

Presupposition Theory in Discourse Grammar

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From a dynamic semantic viewpoint, *discourse theory* must explain how the interpretation of an utterance (or a sequence of utterances) depends on its discourse context, and how, in turn, the discourse context is incremented or updated through each newly processed utterance. The interpretation process is constrained by various linguistic parameters, such as (obviously) the syntax and semantics provided by the lexemes occurring in the utterance, anaphoric and presuppositional expression which must 'resolve' relative to the discourse context, the information structure of the utterance, and the felicity conditions attached to the particular 'force' of the contribution. Discourse theory models the interaction of such constraints in cutting down the possible interpretations of an utterance relative to its discourse context.

In this talk I will zoom in on one of these linguistic parameters and show how presupposition theory can be integrated in a discourse grammar framework. The grammar I shall be using is a so-called Logical Description Grammar, which generates underspecified representations of discourse tree structures decorated with semantic values. The semantic values are in DRT format. The approach to presupposition that I will follow combines aspects of the 'satisfaction' (Karttunen, Heim) and the 'binding' (van der Sandt, Geurts) theory of presupposition. The intention is not so much to provide a 'new' theory of presupposition. Rather, the emphasis is on the benefits of using the discourse grammar framework to model presupposition theory. Aspects of presupposition theory that received a highly procedural treatment in the binding theory of presupposition can be given a straightforward declarative treatment in LDG. Furthermore, the interaction with other parameter of the discourse theory, be it at the level of syntax, semantics, or pragmatics, can transparently be modeled.