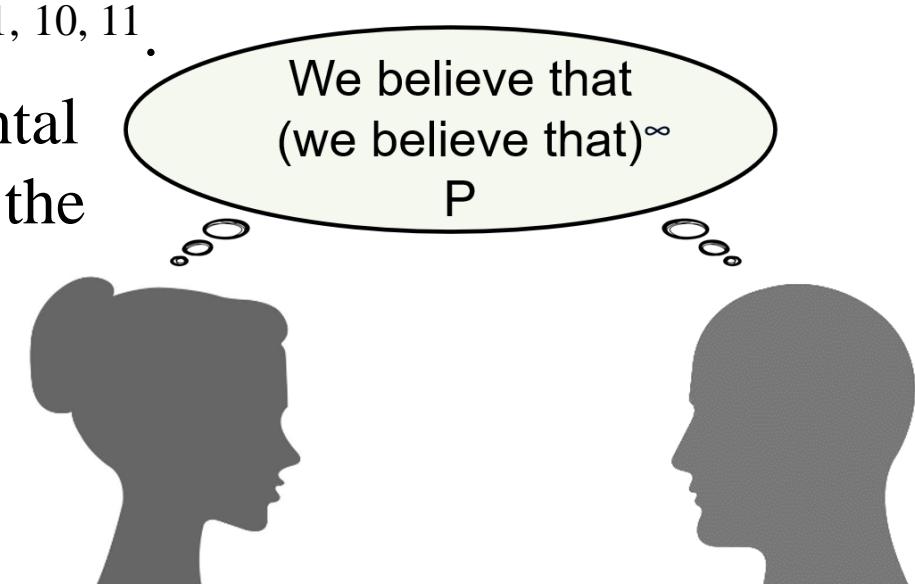


Two common grounds are better than one

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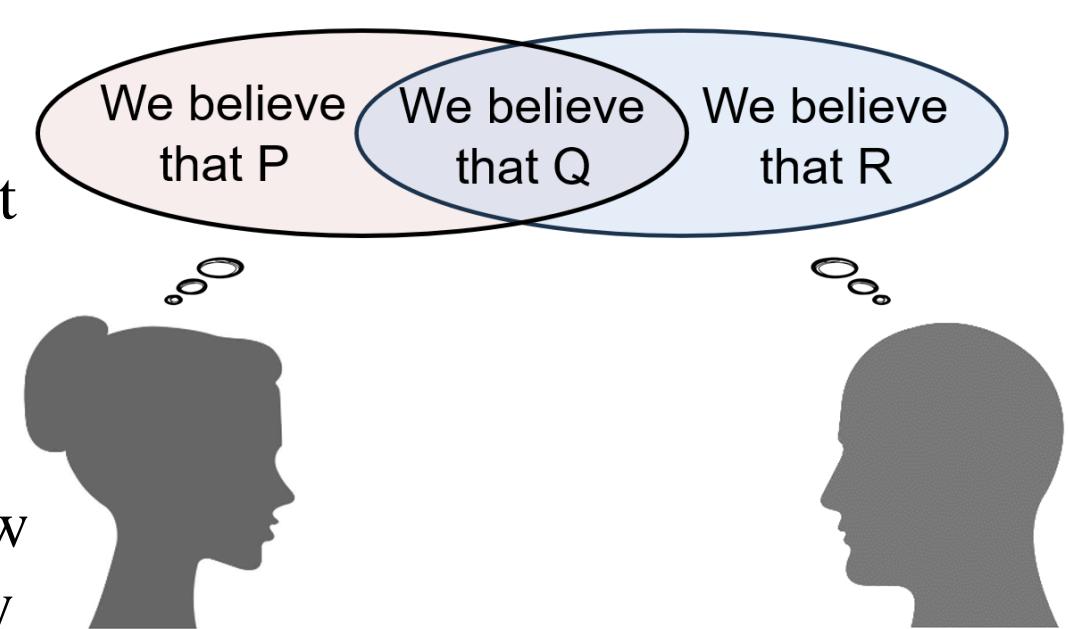
Common ground

- The simplest view on the common ground is that it is like a glass container (i.e., available to all interlocutors) filled with information^{8, 9}. Presupposition triggers appeal to this information:
1) *Mary knows that [John bought a new car]_P*
- This view is problematic^{2, 5}, and it does not distinguish between shared and mutual information. Unless the speaker believes that the listener also believes that P, the speaker would not present P as a presupposition.
- A more advanced view treats common ground as mutual beliefs of the interlocutors^{1, 10, 11}.
- It pays attention to the mental states, but still depends on the actual situation.
- They must *actually* have mutual beliefs.



My proposal

- I propose to make one step further and define common ground as the information that interlocutors *believe to be shared* between them.
 - Based on a more general principle that only beliefs of the interlocutors (and not the actual situation) are relevant for a linguistic exchange.
- This naturally splits common ground into two potentially different ones – one for the speaker and one for the listener.
- Is it a problem?
- I argue that this is not a problem, but rather a solution.
- It is a generalization of the traditional view that explains not only cases of successful communication, but (some forms) of miscommunication too.



Beyond beliefs

- Alternative theories of common ground rely on notions different from belief and knowledge.
- In reasons-to-believe view^{6, 7}, proposition P in situation S is in common ground if:
 - Everyone has reason to believe that they are in S.
 - S indicates to everyone that everyone has reason to believe that they are in S.
 - S indicates to everyone that P.
 - (indicates = gives reasons to believe)
- Commitments' view^{2, 3, 4} defines common ground as a mutual commitments of the interlocutors to the truth of propositions P.
- As far as I can see, those views have the same problem with the cases of miscommunication as the traditional view of mutual beliefs.

Miscommunication

- Miscommunication can arise when either the speaker or the listener mistakenly believe something to be shared information between them, i.e., when (what they take to be) their common grounds differ.

Example 1

- P = *John bought a new car*
- The speaker believes that P is the shared information between her and the listener.
- But the listener does not know P.
 - 2) *Mary knows that [John bought a new car]*
 - 3) *[John bought a new car] and Mary knows it*
- On the traditional view, P is not in the common ground.
 - It should not be presented as a presupposition.
 - 3) should be preferable to 2)
 - Nevertheless, 2) is allowed
 - The listener can accommodate P
- On my view, P is in the speaker's common ground.
 - Presuppositional expression usage is licensed.
 - 2) is preferable to 3)

Example 2

- P = *The listener has a car*
- The speaker believes that P is the shared information between her and the listener.
- But the listener does not have a car and knows that.
 - 4) *Can I borrow [your car]?*
- On the traditional view, 4) should not be produced.
 - P is not in the common ground.
 - It cannot even be accommodated.
 - As it contradicts the listener's beliefs.
- My view explains the production of 4).
 - P is in the speaker's common ground.

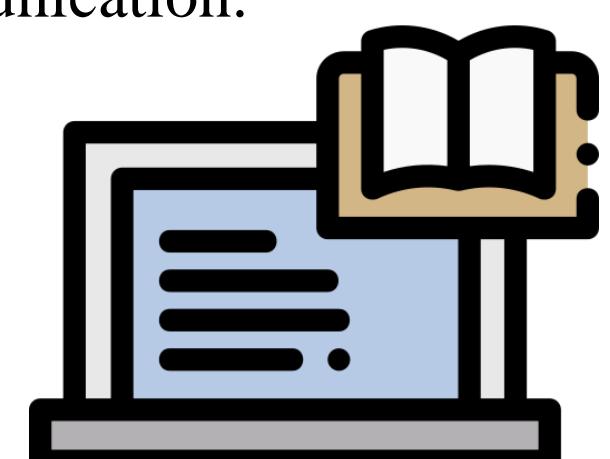


Example 3

- P = *The speaker's car is a red Porsche*
- Q = *The speaker's car is a gray Tesla*
- The speaker takes P to be the shared information
- The listener takes Q to be the shared information
 - 5) *Put this bag into [my car]*
- The listener would perform request 5) incorrectly.
- On the traditional view, neither P nor Q is in the common ground.
 - The speaker should not produce 5) without explaining which car it is.
 - On the listener's side there must be a presupposition failure.
 - "*My car*" is not informative enough to be accommodated in the context.
- My split view explains the situation smoothly.
 - P is in the speaker's common ground. That licenses the production of 5).
 - Q is in the listener's common ground. That licenses the interpretation of 5) without a presupposition failure.

Outside face-to-face

- Apart from the cases of miscommunication, the split common ground view works better in the situations where either the speaker does not know the addressee, or vice versa, or both.
- If I am reading an anonymous pamphlet on the Internet, we do not know each other with the author. Can we have mutual beliefs (i.e., can I believe that they believe that I believe that P)? This is at least controversial.
- But of course, we have some beliefs of what our shared information is. That constitutes our (split) common grounds and facilitates communication.



Conclusions

- Instead of a single notion of common ground I proposed a split view of potentially different common grounds for the speaker and the listener.
- When the two common grounds of the interlocutors coincide (to the extent relevant for a specific communication) that collapses to the traditional view of the single common ground.
- But when they differ, taking them into account allows to explain a broader range of cases, such as miscommunication and non-face-to-face settings.
- Thus, the proposed framework is more general than the traditional view of the single common ground.



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