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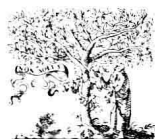
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LEXICAL MARKERS OF COMMON GROUNDS

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INTRODUCTION

Anita Fetzer and Kerstin Fischer

1. THE PROBLEM

This volume investigates the role of lexical markers with respect to the relationship between grounding and common ground on the one hand and between common ground and different types of common ground on the other. Recent research has shown that the content of utterances cannot be assumed to enter common ground only because of the fact that they are being mentioned. Rather, grounding is a complex, sophisticated mechanism in which minimal signals play key roles (e.g. Gardner, 2001). Besides contributing to the process of jointly construing common ground by ratifying each other's contributions, lexical markers exercise a similar function as contextualization cues and framing signals (Gumperz, 1992) regarding the activation of particular types of common ground. The relationship between the two processes, grounding on the one hand and activating common ground on the other hand, is elaborated on and examined from the perspective of lexical markers. Lexical markers are conceived of as multifunctional devices whose degree of explicitness may vary. They have an important function in the processes of grounding and of activating common ground.

The first part of the volume addresses the relationship between mechanisms of grounding and their reference to common ground. The second part examines different types of common ground. It is shown that the investigation of lexical markers provides a novel perspective for investigating the relationship between grounding, common ground and common grounds.

2. COMMON GROUND IN CONTEXT

The multifaceted and heterogeneous category of common ground is central to theories of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, discourse and context. In its common-sense reading, it contains all of the information shared by a speech community, such as facts, attitudes, beliefs, norms, conventions and preferences as well as other types of sociocultural knowledge. In the research paradigm of the ethnography of communication (Saville-Troike, 1989), a speech community's common ground and their sociocultural knowledge is anchored to both linguistic code and social practice, and has been systematized with respect to the categories of *situation*,

that is physical setting and psychological scene, *participants*, viz. speaker, hearer and audience and their statuses in the participation framework, *ends*, namely the goal and the purpose of the speech event from a sociocultural viewpoint, *act sequence*, that is *how* something is said as regards message form and *what* is said as regards message content, *key*, that is mock or serious, *instrumentalities*, viz. channels (spoken, written or email) and forms (vernacular, dialect or standard) of speech, *norms* of interaction and interpretation, and *genre* (Hymes, 1974).

The notion of common ground also plays a prominent role in philosophical and cognitive conceptions of knowledge in the research domains of linguistics, pragmatics, philosophy of language and cognitive science. Here, common ground serves as background for reasoning and for retrieving speaker-intended meaning and other types of implicit meaning, such as indexical expressions, implicatures and indirect speech acts.

Common ground is further understood as presupposition, which is categorized into two distinct domains, viz. semantic and pragmatic presupposition. The former is defined in a truth-conditional frame of reference and applies to any context, and the latter is conceived of as context-dependent. Presuppositions are organized and administered in the framework of context sets (Stalnaker, 1999), which serve as common ground in communication. In the field of computer science, common ground and world knowledge have frequently been conceptualized as a database. While common ground and background are generally conceived of as context-independent notions which obtain in all possible scenarios and in all possible worlds, pragmatic presupposition, unlike semantic presupposition, is context-dependent. It is generally used as a cover term referring to the necessary and sufficient extra-linguistic conditions of communication, such as the social-context categories of participant, time and location. Pragmatic presuppositions are accommodated in speech act theory's felicity conditions (Austin, 1980; Searle, 1969), which are considered as linguistic and social context categories and their satisfaction is assigned the status of a default configuration (Sbisá, 2002). Pragmatic presuppositions are negotiated in and through the process of communication, and because of their defeasibility (Levinson, 1983), they can be cancelled, should a particular contextual configuration arise.

Common ground in the sense of background furthermore plays a fundamental role not only in natural language communication, but also in natural language processing, for instance in dialogue system modelling. According to Vanderveken (2002), participants negotiate the compatibility of background with utterances and their felicity and satisfaction conditions in and through the process of communication. It has to be pointed out, however, that background and context are not identical because possible contexts of utterance can have different backgrounds. As a consequence of that, background contains not only mutual knowledge of facts about the conversational background, but also knowledge about the world and of the world, such as ethical norms and sociocultural values, thus transcending the common-sense notion of context. Searle (1995, 1999) considers background to be a necessary condition for both literal and non-literal meaning thus assigning it the status of a basic premise for felicitous communication. He defines background as an open-ended set of skills, pre-intentional assumptions and practices which are not representational but rather enable intentional acts and states to manifest themselves. For this reason, the conditions of satisfaction for attempted illocutionary acts depend on background and its mutual knowledge, and because of the background, what is said is undetermined by linguistic meaning.

In relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1996), common ground is conceived of as a common set of premises for inference rules. The relevance-theoretic conception of common ground differs from the traditional notion of mutual knowledge by its attempt to avoid the logical consequence of infinite regress, which follows from the code model of communication. To avoid infinite regress, Sperber and Wilson base their theoretical framework on an approximation of mutual knowledge, namely cognitive environments and mutual manifestness. The context-dependent refinements of mutual knowledge and common ground are as follows. A cognitive environment of an individual is conceived of as “a set of facts that are manifest to him” (Sperber and Wilson, 1996: 40). It “is merely a set of assumptions which the individual is capable of mentally representing and accepting as true. (...) We will argue that when you communicate, your intention is to alter the cognitive environment of your addressees; but of course you expect their actual thought processes to be affected as a result” (Sperber and Wilson, 1996: 46). They specify the consequence of communication with respect to mutual manifestness and its social relevance: “Mere informing alters the cognitive environment of the audience. Communication alters the mutual cognitive environment of the audience and communicators. Mutual manifestness may be of little cognitive importance but it is of crucial social importance. A change of the mutual cognitive environment is a change in their possibilities of interaction” (Sperber and Wilson, 1996: 61). But what exactly is manifestness, and what consequences does it have for a context-dependent conception of mutual knowledge and common ground? To use Sperber and Wilson’s (1996: 39) own words:

To be manifest, then, is to be perceptible and inferable. An individual’s total cognitive environment is the set of all the facts that he can perceive or infer: all the facts that are manifest to him. An individual’s total cognitive environment is a function of his physical environment and his cognitive abilities. It consists not only of all the facts that he is aware of, but also all the facts that he is capable of becoming aware of, in his physical environment. The individual’s actual awareness of the facts, i.e. the knowledge that he has acquired, of course contributes to his ability to become aware of further facts. Memorised information is a component of cognitive abilities.

Relevance theory extends the domain of reference of manifestness from facts to all assumptions. As a consequence of the extended frame, manifestness requires a scalar interpretation, invoking different degrees of manifestness. Regarding its semantics, *manifest* is weaker than *know*, and *manifest* is weaker than *assume*. In order to communicate in a felicitous manner and to avoid coordination problems, communicators presuppose and construct mutual cognitive environments. Thus, relevance theory assumes a cognitive context which is assigned the status of a necessary condition for fleshing out the explicatures of a communicative contribution which are required for the calculation of the relevant implicatures. Only then can the contribution be made optimally relevant.

Other theories of context which have been formulated in the fields of cognitive science, linguistics, pragmatics, sociopragmatics and sociolinguistics (Akman et al., 2001; Bouquet et al., 1999; Duranti and Goodwin, 1992; Fetzer, 2002, 2004) consider context as an unbounded entity which requires delimitation. Against this background, it categorizes into cognitive context, linguistic context, sociocultural context and social context. Analogously to the difficulty of accommodating infinite regress in a definition of common ground, context suffers similar delimitation problems. That is to say, context cannot really be delimited and therefore cannot

be described completely, as has already been explicated by Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein, 1978). Depending on the frame of investigation, context is delimited to the global surroundings of the phenomenon to be investigated, for instance to an institution or to a sociocultural setting, in which the discourse is taking place, or it is delimited to a communicative genre, of which the phenomenon to be investigated is a constitutive part. Here, context is not restricted to linguistic material, which is referred to as linguistic context or co-text. It also includes social and cultural phenomena, and is referred to as social context and as sociocultural context. Prototypical social-context constituents are participants, their psychological dispositions, their social and discursive roles, the physical location of the discourse, time and preceding discourse. From a sociocultural-context perspective, these universal constituents are given a culture-specific interpretation and are reframed, such as a more individualistically or a more collectively oriented conception of a participant, and a more polychronically or a more monochronically oriented conception of time. In its narrow definition, context is delimited to the local (or immediately adjacent) surroundings of the phenomenon to be investigated and can refer to the immediately adjacent surroundings of a phoneme, morpheme, phrase or lexical item, sentence or utterance, for instance. It can also refer to the participants and their immediately adjacent surroundings, and to the setting and its immediate surroundings. If the surroundings are cognitive material, for instance a proposition, a mental representation or an assumption, they are called cognitive context. If the surroundings are of an extra-linguistic nature, that is non-cognitive and non-linguistic material, they are called social context, and if the surroundings are language material, they are called linguistic context. Both context and common ground are dynamic concepts as there is always new information and thus new propositions to be added to the common ground or to the context.

To sum up, common ground can be differentiated with regard to a number of perspectives. First, it is seen as comprising a set of true propositions which serve as a resource for the understanding of utterances. Regarding its function, participants presuppose its validity and fall back on it when they retrieve implicatures. In that frame of reference, common ground is looked upon as objective and for this reason, it represents a context-independent category, which is true in all possible contexts. In the truth-conditional approach, common ground is implicit. It can be explicated via true propositions, thus spelling out its underlying presuppositions. In order to describe the underlying mechanisms regarding the joint construction of a shared basis of true propositions, the notion of grounding plays a key role.

In contrast, in an integrated frame of reference, grammatical constructions and lexical expressions encode not only propositional or factual information, but also discursive information anchored to the textual and sequential organization of discourse and interpersonal information anchored to the interpersonal and illocutionary domains. The extension of frame requires a multifunctional approach to grammatical constructions and a multifunctional approach to lexical expression, where propositional, discursive and interpersonal meanings are realized and expressed in a simultaneous manner. Against this background, communicative contributions contain anaphoric, cataphoric and generic grounding devices (Givón, 1993). Communicative contributions therefore not only create common ground (Lambrecht, 1994), but at the same time indicate to which domain of common ground they are to be attributed. Thus, the act of grounding is intrinsically connected with information management, with the participants' common ground and with the administration of common ground, but what is being grounded, and more precisely, where is it being grounded?

3. GROUNDING AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMON GROUND

Common ground has been examined on the one hand as a set of true propositions, which serve as the foundation for reasoning and retrieving implicated meaning. To this set, not only new information is added in communication but the information contained is also updated in the communication process. Here, researchers have taken a product perspective. In the research paradigms of interactional sociolinguistics and ethnomethodology on the other hand, common ground is looked upon from a process viewpoint and thus is constructed and reconstructed in and through the process of communication. Here, relevant variables – for instance solidarity, power, ethnicity and gender – are seen as jointly constructed in interaction by a particular employment of the linguistic code and by a particular employment of a social practice (Garfinkel, 1994; Gumperz, 1977, 1992). To bridge the gap between a conception of common ground as either process or product, common ground has to be assigned the status of both product and process, such that it is not only presupposed in communication but also interactionally organized. So where do the different conceptions of common ground meet, and where do they depart?

All of the research paradigms examined above share a conception of common ground as a presupposed common knowledge base which is required for felicitous communication. To that base, participants anchor their communicative contributions and they fall back on it, should they require further information which may not be explicitly encoded. So, common ground is implicit and presupposed. Furthermore, the majority of conceptions of common ground share some kind of update operator which administers common ground. But there is no general agreement with respect to what type of information common ground contains. While the philosophy-of-language and linguistic conceptions of common ground tend to favour a factual knowledge-based type of common ground, cognitive science employs fact- and assumption-based formats. However, in order to be felicitously integrated into a theory of natural language communication, the prevailing concept of common ground needs to be delimited and contextualized with respect to the basic pragmatic premises of intentionality (Austin, 1980; Searle, 1969) and current purpose (Grice, 1975).

Thomason's notion of *conversational record* (Thomason, 1992) is closely connected with the philosophy-of-language concept of common ground: it contains factual information since it is public, and its construction takes place in the intentional exchange of communicative acts. In Thomason's framework, speaker meaning is equivalent to a sort of coordination-oriented intention. It is intrinsically connected with Lewis's concept of accommodation (Lewis, 1979), which regulates the removing of obstacles to achieve the desires and goals participants attribute to others when they communicate. This is due to the fact that speaker meaning is neither produced nor interpreted in isolation. Rather, it is anchored to a conversational record which contains (1) information that is public, (2) presumptions and (3) an update operator. Regarding the nature of the connectedness between common ground and common grounds, Thomason's concept of conversational record can be considered as an important context-dependent subset of common ground. It allows for both the accommodation of new information and a commonly shared basis. The former is due to its update operator, while the latter is due to its status as public information. But do conversational records and common ground really contain public information only?

Clark's approach to communication is both social and cognitive. Correspondingly, his conception of common ground is also both social and cognitive, or to use his own words: "two people's common ground is, in effect, the sum of their mutual, common, or joint knowledge, beliefs and suppositions" (Clark, 1996: 93). An interpersonal outlook on language and language use requires an extended frame of investigation with common ground as one of its constitutive parts. In such a framework, common ground can no longer be conceived of as consisting of one domain only. Instead it must be differentiated into (minimally) two interacting dynamic domains, namely a participant's personal common ground where her/his subjective and privileged experience is stored, and a participant's communal common ground where social or joint experience is stored. Only then is it possible to cooperate and coordinate actions and perform joint actions. The two types of common ground are interconnected, constantly updated and, if necessary, revised.

The concepts of conversational record (Thomason, 1992) and of personal and communal common ground (Clark, 1996: 110ff.) are further refined with regard to their participant orientation and their embeddedness in context. Fetzer (2002, 2004) examines particular subsets of common ground, namely context-dependent dialogue common grounds. Dialogue common ground is a dynamic sociocognitive construct, which differentiates into an individual dialogue common ground, that is a participant's representation of her/his dialogue common ground, and a collective dialogue common ground, that is a participant's representation of the set of participants' representation of dialogue common ground. The former contains and administers the information of one individual's dialogue regarding force, content, formulation, and interpersonal and interactional presuppositions. It thus captures an individual's processing and interpretation of information. The latter contains and administers the ratified information of the collective. In communication, the participants' individual dialogue common grounds may differ, sometimes to a large extent. In addition to a participant's construction of an individual dialogue common ground, he or she also constructs a collective dialogue common ground which is anchored to the set of participants and to the set of their ratified contributions. The collective dialogue common ground contains and administers set-specific information, such as collective we-intentions, collective communicative goals, collective inferencing strategies and collective coherence (Fetzer, 2004). The set-specific values function as a filter, which canalizes what-has-been-said accordingly by guiding the interpretation and production of intersubjective meaning in a prespecified manner. Collective dialogue common ground intersects with individual dialogue common ground and with other individual and collective dialogue common grounds.

In natural language communication, the individual and collective dialogue common grounds are permanently updated, and all of the postulated contributions and their presuppositions are allocated to the individual dialogue common grounds. Correspondingly, all of the ratified contributions and their ratified presuppositions are allocated to the collective dialogue common grounds, which are expected to be almost identical for the participants because of the necessary condition of ratification. Naturally, the collective dialogue common grounds are permanently updated. Furthermore, the collective dialogue common grounds serve as a foundation for the participants' inferencing processes. Because of their set-specific status, ratified presuppositions are assigned a co-suppositional status. Analogously to the differentiation between individual dialogue common ground and collective dialogue common ground, presuppositions and co-suppositions subcategorize along similar lines. With regard to the validity of dialogue common ground, it is only valid in the restricted domain of a particular

dialogue, but may, if strengthened through ratification in other dialogues, become valid in an extended frame of reference. Unlike presuppositions, co-suppositions administer information about something which *is* the case and about something which *is not* the case. Against this background, co-suppositions are only valid in the restricted domain of a particular dialogue, but may, if strengthened through ratification in other dialogues, become valid in a more extended frame of reference. Thus, a necessary condition for the allocation of a contribution and its presuppositions to a collective dialogue common ground is their ratification. Because of the dynamic conception of common ground and its subcategorization into individual and collective dialogue common grounds, participants are constantly involved in displaying their understanding of the current status of the relevant common grounds.

Functional and cognitive approaches to language and language use understand language and language use as interconnected and as firmly anchored to context (Clark, 1996; Givón, 1993). In communication, participants do not simply exchange information but rather realize their communicative contributions by encoding information in particular linguistic surfaces which are composed of a finite number of lexical expressions and of a finite number of grammatical constructions. Since communication is a context-dependent endeavour par excellence, the information encoded can never be completely new but it is always connected with prior information which is a constitutive part of the participants' common ground, and with new information which is not yet part of their common ground. Grounding is thus intrinsically connected with common ground and with the participants' administration of common ground. Regarding its cognitive status, the act of grounding is anchored to a logic of upward completion and downward evidence: "Levels of action form what I have called action ladders, which have the properties of upward causality, upward completion, and downward evidence" (Clark, 1996: 389), which is also found in abductive processing of information, in abductive processes of hypothesis formation and in abductive reasoning (Givón, 1989; Levinson, 1995).

The contextualization and delimitation of common ground requires the fundamental premise of communication to be conceptualized in a dynamic network-based frame of reference which accommodates the act of grounding. However, the act of grounding is more than a simple update operation as it administers not only the process of adding new information to common ground, but rather the addition of new information to the context-independent category of common ground and to the context-dependent category of different types of common grounds, which may be anchored to individual participants and their assumption of what they consider to be part of their common ground, or to individual discourses or dialogues. A dynamic conception of common ground thus requires the accommodation of a permanent negotiation of common situations in which participants display to each other – and to possible audiences – what they consider to be the common ground of their interaction. In this approach, participants therefore not only display their understanding of each other's contributions, but are also involved in construing and displaying the assumed shared basis. One such mechanism consists of the use of particular lexical markers that serve speakers as presentations of what they assume to be common ground.

4. LEXICAL MARKERS

In communication, participants exchange information by encoding it in lexical expressions and grammatical constructions in a methodical way (Garfinkel, 1994), and all linguistic choices

can be understood as related to context in one way or other. With respect to paralinguistic cues, Gumperz has introduced the notion of contextualization cue, which is anchored to the field of interactional sociolinguistics:

They serve to highlight, foreground or make salient certain phonological or lexical strings *vis-à-vis* other similar units, that is they function relationally and cannot be assigned context-independent, stable, core lexical meanings. Foregrounding processes, moreover, do not rest on any one single cue. Rather, assessments depend on cooccurrence judgments (...) that simultaneously evaluate a variety of different cues. When interpreted with reference to lexical and grammatical knowledge, structural position within a clause or sequential location within a stretch of discourse, foregrounding becomes an input to implicatures, yielding situated interpretations.

Contextualization cues enter into the inferential process at several degrees of generality. Minimally, it is necessary to recognize three distinct levels. Firstly, there is the perceptual plane (...). They serve to provide information on such matters as possible turn-construction units (...). The second level is that of local assessments of what conversational analysts call "sequencing" and what from a pragmatist's perspective one might refer to as "speech act level implicatures" (...) what I have called "communicative intent". (...) Third, there is the more global level of framing. (Gumperz, 1992: 232, 233)

Analogously to the discursive function of paralinguistic cues which organize discourse both locally and globally by indicating the nature of the connectedness between a communicative contribution and context, a lexical marker contributes to organizing common ground by indicating the nature of the connectedness between particular information communicated by a particular piece of discourse with the discourse common ground and with other types of common ground. Lexical markers connect not only the domains of declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge, but also the domains of explicit knowledge or Thomason's notion of public information, which can easily be shared, and implicit knowledge or individual dialogue common ground knowledge, which is highly personal. As feedback signals, they may even contribute directly to the grounding of the conversational record.

Recurrent background is of immediate relevance for the lexicalization and grammaticalization of new meaning (Lehmann, 1995; Traugott, 1995; Wischer and Diewald, 2002), and recurrent background is at the origin of new meaning. It constitutes a necessary condition for the creating of new lexical expressions or new grammatical constructions, as is also explicated by Vanderveken: "For recurrent non literal meanings in recurrent forms of life of background tend to be lexicalized or realized syntactically after a while" (Vanderveken, 2002: 59). For a lexical expression to be assigned the status of a lexical marker, recurrent background and repeated acts of grounding are required. Because of its high frequency in a particular context, the lexical expression which is to be assigned the status of a lexical marker acquires the additional meaning of an instruction to administer a particular piece of discourse information in a particular domain of a particular common ground. Thus, a lexical marker may be multifunctional: it may carry its original semantic meaning while at the same time providing an administrative instruction.

In the socio-cognitive framework, language is used deliberately in an interpersonal setting for social purposes. This is reflected in Clark's relational conception of meaning which

is communicated by the participants' intentional and goal-directed employments of signals: "Signals are built on signs that speakers deliberately create for their addressees – words, gestures, noises, and more" (Clark, 1996: 156). Moreover, Clark postulates the existence of a communal lexicon which is assigned a prime function in the construction of communal common ground. But is communal common ground constructed through language or through language use; is it constructed by utterances or by sentences? Clark provides us with the following answer: "Utterances, however, are not sentences. Recall that signs are types, and they signify types of things, not individual things. Whereas sentences are entirely symbolic, utterances of sentences can never be, because they are particular occurrences and are used to refer to particular objects, states and events" (Clark, 1996: 161, 162). Utterances therefore combine different methods: "In conversation, most utterances are composites of the three methods – describing-as, indicating, and demonstrating – not just one or two" (Clark, 1996: 183), which he schematizes with regard to the basic communicative functions of linguistic and non-linguistic signals, which he calls methods, with regard to the linguistic and non-linguistic signs created, with regard to the cognitive memory resources and with regard to their basic cognitive processes as follows:

Method	Sign created	Memory resource	Basic process
describing-as	Symbols	mental lexicon grammatical rules	activating rules
indicating	Indices	representation of spatial, temporal surroundings	locating entities
demonstrating	Icons	memory for appearances	imagining appearances

Source: Clark (1996: 184).

The descriptive function of language relies on the employment of linguistic symbols which are retrieved from the mental lexicon. They refer to objects, states, and events (Clark, 1996: 162). Indices, in contrast, express relational meaning. They serve to indicate particular spatial and temporal entities and therefore are of immediate relevance to the construction of personal and communal common grounds. Icons serve to demonstrate appearances. They map onto collocational and idiomatic expressions and evoke particular cultural meanings; without these contextual frames, the meaning of icons would be infelicitous. While symbols activate rules and provide a default common ground, indices locate entities thus signifying a particular common ground. It is the interface of symbols and indices where the functional category of lexical marker is allocated to. Lexical markers express relational meanings which are calculated with regard to the marker's connectedness with a contribution and its proposition, force, and local and global contexts.

5. LEXICAL MARKERS OF COMMON GROUND(S)

This volume presents original and up-to-date research on the connectedness between common ground and grounding on the one hand, and between different types of common ground on the other hand. It provides an interdisciplinary perspective on the two primarily socio-pragmatic