



Semantics & Pragmatics SoSe 2022

Lecture 8: Formal Semantics V (Lambda Calculus)



Overview

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 7

Section 2: Lambda Calculus in Logical Languages

Section 3: λ -Abstraction

Section 4: λ -Conversion

Section 5: Modelling Compositionality with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The Semantics of λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Section 1: Recap of Lecture 7



Example

All animals that live in the jungle have a color.

Propositional logic:

p

First-order predicate logic:

$$\forall x((Ax \wedge Jx) \rightarrow Cx)$$

Translation key: Ax : x is an animal; Jx : x lives in the jungle; Cx : x has a color.

Second-order predicate logic:

$$\forall x(\exists X((\mathcal{A}X \wedge Xx) \wedge Jx) \rightarrow \exists Y(Yx \wedge \mathcal{C}Y))$$

Translation key: $\mathcal{A}X$: x is a property (type of animal) which has the property of being an animal; Jx : x lives in the jungle; $\mathcal{C}X$: X is a property (a particular color) which has the property of being a color.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



The Theory of Types

How can we represent this **potentially infinite number of expressions** while conserving their *internal structure* and *combinatorial relationships*? – A logical system developed to fit this requirement is the so-called **theory of types** which was developed by Bertrand Russell as a remedy for paradoxes encountered in set theory.

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 78.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Definition: The Syntax of Types

For the set of types \mathbb{T} we define that:

- (i) $e, t \in \mathbb{T}$,
- (ii) if $a, b \in \mathbb{T}$, then $\langle a, b \rangle \in \mathbb{T}$,
- (iii) nothing is an element of \mathbb{T} except on the basis of clauses (i) and (ii).

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 79.

Note: a and b above are variables which stand in for all kinds of types. This means we can create an infinite number of types by recursively applying clause (ii). For example:

Applying (ii) to $a = e$ and $b = t$ yields $\langle e, t \rangle$

Applying (ii) to $a = \langle e, t \rangle$ and $b = t$ yields $\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$

Applying (ii) to $a = e$ and $b = \langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$ yields $\langle e, \langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle \rangle$

etc.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Examples of **Valid** and **Invalid** Types

e ✓

t ✓

$\langle e, t \rangle$ ✓

$\langle t, e \rangle$ ✓

$\langle t, \langle t, e \rangle \rangle$ ✓

$\langle \langle t, \langle t, e \rangle \rangle, t \rangle$ ✓

et ✗

e, t ✗

$\langle e, e, t \rangle$ ✗

$\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$ ✗

Note: The usage of left and right angled brackets as defined by clause (ii) results in a **strict binarization** of the internal structure of types, i.e. at each level of embedding we always have an **ordered pair** of more basic types.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Definition: Functional Application

How do we derive one type of expression from another?

“[...] if α is an expression of type $\langle a, b \rangle$ and β is an expression of type a , then $\alpha(\beta)$ is of type b .”

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 79.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References

Examples

If $\alpha = \langle e, t \rangle$ and $\beta = e$ then $\alpha(\beta) = t$.

If $\alpha = \langle \langle e, t \rangle, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$ and $\beta = \langle e, t \rangle$ then $\alpha(\beta) = \langle e, t \rangle$.

If $\alpha = \langle t, \langle t, e \rangle \rangle$ and $\beta = t$ then $\alpha(\beta) = \langle t, e \rangle$.

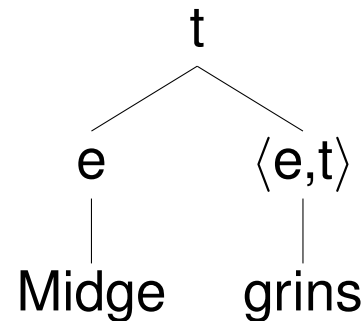
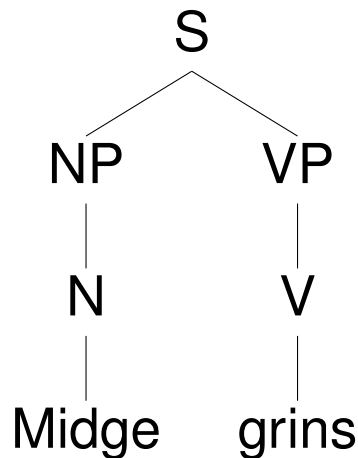
However,

If $\alpha = \langle t, \langle t, e \rangle \rangle$ and $\beta = \langle t, e \rangle$ then $\alpha(\beta)$ is **not defined**.



Semantic Types: One-Place Predicates

An **intransitive verb** requires **one argument** to be filled in order to form a full sentence, hence it is of the **type** $\langle e, t \rangle$. Remember that the argument is on the left side of the tuple (ordered pair), hence the component of type *entity* (e) is left.



Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

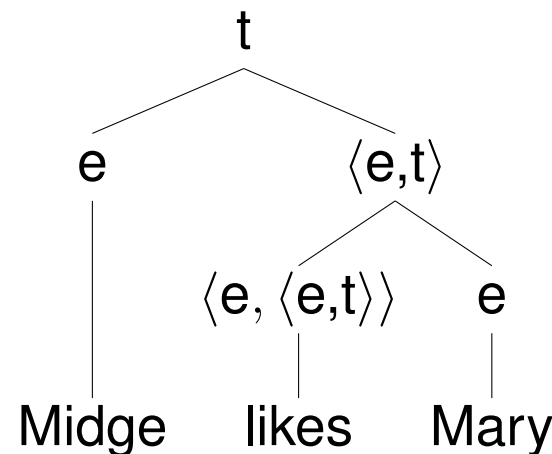
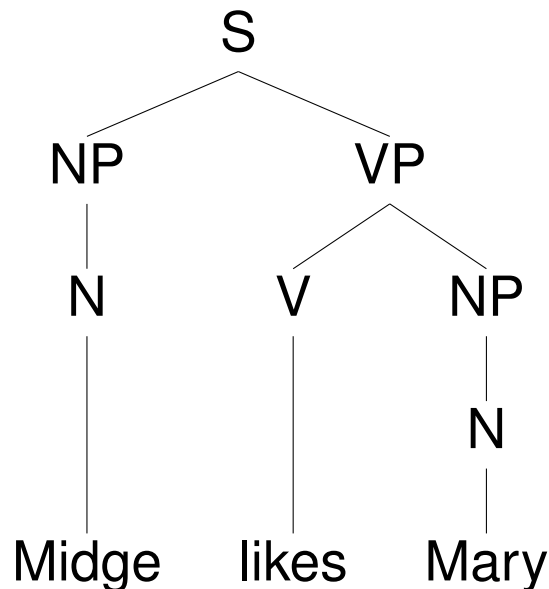
Summary

References



Semantic Types: Two-Place Predicates

A **transitive verb** requires **two arguments** to be filled in order to form a full sentence, hence it is of the **type** $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$.



Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Summary: Types of Expressions

There is a long (potentially infinite) list of **types of expressions** which we might want to represent in our logical language in order to capture the different combinatorial possibilities we find in natural languages.

Type	Kind of expression	Examples
e	Individual expression	<i>John, Jumbo</i>
$\langle e, t \rangle$	One-place first-order predicate	<i>walks, red, loves Mary</i>
$\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$	Two-place first-order predicate	<i>loves, sees</i>
$\langle e, \langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle \rangle$	Three-place first-order predicate	<i>lies between (and)</i>
t	Sentence	<i>John walks, John loves Mary</i>
$\langle t, t \rangle$	Sentential modifier	<i>Not</i>
$\langle e, e \rangle$	Function (entity to entity)	<i>The father of</i>
$\langle \langle e, t \rangle, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$	Predicate modifier	<i>Quickly, beautifully, fast</i>
$\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$	One-place second-order predicate	<i>Is a color</i>
$\langle \langle e, t \rangle, \langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle \rangle$	Two-place second-order predicate	<i>Is a brighter color than</i>
etc.	etc.	etc.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



The Syntax: Recursive Definition

The clauses for the syntax of a type-theoretic language are then:

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References

- (i) If α is a variable or a constant of type a in L [i.e. v_a or c_a], then α is an expression of type a in L .
- (ii) If α is an expression of type $\langle a, b \rangle$ in L , and β is an expression of type a in L , then $(\alpha(\beta))$ is an expression of type b in L .
- (iii) If ϕ and ψ are expressions of type t in L (i.e. formulas in L), then so are $\neg\phi$, $(\phi \wedge \psi)$, $(\phi \vee \psi)$, $(\phi \rightarrow \psi)$, and $(\phi \leftrightarrow \psi)$.
- (iv) If ϕ is an expression of type t in L and v is a variable (of arbitrary type a), then $\forall v\phi$ and $\exists v\phi$ are expression of type t in L .
- (v) If α and β are expressions in L which belong to the same (arbitrary) type, then $(\alpha = \beta)$ is an expression of type t in L .
- (vi) Every expression L is to be constructed by means of (i)-(v) in a finite number of steps.

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 81-82.

Examples of **Valid** and **Invalid** Expressions

Definition of Types

Assume j is of type e (i.e. representing an entity), x is of type e , A is of type $\langle e, t \rangle$ (i.e. a first order one-place predicate), B is of type $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$ (i.e. a first-order two-place predicate), and \mathcal{C} is of type $\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$ (i.e. a second-order one-place predicate).

Expressions

j ✓

A ✓

$A(j)$ ✓

$(B(j))(x)$ ✓ alternative notation: $B(j)(x)$

$\mathcal{C}(B(j))$ ✓

$A(j) \wedge \mathcal{C}(A)$ ✓

$\forall x A(x)$ ✓

Aj ✗

$B(A)$ ✗

$\forall x \mathcal{C}(x)$ ✗

Clause Applied

(i)

(i)

(i) and (ii)

(i) and (ii)

(i) and (ii)

(i), (ii), and (iii)

(i), (ii), and (iv)

—

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Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Truth Valuation

However, the complexity of defining interpretation functions for all kinds of different types of expressions (see table below from Gamut) is beyond the scope of this course.

Gamut (1991), p. 86.

Type	Interpretation
e	Entity
$\langle e, t \rangle$	Function from entities to truth values, i.e. characteristic function
$\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$	Function from entities to sets of entities
$\langle e, \langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle \rangle$	Function from entities to functions from entities to sets of entities
t	Truth value
$\langle t, t \rangle$	Function from truth values to truth values
$\langle e, e \rangle$	Function from entities to entities
$\langle \langle e, t \rangle, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$	Function from sets of entities to sets of entities
$\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$	Characteristic function of a set of sets of entities
$\langle \langle e, t \rangle, \langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle \rangle$	Function from sets of entities to sets of sets of entities
etc.	etc.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Section 2: Lambda Calculus in Logical Languages



Towards a Fully Compositional Account

A logical language L built on the theory of types is extremely powerful, since it is capable of representing a potentially infinite number of different natural language structures. However, we still **cannot (yet) represent parts of sentences** or predicates in a **fully compositional account**.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References

Examples

John smokes.

John smokes and drinks.

Every man walks.

smokes and drinks

every man

every

Translations (Typed Language)

$S(j)$

$S(j) \wedge D(j)$

$\forall x(M(x) \rightarrow W(x))$

?

?

?

Some (Possible?) Translations and Problems

Example	Translation (?)	Problems
smokes and drinks	$S \wedge D$	see (1)
smokes and drinks	$S(x) \wedge D(x)$	see (2)
every man	$\forall x M(x)$	see (3)
every	$\forall, \forall x$	see (4)

- (1) This is not a valid expression in a type-theoretic logical language, since only formulas of type t can be combined with connectives, while first-order predicates lacking arguments are of type $\langle e, t \rangle$. This translation would not be valid in standard predicate logic either, since atomic sentences are here defined as predicates taking at least one constant or variable.
- (2) While this is a valid expression, it would translate as *x smokes and x drinks*, which is not exactly the same as just *smokes and drinks*.
- (3) Given a domain of entities D , $\forall x M(x)$ backtranslates to *everybody is a man*, which is not the same as *every man*.
- (4) Both of these are neither valid expressions in a type-theoretic language, nor valid formulas in standard predicate logic.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Historical Note

“[...] it was not until the late 1960s that logical techniques were applied to a **compositional analysis of natural language**, an achievement ascribable mostly to **Richard Montague**. As it turns out, predicate logic is not well suited for this task, one reason being that its expressive power resides exclusively in the **sentence-like category of formulae**: only formulae are recursively combinable, all other expressions are lexical. As long as only the meanings of full sentences are at stake, this does not matter; but when it comes to representing their parts, the **resources of predicate logic** do not suffice.”

Zimmerman & Sternefeld (2013), p. 253.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Historical Note: Lambda Calculus

“**Functional abstraction** was already introduced by Frege (1891), who expressed it by accented Greek letters. Its importance for compositional semantic analysis was first realized by Richard Montague, who used **lambdas** – a notation that goes back to Alonzo Church’s (1903–1995) work on the **theory of computation** [...]”

Zimmerman & Sternefeld (2013), p. 254.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

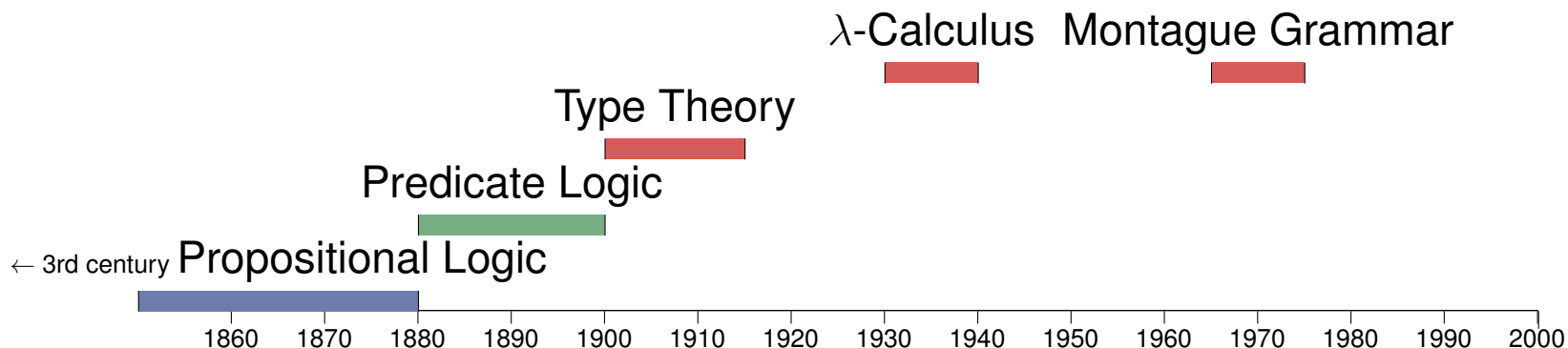
Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References





7. Universal Grammar



There is in my opinion no important theoretical difference between natural languages and the artificial languages of logicians; indeed, I consider it possible to comprehend the syntax and semantics of both kinds of languages within a single natural and mathematically precise theory. On this point I differ from a number of philosophers, but agree, I believe, with Chomsky and his associates. It is clear, however, that no adequate and comprehensive semantical theory has yet been constructed,¹ and

Originally published in *Theoria* 36:373–98 (1970). Reprinted with permission.

Montague (1970), reprinted in Thomason (1974), p. 222.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



4. SEMANTICS: THEORY OF REFERENCE

Let e, t, s be the respective numbers 0, 1, 2. (The precise choice of these objects is unimportant; the only requirements are that they be distinct and that none of them be an ordered pair.) By T , or the set of *types*, is understood the smallest set such that (1) e and t (which are regarded as the type of entities and the type of truth values respectively) are in T ; (2) whenever $\sigma, \tau \in T$, the ordered pair $\langle \sigma, \tau \rangle$ (which is regarded as the type of functions from objects



228

RICHARD MONTAGUE

of type σ to objects of type τ) is in T ; and (3) whenever $\tau \in T$, the pair $\langle s, \tau \rangle$ (which is regarded as the type of senses corresponding to objects of type τ) is in T . In connection with any sets E and I

Montague (1970), reprinted in Thomason (1974), p. 227-228.

Note: Besides e and t , Montague here introduces s as another type. This is used for a further elaboration of the framework which does not only deal with the extensions of expressions (denotational semantics), but also with *intensions* (e.g. English words like *seek*, *try*, *want*, etc.), and is hence called *intensional logic*.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Section 3: λ -Abstraction



The Syntax: Recursive Definition (Last Lecture)

The clauses for the syntax of a **type-theoretic language** are then:

- (i) If α is a variable or a constant of type a in L [i.e. v_a or c_a], then α is an expression of type a in L .
- (ii) If α is an expression of type $\langle a, b \rangle$ in L , and β is an expression of type a in L , then $(\alpha(\beta))$ is an expression of type b in L .
- (iii) If ϕ and ψ are expressions of type t in L (i.e. formulas in L), then so are $\neg\phi$, $(\phi \wedge \psi)$, $(\phi \vee \psi)$, $(\phi \rightarrow \psi)$, and $(\phi \leftrightarrow \psi)$.
- (iv) If ϕ is an expression of type t in L and v is a variable (of arbitrary type a), then $\forall v\phi$ and $\exists v\phi$ are expression of type t in L .
- (v) If α and β are expressions in L which belong to the same (arbitrary) type, then $(\alpha = \beta)$ is an expression of type t in L .
- (vi) Every expression L is to be constructed by means of (i)-(v) in a finite number of steps.

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 81-82.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



The Syntax: Adding the λ -clause

We simply add another clause to the **type-theoretic language** syntax:

- (vii) If α is an expression of type a in L , and v is a variable of type b , then $\lambda v(\alpha)$ is an expression of type $\langle b, a \rangle$ in L .¹

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 104.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References

¹I added the brackets around α here, since at least in some cases these are necessary to disambiguate.



λ -Abstraction

We say that $\lambda v(\alpha)$ has been formed from α by **abstraction over the formerly free variable v** . Hence, the free occurrences of v in α are now **bound by the λ -operator λx** .

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 104.

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 7

Section 2: Lambda Calculus in Logical Languages

Section 3: λ -Abstraction

Section 4: λ -Conversion

Section 5: Modelling Compositionality with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The Semantics of λ -Calculus

Summary

References

Expression

$S(x)$ of type t

λ -abstraction

$\lambda x(S(x))$ of type $\langle e, t \rangle$

Note: The first-order predicate S of type $\langle e, t \rangle$ is applied to variable x of type e , and yields $S(x)$ of type t . In the case of λ -abstraction this is simply reverted, i.e. the type of $\lambda x(S(x))$ is $\langle e, t \rangle$ again.



Examples of λ -Abstractions

Assume a, b are constants and x, y variables of type e ; A is of type $\langle e, t \rangle$; B is of type $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$; and X is of type $\langle e, t \rangle$.

Expressions	Types	λ -Abstraction	Types
x ✓	e	$\lambda x(x)$	$\langle e, e \rangle$
$A(x)$ ✓	t	$\lambda x(A(x))$	$\langle e, t \rangle$
$B(y)(x)$ ✓	t	$\lambda x(B(y)(x))$ or $\lambda y(B(y)(x))$	$\langle e, t \rangle$
$B(a)(x)$ ✓	t	$\lambda x(B(a)(x))$	$\langle e, t \rangle$
$\forall x B(x)(y)$ ✓	t	$\lambda y(\forall x B(x)(y))$	$\langle e, t \rangle$
$X(a)$ ✓	t	$\lambda X(X(a))$	$\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$
$X(a) \wedge X(b)$ ✓	t	$\lambda X(X(a) \wedge X(b))$	$\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$

Note: In our practical usage of the type-theoretic language, variables are mostly defined to have type e (i.e. x, y, z , etc.). In some cases, they might be of type $\langle e, t \rangle$, namely, if they refer to predicate variables (X, Y, Z , etc.). Hence, λ -abstraction essentially amounts to **adding an e or $\langle e, t \rangle$ as a “prefix”** to the type of the expression that is abstracted over.

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 7

Section 2: Lambda Calculus in Logical Languages

Section 3: λ -Abstraction

Section 4: λ -Conversion

Section 5: Modelling Compositionality with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The Semantics of λ -Calculus

Summary

References



More Examples: Recursive Application

Assume that B below represents the relation of “befriend” in English. The expression $(B(y))(x)$ – here simplified to $B(y)(x)$ – then represents “ x befriends y ”.

Expressions	Types	λ -Abstraction	Types
$B(y)(x)$	t	$\lambda y(B(y)(x))$	$\langle e, t \rangle$
$\lambda y(B(y)(x))$	$\langle e, t \rangle$	$\lambda x(\lambda y(B(y)(x)))$	$\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$

Note: $B(y)(x)$ is equivalent to the standard predicate logic expression Bxy . We have already pointed out in the last lecture that for two-place predicates it is a convention in type-theoretic languages to apply the predicate first to what would be the object of a transitive sentence (i.e. y here), and then secondly to what would be the subject (i.e. x). This is also reflected in the order of application of the λ -abstraction to first y and then x .

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 7

Section 2: Lambda Calculus in Logical Languages

Section 3: λ -Abstraction

Section 4: λ -Conversion

Section 5: Modelling Compositionality with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The Semantics of λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Section 4: λ -Conversion



λ -Conversion (aka β -Reduction)

Informally speaking, λ -**conversion**² is the process whereby we reduce the λ -statement by removing the λ -operator (and the variable directly following it) and plugging an expression (in the simplest case a constant c , or a predicate constant C) into **every occurrence of the variable which is bound by the λ -operator**.

Typed expression	λ -Abstraction (over x or X)	λ -Conversion (with c or C over x or X)
$S(x)$	$\lambda x(S(x))$	$\lambda x(S(x))(c) = S(c)$
$S(x) \wedge D(x)$	$\lambda x(S(x) \wedge D(x))$	$\lambda x(S(x) \wedge D(x))(c) = S(c) \wedge D(c)$
$X(a) \wedge X(b)$	$\lambda X(X(a) \wedge X(b))$	$\lambda X(X(a) \wedge X(b))(C) = C(a) \wedge C(b)$

²The term λ -conversion is not to be confused with α -conversion. The latter refers to replacing one variable for another.

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 7

Section 2: Lambda Calculus in Logical Languages

Section 3: λ -Abstraction

Section 4: λ -Conversion

Section 5: Modelling Compositionality with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The Semantics of λ -Calculus

Summary

References



λ -Conversion (Formal Definition)

In general, **λ -conversion** is defined as the process whereby an expression of the form $\lambda v(\beta)(\gamma)$ is reduced to $[\gamma/v]\beta$.

- ▶ β is a typed expression (e.g. $S(x)$ or $S(x) \wedge D(x)$ above).
- ▶ v is a variable (e.g. x, y, z, X, Y, Z).
- ▶ γ is another expression which the λ -expression is applied to (i.e. functional application). In the simple case, this is a constant c or C as above.
- ▶ $[\gamma/v]\beta$ means all occurrences of v in β are replaced by γ .

Important caveat: This definition holds only if “all variables which occur as free variables in γ are free for v in β ”, i.e. if **no occurrence** of v in β is bound by a quantifier or another λ -operator.

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 109-110.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Valid and Invalid λ -Conversions

λ -Abstraction

$\lambda x(S(x) \wedge D(x))$

$\lambda y(\lambda x(S(x) \wedge D(y)))$

$\lambda x(\lambda y(A(y)(x)))$

$\lambda x(\forall x F(x))$

$\lambda x(\exists x F(x) \rightarrow S(x))$

$\lambda X(\forall X(X(a) \wedge X(b)))$

λ -Conversion

$\lambda x(S(x) \wedge D(x))(c) = S(c) \wedge D(c) \checkmark$

$\lambda y(\lambda x(S(x) \wedge D(y)))(c)(d) =$

$\lambda x(S(x) \wedge D(c))(d) =$

$S(d) \wedge D(c) \checkmark$

$\lambda x(\lambda y(A(y)(x)))(c)(d) =$

$\lambda y(A(y)(c))(d) =$

$A(d)(c) \checkmark$

$\lambda x(\forall x F(x))(c) \times$

$\lambda x(\exists x F(x) \rightarrow S(x))(c) \times$

$\lambda X(\forall X(X(a) \wedge X(b)))(C) \times$

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References

Note: While the rule for λ -abstraction given above in clause (vii) licenses all the abstractions in the left side, λ -conversion is only valid for a subset of these, namely the ones where the variable v is not bound by a quantifier. In practice, this means we generally avoid λ -abstractions of variables which are already bound.



Section 5: Modelling Compositionality with λ -Calculus



Disclaimer

“Now it is, of course, also possible to treat the composition of predicates without a λ -operator [...] **So why do we need a λ -operator?** The advantage of the λ -operator is that it provides a **uniform treatment** not only of these examples [combination of predicates] but also of many others too.”

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 107.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Why is λ -calculus needed?

If our aim is to model not only full sentences and formulas representing predicates, but also parts of sentences, and even individual words, by using in a unified account, then λ -abstraction and λ -conversion are possible solutions. Thus, λ -calculus allows us to capture the **compositionality of language**.

English sentence

John smokes and drinks.

John smokes

smokes

drinks

smokes and drinks

Typed expression

$\lambda x(S(x) \wedge D(x))(j) = S(j) \wedge D(j)$

$\lambda x(S(x))(j) = S(j)$

$\lambda x(S(x))$

$\lambda x(D(x))$

$\lambda x(S(x) \wedge D(x))$

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Further Examples: Two-Place Predicates

English sentence

Jumbo likes Bambi.

Jumbo likes

likes Bambi

likes

Typed expression

$\lambda x(\lambda y(L(y)(x)))(j)(b) = L(b)(j)$

$\lambda y(L(y)(j))$

$\lambda x(L(b)(x))$

$\lambda x(\lambda y(L(y)(x)))$

Note: Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 107-108, discuss how the active relation “likes” might be represented differently from the passive relation “is liked by”. Namely, assume we have $L(y)(x)$ representing “x likes y”. If we first abstract over x we get $\lambda x(L(y)(x))$ which represents “likes y” (since x is now bound by the λ -operator). If we then abstract over y we get $\lambda y(\lambda x(L(y)(x)))$, which represents “likes”. If we do it the other way around, however, we first get $\lambda y(L(y)(x))$ which represents “is liked by x”, and in the second step we get $\lambda x(\lambda y(L(y)(x)))$ “is liked by”. However, we will here assume that active and passive sentences are equivalent in terms of their λ -representations, otherwise we couldn’t represent a structure like “Jumbo likes”, since $\lambda y(L(y)(j))$ would strictly translate as “is liked by Jumbo”.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Further Examples: The Copular “Be”

English sentence

Jumbo is grey.

is grey

Jumbo is

is

Typed expression

$\lambda x(G(x))(j) = G(j)$

$\lambda x(G(x))$

$\lambda X(X(j))$

$\lambda X(\lambda x(X(x)))$

Note: In order to just represent be/is here, we have to use a predicate variable X to represent all possible one-place predicates. Since in the last step we abstract both over the variable standing in for the individual (x), and the variable standing in for a predicate applied to the individual (X), all that remains is the copular. Of course, this means that the whole sentence *Jumbo is grey* could also be represented as a λ -expression, i.e. $\lambda X(\lambda x(X(x)))(G)(j)$ which is equivalent to $G(j)$ after λ -conversion. This representation of the copular in a λ -expression is found in Kearns (2011), p. 78.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References

Further Examples: Quantified Expressions

English sentence

Every man walks.

every man

every

Some man walks.

some man

some

No man walks.

no man

no

Typed expression

$\forall x(M(x) \rightarrow W(x))$

$\lambda X(\forall x(M(x) \rightarrow X(x)))$

$\lambda Y(\lambda X(\forall x(Y(x) \rightarrow X(x))))$

$\exists x(M(x) \wedge W(x))$

$\lambda X(\exists x(M(x) \wedge X(x)))$

$\lambda Y(\lambda X(\exists x(Y(x) \wedge X(x))))$

$\neg \exists x(M(x) \wedge W(x))$

$\lambda X(\neg \exists x(M(x) \wedge X(x)))$

$\lambda Y(\lambda X(\neg \exists x(Y(x) \wedge X(x))))$

Note: In order to represent just the quantifiers *every*, *some*, and *no* we need two predicate variables here (X and Y). Same as before, whole sentences can also be represented by λ -expressions, e.g. *every man walks* is $\lambda Y(\lambda X(\forall x(Y(x) \rightarrow X(x))))(M)(W)$ before λ -conversion, which becomes (and is hence equivalent to) $\forall x(M(x) \rightarrow W(x))$ after λ -conversion.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Section 6: The Semantics of λ -Calculus



Truth Valuation

As seen before for other logical languages, the semantic side of type-theoretic languages consists of the **valuation of truth** given a syntactically valid expression.

Example

Remember from last lecture that in a type-theoretic language we might represent a verb like *walks* by W of type $\langle e, t \rangle$. In order to value the truth of a particular formula (e.g. $W(j)$) we define the set of all relevant entities D (the domain) with members d , and a subset $W \subseteq D$ whose members can be said to *walk*. We then define an interpretation function I for which it holds that:

$$I(W)(d) = 1 \text{ iff } d \in W; \text{ and } I(W)(d) = 0 \text{ iff } d \notin W. \quad (1)$$

$I(W)$ is a so-called *characteristic function of W* (over D).

Section 1: Recap of Lecture 7

Section 2: Lambda Calculus in Logical Languages

Section 3: λ -Abstraction

Section 4: λ -Conversion

Section 5: Modelling Compositionality with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The Semantics of λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Truth Valuation: λ -Calculus

It is important to realize that **λ -calculus is not just a syntactic extension to type-theoretic languages**, i.e. some descriptive convention of how to encode certain parts of natural language sentences, but it is also fully compatible with the **semantic side of truth valuation**.

Example

For an expression $W(x)$ we have the problem that while it is of type t we cannot actually assign a truth value $\{0, 1\}$ to it. It can be shown, however, that $\lambda x(W(x))$ is a function h such that

$$h = I(W). \quad (2)$$

In other words, for all entities d in the domain D it holds that $h(d)=1$ iff $I(W)(d)=1$. This illustrates that the denotation of $\lambda x(W(x))$ is indeed the same as one would expect for just the word *walks* represented by W .

Gamut (1991), Volume 2, p. 105.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Summary



Summary

- ▶ λ -calculus enables us to **represent the semantic compositionality** of natural language sentences even below the level of predicates and formulas.
- ▶ There are two main processes of λ -calculus, namely, λ -abstraction and λ -conversion. The former leads to the binding of formerly unbound variables, the latter can be used to reduce complex λ -expressions to simpler ones by plugging in the constants.
- ▶ The **semantic interpretation** of λ expressions is fully compatible with truth valuation as defined for logical languages more generally.

Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

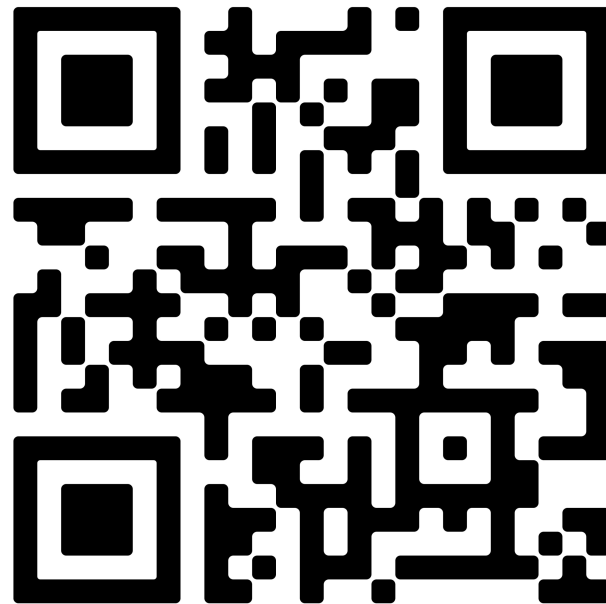
Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



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Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



References



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Section 1: Recap
of Lecture 7

Section 2:
Lambda Calculus
in Logical
Languages

Section 3:
 λ -Abstraction

Section 4:
 λ -Conversion

Section 5:
Modelling
Compositionality
with λ -Calculus

Section 6: The
Semantics of
 λ -Calculus

Summary

References



Thank You.

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