



Semantics & Pragmatics SoSe 2021

Lecture 21: Overview and Discussion

22/07/2021, Christian Bentz



Overview

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Date and Time

Chat

Section 2: Q&As

Tutorial 10

Implicature

Presupposition

Mock Exam

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Section 1: Important Information for the Exam



Important Information

- ▶ The Exam will take place on **Thursday 29/07/2021** from **12:00-14:30** on moodle.
- ▶ If you lock into the exam **in between 12:00-12:30**, you will have 2 hours. You can see a counter running down.
- ▶ If you finish early, you can submit your exam attempt before the counter runs down.
- ▶ The exam will be automatically submitted when the counter runs down – i.e. **14:30 at the latest**.
- ▶ We will ask you to provide your name and student ID as a first “Question”.

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Important Information

- ▶ I will be available between 12:00 and 14:30 to answer questions via the exam chat.
- ▶ Make sure to open the chat before you start your attempt.
- ▶ Be aware that if you enter the chat late, you will not see the questions and answers which were posted before you entered.

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The screenshot displays two overlapping windows. The background window is a Moodle course page for 'Semantics and Pragmatics'. It shows a breadcrumb trail: 'Startseite / Meine Kurse / Sommersemester 2020 / 5 - Philosophische Fakultät / Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft/ Computerlinguistik / Semantics and Pragmatics'. Below this, there is a message: 'Sie können diesen Test in der Vorschau ansehen. Wäre dies ein realer Versuch, würde dies abgeblockt, w... Dieser Test steht zur Zeit nicht zur Verfügung.' The main content area shows 'Frage 2' (Question 2) with the title 'Propositional Logic (15 points)'. The question text reads: 'Determine whether the following expressions are valid formulas of propositional logic based on the "vocabulary" and the "syntactic" clauses of the proposi... If they are not, briefly explain what is wrong.' Below the text are ten options (a) through (j) containing propositional logic formulas. The chat window in the foreground is titled 'SemPrag2020_1: Q&A Chat - Mozilla Firefox'. It shows a message from 'Christian Bentz' at 11:47: 'Christian Bentz hat den Chat betreten'. The chat interface includes a text input field and buttons for 'Senden' and 'Designs'.



Section 2: Q&As



Q&As Tutorial 10

In Exercise 2b: Isn't "the rise" a definite noun phrase which triggers a presupposition that such an entity exists?

– I have added this presupposition in parentheses to the solutions. But note that this is debateable. "Rise" is a mass noun like "sand". It is not so clear that such a mass noun refers to some concrete entity. Mind you that the sentence: *John started to burn rise* is also grammatical.

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Q&As Tutorial 10

In Exercise 2d: Couldn't we say that "punctual" presupposes that a time was arranged which people were supposed to adhere to?

– Yes, this is an interesting observation, thank you. It also seems to pass the different tests (e.g. negation and question) which are relevant for presuppositions. However, I would not know which type of presupposition trigger to assign. So I wouldn't expect students to find such presuppositions.

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Q&As Tutorial 10

In Exercise 2d: “Some” is here mentioned as a scalar term triggering a presupposition, but in the comment it is mentioned as potentially triggering yet another presupposition relating to its status as an indefinite marker. So is it possible that the same trigger triggers different presuppositions?

– This question made me realize that the example is somewhat misleading. I think it is necessary to add “more” here as well: *If she had been earlier, she could have had (some) more tea.* The scalar term “(some) more” then triggers the presupposition: *She had some tea* (as with the Alice example in the lectures). As to the last question: in our examples, each trigger triggers only one presupposition.

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Q&As Implicature (Grice's Maxims)

*In the respective lecture in “Linguistic Fundamentals” there were somewhat different categories given for the failure to fulfill maxims: **infringe, suspend, violate, opt out, flout.** [The categories in our lecture were: **violate, clash, opt out, flout.**] For example: If somebody says: “I keep my door key in my...that thing that you take with you...where you keep your money in ...”, this was said to be an “infringement” of a maxim. Why is there this difference between the lectures, and how would such an example be analysed in the categorization of the current lecture?*

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Q&As Implicature (Grice's Maxims)

– The categories given in the Semantics and Pragmatics lecture go back to the original publication of Grice (1975, p. 30). Maybe there are later publications of his – or by other pragmaticists – where such a more fine-grained categorization is advanced.

As to the example: I would say it is a *clash* between the maxim of manner and the maxims of quality/quantity. According to the maxim of manner, the speaker would have to refrain from using long paraphrases for a concept which has a single lexical item (wallet) associated with it. However, the speaker cannot remember this particular word. Now, if they deliberately use the wrong lexical item then they violate quality, and if they use no lexical item at all they violate the maxim of quantity.

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Q&As Presupposition

Counterfactuals: When talking about this kind of presupposition triggers, we were always only stating a single presupposition, but to me it seems like these constructions actually trigger an additional one. To take the two examples we covered in class:

(41) If I were king, I would paint all bridges pink.

Presupposition: The speaker is not the king.

I'd argue that another presupposition could be made here and that is: (Currently) it is not the case that all bridges are pink. This seems valid, because the sentence wouldn't make much sense if all the bridges were already pink. It also seems that the presupposition would hold under a negation (i.e. If I were king, I would NOT paint all bridges pink) and, analogously, under a question.

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Q&As Presupposition

– This is an interesting observation, yes. I checked in both Kroeger (2019, p. 43) and Levinson (2008, p. 184), but they both only mention the presupposition relating to the antecedent and not to the consequent. I guess you can argue that whenever such a seeming presupposition arises also for the consequent, it is not really the consequent by itself which gives rise to it, but the fact that in a counterfactual construction the consequent has to be factually wrong, since it is bound to a condition which is always false. Also, I think there are cases where such a presupposition on the consequent does not really arise, for instance:

(43) If I were king, I would not change my life.

Presupposition: # The speaker has changed/changes their life.

I don't think the presupposition on the consequent holds here. So, arguably, while the presupposition on the antecedent seems fairly robust, the presupposition on the consequent is not.

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Q&As Presupposition

Comparisons: In example sentence:

(45) Peter isn't as unreliable as John.

Presupposition: John is unreliable.

It seems to me that another presupposition might be: Peter is unreliable. My way of thinking here was – if someone told me this sentence, I would assume both Peter and John to be unreliable, although Peter a bit less. I can't think of a context where I would think that Peter is actually reliable, given the above utterance.

– I think you can construct some conversational context where the presupposition you propose does not hold.

A: I asked Peter and John to help me move, but I'm not sure they will show up.

B: Well, Peter isn't as unreliable as John.

In fact, if you want to make the point that Peter is also unreliable, you would probably say "Peter isn't *quite* as unreliable as John".

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Q&As DRT

Summary of the DRS II, clause iv, sentence (15):

You give an example expression for an disjunction operator as:

$[_1 x: \text{John}(x), [_2 y: \text{donkey}(y), \text{owns}(x,y)] \vee [_3 : \text{horse}(y), \text{owns}(x,y)]]]$

But according to the formal accessibility definition given later, the discourse referent “y” under $[_2\dots]$ should not be accessible to $[_3\dots]$.

Shouldn't that expression be something like:

$[_1 x: \text{John}(x), [_2 y: \text{donkey}(y), \text{owns}(x,y)] \vee [_3 z : \text{horse}(z), \text{owns}(x,z)]]]?$

– This is a very valid question, thanks. Note that the formal accessibility condition states that for $[_2\dots] \vee [_3\dots]$ the variables in 2 are not accessible to the variables in 3 (and the other way around). This definition holds *independent* of whether we use the same variable (y) or two different ones (y, z) in $[_2 \dots]$ and $[_3 \dots]$. On slide 20 in the lecture on DRT II it is stated that using just y we follow Simonds (1996), p. 251. I think the rationale here is to assume that we talk about the same individual y which could be a donkey or horse.

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Q&As Mock Exam

Ex. 6 (d): We did not perform lambda abstraction over the variable y because some of the y s are bound (e.g. in the expression $\exists y(Y(y) \wedge Z(a)(y)(x))$). What is the reason? In the tutorial questions, you wrote a note saying that we avoid abstraction over such cases to avoid having issues with lambda conversion. Can this point be clarified?

– With reference to Lecture 8, slide 33: while the rule for λ -abstraction given in clause (vii) also licenses abstractions for a variable if some occurrences of the variable are bound, λ -conversion is only valid for expressions where the occurrences of the respective variable are *all unbound*. In practice, this means we generally avoid λ -abstractions of variables which have some bound occurrences. I will make sure that this is clear if such a task is given in the exam.

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Q&A Mock Exam

Background: for Question 5 on Type Theory the answers given in the solutions are:

- ▶ ‘showed’ is of type $\langle e, \langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle \rangle$
- ▶ ‘showed Maya to Bambi’ has to be of type $\langle e, t \rangle$
- ▶ ‘to’ has to be of the type $\langle e, e \rangle$
- ▶ ‘showed Maya’ is of type $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$ and hence the kind of expression it represents is a two-place first-order predicate.
- ▶ the kind of expression of ‘to’ is a function from entity to entity.

What would the type-theoretic tree look like then?

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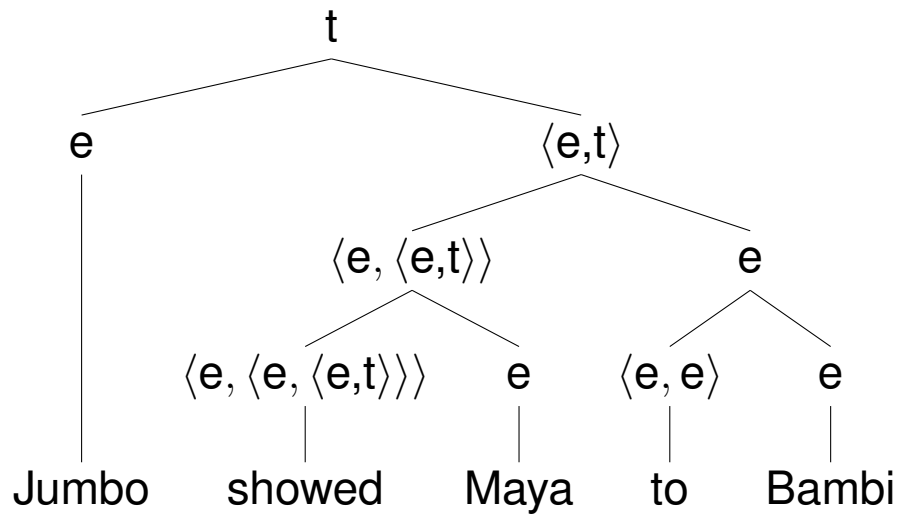
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Q&A Mock Exam

– The underlying type-theoretic tree would then be:



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Relevant Topics

The topics represented in the tutorials will also be relevant for the exam:

Tutorial 1: Information Theory (Information content/Shannon entropy)

Tutorial 2: Propositional Logic

Tutorial 3: Predicate Logic

Tutorial 4: Second Order Logic, Type Theory

Tutorial 5: Lambda Calculus, Type Theory

Tutorial 6: Modality, Modal Propositional Logic

Tutorial 7: Epistemic Modality, Evidentiality

Tutorial 8: Scope of Pragmatics, Basic DRT, Merge Operation

Tutorial 9: Complex DRT, Anaphora Resolution

Tutorial 10: Implicature, Presupposition, Identification Test, Speech Acts

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General Remarks

- ▶ Exercises with clearly defined concepts (requiring less subjective discussion) are better suited as exam questions.
- ▶ Do not assume, however, that you will be able to “look up” the correct solutions in the lecture slides/tutorial solutions.
- ▶ Do not panic when you see expressions/variables/formulas that you have not seen before. Every task is straightforwardly derivable from the concepts and definitions we discussed. *Transfer of knowledge* is an important part of the exam.
- ▶ **Read the instructions carefully!** Details will matter.

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Thank You.

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