Conditional Presuppositions and Modal Subordination

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Presuppositions carried by complex sentences need not come from a subset of the elementary presuppositions triggered in the complex sentences. For instance, the following sentences carry presuppositions resulting from conditionalizing elementary presuppositions by protases.

(1)   a.   If Jane takes a bath, Bill will be annoyed by the fact that there is no more hot water.

        b.   If the summit is a deadend, Bush will regret that there is war.

The most preferred readings of the sentences in (1) contains the following conditional presuppositions:

(2)   a.   If Jane takes a bath, there will be no more hot water.

        b.   If the summit is a deadend, there will be war.

The presuppositions-as-anaphora theory (van der Sandt, 1992; Geurts, 1996, 1999; Krahmer, 1996), which is considered to be the empirically most successful theory on this subject available today (Beaver, 1997, p.983), wrongly predicts that the most preferred readings (1a) and (1b) are the ones where they carry the following unconditional presuppositions:

(3)   a.   There is no more hot water.

        b.   There is war.

In Contrast to the presuppositions-as-anaphora theory, the satisfaction theory (Karttunen, 1974; Heim, 1983; van Eijck, 1996; Kadmon, 2001), which is one of the competitors against the presuppositions-as-anaphora theory, predicts that the sentences in (1) carry the conditional presuppositions listed in (2). In this respect, the presuppositions-as-anaphora theory is inferior to the satisfaction theory. However, the satisfaction theory frequently predicts presuppositions that are too weak (Geurts, 1996; Beaver, 2001). For instance, the satisfaction theory predicts that the sentences in (4) carry the conditional presuppositions in (5).

(4)   a.   If Jane wants a bath, Bill will be annoyed by the fact that there is no more hot water.

        b.   If Time magazine criticizes Bush, he will regret that there is war.

(5)   a.   If Jane wants a bath, there will be no more hot water.

        b.   If Time magazine criticizes Bush, there will be war.

The discussion above indicates that the presuppositions-as-anaphora theory has no device for weakening elemen-

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tary presuppositions and that the satisfaction theory has no device for strengthening conditional presuppositions.

In this talk, I will propose a unified approach for conditional presuppositions. The unified approach presented in this talk adopts the satisfaction theory's tenet where presuppositions are treated as modal propositions, and argues that the domains of presuppositions are anaphorically dependent on contexts. I will implement this idea in Frank's framework (Frank, 1996).

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