

## What projects and why

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It is now broadly recognized that all that projects is not (standard, classical) presupposition. Elements of meaning lacking other standard characteristics of presupposition can also project. Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet (1990) observe that the content of non-restrictive relatives projects, although the content is by default new information for the addressee, and Beaver (2001) comes to similar conclusions regarding parentheticals. Levinson (1983), Kadmon (2001), and Simons (2005) have observed that certain kinds of conversational implicature can project (with each author drawing different conclusions), and Potts (2005) takes robust projection behavior to be a core property of the components of meaning he classes as conventional implicatures (including inferences triggered by parentheticals, expressives, and honorifics). The heterogeneity of projective meaning poses a serious difficulty for existing accounts of projection, which, to date, either stipulate projective behavior, or derive projection from a property of presuppositions under the false assumption that projection is a signature property of presuppositions alone. In this paper, we offer a unified characterization of projective meanings that explains their projection properties.

We propose the following generalization: **meanings project *iff* they are not at-issue**. We define semantic content  $p$  as *projecting* over an operator  $O$  *iff*  $p$  is part of the meaning of a constituent which  $O$  takes within its syntactic scope, and  $p$  is interpreted as not within the semantic scope of  $O$ . Our notion of *at-issueness* is taken from the question-based analysis of discourse of Roberts (1995). We illustrate the generalization using a new diagnostic test: asserted at-issue propositions can be the target of a (non-sarcastic) affirmation, a diagnostic partly inspired by the standard observation that presuppositions are not targeted by simple denials (cf. Shanon 1976 and von Stechow 2004 on “Hey, wait a minute”). Meanings which do not project are at-issue, as illustrated by the felicity of the dialogues in which ordinary content (1) and conversational implicatures (2) are targeted by affirmations. Illustrations of projection tests are omitted.

- (1) PROFFERED CONTENT: A. Fred ate a lot tonight. B. You’re right, he did eat a lot.
- (2) CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE: A. You wanna know if Fred should be a neurosurgeon? Well, he’s punctual and always cheerful. B. You’re right, he’d suck.

Inferences that are known to project cannot be targeted felicitously by a “you’re right” affirmation, and hence are not at-issue. We contrast felicitous affirmation of proffered content with infelicitous affirmation of a projective inference in (3) to (6):

- (3) DEFINITE: A. The King of France will be at the exhibition. B. You’re right, [he will be / # there is a King of France].
- (4) FACTIVE: A. Fred doesn’t know his wife is cheating on him. B. You’re right, [he has no idea / # she is cheating on him].
- (5) APPOSITIVE: A. Fred, a friend of John’s, is here. B. You’re right, [he is here / # he is a friend of John’s].
- (6) APPROXIMATIVE: A. Gore almost won. B. You’re right, [he came close / # he lost].

It is important that at-issueness is a discourse property. We can force a particular entailment into at-issue status by manipulating the discourse environment:

- (7) A. Does France have a king? B. The king of France was at the exhibition! A. You’re right, there is a king of France.

And it is precisely when the environment has this effect that projection is suppressed:

- (8) A. Does France have a king? B. The king of France wasn't at the exhibition.  
 $\neq$  *There is a king of France who was not at the exhibition.*

This leads us to hypothesize a simple explanation of projection: not at-issue material projects because embedding constructions (e.g. negation) comment on whatever is under discussion, and hence usually target at-issue components of meaning. Not at-issue components are not modified by the embedding construction, and so they project. Neither the generalization nor the explanation are clearly stated in prior literature, although they have commonalities with proposals in Abbott (2000) and Simons (2004).

Previous attempts to explain projection have derived it from an underlying property of presuppositions. According to one approach (from Stalnaker 1973, 1974; Karttunen 1974), projection is a consequence of the requirement that presuppositions be entailed by the common ground (CG) which is to be updated by the presupposing utterance (Heim 1983, Beaver 1995). To satisfy this requirement, presuppositions not initially entailed by the CG may be added to it when a presuppositional utterance is made. But it is far from clear whether even standard presuppositions all have CG constraints, and there is no empirical support for extending the analysis to the full range of projective meanings. For example, the content of appositives like (5), which shows robust projection behavior, is typically intended as new information to the hearer.

Not only was the CG account never claimed to describe the full range of projection behavior we observe, but attempting to generalize it by extending the CG constraint to all triggers of projective meaning would have undesirable consequences. E.g. for some triggers accommodation would occur on nearly all occasions of use. Then accommodation, far from being a rescue strategy triggered by an apparent violation, would become the norm, and the idea of a prior common ground *constraint* would become essentially vacuous. And there is a further reason to doubt that the standard CG analysis provides a sound general account of projection. Of all the expression types which have been claimed to impose constraints on the CG, anaphors are surely the clearest case, requiring that salience/familiarity of the antecedent is in the CG. But this requirement of anaphors is well-known to resist accommodation. If in the paradigm case of a CG constraint, accommodation is generally ruled out, then a theory in which accommodation of CG constraints is the norm would seem to be problematic.

Another approach (van der Sandt 1992, Geurts 1999) explains projection as resulting from a requirement for an anaphoric antecedent. Like the CG approach, the anaphoric account was never claimed to cover our full range of projective meanings. Here we merely point out that it would be unnatural to so extend it: there is no evidence that e.g. appositives, expressives, or approximatives carry anaphoric requirements.

Ours is, to our knowledge, the first attempt at a unitary explanation of projection, and in our proposal projection is unrelated to the presence of CG constraints or anaphoric requirements. Projective meaning triggers emerge as a natural class on the basis of the not at-issue status of their projective inference. More broadly, the proposal that projection is a property of not-at-issue content, and is to be explained in terms of this property, opens up a substantially new direction in the study of this phenomenon. For example, the projective properties of prosodically backgrounded material (as in *JOHN didn't walk quickly* versus *John didn't walk QUICKLY*) (cf. Abbott 2000, van der Sandt & Geurts 2004) can be captured and unified with facts about projection of standard presuppositions without requiring an analysis of adverbials as lexically presuppositional: it suffices that there is a correlation between what is prosodically backgrounded and what is not at-issue.