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Uncommon ground

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to show how microargumentation mechanisms of presumptive reasoning and reasoning from best explanation can be used to explain some cases of presupposition suspension. It will be shown how the relationship between presupposition triggers and pragmatic presuppositions can be analyzed in terms of presumptive and nonpresumptive polyphonic articulation of an utterance, resulting in different types of commitments for the interlocutors. This approach is grounded on the two interconnected notions of presumptions and commitments. In some complex cases of presupposition suspension, the speaker presumes the hearer's acceptance of, and commitment to, propositions that do not belong to the common ground or that have been explicitly rejected as being commonly shared. This phenomenon triggers a complex type of reasoning that can be represented as kind of abduction, grounded on hierarchies of presumptions and aimed at providing an interpretation that solves this conflict of presumptions. Several cases of presupposition suspension will be shown to result from nonpresumptive polyphonic articulations, in which different voices responsible for distinct commitments are distinguished. By indirectly reporting an element of discourse, the speaker can refuse to take responsibility for the presupposed proposition, and correct the commitments that may result for him or her. This polyphonic treatment of utterances can explain how and why a presupposition is suspended, and can be used to identify the conflicting presumptions that can be further solved through reasoning from best explanation. This reasoning can result in a different reconstruction of the developed logical form or the illocutionary force of an utterance.

Keywords: common ground, presupposition suspension, presumptive meaning, explicature, indirect reports, argumentation

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1 Introduction

The relationship between presupposition triggers and pragmatic presupposition is a problem in which the interplay between semantics and pragmatics emerges. Pragmatic presupposition can be described as what the speaker assumes to be true, or rather, to be accepted by the interlocutor (Kecskes and Zhang 2013; Kempson 1975), namely as presumed based on the common ground of shared information. The common ground is represented by propositions that the participants in that conversation at that time mutually assume to be taken for granted and not subject to (further) discussion (Abusch 2002; von Fintel 2008; Stalnaker 1974). To presuppose a proposition is "to take its truth for granted, and to assume that others involved in the context do the same" (Stalnaker 1974: 472). A proposition p is presupposed when it is taken for granted by a person in performing a speech act (whether an assertion or a different speech act) whose felicity, or conversational acceptability, depends on the interlocutor's acceptance of p (Allan 2013; Stalnaker 1974, 2002). Pragmatic presuppositions can be triggered by the use of semantic presupposition triggers (analyzed in depth in Heim 1992). However, such triggers have been proven to be defeasible (Levinson 1983: Ch. 4, Sec. 3; Soames 1982), as the presuppositions (also triggered by hard triggers) are canceled by stronger contextual assumptions.[1]

The goal of this paper is to show 1) how the mechanism of reasoning from best interpretation (a notion introduced in Atlas and Levinson 1981; Atlas 2008) can be analyzed from an argumentative point of view as a kind of presumptive reasoning, and 2) how this reasoning pattern can account for the relationship between presupposition triggers and pragmatic presuppositions. The discrepancy between the meaning of the sentence type (or meaning), the sentence token (or what is said) (Recanati 1989), and utterance meaning (Atlas 2007) (or what is meant) (Carston 1988: 155 and Carston 2002: 15) can be mediated by processes of defeasible (nonmonotonic) reasoning that can be represented as presumptive microarguments (Macagno and Capone 2015). Such microarguments are mostly processed heuristically; that is, they are not subjected to critical assessment. In this sense, the microconclusions reached are drawn deductively from presumptive premises (defeasible *modus ponens*; see Verheij 2008; Walton 2004: 134–139); however, each heuristic step is only defeasible; that is, it provides a *prima facie* interpretation that carries a burden of disproof on the party that challenges it.

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1 The cancellability or suspendability of presuppositions also in cases of hard triggers is not universally agreed upon (Karttunen 1974; Karttunen and Peters 1979; Stalnaker 1974). A clear analysis of this debate can be found in Abrusán (2015), Abusch (2002, 2010), and Kadmon (2000: Ch. 5 and 6).

The defeasible relationship between presupposition triggers and pragmatic presuppositions can be analyzed as a process of defeasible interpretation of the polyphonic articulation (or structure) of an utterance. We analyze the relationship between a speaker and his or her utterances in terms of commitments (building on the works of Hamblin 1970; Soames 2002: 79–85; Walton and Krabbe 1995). On this view, the voice that is responsible for an utterance is also responsible for what is meant. However, utterances may deploy a variety of voices or rather a complex structure of indirect reports (Capone 1998), in which different utterers (or enunciators) can be distinguished and held responsible for different implicit speech acts (as shown in Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Capone 2010a, 2010b).

Our claim is that presupposition triggers can be regarded as triggering presumptive articulations between what is asserted and what is left in the background (Herburger 2000: 20), or what is asserted and what is presupposed. The conflict between the presumed commitments deriving from the presumptive interpretation and the ones that are *presumable* can lead to a renegotiation of the polyphony of an utterance. Instead of presumptively reading an utterance as stating the speaker's point of view, the hearer can nonpresumptively distinguish between what a speaker says and what s/he merely reports, which s/he does not hold as his/her own commitments. This nonpresumptive polyphonic reading can explain phenomena in which presuppositions seem to be "suspended" or are simply denied by the speaker.

2 Presumptive meaning and reasoning from best explanation

In pragmatics, the reconstruction of the communicative "meaning" of a speech act can be considered as the result of a process of inferential reasoning, aimed at abducing an intention, or the speaker's communicative intention, from an utterance (Bach and Harnish 1979: Ch. 1). As Mey (2001: 93–94) claims:

> Speech acts are produced not in the solitary philosopher's think-tank, but in actual situations of use, by people having something "in mind." Such a production naturally presupposes a "producer" and a "consumer," human agents, whose intentions are relevant and indispensable to the correct understanding and description of their utterances, quite contrary to the constructed, non-use-oriented examples of most grammarians and philosophers.

Speakers can convey their message relying on the hearer's sharing the same knowledge of the language and pragmatic principles, through which they can make their communicative intention explicit. However, the transition from the linguistic content to the communicative intention is not straightforward (Carston

1988: 155 and Carston 2002: 15). In addition to pragmatic processes of explicatures, disambiguation, enrichment, and so on, there are cases in which the prototypical (default) meaning differs noticeably from the intended one. A linguistic element can be used with a meaning different from the widely known pattern of its use. Sentence types (such as declarative, interrogative, expressive, etc.) can be used to perform speech acts different from the ones prototypically associated with them. In this sense, the preferential and prototypical uses of linguistic elements or syntactic constructions can be considered as facilitating the reconstruction of what is meant, but they are always subject to default.

The distinction between prototypical (defaultive) and nonprototypical meaning is clearly underscored by Jaszczolt's (2005) work on default semantics and on merger representations. Default semantics provides a model of discourse interpretation that is neo-Gricean and (fundamentally) contextualist. Such a model is founded on the model speaker's intention by the model addressee and utilizes the tools of truth conditions to the representation of utterances. Merger representations, in Jaszczolt's model, are representations in which semantic and pragmatic interpretations are integrated following a suitable algorithm, which can captured by the following (Jaszczolt 2010):

> Merger representation Σ is obtained by integrating:
> World knowledge (WK)
> Word meaning and sentence structure (WS)
> Situation of discourse
> Stereotypes and presumptions about society and culture
> Properties of human inferential system

As Jaszczolt claims, the idea that syntactic and semantic information have a privileged status and are essentially the point of departure for pragmatic processing needs to be discarded. Such a view would amount to accepting that pragmatic processing provides only pragmatic additions and embellishments of logical forms. A more holistic approach regards semantic and pragmatic information as interacting on a par within the merger representation. Sometimes the result of pragmatic processing amounts to meaning subtraction (rather than to additions). Jaszczolt provides a more refined view of merger representations intended as pragmatic composition. A merger representation Σ is obtained by integrating the following components: (a) a combination of word meaning and sentence structure (WS), (b) sociocultural and world-knowledge defaults, (c) cognitive defaults, and (d) conscious pragmatic inference (from situation of discourse, social and cultural assumptions, and world knowledge). The picture that emerges provides for a distinction between default meanings on the one hand, and on the other hand

human reasoning used to calculate pragmatic inference, sometimes leading to the integration (or the abortion) of default meanings.

The aforementioned account provides a clear outline of the concept of default reconstruction of an utterance. Default interpretation can be thought of as the presumptive association between an utterance and its communicative effects, namely the pragmatic inferences it triggers and its effects on the communicative setting (Grice 1975, 1989: 220; Levinson 1983: 97). Such effects are the result of the propositional meaning, the possible inferences, the presuppositions, and the context and co-text of the utterance. The automatic, defaultive interpretation that usually characterizes communication can be described as based on a process of presumptive – that is, defaultive and provisional – reasoning (Atlas and Levinson 1981; Levinson 2000; Macagno and Walton 2014; Walton 2013) having the following structure (Rescher 2006: 33):

Premise 1: P (the proposition representing the presumption) obtains whenever the condition C obtains unless and until the standard default proviso D (to the effect that countervailing evidence is at hand) obtains (Rule).

Premise 2: Condition C obtains (Fact).

Premise 3: Proviso D does not obtain (Exception).

Conclusion: P obtains.

The idea of representing default interpretations as an instance of presumptive reasoning is that it can be considered as a heuristic pattern of a more complex (critical) one of reasoning from the best explanation (see the notion of reasoning from best interpretation in Atlas and Levinson [1981] and the idea of different types of presumptions and presumptive reasoning underlying the inferential process of communication in Bach and Harnish [1979]), which in argumentation theory is formalized as follows (Macagno and Capone 2015; Walton et al. 2008):

Argumentation scheme 1: Reasoning from best explanation

Premise 1	F (an utterance) is an observed event.
Premise 2	E (Interpretation 1) is a satisfactory description of the meaning of F.
Premise 3	No alternative meaning description E' (such as interpretation 2) given so far is as satisfactory as E.
Conclusion	Therefore, E is a plausible hypothesis, based on what is known so far.

A set of critical questions is associated with this pattern (which is similar to the inferential structure used by Bach and Harnish 1979: 27), pointing out its defeasibility conditions:

CQ1: How satisfactory is E as an explanation of F, apart from the alternative explanations available so far in the dialogue?

CQ2: How much better an explanation is E than the alternative explanations available so far in the dialogue?

CQ3: How far has the dialogue progressed? If the dialogue is an inquiry, how thorough has the investigation of the case been?

CQ4: Would it be better to continue the dialogue further, instead of drawing a conclusion at this point?

The acceptability of the conclusion of this abductive pattern consists in an assessment of the possible alternative interpretations, namely an analysis of their defeasibility conditions (underminers, undercutters, or rebuttals) that can affect the (Baconian) probability of the conclusion (for the notion of Baconian probability, see Walton 2016: 246; Weinstock et al. 2013).

On this perspective, the pattern normally used to reconstruct the sentence token and (consequently) the utterance meaning is a reasoning shortcut, a heuristics that is used to process utterances automatically, nonreflectively. However, when the presumptions on which the habitual interpretation of an utterance is based fail, the process of reconstruction becomes more complex, based on different types of reasoning (Macagno and Walton 2013; Macagno 2012a). The problem of the relationship between presupposition triggers and pragmatic presuppositions can be addressed as renegotiations of the presumptive meaning of an utterance.

3 Interpretations and explicatures: Uncommon ground

The aforementioned pattern of reasoning from best interpretation and the corresponding automatic, presumptive interpretation of utterances can be used to address the problem of presupposition suspension. More specifically, many phenomena of presupposition suspension involve a conflict between two different points of view, the one resulting from the use of a presupposition trigger (resulting in "potential" presuppositions) and another expressing a contradiction or a conflict with the potentially presupposed content. Our claim is that these conflicts of presumptions (presumptive interpretation of the trigger; presumptions associated with the common ground or conveyed by the utterance) lead to a nonautomatic interpretation of the polyphonic articulation of the utterance. The attribution of the various contents to the different voices can be examined and brought to light as higher-level explicatures.

3.1 Explicatures and the voices of an utterance

The distinction between semantic and pragmatic presuppositions and the difference between presumptive and nonpresumptive interpretation of a sentence or a linguistic item are bridged by the aforementioned process of presumptive reasoning. This interpretive process, consisting of weighting the presumptions associated with the possible interpretations available, frequently underlies the automatic mechanism of reconstruction and development of explicit meaning called explicature in relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 186). Explicatures account for the passage from the semantic representation of a sentence to what is said, in which the decoded logical form of an utterance is normally used as a template for the development of a propositional form (Carston 2004). The development of the explicature usually can involve (a) saturation of variables, (b) ambiguity resolution, (c) the attribution of reference to certain unarticulated or unexpressed constituents (e. g., implicit arguments; see Bhatt and Pancheva 2006; Roeper 1987), and (d) free enrichment (Carston 2002). In this sense, explicatures are cases in which implicated meaning, namely a pragmatic dimension, intrudes into propositional meaning.

Explicatures usually have a function that goes beyond that of cancelable implicatures. They represent the speaker's strong intentions, namely the proposition that are explicitly communicated as reconstructed and developed based on the co-textual and contextual information available. In this sense, they can be considered as grounded on the stronger presumptions associated with the linguistic and pragmatic evidence and clues, and carry a stronger burden of proof.[2] Explicatures, and consequently the reconstruction of what is said, can be regarded as uncancelable once the dialogue moves on, as they are essentially related with the felicity of the speech act expressed by the utterance. In other words, the hearer's reply to the speaker's utterance *u* (*Have you returned the book to the owner?*) presupposes the understanding of *u* (involving the explicature assigning the reference to *the book*). When such an explicature is not challenged (H moves on with the dialogue, for example, by saying *Sure I did*), it becomes part of the presuppositions on which the discourse is based. In this sense, challenging an explicature later on in the discourse would amount to

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2 An explicature concerns the specific logical form of the proposition expressed by an utterance within a specific context. In this sense, an utterance taken out of context can be enriched only potentially with explicatures (Capone 2009). The potential explicature of (1): *Today it is raining* is 'It is raining [HERE]'; however, this explicature does not conflict with (1*): *Today it is raining, but not here*. (1*) is simply a different utterance and is perfectly consistent with an interpretation in which there is no explicature, and thus *but not here* does not cancel anything.

challenging a fundamental pragmatic presupposition (as maintained in Capone 2006, 2009). Moreover, challenging an implicitly accepted explicature (S: *I was not referring to the book you borrowed from Mary, but to the book you took from the bookstore without paying!*) amounts to starting a metadialogue on the interpretation of the utterance. In this metadialogue, arguments can be exchanged to support an explicature and establish the reasonableness of an interpretive choice (H: *I did not know that you saw me!*; *We were talking about Mary; what does my book stealing have to do with it?*).

The idea of explicature can be enlarged to include not only the outcomes of nonreflective, automatic processes, but also the outcomes of the explanatory nonmonotonic microargumentation resulting from a conflict between presumptions (this idea has been developed in Macagno and Capone 2015; Macagno 2012a). For example, we consider the following example to show how presupposition is connected with the pragmatic process of construction of an explicature:[3]

(1)   *I am going to be fired before I have even started my job*. (The speaker is blocked in a traffic jam on his way to the job interview.)

In (1) an apparent contradiction or inconsistency arises. "Being fired" presupposes "being hired," and thus having a job, but this presumptive interpretation conflicts with the fact that "being fired" will occur before "being hired," that is, before "starting the job." This conflict leads to reconsidering the presumptive interpretation of "being fired," bringing to light the distance between the speaker and the description of his activity:

(1´)   I am going to be (subject to a rejection that, considering the situation, the boss can describe as being) fired before I have even started my job.

The speaker is using the term *to be fired* in a twofold way. The first use is a metalinguistic use. The speaker is commenting on the relationship between a state of affairs (losing the possibility of working) and the word used to refer to it (by a second voice, the boss, etc.). The speaker reports a possible use of the term (potentially justified by the fact that the boss could have hired the speaker) and comments on it (it is not possible to "fire" the speaker in this situation). By pointing out the speaker's twofold attitude towards the term *to be fired*

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3 Please note that in our explicated examples, we have adjusted the explicatures and the original elements of the utterance to bring to light the mechanism of presupposition reconstruction.

(reporting the possible use of a predicate vs. asserting the impossibility of using it within the given context), it is possible to avoid the contradiction. The speaker points out that he or she came close to the condition that could be described as "being fired," but failed to achieve its essential requirement.

3.2 Explicating nonpresumptive polyphonic structures

Example 1 above points out another important dimension of the metalinguistic attitude of the speaker, namely the attribution of the pragmatic presuppositions. The speaker is using a presupposition trigger, "to be fired," which presupposes the condition of having a job. However, the speaker denies later what he or she treated as taken for granted. By distinguishing the metalinguistic attitude from the linguistic one, the speaker excludes himself or herself from the common ground, distinguishing the set of noncontroversial propositions accepted by the interlocutor (or the general opinion) from the one that he or she holds. From an argumentative perspective, the speaker distinguishes two sets of commitments: the dark-side one (which the speaker reports and denies) and the light-side one (that the speaker maintains and uses to correct the implicit one; for the notion of dark-side commitments and their developments, see Hamblin 1970; Moeschler 2013; Walton and Krabbe 1995).

     The nonpresumptive polyphonic interpretation of an utterance can explain more complex cases in which the presupposition is clearly negated, such as in the following examples:

(2)   *The reason he stopped **loving you** is because he never really loved you in the first place.*[4]

(3)   *So she stopped smoking, because she never smoked before. She said to herself – "I am a non-smoker. I have never smoked. I don't know how to hold a cigarette."*[5]

These examples of presupposition negation can be explicated as conflicts between the speaker and a voice representing the common ground. The speaker

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4 Retrieved from http://sequentialcrush.blogspot.pt/2013/04/i-know-you-are-dying-to-know-truth.html; stress added by the authors in order to steer interpretation.
5 Jaffe, Sherril. 1989. *Scars make your body more interesting & other stories*, 179. Boston: David R. Godine.

denies a presupposition that represents dark-side commitments, or a common ground that is advanced and the speaker wants to correct. For this reason, the speaker denies what a different voice takes for granted.

The cases (2) and (3) involve a refusal of propositions ('he loved you in the past'; 'she used to smoke') that are treated as shared by the use of presupposition triggers. The speaker corrects the common ground by bringing to light the implicit commitments and then negating them by providing reasons (Simons 2006). The linguistic mechanism of underscoring the controversial and only apparently shared proposition can be conceived as a kind of reported speech, more precisely free indirect speech (Burton-Roberts 1989; Carston 1996). This nonpresumptive polyphonic articulation of the utterance can be made explicit by bringing to light the quoted material, which is later corrected. For example, we consider (2) above:

(2´)   The reason he stopped (the action that you indicated as) (")loving you(") is because he never really loved you in the first place.

In (2´), the higher-level explicature (notion described in Carston 2002: 119 and further specified in Moeschler 2007) makes it explicit that the reported utterance belongs to an utterer different from the speaker, and underscores that the verb *to stop* was used infelicitously, given the mistaken presupposition (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 242). The treatment of (3) is more complex, as it involves a polyphony of three voices: the speaker, a voice reporting what the agent says, and another indicating what the agent thinks:

(3´)   So she (said that she) (")stopped(") smoking (even though it is incorrect saying it), because she (convinced herself that she) never smoked before.

In this case, the explicature introduces a distinction between two voices, the one of the utterer reporting that the agent used the term *stopped smoking* in an allegedly wrong way, and the other of the utterer expressing the conviction that she never smoked.

The correction of the common ground through the refusal of the presuppositions triggered by the reported speech can work also hypothetically (Beaver 2001: Ch. 5) as a reason provided for denying the possibility of using a specific predicate referring to a specific state of affairs. For example, we consider the famous case below:

(4)   *At least John won't have to regret that he did a PhD.* (It is known that John failed to get into a doctoral course.) (Levinson 1983: 187)

Case (4) involves the possibility that a hypothetical utterer (John) uses the term *to regret*, pointing out that the very possibility of feeling sorry about something done (or not done) in the past cannot be the case:

(4´)   (I say that) at least John won't have to (")regret(") that he did a PhD (because it will be impossible to use such a word, given that he has never done it).

These cases bring to light another dimension of the correction of the alleged or hypothetical common ground. In order to reject an implicit commitment – namely a proposition that is treated as noncontroversial – it is necessary to provide a reason against it (Macagno and Damele 2013; Macagno and Walton 2014). This reason can be an actual argument, such as in cases (1), (2), and (3), or simply a rhetorical artifice, like in (4) (*a fortiori* argument). However, in all such cases, the presupposition brings a burden of proof, which needs to be fulfilled by providing a reason or an explanation.

4 Attributing commitments: Polyphony and presupposition suspension

As mentioned above, the suspension of a presupposition can be analyzed in terms of a nonpresumptive polyphonic articulation of the utterance. On this view, certain cases of presupposition suspension can be analyzed through higher-level explicatures bringing to light their corresponding indirect reports, namely voices advancing contents which the speaker accepts or refuses to commit to. This approach would turn the analysis of presuppositions into an implicit dialogue between a plurality of characters responsible for different and specific linguistic acts, and their corresponding commitments.

4.1 Polyphony and commitments

In his linguistic theory of polyphony, Ducrot distinguishes different voices in an utterance, or rather various points of view that are brought forward by distinct utterers. Such perspectives can be considered as pragmatically different because the linguistic character that is responsible for the utterance, the speaker, takes the responsibility only for some of the contents, namely the one that is asserted (*posé*) by one of the utterers, but not for the one that is brought forward by the

utterer representing a *collective voice* (the presupposed content). For example, we consider (3) above slightly modified:

(5)   *Mary has stopped smoking.*

In (5), Ducrot distinguishes two different assertions: the assertion of content (*posé*), and the assertion of something presupposed (*présupposé*). The speaker (*locuteur*), the linguistic character responsible for taking charge of the utterance (Ducrot 1984: 179), is differentiated from the utterers (*énonciateurs*). The utterers are the "voices" responsible for (or rather the perspectives presented as) the contents that have been presupposed[6] (Beaver 2010). In (1), a first utterer (Ducrot calls him *Énonciateur 1*) is responsible for what is asserted, while a *collective voice* or a second utterer (Ducrot calls it in French an *ON*, the indefinite pronoun for *someone*), to which the speaker belongs, is responsible for the presupposition (Ducrot 1980: 83 and Ducrot 1984: 231–233). According to Ducrot, the speaker takes on the responsibility, or the perspective, of the first utterer, but not the one of the content uttered by the second, collective voice, which performs the act of conveying the content that is so presupposed (Ducrot 1984: 172). In this sense, the presupposition can be considered to be an act, consisting in the conveyance of a statement by a different utterer, and not resulting directly in the speaker's taking responsibility for it (Ducrot 1984: 190).

Ducrot's theory of polyphony can be interpreted from an argumentative and dialectical perspective (see also Capone 2000). The pragmatic concept of "taking the responsibility for" an utterance (or specific perspectives) can be analyzed in terms of dialectical obligations or commitments. Hamblin (1970: 257) defined commitment by means of a set of statements that a participant in a dialogue (a purely dialectical role within a dialogue game) is obliged to maintain consistently or to retract. On this view, the linguistic character of the speaker can be interpreted as a dialectical role (the proponent, as opposed to the interlocutor or

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6 "Je signalerai enfin une perspective particulièrement prometteuse qui s'ouvre dès qu'on considère le sens comme un représentant de l'énonciation, représentation consistant notamment à y faire entendre la voix de divers énonciateurs s'adressant à divers destinataires et à identifier ces rôles illocutionnaires avec des personnages qui peuvent être, entre autres, ceux de l'énonciation. Il s'agit de la construction, dans le discours, du locuteur et de l'allocutaire. Psycho- et socio-linguistes ont quelquefois noté [...] que l'on peut, en parlant, constituer une image de soi et de la personne à qui l'on parle, image que l'interlocuteur tantôt accepte et tantôt rejette. Un des principaux moyens de cette constitution est justement la possibilité, inscrite selon nous dans la langue, c'est-à-dire dans la signification des mots et des phrases, de faire s'exprimer différentes voix, en donnant l'instruction de les identifier à des êtres de la réalité – et en spécifiant même certaines contraintes à observer dans cette identification" (Ducrot 1980: 56).

respondent), who is committed to (in the sense of taking the dialectical responsibility for) the contents that are *posé*. The contents that are *présupposé* can be said to belong to or be inserted into a set of commitments that Walton and Krabbe defines as "dark-side" (1995: 12). Such dark-side commitments are implicit commitments and include the propositions that are taken for granted and that both the proponent and the respondent are or become committed to upon the performance of a speech act presupposing a specific content. In this sense, the voices of the utterers proposing distinct pragmatic perspectives can be thought of as corresponding, in a dialectical perspective, to various types of commitments, whether light-side or dark-side.

4.2 Voices, commitments, and presuppositions

Polyphony and the consequent treatment of presupposition as an explicature of the different linguistic agents responsible for the various statements allow one to understand the aforementioned mechanism of explicatures needed to explain presupposition suspension. This account can be also applied to more complex cases such as the following ones:

(6)   *If Mary had stopped smoking, she would be alive now.*

(7)   *It is possible that Mary has stopped smoking (or that she never has).*

(8)   *If you stopped smoking in 2001, you are eligible for a payment from the Tobacco Indemnity Fund.* (Abusch 2002: 2)

(9)   *If I discover that Mary is now in New York, I will be angry.* (Abusch 2002: 2)

In (6) the first utterer, corresponding to the speaker, is responsible for the conditional (in this case the truth of the connector *if...then*), whereas the second utterer, expressing the common opinion, is attributed the responsibility of the factual presuppositions that a) Mary smoked, b) she did not stop it, and c) she is not alive. The only nonmetalinguistic negation of (6) would consist of showing that Mary would not be alive in case she stopped smoking (which can be hard, considering that Mary is dead). All the other negations (*but Mary never smoked*, *but Mary is alive*) correspond to metalinguistic negations, which can be regarded as negations of the felicity of the utterance.

The treatment of (7) is similar. The first utterer is responsible for the truth of the disjunction, to which the speaker is committed explicitly; this, however, simply hides the presupposition of which the second utterer is responsible:

(7´) It is possible that Mary (is not doing anymore what the second utterer/ everybody says that she used to do, i.e., smoking) or that she has never smoked.

The different voices emerge when the one of the members of the disjunction is denied:

(7´´) (The first utterer did not say felicitously that) Mary has (")stopped(") smoking, then/because (what is true is the contrary of what the second utterer/everybody said, i.e.,) she has never smoked.

(8) and (9) are more complex cases because they allow two distinct interpretations, one in which the presuppositions of *to stop* are projected, and the other in which they are suspended. In such cases, there is a difference in interpretation due to background assumptions. In the first interpretation of (8) (uttered by a friend to another, knowing that the latter used to smoke), the speaker corresponds to the utterer, who is committed to the truth of the conditional, while a second utterer (representing what is presumed to be common opinion) is committed to truth of the presupposition ("You used to smoke before 2001"). It is possible to make the polyphony explicit using the following explicatures:

(8a) If (it is true that) you stopped smoking (since you used to smoke before 2001, as everyone/the second utterer says) in 2001, you are eligible for a payment from the Tobacco Indemnity Fund.

In this case, the negation can have as a scope both the asserted content and the presupposed one ("I never stopped smoking because the second utterer was wrong in saying that I used to smoke"). The second reading is more complex:

(8b) If (it is true that) you (performed the action of) ("stopping) smoking before 2001("), you are eligible for a payment from the Tobacco Indemnity Fund.

In this case, the focus is focused on the action as a whole, not on the activity that has stopped. However, the presupposition emerges again in case of the negation of the antecedent ("I have not stopped smoking before 2001, as I have never smoked before"):

(8c) (The first utterer did not felicitously say that) I have "stopped" smoking (as the second utterer was wrong in saying that I smoked before 2001).

The same analysis can be applied to (9), which also has a presuppositional and a nonpresuppositional reading.

(9a) If (it is true that) I discover (the fact that is reported by the second utterer/everyone) that Mary is now in New York, I will be angry.

(9b) If (the event consisting in that) (")I discover that Mary is now in New York (") (is true), I will be angry.

As in (8) above, also in (9) the two readings correspond to a polyphonic and nonpolyphonic interpretation. The presupposition is projected when the conditional has a polyphonic structure; when there is no such polyphonic structure (as I only concentrate on my discovery of Mary's being in New York), the presupposition is not projected, as the utterer is only committed to expressing the possibility of an action.

   The same polyphonic treatment can account for the different projections of presupposition with other triggers. By determining the scope of the predicate it is possible to reconstruct the commitment structure. We can explain the difference of the presuppositions projected by hard triggers, such as *too*:

(10) *If I discover that Mary is now in New York too, I will be angry*.

This utterance can be reconstructed polyphonically as follows:

(10a) If (it is true that) I *discover* (the fact that is reported by the second utterer/everyone) that **Mary is now in New York** too, (in addition to someone else, as reported by the second utterer/everyone) I will be angry.

(10b) If (the event consisting in that) **I discover (the fact that is reported by the second utterer/everyone) that Mary is now in New York too, (in addition to other facts, as reported by the second utterer/everyone)** (is true) I will be angry.

In this case, the scope of the trigger can be on Mary (10a) or on the event (10b), resulting in different presuppositions. Clearly, it is possible to place a pragmatic stress on *too* and suspend the presupposition:

(10c) If (it is true that) I discover (the fact that is reported by the second utterer/ everyone) that Mary is now in New York **too** (in addition to someone else), I will be angry.

In this case, the speaker can have meant that the problem is indeed the presence of someone else with Mary in New York that causes the problem. The polyphonic structure of the statement reveals what is attributed to the common voice and what the first utterer is responsible for,[7] bringing to light what is left in the background.

This treatment of presupposition, conceived as a commitment undertaken by an utterer different from the one responsible for the asserted content, can lead to a complex pragmatic analysis of specific constructions involving verbs of belief or indicating internal epistemic states.

5 Conflicting voices and presupposition suspension

This polyphonic approach based on explicatures shifts the analysis of the presuppositions from the epistemic objective level of truth to the dialogical one of commitment. A presupposition is not canceled (or suspended); rather, the use of the predicate triggering it can be contested. In this sense, the cases of presupposition cancelation can be explained in two different ways, depending on the structure of the commitments of the distinct linguistic agents. A presupposition can be "canceled" in the sense that the felicity of the utterer's move is challenged, due to an infelicitous use of the predicate presupposing a proposition unacceptable for or unaccepted by the speaker.

Polyphony can bring to light metalinguistic dialogues on the possibility of a move, considering that the speaker challenges what is considered as shared. In particular, these metadialogues emerge clearly in the cases of presuppositions triggered by verbs indicating epistemic states and in particular emotive factives (Abrusán 2011). We consider the following cases:

(11)   *John said that Mary has to stop smoking, but she never smoked before.*

(12)   *John said that Mary regrets going **to Rome** with Mark, but she never actually went there.*

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7 The contextual defeasibility of presuppositions has been shown to affect the speaker's commitments in Simons (2013: 333).

Stop and *regret* are presuppositional triggers. The fact of being embedded within indirect reports does not normally suspend the presuppositions, which are inherited by the complete utterance (through conversational implicature, presumably). In both utterances, the speaker comments upon John's assertion, pointing out its infelicity due to a wrong attribution of commitments. In these two utterances, the speaker denies the presuppositions triggered, which are, in this fashion, canceled from the speaker's commitment store (or common ground) through a complex dialogue between various voices.

In both (11) and (12), the first utterer (coinciding with the speaker), responsible for the whole utterance, is distinguished from a second utterer, John, who is committed to the proposition that "Mary has to stop smoking" (in 11) and "Mary regrets going to Rome with Mark" in (12), while a third utterer, expressing what is in the common ground, is responsible for the presupposition ("Mary smoked"; "Mary went to Rome with Mark"). In order to readjust the common ground, the first utterer comments on the felicity of John's utterance by challenging the presupposition. The metalinguistic challenge of the felicity of John's speech acts results also in a challenge on the acceptability of the speech act of presupposing made by the third utterer. In (11), the speaker (first utterer) challenges John's statement and the presupposed content for which a third utterer is responsible. The failure to challenge the statement would result in the speaker's accepting the presupposition.

Case (12) is more complex, as Mary is also committed to the presupposed content, which is the report of a belief. In the same way in which we cannot have direct access to Mary's mind and beliefs, with the exception of cases in which we share mutual knowledge (perception of the environment), we cannot have access to Mary's regrets. Such regrets are like her beliefs. These beliefs can be explicated by resorting to indirect reports (as maintained by May 1987), as follows:

(12´) (The first utterer says that the third utterer and) Mary (believe that Mary went) to Rome (and Mary is sorry that she went to Rome).

In (12), the speaker is correcting the commitment structure of the indirect report, representing what John claims, what Mary says, and what is attributed to the common voice stating what John, Mary, and potentially the speaker are committed to. Unless the speaker distinguishes his or her commitments from the ones expressed by the other voices (commenting on them and correcting them), the presupposition will be inserted in his or her dark-side commitment store. (12) can be reconstructed using the following explicatures, bringing to light the polyphony and the contents attributed to the distinct utterers:

(12´´) (The utterer called) John said that (the second utterer called) Mary regrets going to Rome with Mark (and the third utterer/common opinion, with which Mary agrees, says that she went to Rome with Mark), but (Mary did not say felicitously that she "regrets" it because) she never actually went there (contrary to what the third utterer says).

The structure of *to regret* can be reconstructed through the commitments resulting from its use. The first utterer (or the speaker, in this case) can simply report Mary's regretting her going to Rome, without commenting on it. In this case, the failure to correct the commitments resulting from the third utterer's assertion corresponds to the tacit acceptance of these dark-side commitments. Otherwise, the speaker can challenge metalinguistically the use of the predicate *to regret*. In this fashion, the speaker points out that he or she is not committed to the proposition that is attributed to the voices of the third utterer, with whom Mary (and John) implicitly agree.

From a dialectical perspective, this reconstruction allows one to calculate the possible effects of a speech act on the interlocutor's commitments. If the acceptability of an embedded constituent (the proposition regretted in this case) is not challenged by questioning the felicity of the speech act, the presupposition is inserted also into the interlocutor's commitments, as he or she is part of the community represented by the third utterer. When the speaker challenges the use of the embedding predicate, he or she adjusts the common ground that the use of the presupposition trigger introduces. In this fashion, the speaker does not accept that the presupposed content becomes part of his or her own (and the interlocutor's) commitment store.

This account can explain the presuppositional effects triggered by extraposition to the right in Italian (Feit and Capone 2013). For example we compare the following:

(13)   *John knows that Mary is in Paris.*

(14)   *John knows that Mary is in Paris. But Mary is in London.*

(15)   *John lo sa che Maria è a Parigi.* (*But Mary is in London).
       (Literally, "John it knows that Mary is in Paris", equivalent to the English *John knows it, that Mary is in Paris*, or *John KNOWS that Mary is in Paris*)

While (13) presupposes that "Mary is in Paris", in (14) the presupposition is suspended. The extraposition to the right, marked by the expletive *it*, makes the suspension impossible in (15), but if we reconstruct the explicatures underlying these three statements, we can bring the implicit polyphony to light:

(13´) (The first utterer says that) (the second utterer called) John (says that he believes) that Mary is in Paris (and the third utterer/the common opinion says that is true that Mary is in Paris).

(14´) (The first utterer says that) (the second utterer called) John (says that he believes) that Mary is in Paris (and the second utterer says that it is true that Mary is in Paris). But (the first utterer says that) Mary is in London.

(15´) (The first utterer says that) (the second utterer called) John (believes) it (what the third utterer says that is true, and the first utterer agrees with,), that Mary is in Paris.

The responsibility of the first utterer for the presupposition, or the "dark-side commitment," is indirect and implicit in (13). Here, his agreement with the common opinion is a presumption that is automatically triggered, but that can be denied without incurring a contradiction. In this sense, (14) is potentially ambiguous from a polyphonic point of view, as it can be interpreted as indirectly reporting an epistemic status of knowledge (embedding a proposition to whose truth the speaker is committed) or one of belief (not entailing this commitment). For this reason, (13) can be explicated both as (13´) or as the first conjunct of (14´). However, the expletive *it* in (15) rules out the possibility of interpreting (13) as (14´), as it includes the proposition known by the second utterer in the speaker's (corresponding to the first utterer's) commitments.[8] For this reason, the extraposition, by clarifying the polyphonic reading of the statement, disambiguates the potential ambiguity of the Italian *sapere*, which can be explicated presumptively as "to know" or nonpresumptively as "to believe." The expletive *it* stabilizes the presumptive reading.

    The issue of verbs of knowledge in different languages is very interesting from the point of view of the presuppositions. Although we cannot deepen this issue from an intercultural pragmatics perspective, we should at least mention that another article should be written on intercultural differences. What happens when an English speaker is faced with Italian data or an Italian speaker is faced

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8 This example shows a particular articulation of categorical judgments, in which two judgments are involved, one commenting on an event and the other establishing it. This second judgment, namely the existence of the event commented on, occurred before the utterance of the sentence (Kuroda 1972). In this case, the articulation is different from the one resulting from a normal syntactic structure because the first judgment concerns John's belonging to the ones who know X, while the second judgment expresses that it is known that Mary is in Paris. In a normal articulation, such as (13) above, the epistemic position (commitment) is not part of the second judgment.

with English data? Presumably, if the interlocutors notice some discrepancy between their languages, they can discuss it, and the upshot of that discussion can be taken as an emergent presupposition in the sense of Kecskes (2013). Emergent presuppositions, according to important insights due to Kecskes, are the basis for the development of conversation in intercultural situations.[9] This issue, however, cannot be addressed here.

6 Renegotiating illocutionary forces: Uncommon ground

In the sections above, we took into account utterances whose illocutionary (and perlocutionary) force was reconstructed presumptively, while the common ground was readjusted by challenging the use of some presupposition triggers. However, in some cases the assignation of illocutionary and perlocutionary forces to utterances can be controversial and the presumptive interpretation subject to default. This default can be caused by pragmatic presuppositions that are not shared or not shareable, in the sense that the speaker takes some information for granted that is presumed not to be shared, or even to be shareable. The speaker is deploying a second utterer, who advances a proposition that the hearer cannot have agreed upon but needs to agree upon in order to make the speech act felicitous. For this reason, the illocutionary force of the act performed by the second voice needs to be reinterpreted.

In some cases, especially in case of polite requests or orders, the speaker is performing a speech act that, if presumptively interpreted, consists of a polyphonic articulation resulting in a conflict of presumptions. The speaker deploys a second voice (expressing what is commonly held by the community to which the hearer belongs) responsible for a proposition that the hearer cannot be presumed to be committed to. By performing his speech act, the speaker is presuming that the hearer agrees with a "common" ground that cannot be presumed to be accepted by the interlocutor. The conflict between the uncommon ground and the presumptive meaning attributed to the illocutionary force

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9 Commonalities, conventions, common beliefs, shared knowledge, and the like all create a core common ground, a kind of collective salience on which intention and cooperation-based pragmatics is built (Kecskes and Zhang 2013; Kecskes 2016). However, when this core common ground appears to be mostly missing or limited as is the case in intercultural communication interlocutors cannot take them for granted; rather they need to co-construct them, at least temporarily.

of an utterance can lead to an ordering of the hierarchies of presumptions against the presumptive reading. For example, we consider the following cases:

(16) *Many thanks for returning the book.* (Said by a professor to a student that has not returned yet a book borrowed from the professor)

(17) *Ti ringrazio anticipatamente*
     "Many thanks in advance for ..." [10]

(18) *Thank you for not smoking.* (On a sign posted in a restaurant)

These statements can be interpreted presumptively as acts aimed at expressing gratitude for an action performed by the interlocutor. *To thank someone for* presupposes a reason, which needs to be a voluntary action, positive for the utterer, performed by the hearer. For this reason, such statements can be interpreted presumptively as presupposing that the action occurred, more specifically in the cases above, that the hearer has returned the book (16) and that the people in the premises have not smoked (18). However, such interpretations are subject to default, as the speaker presupposes information that cannot be shared; on the contrary, the presupposed information is presumed not to be shared. In particular, the professor would be surprised in (16) if the student welcomed his thanking. This act of presupposing involves an invitation to comply with what the second utterer (the common voice) claims to be or should be the common ground:

(16´) (The first utterer says) many thanks for (what the second utterer/common voice says you have done or have agreed to do, namely) returning the book.

(17´) (The first utterer says) many thanks in advance for (the action that the second utterer says you have agreed to perform).

(18´) (The first utterer says) thank you for (what the second utterer says you have done or you have agreed to do, namely) not smoking.

The presupposition is used to perform a speech act that, however, has a specific rhetorical and dialogical effect.[11] The burden of making the speech act felicitous

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10 We would like to thank Dorota Zielinska, who suggested to us examples (16) and (17).
11 For an analysis of the act of presupposing and its dialogical effects, see Ducrot (1966), Kecskes and Zhang (2013), and Macagno (2012b, 2015).

is shifted onto the interlocutor, who can decide whether the speaker's move is felicitous or not by adjusting the uncommon ground. By accepting the presupposition, the hearer accepts an agreement to perform an action that is not explicitly requested, but that he or she is led to accepting in order to save the speaker's communicative intention.

7 Reconstructing the common ground: Reasoning from best interpretation

The nonpresumptive interpretation of an utterance can be reconstructed at two different levels. On the one hand, the (systematic) reconstruction of its polyphonic articulation can explain the phenomenon of some presupposition suspensions, pointing out why and how the speaker decides not to commit himself to the content presented as shared, and corrects it. On the other hand, the nonpresumptive interpretation is reached through a mechanism of reasoning from best explanation, which allows one to calculate it considering the conflicting presumptions, the asserted and presupposed content, and the hierarchy of the interlocutors' presumptions.

　　The reconstruction of the best interpretation of an utterance can be illustrated through the aforementioned case (18). The reconstruction of the polyphonic structure of the utterance, explicated in (18´), brings to light the attribution of the commitments and the presumptions underlying it. In cases of conflicts of presumptions (and even more in cases of a presumed shared ground that is in fact not shared), a complex process of explanation is triggered, in which the communicative intention is renegotiated and reconstructed nonpresumptively in order to avoid a communicative failure. The presumptions underlying the automatic interpretation of the propositional content and of the illocutionary force, and the attribution of the "dark-side" commitments are compared and assessed. The stronger presumptions (namely the ones less subject to default based on the contextual and co-textual information) will then guide the interpretation of the utterance. The mechanism of reconstruction of the non-presumptive illocutionary force of (18) can be represented in Figure 1.

　　In this figure, the reconstruction of the explicature of the speech act is represented through a process of reasoning in which the linguistic and epistemic presumptions are compared and analyzed. The steps of this reconstruction can be summarized as follows:
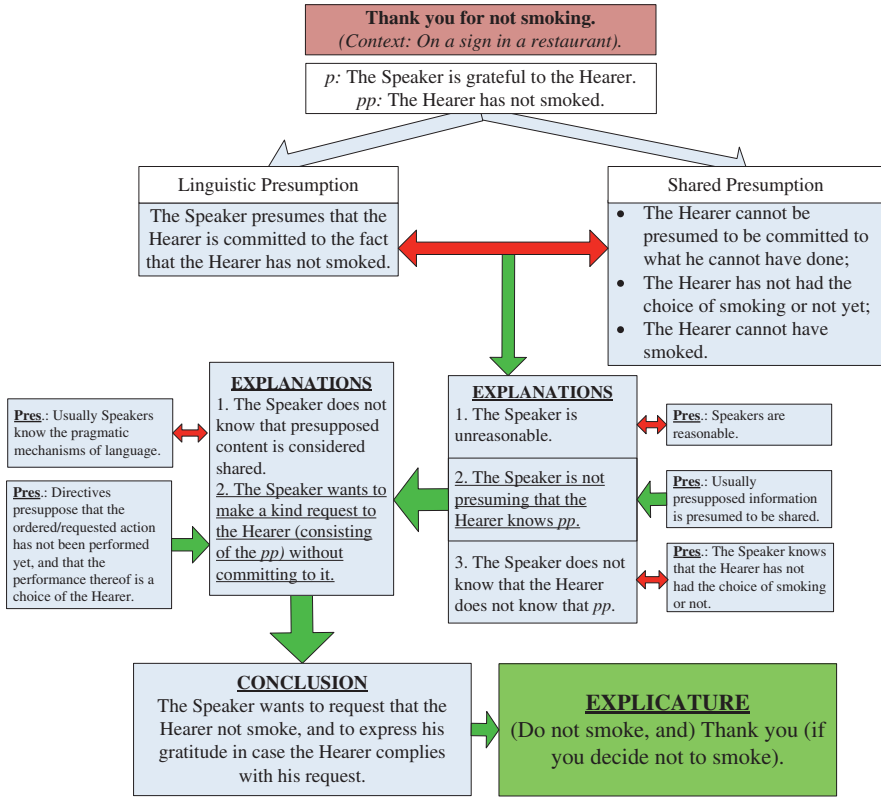
Figure 1: Reconstructing the explicature of a speech act.

1. The Speaker's utterance can be presumptively interpreted as an act of expressing gratitude for a Hearer's action.
2. This presumptive interpretation conflicts with the presumptions associated with the shared communicative situation (as defined by Kecskes and Zhang 2009) and the Hearer's possible knowledge. The conflict is the following:
   a. The Hearer is presumed to be committed to p (decision not to smoke).
   b. The Hearer cannot be presumed to be committed to p (he cannot have decided not to smoke yet).
3. The presumptive interpretation is subject to default and an alternative explicature is searched, not involving the presumption that the Hearer is committed to p.
   a. The best explanation is that the Hearer is requested to make the speech act felicitous, that is, to commit to p.
   b. The Hearer is presumed to behave cooperatively.

 c. The Speaker is committed to expressing his or her gratitude and is not committed to requesting the Hearer to perform the action indicated in p.

This mechanism can explain in terms of commitments the twofold act performed by the speaker in uttering (18). The speaker both expresses his or her gratitude and requests an action. However, since the latter action is the result of the hearer's decision to act cooperatively, and not directly of the speaker's request, the latter cannot be considered as committed to this directive. For this reason, a possible denial of the noncommitting request ("But I am smoking, as you can see") can be considered as noncooperative linguistic and social behavior, instead of a simple refusal to comply with the directive.

 This mechanism of best interpretation can be used to reconstruct also the content of apparently infelicitous speech acts, in which the uncommon ground cannot be adjusted. The speaker in such cases is presuming that the hearer belongs to the common opinion (second voice) advancing a presupposed content that is presumed not to be shared by the interlocutor and the speaker himself or herself. In this sense, the speaker is presuming to presuppose unshareable information. For example, we consider the following:

(19) *You cannot rob banks any longer!* (To a friend known to be honest, commenting on a new law)

Utterances like (19) are presumed to be infelicitous, as their presuppositions conflict with propositions presumed not to be shared by both the speaker and the hearer. By uttering (19), the speaker presumes that the hearer has robbed banks before, but at the same time presumes that it is shared and evident that this presumption cannot be common ground. The problems with the interpretation of (19) would arise from the possibility that the hearer may consider the presumption of his or her committing a robbery in the past possible. For this reason, such utterances can be thought of as requests for reinterpretations, or rather invitations to reconstruct a nonpresumptive meaning that is left unspecified. In this case, for example, the utterance can be reconstructed as aimed at expressing the irrelevance of the law for his or her friend, or the obvious need of such a provision for actual dishonest people.

8 Conclusion

Pragmatic presupposition is based on the idea of common ground, and the possible accommodations thereof. Pragmatic presuppositions are triggered by

lexical or syntactic elements (triggers). However, this relationship between semantic and pragmatic presuppositions is defeasible, subject to defaults also in cases of hard triggers. This paper intended to show how the idea of presumptive interpretation can be applied also to the polyphonic articulation of an utterance. The basic idea is that nonautomatic interpretations are triggered by conflicts of presumptions. They are cases in which presumptive interpretations cannot be presumed, as they conflict with stronger presumptions. In cases of presupposition "suspension," or rather corrections of the potential pragmatic presupposition triggered, the presupposed content cannot be presumed to be shared, as it is contradicted by stronger presumptions or an assertion to the contrary. Such a conflict results in a mechanism of reasoning from best interpretation that can be analyzed as patterns of microargumentation.

The suspension of pragmatic presuppositions, or the correction thereof, can be explained in terms of presumptive versus nonpresumptive polyphonic articulation of an utterance. If we conceive discourse in pragmatic terms, we need to account for a crucial dimension of an action, the responsibility of the agent for what he or she performs. From a communicative point of view, speakers can be held directly responsible for what they say, but only indirectly for what they presuppose (as maintained by Ducrot 1984: 232–233 and developed in a dialectical perspective in Walton and Krabbe 1995: 12). Presuppositions, in particular, are indirectly reported by the speaker, as they are attributed to a second voice, belonging to the community of speakers to which the hearer belongs. The suspension of a presupposition can be considered to be as the result of an act aimed at modifying the presumptive polyphonic structure of an utterance. The first utterer refuses to take responsibility for the presupposed proposition and treats the presuppositional trigger as a quoted element of discourse, not resulting in any responsibility for him or her.

On this perspective, the presumptive polyphonic interpretation of an utterance distinguishes between different utterers, and in particular differentiates between the first utterer, with whom the speaker is usually identified, and a voice representing a common opinion. The speaker is usually held to associate himself or herself indirectly with this common voice, unless he or she points out the difference. The nonpresumptive polyphonic articulation of an utterance consists in a free indirect report: the speaker reports instead of asserting, thus bringing to light the distance between his or her position and the commitments of the common opinion.

This dialogical implicit dimension of utterances can explain several cases in which the semantic presuppositions are not "inherited," or rather when the presupposition triggers do not result in pragmatic presuppositions. The speaker can use an indirect quotation in order to distinguish two or more voices (the first

and the second utterer) and then correct the commitments held by the latter. The speaker can thus choose the commitments by choosing the voice or the voices with whom he or she identifies. In cases of indirect speech acts resulting from an uncommon ground, the distinction is drawn by the speaker between the voice representing the common opinion and the hearer. The speaker leaves up to the hearer the burden of making the speech act felicitous (by making the presupposed content become true) or infelicitous (refusing to make this adjustment happen).

While the nonpresumptive polyphonic articulation can explain how and why the speaker decides not to commit himself or herself to the content presented as shared, and how he or she can correct it, the reasoning process of best interpretation can explain how the nonpresumptive interpretation is reached and how it can be calculated starting from the conflicting presumptions and the uncommon ground. On this perspective, the polyphonic articulation brings to light the conflicting presumptions and the hierarchy thereof, guiding the mechanism in which the best presumptive interpretation is selected at different levels.

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