

Abstract

This thesis defends the idea that optional pragmatic processes (processes not mandated by linguistically encoded meaning) contribute to the level of explicit utterance content (explicature).

The first chapter discusses different approaches to ‘what is said’ and explicit content, in order to define the sense of explicit utterance content that is the object of explanation, and justify this choice against other notions. The focus of the dissertation from then on will be the debate between the advocates and opponents of free enrichment, both of whom recognize the level of the intuitive truth-conditional content of the utterance as the explicit content, going beyond what the overt material seems to provide. The detractors of free enrichment (Stanley 2000, etc) maintain that all effects of context on truth conditions are traceable to logical form. To account for these effects, hidden syntactic variables or semantic parameters in the linguistic meanings of expressions are posited.

The second chapter argues that this alternative approach is not viable. I address attempts to provide evidence for the hidden linguistic structure that is posited, and conclude that they fail. I then present various kinds of data as counterexamples to the semanticist thesis, including metonymy and metaphor, ‘loose talk’, referential uses of definite descriptions, and causal readings of ‘and’-conjunctions, and discuss existing or potential indexicalist ways of treating this data.

Having established that the indexicalist cannot avoid admitting some cases of free enrichment himself, I turn in the third chapter to the question of how it is constrained. I address the examples of potential overgeneration by free enrichment presented so far in the literature, argue that enrichment is a local process, and show that the need for the explicature to provide an inferential warrant for the intended implications of the utterance tightly constrains how much enrichment can take place.

The final main chapter discusses ‘subsential’ utterances, arguing against attempts to treat all discourse-initial fragments as cases of linguistic ellipsis, and giving a relevance-theoretic account of how the indeterminacy that is a feature of many subsential utterances is accommodated.

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