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Presuppositions as conversational phenomena[☆]

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Abstract

In this paper, I distinguish between linguistic and non-linguistic presuppositions. I also propose that we should be interested in conversational presuppositions, which could also be called *speaker-meant presuppositions* or *speaker's presuppositions*. I also distinguish between *potential* and *actual* presuppositions. I propose that, in some cases, presuppositions can be conversationally implicated and cancellation is possible. I specify what the hard cases are and I try to explain them through ontological considerations. I try to reduce the hard cases through (a) the notion that all actual presuppositions are speaker-meant; (b) the distinction between ontological and linguistic presuppositions; and (c) the uncontroversial notion that even ontological presuppositions are susceptible to semantic under-determination that has to be tackled through pragmatic intrusion. Pragmatic intrusion for presuppositional cases, however, cannot really amount to completing or expanding or in any case computing an explicature in an ordinary sense, as explicatures have to do with truth-conditions and aim to create propositionally complete forms that are truth-evaluable, unlike propositional fragments or schemata that are usually expressed in sentences (Carston, 2002; Wilson and Sperber, 2002, 2012). They are processes similar to explicatures, but since presuppositions are only pre-conditions for an utterance's being true or false (Strawson, 1950; Macagno, 2016; Green, 1989; Marmaridou, 2000), we cannot say that these processes are completely like those of explicatures. Nevertheless, they are pragmatically-motivated, even if hard to cancel. (See Capone, 2009 on lack of cancellability or Jaszczolt, 2016 on entrenched meanings.) This more or less brings my approach in line with contextualism (even if I accept semantic invariantism, along the lines of Kratzer, 2012 or Cappelen and Lepore, 2005 (Invariantism is also shared by Carston (2002), in a form that is compatible with her contextualism.)).

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1. Introduction

One of the notorious and thorny problems in the theory of presupposition is the relationship between presupposition and entailment, including the question of whether or not presuppositions are semantically entailed or not. Such a problem, according to Cummings (2009), may be the reason why studies on presupposition from the perspective of clinical

[☆] This project is part of a national research project (PRIN) on performativity, directed by Antonino Pennisi. This paper owes much to considerations in Grice (1989), Stalnaker (1999, 2014), Simons (2013), Capone (1998, 2000, 2003a,b, 2013), Macagno (2016) and Macagno and Capone (2016a,b). Perhaps Simons (2013) has presented the most explicit attempt to reduce (some) presuppositions to pragmatics, although this attempt was limited only to some cases. However, I think that the main idea of what should be done in order to reduce presupposition to conversational implicature is to be found there and her merits cannot be stressed enough. Capone (2013) is also an attempt to reduce presupposition to conversational implicature (M-implicatures, in particular, following Levinson, 2000, Huang, 1994, 2000, 2014).

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pragmatics are so scarce. Cummings may not be too wrong about this, as at one point in this paper I too ask questions about the distinction between ontological and semantical issues, a distinction which promises to bear on decisions about semantic entailment. This paper, in fact, investigates the relationship between presupposition and entailment and proposes some distinctions that are related to speaker's meaning. (Some scholars like Haugh, 2013 define semantic entailment in the following way: p entails q , if and only if the truth of p guarantees the truth of q (Haugh, 2013; Huang, 2014).)¹ In particular, this paper promises to delve into what Huang (2014) calls the 'triggering problem, namely the problem of explaining the origin or source of presupposition. Where do presuppositions come from? Or put slightly differently, why do presuppositions take place in the first place?' (Huang, 2014, 99). Here I investigate the idea that top-down inferential phenomena can shape presuppositions in discourse, in the same way as they can serve to shape explicatures (see Recanati, 2010 and Capone, 2010 on top-down pragmatic effects on utterance interpretation and content; also see Jaszczolt, 2016 and her idea that we need a gestaltist compositionality that can allow an implicature to work as primary meaning and the explicit meaning can take the status of secondary meaning²). In particular, I will follow some important suggestions by Macagno (2016), who opened up the way to an investigation of presupposition in terms of "argumentative reasoning". Although this idea could be seen as a prosecution of Karttunen (1974), according to whom pragmatic principles determine which presuppositions can be projected and which should be cancelled, or of Gazdar (1979), according to whom only presuppositions that are consistent with (a) entailments, (b) propositions in the previous context, (c) the implicatures associated with an utterance, will survive (this is a global cancellation process), in fact, it deals with the triggering problem in a radically different way. (See Beaver, 1997 for a detailed list of triggering constructions.)

The received view of presupposition is as follows, as pointed out by Atlas (2005, 129):

A presupposed proposition is a semantical entailment from the affirmative statement and the content of the conversationally implicated, specific interpretation of the negative statement in a context, an interpretation that is beyond the literal meaning of the semantically nonspecific negative sentence. (Atlas, 2005, 129)

This view is unsatisfactory because, as admitted by Atlas (2005), presupposition is considered a 'heterogeneous' relation. Following Modified Occam's Razor and Jaszczolt's reformulation of it in Jaszczolt (1999), we should prefer a theory that is capable of eliminating the asymmetry between positive and negative sentences, provided that there are no insurmountable obstacles. This would be an advantage, given that many scholars – including Frege, Keenan (1971) and Levinson (1983) (but see also Marmaridou, 2000, Atlas, 2004, Van der Sandt, 2012 among many others) – take constancy under negation to be a defining property of presupposition. But how can it be a defining property if there is an asymmetry between the status of the inference as entailment in positive sentences and that of the inference as conversational implicature in negative ones? The definitional problem is tainted by what Atlas (2005) calls the 'heterogeneous' status of presupposition as an inference. 'Constancy' is merely an appearance, since the inference in the positive sentence is of a very different nature from the inference in the negative counterpart, at least if we confine ourselves to the received views. What is it that is constant? The entailment or the conversational implicature? Clearly the received view leads us to believing that there is one thing which is constant, but then it denies that the inferences are of the same (pragmatic) nature. This is too bad.

The strategy of this paper is to show that presuppositions can be conversational phenomena – in other words, inferences that are calculable by deploying human rationality (and its resources).³ Pragmatics, in this paper, is seen as the ability by language users to reason explicitly or tacitly on why a certain lexeme was used at a certain point in the conversational exchange, why a certain choice was made rather than another, why the speaker used language in this way rather than in a different way. Reasoning involves making use of tacit arguments that take as inputs utterances and contexts and give as output pragmatic inferences. We need a theory that considers both language and its users (Mey, 2001). It is not enough to look at semantics, we need to take into account the pragmatic effects that accrue in context, which Mey (2001) calls 'pragmemes', a term applied by Seymour (2013) to pragmatic increments in context.⁴ Conversational presuppositions, if they could be reduced to pragmatics, would have to have the following features, following Huang (2017, 156): they would have to be expressed implicitly by a speaker in virtue of his/her utterance; they would provide augmented meaning; they would have to be beyond and above what is said; they would arise in virtue of a relationship between a proposition and a speaker on the basis of reasoning or what Huang calls Grice's logic of

¹ We should probably add to this the Strawsonian desideratum (Strawson, 1952) that if p entails q , then a (serious) assertion of ' p but not q ' should be perceived as contradictory. Still, formulated this way, the definition is not perfect, as entailment should not be seen as a relationship between propositions but a relationship occurring between sentences in virtue of their words and syntax (Davis, 2005).

² It is not clear what would the status of conversationally implicated presuppositions be in Jaszczolt's compositional picture. I assume they would not be primary meanings anyway, as they are certainly prior to the primary purpose of the speech act, as Geurts (2017) says.

³ Lepore and Stone (2015) discuss at length the notion of rationality and its role in the Gricean programme.

⁴ Needless to say, what I have to say in this paper is closer to a theory of performance (or pragmemes in Mey's sense) than to a theory of competence.

conversation.⁵ As will be seen in this paper, at some point, at least some presuppositions – as [Simons \(2013\)](#), [Levinson \(1983\)](#), [Macagno \(2016\)](#), [Macagno and Capone \(2016a,b\)](#) have shown – are calculable and cancellable, and hence can be assimilated to conversational implicatures. The difficult (and most controversial) part of the paper is to show that all presuppositions are calculable and cancellable.⁶ I should have said ‘both calculable and cancellable’ as, at least in theory, it should not be too difficult to show that presuppositions can be calculated. I approach the most difficult task by tackling certain theoretical issues (e.g. cancellability, parsimony, symmetry), assuming that it is not enough to use the cancellability test to decide whether an inference is pragmatic or, otherwise, semantic, as Grice himself ([Grice, 1989](#)) was aware and as expressed in [Capone \(1998, 2000, 2003a, 2006, 2009, 2013\)](#). The reduction I propose makes sense from a theoretical point of view, as it simplifies the theory considerably and makes it more symmetrical, assuming that symmetry and parsimony are theoretical virtues, everything being equal, in that it would consider presuppositions in both positive and negative sentences conversational implicatures. A possible way to make the reduction easier is to accept the distinction between *potential* and *actual* presuppositions on the one hand, and the distinction between *non-speaker meant* and *speaker-meant* presuppositions on the other, following the spirit of the pragmatic enterprise which is well summed up by [Pennisi and Falzone \(2016, 258\)](#) in the idea that stress should “be placed on the role of intentionality of speech acts”. In this paper I want to show that the understanding of presupposition capitalizes on the advances of contextualism. Given that “In the semantics-pragmatics interface debate, contextualists are committed to deriving rich pragmatic effects from what is said by a sentence, from the proposition expressed or from the semantic content ([Kecskes, 2014, 36](#))”, I want to show that pragmatic intrusion can occur too in presupposition resolution (in this case, however, pragmatic intrusion does not have effects on truth-conditional content but on the intelligibility and appropriateness of discourse). Now, if Relevance Theorists like [Carston \(2002\)](#) and [Wilson and Sperber \(2002, 2012\)](#) were among the first scholars to address the problem of explicatures, they have certainly neglected the idea that the theory of presupposition too may benefit from a notion like that of explicature (or a related notion).⁷

2. The divide between semantics and pragmatics

The considerations of this paper presuppose, without argument, that while semantics deals with context-independent aspects of meaning, pragmatics deals with context-dependent aspects of meaning (see [Borg, 2012](#); [Cappelen and Lepore \(2005\)](#)). To quote words by [Huang \(1994\)](#), “What pragmatics does is to provide a set of complementary, explanatory principles which constrain the interpretation or production of an utterance whose linguistic representation has already been antecedently cognized” ([Huang, 1994, 2](#)). Semantics normally provides the logical form, which is then processed pragmatically: as [Recanati \(2010, 130\)](#) says, “the *logical form* of the sentence serves as input to the interpretation process, while the *pragmatic context* determines both the semantic values of context-sensitive expressions in logical form and the pragmatic functions which optionally come into play in deriving the semantic value of the whole from the (possibly modulated) semantic values of the parts.” The discussion of presuppositions in this paper presents presuppositions as conversational phenomena to be defined in opposition to the project of semantics, which is magisterially summed up in [Kratzer \(2012\)](#):

Words, phrases and sentences acquire content when we utter them on particular occasions. What that content is may differ from one context to the next. It is the task of semantics to describe all those features of the meaning of a linguistic expression that stay invariable in whatever context the expression may be used. This invariable element is the meaning proper of an expression. ([Kratzer, 2012, 4](#))⁸

Presumably, it might be a good idea to segregate semantics from pragmatics by accepting the idea that semantic meanings largely attach to words by means of conventions, regularities in behaviour that create precedents for current use; that attach to words though associations; that are reinforced through regular habit (see [Davis, 2003, 208–209](#), on this).

⁵ See [Soames \(1979\)](#) for emphasis on speaker’s presupposition.

⁶ One complication is that in [Capone \(2009\)](#) I argued that explicatures are not cancellable and, thus, we should also reflect at some point on whether the presumed uncancellability of certain presupposition follows the pattern of explicatures. I will address this point, even if tentatively, in a later section.

⁷ See the findings in [Macagno and Capone \(2016a,b\)](#).

⁸ Not all philosophers of language or linguists embrace this view. For example, [Travis \(2008\)](#) considers the view that “conditions for truth depend, pervasively, on the circumstances in which, or the way in which, words were produced. If so (...) semantic questions are pragmatic ones” (2008, p. 109). (See also [Baker and Hacker, 1984](#).) Although this position is usually considered to be related to the Wittgensteinian perspective, [Seymour \(2013, 248\)](#) vigorously denies that this is the case and argues that Wittgenstein would have denied that meaning is determined by the intentionality of a particular context. (See [Wittgenstein, 1953](#).)

Conversational presuppositions depend, for their life, on speakers' intentions, that, as is well known, are identified by the use of numerous contextual clues (Dascal, 2003). On the other hand, as Kecskes and Zhang (2009, 235) say, speaker's intentions depend on common ground:

(...) the cognitive-philosophical line (represented by neo-Gricean Pragmatics, Relevance Theory, and Speech Act Theory) still maintains the centrality of intentions in communication. According to this view, communication is constituted by recipient design and intention recognition. The speaker's knowledge involves constructing a model of the hearer's knowledge relevant to the given situational context; conversely, the hearer's knowledge includes constructing a model of the speaker's knowledge relevant to the given situational context. Communication is supposed to be smooth if the speaker's intentions are recognized by the hearer through pragmatic inferences. Consequently, the main task of pragmatics is to explain how exactly the hearer makes these inferences, and determine what is considered the speaker's meaning. In a recent study, Levinson (2006b) confirms that (Gricean) intention lies at the heart of communication, and proposes an "interaction engine" that underlines human interaction. (Kecskes and Zhang, 2009, 235)

Having dealt with intentionality, it may be expedient to distinguish between two different types of presupposition on this basis. It may be useful to distinguish, from the very outset, between linguistic and non-linguistic presuppositions. Non-linguistic presuppositions are assumptions which are taken for granted in context (sometimes erroneously). They are not intentional because they are not necessarily articulated linguistically by the speakers and, thus, cannot be animated by intentions. The fact that they are categorized as non-linguistic does not mean that they cannot take a linguistic form. Surely when we think a thought, the thought is articulated (or expressed, if we vocalize it in public) through a linguistic form.⁹ It is not clear that non-linguistic presuppositions are articulated in this sense, as usually they are at the back of one's mind, even if they can fruitfully interact with assumptions that are at the front of our mind, to produce pragmatic inferences (as we will see in a discussion of an example relating to Donald Trump), but they should, to say the least, be capable of being articulated linguistically, should one want to put some thought to them. While we interact, our surroundings may well have to be taken into account in the production of pragmatic inference. Should a conversationalist say 'That man over there is overhearing our conversation,' the pronominal demonstrative would not work, UNLESS there were some person who is salient to us, of whom we are aware, and whose presence we can safely presuppose to be part of the common ground, if we assume that the object is salient visually and that all participants have normal perceptual abilities. Of course, it need not be the case that we have had a thought about that man, that we have thought of him 'There is a man listening' before the presupposition can be put to work in pragmatic reference. The presupposition need not be linguistic, even if we are quite capable of articulating it linguistically, should we put some thought to it.

Linguistic presuppositions, on the contrary, are normally tied – whether semantically or pragmatically (I am non-committal at this point) – to the presence of some linguistic triggers (see Cummings, 2014, 11), even if it is possible that there are exceptions. Linguistic presuppositions are to be distinguished from logical presuppositions, that is to say presuppositions that arise because it does not make sense to think a certain thought T unless one already accepts P (these can be considered *ontological* presuppositions.) P is a logical presupposition of T if both T and NOT T cannot be accepted unless one already accepts P.¹⁰ The fact that we should methodologically distinguish between linguistic and logical presuppositions does not mean that it is easy to do so or that we have automatic tests for doing so. We can also admit as a logical possibility the case of a linguistic presupposition which is also a case of logical presupposition. And we can also admit as possible that logical presuppositions exhibit the tendency to become linguistic presuppositions. If speakers realize that a presupposition is associated with a certain sentence, regardless of the fact that it is a logical or linguistic presupposition, they are tempted to develop a convention that associates the presupposition with the linguistic expressions that characteristically gives rise to it (following Davis, 2003). This somehow presupposes that ordinary speakers are not good judges as to whether a presupposition is linguistic or logical, contrary to the Availability Principle by Recanati (2004).¹¹ To distinguish between a linguistic and a logical presupposition, one has to resort to conceptual

⁹ Usually a sentence or a sentential fragment (see Stainton, 2006). Wayne Davis (2003, 2005) warns us against assuming that a sentence should be equated with a thought, given that a sentence can serve to express different thoughts (given pragmatic intrusion (Carston, 2002; Capone, 2009; Bach, 1994; Wilson and Sperber, 2002, 2012)) and that the same proposition can be expressed through different sentences (e.g. the case of translations).

¹⁰ A referee made an interesting and important objection to a previous version of logical presupposition rendered as follows: T logically presupposes P if one cannot accept T unless one accepts P. The referee made the point that under this definition then a conjunction would have to presuppose both its conjuncts and itself. However, it is easy to see that under my revised definition conjunction no longer ends up logically presupposing both conjuncts and itself, given that under negation the conjuncts are no longer presupposed (and hence the conjunction itself can no longer be presupposed).

¹¹ However, some scholars have cast doubt from the beginning on the validity of Recanati's availability Principle saying that distinguishing between semantics and pragmatics is an issue that should be decided by complex theoretical considerations (Ariel, 2008, 70–71).

analysis and see what concepts are required in entertaining the presupposing thought. One must demonstrate that it is not possible to think a thought T unless one also accepts P. I am not going to demonstrate in detail how this works, but I am confident that this should be possible.

Another useful and important distinction is that between *potential* and *actual* (or *conversational* or *speaker-meant*) presuppositions. The fact that an utterance contains a semantic trigger that is (normally or usually) responsible for a presupposition does not mean that the presupposition will ascend to become a presupposition of the speaker-meant utterance. Many things can happen on the way in the process whereby the sentence becomes a full-fledged utterance and a presupposition may be lost (evaporates), in the sense that the context can sometimes (even if not always) cancel it. Now, while theorists have been adamant that cancellation can take place only in negative sentences or sentences where modal operators appear, a limited number of scholars have attempted to demonstrate that even in positive, non-modal utterances, presuppositions can evaporate (Levinson, 1983; Simons, 2013; Macagno and Capone, 2016a,b; Capone, 2018). Probably, the issue of evaporation can be decided at a theoretical level, even if, of course, analyses of real conversational data are welcome. It is plausible that there should be a distinction between potential and actual presuppositions, paralleling the distinction between potential and actual implicatures. (The parallel, of course, invites the conflation of presuppositions and implicatures, which is the last step I want to gesture to in this paper.) Why should we have to accept that potential presuppositions can evaporate (in context)? Of course, if presuppositions were conversational implicatures, it would follow from the definition of conversational implicatures that presuppositions could be cancelled in context (as presuppositions would then inherit the same properties of conversational implicatures.) But, so far, we have not demonstrated that (all) presuppositions are or should be considered conversational implicatures and, thus, nothing follows from the definition of conversational implicature. Yet, we know that in many cases entailments can be cancelled in context (see ironies, jokes, metaphors, loose uses of epistemic verbs (Capone, 1998, 2000)). Thus, whether presuppositions are implicatures or not, we expect that for a potential presupposition to become an actual presupposition, it must be speaker-meant, which means that we should consider contextual elements in convalidating the presupposition (see also Bach, 2001) and we should also make sure that there are no contextual elements that are incompatible with the presupposition, such an incompatibility militating against the projection of the presupposition and ultimately leading to its cancellation.

3. Can some presuppositions be conversationally implicated?

Now some important notions are in place that will allow us to look at presuppositions in a new way. Notice that, in the past, several attempts were made to consider presuppositions as conversational implicatures, but the reduction was only confined to certain contexts (usually negation, modals, questions, etc.: Kempson, 1975, Wilson, 1975, Gazdar, 1979). Gazdar (1979) was perhaps the most important scholar who dealt with the projection problem of presuppositions in terms of conversational implicatures and cancellation; however, such ideas were never actually accepted *in toto*, thus giving way to the satisfaction view of presupposition (Heim, 1992; Soames, 1979; Huang, 2014), which is, in my view, unsatisfactory because of the *proviso problem*, as stated by Geurts (2017) (and which I cannot go into). Marmaridou (2000, 123) has an interesting case of pragmatic presupposition that is not due to a lexical trigger but to world knowledge, but that is not totally uncontroversial. I assume in the following, that contextual clues can create a kind of pragmatic *bias* (in the sense of Predelli, 2013) that can constrain the interpretation of a sentence's character and give rise or pragmatically trigger a presupposition.

Let me start with some cases.

(1) May I borrow your umbrella?

Although the utterance does not say that it is raining, it strongly presupposes that it is raining or that there is a chance that it is going to rain, because the speaker would hardly be rational and ask for an umbrella, unless there was a need for it (given that umbrellas are normally used for protecting oneself from rain). Given that umbrellas are typically used in rain, the speaker should use (1) presupposing in a pragmatic sense that there is rain or a chance that it will rain (although the speaker may sometimes react by making queries/challenges like 'Is it really raining?') and the hearer normally accommodates the presupposition that it conversationally implicates, unless s/he explicitly challenges it. (See Macagno and Walton, 2013 on conversational implicatures as arguments.) Of course, cultural context, as Kecskes (2014) would say, is of importance in promoting this presupposition. In Asian culture, where umbrellas can be (also) used to protect oneself from the scorching sun, the presupposition may be a disjunction (there is a chance that it will rains or that there will be a scorching sun). We very easily forget that utterances make sense only in a given cultural context, as also pointed out repeatedly by Jaszczolt (2016) and Kecskes (2014).

I suspect that a number of objections can be levelled at the discussion above. Someone may, for example, note that in some situations an umbrella may be used as a weapon or as an object which one may want to photograph. The reply to

this objection may be something like the following. Objects have prototypical uses and functions and the inferences which arise typically from uses of certain linguistic signs are pretty stereotypical. This is more or less what happens in the well known cases of implicatures-to-stereotype (I-implicatures) discussed by Levinson (2000). When one uses the words 'surgeon' or 'secretary' or 'nurse', one typically thinks of male surgeons, female secretaries and female nurses, even if these I-implicatures in some context can be defeated. Given that the presuppositions I am discussing are speaker-meant, they should have the characteristics of conversational implicatures, and should be defeasible. Thus, actually, my opponent gives me ammunition to support the view that certain presuppositions are conversationally implicated. Thus, there is no doubt that in some (admittedly very rare) cases, one can use an umbrella as a weapon or as an object to photograph, but then one could argue that in certain contexts a certain number of contextual clues will militate against the conversationally implicated presupposition. This is not a fact that will especially surprise us and one which we can certainly accommodate in the kind of theory I am proposing.

Another possible objection may be the following: but after all, even a conversational or speaker-meant presupposition needs a linguistic trigger. I do not doubt that in all the canonical cases of conversational presuppositions we have linguistic triggers (e.g. Mary realized that she was in danger). But why should we think that in the example of the umbrella there is no linguistic trigger? Cannot a word like 'umbrella' be a trigger? Given that so far we have seen that not only verbs but also connectives can be presuppositional triggers, there is no reason why NPs cannot be (in fact, referential presuppositions are usually triggered by the use of proper names).

Another objection to be answered is that the case discussed above is not, after all, a logical presupposition or a presupposition which looks similar to Strawson's notion of presupposition. The reason why this presupposition cannot be a logical presupposition is that it is non-monotonic and also a kind of probabilistic notion. So although I agree with the content of this objection, I think this is not an objection to the view I expressed.

One can suppose that examples like the one above can be multiplied. In fact, although these are the easy cases, it may be of theoretical interest to see how many cases like this exist. The proliferation of such examples may, in fact, show that pragmatic presupposition as was discussed in Stalnaker (1999, 2014), Simons (2013), Macagno (2016), Macagno and Capone (2016a,b) may just be the tip of the iceberg and that there is a massive underground mine of examples to be discovered and discussed.

Some other examples that come to mind are the following:

(2) Are you blond? (asked by a guy who is chatting with a woman.)

The woman takes the speaker to presuppose (rather than making the direct point) that he likes blond women. She accommodates the presupposition if she gives an answer like 'I am afraid I am not'; 'yes, indeed I am'. Of course, here there are no lexical elements that project the presuppositions and it is hard to argue that the question is semantically associated with a presupposition as a matter of holistic interpretation (conditions of use would have to be invoked to make the semantic proposal plausible). Nevertheless, pressed on the issue whether there is a pragmatic trigger of the presupposition, we can reply that questions in general can be considered pragmatic triggers (something I noticed very clearly in my career is that if you ask questions about food, then there is always the speaker-meant presupposition that something may be wrong with it (A: Is there chocolate in this cake? B: You don't eat chocolate? A: No, in fact I do like it)). Questions, as a matter of use, linguistically trigger the presupposition that there is a reason for asking them. This general presupposition can be further modulated in context, giving rise to a speaker-meant presupposition.

Examples of this type can be multiplied *ad libitum*. For example, we can imagine a situation in which a customer enters a shop and asks the shopkeeper: "Have you got the change for a 100 euros banknote?". Clearly, the indefinite description 'a 100 euros banknote' does not introduce a presupposition. (It would, if, instead, it were replaced by a definite description). This question will not be interpreted as a theoretical question, but as an ancillary question whose purpose is to sort out a certain issue in preparation of the possible intended action of buying an item and using a 100 euros banknote for this purpose. The customer by this question presupposes that he can only pay with a big banknote and does not have smaller banknotes. If he had smaller banknotes, the question would be idle, because in this case he would be prepared to pay with a small banknote and would not cause any nuisance to the shopkeeper. Clearly an element of reasoning is involved in calculating this presupposition, as the shopkeeper will provide the presupposition by investigating the possible purpose of the question and by contemplating the possibility that the question is not a theoretical one but ancillary to a request for action. The request for action will be issued only after this preliminary matter has been sorted out. The question as a semantico-syntactic structure can be considered a pragmatic trigger, even if the presupposition it projects is not very specific; in this case, it merely projects the idea that the question has a function or purpose and then it is the task of the hearer, given a multiplicity of contextual clues, to provide a more specific interpretation.

Before closing this section, I would like to draw attention to a pragmatic presupposition which will be written about in historical books on the Trump age. When Senator Jeff Sessions, in the hearing sessions leading to his nomination as USA

Attorney General, was asked whether he had contacts with Russian officials, he replied that he had none. However, when it was made public that indeed he had met the Russian ambassador, he defended himself, by saying that he had interpreted the question as a question about his having contacts with Russian officials in order to talk about political issues. In other words, his interpretation of the question made the most of the pragmatically conveyed presupposition that the examining committee was interested in his having had political contacts with foreign officials as a member of Trump's campaign, rather than ordinary, routine meetings in the capacity as senator belonging to a certain committee. I assume that the controversy around this interpretation can indeed confirm that pragmatic presuppositions of this type are cancellable and contextual and certainly not semantic. Consider now another example which will also enter history books. This seems to me a case of pragmatic presupposition, although one that is non-linguistic and also non-cancellable. When Donald Trump asked Comey to let the investigation into General Flynn go, he used an utterance like 'I hope you will let Flynn go'. Trump's Republican associates defended him by insisting that 'I hope' was not an explicit performative, in the sense of Austin's theory of speech acts. In other words, 'I hope' cannot be equated with an order like 'I order you to let Flynn go'. However, the utterance should be interpreted by taking into account pragmatic presuppositions, and one of these is that if a President is not going to order something, then he'd rather not mention it at all, because the utterance of mentioning something as doable as uttered by a President immediately takes on the interpretation of an order. Wayne Davis (personal communication) says that the utterance was planned by making it deniable and by letting the presuppositions do the work of explicit linguistic expressions. But I agree Wayne Davis only to some extent, because I would certainly not say myself that the intention of getting Comey to do something (illicit) is deniable. Given that it is illicit on the part of the President to ask for the FBI Director to stop an investigation, he should certainly refrain from saying anything that might be interpretable as something illicit. So it is the presuppositions of discourse, our knowledge of institutional duties and practices (and the practice of avoiding mentioning something if it can be interpreted as an illicit request) that allows us to interpret Trump's utterance as a request (even if not an order proper). As a request it is not deniable, not so much for what is explicitly said in it, but due to the strong presuppositions of discourse, which include not mentioning an issue if one knows that that issue could be interpreted as an attempt to do something illicit. Trump was not a child who ignored the presuppositions of institutional discourse; but he expected the FBI director Comey to become complicit (perhaps failing to interpret the meaning of Comey's previous act of declaring that Clinton was being investigated as an action by a partisan official with conservative sympathies, while perhaps Comey simply thought it was his duty to behave that way under the circumstances of the elections). Wayne Davis (p.c.) correctly says that it is the subsequent context that allows us to interpret Trump's utterance as a request (even if not an order) to drop the Flynn-related investigation. Given that Trump sacked Comey when it was clear that he was not obeying his instructions, the action of sacking Comey could be seen as retaliation for Comey's failure to obey. Although Davis' considerations seem to me to be quite illuminating, they work as a further test for what we already know for certainty: that is that the presuppositions of institutional discourse (President-FBI director conversation) prevent a President from mentioning an issue which is forbidden under the law. This looks to me like a case in which pragmatic (non-linguistic) presuppositions interact with pragmatic interpretation to produce further inferences. This presupposition, however, does not need a trigger, because it is not a linguistic presupposition, although it will clearly constrain the interpretation of the reply.

Although the examples of pragmatic presuppositions may appear to be incontrovertible, some objections or challenges can be expected. Are these presuppositions, after all? Cannot we consider them merely cases of conversational implicatures? I would not like to dismiss this possible objection hastily and I am inclined to think that it is a reasonable one and, also, one that makes sense methodologically. However, if presuppositions are elements of meaning which can be expected to serve in the conversational dynamics and without which the conversational dynamics would make little sense and little progress, these can be clearly distinguished from conversational implicatures. Certainly, conversational implicatures are part of the speaker's main point (in asserting or making a question), what Jaszczolt (2016) and Sternau et al. (2016) would call the 'primary intentions' or 'privileged interactional interpretations'¹²; they cannot be relegated to an ancillary role. If I say 'I forgot my watch', I am conversationally implying, rather than presupposing, that I would like to ask the hearer to supply information about the time. This is the main point of the utterance. However, if I am asking whether you can lend me your umbrella, the main point is not to inform you that there is rain (although it is possible that the presupposition can be new information, at least sometimes – 'unpresupposed presuppositions', to use a term by Atlas (2005) –). The request presupposes that there is rain because, I would not be able to make any use of the umbrella, if there was no rain. But the focus of the request is on the umbrella, rather than on the rain. The act of presupposing that there is rain has an ancillary informational role, because the request seems to be supported by its necessity. People would be reluctant to lend me an umbrella if there was no rain, while, instead, they would have a moral obligation to help me if

¹² "To summarize, both Ariel and Jaszczolt argue that in natural discourse, Privileged Interactional Interpretations (Ariel) or Primary Meanings (Jaszczolt) are the most relevant meaning level, although these do not necessarily correspond to the defined explicature" (Sternau et al., 2016, 709).

there was heavy rain (and I had no umbrella of my own at hand). Presuppositions are conversationally implicated as ancillary speech acts (see [Macagno, 2016](#) on the idea that presuppositions are speech acts, an idea that reminds us of the Searlian claim that reference is a speech act).

A referee, however, makes the following objection:

As I noted above, the author said he was going to show that at least some presuppositions can be assimilated to conversational implicatures. A speaker using (1) could certainly imply that there is rain in typical contexts. Nevertheless, the author rejects the possibility that “There is rain” is a conversational implicature rather than a conversational presupposition of (1) on the grounds that “conversational implicatures are part of the speaker’s main point” (p. 11). That claim is questionable. Take the standard scalar implicature. Suppose a plane has crashed and someone asks “How bad was it?” A speaker who answers “Some passengers died” would typically implicate that not all passengers died, but that would not be the speaker’s main point.

The referee is tacitly assuming that the main point of a speaker should be expressed explicitly and not through a conversational implicature. This is an assumption I would like to challenge. It is clear that the scalar implicature ‘Not all passengers died’ is subordinated to an implicit reply whose main point is to say that the accident was not completely disastrous given that there are some survivors. The main point, indeed, includes and does not exclude the scalar implicature. There is no single place in the pragmatic literature that excludes that subordination should not be part of the speaker’s main point and it is evident for me that any position that has to be argued should include an argumentation act as part of the main point.

In connection with example (2), it is not difficult to prove that the inference is a presupposition/implicature rather than a mere conversational implicature. Unless I had a preference for blond women, it would make little sense to ask whether the hearer is blond (or not). If I liked women with any type of hair, reference to the colour of the hair would be purposeless. But we assume that no language move is purposeless but must have a point (leaving aside certain initial parts of the interaction which are described as phatic communication). The presupposition that the speaker likes blondes has some work to do, given that the hearer is prepared to shape the answer in ways that meet the expectation. The hearer may well anticipate that the conversation (and interaction) is more likely not to proceed further if the hearer does not satisfy the expectations of the speaker.

The case can be best illustrated if a basketball coach has a telephone conversation with a boy interested in becoming part of a team and asks whether he is tall. The boy knows from the very start that his question is crucial if the conversation has to proceed further and thus shapes his contribution in such a way that, if he is tall enough, he will make sure to say this, even if perhaps he is not very tall. Can presuppositions of this type merely be conversational implicatures? Well, first one can answer that it is not the main point of the question to say that the speaker is interested only in blond women or tall basketball players. But, as the example of the basket coach shows, the presupposition has some ancillary work to do in the conversational dynamics. For example, even if the speaker has always thought that being 1.80 m is not being tall enough and would reply in a casual telephone conversation that he is not really tall, he knows that such an answer would immediately stop the conversation and, thus, to have a trial, he would choose a reply such as ‘I am tall enough.’

Most importantly, these examples can be used to bring home the idea that presuppositions can be purely conversational phenomena and can be cancelled. Elements of reasoning are responsible for such conversationally implicated presuppositions, confirming that pragmatics (genuine pragmatics) has to do with potential expansions of utterance meaning in which human rationality is deployed. This much can be credited to a number of scholars, such as Grice and, at the end of the line, [Lepore and Stone \(2015\)](#) or [Macagno and Walton \(2013\)](#). Furthermore, the examples above seem to share a property of conversational implicatures which Gunter [Senft \(2014\)](#) has drawn attention to: “implicatures are not fully determinable, that is to say there is no one-to-one linkage between the form of an implicature and its intended meaning” ([Senft, 2014, 37](#)) (actually, this looks more like a property of particularized implicatures).

4. Presuppositions as speaker-meant

There are other interesting cases in which speaker’s intentions play a crucial role in shaping presuppositions. I will take one from [Macagno and Capone \(2016b\)](#) and one from the work of [Stalnaker \(1999\)](#), [Stalnaker \(2014\)](#) (but this is, admittedly, a case discussed by other authors as well, such as [Lewis, 1979](#), [Heim, 1992](#), [Beaver, 1997](#), [Abbott, 2000, 2008](#), among many others) on accommodation.

Consider first an example by [Macagno and Capone \(2016b, 59\)](#): Consider the following situation:

Today I was walking on a sidewalk and suddenly I saw (many) shattered pieces of glass. Another passerby commented aloud that there were many pieces of glass. A friend of his replied; “Then we can no longer walk bare-footed” (translation from Italian).

Macagno and Capone say:

This example is very interesting from the point of view of polyphony. The remark ‘Then we can no longer walk barefooted’ has to be considered ironical – one knows well that in Italy one cannot walk bare-footed because there may be nails, pieces of glass, pebbles, etc. on the pavement. Thus, the presupposition ‘we used to walk barefooted’ triggered by the habitual reading denier ‘no longer’ is suspended as it happens to be situated in the context of an ironical utterance. The presupposition is projected indeed, but it inherits the features of the ironical utterance in which it is embedded and, thus, has to be intended in an ironical way as well. This shows that presupposition (even in positive sentences) is a really and genuinely pragmatic notion, one that needs to depend on the interpretation of the utterance. (Macagno and Capone, 2016b)

There is no doubt that this is an important example, one that highlights the relationship between presupposition and irony. Its importance lies in highlighting the role played by the speaker’s (or speakers’) intentions in promoting or, otherwise, suspending or cancelling a conversational presupposition. Even a theorist who accepts a semantic idea of presupposition as connected with lexical triggers has to concede, by considering this example, that it makes sense to distinguish between potential and actual (conversational, or speaker-meant) presuppositions and that the context as well as the speakers’ intentions play a crucial role in advocating this distinction.¹³ I agree, however, that accepting all this does not amount to accepting that presuppositions do not crucially depend on the semantics of lexical triggers (when they are present). Yet, if we accept that speakers’ intentions are crucial in projecting or, otherwise, cancelling presuppositions, we have achieved a small victory in advocating a substantially pragmatic picture of presupposition. This may not be enough, but it may be a first step forward. (So far such a picture conforms well to Cappelen and Lepore’s (2005) view that a multiplicity of speech acts is compatible with the invariant semantics of a sentence.¹⁴)

5. The hard and intractable cases

Now that I have elucidated the basic notions and aims of this paper, I want to draw close to its most important section: the reduction of obstinate examples. This is, as I said, the tough part of the paper. I suppose the literature unanimously (or almost unanimously) claims that verbs such as ‘know,’ ‘regret,’ ‘realize,’ ‘hear’ (factive predicates, in other words) strongly and semantically presuppose that p (the embedded proposition). There are also iterative adverbs like ‘again’ that presuppose a first occurrence of the event talked about. And there are change-of-state verbs like ‘stop,’ concerning activities, which presuppose the commencement of an activity. (If I regret going to Paris, I went to Paris; if I know that that Paris is in France, Paris is in France; if I stopped smoking, then I used to smoke). These presuppositions are semantic in the sense that they are triggered by a usage of a certain lexeme (the lexical trigger), even if, as usual for presuppositions, in general, the presuppositions can be cancelled in negative sentences, modal contexts, questions, etc. (Levinson, 1983; Atlas, 2004; Van der Sandt, 2012; Geurts, 2017). Although the verb ‘know’ looks like the strongest element of the list of irreducible elements, it is not. There are languages like Italian where the verb ‘sapere’ (the counterpart of ‘know’) is a bit stronger than ‘credere’ (believe), but not necessarily factive in colloquial uses and subject to semantic erosion (see Capone, 1998, 2000, 2013, 2016b). Even philosophers like Peter Strawson (p.c. 1994) agreed that ‘know’ is not presuppositional¹⁵ in the sense of introducing speaker/hearer presuppositions, thus constraining the common ground, in the sense of Stalnaker (2008). I can say ‘John knows that Mary is in Paris’ to inform H that Mary is in Paris, rather than to expect H to presuppose that Mary is in Paris (also see Atlas, 2005). Here accommodation of the presupposition is suggested through conversational implicature (see Atlas, 2005 for a discussion of a similar case). In any case, as Hintikka (1962) and Capone (1998, 2000), Capone (2016a,b) say, ‘know’ and ‘sapere’ can give rise to etiolated uses that do not entail (and do not presuppose) that p , as one can say ‘I ‘knew’ that Mary is in Paris, but it turns out she is not there’. One really uses contextual clues in order to project the entailment and the presupposition (as happens when ‘sapere’ (know) in Italian is associated with the clitic, which usually excludes etiolated uses and presupposes either p or mention of p in previous discourse (Capone, 1998, 2000, 2013)). Concerning ‘realize’, I should say that in a language like Italian it can be translated as either ‘realizzare’ or ‘capire’. (The former may well be a semantic borrowing.) The latter is not associated with a presupposition, although in some contexts, especially when the clitic ‘lo’ is present, a presupposition may be projected

¹³ As Giora (2003, 69) says, the interpretation of irony requires an initial phase, “involving meaning accessed directly” and “an immediately subsequent phase of integration of activated information with contextual information” (also see Attardo, 2000, Dynel, 2013).

¹⁴ Macagno (2016) takes presupposition to be a speech act. This reminds us of Searle’s decision to take reference, too, as a speech act. One may well have to distinguish between the primary speech act of assertion and the ancillary speech act of presupposition; since one would need to write a paper to go into this, I will try to ignore this (non-negligible) issue.

¹⁵ This view has the advantage of explaining directly why ‘I don’t know that Mary passed her driving test’ does not presuppose that Mary passed her driving test, a point that seemed mysterious to Gazdar (1979), Levinson (1983), and Marmaridou (2000, 125).

as a conversational implicature. Disambiguation, however, has to occur through a pragmatic process that is pre-semantic (Carston, 2002; Wilson and Sperber, 2002, 2012). ‘Hear’ is presumably an easy case. One could hear well or fail to hear well and thus ‘hear’ need not be factive (Look, what I heard is that p). (Also see Capone, 1998, 2000 and Williamson, 2000 on the fact that ‘hear’ is non-factive, although, in context, it admits presuppositions.) ‘Regret’, instead, is factive. How could one regret a fact that did not happen? ‘Stop’ is similar too. How can one stop doing something if one never started doing it? But now notice that these could either be linguistic or metaphysical facts. (I am using a kind of argument that reminds us of Cappelen and Lepore (2005).) If they were linguistic facts, we could very well find languages where the facts are not like these. (Take the case of ‘realize’/‘understand’, which seems to be expressed differently in Italian.) If the facts are metaphysical, we expect the linguistic non-cancellability to be a consequence of the logical structure of facts. An activity cannot be interrupted unless it has started. And an action cannot be regretted unless it was executed (at least in part). But this has nothing to do with linguistics. (See Devitt, 2013 on the specific claim that we should distinguish between metaphysical and linguistic facts.) We expect things (or facts) to be so regardless of how we call the verbs, activities, interruptions in question. In order to think of the logical structure of these facts, we need words to express them. But we predict that in all languages of the world, the words associated with these facts would bear the same presuppositions because it is the facts, rather than the words, that presuppose them. Presumably, to use the words by Devitt (2010), we need to put metaphysics first. So these are hardly linguistic presuppositions. When we move from the ontological to the linguistic realm, the linguistic presuppositions, in order to project, at the level of the utterance, have to be speaker-meant. But since this is the case, they may fail to project, after all, as it might be the case that they are not speaker-meant:

- (3) John ‘realized’ that Mary was in Paris (even if he knows well that she has a lover in Rome and she spends weekends with her lover);
- (4) I ‘knew’ that Mary was in Paris, but of course I know well she spends all her week-ends in Rome with her lover;
- (5) John stopped smoking even though he never started smoking; he wanted to smoke but he never really got to his first cigarette as he is allergic to smoke. (See more complicated examples in Macagno and Capone, 2016a,b.)

So far we have presupposed that the presuppositions of ‘stop’ or ‘again’ are entailments because they are not cancellable (and we have even conceded a story about ontological presuppositions). However, at this point we have to see how this story interacts with the considerations by Capone (2009) to the effect that explicatures are not cancellable. Capone (2009) argues, on the basis of intentionality, mainly, that it is really hard to cancel an explicature, because cancelling it involves returning to a discourse which was rescued by the explicature in that without it would have been contradictory or a logical absurdity. But now what if ontological presuppositions were nothing but explicatures needed to make the discourse coherent, non-absurd and non-contradictory? Consider ‘John stopped writing books’. Stopping writing books when one has not written one may look like something that is logically absurd, even if ‘stopping writing books’ is merely logically incompatible with having the intention of writing a series of books (as clarified by ‘John stopped writing books before he even started’; what is presupposed here is only the intention of writing several books, not the action). The fact that the presupposition here seems to be non-cancellable may be the result of an explicature, as the presupposition here is an explicature produced by the desire of having a rational and not an irrational discourse. Cancellability would lead to irrationality, and thus it is avoided.

Consider now ‘Mary smoked again’. This utterance presupposes that there is another event of smoking (given the event of smoking we are talking about); however, notice that we need to fix temporal orientation to make sense of it. Surely it is more normal that there cannot be a second instance of smoking unless there is a first instance of smoking. Thus, the inference that there was a prior instance of smoking is not cancellable. However, non-cancellability need not amount to confirmation that the inference is an entailment. In fact, the inference might merely be an explicature needed to make the discourse rational (rather than irrational). The further event of smoking must be located in the past (rather than in the future) with respect to the event of ‘smoking again’. One cannot say ‘Mary smoked again,’ meaning that there was an event *e* in the past and that there was a further event *e'* ($e' > e$) in the past (with respect to the time of utterance), although this could be compatible with ‘There was a further event of smoking in addition to the one we are talking about’. Why do we locate the further event of smoking in a position that precedes rather than follows the event we are talking about? This has to do with logophoricity (Huang, 2013), as the speaker takes the point of view of the person discussed. If the speaker identifies logophorically with the person discussed, it makes sense to locate the further event prior to the event talked about, given that the person talked about will not consider events that are future with respect to the present event in the description of the event. (He may think ‘I am smoking again’ only if there is an event of smoking in the past with respect to the current event of smoking.) However, if the speaker does not identify with the person discussed it may make sense to say ‘He smoked again’ merely meaning that there was an additional event of smoking located in the past (with respect to

the utterance) but in the future with respect to the action by the person discussed.¹⁶ Logophoric identification is certainly a pragmatic phenomenon as amply noted and discussed by Huang (2013). Consider now what happens with future tense. If I say 'Mary will smoke again', I need not be committed to the fact that there had already been an event of smoking in the past. In fact, I am free to say 'Mary will smoke again, if she ever starts smoking.'¹⁷ It is clear, in this case, that I am talking about two future events and the presupposed event is not to be located in the past (with respect to the speaker's utterance), but has to be located in the future. Locating the presupposed event in the past or in the future depends on pragmatic factors. It is much more common to say that Mary will smoke again in the future if we have already seen her smoke in the past, given that habit is something that needs precedents and the evidence for talking about the future event of smoking again is something that can be more easily be found in the past than in the future (as evidence is something different from prediction). However, the extreme case of 'Mary will smoke again, if she smokes again' proves that the speaker can sometimes predict both the event talked about and the presupposed event.

A reasonable objection might be that when one says 'Mary smoked again,' one does not merely presuppose that there is an additional instance of smoking (in the past) but that the event of smoking again is the second event in a series, where the presupposed event is the first. This explanation might work well if 'first' and 'second' were not contextual terms. Given that they are contextual terms and given that here one may take either the perspective of the speaker or the perspective of the person discussed, the coincidence of perspective can occur only if the speaker is taken to adapt to the perspective of the person discussed. This could work as more or less an implicit indirect report. 'Mary smoked again' could be taken to be a description of an action which Mary would herself describe as 'I smoked first and then I smoked a second time.' Again we are faced with logophoricity. But why do I think that 'first' and 'second' are perspectival expressions? Well, from the perspective of the reporter, the events may ordered in a different way. One could say 'The first event' meaning 'The first event I discovered.' It is not impossible that the reporter discovered the second event first and then reconstructed the other.

Another objection to the view that the problem can be resolved by ordering the events by using 'the first event' and 'the second event' is that after all, Mary smoked again may mean that there was a first series of events of smoking and then there was another series of events of smoking. But there could also be a first event of smoking and then a series of events of smoking or first a series of events of smoking and then an event of smoking. One could simplify things by saying that the utterance talks about the second set of events of smoking presupposing the first set of events of smoking. Even so, if 'first' and 'second' are perspectival expressions, the problem is not resolved this way. One can very well say 'Mary smoked again, if she ever smoked previously' in which I am not presupposing that there was a first event of smoking in addition to the one talked about. My assertion, in fact, is conditional on my finding the evidence that she smoked a first time in addition to this one.

My final objection is that using terms like 'first event' and 'second event' already commits us to a logical mistake. In fact, in the case in which the event discussed is preceded by two different sets of events of smoking, it would be wrong to refer to it as the second event or even as the second set of events. In fact, it is the third, but it could also be the fourth event (or set of events) of smoking. Using labels like 'first event' and 'second event' is necessarily conducive to error.¹⁸

Future uses of 'again' are important in showing that pragmatics, rather than semantics, is involved in fixing the time frame of the event presupposed. If I say 'You have to win again', I am not saying that you have to win again after winning in the future, but presumably I mean that you have to win again given that you have won in the past relative to my utterance. If just semantics were involved, it would be logical that the presupposed event should be located in the past with respect to the future event of winning again, given that one in order to win again must have won before; but suddenly, it is not the perspective of the winner that is taken, but the perspective of the speaker and thus the presupposed past event is past with respect to the speaker's utterance. The reason for this is that the speaker has a reason to request that the hearer win again, as the request must be motivated by some goal of the speaker rather than by some goal of the hearer. If the presupposed winning event is located in the future, then the speaker has little motivation to ask that the hearer win again. However, in some cases, the location of the presupposed event can be moved to the future (with respect to the speaker's

¹⁶ Of course, a semanticist might be inclined to say that such uses should be barred from semantic stipulation. But here I propose that even without a semantic stipulation we can explain why such uses do not occur.

¹⁷ Denis Delfitto (p.c.) does not share this judgement, but would prefer to replace the example with the following: *Mary might smoke again, if she ever smokes a first time*. Under a modal view of the future, which some semantic authors share, this change will not make much of a difference. Even so, I agree that the example without the modal might be awkward, but this has more to do with pragmatic, rather than with semantic reasons. Why should I, in fact, categorically assert that Mary will smoke again, given that I am not sure that she has smoked a first time and given that I am making her smoking again conditional on her smoking a first time? The weaker modal statement might be more appropriate, for scalar reasons (one should make the strongest statement that one can make, rather than the weakest statement one can make). However, nothing prevents me from making a prediction about the future (Mary will smoke again) making it conditional upon an event presupposed by the prediction. This must be part of the semantic expressive potential of the language. Nothing should prevent us from making conditional predictions about the future.

¹⁸ It is of great interest that the Longman dictionary defines a sense of 'again' as 'another time' or 'once more'. Both interpretations are compatible with my view.

utterance), as in the sentence ‘You must win again after winning tomorrow.’ The time adverbial ‘tomorrow’ makes it clear that the presupposed event is located in the future. If locating the presupposed event in the past (rather than in the future) was just a matter of semantics, we could not explain why there is compatibility with the sentence ‘You must win again after winning tomorrow.’ Thus the only alternative we are left with is the pragmatic interpretation. My opponents may well respond that things are easier in the future than in the past. In fact, in the past it is not easy at all to say things such as ‘John smoked again (on April 2 2017 at 3 pm) before smoking on April 3 2017’. (However, one can say ‘Mary smoked again, if she ever smoked a first time’ to support the pragmatic view). The natural interpretation of this utterance is that the presupposed event is located in the past with respect to the event of smoking on April 2nd 2017. However, one could very well say ‘John smoked again before 3rd April 2017 but he never smoked before 2nd April 2017 at 3 pm’. Well, I agree that this interpretation is a bit forced. However, for past cases, a decisive argument is that specifying that the presupposed event occurs at a previous time (as does Márta [Abrusán, 2017](#)) is not enough. One has to specify that the event is past with respect to the event discussed rather than with respect to the utterance time. One must very well resort to the stipulation that this temporal specification is semantic, but why should one increase the burden for semantics when it can be calculated as an explicature that the event presupposed must be prior to the event talked about? The fact that the presupposed event must be prior to the event talked about follows from the propensity to see events as ordered from the perspective of the person talked about. The presupposed event must precede (rather than follow) the event talked about not because of an ontological presupposition or a logical necessity (one can, in fact, order the events in the opposite direction) but because from the point of view of the person talked about ordering will proceed by counting the events in the order as they happen (logophoricity may turn out to be a decisive argument in pragmatic reduction of presupposition). The semantic stipulation is unnecessary. To my knowledge, the only attempt to clarify why the presupposition of ‘again’ is also entailed comes from [Abrusán \(2017\)](#). The author notes that the following statement is contradictory “Floppy will be on the run at Christmas, but she will never be on the run.” However, the following is not. “Floppy will be on the run at Christmas, but she will never be on the run again”. The occurrence of ‘again’ is enough to make the sentence non-contradictory. Notice, however, that the meaning of ‘again’ given in the Longman dictionary is enough to make the two sentences non-contradictory: ‘once again.’ The sentences are contradictory not due to the presupposition of ‘again’ but to its semantic meaning. So this does not imply that the presupposition is entailed.

Now, I do not want to say that the evidence I have discussed is decisive, but it certainly puts in question the idea that non-cancellability of presuppositions should be equated with semantic entailment. We at least need further evidence to establish the point that in the cases of presuppositions (of certain presuppositions), non-cancellability ought to be identified with semantic entailment.

Now, an imaginary opponent may want to say that if my position that semantic entailment is not responsible for the presuppositions in the positive sentences of certain change of state verbs or iterative adverbs, then I should at least find a rationale for explaining where these presuppositions come from. The replies may be two. The first one is that positive and negative sentences share presuppositions and, thus, once we have a method for extracting presuppositions from negative sentences, we have obtained them for positive sentences too. The second one is that we should make the most of a precept by [Stalnaker \(1974\)](#) who says that

The propositions that P and that Q may be related to each other, and to common beliefs and intentions, in such a way that it is hard to think of a reason that anyone would raise the question whether P, or care about its answer, unless he already believed that Q. ([Stalnaker 1974](#), 205)

We do not need to show in detail how Stalnaker's strategy is implemented, as we have abundantly discussed several examples so far. We just need it as a general schema for interpretation.

Before closing this section, I want to return to an (apparently) intractable case. Suppose that we accept that (3) presupposes (4), rather than (5):

- (3) John regrets going to Paris with Mary
- (4) John believes he went to Paris with Mary
- (5) John went to Paris with Mary.

After all, this is not very far from what [Heim \(1992\)](#) proposes about the presuppositions of ‘believe’. In fact, she says that ‘Mary believes her cello is broken’ presupposes ‘Mary believes she has a cello’, while the presupposition ‘Mary has a cello’ is pragmatically accommodated into the main context (given that we assume, lacking evidence to the contrary, that Mary has rational beliefs’ (a conversational implicature may be instrumental in this accommodation process)). Now, this semantico/pragmatic approach could be adopted for (3) as well, if we can demonstrate that ‘regrets’ entails ‘believe.’ Now, it is clear that someone who regrets something must believe it. But from the fact that he believes it, it does not follow that it

is true. So, where does the presupposition (5) 'John went to Paris with Mary' come from? It surely comes from pragmatics and it is accommodated by making use of the same reasoning adopted by Heim for belief. (Of course, here we are lucky because 'regret' is a psychological verb after all (see Davis (2003, 106) for the use of the term 'psychological verb' for verbs related to opacity)) and entails belief.¹⁹ That 'regrets' is a psychological verb involving belief is shown by the fact that it involves having a mental representation and in virtue of that having a relation to a proposition (which, according to Perry (2013), is the abstract structure of belief). I guess one may object that 'regret' is indeed factive, even if it can be used in a psychologized way in discourse – but we should distinguish use from semantics. However, since here I am discussing speaker's presuppositions and not potential presuppositions, my discussion is ok, even if my objector does not agree with me.

6. Some easy cases

Now, all these examples are of interest because we are interested anyway in conversational or speaker-meant presuppositions, as we know from examples like the important one in Levinson (1983) that potential presuppositions may not make it to become speaker-meant presuppositions (or speaker presuppositions or conversational presuppositions):

(6) Mary died before finishing her thesis.

Here, as Levinson says, the presupposition evaporates because it clashes with our world knowledge to the effect that someone who dies before finishing her thesis cannot have finished the thesis. (Important though this case by Levinson may be, it may be considered an easy case of presupposition cancellation, while the most obstinate cases remain those connected with ontological considerations and where presupposition is a logical rather than (or in addition to) being a linguistic notion). There may be other easy cases, like the ones brought to our attention by Dorota Zielinska (personal communication):

(7) Thanks for not smoking on the plane (a notice on the airbus chairs)

Here it is not presupposed that the passengers have smoked on the plane even if an utterance like 'They thanked the passengers for flying Emirates' normally linguistically and conversationally presupposes that the passengers have used Emirates planes.

7. Presuppositions and pragmatic expansions

It may be interesting to see some presuppositions as pragmatic expansions – processes that parallel those noticed by Bach (1994) in his discussion of implicatures, but different from his because they do not intrude into truth-conditional content, given that notoriously when a presupposition fails, the utterance as a whole is deemed unsatisfactory rather than false (Strawson, 1950; Austin, 1962; Macagno and Walton, 2013; Cummings, 2014, 10).

So far we have been formulating some rather strong theses:

- (a) Some presuppositions are of an ontological kind; I have tentatively explained them as explicatures;
- (b) Even presuppositions of an ontological kind have to be speaker-meant; if they are not speaker-meant, they fail to project (or are cancelled).

Presumably thesis (a) is controversial, in the sense that it is not easy to defend it; presumably, thesis (b) is non-controversial. We now want to add one more thesis (to be called (c)):

- (c) Presuppositions – even those that are alleged to be semantic, that is to say triggered by lexical materials – are under-determined and thus are in need of pragmatic completions/expansions. Macagno and Capone (2016a,b) suggested many cases of this sort, one case of which is the following:

(8) Mary stopped smoking.

Does this mean that Mary stopped smoking a cigarette (in fact, the one she started smoking) or that she dropped the habit of smoking? Could Mary stop smoking (the habit of smoking) even if she sometimes, occasionally or erratically, smokes one cigarette every now and then (say two cigarettes a week)? Presumably presuppositions (of the lexical kind) are underspecified and they need pragmatics to fully determine their content.

¹⁹ Michael Devitt (p.c.) too agrees with this judgement.

Now we are closer to a solution that is not unsatisfactory, although only a partial victory. Yet, when one thinks of the theory of presuppositions in abstract, philosophical terms, a theory that is simpler and less asymmetrical is to be preferred. I always thought that a theory of presuppositions that presented an asymmetry between cases of positive sentences and cases of negative, modal and interrogative sentences was unsatisfactory. Now that we are moving towards a theory of speaker-meant presuppositions, we are in a position to eliminate asymmetry and complexity in our little and modest theory.

8. Conclusion

In this paper, I made a distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic presuppositions. I also proposed that we should be interested in conversational presuppositions (speaker-meant presuppositions or speaker's presuppositions). I also made a distinction between potential and actual presuppositions. I said that in some cases presuppositions can be conversationally implicated and cancellation is possible. Then I specified what the hard cases are and I tried to explain them through ontological considerations. Then I tried to reduce some of the hard cases through (a) the notion that all actual presuppositions are speaker-meant; (b) the distinction between ontological and linguistic presuppositions; (c) the uncontroversial notion that even ontological presuppositions are susceptible to semantic under-determination that has to be tackled though pragmatic intrusion. Pragmatic intrusion for presuppositional cases, however, cannot really amount to completing or expanding or in any case computing an *explicature* in an ordinary sense, as explicatures have to do with truth-conditions and aim to create propositionally complete forms that are truth-evaluable (unlike propositional fragments or schemata that are usually expressed in sentences (Carston, 2002; Wilson and Sperber, 2002, 2012)). They are processes similar to explicatures, but since certain types of presuppositions are only pre-conditions for an utterance's being true or false (Strawson, 1950; Macagno, 2016; Green, 1989; Marmaridou, 2000), we cannot say that these processes are completely like those of explicatures. Nevertheless, they are pragmatically-motivated, even if hard to cancel (see Capone, 2009 on lack of cancellability or Jaszczolt, 2016 on entrenched meanings). This more or less brings my approach in line with contextualism (even if I accept semantic invariantism, along the lines of Kratzer or Cappelen and Lepore (2005)²⁰).

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²⁰ Invariantism is also shared by Carston (2002), in a form that is compatible with her contextualism.

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