



EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN



Goethe
Universität
Frankfurt am Main

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

At-issueness and Commitment
Interfaces and Interactions

September 21–22, 2026
Goethe University Frankfurt

Book of Abstracts

Workshop “At-issueness and Commitment: Interfaces and Interactions”

Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

September 21-22, 2026

Version: September 9th, 2026

Organizers

Kathryn Barnes
Cornelia Ebert
Lennart Fritzsche
Ramona Saile
Britta Stolterfoht

Contents

Program	5
Invited talks	8
Bary, Corien: At-issueness and commitment in speech reports	9
Faller, Martina: The commitments of German apprehensive <i>nachher</i>	11
Kocher, Anna: Commitments, beliefs and a glimpse at at-issueness: Experimental evidence from Spanish	14
Talks	16
Claus, Berry: <i>Many</i> commitments: at-issue vs expressive vs cancellable meaning	17
Dascalu, Nicolaie Dominik; Delogu, Francesca: When Not-at-Issue Information Is Less Likely to Be Noticed: Packaging Effects on Truth Judgments	19
Frevert, Elisa; Chen, Yuqiu; Antomo, Mailin: Backgrounded but Binding? Commitment in Presuppositions and Appositive Relative Clauses . .	22
Geurts, Bart: At-issueness, commitment, and common ground	25
Krifka, Manfred: Modal operators in the Judge Phrase: Not-at-issue but part of speaker's commitment	28
Lewerentz, Lukas: Commitment in pictorial communication	31
Müller, Kalle; Taub, Katherine: CG updates: Commitments vs. at-issueness	34
Rüeck, Amelie; Snider, Todd; Franke, Michael: Accessibility of At-Issue and Not-at-Issue Information in Common Ground	37
Thalmann, Maik; Gutzmann, Daniel: Commitment without at-issueness, at-issueness without commitment	41
Turgay, Katharina; Gutzmann, Daniel: Commitment, impositions and complicity: non-at-issue meaning, slurs and the common ground	44
Zodl, Paul: (Not) Committing with German Source-Indicating Adverbials . .	47
Poster Session I	51
Balbach, Nadine; Hörnig, Robin: Speaker Commitment and At-Issueness as Diagnostics for the Meaning Components of Exceptives	52
Chen, Jiayuan: Gestures in focus alternatives	57
Cortez Espinoza, Maya; Onea, Edgar: Distributive Spotlight Questions. A novel class of non-canonical questions.	60
Dascalu, Nicolaie Dominik; Wecker, Marius: Poly-Intentionality and Multiple Common Grounds: A Multicontextual Account of Dogwhistles .	63
Frühauf, Felix: Commitment to non-at-issue Common Ground marking . . .	66
Haenni, Marie: The role of evidentiality in the interpretation of polar responses in French	70
Härtil, Holden; Johansen, Henriette: Not What Was Said: Commitment Attribution in Verbal Irony	73
He, Rong: Shifting At-Issueness without Shifting Commitment	76
Köpping, Jan; Zani, Eleonora: Putting not-at-issue content on the table: Evidence from Bavarian <i>fei</i> and German <i>doch</i>	79
Krasikova, Natalia; König, Peter; Achimova, Asya: Credibility of pre-supposed and asserted information: the role of trigger type and source reliability	83

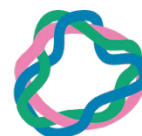
Liu, Landon; Singh, Raj: Reasonable Accommodation and the (Conditional) Proviso Problem	86
Mulligan, Karl: Antagonistic <i>Why?</i> as metacommunicative resistance	90
Poster Session II	93
Bade, Nadine; Kruschwitz, Kascha; Zymła, Mark-Matthias: Commitment through accommodation – evidence from LMs	94
Buchczyk, Sebastian: Two Commitment Spaces for Romance Emotives	97
Gabunia, Tekla: Who’s Even Coming? Georgian <i>WH+=gha</i> and Commitment Beyond At-Issueness	100
Gyuris, Beáta: Commitment, at-issueness and declarative questions	103
Li, Geyi: At-issueness as a window onto gradation between world and semantic knowledge	107
Miglietta, Andrea: Partial Commitment, Parenthesis, and Question Under Discussion – a case study on Italian	111
Pellegrini, Riccardo Enrico: Metaphorical Commitments	114
Thalmann, Maik; Matticchio, Andrea: Decoupling projection from at-issueness	117
Tsiakmakis, Evripidis; Mendia, Jon Ander: High-degree inferences in Spanish: commitments, at-issueness and the structure of discourse	120
Xu, Conglei; Tonhauser, Judith: What is at-issueness? An experimental comparison of diagnostics	123

Program

At-issueness and Commitment: Interfaces and Interactions

Goethe University Frankfurt

SFB1718



MONDAY, SEP 21

09:00 – 09:30	Registration & coffee
09:30 – 09:45	Welcome & Opening
09:45 – 10:45	Invited talk I: Anna Kocher Commitments, beliefs and a glimpse at at-issueness: Experimental evidence from Spanish
10:45 – 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 – 11:45	Bart Geurts At-issueness, commitment, and common ground
11:45 – 12:15	Manfred Krifka Modal operators in the Judge Phrase: Not-at-issue but part of speaker's commitment
12:15 – 12:45	Maik Thalmann, Daniel Gutzmann Commitment without at-issueness, at-issueness without commitment
12:45 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 14:30	Elisa Frevert, Yuqiu Chen, Mailin Antomo Backgrounded but Binding? Commitment in Presuppositions and Appositive Relative Clauses
14:30 – 15:00	Berry Claus <i>Many</i> commitments: at-issue vs expressive vs cancellable meaning
15:00 – 15:30	Amelie Rüeck, Todd Snider, Michael Franke Accessibility of At-Issue and Not-at-Issue Information in Common Ground
15:30 – 16:45	Poster session I + coffee
16:45 – 17:15	Lukas Lewerentz Commitment in pictorial communication
17:15 – 17:45	Daniel Gutzmann, Katharina Turgay Commitment, impositions and complicity: non-at-issue meaning, slurs and the common ground
19:00	Dinner

TUESDAY, SEP 22

09:30 – 10:30	Invited talk II: Martina Faller The commitments of German apprehensive <i>nachher</i>
10:30 – 11:00	Kalle Müller, Katherine Taub CG updates: Commitments vs. at-issueness
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 12:00	Paul Zödl (Not) Committing with German Source-Indicating Adverbials
12:00 – 12:30	Nicolaie Dominik Dascalu, Francesca Delogu When Not-at-Issue Information Is Less Likely to Be Noticed: Packaging Effects on Truth Judgments
12:30 – 13:45	Lunch break
13:45 – 15:00	Poster session II + coffee
15:00 – 16:00	Invited talk III: Corien Bary At-issueness and commitment in speech reports
16:00 – 16:15	Closing

Poster session I

1. **Nadine Balbach, Robin Hörnig**
Commitment and At-Issuehood as Diagnostics for the Meaning Components of Exceptives
2. **Jiayuan Chen**
Gestures in focus alternatives
3. **Maya Cortez Espinoza, Edgar Onea**
Distributive Spotlight Questions
4. **Nicolaie Dominik Dascalu and Marius Wecker**
Poly-Intentionality and Multiple Common Grounds: A Multicontextual Account of Dogwhistles
5. **Felix Frühauf**
Commitment to non-at-issue Common Ground marking
6. **Marie Haenni**
The role of evidentiality in the interpretation of polar responses in French
7. **Holden Härtl, Henriette Johansen**
Not What Was Said: Commitment Attribution in Verbal Irony
8. **Rong He**
Shifting At-Issuehood without Shifting Commitment
9. **Jan Köpping, Eleonora Zani**
Putting not-at-issue content on the table: Evidence from Bavarian "fei" and German "doch"
10. **Natalia Krasikova, Peter König, Asya Achimova**
Credibility of presupposed and asserted information: the role of trigger type and source reliability
11. **Landon Liu, Raj Singh**
Reasonable Accommodation and the (Conditional) Proviso Problem
12. **Karl Mulligan**
Antagonistic Why? as metacommunicative resistance

Poster session II

13. **Nadine Bade, Kascha Kruschwitz, Mark-Matthias Zymla**
Commitment through accommodation – evidence from LMs
14. **Sebastian Buchczyk**
Two Commitment Spaces for Romance Emotives
15. **Tekla Gabunia**
What Else? Georgian WH+=gha and the Interface of At-Issuehood and Commitment
16. **Beáta Gyuris**
Commitment, at-issuehood and declarative questions
17. **Geyi Li**
At-issuehood as a window onto gradation between world and semantic knowledge
18. **Andrea Miglietta**
Partial commitment, Parenthesis, and Question Under Discussion – a case study on Italian
19. **Riccardo Enrico Pellegrini**
Metaphorical Commitments
20. **Maik Thalmann, Andrea Matticchio**
Decoupling projection from at-issuehood
21. **Evrpidis Tsiakmakis, Jon Ander Mendia**
High-degree inferences in Spanish: commitments, at-issuehood and the structure of discourse
22. **Conglei Xu, Judith Tonhauser**
What is at-issuehood? An experimental comparison of diagnostics

Invited talks

Bary, Corien: At-issueness and commitment in speech reports

At-issueness and commitment in speech reports

Corien Bary, Radboud University Nijmegen

We often make reference to what other people have said. We do so for a variety of different reasons, using a variety of different constructions. We vividly represent entire dialogues to tell a story, we back up a claim by advancing the available evidence, or we hedge our claims by indicating that we heard this information from someone else. In Bary and Maier (2021) we sketched the landscape of speech reporting based on the dimensions of eventivity (whether or not a speech event is introduced) and at-issueness (whether the reportative component or the reported content carries the ‘main point’, Simons 2007). Speech reports also seem to differ in the perceived commitment to their reported content. In this talk I explore the relation between at-issueness and commitment for speech reports (see also Bary 2023). Speech reports form an interesting case since it seems possible to present the reported content as the main point of one’s utterance without becoming committed to it. This is a central puzzle in the reportative evidentiality literature (e.g., AnderBois 2014, Murray 2014, Faller 2019). I will bring into the discussion results from our fEMG study on the perception of commitment in speech reports (Yates, Van Tiel, De Swart, Bary, to appear) and outline plans for future experiments, partially inspired by Faller’s (2019) account of the puzzle in terms of the Collaborative Principle.

References

- AnderBois, Scott (2014), On the exceptional status of reportative evidentials. *Proceedings of SALT 24*, 234–254.
- Bary, Corien (2023). Speech reports and evidence. *Journal of Pragmatics* 210, 172–189.
- Bary, Corien and Emar Maier (2021). The landscape of speech reporting. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 14(8), 1–54.
- Faller, Martina (2019), The discourse commitments of illocutionary reportatives. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 12(8), 1–53.
- Murray, Sarah E. (2014), Varieties of update. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 7(2), 1–53
- Simons, Mandy (2007), Observations on embedding verbs, evidentiality, and presupposition. *Lingua* 117(6), 1034–1056.
- Yates, Harriet, Bob van Tiel, Peter de Swart and Corien Bary (to appear), The effect of hearsay on speaker commitment: an fEMG study. *Open Mind*.

Faller, Martina: The commitments of German apprehensive *nachher*

The commitments of German apprehensive *nachher*

Martina Faller & Eva Schultze-Berndt, The University of Manchester

The German temporal adverb *nachher* ‘afterwards, later’, illustrated in (1), has a second use as a sentential adverb, in which it presents a situation as epistemically possible while simultaneously expressing that it would be bad or unfortunate in some way if this situation was (to become) actual, as illustrated in (2) and (3). Even though winning a competition is normally considered a positive event, *nachher* in (2) can only express a negative evaluation, which is further clarified by the continuation explaining the negative consequence.

- (1) das musst du mir **nachher** noch erklären was das ist
‘you’ll have to explain to me **later** what that is’ (IDS DGD corpus)
- (2) [I think I better not take part in this competition.]
Nachher gewinne ich noch
‘I might actually win [a trip]
[and won’t be able to watch the Champions League final at home.]’ (Internet forum)
- (3) [Context: speaker sold a graphics card online, buyer says it’s defect.]
Was kann ich da tun? **Nachher** hat er die kaputt gemacht, und ich sitz auf den Kosten...?
‘What can I do? Maybe he broke it, and I have to bear the cost.’ (Internet forum)

From a cross-linguistic perspective, this use is a clear instance of the category of apprehensives, which is attested widely in the languages of the world (Vuillermet et al. 2026 and references therein). Apprehensive *nachher* has, to our knowledge, not been discussed in work on German modality or more generally German grammar, likely because it appears to be restricted to informal discourse genres.

In this talk, we show that both the epistemic possibility and the evaluative meaning component of *nachher* are not-at-issue speaker commitments. While other epistemic adverbs such as *vielleicht* ‘perhaps’ and *wahrscheinlich* ‘probably’ can sometimes be at-issue (Müller 2019), apprehensive *nachher* cannot, which we argue is due to its evaluative component being strongly subjective (Ernst 2009). Unlike other evaluative

adverbs such as *leider* ‘unfortunately’, however, *nachher* is not factive.

We further show that the prejacent of *nachher* is at-issue in the sense that it is relevant to the question under discussion, but not in the sense of being proposed for the common ground. These observations provide support for the need to decouple speaker commitment from at-issueness also for declaratives, as previously argued for, e.g., reportative evidentials (Faller 2019), and to draw a distinction between these two types of at-issueness (Koev 2018).

While the prejacent of *nachher* is at-issue, it does not seem to be able to directly answer an overt question about it—unlike the prejacent of epistemic and evaluative adverbs:

- (4) a. Q: Was ist mit der Grafikkarte passiert?
‘What happened with the graphics card?’
b. A: Vielleicht/Leider/#**Nachher** hat er die kaputt gemacht.
‘Maybe/Unfortunately he broke it.’

We hypothesise that *nachher* additionally requires the speaker to commit to the discourse relation *Explanation*, as suggested by Francez (2026) for a Hebrew apprehensive: the speaker of (3) utters the *nachher*-sentence to explain why they ask what they can do, the speaker of (2) why they do not intend to participate in the competition. In (4), there is however no plausible way of connecting the *nachher*-sentence to a prior utterance via *Explanation*.

References

- Ernst, Thomas (2009). Speaker-oriented adverbs. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 27, 497–544.
- Faller, Martina (2019). The discourse commitments of illocutionary reportatives. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 12, 1–53.
- Francez, Itamar (2026). Apprehension in Hebrew. In Martina Faller, Eva Schultze-Berndt, and Marine Vuillermet (eds.), *Apprehensional constructions in a cross-linguistic perspective*, volume 10 of *Research on Comparative Grammar*, 197–229. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Koev, Todor (2018). Notions of at-issueness. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 12, e12306.
- Müller, Kalle (2019). Sentence adverbials, (non-)at-issueness, and orientation in German—evidence from conditionals. In Daniel Gutzmann and Katharina Turgay (eds.), *Secondary content*, volume 37 of *Current Research in the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface (CRiSPI)*, 311–340. Leiden: Brill.
- Vuillermet, Marine, Eva Schultze-Berndt, and Martina Faller (2026). Introduction: Apprehensional constructions in a cross-linguistic perspective. In Martina Faller, Eva Schultze-Berndt, and Marine Vuillermet (eds.), *Apprehensional constructions in a cross-linguistic perspective*, volume 10 of *Research on Comparative Grammar*, 1–40. Berlin: Language Science Press.

Kocher, Anna: Commitments, beliefs and a glimpse at at-issueness: Experimental evidence from Spanish

Commitments, beliefs and a glimpse at at-issueness: Experimental evidence from Spanish

Anna Kocher, KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt

tbd

Talks

Claus, Berry: *Many* commitments: at-issue vs expressive vs cancellable meaning

Many commitments: at-issue vs expressive vs cancellable meaning

Berry Claus | Leibniz Universität Hannover

This experimental study investigated how commitment is related to at-issueness and cancellability. In the experiment, conducted in Dutch, participants had to imagine that they were heading several R&D-teams, one of which had requested additional funding, and that they had asked the former head about the team's past performance. There were three versions of the response, see (1), corresponding to three between-subjects-design conditions, one condition targeting at-issue meaning and two conditions targeting cancellable vs noncancellable non-at-issue meaning.

In all three conditions, the response conveyed that many of the previous projects of the team were successful. In the AT-ISSUE-condition, this information was asserted. In the CANCELLABLE-condition, the information was conveyed implicitly as non-at-issue content through a positive numeral modifier, which invites the cancellable pragmatic inference of “*many-ness*” (Mittwoch 2010). In the EXPRESSIVE-condition, the target information was also non-at-issue, but noncancellable. It was conveyed by the expressive *maar liefst*, which, when it targets a numeral, indicates that, according to the speaker, the respective number is remarkably high. There is no translation equivalent of *maar liefst* in English; it is often translated with *no fewer than*.

- (1) {Vele}_{AT-ISSUE} / {Maar liefst 30}_{EXPRESSIVE} / {Meer dan 25}_{CANCELLABLE} van de 50 laatste projecten van het team waren succesvol.
'{Many}_{AT-ISSUE} / {No fewer than 30}_{EXPRESSIVE} / {More than 25}_{CANCELLABLE} of the team's last 50 projects were successful.'

Commitment was operationalised in terms of accountability and deniability. Participants had to indicate to what extent they (dis)agreed with the statements in (2) and (3), on a 7-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

- (2) If it were to turn out later that day that not many of the team's last 50 projects had been successful, the former head would have to explain himself. [ACCOUNTABILITY]
(3) Suppose it were to turn out later that day that not many of the team's last 50 projects had been successful and you were to confront the former head with this. He could then convincingly dismiss the accusation with the following reply: “I did not claim that many of the team's last 50 projects were successful”. [DENIABILITY]

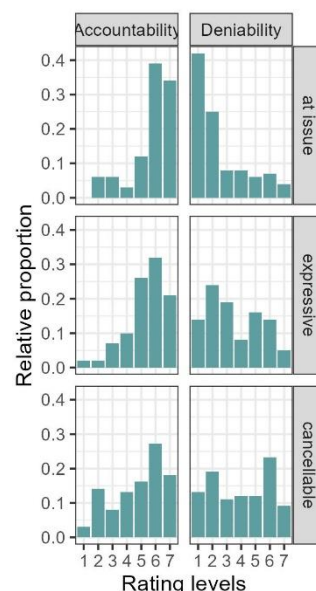


Figure: Proportions of the ratings per level

As can be seen from the figure, agreement with the ACCOUNTABILITY statement and disagreement with the DENIABILITY statement was highest in the AT-ISSUE-condition and lowest in the CANCELLABLE-condition. The ratings in the EXPRESSIVE-condition were in-between. For ACCOUNTABILITY, they differed significantly from those in the AT-ISSUE-condition ($p < .001$) and in the CANCELLABLE-condition ($p < .05$). For DENIABILITY, they differed significantly from those in the AT-ISSUE-condition ($p < .0001$) but not from those in the CANCELLABLE-condition ($p < .1$).

The results replicate the relationship between at-issueness and commitment and extend previous findings to expressive meaning and (non-)cancellability. Overall, commitment was strongest for at-issue meaning and stronger for expressive than for cancellable non-at-issue meaning. In further studies, I plan to investigate whether the non-significant difference for the two non-at-issue conditions for DENIABILITY is attributable to the specific wording of the statement and to what extent it matters whether or not the target information (classification as ‘many’) is interpreted as purely reflecting the speaker's attitude.

Reference

Mittwoch, A. (2010). Numeral modifiers and temporal container adverbials. *Proceedings of the 35th Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistic Society*, 257-268.

Dascalu, Nicolaie Dominik; Delogu, Francesca: When Not-at-Issue Information
Is Less Likely to Be Noticed: Packaging Effects on Truth Judgments

When Not-at-Issue Information Is Less Likely to Be Noticed: Packaging Effects on Truth Judgments

Nicolaie Dominik Dascalu

Ruhr University Bochum

Francesca Delogu

Saarland University

The relation between at-issueness and commitment raises a central question: can content that is less open to direct challenge nevertheless be more readily accepted and accommodated [1, 2]? Previous studies show that subjective content is perceived as less subjective when it occurs prenominally inside a definite description than when it occurs predicatively [3]. Related work suggests that the same structural contrast can increase agreement with controversial content [4]. Building on these studies, we test whether controversial content packaged as not-at-issue affects truth-conditional interpretation, thereby influencing hearers' epistemic vigilance.

Two studies each tested 48 native speakers of English aged 20–35, recruited through Prolific. Stimuli were pre-tested and implemented in PCIBex; reading and response times were recorded to better control for potential confounds.

Experiment 1 employed a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design crossing AT-ISSUENESS, OPINION TYPE, and VERIDICALITY. Each item expressed an evaluative proposition p and a factual proposition q :

(1a) NOT-AT-ISSUE, [non-controversial/controversial], [veridical/non-veridical]:

The [*amazing/ boring*] Roman Colosseum was built [*in ancient times/ recently*].

(1b) AT-ISSUE, [non-controversial/controversial], [veridical/non-veridical]:

The Roman Colosseum is [*amazing/ boring*] and was built [*in ancient times/ recently*].

Participants first judged the conjunction $p \wedge q$ as true or false. In a post-test, they evaluated q independently as true, false, or unknown, allowing the two conjuncts to be assessed separately.

Experiment 2 used the same truth-judgment procedure but replaced subjective adjectives with objectively verifiable properties, yielding a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design crossing AT-ISSUENESS, PROPERTY TYPE, and VERIDICALITY:

(2a) NOT-AT-ISSUE, [property false/true], [veridical/non-veridical]:

The [*African-American/ American*] actor Leonardo DiCaprio starred in [*Titanic/ Terminator*].

(2b) AT-ISSUE, [property false/true], [veridical/non-veridical]:

The actor Leonardo DiCaprio is [*African-American/ American*] and starred in [*Titanic/ Terminator*].

Two accounts predict the observed asymmetry. A *speaker-oriented account* assumes that not-at-issue evaluative content is attributed primarily to the speaker, such that accepting the utterance need not commit the hearer to the evaluation. By contrast, when the same content is presented predicatively and hence as at-issue, accepting the utterance would, *mutatis mutandis*, also commit the hearer to it. An *attention-allocation account* [5, 6], however, predicts that not-at-issue packaging reduces scrutiny independently of whether the content is subjective or objective.

The results favour the latter account. Generalized linear mixed-effects models showed effects of Opinion Type ($z = 13.53$) and Veridicality ($z = 19.82$), and interactions between At-Issueness and Opinion Type ($z = 4.95$) and between Opinion Type and Veridicality ($z = 7.33$). In the controversial–veridical condition, false responses increased from 48.1% for not-at-issue content to 69.8% for at-issue content.

Crucially, the same asymmetry emerged for objective properties. The model showed effects of At-Issue-ness ($z = 2.75$), Property Type ($z = 9.54$), and Veridicality ($z = 17.999$), plus an interaction between Property Type and Veridicality ($z = 4.51$). In the false-property–veridical condition, false responses increased from 35.7% to 57.3%. Thus, packaging may move content outside the focus of attention, regardless of whether it is subjective or objective (Figure 1).

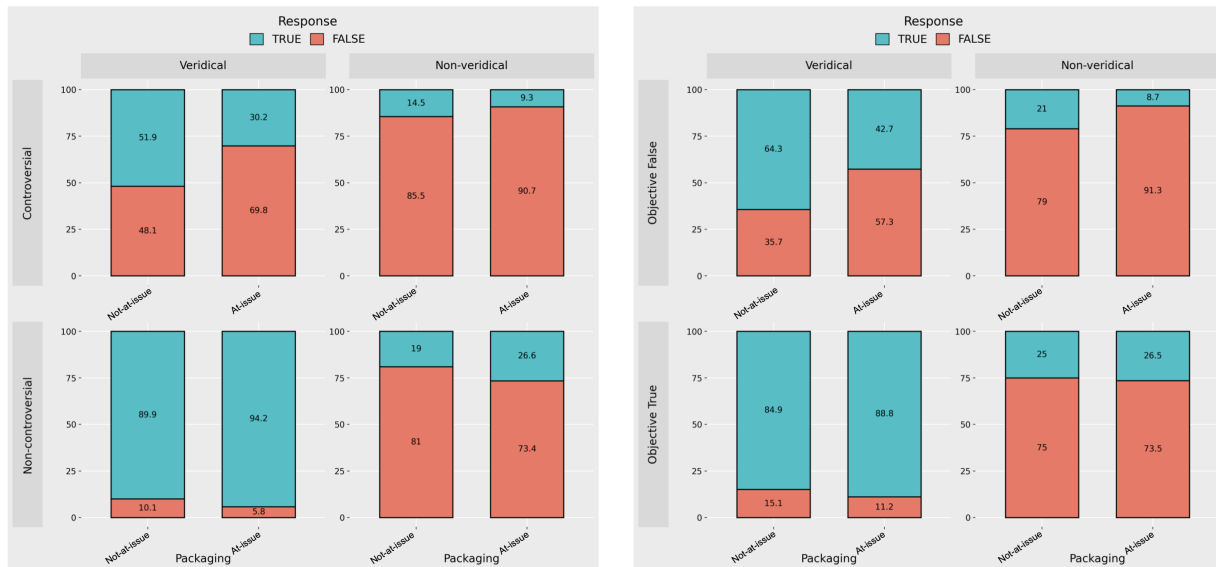


Figure 1: Mean proportions of true and false responses by condition in Experiments 1 and 2. The left panel shows Experiment 1 with OPINION TYPE; the right panel shows Experiment 2, the baseline condition, with PROPERTY TYPE.

References

- [1] Simons, M., Tonhauser, J., Beaver, D. I., & Roberts, C. (2010). What projects and why. *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory*, 20, 309–327. <https://doi.org/10.3765/salt.v20i0.2584>
- [2] Tonhauser, J., Beaver, D. I., Roberts, C., & Simons, M. (2013). Toward a taxonomy of projective content. *Language*, 89(1), 66–109. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.2013.0001>
- [3] Kaiser, E., & Wang, A. (2021). Packaging information as fact versus opinion: Consequences of the (information-)structural position of subjective adjectives. *Discourse Processes*, 58(7), 617–641. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2020.1821166>
- [4] Delogu, F., & Degaetano-Ortlieb, S. (2025). Packaging opinions as given vs. new: Effects on plausibility, agreement, and processing. *Manuscript in preparation*.
- [5] Lombardi Vallauri, E. (2021). Manipulative shallow processing induced by presuppositions and topics. *Frontiers in Communication*, 6, 610807. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2021.610807>
- [6] Giunta, G., Mazzarella, D., & Domaneschi, F. (2025). Are presuppositions really misleading? Assessing the impact of linguistic encoding, at-issue-ness, and source reliability on epistemic vigilance. *Mind & Language*, 40(4), 365–385. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12545>

Frevert, Elisa; Chen, Yuqiu; Antomo, Mailin: Backgrounded but Binding? Commitment in Presuppositions and Appositive Relative Clauses

Backgrounded but Binding? Commitment in Presuppositions and Appositive Relative Clauses

Elisa FREVERT — *University of Göttingen, Germany*
Yuqiu CHEN — *Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany*
Mailin ANOMO — *University of Göttingen, Germany*

Background and research questions:

Recent research on visual communication has shown that at-issue content involves a higher degree of commitment than not-at-issue meaning. This has been shown for iconic co-speech gestures (Chen & Antomo 2025, Walther & Hartke 2026) as well as for emojis (Antomo et al. 2025). These findings raise the question of whether the stronger commitment associated with at-issue content is a general property of meaning across communicative modalities. Does (not)-at-issueness shape commitment attribution? Furthermore, (not)-at-issue meaning is heterogeneous. While presuppositions involve a familiarity constraint (i.e. their content is already part of the Common Ground or treated as such), non-presupposed not-at-issue material such as appositive relative clauses (ARCs) introduces new information into the discourse. How does this heterogeneity of not-at-issue content modulate commitment attribution? We can derive different predictions from previous research: Masia (2025) argues that presuppositions should involve weaker commitment because they are presented as shared information and distribute epistemic responsibility across interlocutors (see also Nuyts 2012). Within this line of reasoning, we would expect a higher degree of commitment to ARCs than to presupposed material. On the other hand, some experimental investigations observe that presuppositions can bind speakers as strongly as assertions (Mazzarella et al. 2018; Reins & Wiegmann 2021). We therefore investigate whether not-at-issue meaning uniformly gives rise to reduced commitment or whether there are differences between different types of not-at-issue content. In doing so, we address a significant gap in the literature, as there has been no empirical research on commitment to appositive relative clauses.

Experiment & Results:

We present the results of an online rating study, where participants read short everyday scenarios in German and evaluated utterances containing either an assertion, a presupposition, or an ARC as illustrated in (1) and (2) (only target sentences):

- (1)
 - a. **Assertion:** “The new neighbor has put his trash in front of our door before.”
 - b. **Presupposition:** “The new neighbor has put his trash in front of our door again”.
 - c. **ARC:** “The new neighbor, who by the way has put his trash in front of our door before, has visitors from his family.”
- (2)
 - a. **Assertion:** “Der neue Nachbar hat schonmal seinen Müll vor unsere Tür gestellt.“
 - b. **Präsupposition:** „Der neue Nachbar hat wieder seinen Müll vor unsere Tür gestellt.“
 - c. **ARC:** „Der neue Nachbar, der übrigens schonmal seinen Müll vor unsere Tür gestellt hat, hatte Besuch von seiner Familie.“

Participants then were asked to give ratings on accountability and possible deniability to measure commitment.

Our results show no significant differences between the three conditions in terms of accountability. Deniability, however, is perceived to be less restricted for presuppositions than for assertions ($p = .001$) and ARCs ($p < .001$), indicating weaker commitment. Assertions and ARCs did not differ significantly ($p = .947$). While the results on the deniability of presupposed content are generally consistent with Masia’s (2025) proposal, the similar pattern observed for ARCs and root declaratives suggests that the

relationship between (not-)at-issueness and commitment attribution, as reported for visual content, is less straightforward in the spoken/written modality.

References

- Antomo, M., Fricke, L., Grosz, P. G. & Scheffler, T. (2025). Lying with at-issue and not-at-issue emojis. In F. Longo & D. Panizza (eds.) *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung*, 29, 77–97.
- Chen, Y. & Antomo, M. (2025). (Not-)At-issueness of iconic gestures and commitment attribution. Oral presentation at XPrag 11, Cambridge, 17.– 19.09.2025.
- Masia, V. (2025). The evidential meaning of presupposition and implicature between retractability and deniability of information. *Folia Linguistica*, 59(1), 153–174. <https://doi.org/10.1515/flin-20232048>
- Mazzarella, D., Reinecke, R., Noveck, I. & Mercier, H. (2018). Saying, presupposing and implicating: How pragmatics modulates commitment. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 133, 15–27.
- Nuyts, J. (2012). Notions of (inter)subjectivity. *English Text Construction*, 5, 53–76.
- Reins, L. M. & Wiegmann, A. (2021). Is lying bound to commitment? Empirically investigating deceptive presuppositions, implicatures, and actions. *Cognitive Science*, 45(2), 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.12936>
- Walter, S. & Hartke, J. (2026). Measuring commitment in iconic gesture: The role of (not-)at-issueness. Oral presentation at “Measuring Commitments”, Radboud University, Nijmegen, 18.– 19.06.2026.

Geurts, Bart: At-issueness, commitment, and common ground

At-issueness, commitment, and common ground

Bart Geurts

Nijmegen

Suppose that commitments are triadic relations $C_{x,y}\varphi$ between two individuals and a proposition (where x is committed to y) and that commitments have a mostly standard modal logic that validates principles (A)-(C), among others:

- (A) $C_{x,y}C_{x,y}\varphi \Rightarrow C_{x,y}\varphi$
- (B) $C_{x,y}\varphi \Rightarrow \neg C_{x,y}\neg\varphi$
- (C) $C_{x,y}\varphi \Rightarrow C_{y,x}C_{x,y}\varphi$

While (A) and (B) are standard, (C) is not. It expresses that a commitment requires consent (which may but need not be made explicit). Thus is the part of commitment logic that is relevant in the following.

Now define that x and y *share* a commitment to φ iff $C_{x,y}\varphi$ and $C_{y,x}\varphi$. Then, courtesy of principle (C), the relationship between commitment and common ground is clarified in two important ways. First, it follows immediately that common ground *is* commitment sharing in the sense that the conjunction of $C_{x,y}\varphi$ and $C_{y,x}\varphi$ is equivalent to:

$$\begin{array}{c} C_{x,y}\varphi \text{ and } C_{y,x}\varphi \text{ and} \\ C_{x,y}C_{y,x}\varphi \text{ and } C_{y,x}C_{x,y}\varphi \text{ and} \\ \vdots \end{array}$$

Second, it follows that $C_{x,y}\varphi$ entails that it is common ground between x and y that $C_{x,y}\varphi$; which captures the public nature of commitments. In the following, I show how at-issueness, too, may be construed in terms of commitment.

According to a popular view, at-issue content is what is relevant to the question under discussion (QUD), where questions are taken to be sets of propositions, i.e. sets of worlds. This is a rather thin concept of questions, which I propose to replace with a richer concept, defined in terms of commitment. To explain, consider the following exchange:

Alice: “Was Napoleon Greek or French?”

Bruce: “French.”

Alice proposes to Bruce that he commit himself to the truth of either $\llbracket$ Napoleon was Greek $\rrbracket$ or $\llbracket$ Napoleon was French $\rrbracket$, and Bruce obliges by choosing the latter.

More formally, the commitment that Alice puts on the table is:

$$C_{b,a}(C_{b,a}Gn \vee C_{b,a}Fn)$$

Given that Alice proposes this commitment, she may be expected to share it if Bruce agrees to do so, which he does. So now we have:

$$C_{a,b}(C_{b,a}Gn \vee C_{b,a}Fn) \text{ and } C_{b,a}(C_{b,a}Gn \vee C_{b,a}Fn)$$

So now it is *common ground* that $C_{b,a}Gn \vee C_{b,a}Fn$. Call this the “issue under discussion”, or IUD for short. (I’m deviating from the usual terminology because IUD is a broader notion than QUD.) Given that $C_{b,a}(C_{b,a}Gn \vee C_{b,a}Fn)$, Bruce must choose between $C_{b,a}Gn$ and $C_{b,a}Fn$. (Here principles (A) and (B) come into play.) He chooses $C_{b,a}Fn$ and thus, unless Alice objects, it becomes common ground between them that Napoleon was French: $C_{a,b}Fn$ and $C_{b,a}Fn$.

Discussions of the three topics in the title typically view discourse as information exchange, thereby confining their scope to informative questions and answers. My notion of commitment is broader and the same holds for its derivative notions, including IUD and common ground. As a consequence, the proposed account of IUDs can deal with exchanges involving promises or requests:

- Bruce: “I’ll do the dishes.”
Alice: “Great, thank you.”
- Alice: “Will you mow the lawn?”
Bruce: “Sure.”

These cases involve a non-epistemic type of commitment, but they are treated in the same way as the familiar informative cases.

Summing up, the proposed theory offers a unified account of commitments, at-issueness, and common ground, and is considerably more general than alternative approaches.

Krifka, Manfred: Modal operators in the Judge Phrase: Not-at-issue but part of speaker's commitment

Modal operators in the Judge Phrase: Not-at-issue but part of speaker's commitment

Manfred Krifka, Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft (ZAS) Berlin
& SFB 1718 Common Ground Tübingen

In the commitment account of assertions and related speech acts, it is generally assumed that the speaker is committing to the at-issue content of what is asserted, and it is discussed whether, and to which degree, the speaker is also committed to what is presupposed or what is implicated (cf. the discussion about lying and misleading, Viebahn 2020, Neri 2021) In this talk I will discuss the issue of assertions that are modified by subjective evidential or epistemic operators as in (1):

- (1) S, to A: *Mary apparently / certainly speaks Mandarin.*

Such assertions appear to be weakened compared to unmodified assertions. Krifka (2023) proposes that this weakening effect arises as follows: S commits to the proposition 'It appears to S that Mary speaks Mandarin', or 'S is certain that Mary speaks Mandarin', which is easier to defend than a commitment to the prejacent proposition 'Mary speaks Mandarin' in case this proposition turns out to be false. Yet, only the latter proposition is at-issue, i.e. answers a question under discussion. So the proposition that S commits to is different from the at-issue proposition.

First, I will discuss evidence that the at-issueness does not include the subjective evidential or epistemic operators. While they sometimes can occur in the overt questions, as in *Does Mary possibly speak Mandarin?* (cf. Krifka 2026) this does not mean that these operators are part of the QuD; rather, they regulate certain expectations concerning the knowledge state of the addressee A.

Second, I will discuss the syntactic structure proposed in Krifka (2023), according to which subjective evidential and epistemic operators occupy a position in a JudgeP that c-commands a TP which answers the question under discussion, and that the commitment operator in the CommitP has the JudgeP in its scope as in (2).

- (2) [_{AcP} [_{CommitP} ⊢ [_{JudgeP} *apparently / certainly* [_{Judge°} [J-] [_{TP} *Mary speaks Mandarin*]]]]]

I will discuss the strong hypothesis that subjective operators generally are modifiers or heads of the JudgeP. This includes slifting constructions like *I think* or *Sue says* which, as JudgeP constituents, show a tendency to morphological reduction, as in German *scheints* (cf. Müller 2021). This also includes subjective modal verbs like *must* and *might*. In particular, I will treat the following ambiguities in German:

- (3) a. *Mary soll Mandarin sprechen.* 'Mary should / is said to speak Mandarin'
b. *Mary will Mandarin sprechen.* 'Mary wants / claims to speak Mandarin'
c. *Mary wird Mandarin sprechen.* 'Mary will / is likely to speak Mandarin'

The fact that the deontic modal *sollen* 'should' and the buletic modal *wollen* 'want' have an epistemic interpretation is known (cf. e.g. Zaefferer 2001, Schenner 2008); here, I will argue that they have a deontic interpretation when occurring in the TP (and hence can be at-issue) and an epistemic interpretation when occurring as head of the JudgeP (and hence are non-at-issue). Similarly, the epistemic interpretation of the future is well-known (cf. e.g. Frana & Menéndez-Benito 2019); here I argue that it receives this reading when occurring as head of the JudgeP, Judge°. Similarly, I will argue that the evidential interpretation of the perfect in various languages, e.g. in Farsi (Simeonova & Zareikar 2015) and in Scandinavian (Haugen 1972) requires that the perfect operator is not interpreted in the TP but in the JudgeP.

- Frana, Ilaria, and Paula Menéndez-Benito. 2019. Evidence and bias: The case of the evidential future in Italian. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*.
- Haugen, Einar. 1972. The inferential perfect in Scandinavian: a problem of contrastive linguistics. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics/Revue canadienne de linguistique* 17. 132-139.
- Krifka, Manfred. 2023. Layers of assertive clauses: Propositions, judgments, commitments, acts. Ed. Julia Hartmann & Angelika Wöllstein, *Propositionale Argumente im Sprachvergleich: Theorie und Empirie*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr. 115-181.
- Krifka, Manfred 2026. Weak and strong epistemic operators in assertion, polar questions and declarative questions. *ELM Experiments in Linguistic Meaning* 4.
<https://www.elm-conference.net/wp-content/uploads/ELM4/AbstractBooklet.pdf>,
<https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/009684>
- Marsili, Neri. 2021. Lying, speech acts, and commitment. *Synthese* 199, 3245-3269.
- Müller, Kalle. 2021. *Satzadverbien, Evidentialität und Non-At-Issueness*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Schenner, Mathias 2008. Double face evidentials in German: Reportative ‘sollen’ and ‘wollen’ in embedded contexts. *Sinn & Bedeutung* 12, 552-566.
- Simeonova, Vesela, & Zareikar, Gita 2015. The syntax of evidentials in Azeri, Bulgarian, and Persian. *Annual Conference of the Canadian Linguistic Association*.
- Viebahn, Emanuel. 2020. Lying with Presuppositions. *Noûs* 54(3), 731-751.
- Zaefferer, Dietmar. 2001. Deconstructing a classical classification: A typological look at Searle’s concept of illocution type. *Revue internationale de philosophie* 216, 209-225.

Lewerentz, Lukas: Commitment in pictorial communication

Commitment in pictorial communication

Lukas Lewerentz (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen & Freie Universität Berlin)

Like sentences, pictures can also be used to communicate contents and to commit to them. If Anna messages Nora and asks Nora what she ate for breakfast, Nora could reply with the sentence ‘I ate an apple’, but she could also send a picture of an apple. In both cases, she would thereby communicate and commit to the claim that she ate an apple for breakfast. That pictures can be used in such an assertoric ways has been acknowledged in the literature (e.g., Kjørup 1974, Korsmeyer 1985, Viebahn 2019, Dixon 2022, Lewerentz and Viebahn 2023, and others). But what exactly one commits to by using a picture assertorically remains controversial.

In this talk, I develop and motivate the view that what one commits to by using a picture depends not just on the picture’s explicit content but also on the *question under discussion* (QUD) (Roberts 2012) that the picture is used to address. To illustrate the idea, consider again Nora’s picture of an apple. In response to Anna’s question *What did you eat for breakfast?*, the picture communicates that Nora ate an apple for breakfast. If Nora sends the same picture in response to the question *What did you just buy at the store?*, then the picture communicates that Nora just bought an apple at the store. Such examples motivate the idea that the content one commits to with a picture can shift with the QUD. Moreover, note that the picture itself need not show how Nora eats or buys the apple in order to convey that Nora ate or bought it. The QUD serves to enrich the communicated content, going beyond the picture’s explicit pictorial content.¹

To account for such observations, I build on Schoubye and Stokke’s (2016) QUD-sensitive account of *what is said* by a sentence. According to Schoubye and Stokke, what is said by a sentence is an answer to the QUD that is constrained by the compositional semantic content of the sentence. I discuss how their theory can be transposed to the case of pictures. On my view, what one ‘says’ (and so usually commits to) with a picture is also an answer to the QUD, constrained by the explicit pictorial content. Roughly, the suggestion is that what is said by a picture *p* used in response to a QUD *q* is the answer to *q* that is closest to *p*’s pictorial content. In the talk, I spell this out in more detail and I discuss how the resulting theory of what is said by a picture can account for observations such as those in the example of Nora. For example, when Anna asks *What did you eat for breakfast?*, and Nora sends the picture of an apple in response, she commits to the claim that she ate an apple for breakfast, because that claim is the answer to the question that is closest to the picture’s content. In the talk, I also discuss how the relevant notion of closeness may be construed.

Dixon, Daisy (2022). “Lies in art”. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 100.1, pp. 25–39.

Esipova, Maria (2021). “On not-at-issueness in pictures”. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics* 6.83.

Kjørup, Søren (1974). “George Inness and the Battle at Hastings, or doing things with pictures”. *The Monist* 58.2, pp. 216–235.

¹The idea that what one asserts with a picture may depend on the QUD is mentioned in passing by Lewerentz and Viebahn (2023, p. 1451), attributed to an anonymous reviewer, but they don’t commit to the idea nor spell it out in any detail. Relatedly, Esipova (2021, pp. 11–12) briefly suggests that what is at-issue and not-it-issue in a picture may depend on the QUD.

- Korsmeyer, Carolyn (1985). "Pictorial assertion". *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43.3, pp. 257–265.
- Lewerentz, Lukas and Emanuel Viebahn (2023). "Truth and directness in pictorial assertion". *Linguistics and Philosophy* 46.6, pp. 1441–1465.
- Roberts, Craige (2012). "Information structure in discourse: towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics". *Semantics and Pragmatics* 5.6, pp. 1–69.
- Schoubye, Anders J and Andreas Stokke (2016). "What is said?" *Noûs* 50.4, pp. 759–793.
- Viebahn, Emanuel (2019). "Lying with pictures". *British Journal of Aesthetics* 59.3, pp. 243–257.

Müller, Kalle; Taub, Katherine: CG updates: Commitments vs. at-issueness

CG updates: Commitments vs. at-issueness

Kalle Müller & Katherine Taub

University of Tübingen

Various epistemic and evidential not-at-issue adverbs can be used to hedge or modulate commitments (e.g., Krifka 2023). We investigate the adverbs *possibly* and *allegedly*, which indicate particularly low commitment. For *possibly*, this is shown in (1), where (1a) can be continued with a modalized negation of it, (1bc).

- (1) a. Possibly, he robbed the bank,
b. and possibly, he didn't.
c. but likely, he didn't.

This effect is even stronger for reportatives, which, unlike other forms of evidentiality, seem to completely remove the speaker's own commitment towards the truth of the at-issue proposition (so-called Reportative Exceptionality, AnderBois 2014).

- (2) a. Allegedly, John is the murderer,
b. but I know that he is innocent.

The content of the continuations in (1) and (2) is likely to arise as implicature. Accordingly, the at-issue content shouldn't enter the CG at all. This then raises the question why they would be used at all. Faller (2019), on the other hand, argues that to make informative contributions and answer QUDs successfully, reportative-marked propositions enter the CG just as a regularly asserted proposition if they are not explicitly rejected by the addressee or denied by the same speaker as in (2b).

We designed an experiment to test at which rate the at-issue proposition enters the CG. In contrast to work on commitment and speech act strength (Searle & Vanderveken 1985, Wolf 2015), Stalnakerian models of CG are binary, propositions can be CG or not. Thus we employed a binary forced choice method instead of a rating scale. We assume that rates of yes-no answers are comparable to scalar rating data (cf. Bader & Häussler 2010), but have an additional methodological benefit in this case: If commitments need to reach a certain threshold for a proposition to become CG but they then become CG as normal, we expect a more absolute distribution (mostly yes or mostly no). A more gradient distribution of yes-no answers, on the other hand speaks in favor of participants being more uncertain about their CG-status. (3) shows a test item:

- (3) *Your cousin tells you about Casey, who owns a café. The café is always filled with customers sitting at small tables. Casey **has chocolate bars** there. She **allegedly/possibly sells specialty coffee** there. She is very particular about what she sells. Therefore, she **doesn't have tea** at the café.*

Do you believe that these items are in the café?

- | | |
|--------------------|----------|
| ○ Chocolate bars | [Yes–No] |
| ○ Specialty coffee | [Yes–No] |
| ○ Tea | [Yes–No] |

We hypothesize that reportative statements are judged CG at a lower rate than unmodified statements (pace Faller 2019) (H1.1). We also compare *possibly* to *possibly not*, hypothesizing that the at-issue function yields a higher rate of yes-answers for positive than negative statements (H2.1), contra degree of certainty (Yatsushiro et al. 2022). We have conducted a pilot study with 21 participants that confirmed our control conditions and showed large significant effects in favor of H1.1 ($z = -3.7^{***}$) and H2.1 ($z = -12.1^{***}$). Details can be found in the preregistration: <https://osf.io/k6tnj/>

References

- AnderBois, S. 2014. On the exceptional status of reportative evidentials. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory* (SALT) 24, 234–254.
- Bader, M. & J. Häussler 2010. Toward a model of grammaticality judgments. *Journal of Linguistics*, 46(2), 273–330.
- Faller, M. 2019. The discourse commitments of illocutionary reportatives. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 12(8).
- Krifka, M. 2023. Layers of assertive clauses: Propositions, judgements, commitments, acts. In Hartmann, J. & A. Wöllstein (eds.), *Propositionale Argumente in Sprachvergleich / propositional arguments in cross-linguistic research: Theorie und Empirie / theoretical and empirical issues*. Tübingen: Narr, 116–183.
- Searle, J. R. & D. Vanderveken. 1985. *Foundations of illocutionary logic*. CUP.
- Wolf, L. 2015. *Degrees of Assertion*. Doctoral dissertation. Ben Gurion University of the Negev.
- Yatsushiro, K., T. Trinh, M. Żygis, S. Solt., A. Benz & M. Krifka. 2022. Certainly but not certain: The expression of subjective and objective probability. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 7.

Rüeck, Amelie; Snider, Todd; Franke, Michael: Accessibility of At-Issue and Not-at-Issue Information in Common Ground

Accessibility of At-Issue and Not-at-Issue Information in Common Ground

Amelie Rüeck, Todd Snider, Michael Franke
University of Tübingen

Background. Popular theories (Stalnaker 1978) model common ground (CG) as a bag of propositions, suggesting that all information in CG is equally available. However, it has been proposed that at-issue and not-at-issue content enter CG through different update mechanisms: at-issue content via a proposal (when accepted), whereas not-at-issue content is imposed on CG directly (Murray 2011; Anderbois et al. 2015). If different contents enter the CG via distinct mechanisms, they may also differ in how they are represented in CG and how accessible they are for downstream pragmatic reasoning. We experimentally investigate this possible heterogeneity of information in CG: does how information enters CG affect how it is subsequently used during pragmatic inference?

Considering that some not-at-issue contents, like those associated with appositive relative clauses, have been claimed to have “shifting” at-issue status (Syrett & Koev 2015) or to have been at-issue at an earlier stage of processing (Jasinskaja 2016), we further distinguish such content from that which was never at-issue (e.g., backgrounded presuppositional content).

Experiment. Participants are asked to interpret a dialogue consisting of a polar question and an indirect answer, such as in (1), on a 7-point Likert scale.

- (1) You: Are you going to the concert in the town hall on Saturday?
Bo: It’s a string quartet.
In this context, does Bo’s reply mean “no” or “yes”?

The indirect answer could be interpreted as either “yes” or “no”, so the participant needs to identify additional information to resolve this uncertainty. In our experiment, we ensure that this information is introduced in prior discourse and so should already be represented as part of CG. We manipulate the bias of the contextual information, driving interpretation towards “yes”—for instance, if they were told that Bo enjoys classical music—or towards “no”—if told that Bo prefers rock music. Crucially, we also manipulate whether the critical information is presented as at-issue, no longer at-issue, or never at-issue, as in (2).

- (2) You: What kind of concerts do you like?
Bo: I like all classical concerts. AT-ISSUE
As a classical concert enjoyer, I love concerts where NO LONGER AT-ISSUE
I can discover new music.
I enjoy going to concerts with friends who also like NEVER AT-ISSUE
classical concerts!

Discussion. An initial experiment (N=50) found no evidence that information status modulates the accessibility of CG content during indirect answer interpretation. These findings suggest that, despite differences in how at-issue and not-at-issue content enter CG, both types of information are used similarly for downstream pragmatic inference, at least in a decision task directly following the context information, such as in our experiment. While the present study investigated the immediate recruitment of CG information during pragmatic inference, future work will also investigate whether differences emerge over longer time scales as CG representations are maintained and updated across discourse. Furthermore, we plan

to extend the study to explicitly test the relationship between at-issueness and commitments, investigating if the distinction between at-issue and not-at-issue content is reflected more in commitment attribution than in CG accessibility.

Funding Acknowledgement. Funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) – SFB 1718 – 538184825

References

- Anderbois, Scott, Adrian Brasoveanu & Robert Henderson. 2015. At-issue proposals and appositive impositions in discourse. *Journal of Semantics* 32(1). 93–138. doi: 10.1093/jos/fft014.
- Jasinskaja, Katja. 2016. Not at issue any more. Unpublished manuscript.
- Murray, Sarah. 2011. A Hamblin semantics for evidentials. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory* 19. doi: 10.3765/salt.v0i0.2543.
- Stalnaker, Robert. 1978. Assertion. *Syntax and Semantics* 9. 315–332.
- Syrett, Kristen & Todor Koev. 2015. Experimental evidence for the truth conditional contribution and shifting information status of appositives. *Journal of Semantics* 32(3). 525–577.

Thalmann, Maik; Gutzmann, Daniel: Commitment without at-issueness, at-issueness without commitment

Commitment without at-issueness, at-issueness without commitment

Maik Thalmann

Daniel Gutzmann

Ruhr University Bochum

There is some temptation to treat at-issueness and speaker commitment as traveling together, the rationale being that speakers should be committed to the things they put forth as their main point of utterance and that things that they commit themselves to may be up for debate.

In this talk we will try to put an end to this association by showing in various ways that the concepts of at-issueness and commitment are completely orthogonal to each other. More concretely, we will show that for every combination of $[\pm\text{at-issue}] \times [\pm\text{commitment}]$, it is easy to find kinds of meanings that instantiate it. Below, we give one example for each combination; we will present more at the talk.

	+commitment	–commitment
(1)		
	+at-issue ordinary asserted content	–at-issue content of complement clauses of non-factive attitudes
	–at-issue content of non-restrictive relative clauses	

Some of the observations that we will make may be trivial and already established (e.g. that NR-RCs are $[-\text{at-issue}, +\text{commitment}]$ is already explicit in the introduction of Potts 2005), but since some theories of dynamic pragmatics like the table model (Farkas & Bruce 2010) do establish a close link between at-issueness and commitment (for assertions), it is important to establish this double dissociation clearly.

That the meanings given above in (1) really have the indicated properties can be shown via common tests. In fact, the dissociation holds for different notions of at-issueness like so-called P(roposal)-at-issueness and Q(uestion)-at-issueness (see e.g. Koev 2018). As is standard, here we test P-at-issueness using propositional anaphora (cf. Farkas & Bruce 2010, Murray 2014) and Q-at-issueness using question–answer alignment. Commitment can be tested with an assertion of a contradictory belief (cf. Krifka 2023). In (2) we illustrate the application of these tests for one case (which will be done for all cases in the talk).

- (2)
- a. Maria meint, dass Markus nicht zuverlässig ist. Karla findet doch/schon.
‘Maria thinks that Markus is not reliable. Karla does think so.’
 $\Rightarrow$ +at-issue
 - b. A: Ist Markus zuverlässig? *‘Is Markus reliable?’*
 B: Maria meint, dass Markus nicht zuverlässig ist. Karla findet doch/schon.
‘Maria thinks that Markus is not reliable. Karla does think so.’
 $\Rightarrow$ +at-issue

- c. Maria meint, dass Markus nicht zuverlässig ist. Ich glaube aber, dass er doch zuverlässig ist.
 ‘Maria thinks that Markus is not reliable. But I believe that he is reliable after all.’
 ⇒ **-commitment**

That at-issueness and speaker commitment are completely independent of each other has direct consequences for dynamic pragmatic frameworks such as the table model, which, as mentioned above, directly tie commitment to at-issueness: such systems may need a mechanism for putting a proposition on the table (or answering a question) without forcing a commitment to that proposition. We will briefly explore different ways this decoupling might be implemented.

References

- Farkas, Donka & Kim Bruce. 2010. On reacting to assertions and polar questions. *Journal of Semantics* 27(1). 81–118. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/ffp010>.
- Koev, Todor. 2018. Notions of at-issueness. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 12(12). <https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12306>.
- Krifka, Manfred. 2023. Layers of assertive clauses: Propositions, judgments, commitments, acts. In Jutta M. Hartmann & Angelika Wöllstein (eds.), *Propositionale Argumente im Sprachvergleich / Propositional arguments in cross-linguistic research: Theorie und Empirie / Theoretical and empirical issues*, 115–181. Tübingen: Narr. <https://doi.org/10.24053/9783823394105>.
- Murray, Sarah E. 2014. Varieties of update. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 7. <https://doi.org/10.3765/sp.7.2>.
- Potts, Christopher. 2005. *The logic of conventional implicatures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199273829.001.0001>.

Turgay, Katharina; Gutzmann, Daniel: Commitment, impositions and complicity:
non-at-issue meaning, slurs and the common ground

Commitment, impositions and complicity: non-at-issue meaning, slurs and the common ground

Katharina Turgay

Daniel Gutzmann

Ruhr University Bochum

Ever since Potts's (2005, 2007) work, expressive meaning has been considered non-at-issue meaning. And while Potts's framework and its extensions (McCready 2010, Gutzmann 2015) have established a semantics to distribute expressive and at-issue meaning into different meaning dimensions, these systems are silent with respect to the pragmatic effects of these different kinds of meaning.

Subsequent research in the dynamic semantics tradition that builds on the distinction between at-issue and non-at-issue meaning has, however, argued that non-at-issue meanings affect the common ground differently than at-issue meaning: they update the common ground directly without being put up for debate; they impose and update it instead of proposing it (AnderBois, Brasoveanu & Henderson 2010, 2015, Murray 2014; cf. also Henderson 2025). This, however, raises some important questions regarding the relation between commitments and the common ground: In frameworks like the table model (Farkas & Bruce 2010), the common ground is the set of shared commitments, and even under Stalnaker's (1978, 2002) conception of the common ground as the set of propositions that are mutually accepted as being true, commitment is baked into the common ground. But can contents that are imposed and directly enter the common ground also impose *commitments to the hearer* in the same way? And what does this tell us about the relation between non-at-issueness, commitments and the common ground?

In order to shed light on this picture we will focus, in this talk, on two kinds of expressive meanings: ordinary expressives like *damn* on the one hand and slurs on the other hand. For ordinary expressives, as in "That damn Kaplan got promoted" (Kaplan 1999), we will argue that the question of commitments does not really arise: They express subjective emotional attitudes of the speaker, and the hearer will not really be inclined to object to this proposition. However, with slurs, the question becomes much more pressing: It has been argued that a hearer who does *not object* to the use of a slur becomes *complicit* in the racist attitudes expressed by the slur (see Camp 2013, Cepollaro 2015, 2017; cf. Turgay 2025 for an overview). The intuition is that a slur activates a derogatory perspective that silence helps to spread: unlike ordinary assertions, an unrejected slur counts as implicit endorsement. This is because slurs express not just a negative attitude but also normative content (Hom 2008, 2010) unwelcome in the common ground of a non-racist speaker.

While the idea of complicity seems intuitively correct, the question is whether this means that a hearer who is complicit in this way also commits themselves to the racist attitude: That is, is non-rejection the same as implicit acceptance, and is acceptance the same as commitment when it comes to slurs? We will discuss the conceptual consequences of the positive and negative answers to this question in this talk, and also address the consequences for acceptance (to the common ground) and commitments when it comes to ordinary asserted content.

References

- AnderBois, Scott, Adrian Brasoveanu & Robert Henderson. 2010. Crossing the appositive/at-issue meaning boundary. *Proceedings of SALT* 20. 328–346. <http://elanguage.net/journals/index.php/salt/article/view/20.328>.
- AnderBois, Scott, Adrian Brasoveanu & Robert Henderson. 2015. At-issue proposals and appositive impositions in discourse. *Journal of Semantics* 32(1). 93–138. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/fft014>.
- Camp, Elisabeth. 2013. Slurring Perspectives. *Analytic Philosophy* 54(3). 330–349. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phib.12022>.
- Cepollaro, Bianca. 2015. In defence of a presuppositional account of slurs. *Language Sciences* 52. 36–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2014.11.004>.
- Cepollaro, Bianca. 2017. Slurs as the shortcut of discrimination. *Revista di estetica* 64. 53–65.
- Farkas, Donka F. & Kim B. Bruce. 2010. On reacting to assertions and polar questions. *Journal of Semantics* 27(1). 81–118. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1093/jos/ffp010>.
- Gutzmann, Daniel. 2015. *Use-Conditional Meaning: Studies in Multidimensional Semantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Henderson, Robert. 2025. Expressivity and dynamic semantics. In Daniel Gutzmann & Katharina Turgay (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Expressivity*, 239–254. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hom, Christopher. 2008. The semantics of racial epithets. *Journal of Philosophy* 105. 416–440.
- Hom, Christopher. 2010. Pejoratives. *Philosophy Compass* 5(2). 164–185.
- Kaplan, David. 1999. *The meaning of ouch and oops: Explorations in the theory of meaning as use*. 2004 version. Ms. Los Angeles.
- McCready, Elin. 2010. Varieties of conventional implicature. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 3(8). 1–57. <https://doi.org/10.3765/sp.3.8>.
- Murray, Sarah E. 2014. Varieties of update. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 7(2). 1–53. <https://doi.org/10.3765/sp.7.2>.
- Murray, Sarah E. 2017. *The Semantics of Evidentials* (Oxford Studies in Semantics and Pragmatics 9). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Potts, Christopher. 2005. *The Logic of Conventional Implicature* (Oxford Studies in Theoretical Linguistics 7). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Potts, Christopher. 2007. The expressive dimension. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33(2). 165–197. <https://doi.org/10.1515/TL.2007.011>.
- Stalnaker, Robert. 1978. Assertion. In Peter Cole (ed.), *Pragmatics* (Syntax and Semantics 9), 315–332. New York: Academic Press.
- Stalnaker, Robert. 2002. Common ground. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 25(6). 701–721. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020867916902>.
- Turgay, Katharina. 2025. Expressivity and slurs. In Daniel Gutzmann & Katharina Turgay (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Expressivity*, 493–519. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zodl, Paul: (Not) Committing with German Source-Indicating Adverbials

(Not) Committing with German Source-Indicating Adverbials

At-Issue-ness and Commitment: Interfaces and Interactions (ORC), 2026

Paul Zödl, University of Tübingen

Investigations of commitment-modifying expressions in German have so far mainly focused on evidential adverbials (Axel-Tober and Müller 2017), “evidential” modal auxiliaries (Diewald and Smirnova 2010; Schenner 2008), and the reportative subjunctive (Sode 2023). This talk focuses on the less-researched domain of source-indicating adverbials (SIAs).

SIAs consist of a preposition (eng. *according to/given*, ger. *laut/nach/zufolge/angesichts*) that combines with a DP, indicating the source of the prejacent. Kratzer (2012) observes that while *given* commits the speaker to the prejacent, *according to* does not:

- (1) ✓ According to ✗ Given the rumor, Barb (must) have been re-elected, *but I wouldn't be surprised if she wasn't*.

Denying the prejacent is only possible with *according to* but not with *given*. Using several tests, Kaufmann and Kaufmann (2020) show that *given* is a speech act operator, while *according to* is an informational, CONTENT-based modal (see also Faller 2017). They make a principled distinction between G(*iven*)-adverbials and A(*ccording*)-adverbials:

- (2) a. [[according to INDIVIDUAL] [EVIDENTIAL PROPOSITION]]
 b. $\llbracket \text{AA} \rrbracket^w = \lambda x_e. \lambda p_{\langle s, t \rangle}. \forall w' [w' \in \cap B_{\text{info}^x}(w) \rightarrow p(w')]$,
 where $B_{\text{info}^x}(w) = \{p \mid p \text{ is the CONTENT of the report of } x\}$, i.e. $p \in \text{CONTENT}(x)(w)$.
 $\approx$ ‘For all worlds w' that are compatible with the content expressed by x in w , p is true in those worlds w' .’
- (3) a. [[given FACT] SPEECH ACT]
 b. $\llbracket \text{GA} \rrbracket(F)(SA) \approx$ ‘The fact F constitutes epistemic grounds for the speaker to publicly commit to a speech act SA .’

This semantics derives the commitment-modification facts in (1). Applying the same diagnostics to German SIAs reveals a third pattern:

	commitment	quality-readings	speech-readings	expl. perf.	fact-DPs	proper names
<i>laut</i>	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
<i>nach</i>	✗	✓	✓	?	?/✓	✓
<i>zufolge</i>	✗	✓	✓	?	?/✓	✓
<i>angesichts</i>	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
G-adverbials	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	?
A-adverbials	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓

Table 1: Behavior of SIAs in German

While Table 1 shows that *laut* patterns with AAs, and *angesichts* patterns with GAs, the behavior of *nach/zufolge* warrants positing a third group, *Z(u)folge*-adverbials. I analyze ZAs as “normality” modals akin to Yalcin (2016) for English *should/lought*. Consider the following example:

- (4) Your friend Clemens has joints that are sensitive to the weather. Every time it rains, his knee hurts. However, you look at the sky and the sun is shining. You say:

Clemens' Knie zufolge regnet es gerade.

Clemens' knee SIA rains EXPL now

≈ ‘Judging by Clemens’ knee, it is raining right now.’

ZAs contribute a circumstantial modal base and a stereotypical ordering source:

- (5) a. $\llbracket \text{ZA} \rrbracket^{w,g} = \lambda F_{fact} . \lambda p_{\langle s,t \rangle} . \forall w' [\text{MAX}_{g(w)}(w' \in \cap B_{circ}(w) \cap F(w')) \rightarrow p(w')]$
 ≈ “In those worlds w' where Clemens’ knee is hurting ($=F$) and events evolve “normally” in that world (given $g(w)$), it rains ($=p$).”
 b. $\text{mb} = \{\text{Clemens' knee is hurting}, \dots\}$
 c. $\text{os} = \{\text{Clemens' knee hurts when it rains}, \dots\}$

With ZAs, there is no commitment to p at all, since we do not have to claim that the actual world is one that evolves normally. Unlike epistemic *must* (von Fintel and Gillies 2010), they remain compatible with direct evidence against the preajcent.

Beyond commitment, the three classes also differ in at-issueness. AAs can be interpreted at-issue, i.e. they can be interpreted in-situ in a conditional (Bary and Maier 2021, ex. 79). ZAs can be shown to be optionally at-issue as well. Like epistemic *must* in Mastermind scenarios (von Fintel and Gillies 2007, ex. 21), their contribution can itself be challenged. GAs, however, can never be at-issue. I suggest this follows from a generalization in Krifka (2017) according to which only TP-material can be at-issue. GAs, as speech-act operators, are merged too high. The German SIA system thus provides an understudied case of commitment-modifying expressions whose behavior cuts across the at-issueness dimension.

References

- Axel-Tober, Katrin and Kalle Müller (2017). “Evidential Adverbs in German: Diachronic Development and Present-Day Meaning”. In: *Journal of Historical Linguistics* 7.1-2, pp. 9–47. DOI: 10.1075/jhl.7.1-2.02axe.
- Bary, Corien and Emar Maier (2021). “The Landscape of Speech Reporting”. In: *Semantics and Pragmatics* 14.8, pp. 1–54. DOI: 10.3765/sp.14.8.
- Diewald, Gabriele and Elena Smirnova (2010). *Evidentiality in German: Linguistic Realization and Regularities in Grammaticalization*. Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 228. Berlin; New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Faller, Martina (2017). “Reportative Evidentials and Modal Subordination”. In: *Lingua* 186–187, pp. 55–67. DOI: 10.1016/j.lingua.2014.10.004.
- von Fintel, Kai and Anthony S. Gillies (2007). “An Opinionated Guide to Epistemic Modality”. In: *Oxford Studies In Epistemology*. Ed. by Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 32–62. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780199237067.003.0002.
- von Fintel, Kai and Anthony S. Gillies (2010). “Must... Stay... Strong!” In: *Natural Language Semantics* 18.4, pp. 351–383.
- de Haan, Ferdinand (1999). “Evidentiality and Epistemic Modality: Setting Boundaries”. In: *South-west Journal of Linguistics* 18, pp. 83–101.
- Kaufmann, Magdalena and Stefan Kaufmann (2020). “Talking about Sources”. In: *Proceedings of NELS 50 (North East Linguistic Society)*, pp. 77–90.
- Kratzer, Angelika (2012). *Modals and Conditionals: New and Revised Perspectives*. Oxford Studies in Theoretical Linguistics 36. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Krifka, Manfred (2017). *Epistemic, Evidential and Discourse Modalities in Commitment Space Semantics*. University of Oslo. URL: <https://amor.cms.hu-berlin.de/~h2816i3x/Talks/ModalityOsloHandout.pdf>.
- Schenner, Mathias (2008). “Double Face Evidentials in German: Reportative ‘Sollen’ and ‘Wollen’ in Embedded Contexts”. In: *Proceedings of Sinn Und Bedeutung*. Vol. 12, pp. 552–566.
- Sode, Frank (2023). *Der deutsche Indirektheitskonjunktiv: Semantik und Pragmatik*. Ed. by Hans-Martin Gärtner, Manfred Bierwisch, and Manfred Krifka. Studia grammatica 79. De Gruyter. DOI: 10.1515/9783110422443.
- Yalcin, Seth (2016). “Modalities of Normality”. In: *Deontic Modality*. Ed. by Nate Charlow and Matthew Chrisman. Oxford University Press, pp. 230–255.

Poster Session I

Balbach, Nadine; Hörnig, Robin: Speaker Commitment and At-Issueness as Diagnostics for the Meaning Components of Exceptives

Speaker Commitment and At-Issueness as Diagnostics for the Meaning Components of Exceptives

Nadine Balbach, Robin Hörnig

SFB 1718 Common Ground, University of Tübingen

`firstname.lastname@uni-tuebingen.de`

Recent work has challenged the traditional view of projection as a categorical phenomenon. Building on earlier work, [9] formulate the Gradient Projection Principle (GPP), according to which projectivity is a gradient property inversely related to at-issueness. The gradient nature of at-issueness has independently been argued for by [1]. [9] characterize projectivity in terms of attributed speaker commitment, yet measure it via speaker certainty rather than speaker commitment itself. The present study instead plans to elicit listener attributions of speaker commitment, using the German exceptive *außer* ‘but’ as a case study to investigate two questions: (i) whether such judgments provide a useful diagnostic for the classification of the meaning components associated with exceptives, and (ii) whether they reproduce the GPP-predicted inverse relationship between projectivity and at-issueness across presuppositions (PSPs) and conventional implicatures (CIs).

Following [10], sentences containing exceptives such as *but* give rise to the three meaning components illustrated in (1).

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| (1) | Every doctor but Mary drinks coffee. | |
| | a. Every doctor other than Mary drinks coffee. | OC |
| | b. Mary doesn’t drink coffee. | NC |
| | c. Mary is a doctor. | POI |

We refer to (1a) as the *Otherness Component* (OC) and, following [3], to (1b) as the *Negative Condition*, abbreviated here as NC, and to (1c) as the *Presupposition of Inclusion*, abbreviated here as POI. The status of these meaning components remains controversial: depending on the analysis, they have been treated as PSPs, CIs, conversational implicatures, entailments, or combinations thereof [6, 4, 10, 3, 11, 12, 7]. Given this controversy, we use these terms only as labels: in particular, adopting the term POI is not meant to prejudge the presuppositional status of (1c). To classify them, we combine listener attributions of speaker commitment, independent at-issueness judgments, and a pluggability diagnostic based on embedding under the attitude verb *say* – a plug [5] that blocks PSPs but not CIs [8].

Following [9], the planned experiment employs an acceptability judgment task using a continuous slider, which allows graded rather than categorical responses without enforcing them. Participants are randomly assigned to one of three between-subject conditions: projectivity (projection out of polar questions, (2)), at-issueness (also based on (2)), and pluggability (projection through *say*, (3)). Experimental items containing the German exceptive *außer* are presented alongside control items carrying PSP, CI, and conversational

implicature content. For each experimental item, participants evaluate questions about the POI, NC, and OC in randomized order. Whereas participants in the projectivity and pluggability conditions rate speaker commitment (see (2a) and (3a)), participants in the at-issueness condition judge whether the speaker asks about the respective meaning component (see (2b)). The prompts shown in (2)–(3) target the POI; equivalent questions address the NC and OC.

(2) Stimulus Projection & At-Issueness

Carlotta: „Haben alle Golfmitglieder außer Hans eine Jahresmitgliedschaft?“

‘Carlotta: “Do all golf members but Hans have an annual membership?”’

a. POI Prompt Projection:

Wie sehr legt sich Carlotta mit ihrer Frage darauf fest, dass es auf Hans zutrifft, dass er Golfmitglied ist?

‘To what extent does Carlotta, by means of her question, commit herself that Hans is a golf club member?’

b. POI Prompt At-Issueness:

Fragt Carlotta mit ihrer Frage danach, ob es auf Hans zutrifft, dass er Golfmitglied ist?

‘Does Carlotta, by means of her question, ask whether Hans is a golf club member?’

(3) Stimulus Pluggability

Carlotta: „Mike sagt, dass alle Golfmitglieder außer Hans eine Jahresmitgliedschaft hätten.“

‘Carlotta: “Mike says that all golf members but Hans have an annual membership.”’

a. POI Prompt Pluggability:

Wie sehr legt sich Carlotta mit ihrer Äußerung darauf fest, dass es auf Hans zutrifft, dass er Golfmitglied ist?

‘To what extent does Carlotta, by means of her utterance, commit herself that Hans is a golf club member?’

A pilot study will validate the materials and test the sequential presentation of the component questions.

The three conditions jointly yield a diagnostic profile for each meaning component, which can be compared against the profiles predicted by the competing analyses and against the empirical profiles of the controls. The OC is standardly taken to be entailed or even asserted content and thus serves as the at-issue baseline: it is predicted not to project, to be judged at-issue, and to show low commitment under *say* – the limiting case the GPP predicts for maximally at-issue content. For the POI and NC, the competing analyses predict distinct profiles. If they are PSPs, they should project out of polar questions – receiving higher commitment ratings in the projectivity condition than the OC – be judged not at-issue, and show low commitment under *say*, since propositional attitude verbs plug PSPs [5]. If they are CIs, the same projectivity and at-issueness profile is expected, but “as comments upon an at-issue core” [8, p. 36], they should project through *say*, yielding high commitment ratings there. Since both profiles coincide except under *say*, the pluggability condition carries the diagnostic load for distinguishing between them; given that plugs are known to leak [5], the gradient commitment scale is particularly suited to detect partial

projection in this environment. Under an entailment analysis, in turn, the POI and NC should pattern with the OC, and under a conversational implicature analysis with the conversational implicature controls.

More generally, if the GPP holds, commitment judgments should mirror projectivity judgments, yielding an inverse relationship between projectivity and at-issueness. Finally, the pluggability condition probes the scope of the GPP: if CIs project through *say* while PSPs do not, the GPP predicts correspondingly lower at-issueness ratings for CIs than for PSPs; divergent projection through *say* despite equal at-issueness ratings would instead suggest that projection through plugs is not governed by at-issueness alone.

By comparing the meaning components' gradient diagnostic profiles against both the theoretical predictions and the empirical profiles of the controls, the study evaluates whether gradient measurement can capture categorical distinctions, while contributing new empirical evidence on the status of the meaning components of exceptives.

References

- [1] Barnes, K., & Ebert, C. (2023).
The information status of iconic enrichments: modelling gradient at-issueness.
Theoretical Linguistics, 49(3-4), 167–223.
- [2] Beaver, D. I., Roberts, C., Simons, M., & Tonhauser, J. (2017).
Questions under discussion: Where information structure meets projective content.
Annual Review of Linguistics, 3, 265–284.
- [3] García Álvarez, I. (2008).
Generality and exception: A study of the syntax and semantics of exceptive constructions.
Doctoral dissertation, Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea.
- [4] Hoeksema, J. (1996).
The semantics of exception phrases.
In J. van der Does & J. van Eijck (Eds.),
Quantifiers, logic, and language (pp. 145–177).
Stanford University Press.
- [5] Karttunen, L. (1973).
Presuppositions of compound sentences.
Linguistic Inquiry, 4(2), 169–193.
- [6] Keenan, E. L., & Stavi, J. (1986).
A semantic characterization of natural language determiners.
Linguistics and Philosophy, 9(3), 253–326.

- [7] Peters, S., & Westerståhl, D. (2023).
The semantics of exceptives.
Linguistics and Philosophy, 46(2), 197–235.
- [8] Potts, C. (2004).
The Logic of Conventional Implicatures.
Oxford University Press.
- [9] Tonhauser, J., Beaver, D. I., & Degen, J. (2018).
How Projective is Projective Content?
Journal of Semantics, 35(3), 495–542.
- [10] von Fintel, K. (1994).
Restrictions on quantifier domains.
Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- [11] Vostrikova, E. (2019).
Phrasal and clausal exceptive-additive constructions crosslinguistically.
Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- [12] Vostrikova, E. (2021).
Conditional analysis of clausal exceptives.
Natural Language Semantics, 29(3), 159–227.

Chen, Jiayuan: Gestures in focus alternatives

Gestures in focus alternatives (Jiayuan Chen, Rutgers University)

Overview. This study argues that deictic gestures are non-at-issue (specifically, use-conditional) by default, but becomes at-issue when they are focused. I argue that such an analysis helps generate the correct focus alternatives when the noun of a demonstrative is under narrow focus.

Data. Consider (1). Following [Chen \(2026\)](#), I assume that (1) places narrow focus on *book*, rather than broad focus on the entire demonstrative DP. (One piece of evidence in favor of such a view is that the demonstrative can be followed by a de-accented *I bought*, which more clearly indicates narrow focus on the noun.) Following [Ahn \(2022\)](#), I assume that *that book* in (1) takes the NP *book* and the pointing gesture $\rightarrow A$ as its arguments. Following [Chen \(2026\)](#), I assume that it has the structure in (10) on page 2. In (10), focus is marked on *book*, and the focus domain is the entire DP. (1) therefore generates the focus alternatives in (2).

(1) [I'm deciding whether to bring the book I bought yesterday or the magazine I bought yesterday.]
I will take that $\rightarrow A$ BOOK (I bought). ($\rightarrow A$ = gesture pointing towards location A)

(2) $\llbracket \text{that}_{\rightarrow A} \text{WALL}_F \rrbracket^f = \{\text{that book at A, that magazine at A, that pen at A} \dots\}$

However, if we assume that only one individual may occupy a location at a time (or that a deictic gesture may indicate only one individual at a time), then the focus alternatives in (2) would all refer to the same individual. Intuitively, however, (1) does not draw a contrast between one individual (if it is possible to draw such a contrast at all); instead, it draws a contrast between a book and a magazine. (See also [Chen 2026](#) for additional reasons related to anti-uniqueness that the alternatives in (2) are ill-formed.) (1) should therefore generate either the focus alternatives in (3) or (4). In (3), deictic gestures vary with the noun. In (4), deictic gestures are simply ignored in focus alternatives.

(3) $\{\text{that book at A, that magazine at B} \dots\}$ (4) $\{\text{that book, that magazine, that pen} \dots\}$

Proposal. This study pursues the second option in (4). To generate the alternatives in (4), I propose that $\rightarrow A$ in (1) is use-conditional. First, note that $\rightarrow A$ is non-at-issue: $\rightarrow A$ is optional in (1), and (6b) is not a felicitous reply to (5). Second, there is evidence that $\rightarrow A$ is use-conditional. In particular, (1) tolerates misdescription: (7) can still be true, for example, albeit inappropriate.

(5) Mary took that $\rightarrow A$ BOOK, (not that $\rightarrow B$ MAGAZINE.)

(6) #That's not true. What you are pointing to is not the book Mary took.

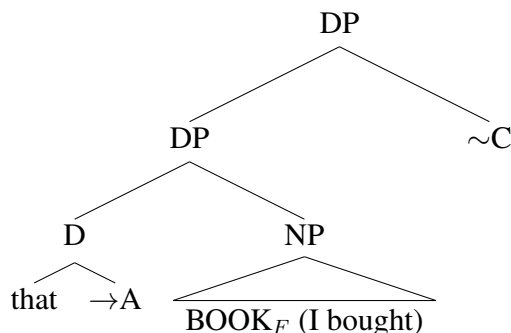
(7) [Mary and I are deciding whether to bring the book or the magazine I bought yesterday. I intend to convey that I will bring the book (at A), but I mistakenly point to another book at B.]
I will take that $\rightarrow B$ BOOK (I bought).

In addition, building on the intuition that information non-spoken modalities introduce in natural languages is supplemental by default (cf. [Schlenker 2017, 2018](#)), I propose that deictic gestures are use-conditional by default. Departing from [Ebert et al. \(2020\)](#), I argue that deictic gestures in demonstratives are not always at-issue: they can become at-issue, but only when they are focused. Following [Chen \(2026\)](#), I assume that (8) is one such example, where focus is marked on $\rightarrow A$ while stress is realized on *that*. Importantly, Following [Potts et al. \(2009\)](#), [Varaschin & Machicao y Priemer \(2026\)](#), and [Ahn \(2026\)](#), I also assume that use-conditional content does not project to focus alternatives: in (9), the use-conditional content of the epithet *weirdo* does not project to focus alternatives, and (9) is true when others who are not weirdos were also not interviewed. Since pointing is use-conditional in (1), (1) correctly generates the focus alternatives in (4).

(8) [I bought two books yesterday, and I'm deciding which to bring.] I will take THAT $\rightarrow A$ book.

(9) Only JIN is so peculiar that they decided to interview the weirdo. ([Ahn 2026](#))

(10)



References:

- Ahn, Dorothy. 2022. Indirectly direct: An account of demonstratives and pointing. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 45(6). 1345–1393.
- Ahn, Dorothy. 2026. Fake nouns: Reconsidering the role of presupposition in reference. In Elin McCready, Daisuke Bekki & Koji Mineshima (eds.), *Proceedings of LENLS 21*, Nagoya, Nagoya University.
- Chen, Jiayuan. 2026. Where does anti-uniqueness come from? a case study of English demonstratives. In *Lenls 21*, Nagoya, Japan: Nagoya University.
- Ebert, Christian, Cornelia Ebert & Robin Hörnig. 2020. Demonstratives as dimension shifters. In *Proceedings of sinn und bedeutung*, vol. 24 1, 161–178.
- Potts, Christopher, Ash Asudeh, Seth Cable, Yurie Hara, Eric McCready, Luis Alonso-Ovalle, Rajesh Bhatt, Christopher Davis, Angelika Kratzer, Tom Roeper et al. 2009. Expressives and identity conditions. *Linguistic Inquiry* 40(2). 356–366.
- Schlenker, Philippe. 2017. Iconic pragmatics. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 36(3). 877–936.
- Schlenker, Philippe. 2018. Gesture projection and cosuppositions. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 41(3). 295–365.
- Varaschin, Giuseppe & Antonio Machicao y Priemer. 2026. A structurally uniform account of slur-based definites. In *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 30*, Goethe University Frankfurt.

Cortez Espinoza, Maya; Onea, Edgar: Distributive Spotlight Questions. A novel class of non-canonical questions.

Maya Cortez Espinoza, Edgar Onea (Graz University)

(1) Teacher, entering class: Wer hat die Hausaufgaben gemacht? ↗
 Who has the homeworks done?
 ‘Who did their homework?’

(2) a. Peter: Ich! Mark: Ich! ... ('Me')
 b. Peter: # Ich nicht. ('Not me')
 c. Peter: # Johanna und Mark. ('Johanna and Mark')
 d. Peter: # Ja. ('Yes')

(3) a. Mark: Ich!
b. Anna: Ich (#auch)!

$$(5) \quad \llbracket Q \nearrow \rrbracket^C = |\text{Spotlight}(\llbracket Q \nearrow \rrbracket, C(\text{addressee}))| = 1$$

(6) $\llbracket \text{Who danced} \rrbracket = \{ \underline{\text{A danced}}, \underline{\text{B danced}}, \dots, \text{Nobody danced} \}$
(HAs underlined)

62

reliable allocation key between spotlighted alternatives and addressees: each addressee simply assigns themselves as their SA. This derives DSQ-properties as follows: SPA follows from the requirement for a reliable allocation key. FPA follows from preserving the wh-question. NAC follows as each addressee provides their own SA and INA follows as SAs suffice for a full answer.

Outlook We proposed a novel type of non-canonical questions: DSQs. To account for the behavior of DSQs, we introduce the term spotlighting as a property of question speech acts. Further research needs to establish the usage of spotlighting in other contexts.

References Artstein, R. (2002). A focus semantics for echo questions. *Workshop on information structure in context*, 98, 98–107.

Bade, N. (2021). On the scope and nature of maximise presupposition. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 15(6), 1–16.

Cohen, A. (2007). Incredulity questions. *Decalog 2007: proceedings of the 11th Workshop on the semantics and pragmatics of dialogue*, 11, 133–140.

Hamblin, C. (1973). Questions in Montague English. *Foundations of Language*, 10, 41–53.

Hedberg, N., Sosa, J. M., Gorgulu, E., & Mameni, M. (2010). Prosody and pragmatics of wh-interrogatives. *Proceedings of the 2010 annual conference of the Canadian Linguistics Association*, 1–14.

Heim, I. (1991). Artikel und Definitheit. In A. Stechow & D. Wunderlich (Eds.), *Semantik/semantics* (pp. 487–534). De Gruyter Mouton.

Karau, S. J., & Williams, K. D. (2001). Understanding individual motivation in groups: The collective effort model. In M. E. Turner (Ed.), *Groups at work* (pp. 113–141). Routledge.

Roelofsen, F., & Van Gool, S. (2010). Disjunctive questions, intonation, and highlighting. *Logic, Language and Meaning: 17th Amsterdam Colloquium*, 17, 384–394.

Dascalu, Nicolaie Dominik; Wecker, Marius: Poly-Intentionality and Multiple
Common Grounds: A Multicontextual Account of Dogwhistles

Poly-Intentionality and Multiple Common Grounds: A Multicontextual Account of Dogwhistles

Nicolaie Dominik Dascalu and Marius Wecker

Ruhr University Bochum

Abstract

Dogwhistles, that is, “language that conveys one message to a general audience while making a second, controversial message available to an ingroup” [1, p. 3], are paradigmatic cases in which at-issueness and commitment come apart. Consider Friedrich Merz’s 2023 statement at Bavaria’s Gillamoos festival: “Kreuzberg is not Germany; Gillamoos is Germany” [2]. A neutral hearer may interpret this as contrasting metropolitan and rural life, whereas conservative or far-right audiences may associate *Kreuzberg* with immigration, crime, and left-wing politics.

A problem is what carries the not-at-issue content: the expression, the speaker’s persona, or hearer-side inference [1, 3]. We propose that dogwhistling is *poly-intentional*: speakers exploit the propositions underspecified expressions make available across contexts associated with hearers and common grounds.

Like advertising, political communication may maximize inferable propositions. “Everything you could ask for in a car” invites need-based completions, while “You will love your stay in Mallorca” addresses party-seeking tourists as well as relaxation-seeking retirees. Dogwhistles exploit this architecture across ideological audiences.

Our proposal draws on Viebahn’s *Semantic Pluralism* [4] and Gutzmann’s pragmatic multicontextualism [5]. Viebahn rejects the requirement that a sentence expresses one proposition in context, as underspecified expressions (e.g., gradable adjectives, quantifiers, and modals) lead to multiple interpretations. Gutzmann likewise rejects pragmatic monocontextualism, showing via multiply addressed indexicals that one utterance may involve multiple contexts and common grounds. Consider a sermon addressed to Maria, Noah, and others. Here, “God forgives your sins” addresses the congregation collectively, yet both the referent of *you* and the attributed sins vary by addressee. Let c^* denote a *multicontextual parameter of evaluation* covering active, addressee-relative contexts:

$$\llbracket \text{God forgives your sins} \rrbracket^{c^*} = \{ \{w \mid \text{God forgives Maria's sins in } w\}, \dots, \{w \mid \text{God forgives Noah's sins in } w\} \}. \quad (1a)$$

The resulting architecture is:

$$\text{one utterance} \longrightarrow n \text{ contexts} \longrightarrow n \text{ propositions.} \quad (1b)$$

This relation extends to dogwhistles and *insinuation* [6].

Consider Giorgia Meloni’s election-night declaration: “Italy voted for us, and we will not betray it.” Its public at-issue content supports a pledge to respect the electoral mandate. In some common grounds, it suggests that the previous government betrayed Italy. For hearers sharing an ideologically charged common ground, *betray* may activate historical narratives—including the *Night of Betrayal*, which led to Mussolini’s fall—or contemporary narratives about previous governing parties as alleged traitors. Speakers leave audience-indexed completions open through underspecified expressions, often combined with indexicals. Hearers reconstruct propositions by drawing on background premises in their respective common grounds.

This account explains plausible deniability [6, 7] as follows. Since one utterance addresses several hearers, each may derive a distinct targeted proposition from their respective common ground. The availability of multiple interpretations allows the speaker to reject the controversial commitment for which they are held responsible. Deniability weakens, however over time as the intended covert inference becomes mutually recognizable across hearers, leaving fewer alternative common-ground configurations in which the message can plausibly be interpreted as neutral. Importantly, this model allows speakers to exploit several covert messages at once.

References

- [1] Henderson, Robert, and Elin McCready. 2024. *Signaling without Saying: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Dogwhistles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [2] Deutschlandfunk. 2023. “Merz: ‘Nicht Kreuzberg ist Deutschland, Gillamoos ist Deutschland’.” 5 September 2023.
- [3] Rinner, Susanne, and Anne Hieke. 2024. “False Friends in Political Dogwhistles.” *Inquiry*.
- [4] Viebahn, Emanuel. 2019. *Semantic Pluralism*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- [5] Gutzmann, Daniel. 2025. *Multitables (and Multiquestions): The Common Ground in Multiagentive Contexts*. Presentation at the CRC Common Ground, Ruhr University Bochum, 30 October 2025. Joint work with Marius Wecker and Katharina Turgay.
- [6] Camp, Elisabeth. 2018. “Insinuation, Common Ground, and the Conversational Record.” In Daniel Fogal, Daniel W. Harris, and Matt Moss (eds.), *New Work on Speech Acts*, 40–66. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [7] Dinges, Alexander, and Julia Zakkou. 2023. “On Deniability.” *Mind* 132(526): 372–401.

Frühauf, Felix: Commitment to non-at-issue Common Ground marking

Commitment to non-at-issue Common Ground marking

Felix Frühauf (Leibniz University Hannover)

Introduction. German modal particles (MPs) like *ja* are well-known to contribute non-at-issue (NAI) meaning (e.g., Gutzmann 2015). It remains controversial how an MP's contribution should be paraphrased, and whether it can be given a propositional paraphrase at all. However, according to common conceptions of *ja*, (1) can, in a given context, be equated to (2). (2) makes use of a parenthetical, which is also taken to contribute NAI meaning (e.g., Potts 2005). But unlike MPs, parentheticals express their propositional content overtly. In this presentation, we address the question whether speakers are (perceived as) committed to the content of MPs and corresponding Common-Ground parentheticals (CGPs), i.e. in our case, whether they are committed to the claim that the at-issue content was already known by someone other than the speaker.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) Die Gemeinde muss ja sparen.
‘The local authority needs JA to cut costs.’ | (2) Die Gemeinde muss sparen, wie Sie wissen.
‘The local authority needs to cut costs, as you know.’ |
|--|---|

Study. The present study investigated speakers’ perceived commitment to the (assumed) content of the MP *ja* and the corresponding CGP *wie Sie wissen* (‘as you know’), where commitment was operationalised as deniability and accountability, following Antomo et al. (2025), a.o. It was a one-item between-subjects design with three conditions ($n = 300$): MP/CGP/PLAIN. For the critical sentence (3), participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the **deniability** and **accountability** claims in (4) on a 7-point scale. In the PLAIN condition, the claims targeted the at-issue content of the clause [all of the texts were in German].

- (3) Critical sentence:
Aber die Gemeinde muss ja sparen./Aber die Gemeinde muss sparen, wie Sie wissen./Aber die Gemeinde muss sparen.
- (4) If it later transpires that, apart from the speaker, no one else in the room was aware that the local authority needs to cut costs,
Deniability:
the speaker might say *I never claimed that anyone else knew about it.*
Accountability:
the speaker would have to justify having said *ja p/p, as you know.*

See Table 1 for the median ratings. For each claim, a separate cumulative linked model for ordinal data was created. Despite the same median for CGP and PLAIN, the deniability model shows that all three conditions differ significantly from one another: MP deniability receives higher ratings than CGP deniability, which receives higher ratings than PLAIN at-issue deniability, which is at floor (see Figure 1a and Table 2 for visualisation and statistics). The effect is weaker for accountability (Figure 1b, Table 3). The difference between MP and CGP is not significant, but they both differ significantly from PLAIN, receiving slightly lower ratings.

Conclusions. MP content receives significantly higher deniability and slightly lower accountability ratings compared to at-issue content. However, CGPs seem to take a middle position. This highlights the need to differentiate between different types of NAI content in commitment research. In the future, we want to extend the investigation to lying/misleading and possible modulations of commitment to *p* via CG markers like the ones discussed here. It remains an open issue how to operationalise commitment, especially in languages that don’t have an established translation for ‘commitment’. Consistent with previous studies, deniability seems to have a stronger effect in terms of distinguishing between content types than accountability.

- Antomo, Mailin, Lea Fricke, Patrick G. Grosz & Tatjana Scheffler. 2025. Lying with at-issue and not-at-issue emojis. In Federica Longo & Daniele Panizza (eds.), *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 29*, 77–97. <https://doi.org/10.18148/SUB/2025.V29.1195>.
- Gutzmann, Daniel. 2015. *Use-conditional meaning: studies in multidimensional semantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198723820.001.0001>.
- Potts, Christopher. 2005. *The logic of conventional implicatures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199273829.001.0001>.

Condition	Median deniability	Median accountability
MP	3.5	6
CGP	1	6
PLAIN	1	7

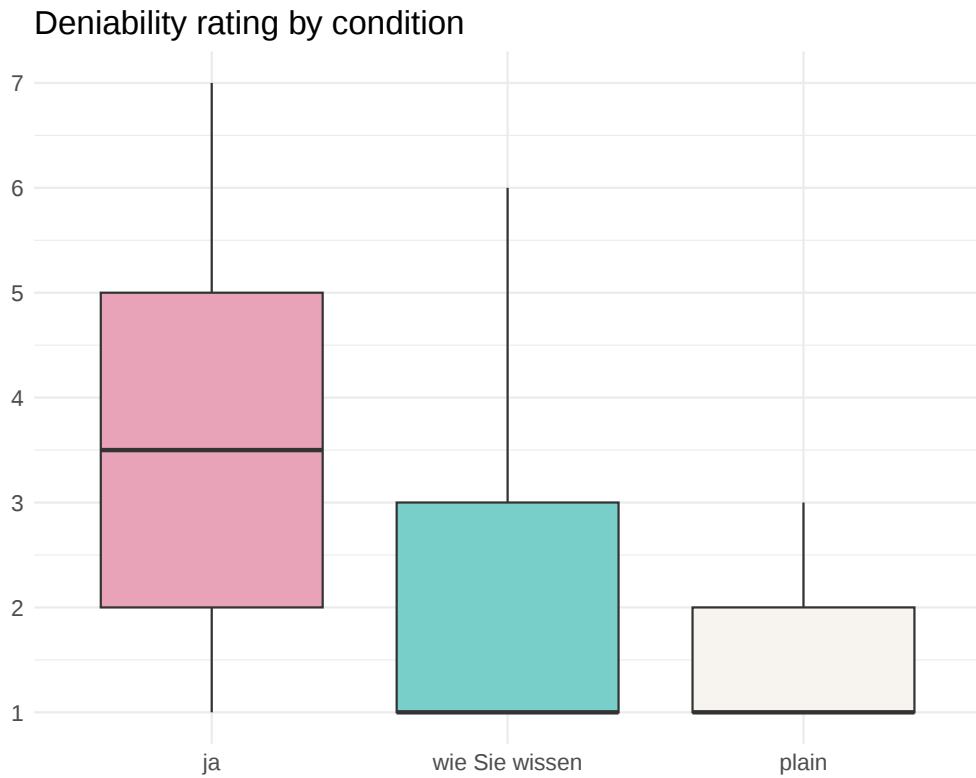
Table 1: Medians per condition

Comparison	Estimate	SE	z-ratio	p-value
MP—CGP	1.476	0.273	5.402	< 0.0001 *
MP—PLAIN	2.157	0.291	7.408	< 0.0001 *
CGP—PLAIN	0.681	0.286	2.383	0.0452 *

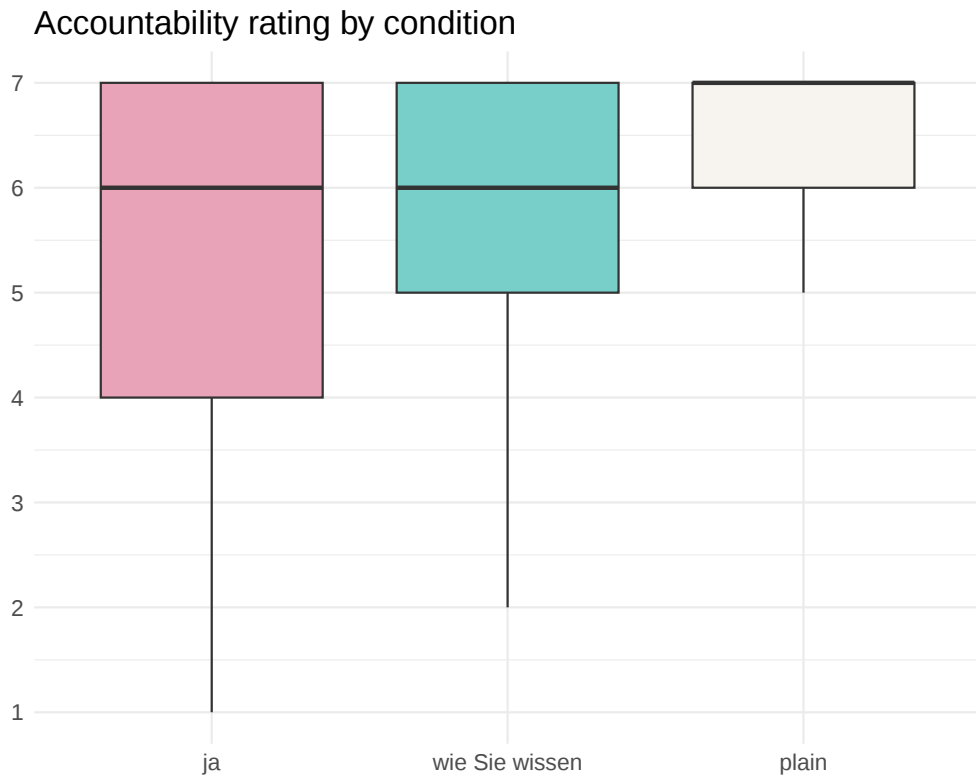
Table 2: Pairwise comparison using emmeans on a clm (**deniability**)

Comparison	Estimate	SE	z-ratio	p-value
MP—CGP	−0.33	0.257	−1.282	0.4053
MP—PLAIN	−1.38	0.278	−4.971	< 0.0001 *
CGP—PLAIN	−1.05	0.277	−3.792	0.0004 *

Table 3: Pairwise comparison using emmeans on a clm (**accountability**)



(a) Deniability ratings



(b) Accountability ratings

Figure 1: Deniability and accountability ratings per condition

Haenni, Marie: The role of evidentiality in the interpretation of polar responses in French

The role of evidentiality in the interpretation of polar responses in French

Marie Haenni (University of Geneva)

The system of polar responses varies from one language to another, falling into either polarity-based or conformity-based systems. Whilst French is generally classified as a polarity-based language (1), certain contexts allow for responses based on conformity, where ‘oui’ can be used to validate a negative proposition (2), thereby raising the question of the conditions under which this reading emerges in French.

- (1) X: Jeanne vient pas, elle est malade.
‘Jeanne is not coming, she’s sick.’
Y: Jeanne vient pas ?
‘Jeanne is not coming?’
X: **Non ($\neg p$) = polarity reading**
‘No’
X’: *Oui ($\neg p$) = conformity reading
‘Yes’
- (2) X: **Il paraît** que Jeanne vient pas, elle est malade.
‘I heard Jeanne is not coming, she’s sick.’
Y: Jeanne vient pas ?
‘Jeanne is not coming?’
X: **Non ($\neg p$) = polarity reading**
‘No’
X’: **Oui ($\neg p$) = conformity reading**
‘Yes’

The data suggest that the reportative evidentiality of the context preceding a confirmation question plays a central role in the availability of the conformity reading. When the content being questioned is introduced as reported, the reportative, not-at-issue component reduces the strength of the speaker’s commitment to the proposition and thus alters the configuration of commitments. This opens the possibility for the respondent to position themselves, via a ‘oui $\neg p$ ’ response, no longer simply on the polarity of the response, but on alignment with a proposition already available and marked as reportative.

I formalise this coexistence within a dynamic framework (Farkas & Bruce 2010), using the model of Mohammadi & Romero (2024), which derives polarity and conformity readings from distinct compartments of the Scoreboard targeted by the anaphora of response particles. I enrich the lexical entry of *oui* in the conformity reading with a presuppositional evidential component, inspired by Murray (2010, 2021) and Bhadra (2020), which requires that the target proposition be already marked as reported in the background; this component is not-at-issue, but modulates the strength and nature of the respondent’s commitment.

Empirically, the data show that the conformity reading is only available when three conditions are met: the content being questioned must be introduced as reported; it must be available as an explicit propositional referent; and the respondent must be *uninvolved* in the sense of Bhadra (2020), that is, not responsible for the truth of *p*. This configuration then allows them to judge the validity of the proposition from a perspective external to their own: that of the original source.

In this analysis, the reportative component, situated at the not-at-issue level, enables the speaker to present *p* as reported content, while maintaining a form of weakened commitment to its truth. The affirmative response of conformity therefore does not add new ‘at-issue’ content, but rather makes explicit the respondent’s alignment with a proposition that is already salient and reported, whilst allowing them to remain at a distance from its validity. The results thus suggest that the system of polar responses in French is sensitive to the evidential structure of the context. The distribution of at-issue/not-at-issue contributions and the participants’ commitment profile determine the coexistence of response patterns based on polarity or on conformity, and open the way for the exploration of other markers (e.g. certain uses of the conditional) that may play a similar role in modulating commitment.

Selected references

- Aikhenvald, A. (2004).** Evidentiality. New York, USA: Oxford University Press
- AnderBois, S. (2014).** « On the exceptional status of reportative evidentials ». *Proceedings of SALT 24*, pages 234–254.
- Bhadra, D. (2020).** « The Semantics of Evidentials in Questions ». *Journal of Semantics*, vol. 37, n° 3, pages 367–423.
- Faller, M. T. (2002).** Semantics and Pragmatics of Evidentials in Cuzco Quechua. Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University.
- Farkas, D. F., & Bruce, K. B. (2010).** On reacting to assertions and polar questions. *Journal of Semantics*, 27(1), 81–118.
- Goodhue, D. (2023).** Simplifying the evidential condition on asking polar questions. *In Proceedings of SALT 33*, 520–540.
- Gunlogson, C. (2003).** True to Form: Rising and Falling Declaratives as Questions in English. Thèse de doctorat, Université de Californie à Santa Cruz
- Gunlogson, C. (2008).** A question of commitment. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics*, 22, 101–136.
- Hansen, M.-B. M. (2001).** Syntax in interaction : Form and function of yes/no interrogatives in spoken standard French. *Studies in Language*, 25(3), 463–520.
- Holmberg, A. (2013).** The syntax of answers to polar questions in English and Swedish. *Lingua*, 128, 31–50.
- Holmberg, A. (2015).** *The syntax of yes and no*. Oxford University Press.
- Kaiser, E. (2024).** « Evidentials and dubitatives in Finnish: perspective shift in questions and embedded contexts ». *Folia Linguistica*, vol. 59, n° 1, pages 71–98.
- Krifka, M. (2013).** Response particles as propositional anaphors. *Proceedings of SALT 23*, 1–18.
- Malamud, S. A., & Stephenson, T. (2015).** Three Ways to Avoid Commitments : Declarative Force Modifiers in the Conversational Scoreboard. *Journal of Semantics*, 32(2), 275–311.
- Mohammadi, M., & Romero, M. (2024).** Polar particles in Farsi: Anaphora in the scoreboard model of discourse. *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 28*.
- Murray, S. (2010).** *Evidentiality and the Structure of Speech Acts*. Thèse de doctorat, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
- Murray, S. (2021).** « Evidentiality, Modality, and Speech Acts ». *Annual Review of Linguistics*, vol. 7, pages 213–233.
- Roelofsen, F., & Farkas, D. F. (2015).** Polarity particle responses as a window onto the interpretation of questions and assertions. *Language*, 91(2), 359–414.
- Sudo, Y. (2013).** Biased polar questions in English and Japanese. In *Beyond expressives* (p. 275–295).

Härtl, Holden; Johansen, Henriette: Not What Was Said: Commitment Attribution in Verbal Irony

Not What Was Said: Commitment Attribution in Verbal Irony

Holden Härtl & Henriette Johansen (U Kassel)

Verbal irony is a revealing test case for the relation between at-issueness and commitment. It arises from a mismatch between utterance and context, often involving echoic dissociation from a literal proposition to which the speaker signals non-commitment (Attardo 2000; Wilson 2006). Consider (1), uttered after a highly paid colleague contributes only one euro to a farewell gift.

(1) *Wow, that was really generous!*

In (1), the speaker is not committed to the claim that the colleague was generous, but conveys a negative assessment. Previous work shows that such ironic contents are less at-issue than non-ironic, literal assertions, as hearers prefer indirect over straightforward rejections (Author Year). This raises the question of how ironic content – non-literal and reduced in at-issue status – becomes attributable to the speaker as a commitment (Koev 2018; Geurts 2019). First, is commitment attribution for ironic meanings delayed relative to non-ironic utterances? Second, does the attributed commitment involve a denial of the literal predicate, operationalized as a negated adjective (*not generous*), or a stronger lexical-opposite evaluation (*stingy*)?

To address these questions, we report on a pre-registered German self-paced reading study. Participants read ironic and non-ironic utterances followed by “thereby says” paraphrases, used as a diagnostic for commitment attribution. The paraphrases rendered the intended meaning either as a negated adjective (*not generous*) or as a lexical opposite (*stingy*). Control conditions estimated form-related effects such as phrase length and adjective repetition. Reading times were measured in the critical region and in a subsequent lexically constant spillover segment, marked by square brackets in (2).

- (2) German Context: Highly paid colleague contributes only one euro to a farewell gift.
Utterance: *Wow, das war ja wirklich großzügig!*
‘Wow, that was really generous!’
Paraphrase: *Damit sagt Tom, dass der Kollege [nicht großzügig ist / geizig ist] [und das ist] eigenartig.*
‘By saying this, Tom says that the colleague [is not generous / is stingy] [and that is] strange.’

As data collection is ongoing, we report descriptive interim data only ($N = 22$), prior to final statistical analysis. The means show a cross-over pattern. In the critical region, ironic utterances were read faster than non-ironic ones (1014 vs. 1056 ms), and negated-adjective paraphrases faster than lexical opposites within irony (994 vs. 1034 ms). In the spillover segment, both patterns reversed: ironic utterances were slower than non-ironic ones (563 vs. 533 ms), and negated-adjective paraphrases slower than lexical opposites (576 vs. 550 ms). We interpret this in two steps. First, the irony-related spillover effect points to delayed integration: speaker attribution of the inferred ironic content appears to require additional pragmatic processing. Second, the paraphrase-type contrast suggests a shift in attributed content: hearers initially access a denial of the literal predicate, while later integration moves toward a lexically enriched evaluative interpretation.

Together with previous at-issueness findings, the present interim data suggest that irony brings together reduced at-issue status and delayed commitment attribution. Since the relevant commitment concerns a non-literal, contextually inferred meaning rather than the literal proposition, its attribution appears delayed relative to non-ironic utterances and unfolds in stages, from an initial denial of the literal predicate to a later, lexically enriched evaluative construal. A model of irony must therefore specify not only the at-issue status of the inferred content, but also how non-literal speaker commitments are pragmatically derived over time.

References

- Attardo, S. (2000). Irony as relevant inappropriateness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32(6), 793–826.
- Geurts, B. (2019). Communication as commitment sharing: Speech acts, implicatures, common ground. *Theoretical Linguistics*, 45(1–2), 1–30.
- Koev, T. (2018). Notions of at-issueness. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 12(12), Article e12306.
- Wilson, D. (2006). The pragmatics of verbal irony: Echo or pretence? *Lingua*, 116, 1722–1743.

He, Rong: Shifting At-Issueness without Shifting Commitment

Shifting At-Issue-ness without Shifting Commitment

Rong HE (herong0530@gmail.com)

Tsinghua University & Leiden University

1 Introduction. An important question in natural language semantics is whether shifts in at-issue status necessarily affect speaker commitment. This paper addresses this question through *weibi*, a particle in Southwestern Mandarin. I argue that *weibi* uniformly encodes a weak epistemic commitment ($\neg\Box p$), in both declaratives and interrogatives, even though its contribution shifts from at-issue to non-at-issue. The behavior of *weibi* thus provides evidence that at-issue-ness and speaker commitment constitute partially independent dimensions of meaning.

2 Data. Morphologically, *weibi* consists of the negator *wei* and the epistemic necessity modal *bi*. It has a dual distribution across declaratives and polar questions (POLQs).

Declarative *weibi* In declaratives, *weibi* is typically STRESSED and is used exclusively to reject a previously salient epistemic necessity claim ($\Box p$), as illustrated in (1).

- (1) A: It {✓must be / ✗is} raining outside.
 B: Waitou **WEIBI** dei xiayu.
 outside WEIBI PROG rain
 ‘It is not the case that it must be raining outside.’

Here, the contribution of *weibi* is **at-issue** and can therefore be directly challenged or denied. Depending on the context, *weibi* may express the weak epistemic commitment ($\neg\Box p$), or yield the stronger inference that the speaker believes $\neg p$ ($\Box\neg p$).

Interrogative *weibi* In POLQs, *weibi* cannot bear stress. Moreover, *weibi*-POLQs are licensed only when the contextual evidence favors the prejacent p while the speaker has an original bias toward $\neg p$.

Original bias	Evidential bias	<i>weibi</i> -POLQ
Negative	Positive	✓
Negative	Negative	#
Negative	Neutral	#
Positive	Positive	#
Positive	Negative	#
Positive	Neutral	#
None	Positive	#
None	Negative	#
None	Neutral	#

- (2) A expects it not to rain because the forecast predicts a dry day. B comes home wearing a dripping wet raincoat. A asks:
 A: Waitou **weibi** dei xiayu a?
 outside WEIBI PROG rain Q
 ‘≈ What? Is it raining outside?’
 B: Duitou. (Waitou dei xiayu.)
 yes outside PROG rain
 ‘Yes. (It is raining outside.)’

In this use, the contribution of *weibi* is **non-at-issue**, as response particles such as *yes* and *no* target only the prejacent p , not the meaning contributed by *weibi*. The associated speaker bias varies in strength. It can merely convey the speaker’s surprise that the contextual evidence supports p . It can also yield the stronger inference that the speaker does not believe p .

3 Proposal. I propose that *weibi* uniformly encodes the weak epistemic commitment ($\neg\Box p$) in both declaratives and interrogatives, a hypothesis independently supported by its morphological composition. More specifically, I analyze *weibi* as a **denegation operator**.

- In declaratives, where its contribution is at-issue, *weibi* rejects a salient epistemic necessity claim $\Box p$.
- In POLQs, where its contribution is non-at-issue, *weibi* blocks the prejacent p , despite being supported by the evidence, from being directly added to the common ground (CG).

The analysis also derives the evidential bias of *weibi*-POLQs. As a denegation operator, *weibi* requires its prejacent to be contextually supported.

For reasons of space, I formalize only interrogative *weibi*, as in (3a). It contributes the non-at-issue condition that the speaker is uncertain whether p should be CG, following Romero and Han 2004. This weak commitment may be pragmatically strengthened to the belief that p should not be CG (cf. Repp 2013; Frana and Rawlins 2019).

- (3) a. $\llbracket weibi \rrbracket^{c, w} = \lambda p. p$
 Defined only if $\neg\forall w' \in \text{EPI}_{S_c}(w) : (\forall w'' \in \text{CONV}_{S_c}(w') : (p \in \text{CG}_{w''}))$
 b. $\llbracket [Q [weibi [p]]] \rrbracket^{c, w} = \{p\}^1$
 Defined only if $\neg\forall w' \in \text{EPI}_{S_c}(w) : (\forall w'' \in \text{CONV}_{S_c}(w') : (p \in \text{CG}_{w''}))$
 $\xrightarrow{\text{strengthened}} \forall w' \in \text{EPI}_{S_c}(w) : (\forall w'' \in \text{CONV}_{S_c}(w') : (p \notin \text{CG}_{w''}))$

Together with the Economy Principle in (4), this analysis derives the negative original bias associated with *weibi*-POLQs.

- (4) Principle of Economy (Romero and Han 2004; Frana and Rawlins 2019):
 Do not use a meta-conversational move unless necessary (to resolve a Quality dilemma).

Since the use of *weibi* constitutes a meta-conversational move, its use must be motivated by a conflict between the contextual evidence for p and the speaker's original commitment to $\neg p$.

4 Implications. The analysis has two broader implications. First, it provides new evidence that at-issueness and speaker commitment should be treated as partially independent dimensions of meaning. While the contribution of *weibi* shifts from at-issue in declaratives to non-at-issue in POLQs, its lexical commitment remains constant.

Second, the analysis broadens the cross-linguistic typology of CG-management operators. For example, *weibi* (3a) differs from Italian *mica* (5) at both the at-issue and non-at-issue levels.

- (5) $\llbracket mica \rrbracket^{c, w} = \lambda p. \neg p$ (Frana and Rawlins 2019)
 Defined only if $\forall w' \in \text{EPI}_{S_c}(w) : (\forall w'' \in \text{CONV}_{S_c}(w') : (p \notin \text{CG}_{w''}))$

References.

- Frana, I. and Rawlins, K. (2019). Attitudes in discourse: Italian polar questions and the particle *mica*. *Semantics and Pragmatics*.
 Repp, S. (2013). Common ground management: Modal particles, illocutionary negation and verum. In *Beyond Expressives: Explorations in Use-Conditional Meaning*. Brill.
 Romero, M. and Han, C.-H. (2004). On negative yes/no questions. *Linguistics and Philosophy*.

¹I assume a monopolar analysis for Southwestern Mandarin POLQs, but the proposal here does not hinge on this.

Köpping, Jan; Zani, Eleonora: Putting not-at-issue content on the table: Evidence from Bavarian *fei* and German *doch*

Putting not-at-issue content on the table: Evidence from Bavarian *fei* and German *doch*

Jan Köpping and Eleonora Zani (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Data. Some response or discourse particles express corrections or challenges. German *nein* canonically challenges at-issue (AI) content [7]. Therefore, it can serve as diagnostic for at-issueness, since it rejects assertions but not not-at-issue (NAI) content [1, 6, 8]. By contrast, unstressed German *doch* can challenge both the AI (2-a) and the NAI content (e.g. the non-restrictive relative clause, NRRC, (2-b)) of (1), whereas Bavarian *fei* is specialized for challenging NAI content and is infelicitous in AI corrections [4, 3].

- (1) A: Tim, who bought a house, is on vacation.
- (2) a. B: Er is doch/#fei in da Oabat.
he is DOCH/FEI in the work
'He is fei at work.' [Reject-AI] ✕
- b. B: Er hod doch/fei koa Haus kaaft.
he has DOCH/FEI no house bought
'He fei didn't buy a house.' [Reject-NAI] ✓

These patterns show that AI and NAI content are handled differently in discourse: while AI content invites acceptance or rejection [2], challenging NAI content requires specialized means and disrupts the natural flow of the conversation [12, 6].

Background. We argue that NAI content should be treated as a kind of proposal to account for the Bavarian particle *fei*, and on theoretical grounds as well. We phrase our discussion in terms of the *Table Model* of discourse (cf. [2] & Figure 1). Novel NAI content, such as NRRCs and informative presuppositions [5, 11], is not already part of the *CG*. As argued by Scheffler & Malamud [10], adding novel NAI content directly to the *CG* incorrectly predicts that all interlocutors become publicly committed without the chance to object. Their solution places NAI content in the speaker's commitments and the projected set, effectively treating it as part of the proposal. While this captures how AI and NAI content enter the *CG* upon acceptance, it is silent about challenges.

Proposal. We treat NAI content as a second type of *discourse update proposal*. Accordingly, NAI proposals are placed on a dedicated area of the Table, allowing interlocutors to challenge them. AI and NAI proposals thus occupy distinct Table areas, determined by the current QUD (cf. Figure 2; [9]), and governed by different discourse rules. By default, AI proposals require acceptance or rejection before the conversation proceeds, whereas NAI proposals must be challenged immediately or are silently accommodated. Consequently, responding only to the AI proposal counts as tacit acceptance of any accompanying NAI content.

Because both AI and NAI contents are represented on the Table, the model can accommodate immediate 'out-of-order' reactions that target both levels simultaneously, such as 'Yes, but ...'-challenges, where a response particle addresses the AI content while the rest targets NAI content.

Restricting discourse expressions to specific Table areas models accessibility: *nein* targets only AI content, *fei* only NAI content, whereas unstressed *doch* is unrestricted. When *fei* or unstressed *doch* challenges NAI content, that content is promoted to the AI area of the Table,

reflecting a shift in the implicit QUD. The incompatible prejacent is placed there as well, thereby creating a standard conversational conflict.

DC_A	Table	DC_B
CG	ps	

Figure 1: The Table model by Farkas & Bruce. The Table stores pending proposals; the CG contains shared commitments; DC_x is participant x 's individual commitment set; and ps is the projected context resulting from the proposals on the Table, representing the effect of acceptance.

DC_A	NAI-proposal ----- AI-proposal	DC_B
CG		

Figure 2: Extended conversational table with separate AI and NAI proposal areas, determined by the current QUD.

References

- [1] Patricia Amaral, Craige Roberts, and E. Allyn Smith. Review of *The Logic of Conventional Implicatures* by Chris Potts. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 30(6):707–749, 2007.
- [2] D. F. Farkas and K. B. Bruce. On Reacting to Assertions and Polar Questions. *Journal of Semantics*, 27(1):81–118, February 2010.
- [3] Stefan Hinterwimmer. The Bavarian discourse particle *fei* as a marker of non-at-issueness. In Daniel Gutzmann and Katharina Turgay, editors, *Secondary Content. The Semantics and Pragmatics of Side Issues*, volume 37 of *Current Research in the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface*, pages 246–273. Brill, 2019.
- [4] Stefan Hinterwimmer and Cornelia Ebert. A comparison of ‘fei’ and ‘aber’. *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung*, 22(1):469–486, 2018. Number: 1.
- [5] Lauri Karttunen. Presupposition and linguistic context. *Theoretical Linguistics*, 1:181–194, 1974.
- [6] Todor K. Koev. *Apposition and the structure of discourse*. PhD thesis, Rutgers University, 2013.
- [7] Manfred Krifka. Response particles as propositional anaphors. In Todd Snider, editor, *Proceedings of SALT 23*, pages 1–18. Linguistic Society of America, 2013.
- [8] Christopher Potts. *The Logic of Conventional Implicatures*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005.
- [9] Craige Roberts. Information structure in discourse: Towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics. *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 5(6):1–69, 2012.
- [10] Tatjana Scheffler and Sophia A. Malamud. “Won’t you?” reverse-polarity question tags in American English as a window into the semantics-pragmatics interface. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 46(6):1285–1327, 2023.

- [11] Judith Tonhauser, David Beaver, Craige Roberts, and Mandy Simons. Toward a Taxonomy of Projective Content. *Language*, 89:66–109, March 2013.
- [12] Kai von Stechow. Would you believe it? The king of France is back! (Presuppositions and truth-value intuitions). In Marga Reimer and Anne Bezuidenhout, editors, *Descriptions and Beyond*, pages 315–341. Oxford University Press Oxford, July 2004.

Krasikova, Natalia; König, Peter; Achimova, Asya: Credibility of presupposed and asserted information: the role of trigger type and source reliability

Credibility of presupposed and asserted information: the role of trigger type and source reliability

Natalia Krasikova¹, Peter König² & Asya Achimova¹

¹Universität Tübingen, ²Universität Osnabrück

Presuppositions are often assumed to be persuasive because they present information as backgrounded and taken for granted rather than less open to challenge than asserted content (Stalnaker, 1973, 2002). Accommodation allows hearers to add presupposed content to the common ground “quietly and without fuss” (Von Stechow, 2008, p. 137). Presuppositions have therefore been argued to influence eyewitness reports, political discourse, and judgments of misleading information (Loftus, 1975; Masia, 2020; Lombardi Vallauri, 2021; Giunta et al., 2025). However, accommodation depends on several factors, including trigger type, prior beliefs, plausibility, and at-issueness (Abusch, 2010; Simons et al., 2017; Tonhauser et al., 2018; Degen and Tonhauser, 2021). Thoma et al. (2023) found that presuppositions were more persuasive than assertions only when they introduced discourse-new information requiring accommodation. In contrast, Miller (2024) found no consistent advantage of informative presuppositions over assertions in memory and common-ground representations.

In this study, we investigate whether false information is accepted more readily when presupposed rather than asserted. In two pilot experiments, participants read historical texts containing false information encoded either as assertions (1) or as presupposed content, see (2) for change-of-state example. Afterwards, participants rated target statements as (3) on a scale from *Definitely false* to *Definitely true*. Contrary to our expectations, presupposed information was not accepted more readily than asserted information; ratings for assertions were close to ceiling (Figure 1). However, acceptance differed across trigger types: factive predicates and counterfactual conditionals yielded higher ratings than iterative constructions and change-of-state predicates.

- (1) In order to detect plots against her, Cleopatra used to disguise herself as an ordinary woman among her subjects. ASSERTION
- (2) Cleopatra ceased disguising herself as an ordinary woman to detect plots against her after one of her subjects recognized her. PRESUPPOSITION
- (3) For a while, Cleopatra used to wear ordinary women's clothes as camouflage. TARGET

The present experiment introduces source reliability as an additional factor. Ceiling effects in the pilot studies may have arisen because participants treated the materials as educational texts and therefore assumed them to be reliable. We also include cleft constructions because they have been argued to encode highly projective content (Tonhauser et al., 2013, 2018). The experiment employs a 4×2 design crossing ENCODING TYPE (assertion, factive, change-of-state, cleft) with SOURCE RELIABILITY (reliable vs. unreliable). One hundred participants will read 18 historical texts containing false information encoded either as assertions or presuppositions and will subsequently rate target statements on a 1–100 scale from *Sounds fake* to *Sounds real*.

We test two hypotheses. First, presupposed misinformation is expected to receive higher acceptance ratings than asserted misinformation when presented by an unreliable source, because presuppositional packaging may partly shield content from epistemic vigilance. Second, trigger types are expected to differ: clefts should yield the highest acceptance, whereas change-of-state predicates should yield the lowest because they are comparatively defeasible. The study will contribute to current debates on the relationship between presupposition accommodation and belief formation and clarify whether different forms of linguistic packaging differentially affect the acceptance of misinformation.

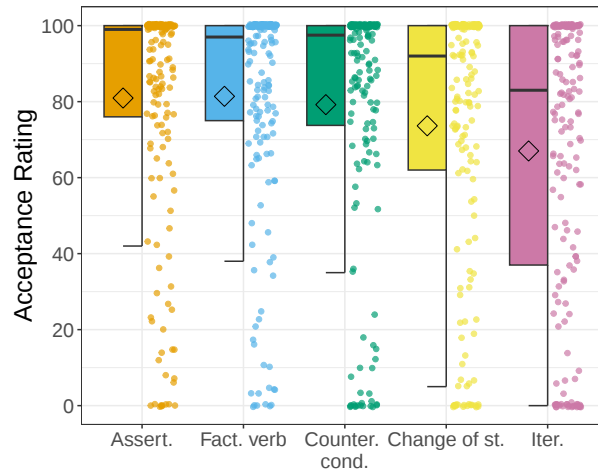


Figure 1: Pilot Experiment. Acceptance of information depending on the trigger type compared to assertions. Black lines show median splits, diamonds indicate average ratings.

References

- Abusch, D. (2010). Presupposition triggering from alternatives. *Journal of Semantics*, 27(1):37–80.
- Degen, J. and Tonhauser, J. (2021). Prior beliefs modulate projection. *Open Mind*, 5:59–70.
- Giunta, G., Mazzarella, D., and Domaneschi, F. (2025). Are presuppositions really misleading? Assessing the impact of linguistic encoding, at-issueness, and source reliability on epistemic vigilance. *Mind & Language*.
- Loftus, E. F. (1975). Leading questions and the eyewitness report. *Cognitive psychology*, 7(4):560–572.
- Lombardi Vallauri, E. (2021). Manipulative shallow processing induced by presuppositions and topics: Theoretical perspectives and experimental evidence. *Frontiers in Communication*, 6:610807.
- Masia, V. (2020). Presupposition, assertion and the encoding of evidentiality in political discourse. *Linguistik online*, 102(2):129–153.
- Miller, E. (2024). Comparative effects of informative presuppositions on representations of the common ground. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Université libre de Bruxelles.
- Simons, M., Beaver, D., Roberts, C., and Tonhauser, J. (2017). The best question: Explaining the projection behavior of factives. *Discourse Processes*, 54(3):187–206.
- Stalnaker, R. (1973). Presuppositions. *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 2(4):447–457.
- Stalnaker, R. (2002). Common ground. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 25(5/6):701–721.
- Thoma, S., Becker, M., and Kißler, J. (2023). Presuppositions are more persuasive than assertions if addressees accommodate them. *Frontiers in Communication*, 8:1222448.
- Tonhauser, J., Beaver, D. I., and Degen, J. (2018). How projective is projective content? Gradience in projectivity and at-issueness. *Journal of Semantics*, 35(3):495–542.
- Tonhauser, J., Beaver, D. I., Roberts, C., and Simons, M. (2013). Toward a taxonomy of projective content. *Language*, 89(1):66–109.
- Von Stechow, K. (2008). What is presupposition accommodation, again? *Philosophical perspectives*, 22:137–170.

Liu, Landon; Singh, Raj: Reasonable Accommodation and the (Conditional) Proviso Problem

Reasonable Accommodation and the (Conditional) Proviso Problem

Landon Liu* & Raj Singh †

Geurts (1996) recognized a challenge for satisfaction theories' of presupposition (Karttunen, 1974; Stalnaker, 1974; Heim, 2008; Schlenker, 2008). We focus on the conditional variant of this problem. Sentences 'if A then $B[X]$ ' are predicted to project a conditional presupposition $A \rightarrow X$; however, sometimes just X is presupposed.

- (1) If Tom flies to Leduc, he will print his plane ticket.
 - a. Projected & actual presupposition: if Tom flies to Leduc, he has a plane ticket.
- (2) If Tom flies to Leduc, his sister will pick him up.
 - a. Projected presupposition: if Tom flies to Leduc, he has a sister
 - b. Actual accommodation: Tom has a sister.

Why, in (1), do we accommodate the projected conditional presupposition $A \rightarrow X$ whereas in (2) we accommodate X ? Proposals following Singh (2007) suggest *independence* tells us whether or not to expect a strengthened presupposition. For example, Lassiter (2012) defines a conditional $A \rightarrow X$ to be *independent* in c when learning A in c does *not* increase the listener's credence of X . However, this was challenged by Mandelkern (2016):

- (3) It is common ground that Smith has gone missing, and we don't know whether he is still alive. A detective enters and says, "If the butler's clothes contain traces of Smith's blood, then it was the butler who killed Smith." (Mandelkern, 2016).
 - a. Projected presupposition: if the butler's clothes contain traces of Smith's blood, then Smith was killed. (Predicted by *Independence*)
 - b. Actual accommodation: Smith was killed.

We propose that $A \rightarrow X$ is a *reasonable* (and remains a candidate for) accommodation if upon supposing A in c , X is **true in the most plausible worlds**.¹

As in the Stalnakerian tradition, it would be uncooperative to expect your listener to accommodate something that would be unreasonable (see Soames, 1989; Heim, 1992; Soames (1989); HEIM (1992); Beaver (2001); von Stechow (2008); see Singh et al. (2016) for relevant experimental results.) In (1a), although it is possible to imagine worlds in which Tom flies to Leduc without a plane ticket (e.g., flying private, or flying his own plane), the most plausible worlds in which he flies to Leduc involves him buying a plane ticket with a commercial airline. Thus, accommodation of the conditional would be reasonable: flying to Leduc strongly supports having a plane ticket. In (1b), Tom's flying to Leduc is independent of his having a sister: worlds in which he has a sister are no more nor less plausible than ones in which he doesn't. Thus, accommodation of the conditional would be unreasonable: flying to Leduc does not strongly support his having a sister. In the Mandelkern case, the projected presupposition is *unreasonable*. Given blood on the butler clothes, Smith being killed is not strictly more plausible than every other world in the context where there is blood on the butler's clothes but is not killed. It would be *unreasonable* for a cooperative speaker to expect our hearer to make commitment to Smith's death contingent on the blood alone; the hearer instead accommodates it outright just based on what she knows in the context.

* Department of Philosophy, Carnegie Mellon University

† Department of Cognitive Science, Carleton University

¹ Formally, $A \rightarrow X$ is a reasonable accommodation in c given a reference world $w \prec$ if and only if $\forall v \in \{c \cap A\}$ such that $X \notin v$, there exists a $u \in \{c \cap A\}$ where $u \prec v$ and $X \in u$.

References

- D. Beaver. Presupposition and Assertion in Dynamic Semantics. CSLI Publications Stanford, Jan. 2001. URL <https://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/jU1MDVmZ/.book-2001.pdf>.
- B. Geurts. Local satisfaction guaranteed: A presupposition theory and its problems. Linguistics and Philosophy, 19(3):259–294, June 1996. ISSN 1573-0549. doi: 10.1007/BF00628201. URL <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00628201>.
- I. HEIM. Presupposition Projection and the Semantics of Attitude Verbs. Journal of Semantics, 9(3):183–221, Jan. 1992. ISSN 0167-5133. doi: 10.1093/jos/9.3.183. URL <https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/9.3.183>.
- I. Heim. On the Projection Problem for Presuppositions. In Formal Semantics: The Essential Readings, pages 249–260. Jan. 2008. ISBN 978-0-470-75833-5. URL https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227991256_On_the_Projection_Problem_for_Presuppositions.
- L. Karttunen. Presupposition and Linguistic Context. Theoretical Linguistics, 1:181–194, Jan. 1974. doi: 10.1515/thli.1974.1.1-3.181.
- D. Lassiter. Presuppositions, provisos, and probability. Semantics and Pragmatics, 5, May 2012. ISSN 1937-8912. doi: 10.3765/sp.5.2. URL <http://semprag.org/article/view/sp.5.2>.
- M. Mandelkern. A note on the architecture of presupposition. 2016. URL <https://philpapers.org/rec/MANANO-14>.
- P. Schlenker. Presupposition projection: Explanatory strategies. Theoretical Linguistics, 34(3):287–316, Dec. 2008. ISSN 1613-4060. doi: 10.1515/THLI.2008.021. URL https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/THLI.2008.021/html?srsId=AfmBOoqhdxTbxqWBwHldGrflmcMt7FvCCZlRR_wAeC0jwlBDN64Pwg.
- R. Singh. Formal alternatives as a solution to the proviso problem. In Semantics and Linguistic Theory, pages 264–281, 2007. URL <http://journals.linguisticsociety.org/proceedings/index.php/SALT/article/download/2960/2700>.
- R. Singh, E. Fedorenko, K. Mahowald, and E. Gibson. Accommodating Presuppositions Is Inappropriate in Implausible Contexts. Cognitive Science, 40(3): 607–634, 2016. ISSN 1551-6709. doi: 10.1111/cogs.12260. URL <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cogs.12260>. eprint: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/cogs.12260>.
- S. Soames. Presupposition. In D. Gabbay and F. Guenther, editors, Handbook of Philosophical Logic: Volume IV: Topics in the Philosophy of Language, pages 553–616. Springer Netherlands, Dordrecht, 1989. ISBN 978-94-009-1171-0. doi: 10.1007/978-94-009-1171-0_9. URL https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-1171-0_9.
- R. Stalnaker. Pragmatic Presuppositions. In R. Stalnaker, editor, Semantics and Philosophy, pages 197–213. New York U. Press, 1974.

K. von Fintel. What is Presupposition Accommodation, Again? Prov. von Fintel, Dec. 2008. ISSN 1520-8583. URL <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/66138>. Accepted: 2011-09-30T15:52:03Z.

Mulligan, Karl: Antagonistic *Why?* as metacommunicative resistance

In this work, I investigate what makes some instances of *Why?* anaphoric to an assertion *antagonistic*, or resistance-inducing, and others not. I claim that the presence of certain modal operators like *should* invite the use of a metacommunicative version of *why* defined for assertions, which has previously been claimed to only be available for questions and imperatives.

Presupposition of standard *why* Asking *Why p?* generally involves presupposing the truth of a declarative proposition *p* (Bromberger 1966). For instance, a speaker asking *Why is the sky blue?* is committed to the proposition that the sky is blue. Likewise, when one speaker utters a declarative proposition *p* and another asks anaphorically, *Why?* or *Why is it?*, the asker seems to accept the truth of *p* and is now seeking an explanation for *p*. However, there are cases in which the asker of an anaphoric *Why?* resists commitment to this presupposition, a phenomenon I dub antagonistic *Why?*:

- (1) A: John should wash the dishes. B: *Why?/Why* should he?

Here, by asking *Why?*, B is clearly not accepting the proposition put forth by A's utterance. Rather, B's utterance is a resistance move (Bledin and Rawlins 2020), i.e., delaying the acceptance or rejection of A's proposal, pending the resolution of some newly raised issue.

Metacommunicative *why* Meanwhile, Ginzburg (2003) observes that there is a distinct, metacommunicative use of *Why?* which emerges when it is anaphoric to questions (as in (2)); imperatives (as in (3)) have been found to pattern similarly (Mulligan 2025). This usage can also be characterized as a resistance move, since the conventional move (answering, for questions; acting, for imperatives) is delayed. Ginzburg (2012) claims that the metacommunicative and the proposition-targeted meaning (as when followed by an assertion, e.g., 4) are in complementary distribution:

- (2) A: When did you get home? / B: *Why?* ($\approx$ *Why are you asking?*) question
 (3) A: Open the window! / B: *Why?* ($\approx$ *Why do you want me to do so?*) imperative
 (4) A: I have a meeting at 1pm. / B: *Why?* ($\not\approx$ *Why are you telling me?*) assertion

In (4), *Why?* can only mean *Why do you have a meeting at 1pm?*, and cannot generate the metacommunicative request of explaining the reason behind the assertion itself.

Analysis My claim is that antagonistic *Why?* does in fact give rise to such a metacommunicative act. I argue that metacommunicative *Why?* emerges precisely in cases when the anaphoric declarative presupposition of standard *why* is either unavailable or false, since explaining a false or uncertain proposition is untenable. With questions and imperatives, the truth of an associated declarative is undefined. With modalized assertions of the form $M(p)$, the prejacent proposition *p* is conventionally presumed to be false (it would be strange for A to utter (1) if John were already washing the dishes), so explanation of a false proposition would make little sense. To confirm that the falsity of the prejacent is what gives rise to the metacommunicative effect, the context can be coerced to make the prejacent of a modal like *should* true:

- (5) A: People are smoking less. / B: People *should* smoke less. / A: *Why?*

Here, A's *Why?* is not antagonistic, but instead made in good faith, targeting a rationale. Other evidence comes from the infelicity upon including a characterization of the modal base, e.g., adding *According to his job description, ...* to (1A).

Conclusion Antagonistic *Why?* is derived from the resistance associated with metacommunicative *Why?*, novelly observed to be available to a particular class of modalized assertions. Asking *Why?* or its semi-elided form *Why should I/he/etc.?* in these modalized contexts is akin to asking, *Why (on what basis) are you asserting this?* This is subtly different from asking *Why is this assertion true?*, the standard meaning of *why*. This abstract thus offers a linguistic diagnosis for distinguishing two kinds of answers of *Why?*, justifications and (causal) explanations, on the basis of at-issueness: the former are discourse-level answers to *why*-questions which target the modal or subjective grounds for assertion, and the latter are answers to questions which target the truth of the asserted content.

References **Bledin, Justin and Kyle Rawlins (2020)**. “Resistance and Resolution: Attentional Dynamics in Discourse”. *Journal Of Semantics*. **Bromberger, Sylvain (1966)**. “Why-Questions”. *Mind and Cosmos: Essays in Contemporary Science and Philosophy*. Ed. by Robert Garland Colodny, 86–111. **Ginzburg, Jonathan (2003)**. “Disentangling Public from Non-Public Meaning”. *Current and New Directions in Discourse and Dialogue*, 183–211. — (2012). *The Interactive Stance: Meaning for Conversation*. 416 pp. **Mulligan, Karl (2025)**. “Shifting Topic”. The Johns Hopkins University.

Poster Session II

Bade, Nadine; Kruschwitz, Kascha; Zymla, Mark-Matthias: Commitment through accommodation – evidence from LMs

Commitment through accommodation – evidence from LMs
Nadine Bade, Kascha Kruschwitz, Mark-Matthias Zyma

Summary In this talk we present theoretical and methodological insights gained from parallel human-LM (language model) experimentation on presupposition accommodation. Specifically, we discuss how humans and LMs are sensitive to context manipulations to different degrees, affecting their judgments and assessment with regard to whether the presupposition is now part of the common ground.

Background The presupposition triggered by the particle *again* in (1) is that Linda bought a pink lamp before yesterday.

- (1) Yesterday Linda bought a pink lamp again.
- | | |
|---|-----------|
| a. Linda has bought a pink lamp before. | VERIFYING |
| b. Susan bought a pink lamp before. | NEUTRAL |

In early work on presupposition understanding and processing, Tiemann et al. 2011 found that sentences with a presupposition trigger differ in acceptability depending on whether the context verifies (1-a) or is neutral with regard to (1-b) the presupposition. Tiemann et al. 2015 replicate the effect of reduced acceptability of sentences with “again” in neutral contexts. Further, when asked whether Linda now has “one” or “at least two” pink lamps, participants overwhelmingly chose the former option in neutral contexts but the latter in verifying contexts. This provides evidence that participants struggle to accommodate the presupposed content out of the blue.

Experiment We tested how LMs deal with verifying and neutral contexts in the context of natural language inference (NLI), assuming that commitments are reflected in the reasoning process. For this, we drafted a suite of German and multilingual LMs fine-tuned on NLI and adapted Tiemann’s experimental setup to the NLI task. This adaption results in an NLI test set where an item consists of the context and the sentence with the presupposition trigger as premises, and one of Tiemann’s suggested answers (once, twice, unclear) translated into full sentences as conclusion. The models were then tasked to determine whether the conclusion follows, contradicts or is neutral with respect to the premises.

Largely, the results suggest that the LMs tested do consider both the presupposed and asserted content as entailed, irrespective of whether the presupposition was given or needed to be accommodated.

Preliminary conclusion Interpreted charitably, the LMs we tested are more committed to the presupposed content being entailed than human participants in a similar set-up. However, it is possible that especially the smaller LMs we tested rely more on structural matching/lexical overlap rather than on actual *commitment*. To control for this, we conducted experiments with minimal pairs,

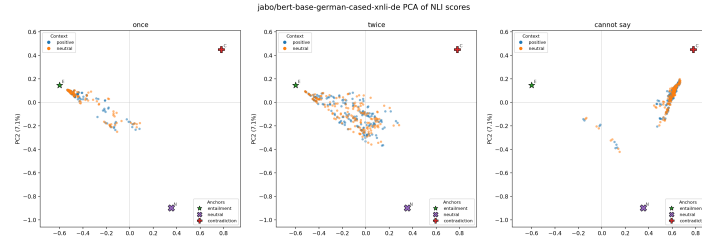


Figure 1: Results for a German BERT model trained on the XNLI dataset (Conneau et al. 2018).

testing whether the presence of a presupposition trigger significantly affects the reasoning process (similar to Wörgötter et al. 2026). These experiments confirmed a significant effect of the presupposition trigger *wieder* (*again*) in resolving the NLI labels.

In comparison to LMs, human participants chose the *at least two* option the majority of the time when the presupposition was given in the context. At first glance these data suggest that, at least with the current task, LMs are not aware that the truth of the presupposition can be verified through context but seem to rely on the trigger alone, reducing commitment to the presupposed content even in verifying contexts.

References

- Conneau, Alexis, Rinott, Rutu, Lample, Guillaume, Williams, Adina, Bowman, Samuel R., Schwenk, Holger and Stoyanov, Veselin. 2018. XNLI: Evaluating Cross-lingual Sentence Representations. In *Proceedings of the 2018 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*, Association for Computational Linguistics.
- Tiemann, Sonja, Kirsten, Mareike, Beck, Sigrid, Hertrich, Ingo and Rolke, Bettina. 2015. Presupposition processing and accommodation: An experiment on *wieder* (‘again’) and consequences for other triggers. *Experimental perspectives on presuppositions* pages 39–65.
- Tiemann, Sonja, Schmid, Mareike, Bade, Nadine, Rolke, Bettina, Hertrich, Ingo, Ackermann, Hermann, Knapp, Julia and Beck, Sigrid. 2011. Psycholinguistic evidence for presuppositions: On-line and off-line data. In *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung*, volume 15, pages 581–596.
- Wörgötter, Marie-Léontine, Lai, Shikai and Schuster, Sebastian. 2026. There Is No Spoon: Existential Presupposition in Large Language Models. In *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Language Resources and Evaluation Conference (LREC 2026)*, Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

Buchczyk, Sebastian: Two Commitment Spaces for Romance Emotives

Two Commitment Spaces for Romance Emotives

Sebastian Buchczyk (Universität zu Köln)

Introduction Emotives in Romance that select subjunctive clausal complements (CCs) have been analysed as factive and thus presuppositional (Terrell & Hooper 1974 et seq.). There are competing accounts with respect to whether the content of the CC p is presupposed (Farkas 1992; Quer 2001, 2009), or the matrix subject's (=protagonist's) belief of p (Schlenker 2005, Mari & Giannakidou 2021). Both such approaches generally face persistent difficulties (see Abrusán 2022 for a discussion for English). Accounts that assume presupposed p incorrectly predict that any denial of p should uniformly yield a straightforward contradiction (2), while belief-presupposition analyses struggle to derive the infelicity of contradiction of p (1), as it merely presupposes Joan's and not the speaker's belief of p .

- (1) En Joan es queixava que li posessin males notes, #però no tenia raó, sempre li donaven notes raonables.
'Joan complained that they gave_{sbjv} him bad grades, but he isn't right, they always gave him reasonable grades.'
(Quer 2001)
- (2) En Joan es queixava que li posessin males notes, però la seva queixa era completament infundada perquè, de fet, sempre li van donar notes raonables.
'Joan complained that they gave_{sbjv} him bad marks, but his impression was completely unfounded because, in fact, he was always given reasonable marks.'

Motivation Abrusán (2022) argues that presuppositions in emotives are sensitive to perspective shifts, and we will assume the same for emotives in Catalan. Evidence for such a shift are expressives which are canonically speaker-oriented. If emotives are sensitive to perspective shifts, we would expect shifted readings when embedding expressives in their CCs. In (3), *maleïda* ('damn') may receive such a shifted reading, mapping the expressive to Joan.

- (3) Convençut erròniament que algú havia tocat la seva quiche, en Joan es queixava que la maleïda Maria se l'hagués menjat la meitat. Després, es va adonar que se n'havia menjat la meitat ell mateix.
'Mistakenly convinced that someone had touched his quiche, Joan complained that the damned Maria had_{sbjv} eaten half of it. Later, he realised that he himself had eaten half of it.'

Consequently, this plausibly lets us assume that the presupposition of the CCs in (1) or (3) could be mapped to the protagonist (=Joan), and not necessarily always to the speaker.

Analysis We assume that CCs of emotives are interpreted in two Commitment Spaces (CS), following Krifka's (2019) conception of actual CS_a and hypothetical CS_h to capture the perspectival shift of the presupposed content in the CC. The general idea is that the author of a sentence such as (1) is located in CS_a , whereas the protagonist is located in CS_h . Given that presuppositions are opaque (speaker) commitments (Searle & Vanderveken 1985, Mazzarella et al. 2018), Joan would be committed to p in CS_h . The speaker in CS_a is not committed to p . The reason for (1) being infelicitous is a default between CS_a and CS_h such that they often coincide (Krifka 2019: 255), unless the speaker in CS_a signals any disagreement with CS_h . (2) is such a case where this alignment is defeasible. In the absence of explicit denial, we assume a principle of charity (Geurts 1999) extending across CS_a and CS_h , whereby commitments in

CS_h are normally taken as coherent and *prima facie* acceptable from the perspective of CS_a and beyond. This yields the default inheritance of configurations in CS_h into CS_a, capturing why speakers may accommodate *p* unless they explicitly reject configurations in CS_h.

Selected references Abrusán, M. (2022). The perspective-sensitivity of presuppositions. *Mind & Language*, 38. 584–603. * Geurts, B. (2019). *Presuppositions and pronouns*. CRISPI. * Krifka, M (2019). Indicative and subjunctive conditionals in Commitment Spaces. In Proceedings of the 22nd Amsterdam Colloquium, 248–258. * Quer (2001). Interpreting Mood. *Probus*, 13: 81–111. * Schlenker (2005). The lazy Frenchman's approach to the subjunctive. In Geurts, T., I. van Ginneken & H. Jacobs (eds.), *Romance languages and linguistic theory*, 269–310. John Benjamins.

Gabunia, Tekla: Who's Even Coming? Georgian $WH+=gha$ and Commitment Beyond At-Issueness

Who's Even Coming? Georgian *WH+=gha* and Commitment Beyond At-Issueness

Tekla Gabunia, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen

Traditional descriptions of Georgian *=gha* characterize the particle as emphatic or expressive and provide little discussion of its contribution in interrogatives (Shanidze, 1980; Hewitt, 1995). the fullest existing treatment of its interrogative use (Kojima, 2007) documents the morphology without asking what work the particle does. Based on new native-speaker judgments and corpus evidence, I argue *WH+=gha* leaves the question itself untouched and instead restricts when it can be asked at all: the question is licensed only once some contextually salient, exhaustible resource has already run out – the set of candidate answers.

- (1) Context: I have just moved to a new country and genuinely do not know what paperwork is required.
 - a. *ra gavaketo?*
what do.SBJV.1SG
'What should I do?'
 - b. **ra=gha gavaketo?*
what=GHA do.SBJV.1SG
Intended: 'What should I do?'
- (2) Context: I have already emailed the embassy, called them, and visited in person. None of these attempts solved the problem.

ra=gha gavaketo?
what=GHA do.SBJV.1SG

'What else can I do?'

The frustration *WH+=gha* so often conveys is not encoded by the particle, and neither is complete ignorance of the answer. Someone finishing preparations for a party – decorations up, food organized, several other tasks done – can ask *ra=gha darcha gasaketebeli?* 'what's left to do?' with no frustration at all. Full depletion is not required for frustration to appear, either: with ten guests invited and seven having cancelled, a speaker who already knows exactly which three people are still coming – by name – can still ask *vin=gha modis?* 'who's even coming?' with real exasperation. Ignorance, then, is not what licenses the construction, and it is not what triggers the affect. Both the presence and the absence of frustration cut across the presence and absence of genuine uncertainty, and I do not yet have a clean generalization over when each appears – only these two contrasting data points, which show that neither ignorance nor full depletion is doing the work commonly attributed to it.

The exhaustion requirement projects across embedding, resists direct denial, and is challenged metalinguistically rather than contradicted outright – the standard signature of presupposition (Tonhauser, 2012), confirmed here with the sharper "Yes, but" diagnostic built for exclusives and clefts (De Vaugh-Geiss et al., 2015). Interestingly, the same particle appears outside questions:

- (3) *gogoebi=gha darchnen.*
girls=GHA remain.AOR.3PL
'Only the girls remained.'

Outside questions, *=gha* presupposes that some other, contextually salient alternative held at an earlier point, and asserts the current value to the exclusion of the rest. *WH+=gha* looks, on the surface, like it could be built the same way, with the alternative set supplied by the *WH*-word itself rather than by focus (Hamblin, 1973; Kratzer and Shimoyama, 2002): both uses presuppose a prior, less restricted set of alternatives

and assert that only what remains is now live. But the closest existing account of a comparable German construction – *bloß/nur* in extreme-ignorance questions (Eckardt and Yu, 2020) – ties the construction to the speaker’s own dismissed guesses and to genuine uncertainty about the answer. Georgian *WH+=gha* does not pattern this way: it is licensed by depletion of a contextually salient resource whether or not the speaker has personally guessed and rejected anything, and, as shown above, independently of whether the speaker knows the answer at all.

The construction is old and still expanding. An original search of the Georgian National Corpus (Old, Middle, Modern) returns 12,952 tokens of *=gha*: 362 (2.8%) on WH-hosts, the remainder on nominal, pronominal, and participial hosts. The WH-share climbs over time, from roughly 1% before 1500 to 15–24% by the nineteenth century, tracking Kojima’s independent observation that fusion with interrogatives is now the more usual pattern in the modern language (Kojima, 2007).

If speakers are genuinely committed to this backgrounded content – not merely assuming it, but answerable for it – Georgian argues against identifying discourse commitment with at-issue meaning or assertion. Some not-at-issue content commits you too (Farkas and Bruce, 2010; Faller, 2019).

References

- De Vaughn-Geiss, J. P., Zimmermann, M., Onea, E., and Boell, A.-C. (2015). Contradicting (not-)at-issueness in exclusives and clefts: An empirical study. In D’Antonio, S., Moroney, M., and Little, C. R., editors, *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT)* 25, pages 373–393.
- Eckardt, R. and Yu, Q. (2020). German *bloß*-questions as extreme ignorance questions. *Linguistica Brunensia*, 68(1):7–22.
- Faller, M. T. (2019). The discourse commitments of illocutionary reportatives. *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 12:8:1–54.
- Farkas, D. F. and Bruce, K. B. (2010). On reacting to assertions and polar questions. *Journal of Semantics*, 27(1):81–118.
- Hamblin, C. L. (1973). Questions in Montague English. *Foundations of Language*, 10(1):41–53.
- Hewitt, B. G. (1995). *Georgian: A Structural Reference Grammar*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam.
- Kojima, Y. (2007). Clitics in modern georgian. *Asian and African Languages and Linguistics*, 2:85–102.
- Kratzer, A. and Shimoyama, J. (2002). Indeterminate pronouns: The view from Japanese. In Otsu, Y., editor, *Proceedings of the Third Tokyo Conference on Psycholinguistics*, pages 1–25, Tokyo. Hituzi Syobo.
- Shanidze, A. (1980). *Kartuli Enis Gramatikis Sapudzvlebi*. Tbilisi University Press, Tbilisi.
- Tonhauser, J. (2012). Diagnosing (not-)at-issue content. In *Semantics of Under-Represented Languages of the Americas* 6, pages 239–254. GLSA Publications, Amherst, MA.

Gyuris, Beáta: Commitment, at-issueness and declarative questions

Commitment, at-issueness and declarative questions

Beáta Gyuris

ELTE Research Centre for Linguistics & Faculty of Humanities, Budapest

The talk intends to contribute to the study of the relationship between commitment and at-issueness by comparing the use conditions of two declarative question types, the rising declarative (R-DEC) in English and the rise-fall declarative ($\wedge$ -DEC) in Hungarian, and by making a proposal that accounts for differences in their distribution.

R-DECs have been argued to give rise to both “assertive” and “inquisitive” uses (e.g. Jeong 2018), the latter including “verificational” (cf. Gunlogson 2003), echoic, and “expert consultation” (cf. Rudin 2022) readings. $\wedge$ -DECs, characterized by a rise-fall terminal contour and accents on all accentable words, whose melody is described by Varga (2010, 4) as a “rise-fall” [L*HL%], however, have no felicitous “assertive”, (1), and “expert consultation” uses, (2):

- (1) Radio station DJ: Good morning, Susan. Where are you calling from?
Caller: # Karcagról $\wedge$ telefonálok $\wedge$?
Karcag.from call.1SG
‘I’m calling from Karcag?’
- (2) A and B decided two days ago that they go out together tonight. They haven’t spoken about it since.
A: # Akkor találkozunk $\wedge$ ma $\wedge$ este $\wedge$?
then meet.1PL today evening
‘We’re gonna meet then tonight?’

Furthermore, $\wedge$ -DECs appear in question sequences immediately following a constituent question, cf. (3), R-DECs do not:

- (3) A, B and John are colleagues. A asks B before a meeting.
A: Miért nincs itt János? Lekéste $\wedge$ a vonatot $\wedge$?
why be-not here John VM.missd the train.ACC
‘Why is John not here? (#) He missed the train?’

Most current accounts of R-DECs assume that it indicates (a type of) commitment. Gunlogson (2003) claims that it marks commitment of the Addressee to the descriptive content; according to Poschmann (2008), echoic uses involve commitment shift, and verificational Speaker commitment. Malamud and Stephenson (2015) associate with them projected commitment by the Speaker. According to

Jeong (2018), in inquisitive R-DECs the prejacent is added to the Addressee's projected commitment set, and in assertive ones to Speaker's current commitment set. Rudin (2022) argues that inquisitive R-DECs involve the absence of Speaker commitment, and anticipation of Addressee commitment.

I suggest that the key to the interpretation of $\wedge$ -DECs are examples like (3), where Speaker uses the $\wedge$ -DEC to probe its denotation p as (relevant-exhaustive, cf. Eckardt 2016) answer to the constituent question. The felicity of (3) does not require Speaker's present/expected commitment to p , or an assumption that Addressee is committed.

The paper argues that the prosody of $\wedge$ -DECs indicates that they mark sentence/proposition focus, cf. Kálmán (1985). Assuming that in questions, focus indicates the presence of alternative questions (cf. Krifka 2011, Roberts 2012), I suggest that $\wedge$ -DECs are to be considered term answers to a QUD that expects propositional term answers.

The paper will i) argue that the proposal is extendable to isolated occurrences of $\wedge$ -DECs, ii) explain felicity contrasts between $\wedge$ -DECs and polar interrogatives in question sequences and discourse-initially, iii) compare the proposal to those of Kamali (2020, 2025) and Esipova and Romero (2023).

References

- Eckardt, R. (2016). Wh-questions on the table. Manuscript, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304304651>.
- Esipova, M. and Romero, M. (2023). P3: Alternative questions and beyond. FOR 2111 Final Workshop, Konstanz, June 2023.
- Gunlogson, C. (2003). *True to Form. Rising and Falling Declaratives as Questions in English*, Routledge, New York.
- Jeong, S. (2018). Intonation and sentence type conventions: Two types of rising declaratives, *Journal of Semantics* **35**: 305–356.
- Kamali, B. (2020). Motivating polar and focal alternatives in polar questions in broad focus. lingbuzz/005477.
- Kamali, B. (2025). Evidential bias across clause types, in T. Trinh, A. Benz, D. Goodhue, K. Yatsushiro and M. Krifka (eds), *Biased questions: Experimental results and theoretical modelling*, Language Science Press, Berlin, pp. 37–71.

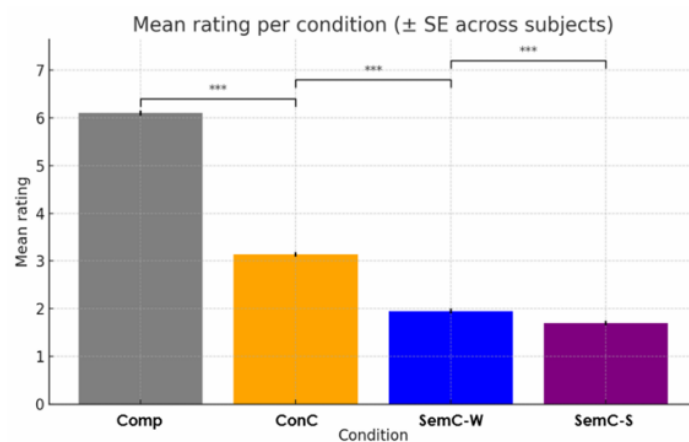
- Krifka, M. (2011). Questions, in K. von Heusinger, C. Maienborn and P. Portner (eds), *Semantics*, de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 1742–1785.
- Kálmán, L. (1985). Word order in neutral sentences, in I. Kenesei (ed.), *Approaches to Hungarian I*, JATE Press, Szeged, pp. 13–23.
- Malamud, S. A. and Stephenson, T. (2015). Three ways to avoid commitments: Declarative force modifiers in the conversational scoreboard, *Journal of Semantics* **32**: 275–311.
- Poschmann, C. (2008). All declarative questions are attributive?, *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* **22**: 247–269.
- Roberts, C. (2012). Information structure in discourse: Towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics, *Semantics and Pragmatics* **5**: Article 6: 1–69.
- Rudin, D. (2022). Intonational commitments, *Journal of Semantics* **39**: 339–383.
- Varga, L. (2010). Boundary tones and the lack of intermediate phrase in Hungarian (revisiting the Hungarian calling contour), *The Even Yearbook*, Department of English Linguistics, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, pp. 1–27.

Li, Geyi: At-issueness as a window onto gradation between world and semantic knowledge

At-issueness as a window onto gradation between world and semantic knowledge

Maienborn et al. (2026) established that world knowledge and semantic knowledge differ in their at-issue status within the Common Ground. World knowledge, arising from community membership, is variable across speakers and open to negotiation (Clark, 1996, 2006, 2021), and can pattern as at-issue or non-at-issue content. Semantic knowledge, however, represented by selectional restrictions as lexical presupposition (Asher, 2011; Beaver & Geurts, 2012) rooted in the conventions of language (Clark, 1996, 2006), patterns as non-at-issue. Based on that, the present study asks whether at-issue status can also reveal possible gradation between world knowledge and semantic knowledge — that is, whether different types of linguistic violation elicit correspondingly different strengths of rejection within the Wait-a-minute paradigm.

A previous acceptability judgment study (Li, 2025) tested four conditions (e.g., *Eine Studentin hat eine Untertasse/eine Serviette/ein Getränk/eine Kellnerin gespült*, 'A student washed a saucer/napkin/drink/waitress'): a compatible control (COMP), a conceptual conflict violating world knowledge but not selectional restrictions (CONC), and two semantic conflicts violating selectional restrictions at different ontological distances from the verb's target category (Metzger et al., 2019) — weak (SEMC-w, still within the higher-level ontological category) and strong (SEMC-s, outside it). All four conditions differed significantly from one another in acceptability, including SEMC-w from SEMC-s, though this last difference was significantly smaller than the other pairwise contrasts (see figure above). This pattern suggests that ontological distance does produce graded ill-formedness within the semantic domain, while the categorical boundary between world knowledge and semantic violation remains the dominant divide.



The planned study will test empirically whether the at-issue status of world knowledge and semantic knowledge likewise allows for gradation, using von Fintel's (2004) Wait-a-minute test as a paradigm, which holds that one cannot generally respond to a sentence S with "Hey, wait a minute, I didn't know that P" to reject P if P is an entailment of S; but one may do so if P is a presupposition of S. Both conceptual and semantic conflicts are embedded in a non-at-

issue relative clause, illustrated in (1), manipulating the internal object argument across the same four conditions as before: **COMP** (1a), **CONC** (1b), **SEMC-w** (1c), and **SEMC-s** (1d):

- 1) A: Sophie, die gerade ... “*Sophie, who by the way was just washing ...*”
a. ...die **Untertassen** (**COMP**) “*the saucers*” ...
b. ...die **Papierhandtücher** (**CONC**) “*the napkins*” ...
c. ...die **Getränke** (**SEMC-w**) “*the drinks*” ...
d. ...die **Kellnerinnen** (**SEMC-s**) “*the waitresses*” ...
... gespült hat, ist die Freundin von Thomas. “*..., is the girlfriend of Thomas’*”

For each condition, participants will choose the most suitable rejection among three fixed response types: an assertion-level rejection (2a), a standard wait-a-minute rejection (2b), and an intensified wait-a-minute rejection with capitalized markers to imitate the prosody (2c). Here, the **COMP** condition *Untertasse* in (1a) is used as an example:

- 2) B: a. Nein, das ist sie nicht.
“*No, she is not.*”
b. Ähm Moment mal, Untertassen werden nicht gespült.
“*Hey, wait a minute! Saucers are not washed.*”
c. Ähm Moment mal, Untertassen KÖNNEN doch GAR nicht gespült werden!
“*Hey, wait a minute! Saucers cannot be washed at all!*”

We predict the assertion-level rejection for **COMP**, the standard wait-a-minute rejection for **CONC**, and the intensified wait-a-minute rejection for both **SEMC-w** and **SEMC-s**, with rejection strength tracking the type and severity of the violated knowledge. We expect the results to confirm a principled distinction between world and semantic knowledge, and to show that, within the non-at-issue domain, this distinction remains binary rather than graded.

Key References

- Asher, N. (2011). *Lexical meaning in context: A web of words*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beaver, D. I., & Geurts, B. (2012). Presupposition. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Summer 2012 ed.). Stanford University, Metaphysics Research Lab.
- Clark, H. H. (1996). *Using language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, H. H. (2006). Context and Common Ground. In: Keith Brown, (Editor-in-Chief) *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*, Second Edition, volume 3, pp. 105-108. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Li, G. (2025). Sprach- vs. Weltwissenskonflikte: Experimentelle Untersuchung zu Differenzierung und Abstufungen. [Unpublished master's thesis]. Tübingen.
- Maienborn, C., Buscher-Schiewe, F., Dudschig, C. & Kaup, B. (2026). Denials as a window into semantic and world knowledge violations. To appear in *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung* 30.

Metzger, S. et al. (2019). Basisontologie zur semantischen Annotation von Nomina – Manual. Manuskript, Universität Tübingen.

von Fintel, K. (2004). Would you believe it? The King of France is back! (Presuppositions and truth-value intuitions). In M. Reimer & A. Bezuidenhout (Eds.), *Descriptions and beyond* (pp. 315–341). Oxford University Press.

Miglietta, Andrea: Partial Commitment, Parenthesis, and Question Under Discussion
– a case study on Italian

Weak Commitment, Parenthesis, and Question Under Discussion – a case study on Italian

Author: Andrea Miglietta

Affiliation: University of Vienna

The Italian verbal forms *credo* ('I believe') and *penso* ('I think') can appear in parenthetical position in production data, e.g. interpolating the clause they semantically select for, as in the examples (1), (2), and (3) taken from the spoken corpus KIParla (Mauri et al. 2019). When used parenthetically, these forms constitute non-at-issue material (Simons 2007), and they absolve the function of attenuating the claim to truth of the assertion (Urmson 1952) and weakening the speaker's commitment (Ifantidou 2001), indicating that the s/he cannot adhere to the Gricean maxim of quality (Schneider 2007). As epistemic sentential operators, these verbal forms not only target at-issue content (Simons et al. 2010), leaving non-at-issue content surviving their entailment-calling effect, but also show focus sensitivity, leading to different implicatures depending on the constituent being focused (Beaver & Clark 2009).

This work aims at understanding the relationship between the parenthetical distribution of verbal forms expressing weak commitment, such as *credo* and *penso*, and the information structure of the assertion. More specifically, it tries to address the following questions: how are displacement and focus sensitivity related? Is the parenthetical distribution the trace in the linear order of focus sensitivity? Do these verbal forms always target the focused constituent answering the last Question Under Discussion (Roberts 1996/2012) as in (2)? Or instead, can they target constituents inside the at-issue material, providing the answer to other types of Potential Questions (Onea 2016), as the example in (3) seems to suggest? These questions will be addressed through the analysis of the parenthetical occurrences of the verbal forms *credo* and *penso* retrieved in the spoken corpus KIParla. These occurrences and the surrounding context will be annotated following the annotation schema for information structure proposed by Riester, Brunetti, and De Kuthy (2018).

(1) Le scuole invece le ha frequentate **penso** sempre lì a borgo (KIP_ PTB008)
'Instead, he went to school, **I think**, still there in Borgo.'

(2) BOI068 la zona di corticella mi piace abbastanza (KIP_ PBA009)
'I actually quite like the Corticella area.'

BOR019 dov'è? esattamente
'Where is it, exactly?'

- BOI068 oddio corticella è praticamente eh **credo** dopo piazza
dell'unità non so se hai presente
'Oh gosh, Corticella is basically, well, **I think** after
Piazza dell'Unità. I don't know if you know where that
is.'
- (3) PSB020 ma in polonia cosa hai fatto? (KIP_SBIU006)
'But what did you do in Poland?'
- PSB005 sono stata a varsavia **credo** due volte
'I've been to Warsaw, **I think** twice.'

References

- Beaver, D. I., & Clark, B. Z. (2009). *Sense and sensitivity: How focus determines meaning*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Ifantidou, E. (2001). *Evidentials and relevance*. J. Benjamins.
- Mauri, C., Ballarè, S., Gorla, E., Cerruti, M., & Suriano, F. (2019). KIParla corpus: A new resource for spoken Italian. In R. Bernardi, G. Semeraro, & R. Navigli (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 6th Italian Conference on Computational Linguistics CLiC-it*.
- Onea, E. (2016). *Potential questions at the semantics-pragmatics interface* (Vol. 33). Brill.
- Riester, A., Brunetti, L., & De Kuthy, K. (2018). Annotation guidelines for information structure. *Linguistic Issues in Language Technology*, 14, 1–56.
- Roberts, C. (1996). Information structure in discourse. *OSU Working Papers in Linguistics*, 49, 91–136.
- Schneider, S. (2007). *Reduced parenthetical clauses: A corpus study of spoken French, Italian and Spanish*. J. Benjamins.
- Simons, M. (2007). Observations on embedding verbs, evidentiality, and presupposition. *Lingua*, 117(6), 1034–1056.
- Simons, M., Tonhauser, J., Beaver, D., & Roberts, C. (2010). What projects and why. *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory*, 20, 309–327.
- Urmson, J. O. (1952). Parenthetical Verbs. *Mind*, 61(244), 480–496.

Pellegrini, Riccardo Enrico: Metaphorical Commitments

Metaphorical Commitments

Riccardo Enrico Pellegrini — Johns Hopkins University

Metaphors, loose talk, and other instances of non-literal speech are characterized by a lack of commitment by the speaker to the literal content that their uttered sentence expresses. For example, a speaker neither commits to the existence of Sherlock Holmes when uttering (1), nor do they commit to Rob being an exact height when uttering (2), even though both sentences entail such things.

(1) Ellen wore the same hat as Sherlock Holmes.

(2) Rob is six foot one.

Some work (Yablo 2014; Hoek 2018) aims to explain this phenomenon by arguing that an audience is able to determine what a speaker meant by first contextually presupposing (Simons 2004) a proposition in order to make sense of the utterance, and then extracting an intended content by taking the speaker to commit only to the content that addresses the QUD (Roberts 1996). On this picture, it follows that the speaker is not committed to the myth of Sherlock Holmes and his existence, because such content does not address — is orthogonal to — the QUD. Since QUD-orthogonality is synonymous with a lack of Question-at-issueness (Simons et al. 2010), one can recast this result by claiming that, in cases of non-literal speech, the speaker's lack of commitment to certain propositions is determined by those propositions not being Q-at-issue.

This paper argues that lack of Q-at-issueness, while necessary, is not sufficient to signal a lack of commitment from the speaker and therefore to license a non-literal interpretation of an utterance. If it were sufficient, utterances (3) and (4) could receive a non-literal reading.

[What is Andrea's relationship status?]

(3) Andrea is a bachelor.

[What are Ruben's current habits?]

(4) Ruben stopped smoking.

However, it is neither the case that the speaker can be taken not to be committed to the proposition that *Andrea is male* when uttering (3), nor that the speaker can be taken not to be committed to the proposition that *Ruben used to smoke* when uttering (4), even though both propositions are not Q-at-issue.

Furthermore, the paper argues that employing a different notion of at-issueness, i.e. Proposal-at-issueness (Koev 2013), will also not suffice, since a lack of Q-at-issueness and a lack of P-at-issueness is still not sufficient to signal the lack of speaker's commitment required for non-literal speech, as we can see with (5) and (6).

(5) Ellen wore the same type of hat as Sherlock Holmes, a real detective, to the party last Friday.

(6) Rob, who is some integer number of inches tall, is six foot one.

By modifying (1) and (2) and introducing, as NRRCs and nominal appositives, the very content that the speaker is not committed to in those cases, a non-literal reading is blocked. However, the content of NRRCs and nominal appositives is generally taken to be neither Q-at-issue nor P-at-issue.

To overcome this challenge the paper offers a novel notion of lack of at-issueness that can be thought of as a stricter not-P-at-issueness, such that proposition p is strictly not at issue in context c iff p is a proposal that cannot be targeted by anaphoric or non-anaphoric dissentive/assentive replies in c . With the introduction of this novel notion of lack of at-issueness, the paper draws further connections to factors that are taken to influence speaker commitment, such as *world knowledge* (Tonhauser et al. 2018), as well as to discussions regarding presupposition projection, since the availability of certain non-literal readings seems to be tied to the *gradient projection principle* (Tonhauser et al. 2018; Pellegrini 2025).

Bibliography

- Hoek, D. (2018). Conversational Exculpature. *Philosophical Review* 127(2), 151-196.
- Roberts, C. (1996). Information Structure in Discourse: Towards an Integrated Formal Theory of Pragmatics. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 5:1-69.
- Koev, T. (2013) *Apposition and the structure of discourse*. (Ph.D. dissertation), Rutgers University.
- Pellegrini, R. E. (2025). Contracted attitudes. *Proceedings of Sinn Und Bedeutung*, 29: 1272-1287.
- Simons, M. (2004). Presuppositions and Relevance. In Zoltan Gendler Szabo (Ed.), *Semantics Versus Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press UK. pp. 329-255.
- Simons, M., Tonhauser, J., Beaver, D., & Roberts, C. (2010). What projects and why. *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory*, 20: 309-327.
- Tonhauser, J., Beaver, D. & Degen, J. (2018). How Projective is Projective Content? Gradience in Projectivity and At-issueness. *Journal of Semantics*, 35(3): 495-542,
- Yablo, S. (2014) *Aboutness*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Thalmann, Maik; Matticchio, Andrea: Decoupling projection from at-issueness

Decoupling projection from at-issueness

Maik Thalmann¹ and Andrea Matticchio²

¹Ruhr University Bochum ²UMass Amherst

The Gradient Projection Principle (GPP; [Tonhauser et al. 2018](#)) proposes that projection is a function of at-issueness: content projects through entailment-canceling operators to the degree that it is not at-issue. We argue, based on experimental evidence, that the GPP fails as an algorithm for presupposition projection, and that at-issueness and projection must be modeled independently.

Two results undermine the GPP directly. First, in a truth-value judgment task testing presupposition projection in attitude reports (“Peter is (not) certain that Jan canoed again/stopped canoeing”), we find evidence for presupposition failure in scenarios where Peter is not certain that Jan canoed in the past (the *undefined* condition in [Fig. 1](#)). The GPP has no mechanism for projection in (modal/attitudinal) quantificational environments, so it is silent on all readings but the non-belief-relative inference “Jan canoed in the past”—and predicts no presupposition failure in our cases. Second, even granting that the GPP could be supplemented with a mechanism for quantification, it still makes a further wrong prediction. Given the independent assumption that soft presuppositions (*stop*) are more at-issue than hard presuppositions (*again*)—see also the next paragraph—the GPP predicts a soft/hard asymmetry in projection through negation. No such asymmetry is found; see [Fig. 1](#): both presupposition types behave alike.

These results show that projection cannot be read off at-issueness alone. This does not mean the two are unrelated, however: we argue that at-issueness and projection are connected, but not in the way the GPP proposes. The soft/hard at-issueness asymmetry that the GPP extends to projection is independently real, as is established using question-answer congruence by [Chen et al. \(2022\)](#). On this paradigm, a target inference counts as at-issue if it can felicitously answer a question that queries it exactly (e.g., the presupposition of “John stopped smoking” for “Did John smoke before?”). Chen and colleagues show that soft presuppositions pattern as at-issue content, while hard triggers do not, lending support for a link between trigger strength and at-issueness. Crucially, this asymmetry is not confined to presuppositions: non-restrictive relative clauses (NRRC), which are taken not to be presuppositional, pattern with hard triggers, systematically resisting question-answer congruence with their content. The results are shown in [Fig. 2](#). Every account that connects the soft/hard distinction to projection alone and not to at-issueness is entirely silent on this fact.

We speculate that at-issueness and projection belong to two distinct levels of a grammar for meaning, with different operating domains. First, a core semantic system computes truth-conditions and projection using a logic also capable of handling quantification, independently of at-issueness. Second, a discourse semantic system governs at-issueness proper, regulating question-answer congruence, and plausibly also other discourse phenomena that interact with presuppositions. On this architecture, the GPP’s error is not in linking at-issueness to the discourse behavior of presuppositions, but in extending that link to projection, which belongs to an entirely separate module.

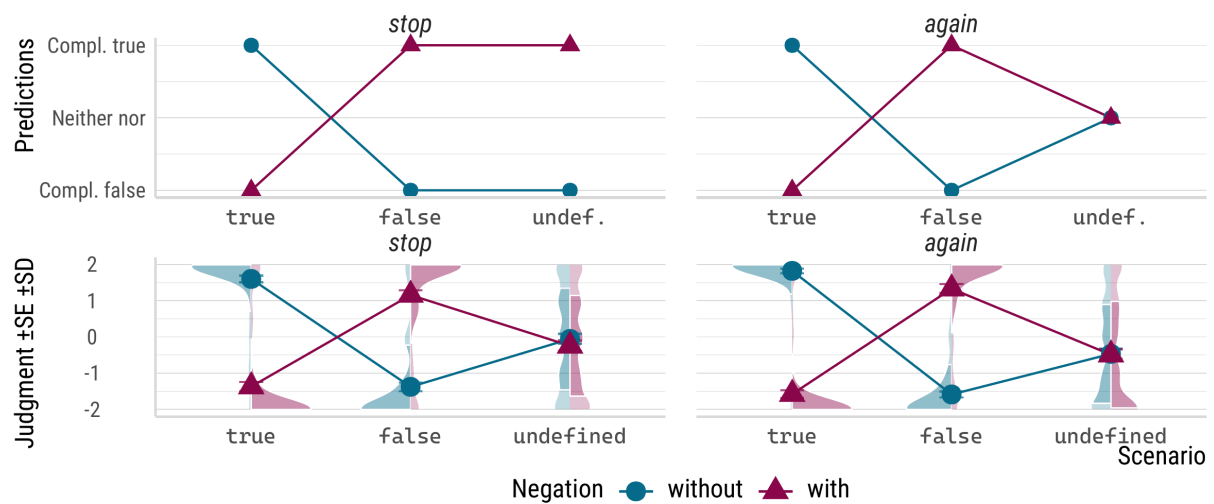


Figure 1: Presuppositions under *be certain*.

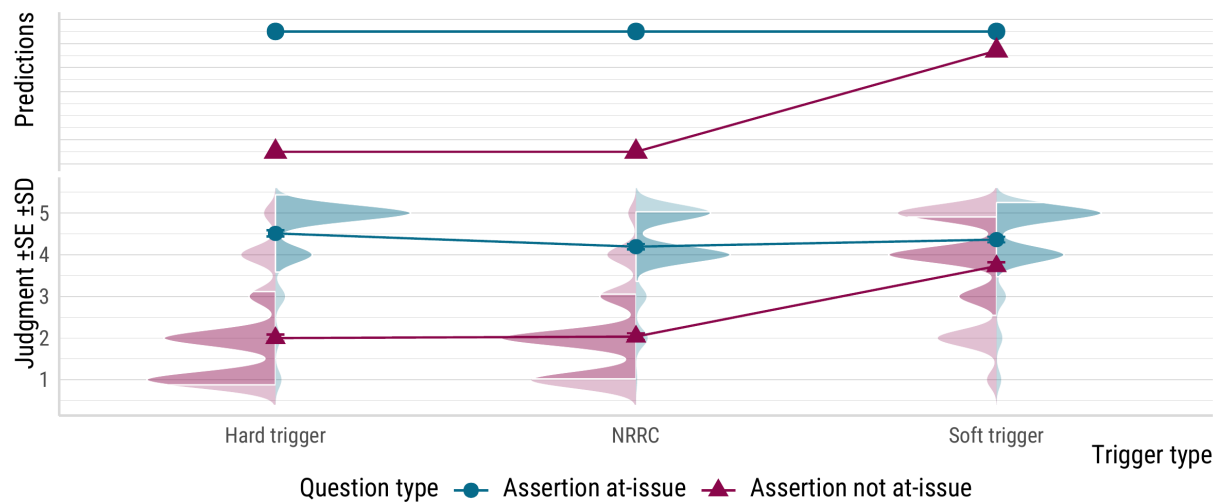


Figure 2: NRRCs, soft, and hard triggers in question-answer congruence; Chen et al. (2022).

References • Chen, Yuqiu, Maik Thalmann & Mailin Antomo (2022). “Presupposition triggers and (not-)at-issueness. Insights from language acquisition into the soft-hard distinction”. In: *Journal of Pragmatics* 199, pp. 21–46. DOI: [10.1016/j.pragma.2022.06.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.06.014). • Tonhauser, Judith, David I. Beaver & Judith Degen (2018). “How Projective is Projective Content? Gradience in Projectivity and At-issueness”. In: *Journal of Semantics* 35.3, pp. 495–542. DOI: [10.1093/jos/ffv007](https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/ffv007). •

Tsiakmakis, Evripidis; Mendi, Jon Ander: High-degree inferences in Spanish:
commitments, at-issueness and the structure of discourse

High-degree inferences in Spanish: commitments, at-issueness and the structure of discourse

Evripidis Tsiakmakis (Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea)
Jon Ander Mendia (Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea/Ikerbasque)

In this study we compare two utterance types from Spanish that trigger a high-degree inference in the absence of an overt/independently attested quantificational source. The first type, exemplified by (1a), corresponds to a well-studied subset of Spanish *si*-exclamatives (see Bosque 2017 for an overview). The second type, exemplified by (1b) and for current purposes dubbed as the *pues-no*-construction, has to our knowledge received no attention in the linguistics literature:

- (1) a. ¡Si habrá pateado él esta ciudad!
if has.FUT walked he this city
b. ¡Pues no habrá pateado él esta ciudad!
well NEG has.FUT walked he this city
‘He has walked all over this city so many times!’

Despite the difference in the peripheral functional morphemes they employ, the two sentences uniformly trigger the high-degree inference reflected in the English translation. Even though the proposition corresponding to this inference is not explicitly asserted in either (1a) or (1b), the speaker appears strongly committed (in the sense of e.g., Krifka 2019) to this proposition in both cases:

- (2) a. ¡Si habrá pateado él esta ciudad!...[#]pero no
if has.FUT walked he this city but NEG
muchas veces.
many times
b. ¡Pues no habrá pateado él esta ciudad!...[#]pero
well NEG has.FUT walked he this city but
no muchas veces.
NEG many times
‘He has walked all over this city so many times!’

Moreover, the high-degree inference cannot be easily challenged by the addressee in either case. The reaction in (3) below feels awkward, regardless whether the trigger is (1a) or (1b) from above.

- (3) [#]No, él ha caminado por la ciudad solo un
no he has walked through the city only a
par de veces.
couple of times
‘No, he has only walked through the city a couple of times.’

If, following traditional literature (see Potts 2005, among many others), we take challengeability as a standard test for diagnosing at-issue content, (3) suggests that the proposition corresponding to *He has walked all over this city so many times* is non-at-issue content both in the case of the *si*-exclamative in (1a) and the *pues-no*-sentence in (1b).

If the high-degree inference of *si*-exclamatives and *pues-no*-sentences is a non-at-issue strong speaker commitment, then it is in principle predicted to be a presupposition (see e.g., Peters 2016). Importantly, this generalization is not enough to fully capture

the behavior of the Spanish constructions under study. A major difference between *si*-exclamatives and *pues-no*-sentences is that the speaker has the status of a privileged source for adding the conveyed proposition in the Common Ground (CG) in the case of the latter (4b) but not in the case of the former (4a):

- (4) a. #*¡Si* *habrá* *pateado* *él* *esta* *ciudad,* *sabes?*
 if has.FUT walked he this city you.know
 b. *¡Pues* no *habrá* *pateado* *él* *esta* *ciudad,* *sabes?*
 well NEG has.FUT walked he this city you.know
 ‘He has walked all over this city so many times, you know.’

Another striking difference is that, while a *si*-exclamative like (1a) can felicitously be used to answer the corresponding question, a *pues-no*-sentence like (1b) cannot:

(5) Q: Has Juan ever walked in this city?

A1: *¡Si* *habrá* *pateado* *él* *esta* *ciudad!* *Trabajaba*
 if has.FUT walked he this city was.working
 de cartero.
 as mailman

A2: #*¡Pues* no *habrá* *pateado* *él* *esta* *ciudad!*
 well NEG has.FUT walked he this city
 Trabajaba de cartero.
 was.working as mailman

‘He has worked all over this city so many times! He worked as a mailman.’

What the pattern in both (4) and (5) reflects is that *si*-exclamatives and *pues-no*-sentences have a fundamentally distinct discourse status. Concretely, while a *si*-exclamative can be an addressee-directed reaction to a stimulus, the corresponding *pues-no*-variant can only be construed as the speaker’s introspective comment via which they ‘smuggle’ a proposition in the CG. In other words, *si*-exclamatives can be relevant to the current Question Under Discussion (QUD), whereas *pues-no*-sentences introduce and at the same time settle an independent issue, that is only tangential to the current QUD.

Taking stock, comparing Spanish *si*-exclamatives and *pues-no*-sentences suggests that, in order to get a better overview of the meaning status and variety of backgrounded commitments, we need to factor in discourse relations and mark sourcehood in adding propositions to the CG (in the sense of Gunlogson 2008).

References

- Bosque, I. 2017. Spanish exclamatives in perspective: A survey of properties, classes, and current theoretical issues. In Bosque, I. (ed.), *Advances in the Analysis of Spanish Exclamatives*, 1–52. Ohio: Ohio State University Press.
- Gunlogson, C. 2008. A question of commitment. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 22: 101–136.
- Krifka, M. 2019. Commitments and beyond. *Theoretical Linguistics* 45: 73–91.
- Peters, S. 2016. Speaker commitments: Presupposition. *Proceedings of SALT 26*, 1083–1098.
- Potts, C. 2004. *The Logic of Conventional Implicatures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Xu, Conglei; Tonhauser, Judith: What is at-issueness? An experimental comparison of diagnostics

What is at-issueness? An experimental comparison of diagnostics

Conglei Xu, Judith Tonhauser

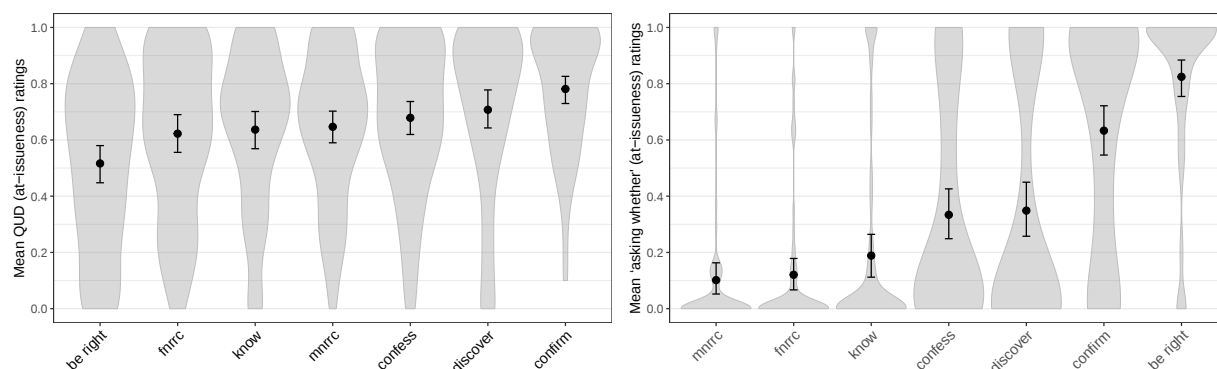
At-issueness is a key concept in theoretical semantics/pragmatics, but there is no consensus about how it is defined or diagnosed (e.g., [Tonhauser 2012](#); [Tonhauser et al. 2018](#); [Koev 2018](#)). We present experimental data investigating whether four widely used diagnostics for at-issueness yield consistent results. Our findings reveal significant differences across diagnostics, indicating they are not interchangeable. Since the diagnostics target distinct theoretical conceptions of at-issueness, these differences offer insight into their comparability.

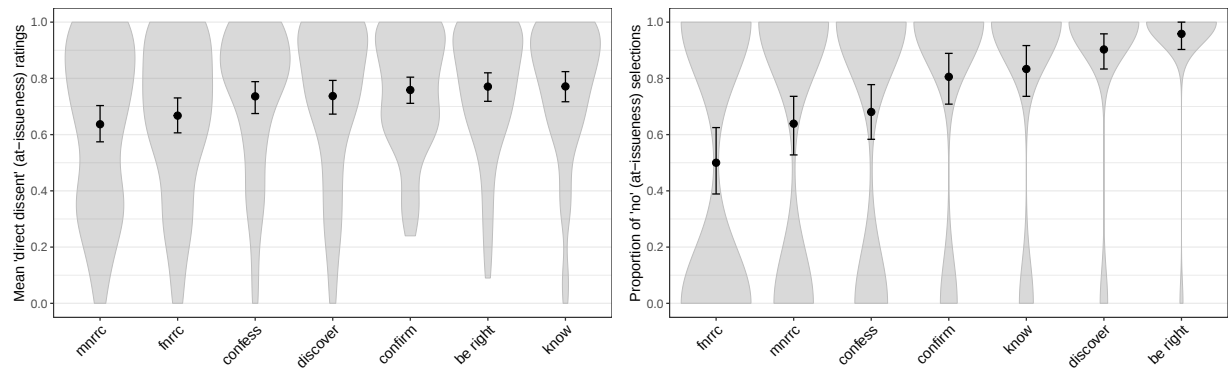
At-issueness: Diagnostics and theoretical conceptions. Four diagnostics have been widely used to identify at-issueness: the QUD diagnostic ([Tonhauser 2012](#); [Chen 2024](#)), the ‘asking whether’ diagnostic ([Tonhauser et al. 2018](#); [Solstad and Bott 2024](#)), the direct dissent diagnostic ([Tonhauser 2012](#); [Syrett and Koev 2015](#)), and the ‘yes, but’ diagnostic ([Xue and Onea 2011](#); [Destruel et al. 2014](#)). These diagnostics are motivated by different theoretical conceptions of at-issueness. The QUD diagnostic targets Q-at-issueness ([Koev 2018](#)), according to which at-issue content addresses the current Question under Discussion. The ‘asking whether’ diagnostic assumes that the at-issue content of an interrogative partitions the context set ([Tonhauser et al. 2018](#)). By contrast, the direct dissent and ‘yes, but’ diagnostics target P-at-issueness ([Koev 2018](#)), according to which at-issue content constitutes a proposal to update the common ground that can be accepted or rejected.

Prior research on at-issueness has already identified disagreements that may be due to the diagnostics used. For instance, while [Syrett and Koev 2015](#) report that sentence-medial NRRCs are more at-issue than sentence-final ones based on the direct dissent diagnostic, [Drozdev 2024](#) finds no difference using the ‘asking whether’ diagnostic. To more systematically investigate the extent to which the four diagnostics give the same results, we designed a set of four experiments that measure the at-issueness of the same contents under these diagnostics.

Methods. For each experiment we recruited 80 participants on Prolific. The same seven expression/content pairs were investigated across the four experiments: the content of sentence-medial and -final NRRCs, and the content of the clausal complements of *discover*, *know*, *be right*, *confirm* and *confess*. Each expression/content pair was instantiated by one of seven items (e.g., ‘Greg bought a new car’) and realized as either an assertion or a polar question. Participants give the relevant rating in each diagnostic for the seven target stimuli as well as two control stimuli.

Results and Discussion The experiments revealed substantial differences across diagnostics. At-issueness judgments varied depending on the diagnostic employed, suggesting that the diagnostics do not measure a single, unified notion of at-issueness. Following [Koev 2018](#), these findings support the view that diagnostics based on different theoretical conceptions capture distinct notions of at-issueness. Moreover, even the direct dissent and ‘yes, but’ diagnostics, both designed to measure P-at-issueness, yielded different patterns of results. This suggests that at-issueness judgments are influenced not only by the underlying theoretical conception but also by the design of the diagnostic itself.





References

- Yuqiu Chen. Presuppositions at the semantics-pragmatics interface. 2024.
- Emilie Destruel, Daniel Velleman, Edgar Onea, Dylan Bumford, Jingyang Xue, and David Beaver. A cross-linguistic study of the non-at-issueness of exhaustive inferences. In *Experimental perspectives on presuppositions*, pages 135–156. Springer, 2014.
- Katharina Drozdov. Projection and at-issueness of nonrestrictive relative clauses. Unpublished manuscript, 2024.
- Todor Koev. Notions of at-issueness. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 12(12):e12306, 2018.
- Torgir Solstad and Oliver Bott. Cataphoric resolution of projective content: The case of occasion verbs. *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 17:11–1, 2024.
- Kristen Syrett and Todor Koev. Experimental evidence for the truth conditional contribution and shifting information status of appositives. *Journal of Semantics*, 32(3):525–577, 2015.
- Judith Tonhauser. Diagnosing (not-) at-issue content. *Proceedings of Semantics of Under-represented Languages of the Americas (SULA)*, 6:239–254, 2012.
- Judith Tonhauser, David I Beaver, and Judith Degen. How projective is projective content? gradience in projectivity and at-issueness. *Journal of Semantics*, 35(3):495–542, 2018.
- Jingyang Xue and Edgar Onea. Correlation between presupposition projection and at-issueness: An empirical study. In *Proceedings of the ESSLLI 2011 workshop on projective meaning*, pages 171–184, 2011.