Exam 2
Chris Potts, Ling 130a/230a: Introduction to semantics and pragmatics, Winter 2015
Distributed Mar 12; due Mar 19, 6:30 pm

Notes and reminders

• This is due on Mar 19, by 6:30 pm. No late work will be accepted.
• You must submit your work electronically to the usual course address: linguist130a-win1415-staff@lists.stanford.edu
• No collaboration of any kind is permitted. You are, though, free to use your notes and any other reference materials you like.

1 High-stakes conversational implicature [3 points]

Suppose that the following dialogue takes place in the context of a Senate confirmation hearing. A is a powerful senator, and B is a candidate for the important position.1

A: Have you ever ingested Pop Rocks Candy and Coca-Cola at the same time?
B: I have not ingested Pop Rocks Candy and Coca-Cola at the same time in over ten years.

B’s response generates a conversational implicature. Identify that implicature and explain how it arises from interactions among the maxims.

2 Quantificational determiner [2 points]

Give a functional denotation for the quantificational determiner not every. (For examples of such denotations, see section 5.7 of the ‘Semantic composition’ handout.)

3 Quantificational determiner [2 points]

Give a functional denotation for the quantificational determiner neither as used in Neither parent smokes. Use the meaning for both from the ‘Presupposition’ handout as a model.

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1When I was growing up, simultaneously ingesting Pop Rocks and Coca-Cola was reputed to be very dangerous: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pop_Rocks
4 Semantic composition

For each of the top (root) nodes in the following trees, provide (i) the name of the rule you used to derive that meaning from its constituent parts, according to the handout ‘Semantic composition’ as extended by rules (D) and (S7) from the ‘Presupposition’ handout, and (ii) the meaning itself after all the allowable substitutions from functional applications. Assume the following lexical denotations; \([\text{the}]\) is given on the ‘Presupposition’ handout, in (21).

- \([\text{tease}] = \lambda y \ (\lambda x \ (T\ \text{if}\ x\ \text{teased}\ y,\ \text{else}\ F))\)
- \([\text{child}] = \lambda x \ (T\ \text{if}\ x\ \in\ \{[\text{Bart}], [\text{Lisa}], [\text{Maggie}]\},\ \text{else}\ F)\)
- \([\text{male}] = \lambda f \ (\lambda x \ (T\ \text{if}\ x\ \in\ \{[\text{Homer}], [\text{Bart}]\} \ \text{and}\ f(x) = T,\ \text{else}\ F))\)

4.1 [2 points]

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        DP
       /   \  
      the   NP
         / \  
       AP  NP
      / \  /  
     A   N male  child
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4.2 [2 points]

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        VP
       /   \  
      not  VP
         / \  
        V  DP
       / \  |
      tease the NP
            / |
             N  child
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5 What kind of meaning is this?

The handout ‘Diagnosing different kinds of meaning’ provides a flow-chart for classifying meanings as variously at-issue, conventionally implicated, presupposed, or conversationally implicated. For each of the following sentences, classify its associated target meaning according to this rubric. For each test that you need to run (until you reach a decision), provide (i) the example that results from applying the test to the sentence to assess the status of the target meaning, and (ii) a judgment as to what the test example tells us. Examples of complete answers are in section 3 of the handout.

5.1

Sentence: Carol wished that she could juggle.
Target meaning: Carol cannot juggle

5.2

Sentence: Carol tried to win the race.
Target meaning: Carol did not win the race.

6 Grice and perceived illocutionary effect

In ‘Consensual searches’, Solan and Tiersma consider the question Can I look in the trunk? in contexts of interactions between police officers and drivers they have stopped. Use Grice’s maxims to articulate why drivers tend to perceive this question as having the illocutionary force of a command even though its literal content is that of a question.

7 Swearing and the FCC

Provide two cogent linguistic or cognitive arguments in favor of the position that swears like the F-word should be subject to different legal restrictions than other kinds of speech. (1–2 sentences per argument; the arguments might not be persuasive to you, but they should make sense!)

Extra credit

Formulate a presuppositional meaning for stop, as a partial function. Notes:

• Assume [stop] takes a VP meaning (function from entities to truth-values) as its first argument and an entity as its second argument, to deliver a proposition. (The VP meanings are syntactically spelled out as gerunds like smoking and eating the cake.)

• The meaning of stop is partly temporal, but you needn’t work out a theory of tense or anything — that information can be specified in prose.