Presuppositions and commitment stores

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Francis Corblin
Université Paris-Sorbonne
& Institut Jean-Nicod (CNRS)
Francis.Corblin@paris4.sorbonne.fr

Abstract

This paper revisits the classical question of presupposition projection in a dynamic approach to dialog using Hamblin's "commitment stores" (Hamblin, 1970). It is based on a view of presuppositions as selectionnal restrictions, conceived as constraints on the definition domain of functions. The specific update of commitment stores achieved by the mere use of lexical item having restricted definition domains (presuppositions) is captured by means of layered commitment stores distinguishing *background commitments* and (classical) commitments arising from what is said. The compatibility of this dialogic approach with the dynamic theories of Heim (1983) and van der Sandt (1992) is discussed in the course of the paper.

1 Commitment stores

In Hamblin's (1970) style, a dialog updates the commitment stores (CS) of the speaker and hearer, which means that linguistic expressions should be defined in terms of instructions for updating current commitment stores. CS are represented by Hamblin as lists of propositions, keeping track of what the speaker and hearer got committed to in virtue of what they have said (and in virtue of what they have not raised objections against) in the current dialog.

CS should be distinguished clearly from what will be called here the knowledge-base (KB) of each agent involved in the dialog. This data-base is the whole set of propositions that the agent takes for granted. Of course, there is a link between KB and CS, but this relation is not simple and we do not want to take an *a priori* position on this link. For instance, to end a dialog with *p* in one CS does not imply that the agent belief is that *p* is true, and even taking the initiative to update one's own CS with *p* does not imply that the agent belief is that *p* is true. Moreover, as Hamblin (1970) himself puts it, assuming that a KB does not contain *p* and ¬*p* is a standard assumption, but to assume that a commitment store never contains both would be probably too strong. [1]

CS has the general structure of a blackboard. Both participants can "see" what both CSs show at any time; only one participant's CS at once can be updated; speech acts and linguistic expressions are defined as rules for updating CS (adding/retracting commitments).

The project is to use DRT as the language for representing CS, which means providing a first-order representation of the propositional content enriched with dynamic information about context change potential.[2]

Moreover, the DRS material will be split in two parts: the foreground part and the background part. This difference, which can be intuitively seen as the use of two different colors, for writing the conditions of a DRS, does not trigger any change in the classical mechanism which computes the binding relations and the truthful embeddings of CSs in a Model : all DRS conditions are just DRS conditions and only DRS conditions. The difference between foreground/ background will only play a role in the rules for updating CS. This kind of strategy contrasting

[1] An important point, not considered in this paper, is related to the *effects of when it's said* (Hamblin, 1970 b) : a CS is a list, hence the order in which propositions are entered in a CS is relevant. A given CS can contain, for instance *p*, and then ¬*p*. A real discussion of such cases being far beyond the scope of this paper; let us just consider that in such cases , if a commitment contradicts a previous one, the previous one is just retracted.

[2] The view that DRS should be conceived as CS is explicitly introduced by Geurts (1995 : 29) : "I assume, therefore, that a DRS is is a partial picture of a commitment slate".

different kinds of semantic information of the same type has been adopted many times in the literature and it seems to me that layered DRT developed in Nijmegen by R. van der Sandt and his colleagues is based on the same idea.[3]

The conception of CS used in this paper will be kept as simple as possible by means of some idealizations. We consider only *light side* commitments, in the terminology of Walton & Krabbe, (1995, pp. 134), which means that we stick to Hamblin idea that commitments are public. We do not consider either the difference between assertion (an explicit claim of A), and *concession* (what B claims without receiving any objection from A). As in Hamblin's original examples, we assume that what B claims without receiving any objection from A becomes part of A's CS. This latter simplification will allow us, to use in most cases identical CS for A and B. Some very schematic working rules can be used for the sake of illustration.

If A uses a declarative sentence *p*, *p'*, the representation of this sentence is entered in A's CS.

If B does not object, *p'* becomes a part of B's CS.

I will not consider in the paper any "syntactic rule" on dialog moves, i.e. rules which try to predict what a given expression, or a given CS configuration, prohibits or imposes for the next moves. I will only consider "semantic rules" i.e. rules defining what a given expression triggers in terms of CS updates for the user of this expression, and I will consider only declarative sentences (for the interpretation of questions in dialog, see Ginzburg (1995).

2 Presuppositions as commitments

Although there are many debates about the nature and behavior of presuppositions, most theories would accept at least the following claims: 1– presuppositions are propositions; 2– they are lexically triggered.

From this, we infer that presuppositions should be entered in CS. The interpretation of 2 is not straightforward. Let us assume that a presupposition of a lexical item *I* is triggered by the use of *I*. This means that any use of *I*, in any logical context (negation, modality, etc.), and for any illocutionary force (assertion, question, etc.) triggers the ascription of *I*'s presupposition to the CS of the user of *I*. Although this view is by no means original it faces two problems:

1. It is too strong: in some contexts, *I* is used, but its potential presuppositions are not projected. Some theories see these cases as "cancellation" cases.

2. It is unmotivated: why should the mere use of a lexical item, irrespective of the logical (e.g. negation, conditional, etc.) context in which it is embedded, commit its user to any propositional content?

I will first try to provide an answer to question (2). The general idea is to consider presuppositions as selectional restrictions, a linguistic phenomenon conceived as analogous to domain restrictions on functions.

2.1 Selectional restrictions

Selectional restriction is a notion introduced by Chomsky (1965), and exemplified by (1) :

(1) I drink something.

It can be described, tentatively, as follows : the lexical expression *drink x* cannot be used for updating any CS, unless the variable *x* is restricted to a domain of individuals such that they satisfy the condition *liquid (x)*.Anyone trying to bypass this rule would not be using the language properly. Consider for instance the potential utterance (2) :

(2) Were you drinking an apple?

It seems to me that the most widespread judgment on (2) is that it violates the rules of English. If someone tries nevertheless, no update stemming from the sentence itself is performed, but the next moves in dialog will try to elucidate this problem about the language supposed to be the common language of the dialog.

Note that the condition *liquid (x)* has any properties of what is called a presupposition : it is propositional, lexically triggered, and stemming from the mere use of the verb *drink* whatever its logical environment is. It gives rise to the same phenomena, and can be captured by the same test than classical examples of presuppositions. (3) will quickly illustrate this:

(3) A : I was not drinking my X.

[3] Corblin (1991) argues that presuppositions should be treated as distinguished conditions of DRSs, which seems to be the same idea.

After (3), *liquid (X)* becomes a part of A's CS. The hearer B can test this commitment against her KB and can find three things in it : 1. *liquid (X);* 2. ¬ *liquid (X);* 3. no information about *liquid (X).*

Case 1 is the unmarked case: *X* is the known common noun or a known trademark for a liquid.

Case 2 is a case where B must ask clarification about the language used by A : either *drink* or *X* is used by A in a non-standard way. It can trigger for instance moves like (4) which are typical of reactions to presupposition failure:

(4) B : But one cannot DRINK an X, X is not a liquid

Case 3 can be a case where B will learn that *X* is a liquid; at least, she will learn that A uses it as something that A takes for being in A and B's KB.

There is a correspondence between these three cases and the concepts found in the literature which must be clarified. Case 1 reminds van der Sandt (1992) notion of *binding*: the content *liquid (X)* is *found* in some representation of the context. Similarly it is close to the notion of *satisfaction* used in satisfaction theories. Case 2 corresponds to what is called *presupposition failure* in most theories. Case 3 evokes strongly what is called *accommodation,* in most theories using the concept.

2.2 Presuppositions

Having argued that this typical example of selectional restriction can be described in the same terms than presuppositions, we are lead to conclude that presupposition might be nothing else than selection. Selection itself is conceived on the model of domain restrictions on the definition of functions. It is based on the fact that some lexical items contain constraints on their definition domain: the function associated to *drink (x)*, is defined for any *x* satisfying the function *liquid(x),* and undefined otherwise. Using lexical items with no consideration of their definition domain is just not speaking the language. Conversely, using a lexical item commits to the satisfaction of its domain restrictions.

I will illustrate on some classical examples this view of presupposition as selection:

A. Factive verbs.

(5) I regret that P.

Factive verbs presuppose the truth of their complement *p.* What we said before is that *drink (x)* is defined if *liquid (x)* is true, and undefined otherwise. Similarly *regret (p)* is defined is *p* is true, and undefined otherwise. We will thus analyze *regret (p)* as triggering the background commitment (BC) *p.* One can note that the form of the presupposition is slightly different. For *drink* the BC is a condition on the individual members of the domain (*liquid)*; for *regret* it is just the truth of the propositional argument which is presupposed. This difference might be relevant for delimitating sub-classes, but the similarity is important enough for claiming that we have examples of the same phenomenon.

2. *Manage to.*

(6) John managed to P.

In this case, *p* is not presupposed, but a condition equivalent to: *doing p was difficult for John* is associated to *manage*. The situation is very close to the case of *drink.*

3. Definite descriptions.

(7) The king of France is bald.

It is easy to see *the,* in *the X* as imposing the BC that there is one and only one X.

2.3 Background commitments

We use for the representation of dialog CS designed as classical DRSs distinguishing explicitly BC from the other conditions. We will use in this paper italics for BC.

A simplified CS for (7) is (8) :

(8)[*x [king- of France (x),* bald (x)]]

Although binding is allowed between all commitments, BC are distinguished from foreground commitments by a set of properties which supports the decision to set them apart. In a sense, BC are just the price one has to pay for *using* lexical items, whatever one wants to convey about a model by using these items. A dialog, thus, is not designed for making public the BC of the lexical items she uses, although just by using such items the speaker is committed to them. BC are made public, although the dialog is not set up for making *them* public.

The most salient property associated to this background status is that if *p* is introduced as a

BC, the probability to isolate *p* as an antecedent for a propositional anaphor is very low. Depending on one's own theory of propositional anaphora, one might suggest different reasons for this. It can be seen as a mechanical consequence of the fact that BC are propositions which are most often not encoded under the linguistic form of a clause. If your theory requires that the antecedent of propositional anaphors be clauses, you explain that presuppositions are not accessible to them. If you do not make this assumption and let anaphors work on the semantic representation of the discourse or dialog, you will have to block by an additional stipulation the accessibility of BC. Some examples will illustrate the difficulty to isolate a BC as the antecedent of a propositonal anaphor. In (9), although the sentence is represented as a conjunction (*It was difficult for John to fail* & John failed), it is impossible to interpret a propositional anaphor as taking the sole presupposition as its antecedent :

(9) A: X managed to fail.
B: I cannot believe it.

Most speakers interpret B's sentence as : I cannot believe X failed. [4] This is a case in which the presupposition does not show up in the sentence as a clause. The same is true for *The King of France* case, and the presupposition is not accessible. The most interesting cases for the discussion are factive verbs, since they exhibit the presupposition under the form of a subordinate clause. Consider the contrast (10)/(11) :

(10) X regrets that Y left.
(11) X says that Y left.

If it can be shown that the accessibility of the subordinate clause is significantly lower in (10) than in (11), it would be an argument showing that as such, the BC status of an overtly expressed clause reduces its anaphoric accessibility. I will not pursue the discussion on this for space consideration.

A consequence is that a BC is introduced without being isolated as an accessible topic for the ongoing dialog. A BC, thus, cannot be a *QUD* (questions under discussion), see Ginzburg (1995). In other words, encoding as a BC a given information gives no chance to know more about it in the dialog because it is not an accessible topic. The other side of the coin is that BC encodes normally shared information, that is to say information that the dialog is not designed to manipulate.

Some other distinctive properties can be associated to BC.

- *BC must be contested immediately*. Beaver (2001) insists on this distinctive property of presuppositions, and the present proposal provides a nice context for discussing this point. In dialog, the participants can hold contradictory theses, and a single participant can change her mind in the course of the discussion. If I do not object immediately to your assertion *p*, which becomes part of my commitment, *p* is by no means protected from latter attacks. But it is a common observation that to come back after a while on a *BC p* for adopting explicitly a commitment ¬*p*, is judged unfair if the initiative is taken by the opponent; if taken by the proponent of the BC, it is even worse. I will try to suggest some justification of this based on the very notion of BC.

– *the rejection of a BC by the opponent comes with the cancellation of the utterance containing its trigger.* "Cancellation" means that any effect on the opponent CS update is cancelled. Many BC being existence commitments one might think that this is not a property of BC, but a property of existence commitments. But in the case of selectional restrictions (see the case of *drink)*, the BC is not a BC of existence, and this is also true for some classical examples of presuppositions (e.g. *manage).* In those cases, my intuition is that, if one rejects the BC, one suspends any update, and waits (or asks) for an elucidation. Suppose for example someone says to you that *John managed to pass the exam*, and that for you, John is the best student of the class. Would you just reject explicitly the BC, keeping the information that *John passed*; or would you suspend any update, thinking for instance that the proponent may be actually speaking of someone else that John (satisfying the BC) and convey no information about *John?* My impression is that when one is in doubt about the capacity of the proponent to

[4] Note that the reading *I cannot believe that it was difficult for him and that he failed* is not accessible either. If it were, one could argue that what happens for the succession accommodated presupposition/assertion is not that different from what happens for two conjoined assertions:
A. It was difficult for him to fail and he failed.
B. I cannot believe it.
Most speakers can interpret B's assertion as : I cannot believe that it was difficult and that he failed, even if they express a preference for taking as antecedent the last expressed proposition.
This shows that bakground commitments cannot be treated as would be a previous assertion.

choose the right word for speaking of a Model, this doubt extends to any part of the utterance.

- *for rejecting a BC there are specific linguistic devices which are also used for language mistakes: metalinguistic negation and stress on the "wrong" word.* Typical cases are illustrated in the following examples :

(12)But one cannot DRINK an X, one can only EAT an X.

(13)John did not MANAGE to succeed; he succeeded because the exam was very easy for him.

All these properties are coherent with the view of BC advocated in this paper. The rejection of BC, if any, must be immediate because it is unexpected, it would cancel the whole utterance, and it would cast doubts about the language used in the current dialog.

3 The projection problem

The general idea is that any user of a lexical BC trigger is committed to its BC. We expect, then, in general, the BC of a complex sentence to be the conjunctions of its BC. The only resources we have for deriving the so-called "cancellation" cases, are linked to the notion of "user of a lexical item", and to the notion of context of satisfaction of a BC.

3.1 Plugs

The classical theory of presupposition projection set up by Karttunen (1973, p. 178) distinguishes three kinds of contexts: *plugs*, *holes,* and *filters*. Dynamic theories of presupposition projection (the satisfaction theory and the binding-accommodation, see Geurts 1995)) are mainly concerned with filters, and what they have to say about plugs and holes is not very clear. The present proposal, in contrast, provides a straightforward explanation for the existence of plugs.

Plugs are defined by Karttunen as contexts which blocks all the presuppositions of the complement sentence. Typical examples are : *say, mention, tell, ask.*[5] They are precisely contexts that allow taking their lexical trigger as *used by another agent* (reported speech), not by the speaker. In other words, in the context of these verbs, the speaker does not necessarily take herself the responsibility of using these lexical items, but might only be reporting the words *another* speaker used *(John says that the king of France is bald*). Our explanation is straightforward: who uses a lexical item is committed to its BC, and not who *reports* the use of a lexical item by someone else, provided that she makes explicit that she would not use herself this word. The later condition is crucial although we will not go into details here. The fact that this condition is very difficult to satisfy (because after all, a speaker makes use of any lexical item she utters (except in direct reported speech) explains that plugs are not strict barriers against projection of the BC in the speaker CS.

The prediction of the theory is that any other context should be a Karttunen's *hole* i.e. a context in which any BC is made part of the speaker's CS. [6]

3.2 Filters

Filters have the following relevant features: in some constructions (e.g. the antecedent of a conditional), the presence of an expression entailing a presupposition of the consequent, prevents the presupposition to be ascribed to the CS of the speaker. A typical case is (14) :

(14) If France is a monarchy, the king of France is bald.

Gazdar (1979), Heim (1983) and van der Sandt (1992) are well known proposals devoted to explain the existence of filters (see Beaver 2001).

Most properties of context change potential approaches (Heim 1983) transpose nicely in our framework without any ad hoc stipulation: if a trigger is used in the consequent of a conditional, the user is committed to the presupposition in her top-level CS updated by the antecedent. This is a direct consequence of what is a BC : to use a trigger in the consequent means that your top-level CS updated by the antecedent is a context in which the trigger is licensed. If the antecedent update entails the BC, as in (14) this requirement is satisfied and no update is necessary. If not, the speaker is committed to the presupposition satis-

[5] I follow here the presentation of Beaver (2001, p. 54).

[6] We have not enough space here for discussing attitudes verbs (Heim 1992, Geurts 1995). What have been said about verbs reporting speech acts would be a worth trying starting point.

faction in her (toplevel) CS. A comparison to Gazdar (1979) proposal will lead to make this formulation more precise.

Gazdar's treatment of cases like (14) relies crucially on Hintikka's logic of belief, and on the notion of *clausal implicature*:

(15) Clausal implicature of $P \rightarrow Q$: $\neg K(P), \neg K(\neg P), \neg K(Q), \neg K(\neg Q)$. (the speaker has no belief about P)

Gazdar predicts that the presupposition *p* of the consequent is cancelled because if projected, it would contradict the clausal implicature triggered by the use of *if P* (if *P* entails *p*).

But examples like (16) show that this cannot be the right explanation :

(16) Mary is sleeping. If Mary is sleeping, John knows that she is sleeping. Thus John knows that she is sleeping.

The speaker is committed to *P* by the first sentence, but *if P…* is used then, which shows that the use of *if P* is compatible with the commitment to *P*. The key part of Gazdar explanation (i.e. the clausal implicature) seems, in other words, to meet empirical objections.

But such cases force us to strengthen our own proposal. Once admitted that *P* and *if P* are compatible in a CS, we need an additional principle for ensuring that the presupposition of the consequent is not projected at the top-level. I propose that the relevant principle is the Minimal Commitment Principle (MCP) :

(17) MCP : The update of CS by BC is minimal. A potential BC *P* ends up as a BC iff the use of its trigger is not licensed otherwise.

MCP ensures that in (14), since the antecedent of the conditional entails a BC of the consequent, no update of the CS is done.

Van der Sandt's anaphoric treatment of presuppositions would consider (14) as a case in which the presupposition tries to find its antecedent in the *if* clause. In (14) anaphora to the *if* clause fails, and looks for an antecedent at the top-level of the DRS. If (14) is the first sentence of a discourse, no antecedent can be found. Accommodation is then tried at this level. Accommodation is constrained by *contextual acceptability*. I will discuss briefly van der Sandt constraints[7], while running through the example, trying to establish whether they are compatible with the present approach:

(i) informativeness: prevents to accommodate a presupposition which is entailed by the DRS.

MCP seems to have roughly the same effect: if you are already committed to P, any BC entailed by P will trigger no update. Note that in the CS approach, this is a constraint on BC, not on commitments. Nothing prevents the reiteration of an assertion in a dialog, as everyday life shows.

(ii) consistency: prevents to accommodate $\neg P$ if the DRS entails *P*. Although the CS framework allows explicit contradiction in a dialog, the very notion of BC suggests that the retraction of a previous commitment by means of a BC is not a standard strategy.

(iii) no accommodation can be such that some subordinate DRS is either entailed or contradicted by a superordinate DRS.

This constraint seems to be based on the same intuition than Gazdar's clausal implicature (see above). Although van der Sandt gives it explicitly as a constraint on accommodation, he overtly makes it an application of a general principle on discourse coherence which would exclude cases like (16).[8] The MCP, in contrast, will derive (14) without predicting anything about (16).

Let us now consider the treatment of (14) by (i)-(iii). Top-level accommodation is blocked by (iii): one cannot accommodate something that entails a subordinate DRS. *There is a king of France* entails *France is a monarchy*. We try then to accommodate in the antecedent, and this is allowed if *France is a Monarchy* does not entail that *there is a king of France.* It the entailment holds, the informativeness principle (i) is violated.

At first glance, van der Sandt's system makes the same empirical prediction that the MCP for (14), but I see at least one potential problem with this strategy. As I understand the way of treating (14) with (i)-(iii), the theory assumes a strong logical difference between the two propositions. In (14) we need to accept:

There is a king of F. |= F. is a monarchy

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[7] Van der Sandt (1992, p. 367).

[8] There is no doubt that this is van der Sandt's interpretation of the constraint as shows his illustrative example (63a):*John has a dog. If he has a dog, he has a cat.*
He gives this piece of discourse as unacceptable, although it is for me correct.

If not, accommodation on top-level is allowed. But we need to accept as well:

F is a monarchy $|\neq$ *There is a king of F.*

If we do not, accommodation in the antecedent is not informative.

But this distinction is not plausible if one considers the following couple of examples:

(18) If John has a wife, his marriage is very recent.

(19)If John is married, his wife is French.

The theory, as I understand it, would have to assume that in (18): *to be married* $|=$ *having a wife,* and *to have a wife* $|\neq$ *to be married.* But in (19), the theory would have to assume that *to have a wife* $|=$ *to be married*, and *to be married* $|\neq$ *to have a wife*. It is hard to believe that the processing of these two sentences might be grounded on so strict, subtle and incompatible logical relations between the predicates *to be married* and *to have a wife.*

Our proposal escapes this problem because we do not manipulate logical relations between propositions but constraints on definition domains for the use of lexical items. "To be licensed", in the MCP (17) means than if a proposition is true, it is legitimate to make use of a given lexical item for it. But to the truth of the proposition, we do not associate strict logical inferences involving the lexical item. It is be more in the spirit of our view to see licensing as based on default generic implications like: if X is a monarchy, normally, there is a King(Queen) of X; if X is the King of X, normally, X is a monarchy. We all know real cases in which there are monarchies without sovereign and sovereigns without monarchies.

What we conclude from this discussion is that the MCP derives correctly the "filtering effect" of quantified structures without assuming the "contextual acceptability" constraints needed in van der Sandt's approach, which are not without problems.

3.3 Commitments and Knowledge-Bases

(20) exemplifies a classical problem for presupposition projection theories:

(20) Any woman cherishes her child.

The problem is that this sentence is admissible in a dialog, although none of its users would accept to be committed to *Any woman has a child*. A solution is to let such sentences be interpreted as:

(21) Any woman (having a child) cherishes her child.

But this solution is too strong because it would legitimate, contrary to facts, *any* "intermediate accommodation" like in (22):

(22) Any woman likes her Ferrari.

In the present framework, like in Heim (1983), it is predicted that (20) triggers the BC that any woman has a child. Van der Sandt (1992, p.364) predicts for (20) the interpretation (21) on the basis of a structural constraint on binding/accommodation. The pronoun *her* must be bound by its antecedent *any woman*, and consequently, the accommodation of an antecedent for *the child of x* can only be done in the scope of *any woman.* But the contextual acceptability constraints (i)-(iii), see §3.2, cannot rule out (22).

In a nutshell, although a strictly universal commitment is not projected, a purely accidental and unexpected property like in (22) makes the sentence odd. [9]

We need, it seems, a treatment which commits the user of (20) at least to the BC that "stereotypical women have a child". This would derive the acceptability contrast (20)/(22). Let us stick to the prediction that the basic interpretation of such structures projects a *universal* BC. This is what happens if the discourse is not generic, and is about a restricted set of individuals.[10]

(23) Every boy took his Ferrari (bike)and left.

(23) commits to the BC that every boy (within a particular context-set) had a Ferrari (bike).[11]

Now if the sentence is generic, the KB of the participants knows whether this universal BC is true or not: in the sentence (22), we now that it is not. Let us take this contradiction between the universal commitment mechanically projected by the structure and a proposition of the (shared) KB, a *necessary* condition for triggering the suspension of the universal BC projection. The *sufficient* condition is that the correspondent stereotypical BC be the case, which is true for

[9] See Beaver (2001, §5.6) for a discussion pointing to the relevance of genericity in such examples.

[10] See Beaver (2001).

[11] I am not sure how van der Sandt's approach would accommodate this generic/specific contrast.

bike (in some societies), not for *Ferrari*. The relevant configuration for (20) is thus:

(24) CS potential update:
any W has a C
KB:
¬ (any W has a C)
GEN (W have C)

For (22), although the necessary condition is satisfied, the sufficient condition is not, and the sentence is odd. If both conditions are satisfied, the sentence is interpreted as projecting a weaker BC (stereotypical, not universal). We can explain in this approach why sentences like (20) give the impression that the proponent speaks as if the property were universal (this is the basic interpretation) and why it commits to stereotypes (a typical woman has a child). Moreover we can understand why such sentences are perceived as shortcuts and why these shortcuts although they commit to BC stereotypes are nevertheless so often used. For this, let us compare (20) to the fully explicit (BC-less) version (25):

(25) Every woman having a child cherishes her child.

This sentence is perfectly acceptable and "clean" (deprived of any BC about women and child). It has nevertheless some features which might lead speakers to prefer the "shortened" version. For most speakers the sentence has a redundancy flavor, and the more the property is stereotypical, the more it is perceptible. The reason might be that to restrict X with a stereotypical property of X creates for ordinary discourse the same kind of redundancy than to restrict X with a property strictly entailed by X. The underlying principle might be that by default, one always speaks of stereotypical cases. Compare: *any triangle having three angles, any man having two hands, any French man having a car,….* By choosing this explicit option, then, the speaker treats stereotypes exactly as any property and does not make use of the shared knowledge of the evoked stereotype.

The commitment framework suggests thus to see the so called "intermediate accom-modation" as a pragmatic weakening of the semantic universal BC, relying heavily on KB and stereotypes.

4 Conclusion

The general idea of this paper is that presuppositions are background commitments arising from the use of lexical items involving restrictions on their definition domain. We have tried to give some arguments showing that this idea is worth trying, an the paper has been devoted mainly to illustrate the basic intuitions of this dialogic approach and to point to some issues on which it seems to do better than current dynamic approaches. The next step will be to test this view of presuppositions in a formalized version of the CS framework in order to develop a more systematic comparison with the predictions of these theories.

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