INTRODUCTION TO PRESUPPOSITION

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The two papers in this part are from the same time and they deal with different aspects of the same issue. The issue is one that arises in connection with semantic presuppositions, associated with particular lexical items or grammatical constructions. A competent speaker, who expresses herself in accordance with the rules of her language and makes use of such a construction or word, must ipso facto have the intention to impose the associated presupposition.

The problems that the two papers address both have to do with the following facts about the use of presupposition-triggering words and constructions. First, it is extremely common for the sentences we produce in ordinary speech and writing to contain presupposition triggers. What’s more, our sentences often contain not just one presupposition, but two or more. Furthermore, among the words that act as presupposition triggers, there are some that give rise to several presuppositions and not just to one. Many of the utterances we produce thus generate a combination of presuppositions, and one of the tasks incumbent on the interpreter of such an utterance is to verify that all these presuppositions are justified by the context in which the sentence is used. Justification of multiple presuppositions is an intriguing phenomenon for several reasons. First, there is the notion of presupposition justification, as it applies also to single presuppositions. David Lewis was the first to state explicitly that when the context available to the interpreter of a sentence does not verify a presupposition that is triggered by the sentence, then he will accommodate the presupposition. He will assume that the presupposition is part of the context after all, or at least that the speaker thought so. By and large, where matters of presupposition are concerned, verbal communication operates on the principle of ‘speaker knows best’. This simple view of accommodation, however, which suggests that you can never go wrong in using presupposition triggers as speaker, is no more than a rough first approximation, because accommodation isn’t always possible. Secondly, when accommodation, in the sense of context adjustment, is possible, it often follows, and seems required to follow, particular strategies for which Lewis’ formulation doesn’t give any clues. For the most part presupposition accommodation isn’t simply a matter of adding the given
presupposition to the context as it is, or as what one takes it to be. As pointed out in particular by David Beaver, it often involves taking more new information on board than strictly necessary to get the context to entail the presupposition. What interpreters try to do is to come up with a plausible story about what the speaker could have taken the context to be, if she took, as she apparently did, the presupposition to be verified in it. And she must have taken the context to be like that, for otherwise her use of the presupposing word or construction would have been infelicitous. While the accommodations that interpreters actually make often strengthen the context more than is strictly speaking required for entailment of the presupposition, the accommodated information will, on the other hand, often be too little to entail the presupposition on its own. All that matters is for the presupposition to be entailed by the context, once the accommodated bit of information has been added to it. Kamp & Roßdeutscher (1992, *Remarks on Lexical Structure*) coined the term ‘justification’ to cover all the possible ways of making sure that a presupposition is satisfied: (i) verify that the presupposition is contained in, or, synonymously, is entailed by, the context as it is given to him; (ii) accommodate the presupposition wholesale by adding it to the given context; (iii) accommodate some bit of information that has the effect that the presupposition is entailed by the context updated with this bit, though not necessarily by the bit on its own. Much of the presupposition literature can be read as implying that the only options for dealing with presuppositions are (i) and (ii). But many actual accommodations are instances of (iii) without being instances of (ii). Hence (ii) is a special case of (iii); some accommodations take this particular form, but many do not.

When two or more presuppositions are involved in the production of an utterance, further complications can arise. One presupposition may contain other presupposition triggers in its turn, so that what the interpreter faces is a structure in which some presuppositions are nested within other presuppositions. Typically this produces a kind of presupposition duplication effect. For example, consider the sentence *Emma was in love with a different young man as well*. Both *as well* and *different* are presupposition triggers, and each present their presupposition to the recipient. But the *different* presupposition is embedded within the *as well* presupposition. The *as well* presupposition is to the effect that someone else was in love with a different young man. But that means that both Emma and this other person must satisfy the presupposition associated with *different*: the young men they were in love with must both have been different in some context-related way. This carries various implications for the justification of these presuppositions. To consider just one possibility, suppose that the context suggests who the other