Anaphoric access to presupposed content. Experimental evidence from propositional anaphor resolution in German

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Presupposed content has been characterized as "inaccessible" for direct responses and anaphoric relations (Potts 2015). This has been related to the idea that as not-at-issue content, it directly enters the common ground upon being uttered, rather than being put up for discussion (Murray 2014, Anderbois et al. 2015). The empirical picture on this has been somewhat unclear, however. Not least because there are many confounding factors that can affect whether presupposed content is accessible for anaphoric uptake: amongst them whether it has an overt linguistic antecedent or its own propositional discourse referent and whether it is at the right frontier of discourse.

In this talk I present data from propositional anaphor resolution experiments (joint work with Jet Hoek and Klaus von Heusinger) on German *obwohl* ('even though')-clauses whose content has been characterized as presupposed (König 1991, Breindl 2014). These experiments test whether resolution to the content of the *obwohl*-clause is dependent on the continuation sentence that contains the propositional anaphor *das* 'that' and compare this to the accessibility of the same content when expressed through an *aber* ('but')-clause, whose content is at-issue. Since the confounds mentioned above are neutralized in these experiments, they isolate the effect of being presupposed on the anaphoric accessibility of propositional content. The results do not confirm that presupposed content is *per se* inaccessible for anaphoric uptake. The picture is instead more complex: while with many continuations, the content of *obwohl*-clauses is never resolved to, it is more accessible to continuations expressing that the antecedent content is *established* and it is even the preferred option with continuations expressing that the antecedent content is *off-topic*. I compare this with data from a previous study on factive embedded content, which shows a different behaviour again, and intend to discuss implications of the combined results on some of the theoretical notions involved.

References:

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