

Two takes on *too*?

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There are potentially two views of the presupposition trigger too: 1. the traditional view is that it presupposes another comparable constituent to the constituent that is in its scope, or 2. the parallel view, that it presupposes only a parallel relationship. Additionally, too has been ascribed with some unique qualities, including an inability to accommodate. A corpus study of spoken data was carried out and the two views of too, including how they relate to too's ability to accommodate are discussed in light of this empirical work.

1 Background

There are two views on what *too* might presuppose. The traditional view is that *too* has a constituent in its focus, and that it then presupposes the existence of another constituent which is comparable or parallel to the focused constituent. This could be coded as $too(c_2)$ and presuppose: c_1 , given $c_1 \models c_2$. There is also a second view of *too*, suggested in part by Asher and Lascarides (1998) discussion of *too*. In this view, *too* does not presuppose a second constituent, but only that there is a parallel relationship between a constituent in the scope of *too* and something else, potentially a proposition. This could be coded as $too(c_2)$ and c_1 and presuppose: c_1 parallel to c_2 . The traditional tests for presuppositions don't seem to allow us to distinguish between these two views.

Too has been attributed with several additional qualities which make it quite unique. First, *too* has been said to have the curious property of not adding information nor affecting the truth value of its carrier sentences when the presupposition fails. Zeevat (forthcoming) has classified *too* as belonging to a group of non-referential anaphoric triggers, a group of triggers which do not place requirements on their contexts. Zeevat also attributes *too* with three special characteristics: 1. it does not accommodate, 2. it can bind with traditionally inaccessible antecedents, and 3. it is obligatory in certain contexts, and the removal of the *too* in these contexts makes the discourse infelicitous.

In Asher & Lascarides (1998)'s model of presupposition interpretation, all presupposed material is related to the context through rhetorical relations. *Too* is also special here in that it will always be bound to the discourse through the rhetorical relation *Parallel*. The structure of this relationship includes the two constituents that are being compared, and a *theme*, that is a common element that the constituents share which allows them to be considered parallel (Asher 1993).

Which of the two views of *too* seems to best characterize its use in natural discourse, and how does each view relate to the way *too* functions in terms of the ideas of binding and accommodation in the anaphoric theory of presupposition (van der Sandt, 1992)? Can natural language examples shed any light on some of the unique properties ascribed to *too*?

2 Method

To answer this question, all uses of *too* as a presupposition trigger used in multi-speaker discourse were excerpted from 50 multi-speaker dialogues taken from the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English (LLC). 45 examples were found. To increase reliability, annotation was done by the author on two separate occasions, as well as by a second annotator. Each annotation task had two parts, first, the utterance containing *too* was presented with a short context and annotators were asked to make a hypothesis about what two constituents were compared. Second, an expanded context was given and the annotator was again asked to identify what two constituents were being compared and additionally, to mark in the transcript where the first constituent (c_1) was introduced.

3 Problems identifying c_2

Identifying what constituent was in the scope of *too* was very problematic, i.e. identifying c_2 . This is because *too* can focus any one of several constituents: the subject, the predicate or part of the predicate, or another constituent. This variability was first discussed by Jacobson (1964) and Fjelkestam-Nilsson (1983) has pointed out in her corpus study of written uses of *too* that all three types of focusing occur. *Too*'s position in the sentence does not aid in identifying the focused constituent either. Jacobson (1964) classified *too* as potentially occurring in four positions relative to the focused constituent (or c_2): immediately before, immediately following, or before or after the focused constituent. Fjelkestam-Nilsson (1983) found that all combinations were possible and occurred at least once in the data, though some combinations were more frequent than others. This variability accounts for the difficulties in both this study and Fjelkestam-Nilsson (1983) in identifying c_2 when limited to examining only the local context of the utterance in which *too* occurs. An illustration of this variance is given in (1) (example modified from Fjelkestam-Nilsson, 1983, p.28). Each sequence, (ba), (ca), and (da), selects two different constituents to be compared.

- (1) a. John called Mary too.
- b. Tom called Mary.
- c. John wrote to Mary.
- d. John called Susanne.

The second annotator's notes also clearly show that in many cases she had either no idea what was being focused or began with a completely incorrect first hypothesis when examining the usage without the benefit of the greater discourse context. Examine the example below:

- (2) **Speaker B** To eighteen Devonshire Close.
- Speaker a** That`s a nice address **too**.¹ (2 1a1269 B)

The first hypothesis given by the second annotator was that the address was being contrasted with other nice things about the residence. But examination of a greater context (given in (3)) shows that this is incorrect and the two constituents compared are the two addresses. Note that the *theme* as defined by Asher (1993) is "a nice address" and the two constituents being compared are the actual addresses: at Stratford Corner & eighteen Devonshire Close. Notice that not only is it difficult to determine c_2 with only the local context, but it is also difficult to determine what the theme is.

- (3) **Speaker B** And we have a place now. Temporarily for a few days. At Stratford Corner which is near Marshall and Snelgrove. Yes really, yes yes, you know, you know, it is in Oxford Street.
- Speaker a** A very nice address.
- Speaker B** It's all right temporarily. It's got a Mayfair number! But we are moving on Saturday. All this bloody stuff.
- Speaker-a** To whither . or . where as the vulgar say .
- Speaker B** To eighteen Devonshire Close.
- Speaker a** That`s a nice address **too**.

LLC is coded for several prosodic cues, including f_0 prominence, intonation type (e.g. fall, rise, level, combinations thereof), stress and pausing. But after carefully examining the transcript, this information aided in determining c_2 only in a few cases. The labeling in LLC may not have been nuanced or detailed enough to signal what c_2 was from the transcript. Also, the majority of examples were much more complex than those traditionally given to show the disambiguation effects of prosody. There are actually three cases where determining c_2 is not difficult, and an example of each type is given in (4).

- (4) a. She did it too.
- b. It was done at midnight too.
- c. MARY overslept too.
- d. Mary, too, overslept.

In (4a) and (4b), there is only one possible interpretation for c_2 because all the other information is anaphoric. For (4c), prosodic prominence on Mary supports an interpretation that someone other than Mary overslept. (4d) places *too* in a position in which the only interpretation is that the *theme* must be oversleeping and Mary is c_2 .

Very few examples allowed identification based on these clues. Identification of c_2 for the majority of cases was only possible after c_1 already had been found. In all but one case at least one potential parallel constituent was found. The relationship between c_1 and c_2 seems to be characterized by a very strong mutual dependency.

4 Does *too* ever accommodate?

Too has been said not to be able to (or to seldom) accommodate. There are several other anaphoric expressions that are not able to accommodate. Among them, personal pronouns are the most well-known. Van der Sandt (1992) gives lack of semantic content as an explanation for their inability to accommodate. Zeevat argues that triggers such *indeed*, and in consequence *too*, do have a rich semantic

¹ Examples taken from the corpus have in some cases been simplified for brevity.

content but still do not allow accommodation, questioning the validity of this explanation. Because presupposed information is what is accommodated, correctly characterizing what *too* presupposes is vital to any discussion of whether or not *too* accommodates. Let us consider the two views of what *too* presupposes in relation to the anaphoric theory, and particularly the accommodation issue, keeping the results of the empirical work presented above in mind.

Traditional view: *too*(c_2), presupposes c_1 , where $c_1 \setminus = c_2$

In this view binding is something that occurs between c_2 and c_1 and c_1 is considered the antecedent of c_2 . Using this definition, binding occurred in almost all cases empirically. However, how the antecedent was determined in the empirical study differs greatly from how antecedents are identified for other anaphoric expressions. Rather than being able to first determine c_2 , and then look for a potential antecedent, we can only definitively identify c_2 for many cases simultaneously when we identify c_1 .

Why wasn't *too* used to accommodate information? Can lack of accommodation be justified based on a supposed lack of semantic content if *too* presupposes an entire constituent?

Let us consider the complexity of the accommodation task for the hearer in cases like the majority of those found in the corpus, where c_2 was unidentifiable until c_1 was found. Considering the difficulty in identifying c_2 , it is hard to see how even a charitable listener will be able to accommodate a c_1 solely based on what s/he knows of c_2 . Note also that this accommodation task is more complicated than for other presupposition triggers: possessive pronouns limit accommodation to a person, *the CN* asks a listener to accommodate *CN*, *realize p* only requires a listener to add *p*. An accommodated c_1 can be any one of several constituents in a sentence. Accommodation is only easy when c_2 can be clearly identified, which the empirical data suggests is not a very common occurrence, limited to the special circumstances given in (4) above.

What about the cases where *too* is believed to accommodate? In the spoken data, only one example was found where *too* would have to be given an accommodation interpretation and this was a special case of *too* appearing at the beginning of a recording (i.e. the earlier discourse context is missing), where a speaker asked "Do you play the flute *too*?". It is unclear whether the speaker meant that s/he played the flute as well, or if the hearer is meant to contrast the flute with other instruments. (Of course, in this example the speaker and hearer must be aware of what is meant.) Examples similar to these have been questioned by Zeevat (forthcoming) as not leading to accommodation, but instead perhaps to the inference that the speaker also plays the flute. Any accommodation here would truly be a repair strategy, and might be wrong.

But if c_2 and the theme are transparent, as in the examples given in (4), then accommodation should be possible. Interestingly, cases where this happens are very similar to those contexts where *too* has been pointed out to be obligatory (by e.g. Zeevat). The less transparent the relationship, the less obligatory *too* is. The reason *too* seems to be able to accommodate in these cases may simply be because these are the only cases where it is communicatively feasible. Only under transparent circumstances does the speaker provide the hearer with enough information to make sense of a non-bindable *too*. And when the parallel relationship is transparent, it is obligatory to mark it.

Parallel view: *too*(c_2) presupposes parallel relationship between c_2 and something given earlier.

In this view, binding involves identifying a supposed parallel relationship between two potential constituents. This view seems also to intuitively fit better with the actual task of interpreting the natural language examples because of the need in many cases to first find c_1 before completely identifying c_2 , i.e. because of the mutual dependency of the two constituents.

Accommodation, then, in this view involves getting a parallel relationship between two constituents by placing *too* in the vicinity. If this view of *too*'s accommodation is correct then we should be able to get listeners to accommodate parallel relationships in texts where there were none simply by inserting *too* and letting accommodation do the rest. And indeed, this exactly is what we find. The only constraint on the input is that it must contain two constituents of the same type. In example (5), *too* has been inserted. Note that there were no uses of *too* in the original text.

(5) **Speaker A** He was invalided out of New Guinea with three kinds of jaundice (*too*) two kinds of malaria (*too*), extensive jungle sores (*too*). Filthy climate, dengue fever (*too*) and a couple of other things to be going along with and he was in hospital for six months (*too*) <sort of> hovering about the *place*#| till he made his mind up to come back, you know.

Speaker b Frightful.

Speaker A He weighed six and a half stone when he came out of New Guinea. He's about the same height as me (*too*), which is not good and you know you you can duplicate this (*too*) among . a {lot of middle-aged} Australians (*too*)

Speaker b Yes - - it makes for a great great generation gap (*too*) in this country (*too*) at any rate.

Speaker A Well, the generation gap is the same anywhere I think between anyone who took part in World War Two and people who've grown up living on the fat of the land without any prospect of being conscripted (*too*) (110 198+A)

6 Which view of *too* functions best with the empirical data?

First, for the traditional view, the empirical data seems to show that *too* can be considered to be semantically underspecified, and that this would explain its inability to accommodate. A prerequisite for accommodation is that a hearer can determine what the speaker wants him to accommodate. On the other hand, when this prerequisite is fulfilled, e.g. in cases similar to those given in (4), then accommodation seems to be possible. This type of example seems however to be the exception rather than the rule in *too* usage.

The parallel view seems to be more consistent with the task involved in interpretation of examples in the corpus, i.e. the necessity of identifying both constituents argues against a kind of one-sided dependency relationship that the traditional view seems to endorse. In this view we can see that accommodation is entirely possible, and how this seems to work was illustrated in (5). In all, the parallel view seems to account for the empirical data with fewer problems than the traditional view. Only one question seems to be unclear in this view. Where does the inference of a c_1 that seems to appear when c_2 is clearly marked come from? According to the parallel view it can't come from accommodation. If the parallel view of *too* is correct then we have to conclude that this inference is not presuppositional.

7 How does all this relate to other presupposition triggers?

Also has qualities similar to *too*: it can be placed in any number of positions relative to its focused constituent and shows the same type of mutual dependency that *too* shows (see Jacobson, 1964, Fjelkestam-Nilsson, 1983). But this underspecification of the focused c_2 associated with *too* and *also* does not carry over to other presupposition triggers.

Kamp and Rossdeutscher (1994)'s work on German *wieder* (again) is a perfect example. Despite the fact that it is often grouped with *too*, *wieder* has several characteristics that make it quite different from *too*. *Wieder* can have either a restitutive or a repetitive meaning. It's focused constituent (or the constituent in its scope) generally occurs to the right of *wieder*, and the antecedent of the presupposed constituent will be of the same type as the constituent in *wieder*'s scope. All this considerably narrows the number of possibilities for what can be presupposed for *wieder*, and most likely similar considerations apply to for *wieder*'s English equivalent. In summary, it seems as if *too* and *also* are quite unique in being so underspecified.

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