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A problem for *Maximize Presupposition! (Locally)*

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Maximize Presupposition! (MP) is a principle of language use (rooted in Heim 1991), which says that of two competing forms that are equally informative one must use the one which has a stronger presupposition, unless this presupposition is not satisfied in the particular context. This derives the oddness of (1) with the *all*-variant, because the assumed context supports the stronger presupposition of the *both*-competitor (that John has exactly two students).

(1) [Context: John has two students]
John invited {#all, both} of his students.

Either the above formulation of MP is on the wrong track or MP is not a speech-act-level principle. A convincing argument for this claim comes from an observation due to Percus (2006). In (2), *all* is intuitively odd in the same way as it is in (1). However, the presupposition triggered by *both* in (2) is filtered through the antecedent of the conditional; the *both*-sentence presupposes that if John has two students, then he has two students, which is tautologous. Therefore, the presupposition of the *both*-sentence as a whole is not stronger than its *all*-alternative.

(2) If John has exactly two students, he will invite {#all,both} of them.

Percus takes (2) as evidence that the standard formulation of MP is on the wrong track. His proposal is that whenever two alternatives are equally informative, the one which contains an occurrence of the presuppositionally stronger <u>lexical item</u> must be used. Thus in (2) the two alternatives are equally informative because neither can be true without the other being true as well; therefore, since *both* is a presuppositionally stronger lexical item than *all*, the *both*-sentence is preferred.

Singh (2011) takes (2) as evidence that the standard formulation of MP is on the right track except that it needs to be relativized to local contexts (Heim 1983, Schlenker 2009). The local context of the *all/both*-consequents in (2) is the set of possible worlds that verify the antecedent, i.e. worlds in which John has exactly two students. Relative to this context, the stronger presupposition of the *both*-consequent is satisfied. The *all*-consequent is therefore predicted to be infelicitous, as desired.

The contrast in (3) is problematic for Singh's proposal.

(3) I am critical of {#all,both} of the two mainstream presidential candidates.

Singh seems to predict no contrast between the two sentences in (3). This is because we do not expect the DPs [*both of the two candidates*] and [*all of the two candidates*] to differ with respect to the presuppositions they trigger. [*The two candidates*] already presupposes that there are exactly two candidates, and the same presupposition should, by standard assumptions, be triggered by [*both of the two candidates*] and by [*all of the two candidates*]. Note that [*all of the n candidates*] generally inherits the presupposition triggered by [*the n candidates*]:

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(4)   a. Are you critical of (all of) the *n* mainstream candidates?

        b. If you are critical of (all of) the *n* mainstream candidates, who should we vote for?
          ⇒ There are exactly *n* candidates.

(3), though challenging, might ultimately be surmountable by a revision of Singh's account. One possibility, suggested by a reviewer, is to define the local context of *both/all* as the context that results <u>after</u> processing the restrictor. The tenability of this move, however, and the details of how it can work, must be left to future discussion. Percus's proposal, on the other hand, captures the contrast in (3) straightforwardly.

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