

GIVENness and local contexts

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Whether a constituent is GIVEN plays a central role in anaphoric reduction phenomena like deaccenting and ellipsis. I argue that GIVENness is determined compositionally, in a local context — in other words, I give evidence for GIVENness operators in syntax, and I argue that these operators are sensitive to local manipulations of the context (in particular, of the assignment function). I show how this leads to significant simplifications in the theory of reduction licensing, allowing us to dispense with otherwise necessary stipulations (e.g., Heim’s prohibition of ‘Meaningless Coindexing’ or Sag’s non-standard definition of alphabetic variance), and making it feasible at last to treat the relationship between an elided phrase and its antecedent as one of perfect identity.

I consider several consequences of my proposal for the formulation of GIVENness operators, arguing that it compels us to take their anaphoric character seriously, while allowing for ex post facto (that is, post-suppositional) linking of congruence operators to their antecedents in a dynamic semantics. I provide evidence that GIVENness domains are maximized, and against the notion that any non-F-marked node must be GIVEN. And I explore some consequences of these moves for restrictions on antecedent-contained deletion and the puzzling phenomenon of focused bound pronouns.