

Academic Year/course: 2022/23

32285 - Semantics and Pragmatics

Syllabus Information

Academic Course: 2022/23

Academic Center: 803 - Masters Centre of the Department of Translation and Language Sciences

Study: 8039 - Master in Discourse Studies: Communication, Society and Learning

Subject: 32285 - Semantics and Pragmatics

Credits: 5.0

Course: 1

Teaching languages:

Theory: Group 1: English

Seminar: Group 101: English

Group 102: English

Teachers: Martina Elisabeth Wiltschko

Teaching Period: Second Quarter

Schedule:

Presentation

This course is an introduction to natural language semantics and pragmatics, including the basic issues and data that have traditionally been the focus of study in the most influential theoretical frameworks and in commonly used research methodologies. In addition, we will incorporate lesser studied phenomenon that belong to the empirical domain of linguistic conversation. The overall goal is to develop the student's ability to analyze semantic and pragmatic phenomena in language.

Associated skills

- General skills:
 - Collection of data-sets that speak to a specific question and/or hypothesis about the semantics and pragmatics of natural language. To be able to provide minimal pairs.
 - Description of natural language data (of spoken and written language): To be able to describe in detail the relevant facts about a particular data set.
 - Analysis and problem solving: To be able to propose the most economic analysis of a semantic or pragmatic phenomenon given some set of theoretical concepts and specific methods.
 - Application of theoretical knowledge to practical cases: To be able to apply

theoretical concepts and knowledge about semantics and pragmatics to the analysis of new data.

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Motivation for quality: To be better able to recognize different degrees of precision in the analysis of data and to develop a sense of the importance of formulating descriptions and analyses with maximal precision.

- Specific skills: Ability to reflect on the functioning of language: To be able to distinguish between the respective roles of semantics and pragmatics in linguistic communication.

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to

- understand the construction of meaning in natural language. How meaning arises through the composition of words into sentences and of utterances in context.
- appreciate the complexity of language in interaction
- understand how different types of form (words, prosody, gestures, facial expressions) all contribute to the construction of meaning
- distinguish between meaning that is literally encoded and meaning that comes about through contextual information and inferencing
- understand the core concepts of semantics and pragmatics that have been at the core of semantics and pragmatics research since its inception

Sustainable Development Goals

By developing an understanding of the complexity of spoken language, students will appreciate that every form of language is equally valued. As a by-product, students will be able to recognise linguistic prejudices that may lead to linguistic discrimination.

Prerequisites

This is an introductory course of the Masters program with no pre-requisites (introduction to linguistics an asset).

Contents

- Week 1: *What is meaning? How do we interact meaningfully?*
- Week 2: *Compositionality and Truth(conditions)*
- Week 3: *Modality and possible worlds; Quantifiers*
- Week 4: *Clausal and nominal reference*
- Week 5: *Presuppositions*
- Week 6: *The Gricean program. Recognizing intentions.*
- Week 7: *What we do when we use language: Speech act theory.*
- Week 8: *Dynamic theories of meaning. Language in interaction.*
- Week 9: *Expressing emotions and other non-truth-conditional meaning.*
- Week 10: *The relation between language, thought and communication*

Teaching Methods

- There will be videos designed for the course which explain the basic concepts we will cover in class. Students are expected to watch these videos before class.
- There will be weekly readings and mostly weekly exercises, all of which will be posted on the Aula Global Moodle for the course and which will form the basis for class discussion.
- The readings and exercises should be done BEFORE the class in which they are discussed.

Evaluation

The grade for the course will be based on performance on a set of 3 homework exercises done over the course of the quarter (counting 15% each towards the final grade) a final group project which you will be work on over the course of the quarter (35% towards the final grade), and participation in class, seminars and on aula global (20% of the final grade).

The final project will be presented after the course is over and the paper is due 1 week after the last class.

There is a fourth homework, which consists of summarizing the discussion in the seminar. It will be due 5 days after the seminar that you are responsible for.

Bibliography and information resources

- Required readings are marked with *, we will assume that you will have read them **before** class.
- Unmarked readings are background readings that are optional. You may find them useful, especially if you have no background.
- Throughout the course you may find Kearns textbook useful. Please read as you see fit.
Kearns, Kate. 2011 *Semantics* (second edition). Palgrave MacMillan (available on the course website)
- Several readings are found in:
Portner, Paul and Barbara Partee (2002). *Formal Semantics. The essential readings*. Blackwell (available on the course website)
- If you require further background readings, please contact me.
- Throughout the course, I will be comparing traditional views on semantics/pragmatics with my own view on interactional language. The readings for this part of the course are not obligatory as I will be teaching about it and there are no set times for when you should read the individual chapters.
Wiltschko, Martina (2021). *The grammar of interactional language*. Cambridge University Press. (available on the course website)

Week 2:

- *Partee, Barbara H. (2011) "Formal Semantics: Origins, Issues, Early Impact," *Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic and Communication*: Vol. 6. <https://doi.org/10.4148/biyclc.v6i0.1580>
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/compositionality/>
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth/>

Week 3:

- *Lewis, David, 1975. Adverbs of Quantification. In: Edward Keenan (Ed.), *Formal Semantics of Natural Language*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 3-15. (also in Portner & Partee 2002).
- *Rullmann, H., Matthewson, L., & Davis, H. (2008). Modals as distributive indefinites. *Natural Language Semantics*, 16(4), 317-357.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/possible-worlds/>
- Copeland, B.J.(2002). The Genesis of Possible Worlds Semantics. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 31, 99–137. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1023/A:1015273407895>
- Kratzer, Angelika. 1981."The notional category of modality. Eikmeyer, Hans-Jürgen & Hannes Rieser (eds.), *Words, worlds, and contexts. New approaches in word semantics.*" : 38-74. (updated version in Portner & Partee 2002)

Week 4:

- *M Ryan Bochnak, Vera Hohaus, Anne Mucha, Variation in Tense and Aspect, and the Temporal Interpretation of Complement Clauses, *Journal of Semantics*, Volume 36, Issue 3, August 2019, Pages 407–452, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/ffz008>
- *Heim, I. (1983). File change semantics and the familiarity theory of definiteness. *Semantics Critical Concepts in Linguistics*, 108-135. (also in Portner & Partee 2002)

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/propositions/>

Week 5:

*Jerrold J. Katz and Terence Langendoen. 1976. Pragmatics and Presupposition. *Language*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (pp. 1-17)
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/presupposition/>

Week 6:

*Danny Fox. 2014. Cancelling the Maxim of Quantity: Another challenge for a Gricean theory of Scalar Implicatures
Semantics & Pragmatics 7, 5: 1–20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3765/sp.7.5>
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/implicature/#GricTheo>

Week 7:

*Fogal, D., Harris, D., & Moss, M. (2018). Speech Acts: The Contemporary Theoretical Landscape. *New Works on Speech Acts*, 1-40.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/speech-acts/>

Allen, Keith. 1997. Speech Act Theory: An overview; Speech Acts and Grammar; Speech Act Classification. All in:
Lamarque, P., & Asher, R. E. (Eds.). (1997). *Concise encyclopedia of philosophy of language*. Pergamon.

Week 8:

*Stalnaker, R. (2018). Dynamic Pragmatics, Static Semantics. *New work on speech acts*.

*Sacks, Harvey. 1987. "On the preferences for agreement and contiguity in sequences in conversation." In *Talk and social organisation*, by Graham Button and John Lee, 54–69. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Week 9

*Gutzmann, Daniel. 2013. "Expressives and beyond. An introduction to varieties of use-conditional meaning." *Beyond Expressives. Explorations in Use-Conditional Meaning*, by Daniel Gutzmann and Hans-Martin Gärtner, 1–58. Leiden: Brill.

Week 10:

*Levinson, Stephen. 2019. "Interactional foundations of language: The interaction engine hypothesis." In *Human Language: From Genes and Brain to Behavior*, by P. Hagoort, 189-200. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.