Presupposed partitivity in classifiers

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It is herein argued that the semantic contribution of what are here called partitive classifiers is presuppositional. This is supported by evidence that the proper part-hood inferred from English "piece" and similar classifiers (e.g. "darab" Hungarian, "stuck" German) behaves like a lexical presupposition (e.g. "stopped raining") rather than a resolution presupposition (e.g. "raining again") using the test for presuppositional status in Amaral & Cummins (2014). In (1) the fact that the proposition containing the partitive classifier can be at least questionably, hence "?" affirmed and corrected, while being denied and corrected is straightforwardly acceptable shows that it patterns like a lexical presupposition as opposed to a resolution presupposition which shows no preference between the two responses (Amaral & Cummins 2014: 168). Further support that (1) displays presuppositional content comes from the fact that asserted content (2) patterns differently: affirming and correcting is straightforwardly marked as opposed to at least questionable. The semantics of partitive classifiers analyzed such that they presuppose that there is an individual that is part of another individual. When this presupposition is met, (3) is true if and only if the piece of cake was eaten. With this analysis, partitive classifiers are analyzed in parallel with partitive constructions (e.g. "three of the lawyers") in Marty (2019: 153), wherein proper-partitivity is a presuppositional implicature that arises from competition with non-partitive alternatives (e.g. "a piece of pie" vs. "a pie"). In other words, presupposition and assertion can be agreed with even if the implicature that a piece is not a whole is going be cancelled (1b). The given analysis of partitive classifiers and the proper-part inference also aligns with Romoli & Schwarz (2014) who show that presuppositions (e.g. "stopped going") are processed like indirect scalar implicatures (e.g. "didn't always go") in that inferences that each give rise to are both supported or not in the same sorts contexts. In summary, this talk shows how the semantics of partitive classifiers fits straightforwardly work on partitives and presupposition.

Word count: 330

(1) Context: Zelda was very hungry and ate a whole pie.

a. Zelda: "I ate a piece of pie"

b. ?"Yes, you ate a whole pie."

c. "No, you ate a whole pie."

(2) Context: Zelda was very hungry and ate a peach pie.

a. Zelda: "I ate an apple pie"

b. #"Yes, you ate a peach pie."

c. "No, you ate a peach pie."

(3) Zelda ate a piece of pie.

Presupposition: $\exists x \exists y([\![\text{piece}]\!](x) \wedge x \sqsubseteq y \wedge [\![\text{pie}]\!](y))$

i.e. there is a pie-individual, *y*, and a piece-individual, *x*, and *x* is part of *y*

Assertion: $\exists x \exists y([\![\text{piece}]\!](x) \wedge x \sqsubseteq y \wedge [\![\text{pie}]\!](y) \wedge [\![\text{ate}]\!](\text{Zelda})(\text{x}))$

i.e. there is a pie-individual, *y*, and a piece-individual, *x*, and *x* is part of *y,* and Zelda ate *x*

References

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