

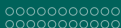
What is the semantics-pragmatics interface?

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So it begins

As our adoption of the generative paradigm implies, we take linguistics to include not only the study of languages and their interpretations as abstract systems but also the study of how such systems are represented in human minds and used by human agents to express their thoughts and communicate with others. [...] We will consider not only what linguistic expressions themselves mean (semantics in the strict sense) but also what speaker's mean by using them (pragmatics).

(Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 1998, 5)

So it begins

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(Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 1998, 5)

Goals of this session

- Present a **big picture** of what the semantics-pragmatics interface may refer to.
- Spell out a few **questions** that are currently being discussed.
- Convince you of the **interest** of the course ;-)



Initial questions

- How do semantics and pragmatics **interact** in the specification of the **meaning** of a linguistic construction?

Initial questions

- Is there a real **border** between semantics and pragmatics or is pragmatics becoming non-truth-conditional semantics?

Initial questions

- What do different **non-canonical** expressions (wrt. information structure, illocutionary force and dimensions of meaning) contribute to context?

More specific questions

- What is the connection between **illocutionary force** and **implicated** meaning?



More specific questions

- Is illocutionary force part of grammar, semantics or pragmatics?



More specific questions

- What are the connections between **information structure** and **non-truth-conditional** meaning?



Previously on *this* seminar ...

The questions

- How can we map **form and meaning**? Is there a one-to-one correspondence?

Previously on *this* seminar ...

The questions

- Has the syntax-semantics interface a particular location in the overall **design of the faculty of human language**?



Previously on *this* seminar ...

The questions

- Is the meaning component of language only located at **LF**?



Previously on *this* seminar ...

The topics

- Logical Form
- The cartography of the left periphery
- Specificational pseudoclefts
- Selectional predicates

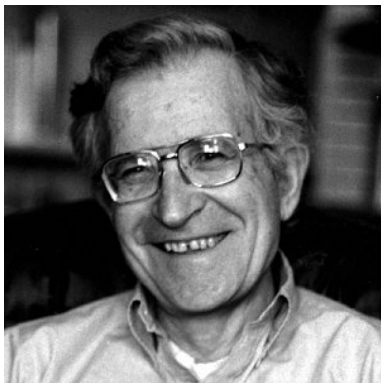


Previously on *this* seminar ...

The papers

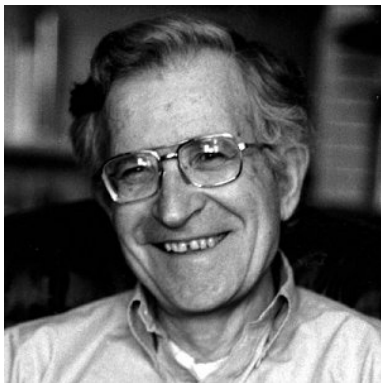
- Fox, D. (2003)
- Pesetsky, D. (1987)
- Rizzi, L. (1997)
- Heycock, C. & A. Kroch (1999, 2002)
- Grimshaw, J. (1979)

Who are the syntacticians?



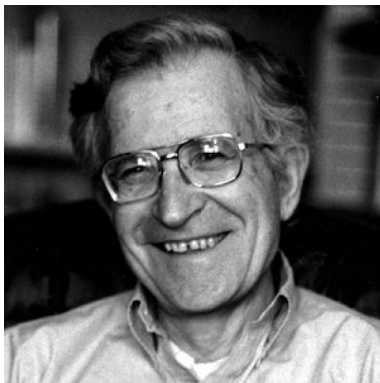
- How does sound and form combine to obtain meaningful expressions?

Who are the syntacticians?



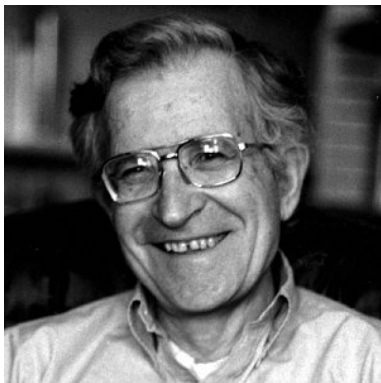
- Can we propose a model of the faculty of human language based on introspection?

Who are the syntacticians?



- Why have humans developed natural language? How do children acquire language?

Who are the syntacticians?



- To what extent is language a specific device different from other cognitive abilities?

Who are the semanticists?



- To what extent can we understand the meaning of expressions by considering their literal meaning?

Who are the semanticists?



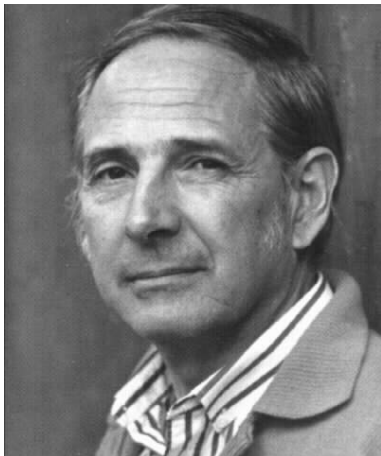
- How do we build complex meanings from simpler ones and the way the meaningful expressions combine?

Who are the semanticists?



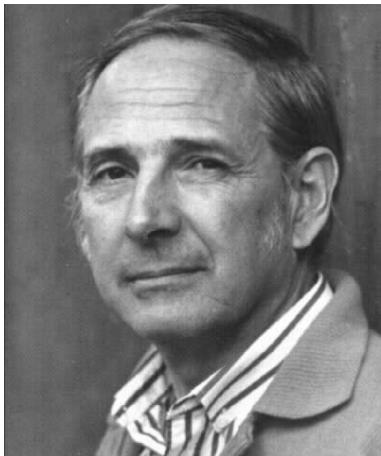
- How much can we understand from natural language by using the tools provided by an artificial language?

Who are the pragmaticists?



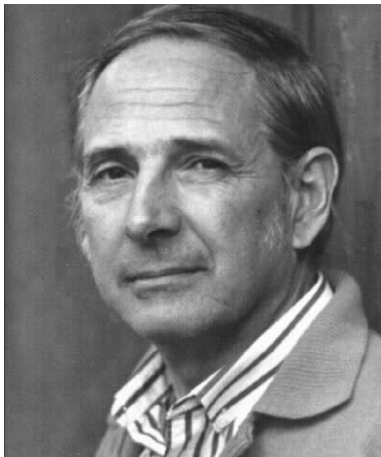
- How do we use language to convey more than what we literally say?

Who are the pragmaticists?



- What are the contextual factors that have a say in the use of particular constructions?

Who are the pragmaticists?



- How do different kinds of utterances structure dialog?

The border wars

- Can we formalize/predict the contextual import in language meaning and the speaker's intentions?
- Are certain phenomena best approached from the semantic or the pragmatic point of view?

The border wars

... there is a common slate, a level of propositional representation, upon which both semantics and pragmatics can write—the contributions may be distinguished, let's suppose, by the color of the ink: semantics in black, pragmatics in red. Semantics and pragmatics remain “modular pens” as it were: they are separate devices making distinctively different contributions to a common level of representation.

(Levinson 2000, 193)

The border wars

...it turns out that semantics and pragmatics are interwoven in a way that makes it impossible to really study semantics without simultaneously doing some pragmatics, and vice versa ... for example, sentences with definite noun phrases (the dog), vague adjectives (tall), and modals (must) can't be assigned a semantic meaning without the input of contextual information. Turning things around, it is obviously impossible to figure out speaker's meanings without first understanding the literal semantic meaning of what they say.

(Portner 2005, 176)

The border wars

Meaning viewed as “literal meaning”

The literal meaning of expressions is derived by the following relations recognized by the speakers:

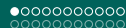
- Entailment
- Synonymy
- Ambiguity
- Contradiction

The border wars

Meaning viewed as “use”

The non-literal meaning of expressions is derived by the following relations recognized by the speakers:

- Presupposition
- Implicature



Some topics (but not all)

Context dependency

Example

- (1) I am hungry.
- (2)
 - a. Bond is hungry.
 - b. Pavarotti is hungry.

Some topics (but not all)

Context dependency

Example

- (3) a. Loren is behind the tree.
b. Loren is in front of the tree.



Some topics (but not all)

Context dependency

Example

- (4)
- At some point, the person talking was John.
 - At some point, I was John.

Some topics (but not all)

Presupposition projection

Example

- (5) It stopped raining \Rightarrow it was raining before.
- (6) It didn't stop raining \Rightarrow it was raining before.
- (7) Maybe it stopped raining \Rightarrow it was raining before.

Some topics (but not all)

Presupposition projection

Example

- (8) It stopped raining and then it started raining.
- (9) It started raining and then it stopped raining.
- (10) If it was raining, then it stopped raining by noon.
- (11) If John came to the party, then it stopped raining by noon.
- (12) Either it stopped raining or Mary had an umbrella.
- (13) Either it stopped raining or it never was raining in the first place

(Portner 2005, 181)

Some topics (but not all)

Scalar implicatures

Example

- (14)
- Fred ate two bananas.
 - A thief stole some of my DVDs.
 - The movie yesterday was okay.

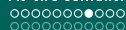


Some topics (but not all)

Scalar implicatures

Example

- (15)
- a. If you're convicted of a felony, you'll spend at least a year in jail. And if you're convicted of murder, you'll be executed.
 - b. Because he earns \$40,000, he can't afford a house in Palo Alto.
- Horn (2006)



Some topics (but not all)

Scalar implicatures

Example

- (16) a. Fred ate didn't win many votes.
b. Fred didn't win MANY votes: he won them all.
- (17) a. I don't like this car.
b. I don't LIKE this car: I LOVE it.

Geurts (1998)

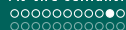


Some topics (but not all)

Expressive meaning

Example

- (18) a. Ich ruf' Dich an.
b. Ich rufe Sie an.



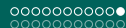
Some topics (but not all)

Expressive meaning

Example

- (19) John thinks that roller coasters are fun, but Mary thinks that roller coasters are not fun.
- (20) Sue believes that that bastard Kresge should be fired. (# I think he's a good guy.)

(Potts 2007)



Some topics (but not all)

Expressive meaning

Example

- (21) My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry that bastard Webster. (Kratzer 1999)
- (22) I am not prejudiced against Caucasians. But John, who is, thinks/claims that you are the worst honky he knows. (Schlenker 2003)

Overview

- Illocutionary force: How should we describe formally the discourse contribution of the different sentence types?

Overview

- Context update: What are the relevant factors that model dialog?

Overview

- Information structure: What difference in meaning the different information packagings trigger?

Our topics

Illocutionary force

Example

- (23)
- a. Sit down!
 - b. I'd like for you to sit down.
 - c. You must sit down.



Our topics

Illocutionary force

Example

- (24)
- How tall is Pau?
 - How tall Pau is!
- (25)
- I know how tall Pau is.
 - I wonder how tall Pau is.
 - It's surprising how tall Pau is.

Our topics

Illocutionary force

- Is *illocutionary force* a merely pragmatic term or can it be described in terms of formal semantics? What about *sentence mood*?

Our topics

Illocutionary force

- If illocutionary force is not revealed in the sentence's form, can we somehow recover it from the sentence's context and form?



Our topics

Illocutionary force

- What properties determine a sentence type?



Our topics

Illocutionary force

- What is the context update potential of the difference sentence types?



Our topics

Context update

Example

- (26) a. My name is Geraldo.
b. I fed the cat.
- (27) a. What's your name?
b. Did you feed the cat?



Our topics

Context update

Example

- (28) a. [I remember you ...] Your name is Geraldo.
b. You got a haircut. [Upon greeting a friend]
- (29) a. #What's my name?
b. #Did I get a haircut?

(Gunlogson 2005)



Our topics

Context update

- How does an assertion change/update the context?

Our topics

Context update

- What kind of restrictions do questions, orders or exclamations impose on dialog?



Our topics

Context update

- What is the relation between form (i.e., sentence type) and function (i.e., speech act it performs)?

Our topics

Information structure

Example

- (30)
- a. A: Who went to the party?
 - b. B1: MAX went to the party?
 - c. B2: ??Max went to the PARTY.
- (31)
- a. A: Where did Max go?
 - b. B1: ??MAX went to the party.
 - c. B2: Max went to the PARTY.

(Portner 2005, 196)



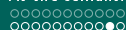
Our topics

Information structure

Example

- (32) a. MARY likes Joe \Rightarrow Somebody likes Joe.
b. Mary likes JOE \Rightarrow Mary likes somebody.

(Portner 2005, 196)



Our topics

Information structure

Example

- (33) a. A: Who passed the exam?
b. B: Mary_T did.
- (34) a. A: John was the first student to defend his thesis.
b. B: MARY_F was.



Our topics

Information structure

- How do we model the effects of syntax (dislocations) and phonology (intonation) into pragmatics? How does/would an interface syntax-pragmatics look like?



Our topics

Information structure

- What is the contribution of c/kontrast and how does it interact with focus and topic?

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