



Are presuppositions accommodated globally by default?

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Overview

- What is presupposition accommodation?
 - How does it relate to projective meaning?
- Can we investigate presuppositions in the same way as scalar implicatures?
- Goals of this project
 - Measure differences between presupposition triggers
 - Investigate time-course of processing

Accommodation

John **stopped** going to the gym

ps. = John used to go to the gym

- Presupposition could be
 - Common knowledge to both interlocutors
 - Known to the speaker and not the hearer (i.e. speaker intends to convey ps. as well as declarative content)
- In the latter case, ps. is *accommodated*

Projection

- Presuppositions of complex sentences *project*

Mary **realised** that whales are mammals.

Mary didn't **realise** that whales are mammals.

ps. = Whales are mammals.

- Characteristic of presuppositions
 - Unlike implicatures etc.
- How do projective meanings arise?

Projection failure

- Presuppositions of complex sentences *project* (sometimes...)

Mary didn't **realise** that whales are fish, because whales are not fish.

- How do projective meanings sometimes not arise?

Possible accounts

- Dynamic semantic theory (Heim 1983, van der Sandt 1992)
 - Projection explained by rules of semantic composition
 - *Local accommodation* possible (but dispreferred?)
- Pragmatic theories (Stalnaker 1974, Schlenker 2008)
 - Projection explained by principles of conversation
 - Default is to project? (Levinson 2000)

Recapitulating the study of SIs

- Scalar implicatures
 - Enriched meanings
 - Signalled by specific trigger expressions
 - Computed by default and cancelled, or obtained only when contextually justified?
 - Theories generally agree on ultimate interpretation
 - Distinguishable by time-course of processing
 - Open to experimental investigation

Investigating presuppositions

- Comparative little experimental work until recently
 - See presentations this session and references therein
 - Also Smith and Hall (2011), Xue and Onea (2011), etc.
- Diversity of triggers / presuppositions
 - More complex than SI case?
- Goals:
 - Examine differences between triggers
 - Examine time-course/context effects for given trigger

Triggers: differences in projection?

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)

- Do ps. triggers differ in their projection behaviour?
- Do ps. triggers differ in their information backgrounding?
- Do ps. triggers differ in their accommodation?

Triggers: backgrounding

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)

- Use of a ps. trigger => some content not at issue
- ‘Backgrounded’ content cannot be addressed

“In polar questions, the at issue content determines the relevant set of alternatives”

Does Juan live in Maria’s house?

Yes, he does.

**Yes, Maria has a house.* (Roberts and Tonhauser)

Triggers: backgrounding

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)

- Do triggers do this to a different extent?
- How addressable is the backgrounded content, for a given trigger?

Has Tom stopped watching old films?

(ps. = Tom used to watch old films)

No, he watches old films vs.

No, he didn't use to watch old films.

Triggers: accommodation

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)

Has Tom stopped watching old films?

No, he didn't use to watch old films.

- Acceptability of latter (arguably) requires local accommodation, or equivalent, of ps.
- Addressable background content is that which admits local accommodation

Triggers: pilot study

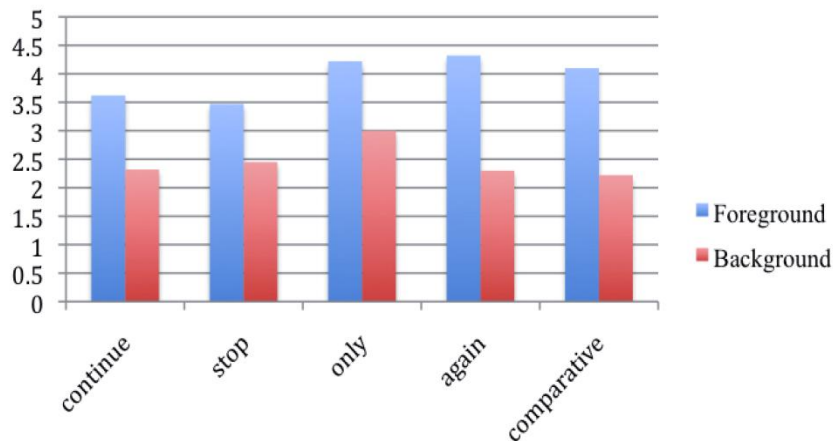
(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)

Question	VERSION 1 ANSWER	VERSION 2 ANSWER
Is Jane's book continuing to sell well?	No, it didn't use to sell well.	No, it is not selling well.
Has Tom stopped watching old films?	No, he watches old films.	No, he didn't use to watch old films.
Did Tom visit only Chicago during the holidays?	No, he didn't visit Chicago.	No, he did visit other cities.
Did Susan kiss Dave again today?	No, she didn't kiss Dave today.	No, she never kissed Dave before.
Is Zoe a better doctor than Julian?	No, she isn't a doctor.	No, she isn't a better doctor.

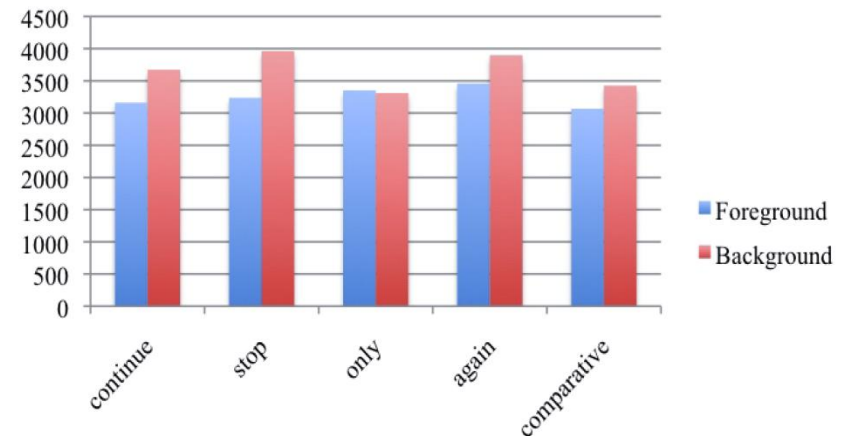
Triggers: pilot study

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)

Felicity rating means



Response latencies means



- Refutations in the foreground condition are preferred to those in the background condition for all presupposition triggers (Mann-Whitney U tests, all $p < 0.01$).
- Numerically faster RTs to foreground corrections, but not statistically significant.

Triggers: main study

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)

- Aimed to contrast *resolution* and *lexical* triggers (Zeevat 1992)
 - Resolution triggers: anaphoric to entity/event
 - Lexical triggers: preconditions of asserted content
- 4 response conditions, 2 x 2 design:
 - Affirming or denying main content
 - Affirming or denying presupposition
 - 8 triggers, 32 items; 20 participants

Triggers: main study

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)

Did Brian lose his wallet again?

Yes, he did lose his wallet again

No, he didn't lose his wallet this time

Yes, although he didn't lose his wallet before

No, because he didn't lose his wallet before

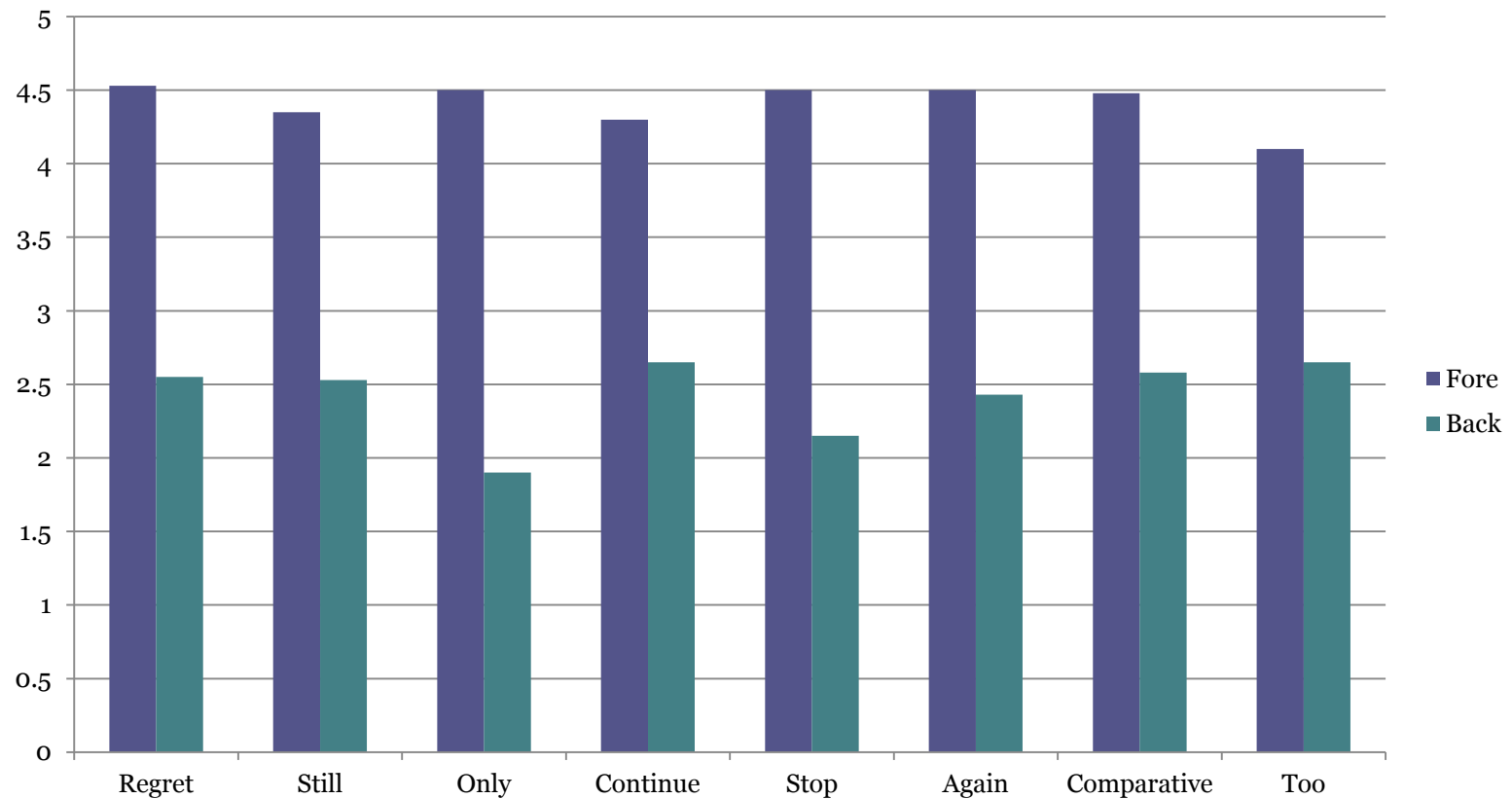
Triggers: further hypotheses

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)

- (i) You cannot felicitously deny the presupposition while agreeing with the assertion in the case of LEXICAL TRIGGERS ("Yes, although it is not the case that (ps)") whereas you can do this for ANAPHORIC TRIGGERS.
- (ii) You cannot felicitously deny the assertion on the grounds of presupposition failure with ANAPHORIC TRIGGERS ("No, because it is not the case that (presupposition)") to the same extent that you can with LEXICAL TRIGGERS.

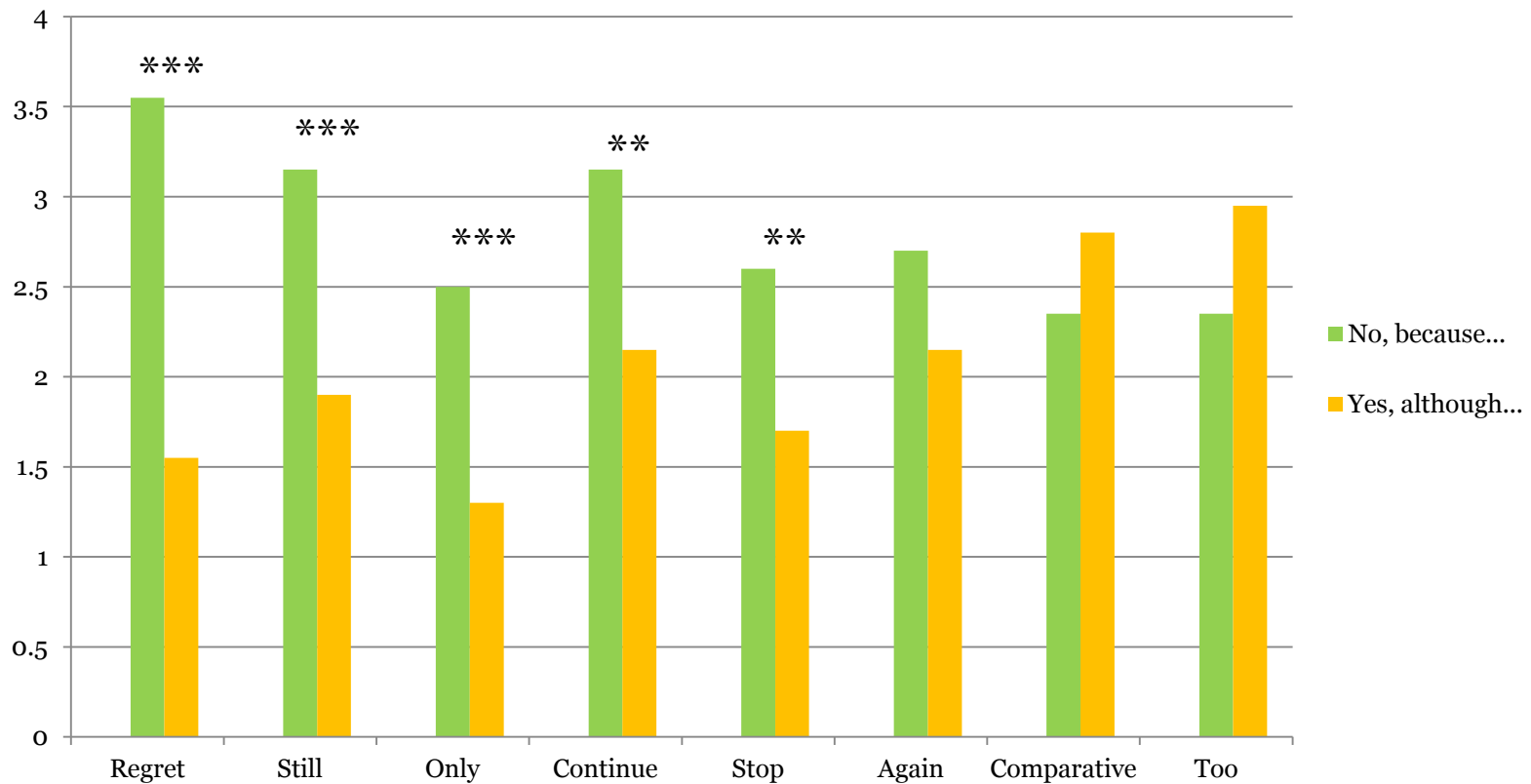
Triggers: main study results

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)



Triggers: main study results

(Amaral, Cummins, Katsos)



Time-course of accommodation

- Is there a preference for global accommodation?
- Chemla and Bott (2010)
(Adapting (SI) paradigm of Bott and Noveck 2004)

The Martian geologists did not realise that elephants are reptiles.

Acceptance => local, rejection => global accommodation

Rejections **faster**, therefore...

Motivation for further work

- Possibility of various response strategies
- Out-of-the-blue presentation may cause participants to posit specific QUDs
 - Different RTs may reflect different processing here
- Effect could be specific to particular triggers tested
 - Might others be more tolerant to local accommodation?
- Could acceptance reflect some form of pragmatic tolerance (Katsos and Bishop 2011)?
 - This might be characteristic of presupposition failure

Planned experiment

- Following up adaptation of Bott and Noveck (2004) with adaptation of Breheny et al. (2006)
 - Measuring reading times for identical ‘segments’ of discourse in contexts biased for a local or global reading

Why did everyone get off that train?

I just heard that the power cables are down.

So /I guess they just heard that their train was cancelled/

It's very inconvenient for them.

Planned experiment

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Why did everyone get off that train?

I don't know what's going on.

But /I guess they just heard that their train was cancelled/

The service is so unreliable lately.

Theoretical implications

- Expect to show a global accommodation preference
- This does not necessarily exclude the pragmatic account
 - Need to clarify whether the preference for local accommodation (no processing) is necessarily part of this story
 - Still leaves questions open in the semantic account
 - Must the global preference be stipulated, or is it explicable in parsing/processing terms?