Presupposition Projection: the New Debate

Since the 1980's, the analysis of presupposition projection has been dominated by dynamic theories, whose main tenet is that the meaning of a clause should not be analyzed in terms of its truth conditions, but rather in terms of its 'context change potential' (i.e. of the effect it has on the context in which it is uttered). Despite striking empirical successes, these analyses have been criticized because they are insufficiently explanatory: the dynamic framework turns out to be so powerful that it makes it possible to stipulate in the lexical entries of connectives and operators the results that one would have liked to derive in the first place. For this reason, several analyses have (re-)emerged which advocate a return to the pre-dynamic era. They differ in their conceptual motivations and predictions: some are based on a semantics which is neither dynamic nor trivalent; others are trivalent but non-dynamic; still others seek to reconstruct dynamic notions in an entirely new way. But all provide general algorithms that derive the projection behavior of any connective or operator from its classical (non-dynamic) behavior, and in this sense they offer accounts that are truly explanatory. We will try to survey this new debate.