The Construction of Meaning

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ISBN: 1-57586-376-6

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Introduction

At Stanford we are fortunate to have a large and diverse group of people conducting research in the areas of semantics and pragmatics. These people come together for meetings of our visiting speaker series, the Construction of Meaning Workshop, and at our annual Semantics Fest, an entire day of semantics/pragmatics related talks by members of the Stanford research community. In this book we present a millenial snapshot of research on semantics and sragmatics of natural language taking place at Stanford University.

Contributors to this volume are primarily faculty and students of the Linguistics Department, and we are also grateful for being able to include work by Dag Westerståhl of the University of Göteborg (here as co-author with Stanley Peters) and two visitors to Stanford's Center for the Study of Language and Information, Francis Bond and Kyonghee Paik. Most of the work included in this volume was first presented at the Semantics Fest in March 2000.

All the papers here manifest what I would characterize as theoretical freedom, freedom to explore what different frameworks have to offer and to allow phenomena rather than theoretical predilections to dictate the form of the analysis. The papers we have collected come from varying perspectives (acquisition, historical, formal) and include work on a number of languages, including English, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean and Quechua. Phenomena studied include adverbial modification, classifiers, control phenomena, evidentiality, focus, presupposition, quantification, tense and aspect, and an idiomatic wh-construction which defies classification.

The editors gratefully acknowledge the work and assistance of all those that reviewed papers incorporated in this volume, as well as all those attendees of the Semantics Fest who helped shape the papers that you see here. We also thank the Center for the Study of Language and Information for housing the Semantics Fest, and the Stanford Humanities Center and Mellon Foundation for providing financial support to the Construction of Meaning Workshop.

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