

## On reading Partee 1995

Chris Potts, Ling 130a/230a: Introduction to semantics and pragmatics, Winter 2019

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**Note** Partee 1995<sup>1</sup> is a long and rich article that could be read with many goals in mind. We don't expect you to master all aspects of it. The following questions are aimed at helping to get you focused on what's important for our discussions. You should keep studying the article until you can answer them all.

- (1) What is the definition of compositionality?
- (2) Lewis's advice and Creswell's principle: What do they mean for semantics, and how do they inform our decision to treat lexical meanings and their combinations?
- (3) Give definitions of the following in a manner that is perspicuous for you.
  - a. Intersective adjective
  - b. Subsective adjective
  - c. Nonsubsective adjective
- (4) Can we distinguish 'vague' from 'context-dependent'? How?
- (5) What are the problems with treating context-dependent adjectives like *tall* as simply a kind of subsective adjective?
- (6) How does Partee eventually classify context-dependent adjectives in the intersective/subsective/nonsubsective typology?
- (7) In what sense might context-dependence and point-of-view be said to challenge compositionality?
- (8) How common is it for words to have vague meanings?
- (9) In what sense are compounds at or near "the limits of compositionality"?

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<sup>1</sup>Partee, Barbara H. 1995. Lexical semantics and compositionality. In Lila R. Gleitman and Mark Liberman, eds., *Invitation to Cognitive Science*, volume 1, 311–360. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.