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## An argument for the trivalent approach to presupposition projection

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# snippets

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## Contents

1.	Andreea C. Nicolae, Patrick D. Elliott, and Yasutada Sudo <i>Introduction</i> .....	1
2.	Dorothy Ahn <i>ASL IX to locus as a modifier</i> .....	2
3.	Artemis Alexiadou <i>Decomposing scalar approximatives in Greek</i> .....	4
4.	Anna Alsop, Lucas Champollion, and Ioana Grosu <i>A problem for Fox's (2007) account of free choice disjunction</i> .....	7
5.	Anton Benz and Nicole Gotzner <i>Quantifier irgendein and local implicature</i> .....	10
6.	Jonathan David Bobaljik and Susi Wurmbrand <i>Fake indexicals, binding, and the PCC</i> .....	13
7.	Brian Buccola and Emmanuel Chemla <i>Alternatives of disjunctions: when a disjunct contains the antecedent of a pronoun</i> ....	16
8.	Luka Crnić and Brian Buccola <i>Scoping NPIs out of DPs</i> .....	19
9.	Chris Cummins <i>Some contexts requiring precise number meanings</i> .....	22
10.	Patrick D. Elliott and Paul Marty <i>Exactly one theory of multiplicity inferences</i> .....	24

11.	Anamaria Fălăuș and Andreea C. Nicolae	
	<i>Two coordinating particles are better than one: free choice items in Romanian</i> . . . . .	27
12.	Danny Fox	
	<i>Individual concepts and narrow scope illusions</i> . . . . .	30
13.	Danny Fox	
	<i>Degree concepts and narrow scope illusions</i> . . . . .	33
14.	Nicole Gotzner	
	<i>Disjunction, conjunction, and exhaustivity</i> . . . . .	35
15.	Martin Hackl	
	<i>On Haddock's puzzle and the role of presupposition in reference resolution</i> . . . . .	37
16.	Andreas Haida	
	<i>Symmetry, density, and formal alternatives</i> . . . . .	40
17.	Nina Haslinger and Viola Schmitt	
	<i>Strengthened disjunction or non-classical conjunction?</i> . . . . .	43
18.	Fabian Heck and Anke Himmelreich	
	<i>Two observations about reconstruction</i> . . . . .	46
19.	Aron Hirsch	
	<i>Modal adverbs and constraints on type-flexibility</i> . . . . .	49
20.	Natalia Ivlieva and Alexander Podobryaev	
	<i>On variable agreement and scope reconstruction in Russian</i> . . . . .	52
21.	Hadil Karawani	
	<i>The past is rewritten</i> . . . . .	54
22.	Manfred Krifka and Fereshteh Modarresi	
	<i>Persian ezafe and proportional quantifiers</i> . . . . .	56
23.	Paul Marty	
	<i>Maximize Presupposition! and presupposition satisfaction</i> . . . . .	59
24.	Lisa Matthewson, Sihwei Chen, Marianne Huijsmans, Marcin Morzycki, Daniel Reisinger, and Hotze Rullmann	
	<i>Restricting the English past tense</i> . . . . .	61
25.	Clemens Mayr	
	<i>On a seemingly nonexistent cumulative reading</i> . . . . .	65
26.	Marie-Christine Meyer	
	<i>Scalar Implicatures in complex contexts</i> . . . . .	67
27.	Moreno Mitrović	
	<i>Null disjunction in disguise</i> . . . . .	70
28.	Andreea C. Nicolae and Yasutada Sudo	
	<i>The exhaustive relevance of complex conjunctions</i> . . . . .	72
29.	Rick Nouwen	
	<i>Scalar vagueness regulation and locative reference</i> . . . . .	75

30.	Robert Pasternak	
	<i>Unifying partitive and adjective-modifying percent</i> .....	77
31.	Hazel Pearson and Frank Sode	
	<i>'Not in my wildest dreams': a part time minimizer?</i> .....	80
32.	Orin Percus	
	<i>Uli and our generation: some reminiscences</i> .....	82
33.	Jacopo Romoli	
	<i>Why them?</i> .....	84
34.	Fabienne Salfner	
	<i>The rise and fall of non-conservatives</i> .....	87
35.	Petra B. Schumacher	
	<i>Vagueness and context-sensitivity of absolute gradable adjectives</i> .....	90
36.	Stephanie Solt	
	<i>More or less an approximator</i> .....	93
37.	Giorgos Spathas	
	<i>Plural anaphoric reference and non-conservativity</i> .....	95
38.	Benjamin Spector	
	<i>An argument for the trivalent approach to presupposition projection</i> .....	97
39.	Bob van Tiel	
	<i>'The case against fuzzy logic revisited' revisited</i> .....	100
40.	Lyn Tieu	
	<i>A developmental asymmetry between the singular and plural</i> .....	103
41.	Tue Trinh	
	<i>A tense question</i> .....	106
42.	Hubert Truckenbrodt	
	<i>On remind-me presuppositions and embedded question acts</i> .....	108
43.	Michael Wagner	
	<i>Disjuncts must be mutually excludable</i> .....	111
44.	E. Cameron Wilson	
	<i>Constraints on non-conservative readings in English</i> .....	114
45.	Susi Wurmbrand	
	<i>Indexical shift meets ECM</i> .....	117

# An argument for the trivalent approach to presupposition projection

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According to several theories of presupposition (Heim 1983; Schlenker 2008, 2009, a.o.), presupposition triggers in the scope of universal quantifiers (as in (1)) yield a *universal presupposition* (cf. (1a), while in static trivalent approaches (Peters 1979; Beaver and Krahmer 2001; George 2008, 2014; Fox 2008), the presupposition is strictly weaker. In such approaches, (1) presupposes the disjunction of its the truth-conditions and its falsity-conditions, and a universal statement is false as soon as there exists a counterexample satisfying the presuppositional part of the predicate but not its assertive part (cf. (1b)).

- (1) Every linguist stopped smoking.
  - a. Presupposition under the Universal Projection (UP) view: ‘Every linguist used to smoke’.
  - b. Presupposition under the trivalent view: ‘Every linguist used to smoke and stopped, or at least one linguist used to smoke and didn’t stop’.

I claim that the interpretation of the sentence in (2) provides an argument for the trivalent approach.

- (2) Every linguist agrees with every other linguist that Uli made major contributions to the field.

First, note that *x agrees with y that p* presupposes that *y believes p* (Lahiri 2002). I assume the following LF for (2) (*p* abbreviates the that-clause):

- (3) [Every linguist][ $\lambda x$ [every linguist diff from *x*][ $\lambda y$ [*x* agrees with *y* that *p*]]]

On the UP view, (2) is predicted to presuppose (4a), which reduces to (4b) (assuming there exist several linguists):

- (4)
  - a. For every linguist *l* and every linguist *l'* distinct from *l*, *l'* believes *p*.
  - b. Every linguist believes *p*.

Since (2) also *asserts* that every linguist believes *p*, (2) is predicted to assert what it presupposes. It should thus pattern with (5), which asserts what it presupposes and is perceived to be *tautological* (technically, it is *Strawson-tautological*, being Strawson-entailed by the tautology – cf. von Stechow 1999):

- (5) Mary is her sister’s sister.

(2), however, is not perceived as tautological.

As a reviewer notes, the meaning of *agree with* might be more complex. For instance, the sentences in (6) suggest that Mary was aware of Paul's opinion and discussed it with him before agreement was/wasn't reached. This inference, however, behaves like a presupposition, being preserved, e.g., under negation. Even if we assume a stronger presupposition for *agree with* to take this into account, the assertive content would still be redundant.

(6) Mary agreed/didn't agree with Paul that Jane should be invited.

The trivalent view fares better. On this view, (2) is true if every linguist believes  $p$ , and false if there exists a pair of linguists  $(l, l')$  that falsifies the universal claim that for every linguist  $l$  and every linguist  $l'$  distinct from  $l$ ,  $l$  agrees with  $l'$  that  $p$ . That is, it is false if there is a pair of linguists  $(l, l')$  such that  $l'$  believes  $p$  and  $l$  doesn't. The predicted presupposition – the disjunction of the truth and falsity conditions – is as in (7a), which reduces to (7b) (assuming there exists at least one linguist):

- (7) a. Every linguist believes  $p$ , or there is a linguist who believes  $p$  and another linguist who does not.  
b. There is a linguist who believes  $p$ .

This seems better. The presupposition no longer entails the assertion. Furthermore, the predicted presupposition seems plausible. In (8), for instance, an existential inference seems warranted.

(8) Does every linguist agree with every other linguist that Uli made major contributions to the field?

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