Abstract
On its own, the sentence 'John knows that he is incompetent' presupposes that John is incompetent: the sentence is usually odd unless it is already assumed that he is. By contrast, the complex sentences 'If John is incompetent, he knows it', or 'John is incompetent and he knows it' do not have this presupposition (no inference is obtained in the first case; and in the second, it is asserted rather than presupposed that John is incompetent). It is thus natural to ask how the presuppositions of complex sentences are computed from the presuppositions of their parts. Since the 1980's, formal approaches to this question (called the problem of 'presupposition projection') have been dominated by dynamic semantics, whose main tenet is that the very meaning of an expression is a 'context change potential', i.e. an ability to modify the beliefs of the speech act participants. It was recognized early on, however, that this approach lacks explanatory power. Although it can capture the fact that, say, the sentence 'John is incompetent and he knows it' filters out the presupposition of the second conjunct, it utterly fails to explain why there couldn't be a deviant conjunction 'and*' that had the same assertive component as 'and' but a different presuppositional behavior. After introducing some of the main ideas - and problems - of dynamic semantics, we will discuss new formal approaches that have been (re-)discovered in the last two years. Although they have conflicting inspirations and make different predictions, they all explain presupposition projection on the basis of a non-dynamic semantics, and offer completely general and predictive algorithms.