*Language and Ontology*

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Handout 13

**The Semantics of Verbs of Saying and Quotation**

**1. The general semantics of attitude reports**

The Relational Analysis of attitude reports

*That*-clauses are referential terms, provide propositions as arguments of the relation expressed by the verb; attitude verbs express dyadic relations between agents and propositions.

(1) a. John thinks/claims that Mary is happy.

b. think/claim(John, [*that Mary is happy*])

The Propositional Analysis of special quantifiers and pronouns

Quantifiers like *something, everything, something nice* etc quantify over propositions that are to be arguments of the dyadic relation expressed by the attitude verb.

The new view: *That*-clauses as predicates of attitudinal objects

Attitudinal objects:

Cognitive products: thoughts, claims, decisions, imaginations etc

Illocutionary products: claims, requests, promises, threats etc

Mental states: beliefs, intentions, fears, hopes

Davidsonian arguments and attitudinal objects

Cognitive and illocutionary products are products of Davidsonian event arguments.

Mental states and modal objects are themselves Davidsonian event arguments and their own ‘products’).

Function of *that*-clauses

predicates of the products of Davidsonian arguments

(2) a. John thought that S.

b. ∃e(think(e, John) & [*that* S](product(e)))

(3) a. John claimed that S.

b. ∃e(claim(e, John) & [*that* S](product(e)))

The semantics of nominalizations

(4) a. John’s claim that S

b. ιe[claim(e, John) & [*that* S](e)]

c. John’s claim yesterday that S

The semantics of ‘special’ quantifiers and pronouns

**(**5) a. John said something nice.

b. ∃e∃e’(say(e, John) & nice(e’) & e’ = product(e))

c. John said something that caused astonishment

d. John said something I could not hear very well.

(6) a. John thought what Mary thought.

b. ∃e∃e’∃e’’(think(e, John) & e’ = product-kind(e) & think(e’’, Mary) & e’ = product-

kind(e’’))

c. ?? John thought what Mary hopes, that it is raining.

d. ??? John thought what Mary wrote down, that it is Sunday.

(7) a. John hopes what Mary fears.

b. ∃e∃e’∃e’’(believe(e, John) & pos(product(e)) & e’ = product-kind(e) & believe(e’’,

Mary) & neg(product(e’’)) & e’ = product-kind(e’’))

General point

No need for finding a type of object that acts both as the meaning of sentences and as the object of propositional attitudes, as on the standard view.

The semantics of independent sentences

Independent sentences act as predicates of illocutionary products:

(8) a. Mary is happy.

b. λd[[*Mary is happy*](d)]

(9) a. Leave!

b. λd[[addressee *leave*](d)]

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**2. Ways for sentences to act as predicates of attitudinal objects**

**2.1. Specification of truth or satisfaction conditions**

Different ways for clauses to characterize attitudinal objects

- specify truth- or satisfaction conditions of attitudinal object

- specify structure of an attitudinal object

Semantics of clausal complements when specifying satisfaction conditions of attitudinal objects

(10) [*that* S] = λd[ ∀s( s ╞ d 🡪 S is true in s)]

Fine’s (to appear) truthmaker semantics

Exact truthmaking / satisfaction ╞ as a relation between a situation (action and a sentence that holds iff s is wholly relevant for the truth of S.

Now:

Exact truthmaking/satisfaction╞ as a relation between situations(actions) and attitudinal objects

General observation

Attitudinal objects themselves may impose particular conditions on their satisfiers not imposed by sentence:

Underspecification of the content of attitudinal objects by the clausal complement

(11) Fiona wants to catch a fish (that she can eat).

Also:

Satisfiers of attitudinal objects may be actions ‘by way of’ fulfilling the attitudinal object (Searle 1983)

Searle’s (1983) view of intentionality of mental states and acts, as well as illocutionary acts come with inherent satisfaction conditions

Intentions: satisfiers are actions by way of fulfilling the intention

Requests: satisfiers are actions by way of fulfilling the request

Beliefs: satisfiers are states of affairs making the belief true

Claims: satisfiers are states of affairs making the claim true

Desires: satisfiers are states states of affairs or actions satisfying the desire

(10) works well for

Implicit belief:

Clausal complement specifies truth conditions (or better truthmakers: truthmaking situations)

Implicit desire:

Clausal complement specifies satisfaction conditions (or better satisfiers: actions fulfilling the desire)

**2.2. Specification of structure by clausal complements**

More fine-grained content?

(11) a. John was thinking that Mary is nice, always she is.

b. John literally said that Mary is nice and extraordinarily talented.

With verbs of saying – overt saying or ‘saying to oneself’ -- clausal complement may specify the structure of an illocutionary act.

Proposal:

Clausal complements may specify composition of product in terms of smaller products: concept-conveying products, predicational products, referential / identificational products …

*Think, say*

Clausal complement may specify smaller products composing the thought or claim:

act of reference – referential product; act of predication – predicational product

(12) a. John thinks that Mary is happy.

b. [*that Mary is happy*] = the property of a cognitive product x such that x consists of a

referential product involving the use of ‘Mary’ and a predicational product involving

the use of the concept ‘happy’

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**3. Illocutionary and locutionary products**

**3.1. Properties of illocutionary products**

Recall:

Illocutionary products have a physical realization and content related properties:

(13) a. John’s claim made Mary upset.

b. Bill overheard John’s claim.

c. John’s claim yesterday

(14) a. John’s claim is true.

b. John’s claim implies that Mary is guilty.

c. John’s claim contradicts Bill’s claim

Similar illocutionary verbs

(15) John requested what Mary demanded.

Mismatches

Verbs of saying conveying different physical realizations

(16) a. ?(?) John screamed what Mary whispered.

b. ? John shouted what Bill yelled.

(17) a. ??? John’s scream was the same Mary’s whisper.

b. ?? John’s shout was the same as Bill’s scream.

The verb *say* and verbs of manner of speaking

(18) a. ??? John said what Mary whispered.

b. ??? John said what he screamed.

Illocutionary verbs and the verb *say*

(19) a. ??? John asserted what Mary said.

b. John asserted that Bill won the race.

c. Mary said that Bill won the race.

(20) a. ??? John demanded what May said.

b. John demanded that Bill should leave.

c. Mary said that Bill should leave.

(21) a. ??? John promised what he said.

b. John promised that he would help Mary.

c. John said that he would help Mary.

Manner of speaking verbs: same pattern

(22) a. ??? John whispered the same thing that Mary asserted / demanded / asked.

b. ??? John whispered the same thing that Mary asserted / demanded / asked.

*Say* and *write* take *that*-clauses and direct quotes, but not infinitival clauses (acting as embedded imperatives) or interrogative clauses:

(23) a. John said / wrote ‘leave!’

b. \* John said / wrote for Bill to leave.

(24) a. John said ‘what should I do?’.

b. \* John said what he should do. (in the sense of asking question).

Perhaps also *think*:

(25) a. John thought ‘what should I do now?’.

b. \* John thought what he should do now.

(26) a. John thought ‘go away!’.

b. \* John thought for Bill to go away.

(27) a. ??? John thought what Bill decided.

b. Bill decided that they should leave the house.

c. John thought that they should leave the house.

Illocutionary verbs, *say*, and mismatches in physical realization:

(28) a. John asserted the same thing as Mary.

b. John whispered that Bill won the race.

c. Mary screamed that Bill won the race.

d. (?) John said the same thing as Mary

**3.2. Austin’s (1962) distinction between linguistic acts of increasingly higher levels**

Locutionary acts

- phonetic acts (the uttering of sounds)

- phatic acts (the uttering of sounds as belonging to phonological, morphological, or syntactic categories)

- rhetic acts: acts of referring to things and saying something about them: referential and predicational acts

Illocutionary acts

making assertions, demands etc).

The *by*-relation

Austin’s acts are ordered by the by-relation, that Goldman’s (1970) relation of ‘level generation’.

For Austin and Goldman: the by-relation a form of composition of acts

Pulling the trigger is different from killing the king, but the latter has the trigger pulling as a nontemporal part.

Can there also be acts that ‘forget’ or may ‘forget’ the lower level acts that generate them?

Perhaps:

The killing of the king could have been done by throwing a bomb.

Intuitive grounds for Searle’s illocutionary acts?

The very same assertion could have been made in English / by using a softer voice / by whispering.

Austin

Rhetic acts are described in *indirect quotation* (*that-*clauses)

phatic acts are described in *direct quotation*.

Better: direct quotes describe both phatic and rhetic acts (for and content, but without force)

Direct quotes as complements

*Say, write*: neutrality regarding force

(29) a. John said ‘I will come’.

b. John said ‘Can you come?’

c. John said ‘Come as soon as possible!’

(30) a. John wrote ‘Can you come?’

b. John wrote ‘Come as soon as possible!’.

(31) a. John whispered ‘I will come’

b. John whispered ‘Will you come?’

Proposal

Locutionary products play the role in the semantics of *say* and verbs of manner of speaking that illocutionary products play in the semantics of illocutionary verbs:

clausal complements of say and verbs of manner of speaking characterize locutionary products, not illocutionary products.

Illocutionary verbs:

may involve ‘thin’ illocutionary products, without locutionary products.

**3.3. The semantic role of locutionary products**

The action-product distinction for lower-level linguistic acts

Product of a phatic act: has only relevant properties, properties of the linguistic structure the act is meant to realize.

The notion of a token

best conceived of as the product of a lower-level linguistic act (utterance act): phonological product, morpho-syntactic product

Interpreting the data with verbs of saying

*Say*

Involves locutionary product only, is neutral regarding force

Manner of speaking verbs

Involve locutionary + phatic product

*Whisper, scream*:

Verbs allow decomposition into phatic verb and manner of speaking modifier

Proposal

*Say, write,* perhaps *think*, and manner of speaking verbs have their clausal complement apply to a locutionary or phatic product, not an illocutionary product.

How do *that*-clauses characterize locutionary products?

Based on syntactic structure, *that*-clauses can specify locutionary products as composed of smaller products, in particular ‘rhetic products’ (referential and predicational products).

products and referential products

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**4. Outline of a product-based semantics of quotation**

Pure quotation

(32) a. Mary said ‘hey’.

b. John translated ‘red’ as ‘rouge’.

Direct quotation

(32) c. Mary said ‘I will come’.

The present approach

Lower-level linguistic acts are performed not or not just in order to perform higher-level linguistic acts, but rather to convey lower-level product types as part of the meaning of the sentence.

Quotational complements

convey form-related product types

Pure quotations convey meanings based on lower-level linguistic acts:

phatic or rhetic acts.

Pure quotations may have predicative function, based on their meanings as lower-level product types

A simple case:

(33) a. John said ‘hey’

*Hey*, with its morphological structure within the LF of the sentence and without quotation marks: stands for a morphological product type

Its semantic function is to be predicated of the utterance product:

(33) b. ∃e(say(e, John) & [*hey*](product(e)))

The compositional semantics

Quoted material has lower-level linguistic structure within the syntactic structure that is input to interpretation (LF): phonological, morphological, or syntactic structure within the LF of the sentence.

Lower-level linguistic structures are interpreted not as meaning-related product types, but as form-related product types.

The syntactic (LF-) structure of (8)

(35) John [said [hey]m ]VP

Consequences

- Pure quotations need not be considered NPs, but can be of lower-level categories

- Pure quotations need not be considered be referential terms, but may be predicational.

Extension to direct quotation

(41) Mary said ‘I will come’

Direct quotes express both properties of phatic and rhetic products

Fact: Direct quite are sentential complements of verbs of saying: *say, state, ask, answer, complain, remark*

Property of phatic products is based on a lower-level linguistic structure, possibly a partial structure or mixed structure, such as phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic (non-LF) structure.

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