenker_2008) explains the conditionalized status of cosuppositions. As already suggested by (1)b, the content of a co-speech gesture \( G \) modifying \( d' \) in \( G \ d' \text{...} \) is naturally 'articulated' as \( \ldots d' \ g \text{...} \), where \( g \) is a post-verbal modifier with the same content as \( G \) (e.g. helped...like

* For helpful theoretical or empirical discussions, I wish to thank Dylan Bumford, Emmanuel Chemla, Chris Kennedy, Nathan Klinedinst, Jeremy Kuhn, Rob Pasternak, Anna Szabolcsi, Lyn Tieu, and the participants to my NYU seminar (Fall 2015) for helpful discussions. The research leading to these results received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007-2013) / ERC Grant Agreement N°324115–FRONTSEM (PI: Schlenker). Research was conducted at Institut d'Etudes Cognitives (ENS), which is supported by grants ANR-10-IDEX-0001-02 PSL* and ANR-10-LABX-0087 IEC.
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 $c'[d'] \models g$, i.e. $c' \models d' \Rightarrow g$ – hence the conditionalized presupposition we observe. (While like this is a particularly simple means of ‘articulation’, all that matters to derive the desired result is that the at-issue gestural content should come right after the VP $d'$.)

Within the Transparency theory, the post-posed nature of the modifier explains why the gestural presupposition is conditional, modulo the extension of (2)-(3) sketched in (4)a-b. (4)b rules out the articulated competitor ... helped 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 $b'$, $C \models a \, ((d' \, g') \, c') \, b' \iff a \, (d' \, c') \, b'$.

Assuming that the modifiers are intersective, (4)b is equivalent to the acceptability conditions predicted by (2)-(3) for $a \, (d' \, \text{and} \, g \, d^* \, b)$, where $d^*$ is an arbitrary assertive component:

(5) Predictions of (2)-(3) for the acceptability of $a \, (d' \, \text{and} \, g \, d^* \, b)$

For any $g$ of the same type as $d$, for any sentence completion $b'$, $C \models a \, ((d' \, g) \, c') \, b' \iff a \, (d' \, c') \, b'$.

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 of these 10 guys drove / swam to the bridge.
   b. None 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.)

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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

Tieu, Lyn; Pasternak, Rob; Schlenker, Philippe; Chemla, Emmanuel: 2017, Co-speech gesture projection: Evidence from inferential judgments. Manuscript.