SPEAKER/ HEARER REPRESENTATION IN A DISCOURSE REPRESENTATION THEORY MODEL OF PRESUPPOSITION: A COMPUTATIONAL-LINGUISTIC APPROACH

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the semantic/pragmatic interface in the treatment of presupposition and assertion in Discourse Representation Theory (DRT). It is argued that as a formal semantic theory, DRT needs pragmatic enrichment in its treatment of presupposition. The pragmatic enhancement is achieved through defining presupposition in terms of beliefs, and re-interpreting the Gricean maxims in terms of 'belief constraints' on the making of presupposition and assertion. Additionally, presupposition is interpreted as a property of the communicative behaviour of the speaker and hearer. A series of checks is devised, which differentiate speaker generation of presupposition and assertion from hearer recognition. Further, recent advances in DRT are expanded in order to account for varying strengths of beliefs (weak and strong belief) as well as dialogue acts triggered by assertions. A new emerging Discourse Representation Structure (DRS) creates compatible speaker and hearer cognitive states representation. The linguistic content (presupposition and assertion) is linked with the beliefs and intentions of agents in dialogue in order to move DRT towards being 'more pragmatic'. The dissertation implements some of these ideas in a computational representation.

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