Preliminaries to Acceptance-based Pragmatics

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While processing good enough linguistic representation, dialogue partners rely on different perspectives - their own point of view, their addressees' one, common/shared beliefs - or on existing linguistic representations built during preceding interactions. Explaining such a phenomenon is still a challenge. In this work, we propose preliminaries for a rational model of dialogue based on a distinction between belief and acceptance. Central to this model is the inclusion of acceptance. Acceptance here differs from the speech act of assent, ie. agreeing to a proposal whether or not this agreement is in line with one's mental state. Acceptance has been initially designed as a belief-like mental representation aiming at encapsulating knowledge involved in practical reasoning (Cohen, 1989; Paglieri, 2006; Saget, S. & Guyomard, M., 2006 & 2007). This model is called Acceptance-based Pragmatics. We demonstrate that adding the notion of acceptance enables to support different kinds of backgrounds, notably mixing perspective-taking and reuse.

We will firstly make explicit initial motivations and principles of Acceptance-based Pragmatics. Extending the set of belief-like mental attitudes used to characterize knowledge (privilege and shared) enables to take into account the full diversity regarding the kind of knowledge and the kind of function knowledge may have in language processing (background, construction, established mutual understanding). It also enables to specify the corresponding rational state or behavior. Such a rational model of dialog is deeply helpful as an analytical method to identify and specify subparts of a complex notion such as common ground and to express specific (several) expressions of rational behavior or state.

Secondly, we specify the basic principles of Acceptance-based Pragmatics. Finally, we present challenges of acceptance definition as well as ongoing work to refashion the belief and acceptance distinction with a fact (declarative knowledge) versus tool (procedural knowledge) distinction. Basing the distinction on one property rather than a collection of properties enables to go beyond distinctions such as voluntary/involuntary reasoning process (Hakli, 2006). or explicit/implicit memory. We explore insights both from formal epistemology and cognitive science to specify acceptance.

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