

Incrementality, Representationalism and Intention Recognition

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While the ubiquitous presence of context dependency in every utterance exchange is now common currency, the full significance of shifting to such a perspective incorporating the incremental nature of context-building has yet to be spelled out. In this talk, our point of departure is the demonstration that *split utterances*, a pervasive characteristic of conversational dialogue, are no more than a subpart of the general phenomenon of *ellipsis*, which imposes the need for a highly structured concept of context that evolves in reflection of incremental word by word processing. We then go on to address some of the challenges that such data pose for current philosophical conceptions about language in use and its relation to linguistic capacity for language.

Given that interlocutors' intentions may emerge and evolve only during the course of their exchange, we argue against the standard assumption that utterance understanding involves an essential element of mind-reading (grasping the content the other party has intended to convey). Replacing this, we assume along with Ginzburg and Cooper 2004, Purver 2004, Poesio and Rieser 2009 that interaction through clarification/correction/extension is a canonical part of successful context-dependent process of utterance understanding, but we go further and argue that the mechanisms provided by the grammar impose no necessary meta-representation of any speech-act or attitude held by a speaker of the utterance (a stance which is contra all work in pragmatics, e.g. Grice 1975, Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995, Bach 2002).

On the view proposed (Kempson et al 2001, Cann et al 2005), in which context-dependent values are determined as part of the structure building process induced by the grammar, the grammar formalism is overtly representationalist, but only a single level of representation is invoked, that of representations of content constituting utterance understanding (contra e.g. Kamp and Reyle 1993, Jackendoff 2002). Finally we argue that linguistic knowledge is an evolved form of "knowing how" (contra Stanley and Williamson 2002), with specialized mechanisms grounded in routinised practices acquired from our interaction with others, yet core syntactic principles relying on the capacity for context-relative real-time individuation and inferential processing (contra Brandom 1994).

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