Formal Semantics of Natural Language – Yoad Winter – ESSLLI 2022, Galway

Outline

Class 1 – Basic notions and tools
  Entailment as a core semantic intuition
  The truth-conditionality criterion
  Equivalence, tautology, contradiction, contingency
  Comparison to philosophical and mathematical logic
  Compositionality
  Structural ambiguity; ambiguity vs. vagueness
  Types and domains
  Characteristic functions
  Currying
  Arbitrary, combinatorial and logical denotations
Reading: chapters 1 and 2 of [1], including exercises

Class 2 – Simple meaning composition
  Using Lambda notation
  Reflexive pronouns in variable-free semantics
  Simple intersective modifiers
  Cross-categorial coordination and negation
  Simple quantifiers
  Word meaning and intended models
  Function application
  Syntax-semantics interface
  Category-to-type matching
Reading: chapter 3 of [1], including exercises

Class 3 – Plurals and distributivity
  Collective reference
  Effects of plural morphology
  Ontology: mereology, sets, groups, impure atoms
  Distributivity/reciprocity (D/R)
  Lexical sources of D/R
  Grammatical D/R operators: *each other*, floating
    each, adverbials, derivational reciprocity,
    pluractional markers
  Arguments for covert D/R
  Covers and pragmatic effects
  Logical D/R quantifiers
  Vague D/R quantifiers
  On-going experimental efforts
Reading: review articles [2, 3, 4]

Class 4 – Modification and events
  Adverbial modification
  Event nominals
  Intensional vs. non-intensional modification
  Davidson's proposal
  Existential closure: events and DRT
  Compositional event modification
  Time adverbials and argument orientation
  Languages with free word order
  Neo-Davidsonian approaches
  Remaining Challenges
Reading: review articles [5], [6], [7,ch.1]

Class 5 – Presupposition
  Strawsonian vs. Russellian approaches
  Truth-value gaps
  Presupposition projection
  Holes, plugs and fillers
  Semantic vs. pragmatic approaches
  Formal semantic account (Schlenker)
  Formal pragmatic account (Stalnaker/Heim)
  Accommodation
  On-going experimental efforts
Reading: review articles [8, 9, 10]

References

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[4] Lucas Champollion. Distributivity in formal semantics. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 2018. forthcoming.

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[8] David I. Beaver and Bart Geurts. Presupposition. In Edward N. Zalta, editor, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Winter 2014 edition, 2014.

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[10] Florian Schwarz. Presuppositions, projection, and accommodation – theoretical issues and experimental approaches. Oxford University Press, 2019.