Projection inferences: Integrating linguistic and extra-linguistic cues

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Interpreters may infer that the speaker is committed to the truth of an utterance content even when that content is not entailed. A well-known instance of such inferences, referred to as a projection inferences, are presuppositions: for instance, interpreters may take Scott, the speaker of (1), to be committed to the truth of the content of the complement of "know", that Julian dances salsa, even though that content is not entailed by (1), as it is realized as part of an interrogative sentence.

(1) Scott: "Does Cole know that Julian dances salsa?"

In this talk, I will first provide empirical evidence that projection inferences are observed with a broader range of expressions than previously assumed (Degen & Tonhauser to appear), thereby providing the impetus for the development of novel analyses of projection inferences. I will then suggest that empirically adequate analyses of projection inferences must be able to probabilistically integrate linguistic and extra-linguistic cues that interpreters rely on in drawing projection inferences. Empirical evidence comes from experiments that investigate the integration of lexical meaning, interpreters' prior beliefs about utterance content, and the at-issueness of utterance content in deriving projection inferences (Degen & Tonhauser 2021; Tonhauser & Degen ms).

References

Degen, Judith and Judith Tonhauser. 2021. Prior beliefs modulate projection. *Open Mind 5*: 79-90.

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Tonhauser, Judith and Judith Degen. ms. *Prior beliefs and at-issueness independently modulate projection*. Manuscript, University of Stuttgart and Stanford University.