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Suppose now A = The King of France is bald, and B = There is a present King of France. Then the conclusion of the argument above (which is valid on classical assumptions) is that the sentence The King of France exists is a tautology, or always true. Since the whole point of such presuppositional theories is to deal with presupposition failure and to explain the intuition that when their presuppositions fail sentences are neither true nor false, some of the classical logical assumptions must be abandoned to avert conclusions like that of (21). The simplest way to reconcile a definition of semantic presupposition like that in (20) with the bulk of accepted logical apparatus, is to abandon the assumption that there are only two truth values (the assumption of \textit{bivalence}). Instead we can adopt three values, \textit{true}, \textit{false} and \textit{neither-true-nor-false} (the latter for sentences whose presuppositions are false), and make just the modifications in the rest of the logical system that this change requires (notably, the abandoning of \textit{modus tollens}, and bivalence). It has been shown that perfectly well-behaved logics with three values can be constructed and it could be claimed that such logical systems are (by virtue of their ability to handle presuppositions) a notable advance in models of natural language semantics (see e.g. Keenan, 1972). It is also possible to retain what is formally a two-valued system by allowing \textit{truth-value gaps} instead of a third value, and this would now be the preferred method. However, such systems have many of the same formal properties (e.g. the invalidity of \textit{modus tollens}) and will prove just as inadequate as models of presupposition for the same reasons that we shall adduce against three-valued models. (Since students tend to find value-gap systems harder to conceptualize, they are not discussed here -- but see Van Fraassen, 1971.)

The intellectual moves made here were congenial to the linguistic theory called \textit{generative semantics} (which flourished 1968-75), for workers in this theory were concerned to expand and modify logical models of semantics to accommodate as many of the distinctive properties of natural language as possible. It thus became their aim to \textit{reduce} pragmatic phenomena to the orderly domain of semantics (see especially G. Lakoff, 1972, 1975). However it soon became apparent that there are some presupposition-like phenomena that don't behave in quite the way that the concept of semantic pre-

\footnote{\textit{Modus tollens} is the inference from $p \rightarrow q$ and $\sim q$ to $\sim p$ (see Allwood, Andersson & Dahl, 1977: 101).}

\section*{4.2 The phenomena: initial observations}

Supposition requires. For example, Keenan noted that the use of the pronoun \textit{tu} in the French sentence (22) seems to presuppose that "the addressee is an animal, child, socially inferior to the speaker, or personally intimate with the speaker" (1971: 51):

\begin{quote}
(22) Tu es Napoléon
\end{quote}

But suppose I use (22) when none of these conditions obtains -- it would be strange to say that what I said was neither true nor false: it is true just in case the addressee is indeed Napoleon and false otherwise. And the polite or formal (23) shares just the same truth conditions:

\begin{quote}
(23) Vous êtes Napoléon
\end{quote}

Thus the 'presuppositions' concerning the relationship holding between speaker and addressee, expressed by the use of \textit{tu} or \textit{vous}, simply do not affect truth conditions. Keenan (1971) therefore held that such examples form an independent and distinct class of pragmatic inferences which he called \textit{pragmatic presuppositions}, which are best described as a relation between a speaker and the appropriateness of a sentence in a context.

Other putative cases of presupposition that do not fit the definition of semantic presupposition soon emerged, cases where the inferences in question seem to be context-sensitive in a way that will occupy us below. Hence, for a while it was suggested that there are two distinct kinds of presupposition in natural languages, semantic presuppositions and pragmatic presuppositions, existing independently (see e.g. Keenan, 1971). But from 1973 onwards it became increasingly clear that there were so many problems with the notion of semantic presupposition that a theory of language (and specifically of semantics) would do better without it. The reasons for abandoning the notion of semantic presupposition rest firmly in the nature and properties of the phenomena when properly explored, a task to which we should now turn.

\section*{4.2 The phenomena: initial observations}

Frege's and Strawson's claim that presuppositions are preserved in negative sentences or statements -- a claim embodied in

\footnote{Note, though, that we have already argued that this kind of inference is in fact an aspect of social deixis (see 2.2.5) encoded as a conventional implicature (see 3.2.3).}
Presupposition

Strawson’s definition (18) above—provides us with an initial operational test for identifying presuppositions. We can simply take a sentence, negate it, and see what inferences survive—i.e. are shared by both the positive and the negative sentence. It should be noted that from now on we shall sometimes talk as if sentences are the objects that presuppose; this is a looseness adopted simply for purposes of exposition, and in fact it is a theory-relative matter as to whether it is sentences or utterances (sentence-context pairs) that presuppose, as we shall see.³

Let us start by taking the relatively simple sentence in (24):

(24) John managed to stop in time

From this we can infer:

(25) John stopped in time
(26) John tried to stop in time

Now take the negation of (24) (note that ‘the negation’ here means the negation of the main verb or the topmost clause in a complex sentence):

(27) John didn’t manage to stop in time

From this we cannot infer (25) — in fact the main point of the utterance could be to deny (25). Yet the inference to (26) is preserved and thus shared by both (24) and its negation (27). Thus on the basis of the negation test (and the assumption of its sufficiency), (26) is a presupposition of both (24) and (27).

Note that whenever (24) is true, (25) must be true, but that when (27) is true, (25) need not be true. So, (24) entails (25), but (27) does not entail (25), by the definition of entailment in (17) above. Clearly, then, when we negate (24) to obtain (27), the entailments of (24) are no longer the entailments of (27). In short, negation alters a sentence’s entailments, but it leaves the presuppositions untouched. Thus (25) is an entailment of (24) which constitutes at least part (and it has been claimed, all)⁴ of the truth conditions of (24), while (26) is a presupposition of both (24) and (27). Behaviour under negation makes a basic distinction between presupposition and entailment.

Where does the presupposition in (24) come from? From the word manage of course. If we substitute the word tried in (24) the inference to (25) of course is the same, but this is not an entailment as is shown by considering the negative sentence (28):

(28) John didn’t try to stop in time

So presuppositions seem to be tied to particular words—or, as we shall see later, aspects of surface structure in general. We shall call such presupposition-generating linguistic items presupposition-triggers.

Let us now take a somewhat more complex example. Consider (29) and its negation (30):

(29) John, who is a good friend of mine, regrets that he stopped doing linguistics before he left Cambridge
(30) John, who is a good friend of mine, doesn’t regret that he stopped doing linguistics before he left Cambridge

There are quite a large set of inferences that seem to hold good both for (29) and for its negation (30), for example:

(31) There is someone uniquely identifiable to speaker and addressee as ‘John’
(32) John is a good friend of the speaker’s
(33) John stopped doing linguistics before he left Cambridge
(34) John was doing linguistics before he left Cambridge
(35) John left Cambridge

Since these are constant or invariant under negation, they are candidate presuppositions under the Frege/Strawson conception. Notice too that each of the inferences can be tied back to particular words or constructions that give rise to them. Thus (31) seems to be tied to, or arise from, the use of the proper name John; (32) seems to arise because relative clauses of this informative (non-restrictive) sort are not affected by the negation of a main verb outside the clause, and are thus preserved in their entirety under negation; and similarly for (35), which seems to arise from the fact that temporal clauses (initiated by before, after, while, when, etc.) are likewise unaffected by the negation of a main verb. The source of (33) is a little more opaque: it arises because (33) is the complement of a particular kind of verb (called factive), here regret; it appears that it simply makes

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³ In the linguistics literature, at any rate, the third possible notion of a speaker presupposing has played little important role in theorizing. However, those theories (discussed below) that seek to reduce presupposition to conversational implicature could be seen as built on this third notion.

⁴ See e.g. Halvorsen, 1978; on the semantic view of presupposition the presupposition (26) would also be part, but a special part, of the truth conditions of (24).
Presupposition

no sense to talk about \( X \) regretting \( Y \), or alternatively \( X \) not regretting \( Y \), unless \( Y \) is an event that has happened or will definitely happen. So the complement \( Y \) is presupposed by both positive and negative sentences with main verbs in this class. The source of (34) is easier to locate: if one asserts that \( X \) stopped \( V-ing \), then one presupposes that \( X \) had been \( V-ing \), an inference shared by the assertion that \( X \) has not stopped \( V-ing \). So the verb stop is responsible for the presupposition (34).

These are fairly heterogeneous sources, and natural questions then arise of the sort: what are all the structures and lexemes that give rise to presuppositions? do they have anything in common? why do some linguistic items have such inferences built into them and not others? and so forth. But before we explore these, let us note that there is a way in which there is an intuitive unity to this set of inferences. For the basic intuition is that they are all in some important sense background assumptions against which the main import of the utterance of (29) is to be assessed. A useful analogy here is the notion of figure and ground in Gestalt psychology: in a picture a figure stands out only relative to a background, and there are well-known visual illusions or ‘ambiguities’ where figure and ground are reversible, demonstrating that the perception of each is relative to the perception of the other. The analogy is that the figure of an utterance is what is asserted or what is the main point of what is said, while the ground is the set of presuppositions against which the figure is assessed. (There are even some cases where figure and ground, i.e. assertion and presupposition, seem to get inverted like the classic Gestalt ambiguities; see Langendoen, 1971.) To see that the set of presuppositions really forms a set of background assumptions, and not just a set of inferences picked out by some technical definition of presupposition, consider what happens when we convert (29) into a question:

(36) Does John, who is a good friend of mine, regret that he stopped doing linguistics before he left Cambridge?

Here the main point of an utterance of (36) will be to question whether John really does regret stopping doing linguistics, rather than to assert that he does (as in (29)) or to deny that he does (as in (39)). But (36) shares all the presuppositions listed above for (29) and (39). Thus the main point of an utterance may be to assert or to deny or to question some proposition, and yet the presuppositions can remain constant, or – to employ our analogy – the figure can vary within limits, and the ground remain the same. This is of course the intuition that lies behind the position taken by Frege and Strawson, and the way in which the technical notion of presupposition is intended to capture at least part of our pre-theoretical intuitions about what is presumed or (in the ordinary language sense) presupposed when we speak.

Let us now return to the questions that arose above. What sort of range of presuppositional phenomena is there? We may begin by listing some of the constructions that have been isolated by linguists as sources of presuppositions, i.e. by constructing a list of known presupposition-triggers. Karttunen (n.d.) has collected thirty-one kinds of such triggers, and the following list is a selection from these (the examples provide positive and negative versions separated by ‘/’ to allow the reader to check the inferences; the presupposition-triggers themselves are italicized; the symbol >> stands for ‘presupposes’):

1. **Definite descriptions** (see Strawson, 1950, 1952):
   (37) John saw/didn’t see the man with two heads
   >> there exists a man with two heads

2. **Factive verbs** (see Kiparsky & Kiparsky, 1971):
   (38) Martha regrets/doesn’t regret drinking John’s home brew
   >> Martha drank John’s home brew

3. **Frankenstein was/wasn’t aware that Dracula was there**
   >> Dracula was there

4. **John realized/didn’t realize that he was in debt**
   >> John was in debt

5. **It was odd/it wasn’t odd how proud he was**
   >> he was proud

6. **some further factive predicates: know; be sorry that; be proud that; be indifferent that; be glad that; be sad that**

3. **Implicative verbs** (Karttunen, 1971b):
   (43) John managed/didn’t manage to open the door
   >> John tried to open the door

4. **John forgot/didn’t forget to lock the door**
   >> John ought to have locked, or intended to lock, the door

5. **some further implicative predicates: X happened to V >> X didn’t plan or intend to V; X avoided V-ing >> X was expected to, or usually did, or ought to V, etc.**

4. **Change of state verbs** (see Sellars, 1954; Karttunen, 1973):
   (46) John stopped/didn’t stop beating his wife
   >> John had been beating his wife
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(47) Joan began/didn't begin to beat her husband
(48) Kissinger continued/didn't continue to rule the world
(49) some further change of state verbs: start; finish; carry on; cease; take (as in I took Y from Z) Y was at/in/ with Z); leave; enter; come; go; arrive; etc.

5. Iteratives:

(50) The flying saucer came/didn't come again
(51) You can't get gobstoppers anymore
(52) Carter returned/didn't return to power
(53) Carter held power before

6. Further iteratives: another time; to come back; restore; repeat; for the nth time

7. Verbs of judging (see Fillmore, 1971a):

This kind of implication is, arguably, not really presuppositional at all for, unlike other presuppositions, the implications are not attributed to the speaker, so much as to the subject of the verb of judging (see Wilson, 1975).

(54) Agatha accused/didn't accuse Ian of plagiarism
(55) Ian criticized/didn't criticize Agatha for running away

8. Temporal clauses (Frege, 1882; Heinśm, 1972):

Before was even born, Frege noticed/didn't notice presuppositions

9. Strawman was born

While Chomsky was revolutionizing linguistics, the rest of social science was/wasn't asleep

Chomsky was revolutionizing linguistics

(59) Since Churchill died, we've lacked/ we haven't lacked a leader

Churchill died

10. Further temporal clause constructors: after; during; whenever; as (as in As John was getting up, he slipped)


Sentence (60) exhibits what is known as the cleft construction (cf. unclerfed Henry kissed Rosie), (61) what is known as the pseudo-cleft construction (cf. unclerfed John lost his wallet). Both constructions seem to share approximately the same

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presuppositions, and share in addition - it has been claimed (see Halvorsen, 1978) - a further presupposition that the focal element (Henry in (60) and his wallet in (61)) is the only element to which the predicate applies. It was/wasn't Henry that kissed Rosie

(61) What John lost/didn't lose was his wallet

9. Implicit clefts with stressed constituents (see Chomsky, 1972; Wilson & Sperber, 1979):

The particular presuppositions that seem to arise from the two cleft constructions seem also to be triggered simply by heavy stress on a constituent, as illustrated by the following examples where upper-case characters indicate contrastive stress:

(62) Linguistics was/wasn't invented by CHOMSKY!

someone invented linguistics

(63) John did/didn't compete in the OLYMPICS

John did compete somewhere (cf. It was/wasn't in the Olympics that John competed)

10. Comparisons and contrasts (see G. Lakoff, 1971):

Comparisons and contrasts may be marked by stress (or by other prosodic means), by particles like too, back, in return, or by comparative constructions:

(64) Marianne called Adolph a male chauvinist, and then HE insulted HER

For Marianne to call Adolph a male chauvinist would be to insult him

Adolph called Marianne a Valkyrie, and she complimented him back/in return/too

to call someone (or at least Marianne) a Valkyrie is to compliment them12

(65) Carol is/isn't a better linguist than Barbara

Barbara is a linguist

(67) Jimmy is/isn't as unpredictably gauche as Billy

Billy is unpredictably gauche

11. Non-restrictive relative clauses:

Note that there are two major kinds of relative clause in English - those that restrict or delimit the noun phrase they modify (restrictive as in Only the boys who are tall can reach the cupboard) and those that provide additional parenthetical information (non-restrictive as in Hillary, who climbed Everest

12 But perhaps the inferenee is more restricted: 'For someone (or at least Adolph) to call someone (or at least Marianne) a Valkyrie is to complement them'. See the cautionary note re verbs of judging in 6 above.
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in 1953, was the greatest explorer of our day). The latter kind is not affected by the negation of the main verb outside the relative clause and thus gives rise to presuppositions:

(68) The Proto-Harrappans, who flourished 2800–2650 B.C., were not great temple builders

The Proto-Harrappans flourished 2800–2650 B.C.

12. Counterfactual conditionals:

(69) If Hannibal had only had twelve more elephants, the languages in the Romance would not this day exist

Hannibal didn’t have twelve more elephants

(70) If the notice had only said ‘mine-field’ in English as well as Welsh, we would never have lost poor Llewellyn

The notice didn’t say mine-field in English

13. Questions (see Katz, 1972: 201ff; Lyons, 1977a: 597, 762ff): As noted in connection with (36) above, questions will generally share the presuppositions of their assertive counterparts. However, interrogative forms themselves introduce further presuppositions, of a rather different kind, which are what concern us here. It is necessary to distinguish different types of questions: yes/no questions will generally have vacuous presuppositions, being the disjunction of their possible answers, as in (71). These are the only kinds of presuppositions of questions that are invariant under negation. Alternative questions, as in (72), presuppose the disjunction of their answers, but in this case non-vacuously. WH-questions introduce the presuppositions obtained by replacing the WH-word by the appropriate existentially quantified variable, e.g. who by someone, where by somewhere, how by somehow, etc., as in (73). These presuppositions are not invariant to negation.

(71) Is there a professor of linguistics at MIT?

Either there is a professor of linguistics at MIT or there isn’t

(72) Is Newcastle in England or is it in Australia?

Newcastle is in England or Newcastle is in Australia

(73) Who is the professor of linguistics at MIT?

Someone is the professor of linguistics at MIT

The above list contains perhaps the core of the phenomena that are generally considered presuppositional. However it is important to bear in mind that any such list is crucially dependent on one’s definition of presupposition. For example, taking constancy under negation alone as the definitional criterion one would include phenomena like those immediately below, even though these would probably be better accounted for under different aspects of pragmatic theory, as indicated by the rubrics in parentheses after each example (where ’?’ stands for ‘putatively presupposes’):

(74) Do/don’t close the door

? the door is open (felicity condition on requests)

(75) Vous êtes/n’êtes pas le professeur

? the addressee is socially superior to or non-familiar with the speaker (conventional implicature)

(76) The planet Pluto is/isn’t larger than Ceres

? the speaker believes the proposition expressed (The maxim of Quality, or alternatively, sincerity condition on assertions)

Or suppose instead we abandon constancy under negation as the acid test of presuppositionalhood (as Karttunen (1973) advised), substituting behaviour in say if... then clauses (see below), then we might be led to claim that certain particles like only, even, just are presupposition-triggers. The grounds would be that, even though they do not yield inferences that survive negation, the inferences do survive in conditional contexts where entailments do not, as illustrated below:

(77) If only Harry failed the exam, it must have been easy

? Harry failed the exam

(cf. If only Harry didn’t fail the exam, it must have been easy

? Harry didn’t fail)

(78) If even Harry didn’t cheat, the exam must have been easy

? Harry is the most likely person to cheat

(cf. If even Harry cheated, the exam must have been easy

? Harry is the least likely person to cheat)

(79) If I just caught the train, it was because I ran

? I almost didn’t catch the train

(cf. If I just didn’t catch the train, it was because I ran

? I almost did catch the train)

The isolation of the range of the phenomena thus depends crucially on the definition of presupposition adopted. But any theory of presupposition might reasonably be required to handle at least the majority of the cases listed in 1–13 above. We shall use this set of core phenomena to investigate some further basic properties that presuppositions exhibit.

4.3 The problematic properties

Constancy under negation is not in fact a rich enough definition to pick out a coherent, homogeneous set of inferences.