

Pragmatic Subjectivity in Metaphors and Similes

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Overview

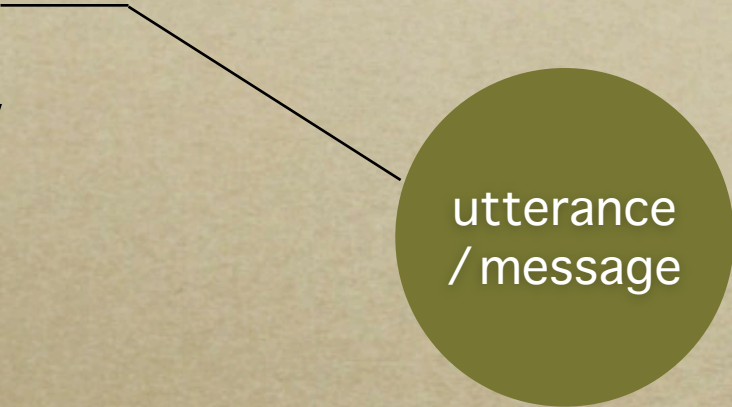
- This presentation aims...
 - to give a novel (but old & familiar) perspective of **subjectivity** that will give a cognitively reasonable account of the comprehension process of metaphors and similes
 - to develop Cognitive Linguistics by adopting **pragmatic view of communication** toward establishing Cognitive Pragmatics

Subjectivity in Cognitive Linguistics

- Subjectivity in language is...
 - mainly studied in the view of subjectification (Langacker 1991) or grammaticalization (Traugott 1988, 1995), which has been embedded or entrenched in language prior to its actual use of a present speaker/writer.
 - However, we often use the term in everyday life to point out that someone's judgement belongs to his own mind and does not shared by others.
- ➡ **Why different?**
 - ➡ **semantic/syntactic view vs. pragmatic view**

Pragmatic model of speech event

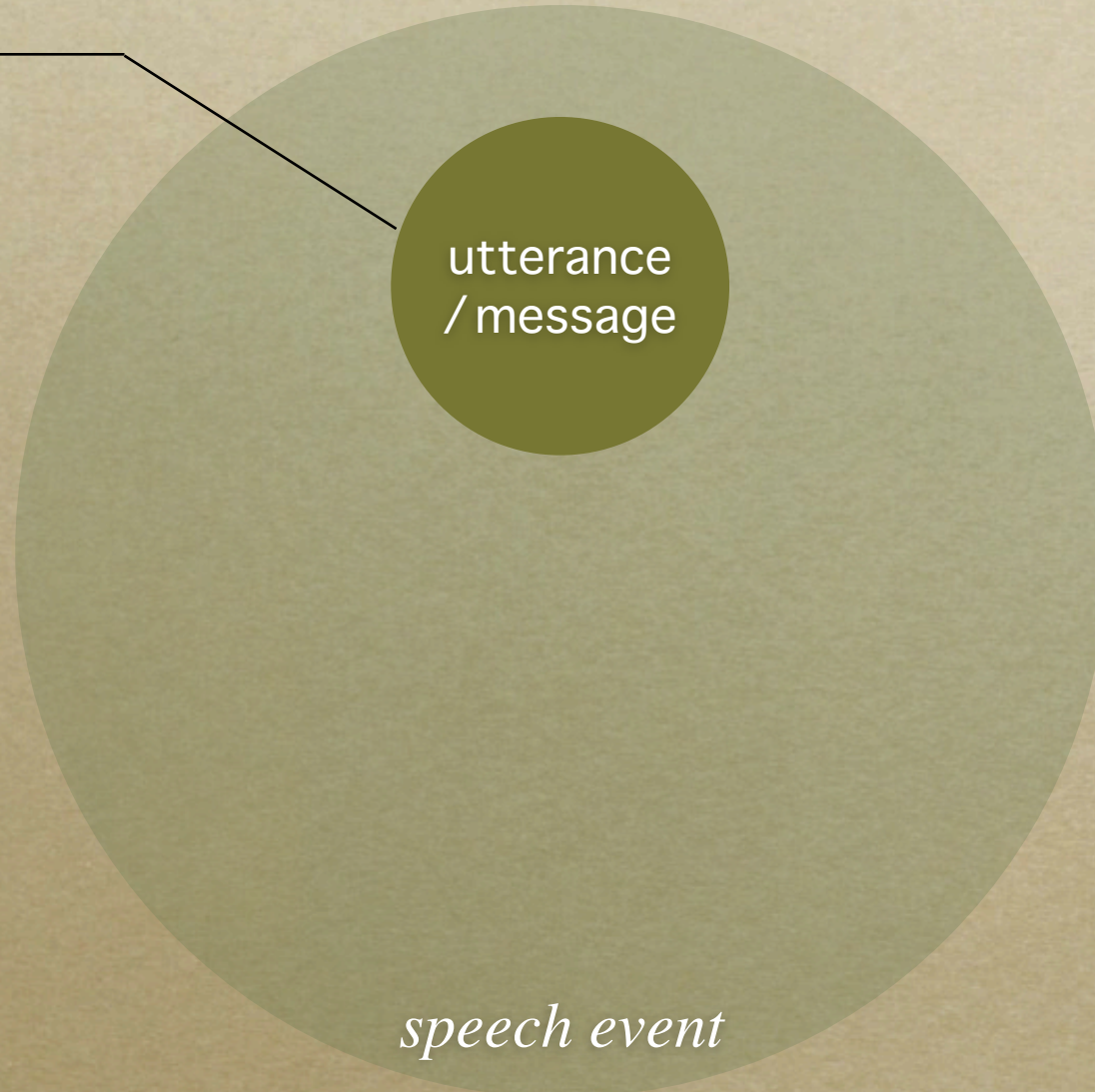
1. In non-pragmatic view, an utterance or a message alone is given to a hearer/reader.



utterance
/ message

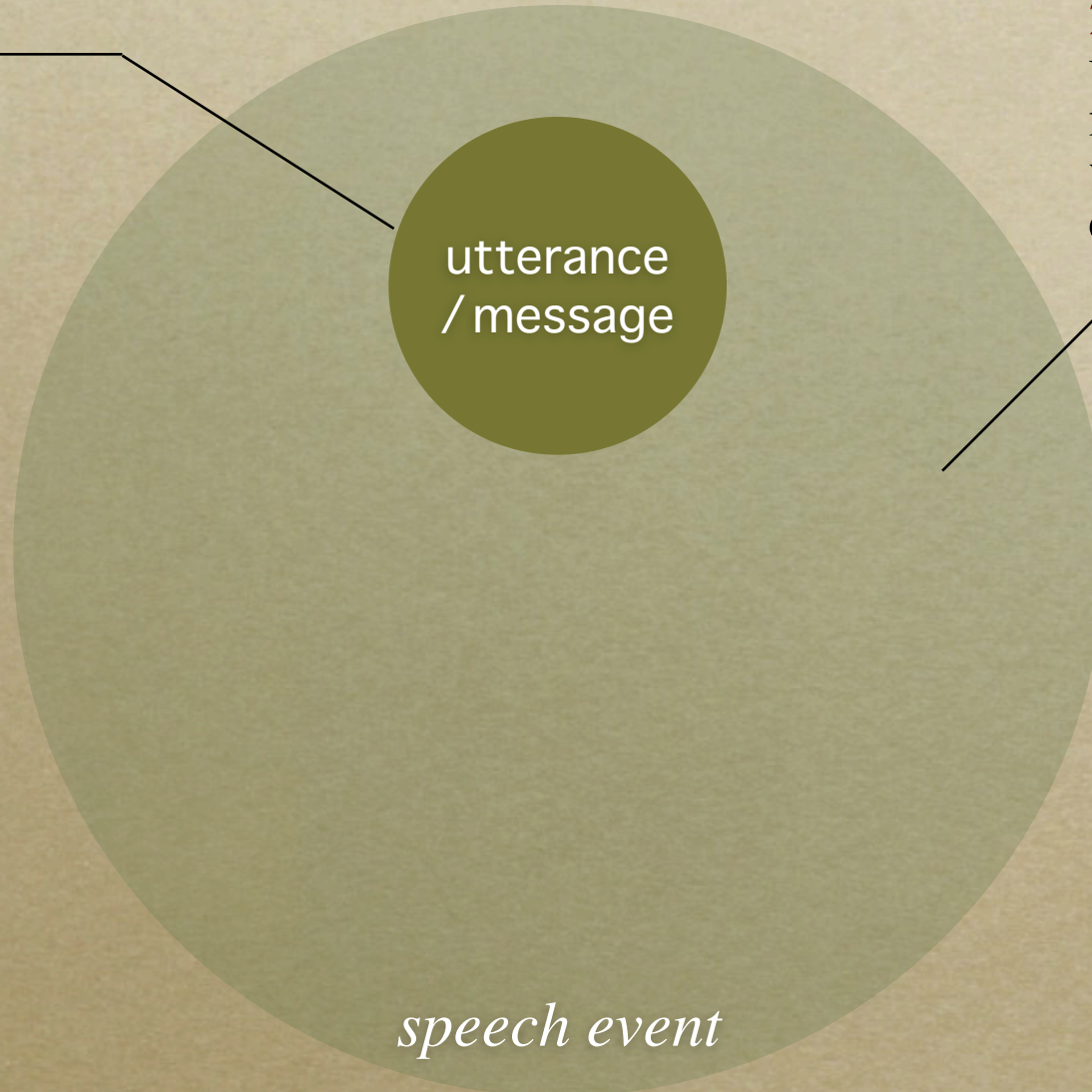
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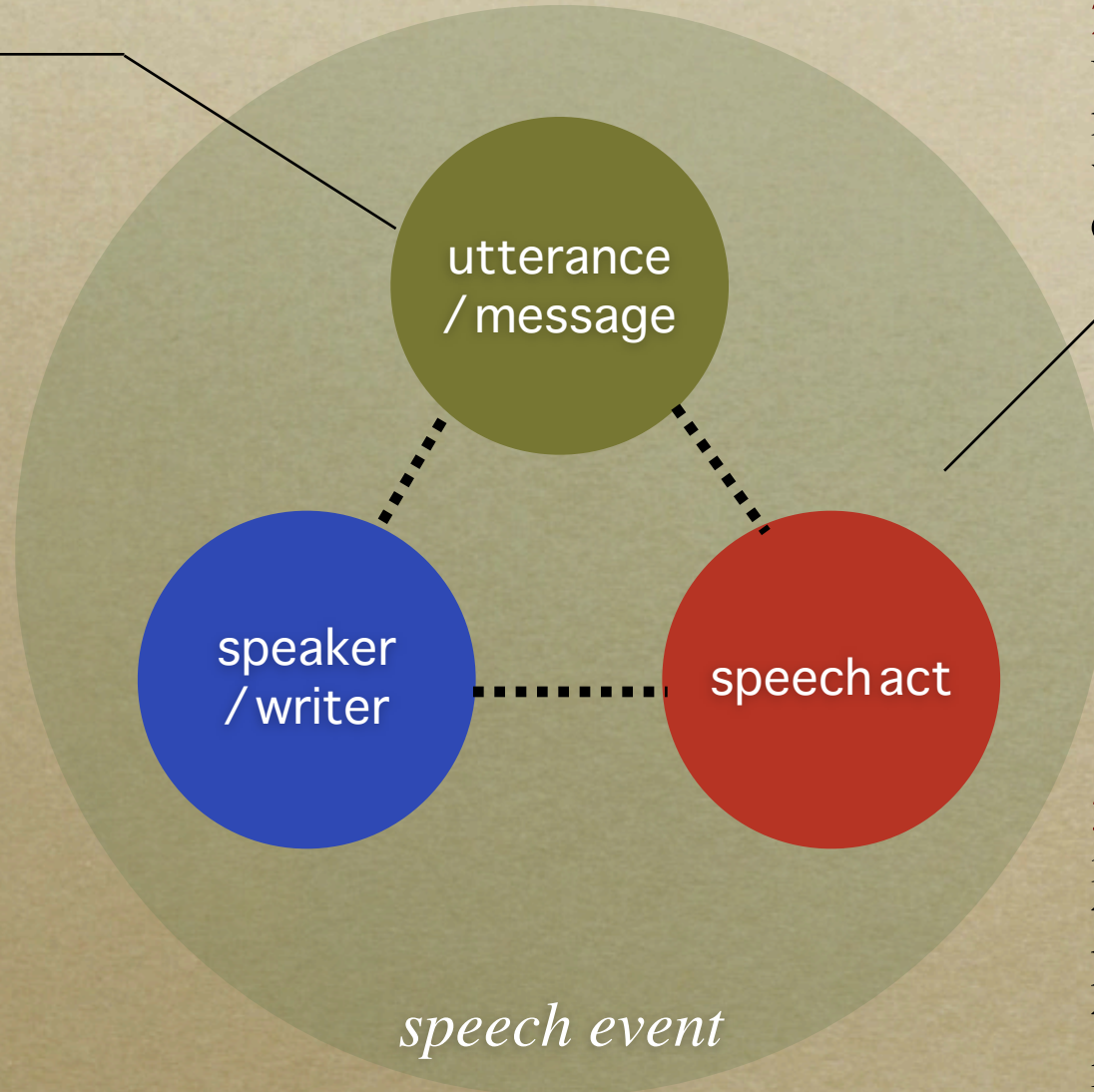
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2. However, an utterance or a message never stands alone without its speech event (i.e. context).

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3. The salient factors in speech event are the speaker/writer and his speech act other than an utterance/message.

Pragmatic model of speech event

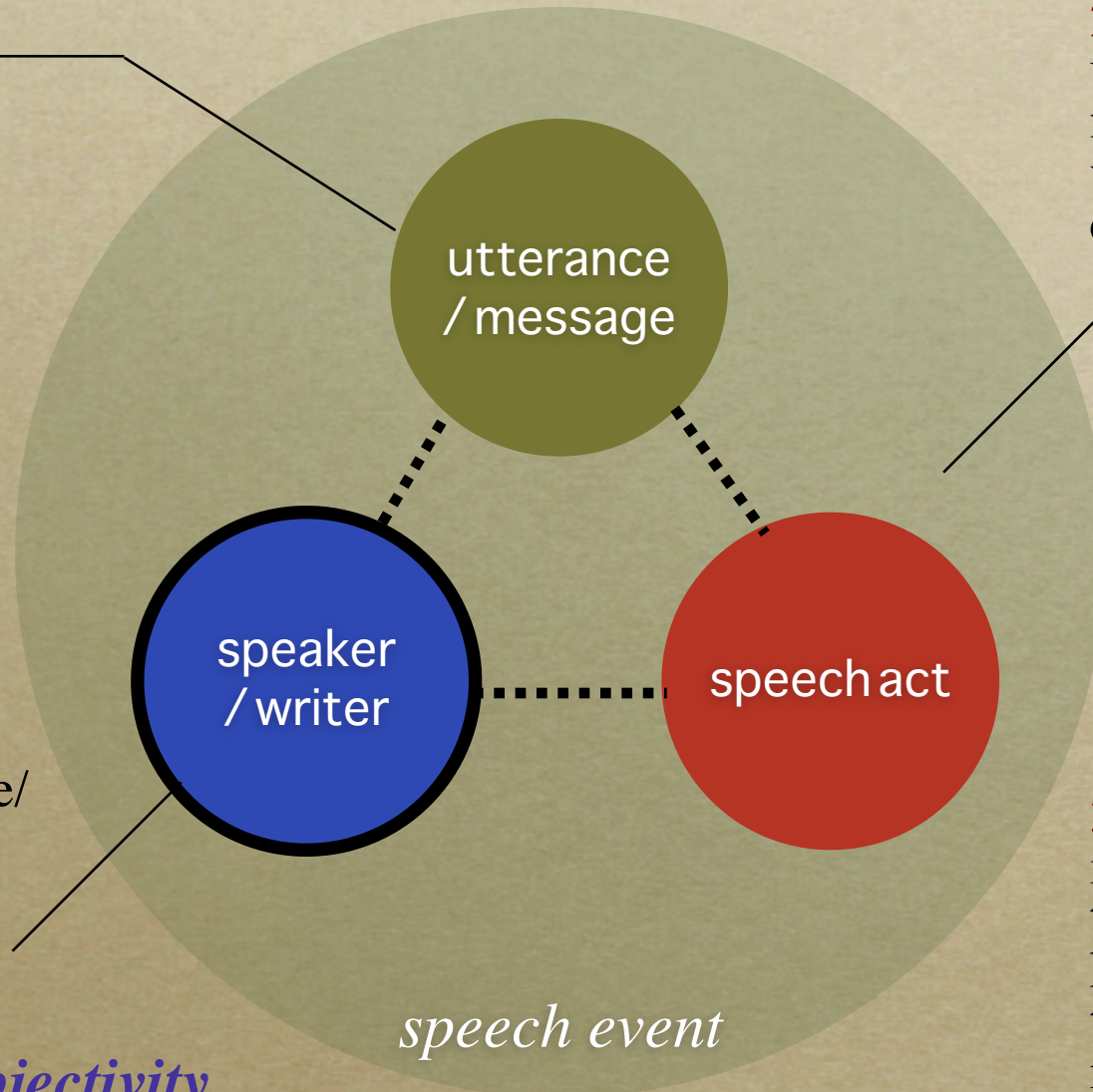
1. In non-pragmatic view, an utterance or a message alone is given to a hearer/reader.

2. However, an utterance or a message never stands alone without its speech event (i.e. context).

4. In canonical comprehension process, the utterance/message is profiled, but sometimes **the speaker/writer gets foregrounded**.

3. The salient factors in speech event are the speaker/writer and his speech act other than an utterance/message.

-> *Pragmatic subjectivity*



Linguistic communicative assessment

- Interpreters (hearer/reader) can assess a given speech event to be **canonical** or **deviant** in view of linguistic communication.
- ➔ **linguistic communicative assessment (LCA)**
 - 1) construal assessment
 - 2) grounding assessment (cf. Clark & Brennan 1987)
 - 3) speech act assessment
- Each assessment is based on ICMs (Lakoff 1987), which should be used as resources of language comprehension by interpreters.

Construal assessment

- **The ICM of construal assessment**

- *The construal of an event by a speaker should be in accord with that by a hearer.*

- ◆ canonical state

A: (Walking in a park together) It's raining.

B: yeah.

- ◆ deviant state

B: No, it's drizzling.

➡ The hearer attributes the deviation to the speaker or the hearer's belief or usage.

Grounding assessment

- **The ICM of grounding** (i.e. constructing common ground) **assessment**
 - *a) The information that a speaker intends to convey should be **informative enough to a hearer.***
 - *b) (a) should be **achieved through the shared information** between a speaker and a hearer.*
- ◆ deviant state
 - A: (Walking in a park together) It's raining.
 - B: So what?
 - ➡ The hearer considers A's utterance to be **not informative** and may infer that A has what to follow the utterance (e.g. "I left my umbrella at home").

Speech act assessment

- **The ICM of speech act assessment**
 - *The type of speech act (locution/illocution/perlocution) should be in accord with the one which is evoked or allowed by its immediate context and a hearer's expectation.*
- ◆ deviant state
 - A: You are so rude!
 - B: Thank you (-> illocution-level deviation)
- ➡ The hearer considers B's speech act to be deviant and may infer that A has **ironical/humorous** intent.

The characteristics of LCA

- Those three types of assessment are **not discrete**.
 - E.g. **Referential deviation** (calling an object/person X ‘Y’, while it/he should be called ‘X’ in canonical state) can be detected through **either construal assessment or (locution level) speech-act assessment**.
- **Construal assessment and grounding assessment** usually work in the **opposite** direction to each other.
 - E.g. “It’s raining” utterance.
 - ➡ ∴ LCA motivates interpreters to make a pragmatic inference.

Similes and Metaphors

- What's the difference between similes and metaphors? (“X is like Y” vs “X is Y”)
 - common features: two domains are compared
 - source domain: Y, target domain: X
 - different features: explicitness of resemblance
 - similes: explicit
 - metaphors: implicit
- ➔ More detailed analyses are possible in view of LCA.

Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors

A typical 'X is Y' metaphor

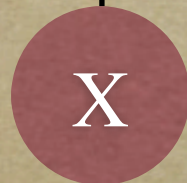
John is a teddy bear.

Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors

A typical 'X is Y' metaphor

John is a teddy bear.

based on mutual
knowledge
-> *canonical* [grounding
assessment]



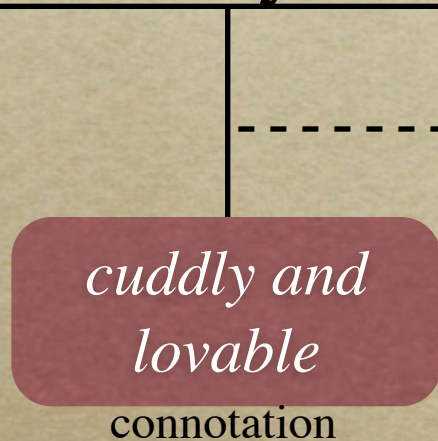
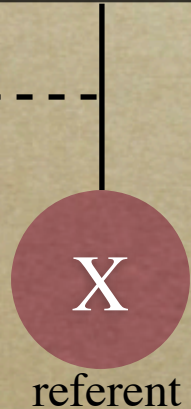
referent

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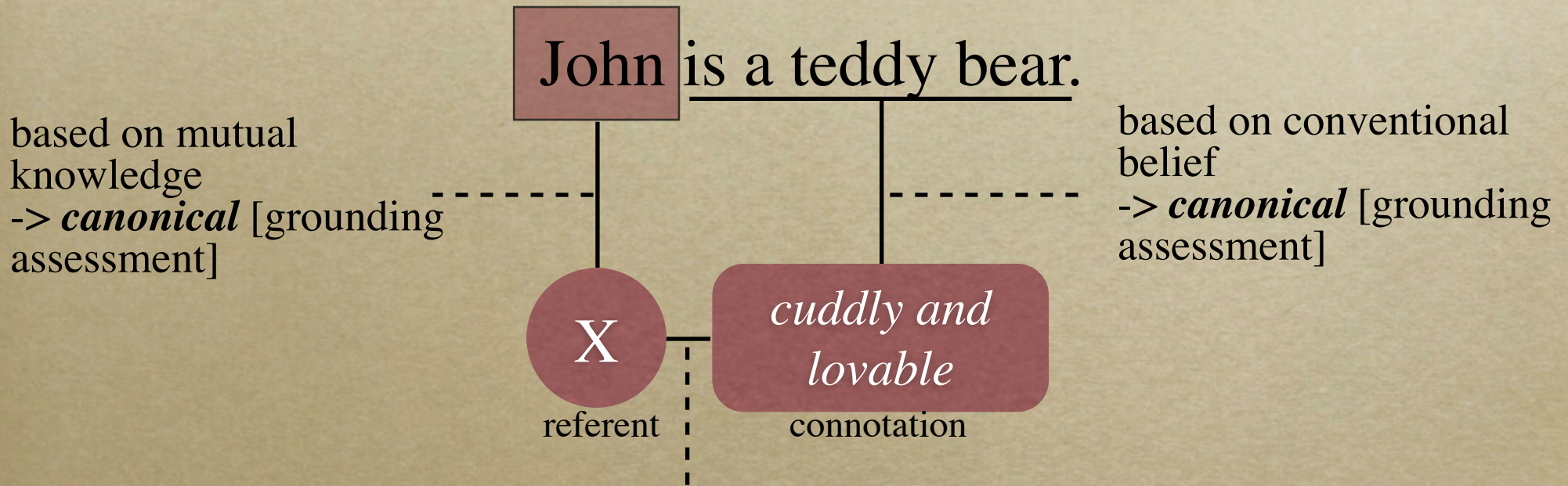
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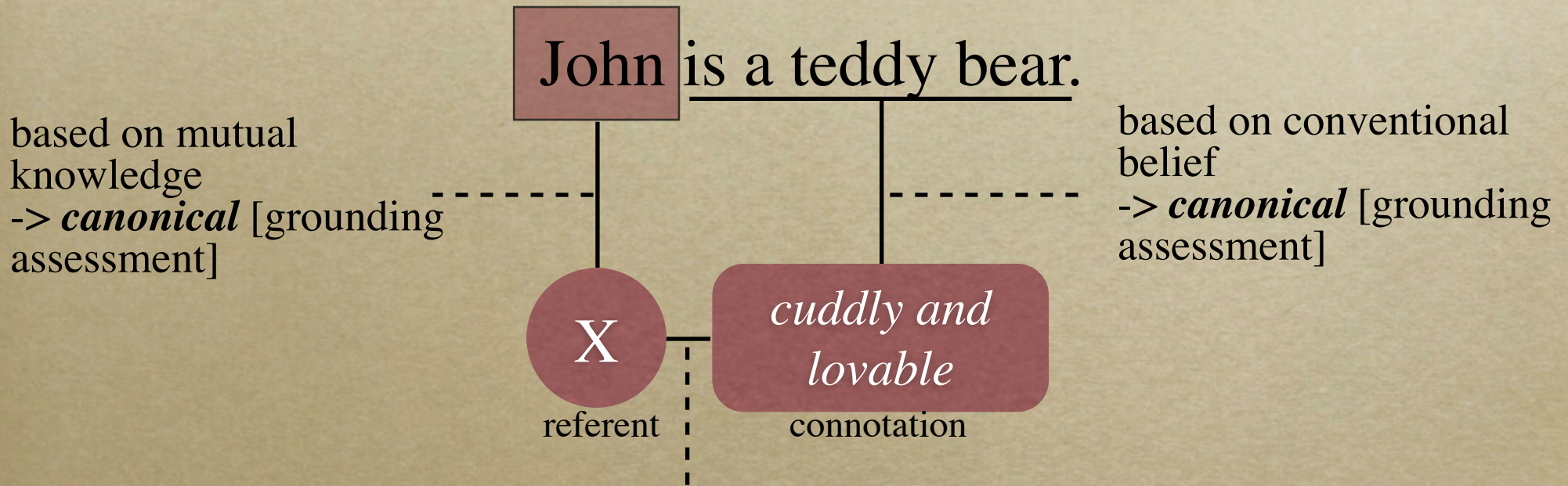
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When John looks cuddly and lovable
to the hearer,
-> *canonical* [construal assessment]

Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors

A typical 'X is Y' metaphor



When John looks cuddly and lovable to the hearer,
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low pragmatic subjectivity

Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors

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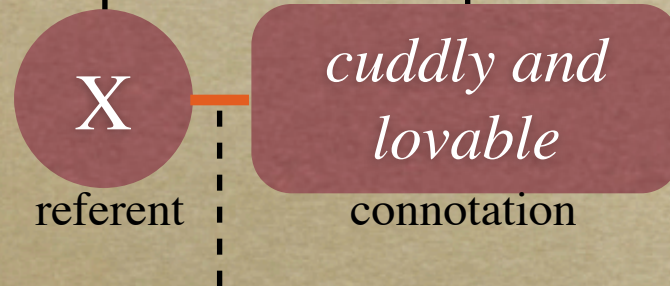
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If John does not look cuddly and
lovable at all to the hearer,
-> *deviant* [construal assessment]

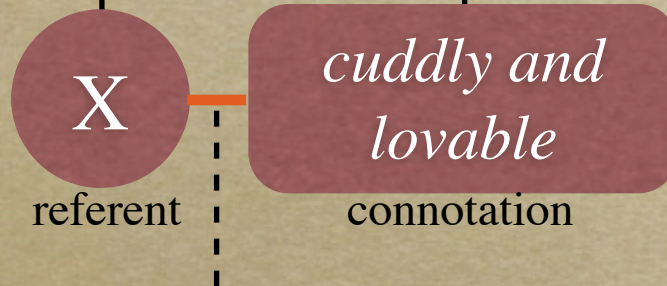
Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors

A typical 'X is Y' metaphor

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The hearer will revise
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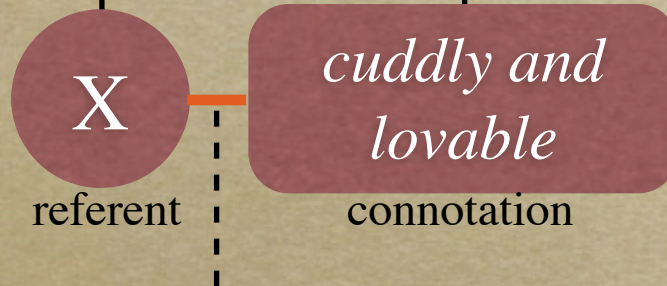
Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors

A typical 'X is Y' metaphor

John is a teddy bear.

based on mutual knowledge
-> *canonical* [grounding assessment]

based on conventional belief
-> *canonical* [grounding assessment]



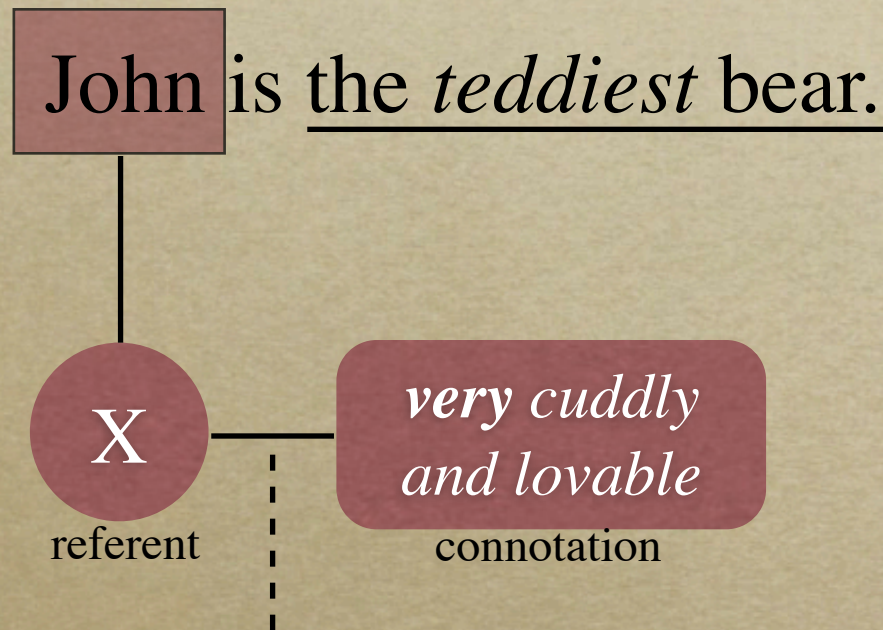
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The hearer will revise John's assumptions or teddy bear's connotations (=updating the world knowledge),
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high pragmatic subjectivity

Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors

based on mutual
knowledge
-> *canonical* [grounding
assessment]



When John looks very cuddly and
lovable to the hearer,
-> *canonical* [construal assessment]

Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors

based on mutual knowledge
-> *canonical* [grounding assessment]

John is the *teddiest* bear.

not based on mutual linguistic knowledge (i.e. 'teddy' is not an adjective)
-> *deviant* [grounding/speech act assessment]

X

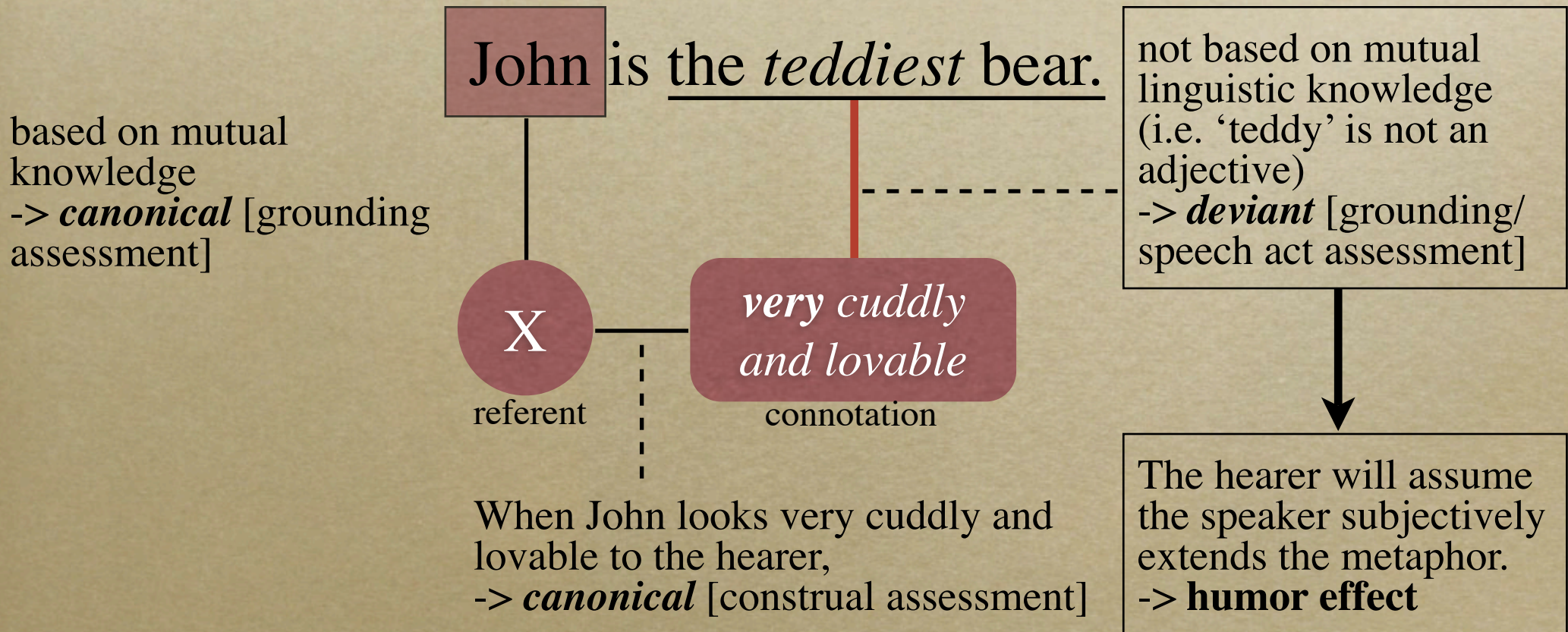
referent

very cuddly and lovable

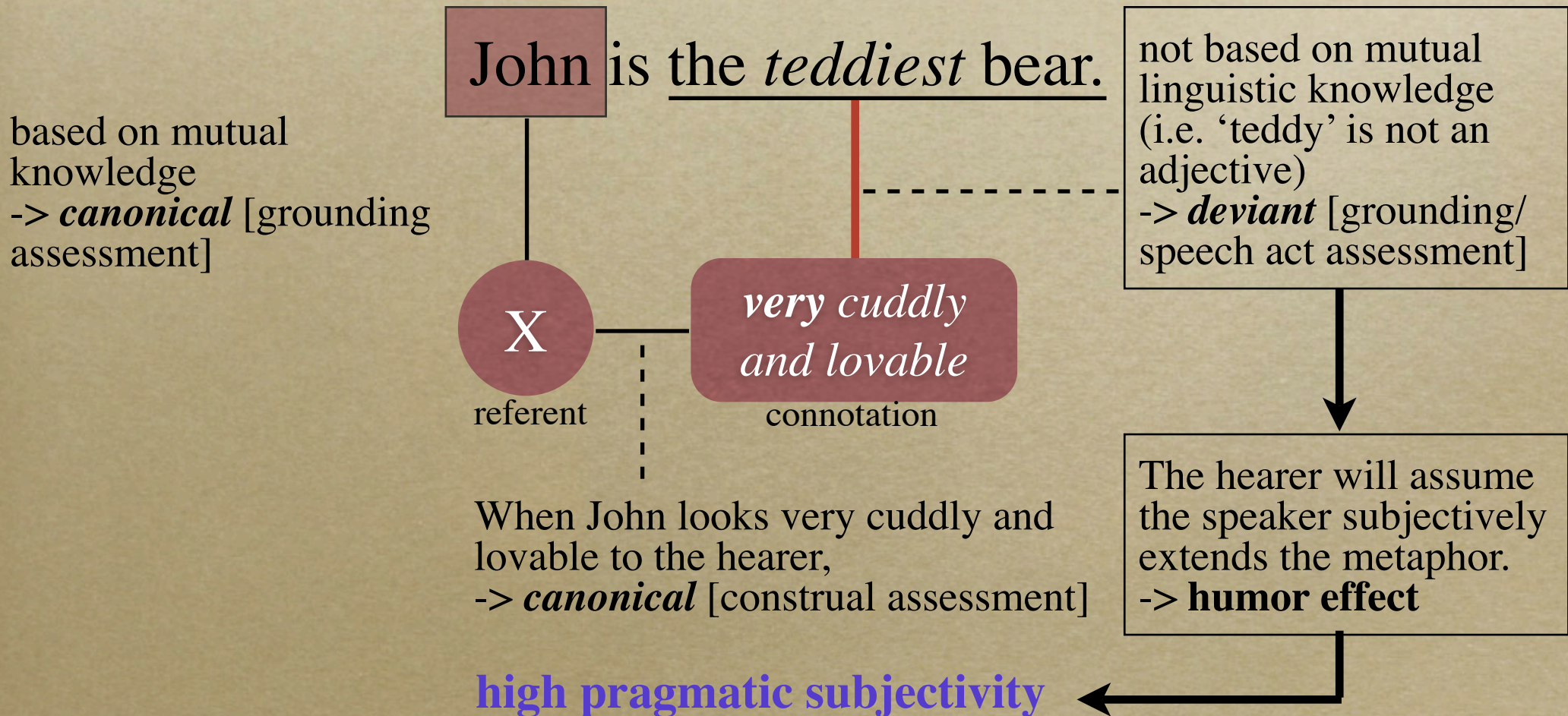
connotation

When John looks very cuddly and lovable to the hearer,
-> *canonical* [construal assessment]

Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors



Pragmatic subjectivity in metaphors



Pragmatic subjectivity in similes

- ‘Heuristic recognition’ in similes
 - It is not that similes are **based on the resemblance**, but that some **resemblance is set up** through similes. (Sato 1978: 64)
 - In Langackerian terms, *A is like B* **profiles the resemblance**, while *A is B* profiles the properties predicated. (Croft and Cruise 2004: 212-213)
- ➡ Similes tend to be deviant in construal assessment.
 - The resemblance is not shared between a speaker and a hearer before a simile expressed.

Pragmatic subjectivity in similes

- Prototypical similes are pragmatically subjective.
 - In 'X is like Y' similes, a large part of them are followed by their explanations of similarities discovered by the speakers. (cf. Roncero et al. 2005)
 - Ex. similes in movie lines
 - (1) My momma always said, '**life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're gonna get**' (Forrest Gump, 1994)
 - (2) **Men are like gum anyway** -- *after you chew they lose their flavor.* (Ally McBeal, 1997)
 - (3) **Bart, a woman is like a beer.** *They look good, they smell good, and you'd step over your own mother just to get one!* (The Simpsons, 1989)

Metaphors and similes from LCA

- Prototypical metaphors: **low pragmatic subjectivity**
 - ❖ Novel metaphors extended from prototype get highly pragmatically subjective. [grounding/speech act assessment]
- Prototypical similes: **high pragmatic subjectivity**
 - ❖ Explanations frequently follow similes. [grounding assessment]
 - ❖ Conventional similes (e.g. like hell) get less pragmatically subjective.
- **Referential deviation** of LCA causes pragmatic subjectivity to both metaphors and similes.

Conclusion

- Pragmatic subjectivity is...
 - the subjectivity that is discovered by interpreters through **linguistic communicative assessment**.
 - the subjectivity under which **the speaker is foregrounded in the speech event**.
 - as a subject of construal/a subject of grounding/a subject of speech act
- Metaphors and similes can be reanalyzed from LCA.
 - Further examinations should be needed especially to analyze **‘generic vs specific’ reference of target**.
 - Corpus analysis and experimental research will help LCA’s effect.

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Thank you for your attention.

