Final exam

Chris Potts, Ling 130a/230a: Introduction to semantics and pragmatics, Winter 2024

Distributed March 12; due March 21, 6:30 pm Pacific

Notes and reminders

- This is due on March 21, by 6:30 pm. No late work will be accepted. This is also the final due date for all late work. We cannot be flexible about this due to constraints imposed by the University on when grades need to be submitted.
- You must submit your work electronically via Canvas.
- No collaboration of any kind is permitted. You are, though, free to use your notes and any other reference materials you like.
- Please submit questions on the Ed forum or to the staff email address. Questions sent to individual instructors probably won't be answered in a timely enough fashion to be useful.
- As a general rule, we will not give feedback on interim answers that students have written. We are happy to talk openly and freely about the practice midterm available from the Section tab of the course website.

1 Quantifiers, entailments, and implicatures [2 points]

A classic Gricean argument is that *most* is semantically consistent with *every* but tends to exclude it pragmatically because of a quality–quantity interaction. This argument depends on the semantic claim that *every* entails *most*. Your task is to support this claim, assuming the following meanings:

(M) $$[\![\textit{most}]\!] = \lambda X\Big(\lambda Y\Big(\mathsf{T} \text{ if } |X \cap Y| > |X - Y|, \text{ else } \mathsf{F}\Big)\Big)$$

(E) $$[\![\textit{every}]\!] = \lambda X\Big(\lambda Y\Big(\mathsf{T} \text{ if } X \subseteq Y, \text{ else } \mathsf{F}\Big)\Big)$$

In this context, a determiner meaning D_1 entails another determiner D_2 if and only if the following holds: if $[\![D_1]\!](A)(B) = \mathsf{T}$, then $[\![D_2]\!](A)(B) = \mathsf{T}$, for all A and B. **Assume throughout that the first argument to the determiner is non-empty.**

2 *every* and presuppositionality [2 points]

On the midterm exam, we saw that *every* does not entail *some* because $[\![\textit{every}]\!](\emptyset)(B) = \mathsf{T}$ for all sets B but $[\![\textit{some}]\!](\emptyset)(B) = \mathsf{F}$ for all B. An alternative analysis would be that *every* actually *presupposes* that $[\![A]\!]$ is true of at least one entity. Your tasks:

i. Formulate this presuppositional $[\![\textit{every}]\!]$ as a partial quantificational determiner meaning (same kind of meaning as, e.g., $[\![\textit{neither}]\!]$).

ii. Articulate what this analysis predicts about the monotonicity properties of *every*, and explain why it makes these predictions using a technical argument. For examples of technical arguments of this form, see the handout 'Some formal analyses of determiners'. Given the presuppositions involved here, it is worth being explicit that all the monotonicity definitions require preservation of *truth*, and flipping from T to 'undefined' is not preservation of truth.

3 What kind of meaning is this? [2 points]

The handout 'Diagnosing different kinds of meaning' provides a flow-chart for classifying meanings as variously at-issue, conventionally implicated, presupposed, or conversationally implicated. Use that framework to classify meaning p as expressed in (A).

(A) Carol seized the opportunity to meet Oprah.

$p =$ Carol met Oprah

Section 3 of the handout provides model answers. Your own answer could adopt the same format, and we're looking for a similar level of explanation about the relevant examples.

4 Scalar adjective experimental predictions [2 points]

The adjective *open* can be modified by minimal standard adverbs like *slightly* (as in *slightly open*), and also maximal standard adverbs like *completely* (as in *completely open*). In light of this, on the theory developed by Syrett et al. (2009), what is the **expected** pattern of behavior (for children and adults) for the prompt 'Hand me the open one' in an experimental condition in which the subject is presented with two boxes, both partly open, but one noticeably more open than the other, and why is this the expected behavior on their theory? (2–3 sentence response.)

5 Illocutionary effects [3 points]

In *Speaking of Crime*, Solan and Tiersma observe that people in police custody often perform the speech act of invoking their right to counsel very indirectly, with utterances like "Maybe I need a lawyer". Your task: using the properties of illocutionary force given in section 4.2 of the 'Speech acts' handout, give two reasons *why* people in custody might behave in this way. (There are a number of sensible reasons that connect with the illocutionary force properties. You can just pick two. We expect each reason to take 3–5 sentences to describe.)

6 Swearing and the FCC [3 points]

Provide three 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. (2–4 sentences per argument; the arguments might not be persuasive to you, but they should make sense! You are free to use arguments given in the lecture, or invent your own.)