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11/28/16
Semantics Midterm

1. a. A asks if B has a Siamese [cat is omitted], and B responds "I have a cat." B's utterance implicates that B does have a cat, but that it is not a Siamese cat. This is derived from the Gricean framework due to the maxim of relation. Following this maxim, one should only provide information that is relevant to the subject of discussion at the time. This statement is only true and helpful if B's response is interpreted as affirming the existence of their cat and denying the quality of it being Siamese. Although this answer does not follow A's question semantically, by responding in this way B is providing additional information not present if they were to answer "no" as in B'. In B', the speaker is replying to the question in a semantically correct way, but not giving all the information pertinent to this subject, mainly that the speaker does have a cat. B, on the other hand, is not semantically answering the question, but is a more informative response than B'. The Gricean maxim of quantity explains that one should be as informative as possible (without unnecessary information), and therefore prefers B's answer.

should run a cancellation test to show that this is a fact an implicature

0/3

15/15 good

15/15 good,

2. (a) Alfonso talked to Joanna's mother.
   (b) Alfonso borrowed Joanna's book.
   (c) Alfonso kicked Joanna's chair.

good 8/8

a. Lambda notebook

b. [[Mother]] : <e , <e , t>> you're right that mother should be this type, but that's not what you have in the Lamda Notebook
[[book]] : <e , t> good

its not crazy to think there is a presupposition in [[mother]], but [[mother]] needs to give rise to a presupposition that there is a particular kind of relationship that holds between Joanna and her mother 6/8

the intermediate DP?

These two types of Ns alter the type of the DP, changing the meaning of the possessive. The type of [[Mother]] here picks out a Joanna's unique mother if she has one, and nothing otherwise. This is truth-value-less if it does not pick out a unique entity. The type of [[book]] indicates ownership and can pick an item out of a set. The possessor and the possessee therefore can have a relationship of ownership in a literal and non-literal sense. Both types are possessive determiners and are genitive.

is ownership the the only possible relation? what if Joanna wrote the book but does't own it?

c. The whole DP should have type <e , t>and should produce a unique entity that is "Joanna's mother." We can reread this phrase as "the mother of Joanna." Working with the surface form, the denotation and semantic type of [['s]] is ambiguous, as it must change depending on the object. If the object is [[Mother]], the denotation should be <<e , t> , <e , t>>, and if the object were [[book]] it should be <<e , t> , <e , <e , t>>>. The denotation of [[Mother]] is $\lambda x.x \epsilon D_e.Mother'(x)$ with type <e, <e , t>>. The denotation of [[book]] should be $\lambda x.x \epsilon D_e.book'(x)$ with type <e , t>.

should be type e at the very top = needs to point to a particular person who is Joanna's mother

good

shouldn't that be the other way around?

your denotation for the two types of POSS are not in the lambda notebook, but based on what you have below, it's not quite right 4/9

but the lambda function you have written here is type e

d. A doctor met Joanna's mother.

should be <e,<e,t>>,<e,e>> to compose with mother <e<e,t>> and <<e,t>,<e,e>> to compose with book <e,t>

Lexicon:

- Presuppositions:
  1. Joanna has a mother.
  2. There is a certain doctor who met Joanna's mother.

3. Joanna's mother did not previously know this doctor.

- Lexicon:
  1. $[[a]] = \lambda f_{\langle e,t\rangle} . \lambda g_{\langle e,t\rangle} . \exists x_e . f(x) \wedge g(x)$
  2. $[[doctor]] = \lambda x_e . doctor'(x)$
  3. $[[met]] = \lambda y_e . \lambda x_e . met'(x,y)$
  4. $[[Joanna]] = \lambda x_e . J'$
  5. $[['s]] = Possessive = \lambda f_{\langle e,t\rangle} . \lambda h_e . \lambda g_e . (f_{<e,t>}(y_e) \wedge POSS(g_e, h_e))$
  6. $[[mother]] = \lambda x . x \epsilon D_e . Mother'(x)$
  7. $[[a\ doctor]] = (\lambda d_{\langle e,t\rangle} . \exists x_e . doctor'(x) \wedge d(x))$
  8. $[[Joanna's\ mother]] = \lambda h_e . \lambda g_{<e,<e,t>>} . POSS(g_e, h_e)$
  9. $[[met]]([[Joanna's\ mother]]) = \lambda y_e . \lambda x_{<<<e,t>,<e,t>>,<<e,t>>} . met'(y, x)$
  10. $[[a\ doctor\ met\ Joanna's\ mother]] = \exists x_e . doctor'(x) \wedge met'(x, POSS(g_e, h_e))$

the function POSS is not bound anywhere in this function this is know as vacuous binding and would lead to problems in interpretation in the full derivation

5/8

also the uniquness presupposition is best expressed in POSS since you get the same presupposition for both book and mother

POSS should overtly relate the possessor and posessee but you never saturated g or h

3. a. An epithet is an adjectival exclamation, and does not contribute to the DP/sentence in which it appears, except that it provides emphasis of a negative contextual quality. Depending on the placement of the epithet, certain words will be emphasized. In the sentence "Julia broke the fucking computer," the epithet "fucking" places emphasis on the fact that the *computer* was broken by Julia and centers anger on the fact that the *computer* is broken. The same epithet in the sentence "Fucking Julia broke the computer," instead expresses aggression towards Julia, as she is the focus and is presented as having broken the computer. The phrase "Julia fucking broke the computer," implies that the issue is that Julia *broke* the computer and the attention is placed on the act of breaking (this example is an adverbial and not an adjectival epithet). Informally, an epithet like "fucking/damn/darn" draws attention to certain aspects of the sentence. The context of utterance can change the meaning of such words (for instance, "fucking" is used angrily, jokingly, or to express surprise depending on the context of utterance).

good

11/11

good

b. The contribution of an epithet like "fucking" does not fit entirely into any of the categories we have studied. Let's consider this exchange:

A: Why didn't you respond to my email?

B: Julia broke the fucking computer.

It is not an at-issue entailment, as the entailments for the utterance of B would be "the computer is broken," for example. Nor is it a presupposition—the presuppositions for this sentence would be similar to "there is a computer." It cannot follow the constancy test and provide the same contextual contribution. If anything, the utterance of B most closely resembles an implicature, but that is not due to the epithet contribution. I believe the contribution of epithets are an entirely separate thing. Its contribution is detachable from the meaning of the sentence, like entailments and presuppositions, but its contribution is also inferred from the context of the utterance.

7/11

show this

good support this with a cancellation test

what do you mean?

good

c. Adjectival epithets have a contextually-linked contribution to the sentences in which they are used. I believe, like morpho-syntactically-motivated expletives, epithets are formally inert in semantics. Their type is likely <e,t>, like most adjectives, where t always =1. Since it does not describe a physical or informative quality, it cannot be false.

on the right trak, but what exactly do you mean? E.g the denotation below doesn't adequately capture the projection you alluded to above

10/11

$[[\text{the}]]^{c,a} = \lambda f_{\langle e\ t\rangle} : (\exists!x\ .\ x \epsilon Cc \wedge f(x) = 1)\ .\ (\iota x\ .\ x \epsilon Cc \wedge f(x) = 1)$

$[[\text{fucking}]] = \square x.\lambda x_e.\text{fucking}'(x) = 1$

$[[\text{computer}]] = \lambda x_e.\text{computer}'(x)$

(the * (fucking * computer))

$[[\text{the fucking computer}]]^c = (\iota y : y \epsilon Cc \wedge \text{fucking}'(y) \wedge \text{computer}'(y) = 1)$

Defined only if $(\exists!x\ .\ x \epsilon Cc \wedge f(x) = 1)$

good, but

like whether the emotion is positive or negative?

d. There are various differences in expressive adjectives, including the sentiment conveyed. Expressive adjectives serve to identify the sentiments of the speaker who utter them. Epithets and these adjectives are contextual clues for the utterance. It would be difficult to capture these in semantic notation, but I believe it would be similar to that of the epithets in part (c). Since these adjectives in essence describe the context or the emotions of the interlocutor and not the object itself, they cannot be false. Words like "fucking," "goddamn," and "darn" are semantically vacuous. On the other hand, "amazing," "idiotic," and "wonderful" are opinion-based and not concretely tied to the nature of the object.

what about intensity?

So how would you try to capture this?