LING 115: SEMANTIK I

Syllabus (tentative)
WiSe08-09

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the students to the foundations and essential concepts of Semantics (Formal Semantics). A procedure will be developed which derives the meaning of a complex linguistic unit (for example, a sentence or a phrase) from the meaning of the words and the syntactic structure that compose it. By examining different aspects of semantic composition, this course provides techniques and formal tools to investigate the empirical properties of natural language. Furthermore, if time permits, we will overview how children acquire some aspects of this semantic procedure.

KURSBESCHREIBUNG

Dieser Kurs führt die Studierenden in die Grundbegriffe und die wesentlichen Konzepte der Semantik (Formal Semantics) ein. Es wird ein Verfahren entwickelt, mit dessen Hilfe die Bedeutung einer komplexen sprachlichen Einheit (z.B. eines Satzes oder einer Phrase) von den Bedeutungen einzelner Wörter und ihrer syntaktischen Struktur abgeleitet wird. Durch die Betrachtung verschiedener Aspekte dieser semantischen Komposition vermittelt dieser Kurs Techniken und Werkzeuge, um empirische Eigenschaften natürlicher Sprache zu erforschen. Weiterhin, werden wir, sofern es die Zeit erlaubt, uns eine Überblick verschaffen, wie Kinder einige Aspekte dieser semantischen Verfahren erwerben.

INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Maribel Romero (short for María Isabel Romero Sangüesa)
maribel.romero@uni-konstanz.de
G100 during the "Sanierung"; G212 normally
Office hours: Tuesdays 15-16h, Thursdays 12-13h

TUTOR: Andreas Walker
andreas.walker@uni-konstanz.de
G102 temporarily
Office hours: Wednesdays 11-12h

PREREQUISITES: None. Some background in syntax is convenient, but not necessary.

READINGS

Textbook: Heim, I., and A. Kratzer. 1998. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Blackwell.

Other books: Chierchia, G. and S. McConnell-Ginet. 1990. *Meaning and Grammar. An Introduction to Semantics*. MIT Press.
Löbner, S. 2003. Semantik: eine Einführung. De Gruyter.
Partee, B., Ter Meulen, A. , and Wall. 1990. *Mathematical Methods in Linguistics*. Kluwer.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE

Weekly exercises to practice	0%
Three homework assignments (together)	30%
[Joint class presentation of assigned reading	10%]
Attendance and class participation	10%
Final exam (Klausur)	50% or 60%

OUTLINE OF THE COURSE

I. Introduction: foundations and formal tools
• The empirical domain of semantics: meaning and semantic relations • Literal meaning (semantics) and utterance meaning (pragmatics) • Set Theory • Propositional Logic and Predicate Logic
• The development of pragmatic implicatures in children. Reading: Chierchia, G. et al. 2001. The acquisition of disjunction: evidence for a grammatical view of scalar implicatures. 25th B.U. Conference.

II. The meaning of open-class lexical items. Building simple sentences.
• Compositionaliy in the semantics of NatLg • Names and predicates • Modifiers (adjectives, prepositional phrases, etc.) • Computing ambiguities from syntactic attachment.
• Goodman and Quine's induction problem for lexical words. • The child's learning of lexical words. Constraints on word meaning. Readings: Goodman, N. 1983. *Fact, fiction and forecast*. Harvard University Press. Ch 3. Pp. 59-83. Markman, E. 1994, Constraints children place on word meanings. In Bloom, ed*., Language Acquisition. Core Readings*. MIT Press. Pp. 154-173. Gleitman, L. and Gleitman, H. 1992. A picture is worth a thousand words –but that's the problem. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 1.

III. The meaning of functional items: Quantifiers. Building quantificational sentences.
• Quantifiers as relations between sets. • Quantification and the sentence. Scope ambiguities. • Mathematical properties of quantifiers. Their impact on the grammar: Negative Polarity Items, *there*-sentences.
• Children's meaning of *every*. • The acquisition of scope. Readings: Crain, S., et al. 1996. Quantification without Qualification. *Language Acquisition* 5.2. Musolino, Julien. Structure and meaning in the acquisition of scope.