

Forschungsprogramm: Connectives and Formal Pragmatics

Ziele des Programms

Connectives do not represent a word class like ‚verbs‘ and ‚adjectives‘. They may be either conjunctions like *but* and *although* (i.e. coordinators or subordinators), Particles (*even, too*), Adverbs (*finally*), and even whole PPs (on the contrary) and phrases (*what is more*). What they have in common is that their communicative role is to establish cohesion between individual propositions and to thereby narrow down the possible interpretations of a communication. Our interest in connectives is inspired by the fact that they provide a linguistic basis for the more general topic of discourse relations and text coherence.

Some of these connectives may establish purely semantic relations and others may be presuppositional or focus-sensitive and thus require a treatment in terms of the „meaning-in-context“-pragmatics which has recently become a feasible extension of discourse representation structures. These topics are addressed in detail in Hans Kamp’s proposal. What the present proposal aims at in particular is yet another level of description: the inter-dependence of communicative intentions or calculated effects and use of connectives.

Ideally, a description of the connective elements on all the levels relevant for them will lead to an embedding of existing Discourse Representation Structures into a more encompassing account of communicative score-keeping, where the latter makes systematic use of the lexicon of connectives also envisaged in Hans Kamp’s proposal.

That the main thrust here is aimed at communicative intentions and effects sounds rather Gricean, but is very different methodically: Robert van Rooij has recently argued in a number of papers that the notion of exhaustivity suffices to explain the bulk of what has become known as Gricean implicatures, and that a notion of relevance derived from decision-theoretic considerations suffices for an all-encompassing picture. It seems to us that much the same is true e.g. for argument-strengthening, which requires *and*, versus argument-weakening, which calls for *but*. What we aim at is most strikingly explained by a question-answer-dialogue of the following kind:

A: Is there a restaurant on the way?

B: Yes, there is one half way, but it is very expensive.

Clearly, the sentence preceding *but* answers the question, so what exactly is the role of the *but*-sentence itself? It seems that an answer to this problem may also help to provide a more procedural explanation of the phenomenon of indirect speech acts, which seem to be very similar structurally:

A: Can you pass the salt?

B: Yes, I can [... and do indeed pass the salt]

Forschungsschwerpunkte

The project sketched here aims at a contribution to both DRT and pragmatics. It strives to enhance the formal modelling of aspects "controlling the interaction game". It therefore has to describe the impact of additional relations/structures on semantico-pragmatic score-keeping (context change) via discourse representations and their interpretation. Particular emphasis will be given to the integration of a level of description which rests on a notion of relevance which is rooted in the concept of rational behaviour as discussed in decision theory and game theory.

Stand der Forschung

Over the last twenty years, the interaction between semantics and various aspects of pragmatics (deixis, anaphora, presupposition) has become articulate through the development of the necessary formal tools in the seminal work of e.g. Kaplan(1978) for indexical semantics and Kamp (1981) or Heim(1982) for dynamic "context-change" semantics. In the classical version of Kamp/Reyle(1993), Discourse Representation Theory still offers more or less unstructured representations in the form of sets of conditions: whatever structure there is in the form of subrepresentations derives from sentence-internal structures, i.e. from complex and embedded sentences, and order is built into the processing strategy and not reflected by the representations themselves. Asher/Lascarides (2002) is a heroic attempt to describe the interpretation process at all necessary levels in a rather abstract way, lacking the linguistic analyses of detail we deem necessary on the way to such a grand design. This humble work was begun, e.g., with the Rhetorical Structure Theory of Mann/Thompson (1987), who specify their discourse relation in a way which is closely connected to concepts of speech act theory. Progress with the precise formulation of such discourse relations and their impact on semantic interpretation thus seems to depend on a better understanding and integration of pragmatic concepts relating to the "use" of language: concepts from the areas of speech act theory and Gricean communicative principles. These latter topics are still largely confined to the realm of intuitions, but recent work by Merin (1993, 1999) shows the feasibility of an adequate descriptive framework.

Merin (1999) is to a certain extent meant to be a formalization of Ducrot's (1973) ideas about adversative *mais*. He notices that his rendering of the basic idea for *p but q* (*p* is the case, you are tempted to infer *r*, but wait, *q* is also true, and from *q* [or *p* & *q*] you will want to infer not-*r*) does not work well with combinations of *but* + *too* and suggests that these need a treatment in a dynamic framework. For German, Reyer (2004) found that

combinations of *aber* and *auch* are by far the most frequent *aber*+particle pairs. This supports the idea that any treatment of *aber/but* should be essentially dynamic, and in Bäuerle (2003) we began to work out such an account.

Eigene Vorarbeiten

That the representations of classical DRT are too unstructured to allow for a precise description of states of affairs anaphora was made explicit in Bäuerle(1988). At IMS, the topic of structured representations was then further pursued by, among others, Nicholas Asher(1991, 1993), and Merin (e.g.1993) pioneered a more formal approach to pragmatics. An annual joint seminar on pragmatics by Hans Kamp and myself ensures continuing co-operation. Bäuerle (2003) takes issue with Merin's (1999) account of *but* and sketches a description which is more in line with the ideas of dynamic semantics. A diploma thesis written under our direction [Reyer (2004)] addresses the frequency of verb-particle combinations in a newspaper corpus.

Themen geplanter Dissertationsprojekte

Dissertation projects should (a) discuss individual connectives, or groups of connectives, or (b)devote themselves to structural and logical problems of relevant scorekeeping mechanisms.

Verzahnung innerhalb des Kollegs

As explained under *Ziele des Projekts*, there is a very close connection and partial overlap with the project of Kamp.

Literatur

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