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**AG2 – Exact Repetition in Grammar and  
Discourse**

Repetition vs.  
implicatures and presuppositions

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# Variability in scalar implicature

- Robustness of SIs varies with the trigger (Van Tiel et al. 2014), when presented in same minimal context

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John says:

*This student is intelligent.*

Would you conclude from this that, according to John, she is not brilliant?

Yes

No

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# Causes of SI failure?

- Can we think of circumstances in which a weak scalar, such as “some”, fails to trigger an implicature?
  - Theoretically, several possibilities...
  - ...including cases in which stronger scalemate (“all”) would be irrelevant to the discourse purpose (cf. Breheny et al. 2006)  
*Some of John’s relatives are visiting*
  - Still, even in such cases, tempting to think that the speaker might just use “all” anyway, if it were true
  - Possible exception (?): where the utterance is directed towards a question that also uses the weak scalar  
*Did you eat some of the cakes? / Yes, I ate some of them.*

# Parallel in numerical domain

- Cummins, Sauerland and Solt (2012)
  - *more than 60* attracts range interpretation (“not more than 80”)
  - However, the upper bound is less consistently inferred when the number has been previously mentioned

A: We need to sell 60 tickets to cover our costs. How are the ticket sales going?

B: So far, we've sold more than 60 tickets.

How many tickets have been sold? From ..... to ....., most likely .....

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How many tickets have been sold? From ..... to ....., most likely .....

# And presuppositions?

- Presuppositions generally project, for instance from under the scope of negation: *I didn't realise that p*
- However, this is cancellable: *...because not-p*
- Hence, hearer has to decide whether to add the presupposition (in this case  $p$ ) to her discourse model
- Idea: repetition as a licensing condition for non-projection
  - That is, acceptability of *I didn't realise that p, because not-p* is dependent upon prior introduction of the idea *realise that p*

# Pilot experiment: guessing questions

- Participants asked to provide preceding discourse turns for 16 utterances by “B”, 8 involving presuppositions
  - v1 of form, e.g., “John didn’t stop smoking”
  - v2 of form, e.g., “John didn’t stop smoking; he didn’t use to smoke”
- Question: was there a difference in the prevalence of repetitious responses?
- Answer: yes, essentially however coded
  - 48% vs. 81% prevalence of clear ps. in preceding turn
  - 58% vs. 85% prevalence of possible ps. in preceding turn
  - 17% vs. 57% prevalence of repeated string (modulo inflections)
  - Some verbatim “repetitions” in v2

# Metalinguistic?

- Presupposition-cancelling cases behaving like classic instances of “metalinguistic negation” (Horn)
  - Cases where the negation of material expresses an objection to the pragmatic meaning it conveyed (or would convey)
    - *We don't like coffee, we love it*
    - *Grandma isn't feeling lousy, she is indisposed*
    - *(?) John didn't quit smoking, he never smoked*
- Similar pattern in “repeating tonelessly”
  - *You thought it would be a good idea*
- Suspension of meaning seems to relate to the fact that these are not the speaker's “own words”
  - Hearer is (expected to be) alert to this

# Possible influences on the speaker

- Various factors could be bearing upon the speaker, in principle, with possible “architectural” consequences
- Low-level: priming
  - Contributory to maximising the ease of production
- High-level: strategic, dialogic (e.g. QUD)
  - Contributory to maximising the ease of comprehension



# High-level approach

- More traditional
- Exact repetition strategic
  - presenting precisely what is being objected to (in metalinguistic negation or in the presupposition case)
  - or offering a minimal, narrow response to a particular QUD (although we could analyse the other examples in this way too)
- For the latter case, might need to tighten the notion of QUD
  - Would need it to be the case that a repetitious answer was effort-saving as far as the hearer was concerned
  - e.g. if you care “whether more than 60”, “more than 60” has to be a more efficient answer than “(more than) 100” for this to work

# Low-level approach

- Priming, in the sense of Pickering and Garrod (2004)
  - Repetition could be explained as the re-use of material whose first use has made it cognitively available at a lower processing cost

*Did Amy manage to pass the exam?*

*She didn't manage to pass the exam, she did so easily*
- Logical limits to this; priming cannot be be-all and end-all
  - Production cannot be determined completely by priming
  - Although priming should apply to words, some of the best demonstrations (e.g. Branigan et al. 2000) are more abstract

# Priming and informational load

- Branigan et al. (2000) show priming for Prepositional Object and Double Object forms for ditransitive verbs
  - *X verbed the Y to Z* primes *John gave the book to Sally*
  - *X verbed Z the Y* primes *John gave Sally the book*
- Any differences in meaning/intention?
  - If not, then essentially a free choice, which is being influenced slightly by the availability of the two competing forms
- Apparently little consensus as to whether it's possible for priming to influence communicative intention...
  - ...which would have some consequences for the architecture of a production model of language, often taken to be intention-driven

# Priming vs. Whorf

- Conceptual parallel between priming effects bearing on intention and the idea that language influences our thought
  - Effective consequence of priming is, at the point of utterance, a slight change to the resources available to us for communication
  - Seems rather unlikely that this would seriously impinge upon our ability to express whatever intention we want
  - Seems very plausible that this would have minor effects

# Outlook for the hearer

- Hearer seems to be able to suspend enrichments in cases of repetition
  - A rational response, assuming that the hearer's goal is to get at the speaker's intention, rather than to track down the QUD or identify the presence of priming effects (or whatever)
  - Otherwise, miscommunication would be predicted, with hearers drawing inferences that speakers did not mean to convey
- However, unclear whether this involves responding to high-level or low-level considerations (or both)
  - Potentially interesting to speculate as to how the hearer might deal with priming – emulation, for instance?
  - Relates to some live ideas about forward modelling and ToM