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Indirect directive speech acts

Searle (1975) distinguished between indirect speech acts that are conventionally associated with an utterance, and indirect speech acts that are derived as conversational implicature. He proposed a general schema for inferring indirect speech acts from speech act theory, world knowledge, and Gricean maxims. In this talk, we consider the problem of explaining indirect speech acts in game theoretic models of implicature. If Searle's approach is valid, then such an explanation should be possible. We first show how a classification of different kinds of directive speech acts can be derived from Optimal Answer models (Benz 2011). We then present a number of case studies.

Benz, Anton. 2011. How to set up normal optimal answer models. In Anton Benz, Christian Ebert, Gerhard Jäger & Robert van Rooij (eds.), *Language, Games, and Evolution. Trends in Current Research on Language and Game Theory*, 14-39. Heidelberg: Springer.

John R. Searle. 1975. Indirect speech acts. In Peter Cole & Jerry L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics*, volume 3, 59-82. New York : Academic Press.

Chris Cummins
University of Edinburgh

When are speech acts recognised?

It appears uncontroversial that hearers are able to correctly identify formally ambiguous speech acts very rapidly, taking into account relevant aspects of the context. Given complete information about the utterance and the circumstances in which it is uttered, this process should logically be relatively unproblematic in most cases: Searle and others have discussed how we might go about identifying indirect speech acts, and research in plan-based AI has attempted to emulate the reasoning required. However, there are apparently good reasons to suppose that speech act recognition should start – and conceivably finish – before the utterance is complete, and hence in a condition of partial information. In this presentation I discuss this idea and its practical implications, examine some of the evidence for on-line processing that deals with speech acts, and consider the circumstances under which early recognition of speech acts could actually benefit interlocutors.

Reflective Questions and Indirect Speech Act Failure: Crosslinguistic Variation and Formal Modeling

Hans-Martin Gärtner (Budapest), Daniel Gutzmann (Köln) & Beáta Gyuris (Budapest)

Reflective Questions (RQs) – also known as "deliberative questions" (Oppenrieder 1989) or "conjectural questions" (Littel, Matthewson and Peterson 2010) – can be characterized as "posings" rather than "askings" of questions (cf. Lyons 1977:755). Several languages are known to possess special interrogatives whose primary function is the expression of RQs. Examples are Danish *mon*-V(erb)M(edial)-I(nterrogative)s (cf., e.g., Erteschik-Shir 2010), German *ob*-(*wohl*-)V(erb)F(inal)-I(nterrogative)s (cf., e.g., Zimmermann 2013), Romanian *oare*-I(nterrogative)s (cf., e.g., Farkas and Bruce 2009), and Hungarian *vajon*-I(nterrogative)s (cf., e.g., Gärtner and Gyuris 2012). The empirical puzzle we will concern ourselves with consists in the fact that Danish *mon*-VMIs and German *ob*-(*wohl*-)VFIs do, while Hungarian *vajon*-Is don't support usage as indirect requests. The Ge-Hu contrast is shown in (1).

- (1) a. *Ob du (bitte) das Auto volltanken könntest?* (Thurmair 1989:54)
b. (#*Vajon*) *Meg tudnád tankolni az autót (kérlek)?*
"Could you (please) fill up the car?"

There are three main theoretical points we would like to address: (i) What accounts for the contrast in (1)? (ii) Is such an account compatible with a uniform crosslinguistic theory of RQs? (iii) Do the answers to (i) and (ii) provide arguments in favor of any of the rivaling approaches to RQs, i.e., the approach in terms of a "missing call on the addressee" by Truckenbrodt (2004; 2006a; 2006b), the approach of "answerability flouting" via "evidential presuppositions" by Littel, Matthewson and Peterson (2010), the approach in terms of "weakly inquisitive" "projected future common grounds" by Farkas and Bruce (2009), and the approach in terms of a "hypotheticality modal" weakening the question meaning by Zimmermann (2013)? We will sketch some ideas about (i) here and leave explicating our answers to (ii) (presumably *no*) and (iii) (*not really*, all of them provide ingredients to be synthesized) to the talk.

Ad (i). One major obstacle to a satisfactory answer lies in the fact that there are no agreed upon general accounts of ISA failures (yet). We discard (or consider as very last resort) appeals to culture-specific blocking in the sense of Wierzbicka (1985) (see Kalisz 1993 for a critique), not the least because an ISA construal of (1b) without *vajon* is perfectly idiomatic. Equally, we don't see how "blocking by a conventionalized ISA" (cf. Asher and Lascarides 2001) could do the trick since we are unable to find any candidate for such an ISA – a formula expressing polite requests – that could not equally be found for German (1a). Also, given that the "pragmatic marker" *vajon* is semantically opaque – historically it presumably derives from something like subjunctive *be it* – it cannot be considered a "suspending" (or even "canceling") phrase of the kind discussed by Levinson (2000:81). Instead, the intuition we would like to pursue is analogous to the one expressed by Sag and Liberman (1975:496) regarding "intonational disambiguation": "some intonation contours can "freeze" an utterance pragmatically, i.e., require a literal interpretation." Thus, our claim is that *vajon* fixes the RQ construal of interrogatives. This could be formalized by identifying *vajon* with Zimmermann's HYP operator (p.100), which restricts semantic answers to addressee speculations. At the same time, it would seem to be attractive to derive the "freezing effect" on the basis of the "use-conditional" approach by Gutzmann (2012). However, since in this framework, sentence mood and modal particles are dealt with in the use-conditional dimension already, we are forced to analyze the counterpart of *vajon*, HYP*, as a "hyper shunting" expression. The idea, of course, is that standard Gricean mechanisms must be able to apply to sentence moods and particles in order to derive ISA construals of German RQs such as (1a). At the same time, hyper shunting expressions are shielded from those mechanisms. The bulk of our talk will be

devoted to exploring the division of labor between the postulated truth-conditional, use-conditional and speech act layers.

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Bart Geurts
Radbout University, Nijmegen

Precedents

It is uncontroversial that language conventions have a role to play in a theory of speech acts. What is controversial is how central that role must be. Austin famously held that all speech acts are defined according to the conventional roles they play. Strawson claimed that this conventionalist view applies to one type of speech act only, and a somewhat marginal one at that. In this paper I argue for a relatively strong version of conventionalism, which is based on a relatively lax notion of convention. The key concept in my account is that of a precedent: if it is common ground between speakers that a given expression or construction α has previously been used (either by themselves or others) for a particular purpose p , then in principle they can reuse α for the same p . Precedents, thus understood, are involved on all levels of semantics and pragmatics, but I focus on the parallels between lexical interpretation and the interpretation of speech acts, arguing that both levels are rife with indeterminacies due to the availability of multiple precedents, and that on both levels pragmatic reasoning is critical for selecting the appropriate precedents, and thus the meanings and speech acts that the speaker is committed to.

Magdalene Kaufmann
University of Connecticut

Talk about embedding

Many languages are taken to have grammatical marking of imperative clauses (verbal morphology, clause type particles). For a long time, the standard assumption had been that such markers cannot occur in embedded sentences ("Imperatives cannot be embedded"). More recent research has discovered a series of counter-examples to this generalization. At the same time, it remains to be acknowledged that embedding is severely restricted cross-linguistically. Building on, and extending, what I discussed in Kaufmann (2012, ch. 6.1), I investigate patterns in the exceptions to the putative ban on embedded imperatives. I focus on data from English, German, Japanese, Korean, and Slovenian (specifically, the interpretation of the imperative subject), and I suggest an account in terms of clashes between shiftable (in the sense of Schlenker 2003) and unshiftable indexicality. While the talk will focus mostly on imperatives in reported speech, I will discuss some connections to imperative marking in relative clauses.

Mikhail Kissine
University of Brussels

Are non-modal assertions about the future possible

There is an increasing tendency in formal semantics to assume that future tense, qua a purely temporal category, should be expelled from the linguist's toolbox. Assertions about the future, it is argued, necessarily involve a modal component. In the first part of this talk I'll critically assess an empirical argument for this view, put forth by Klecha (2014). Whether future markers exhibit or not behaviour diagnostic of modal subordination constitutes an important

test for choosing between a modal or purely temporal semantics of future tense. Klecha argues that implicit conditional readings of future-tensed sentences can only be explained by a modal subordination mechanism. I show that these implicit conditional readings are best explained by a standard mechanism of temporal anaphora. This claim is supported by the existence of, on the one hand, implicit conditional readings with past tense, and, on the other hand, non-conditional readings with 'will'. The validity of these intuitions is verified by an acceptability study, carried through the Amazon Mechanical Turk platform. In the second part of the talk I'll briefly argue that there are no philosophical, cognitive or linguistic reasons for treating future tenses as more complex than past and present tenses and/or as necessarily involving modality.

Marcus Kracht & Christoph Brandt
Bielefeld University

A Simple Model for Speech Acts

I shall give an overview over a proposal by Christoph Brandt and myself to model a multi-party communication network, where speech acts live side by side with ordinary actions. The original proposal was tailored to monitor mixed dialogs between humans and machines and uses only a limited set of basic speech act types (assertion, question, command). It seems likely, though, that it can be upgraded to cover more speech act types. An important feature of this model is that it allows to track and predict knowledge propagation through a network by means of communication protocols.

Manfred Krifka
ZAS & Humboldt-University Berlin

Bias in Commitment Space Semantics: Declarative Questions, Negated Questions, and Question Tags

I will present a framework for speech acts in which they do not only change the commitment sets of participants, but also the ways how they can develop in the future. This allows for modeling delegation, conjunction and disjunction of speech acts. This also allows for modeling questions as acts that only have an effect on the future development of commitment spaces. I will show how this allows for modeling declarative questions and other biased questions. Questions with high negation will be modeled as involving denegation of assertions, and the two types of question tags, matching tags and reverse tags, will be modeled as conjunction vs. disjunction of an assertion with a biased question.

Staffan Larsson & Jenny Myrendal
Gothenburg University

Dialogue acts for word meaning negotiation

We describe a tentative dialogue act taxonomy for word meaning negotiation (WMN) in computer-mediated communication (CMC). WMN is a semantic coordination process in which participants collaborate to establish the situated, local meaning of a particular word. By studying sequences of WMN, we have been able to distinguish several dialogue acts and associated semantic operations used in the process of establishing situated meaning. These operations draw upon both semantic affordances of the words themselves (meaning potentials) and relevant aspects of the conversational context. We will describe the dialogue acts and semantic operations involved in WMN, illustrate using examples and discuss how WMN dialogue acts can be defined and operationalised.

Sven Lauer
University of Konstanz

Speech-act operators vs. extra-compositional conventions of use: What are the issues?

In recent work, Krifka (2001, 2014, 2015, a.o.) has proposed that illocutionary force is represented compositionally by means of speech-act operators whose denotation specifies the dynamic effect of utterances. Concurrently, Condoravdi and Lauer (2011, 2012) and Lauer (2013) have proposed analyses according to which utterances produce their dynamic effects in a different way, viz., through semantic conventions of use that are external to the system of semantic composition.

The latter strategy is arguably more parsimonious while the former is more powerful (e.g., it allows for the carriers of illocutionary force to be embedded and modified by other operators). The main concern of this talk is to determine whether this additional power is in fact needed, by exploring ways in which a Lauer/Condoravdi-style account can predict the facts motivating the Krifka-style approach. This will lead to a characterization of the kind of data that would support a knock-down argument against the conventions-of-use approach. While I claim that such data has not yet been produced, I will point out some directions where it might be found in the future.

Uli Sauerland
ZAS Berlin

Question-Acts in the Particle Accelerator

Focus particles (or adverbs) like "again", "even", "perhaps", "only", "already", and others in several languages trigger readings in questions of a different nature than those available with the same particles in declaratives (e.g. Bayer & Obenauer 2011, Iatridou & Tatevosov 2014, Sauerland 2006). I develop an approach based on three standard assumptions about these particles: i) the lexical particle semantics, ii) the syntax of movement, and iii) the semantics of scope. In addition there is one new assumption: a special structure of question speech acts that interacts with i) through iii) to derive their special readings in questions.

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Marina Sbisa
University of Trieste

Force assignment

The basic idea is that illocutionary act types are types of scripts (what Austin called "accepted conventional procedures") comprising an initial state (preparatory conditions or presuppositions), one or more ways of performance, and an outcome. In natural conversation we assign force to utterances as soon as, or insofar as, we recognize their belonging to the execution of a certain script. Sentence type plays an important role in this process but does not tell the whole story about it. Most kinds of so-called indirect speech acts can be better explained in this perspective than by means of Gricean inferences from a literal force to a "primary" one.

However, it remains to be discussed what exactly, in default situations, is connected to sentence type: what, if anything, we are entitled to assign to utterances on the basis of the type of sentence uttered. If that is not illocutionary force (or not all of it), what is it then?

Bob van Tiel
ZAS, Berlin

Automatic inferences about speakers' beliefs (joint work with Bart Geurts)

In recent times, several theorists have rejected the idea that speakers and hearers constantly take into account each other's mental states, proposing that reasoning about each other's beliefs, intentions, etc. is a fallback option, which is resorted to only if the going gets rough (e.g. Apperly 2011, Keysar et al. 2003, Millikan 2005, Pickering & Garros 2004).

To the best of our knowledge, there is no serious body of data to support the claim that, in linguistic communication, the mutual attribution of propositional attitudes is rare. On the contrary, there is good evidence for the opposite view (see Brennan et al.'s 2010 survey). However, it seems that there is more and perhaps more convincing evidence for the claim that speakers routinely model hearers' minds than for its converse, i.e. that hearers routinely model speakers' minds. In this study we found experimental support for the second claim by testing the hypothesis that a statement S automatically gives rise to the inference that the speaker believes that S is true.

Hubert Truckenbrodt & Frank Sode
ZAS & Göttingen University

German root phenomena and the syntax of perspective

We argue for a syntactic representation of the perspective relative to which a clause is presented as true in an assertion. The suggestion builds on Kaplan (1989), Heim (1982), Schlenker (2005) and has connections to Krifka (2015).

In (i) the speaker presents himself as asserting the content. In (ii) the speaker presents Peter as asserting the content, correlating with different verbal mood morphology.

(i) [Ich bin begeistert von Mallorca.] Die Sonne hat[IND] die ganze Zeit geschienen.
'[I am enthusiastic about Mallorca.] The sun was shining all the time.'

(ii) [Peter schwärmte von Mallorca.] Die Sonne habe[KONJ] die ganze Zeit geschienen.
'[Peter was enthusiastic about Mallorca.] The sun was [KONJ] shining all the time [with Konjunktiv morphology expressing that this is what Peter said].'

We suggest that this difference in perspective is represented by a silent perspective pronoun ("Origo" vs. "Peter"/"Non-Origo") that makes itself felt at the syntax-semantics interface in various ways.

We argue that the perspective index provides is a key ingredient in insightful analyses of German verbal mood as in (i) and (ii) (building on the recent Ph.D.-thesis of Sode 2014), of German V-to-C movement, in the formal analysis of modal particles and in the analyses of different kinds of parentheticals.