

Titles and Abstracts

Tsinghua Logic Colloquium

May 16 2015 - on Logic, Language and Philosophy

09:00-09:50 **Frank Veltman** (University of Amsterdam)

Too good to be true

There are semantic phenomena that do not easily lend themselves to a description in a static truth conditional framework. Think of problems having to do with text coherence - like anaphoric reference, or modal subordination, which crucially involve context change. Think of sentences that are not stated in the declarative mood - on the face of it, it makes little sense to assign truth values to questions or to commands.

Now, it is often claimed that these are not really semantic phenomena: anaphoric reference and modal subordination are inherently pragmatic relations, and semantically the only thing that matters to questions and commands is their propositional content, which then serves as input for a separate pragmatic theory of performatives.

However, even if one only looks at sentences in the declarative mood, frictions arise. Think of phenomena where some kind of ‘subjectivity’ is involved - epistemic modalities (like ‘maybe’), or evaluative adjectives (like “difficult”, “tasty”, “ugly”). Trying to deal with these phenomena in a truth conditional set up has led to notions as “faultless disagreement”, and “assessment relative truth” - epicycles of truth conditional semantics as I would like to call them. In my talk I will sketch how the kind of ‘subjectivity’ involved gets a proper place in a framework in which the meaning of a sentence (of any grammatical mood) is equated with the impact it has on the intentional state of the addressee.

10:15-11:05 **Xin Wang** (Beijing Language and Culture University)

The semantics and pragmatics of the ‘Shenme ... Shenme’ sentence and its deduction

Based on 王欣(2015), this paper explores the semantics and pragmatics of the “shenme...shenme” sentence as christened by 温宾利(1997, 1998) and argues that it can express the necessary and sufficient condition. Both the necessary condition and the sufficient condition are the default implicatures of this sentence pattern, which means that they are automatically computed by the grammar on the one hand and can be cancelled in some contexts on the other. This paper finally deduces the “shenme...shenme” sentences in which the paired wh-words modify a common noun or a verb phrase with the discontinuous Lambek calculus.

11:05-11:55 **Shihong Zhou** (Beijing Normal University)
*The YOU (existence / have) sentences in Mandarin Chinese
from the perspective of theticity/categoricity distinction*

This paper explores the sentences with an unidentifiable NP subject and its relevant YOU(有) complex presentative construction in Mandarin Chinese from the perspective of information structure. The author argues that the unidentifiable NP subject sentence expresses an event-central judgment, yet “YOU-presentative relative construction is an amalgam in essence, in which an entity-central judgment is superimposed with a categorical judgment that asserts something about the newly introduced entity. The two judgments responsible respectively for two discourse functions, presenting and commenting the new referent, are joined upon the unidentifiable NP, through the addition of the existence operator YOU(有). The two clauses are combined into one minimal sentential unit by sharing the unidentifiable NP, which makes the expression more efficient. YOU(有) presentative amalgam is a syntactic adaptation driven by the information repackaging.

14:00-14:50 **Martin Stokhof** (University of Amsterdam)
Meaning at the crossroads

One of the fascinating things about semantics is that it is about meaning and that semantic theories construct meaning in different (sometimes radically different) ways. The truth-conditional concept of meaning has been leading for quite some time, but it has come under attack from different quarters. This talk is not about who is right and who is wrong, but attempts to analyse the nature of the debate, and thus gain some insight into the nature of semantics. We will focus on two cases: dynamic semantics, and non-discursive content.

14:50-15:40 **Yuncheng Zhou** (Tsinghua University)
On conservatism in inference

In this talk, I will try to argue that inference involving derogatory words is constitutive of their meaning by defending a version of conservatism in inference about derogatory words. The account of conservatism I have proposed is informed by Kaplan’s notion of character in his theory of meaning. I will first be reviewing the debate between inferentialists and referentialists about inferential role semantics. Then I will examine inferentialist approach to the meaning of derogatory words. Last I will present my own inferentialist position on the issue of derogatory words.

16:00-16:50 **Xuhui Hu** (Peking University)
*Verbs, events and telicity
- A syntax-semantics/pragmatics interface approach*

This talk will begin with a brief introduction of the studies on events and telicity in philosophy of language and linguistics (cf. Vendler 1957; Davidson 1967; Parsons 1990; Rothstein 2008). We will then present our hypothesis on the classification events and the nature of telicity. Based on the revised version of the Exo-Skeletal (XS) Model (Borer

2005 a,b, 2013) in the Chomskyan tradition, which provides the specific mechanism for the mapping of events onto syntax, we propose that at the grammatical level, there are only two types of events, i.e. dynamic and stative events, while activity, accomplishment and achievement events are sub-types of dynamic events which are not determined by syntactic structure but lexical information plus pragmatic information. Telicity, traditionally taken as a property of lexical information, is assumed to be the result of syntactic composition. We argue that lexical information and contextual (pragmatic) information also play a role in the determination of telicity because the interpretation returned by syntactic computation should be compatible with human's general conceptual knowledge, a specific illustration of the Conceptual-Intentional (C-I) interface requirement articulated in Minimalism (Chomsky 2000, 2013).

16:50-17:40 **Jiayue Cui** (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences)

Research on passive sentences

in the framework of Montague Grammar's generative lexicology

Montague grammar (shorten for MG) is a theory study semantics by using mathematical logic. MG's background includes Chomsky's transformation generative grammar and intensional logic. PTQ system is the central part of MG. With the development and wide application of computer, it is difficult to apply MG to natural language information processing directly. The purpose of this paper is to creat a new theory -The system of Tyn in the framework of MG with the help of many sorted theory. A lot of English cases which are ungrammatical formed but actually accepted by the public have been successfully explained by this system. This theory is particularly important to overcome problems of the very complicated language –Chinese. The system established the basic condition of Chinese type matching, and solved problems like “书读我”; As for newly emerging linguistic phenomenon such as “吃食堂”, especially passive sentences. We intended to translate characteristics of passive sentences into semantic type which can identify and match other types, and create the conditions of forming passive sentences. This article will firstly determine these semantic types, and produce corresponding matched semantic types, and therefore determine formation conditions of passive sentences.