Redundant Utterances & Awareness Dynamics

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Introduction

A Constraint on Discourse

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This talk covers cases when speakers do not obey (1).

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Büring's constraint in (1) covers two of the three major sentence types: declaratives and interrogatives.

Non-Redundancy

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(2) Non-redundancy (version 1): Don't say known things, don't ask for known things, and don't order planned things!

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We will be able to make this constraint more precise as we go along.

Raising Awareness

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Main Claims: A primary function served by utterances that violate (2) is that of raising awareness of issues that interlocutors are not attending to.

To capture this function, models of discourse should incorporate some representation of discourse participants' states of awareness.

From Sentence Types to Discourse Effects

Conventional Discourse Effects

Farkas and Roelofsen (2016): The "most widespread" contemporary approach (Ginzburg 1996; Groenendijk 1999; Farkas and Bruce 2010; Condoravdi and Lauer 2012; Roberts 2012; Northrup 2014; Malamud and Stephenson 2015). Alternative views: "Radical dynamics", Inquisitive Semantics

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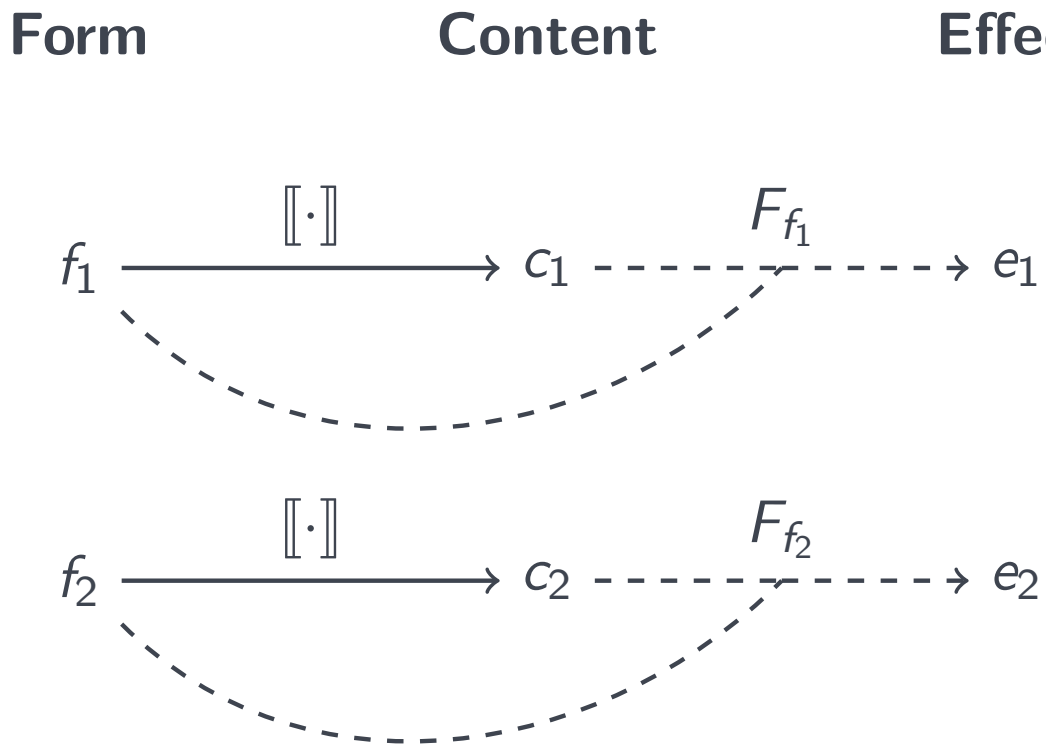

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More nuanced views on F_{f_1}:

- F_{f_1} adds c_1 to the speaker's set of discourse commitments and to "the Table." If accepted, c_1 is added to the CG (Farkas and Bruce 2010).

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- F_{f_1} adds c_1 to the speaker's set of discourse commitments and to "the Table." If accepted, c_1 is added to the CG (Farkas and Bruce 2010).
- F_{f_1} publicly commits the speaker to believing c_1. Additional assumptions (e.g. that the speaker is honest and is well-informed) can lead p to enter the CG (Lauer 2013).

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QUD constrains the future development of CG. For every question $q \in QUD$, discourse participants are committed to making it the case that CG entails some answer to q.

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Some proposals for F_{f_3}:

- c_3 is added to a To-Do List (TDL) (Portner 2007).
- c_3 is added to CG (Kaufmann 2012).
- The speaker's set of publicly committed effective preferences is updated (Condoravdi and Lauer 2012; Lauer 2013).

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Minimally, we can assume that if f_3 is an imperative uttered with directive force and f_3 is accepted, the addresee is thereafter committed to perform some action related to $[\![f_3]\!]$.

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b. An interrogative f_2 such that $c_2 \in QUD$ or $\exists p \in c_2(\cap CG \subseteq p)$,

c. An imperative f_3 such that the addressee is already committed to performing the relevant action related to $[\![f_3]\!]$.

Redundancy

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(4) "But again, as we both know, there's a strong majority in the House held by the Democrats" (CNN Moneyline 1992).

(5) "And as I just mentioned, if you want an exact answer, then you must keep all your constants" (`http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/frontiers/web/chapter_1/6254.html`).

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- Assertions of the form *It is clear that p* (Barker and Taranto 2003; Barker 2009)
- Unfocused variants of the German discourse particles *ja* and *doch* (Zeevat 2004; Zimmermann 2011; Kaufmann and Kaufmann 2012; Grosz 2014; Rojas-Esponda 2015)

Redundant Interrogatives

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(7) After all, who helped Luca when he was in trouble?

(8) Who helped Luca when he was in trouble? Yet he managed to become what he is now.

(9) After all, who lifted a finger to help Luca?

Examples from Caponigro and Sprouse (2007)

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- RQs may be embedded.

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(10) # Take out the trash and remember to take out the trash.

In normal circumstances, a commitment to do *Y* entails having a commitment to remember to *Y*.

Redundant Imperatives

But once the two imperatives are separated in time, the mnemonic imperative becomes felicitous.

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Example (11b) shows a redundant imperative that is nonetheless felicitous.

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- Declaratives whose contents are already in *CG*.
- Interrogatives whose answers are already in the *CG*.
- Imperatives whose related action the addressee is already committed to performing.

Awareness

Why Redundant Utterances?

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This will require modelling awareness-related effects of utterances that are tangential to their conventional discourse effects on *CG*, *QUD*, *TDL*, etc. We may think of awareness-related effects as side effects (Barker 2002; Potts 2005; Shan 2005).

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Intuitively, the purpose of (12) is to remind the addressee of some pre-existing commitment to take out the trash, not to have the addressee form a new commitment.

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(13) **As discussed above, children with typical phonological development rarely delete unstressed syllables in word-final position.** Therefore, we argue that words with word-final unstressed syllables, such as *tiger* and *grasshopper*, are not appropriate items to use for the purpose of identifying the occurrence of weak syllable deletion.

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In (13), attention is drawn to information already in *CG* because it is relevant for a new conclusion about identifying weak syllabel deletion.

Other Awareness-Related Phenomena

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- Rawlins (2010) on "conversational backoff"
- Franke and de Jager (2011) on questions' effects on behavior
- Yalcin (2011) on implicit and explicit belief
- Ciardelli et al. (2011) and Roelofsen (2013) on *might* and "attentive content"
- Bledin and Rawlins (2016) on "epistemic resistance moves"

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(15) As I told you last week, I'm going to be on vacation next month. Do you mind looking after my cat when I'm gone?

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(16) a. (At 9am) Take out the trash.

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Following Franke and de Jager (2011), we may say the addressee makes an *implicit assumption* that they do not have to take out the trash. This assumption is overturned when awareness is raised via (16b).

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- "Background" beliefs represented as subjective probability distribution over worlds. Under unawareness, agents conditionalize on assumptions (Franke and de Jager 2011).
- Given a partition Π_α, $\delta(\Pi_\alpha)$ returns a subset of Π_α, the agent's "view from Π_α" (Yalcin 2011; Bledin and Rawlins 2016).

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- If f_i is a polar interrogative, then $c_i \subseteq A_\alpha(f_i)$ for all α.
- If f_i is an imperative, and a_i is the relevant action related to $[\![f_i]\!]$, then $\{w | \textbf{addressee}$ performs a_i in $w\} \in A_\alpha(f_i)$ for all α.

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$$[\![\text{Who came to the workshop?}]\!] =$$

$$\left\{\begin{array}{c}\text{Deniz came to the workshop.}\\ \text{Sunwoo came to the workshop.}\\ \text{Lauren came to the workshop.}\\ \ldots\\ \text{Ryan Gosling came to the workshop.}\end{array}\right\}$$

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By uttering *Who came to the workshop?*, it's unlikely that you will become aware of the proposition *Ryan Gosling came to the workshop*.

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This contrasts with, e.g., the approach towards "attentional content" in Inquisitive Semantics (Ciardelli et al. 2011; Roelofsen 2013).

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- One function of these redundant utterances is that of raising awareness of issues discourse participants may not be attending to.
- In turn, raising awareness may play an important role in decision making and in structuring the discourse.

References

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