

A stress-free alternative to a Homogeneity presupposition

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Overview. This note re-evaluates some of the arguments recently put forth by [Wehbe \(2022\)](#) and [Guerrini and Wehbe \(2024\)](#) that homogeneity with definite plurals, exemplified in (1), is the result of a Homogeneity presupposition, as in (2) (contrary to earlier arguments against a homogeneity presupposition by [Spector 2013](#), [Križ 2015](#), [Križ and Spector 2017](#)).

- (1) a. Mary read the books. ≈ Mary read **All** of the books
b. Mary didn't read the books. ≈ Mary read **None** of the books
- (2) Homogeneity presupposition:
Mary read **All** of the books \vee Mary read **None** of the books

We argue that the infelicity data which they use to motivate a homogeneity presupposition have alternative explanations, which can explain infelicity even in cases where assuming a homogeneity presupposition does not help. Specifically, our alternative explanations rely on (i) a requirement for contrastive focus in certain contexts, and (ii) mandatory implicatures. Our alternative explanations thus undermine [Wehbe](#) and [Guerrini and Wehbe's](#) arguments in support of assuming a Homogeneity presupposition. At the same time, they do not rule out the possibility that there is a homogeneity presupposition after all.

PAI. [Wehbe](#) and [Guerrini and Wehbe](#) argue that a constraint on presupposition accommodation—dubbed Post Accommodation Informativity (PAI)—explains the contrast in (3), on the crucial assumption that definite plurals trigger homogeneity as a presupposition. Given the contextual setup, (3a) becomes uninformative after accommodating that presupposition (whereas (3b), which lacks the presupposition, doesn't), explaining the oddness.

- (3) I knew that Ann read at least some of the books. But today I learned that...
a. #she read the books. b. she read ALL the books.

Alternative analysis. We claim that the source of the contrast (3) is independent from PAI and has to do with constraints on focus: the discourse is structured in such a way that stress is presumably required on an element that contrasts with 'some' in the preceding sentence. In (3a) there is no overt phrase which can appropriately host contrastive focus, but the addition of the universal 'all' provides just that, which is why (3b) must be pronounced with stress on 'all'. [Guerrini and Wehbe's](#) observation thus does not necessarily detect a homogeneity presupposition. Note that with conjunction we see the same effect we see with *all* in (3b): stress on *and* is required if the context entails that the corresponding disjunction is true, as (4) demonstrates.

- (4) I knew that Ann read at least one of books A and B. But today I learned that...
a. #she read book A and book B. b. she read book A AND book B.

One may wonder though whether the requirements for stress in (3b) and in (4) have to do with homogeneity after all, given that both *all* and stressed *and* serve as homogeneity removers (when *and* occurs under negation, stressing *and* is required or at least strongly preferred in order to bring about the reading $\neg > \wedge$; see [Križ 2015](#), [Schwarzschild 1994](#), [Szabolcsi and Haddican 2004](#), a.o.). But the same observation can be made for utterances which have no apparent connection to Homogeneity. A more suggestive piece of evidence for our alternative analysis then comes from cases in which the effect is replicated even when there is no homogeneity presupposition in sight, such as with disjunction. (5a-b) show that stress on the locus for contrast, the disjunction marker, is required, in a way which parallels the contrast in (5c-d) between

explanation suggests itself on a view where homogeneity effects follow from implicature calculation (Magri 2014, Bar-Lev 2021). Magri (2009a,b) claims that implicatures are obligatorily derived when their derivation leads to a contextual contradiction; Magri (2011) further points out that this occurs even in DE contexts, as in (11), where *some* is in the restrictor of *every*:

- (11) Context: *In Italy, children always inherit the last name of their father.*
a. #Every father some of whose children have a funny last name must pay a fine.

If the inference from *John is married to his teammates* that he is married to all his teammates is an implicature, as the implicature view of Homogeneity assumes, then since this implicature results in a contextual contradiction, one may expect it to be obligatorily derived even in DE contexts, for the same reason that *some* in (11a) gets the contextually contradictory *some-but-not-all* meaning in a DE context. On this view, the infelicity of (10a), just like the infelicity of (11a), is due to the fact that an implicature is derived locally, which then makes the sentence a contextual tautology. Concretely, this is the prediction of Bar-Lev (2021)'s theory of homogeneity when combined with Magri (2011)'s assumption that exhaustification is obligatory at every scope site and Bar-Lev (2023)'s account of Magri's generalization that infelicity cannot be avoided when exhaustification results in a contextual contradiction given the full set of alternatives.

Homogeneity and presuppositional implicatures. Our alternative explanations for infelicity with definite plurals in examples like (3a), (5c), (6a), (8a), and (10a) do not rule out the existence of a homogeneity presupposition, but rather only show that they are not necessarily indicative of its existence. Moreover, there are reasons to believe that implicatures in general are part of the presupposed content (Bassi et al. 2021). If we take implicatures to be presuppositional and assume the implicature view of homogeneity (which we assumed for explaining the infelicity of (10a)), one should expect a homogeneity presupposition after all. This is indeed the view proposed by Guerrini and Wehbe (2024).

Note that the argument made by Wehbe and Guerrini and Wehbe from cases like (3a) in favor of a homogeneity presupposition is parallel to an argument that has been made in favor of presuppositional implicatures from cases like (12) (for a similar example see Bassi et al. 2021:p.28). Importantly, here having focus on *some* does not make the sentence felicitous, which is why an account based on contrastive focus does not look promising. (Having said that, the fact that there is obligatory stress on *only* in (12b) may indicate that considerations of contrastive focus are at play here after all; this is a direction we set aside for now, as our main focus in this abstract is on homogeneity.)

- (12) I knew that Ann read at least some of the books. But today I learned that...
a. #she read SOME of the books.
b. She ONLY read SOME of the books.

The question whether there is a homogeneity presupposition can then be taken to be part of the general question of whether implicatures are presuppositional. While we do not aim to take a stance on this issue, we should note that it is not settled; see recently Spector (2024) for arguments in favor of an alternative account of the contrast between (12a) and (12b) which does not rely on presuppositional exhaustification, and see Doron et al. (2024)'s reply.

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