

OASIS UPF Workshop
Nov. 26-27, 2018
U. Paris 8

Monday, Nov. 26:

14:30-15:00 Opening: Louise McNally

15:00-16:00 Roberto Zamparelli (U. Trento), "Exemplar-based Genericity"

16:00-16:30 Coffee

16:30-17:15 Cristina Real-Puigdollers (UPF), "The roots of syntax: An analysis of semi-lexicality"

17:15-18:15 Ora Matushansky (CNRS), "The ideal husband: on relational generics"

20:00 Dinner

Tuesday, Nov. 27:

9.30-10:30 Luisa Martí (QMUL), "Zero, number features, and the semantics of nouns"

10:30-11:00 Coffee

11:00-12:00 Andrew Koontz-Garboden (U. Manchester), "On the ontology of adjectival and nominal gradability and comparison"

12:05-12:50 Carla Umbach/Helmar Gust (ZAS-Berlin/U. Osnabrück), "Concepts, kinds and types"

12:50-14:30 Lunch

14:30-15:30 Gillian Ramchand (UiT/Artic University of Norway), "The Verbal Symbol and Natural Language Ontology: Rethinking Event Kinds"

15:35-16:35 Fabienne Martin (HU-Berlin), "Aspectual differences between agentive and non-agentive uses of causative predicates"

16:35- Closing discussion with coffee

On the ontology of adjectival and nominal gradability and comparison

Andrew Koontz-Garboden (based on joint work with Ryan Bochnak, Itamar Francez, Peter Jenks, and Emmanuel-Moselly Makasso)

As documented in the philosophical and linguistic literature (see e.g., Kennedy 2012 for an overview), there are classes of properties that hold of an individual not in an absolute fashion, but to some degree:

- (1) a. Kim is wiser than Sandy.
- b. Sandy is taller than Kim.
- c. Jo is happier than Jack.

The canonical lexicalization of such properties in English and many familiar languages is with adjectives. There are many lesser studied languages, however, in which the descriptive content expressed by English adjectives is more often lexicalized by nouns or verbs, as discussed extensively in the typological literature (Dixon 1982; Thompson 1989; Hengeveld 1992; Bhat 1994; Wetzer 1996; Stassen 1997; Beck 2002; Baker 2003). Even in familiar languages, sentences with an adjectival predicate sometimes have a truth-conditionally equivalent minimal pair counterpart where the descriptive content is introduced with a noun instead:

- (2) a. Kim is wise.
- b. Kim has wisdom.

While the compositional semantics of sentences like (1,2a) have been well studied, with a variety of proposals following as a consequence for the lexical semantics of gradable adjectives, much less is known about sentences like (2b) or the lexical semantics of the nouns, e.g. *wisdom*, that underpin them. Orthodox proposals that treat adjectives as having a degree semantics and nouns like *wisdom* as having a semantics of mass nouns as in Link (1983) lead to the sentences in (2) restricting truth conditions in different ways, so that although they intuitively have the same truth conditions, model-theoretically their meanings are different. In this talk I argue that this conclusion is incorrect. Drawing on data from comparatives and other constructions in English and Basaá (Bantu; Cameroon), I suggest that the truth-conditional identity of sentences like (2a,b) should be captured model-theoretically, with the lexical semantics of adjectives like *wise* and nouns like *wisdom* built on a common ontology (whatever that ontology is, a question I leave outstanding).

The ideal husband: on relational generics

Ora Matushansky

The hypothesis that weak definites denote kinds or concepts (Carlson and Sussman 2005, Carlson 2010, Aguilar Guevara and Zwarts 2010, 2013, Aguilar Guevara 2014, etc.) explains a number of their properties: the definite article without referentiality, semantic enrichment in a number of environments, the impossibility of intersective modification, etc. However, the hypothesis that a weak noun denotes a kind, i.e., necessarily an entity, cannot deal with an understudied class of weak definites, viz.,

axial parts, a.k.a. spatial grams or location nouns, such as top, foot or north. I will discuss the evidence for assimilating axial parts to weak definites, the problems arising as a result and the possible solution treating weak definites as concepts or ideals.

The roots of syntax: An analysis of semi-lexicality

Cristina Real-Puigdollers

In this talk I explore a prediction of the theoretical framework first presented in Acedo-Matellán and Real-Puigdollers (2014), built on the Distributed Morphology framework (Halle & Marantz, 1993, 1994; Harley & Noyer, 1999; Embick 2010), whereby roots correspond to (lately inserted) Vocabulary Items that phonologically and semantically interpret functional nodes. Specifically, we propose that categorizers (a, n, v) are a prominent locus for the insertion of roots, since roots are Vocabulary Items that have no specific context of insertion. Our approach makes an interesting prediction on linguistic variation that involves the insertion of roots into functional heads distinct from categorizers. That is, if roots are inserted by competition when no other functional vocabulary item is available, we predict the existence of linguistic types that emerge from the morphological properties of exponents of functional categories, like number, gender, tense, aspect and mood. This hypothesis allows us to derive Sanches's generalization, which states that classifiers and optional number morphology are in complementary distribution. In the talk, I further develop this prediction to capture the phenomenon of semi-lexicality.

Concepts, kinds and types

Carla Umbach and Helmar Gust

There is a widespread view in linguistics that concepts, kinds and types are roughly the same. It will be argued in this talk that this view is misleading. The three notions stem from different fields – mainly from psychology, linguistics and mathematics – and serve different purposes: Concepts are mental entities guiding human agents through their environment; kinds started out as a means to establish biological classification systems and are basic in the interpretation of generic NPs; types were introduced in mathematics to safeguard systems against the disastrous consequences of the Russellian antinomy in naïve set theory. Carlson (2010) shows in which way concepts and kinds can be seen to interact while carefully keeping the two notions apart. In the talk, we will explore ways in which types can be seen to interact with concepts and kinds while exploiting their safeguarding capacity.

Carlson, G. (2010). Generics and concepts. In F. J. Pelletier (ed.) *Kinds, Things and Stuff*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 16-36.

Exemplar-based Genericity

Roberto Zamparelli

In this talk I will explore a novel semantics for generic sentences which uses no unselective binding and possibly no GEN operator. The key idea is that individuals can be seen either as “regular objects”, or as “minimal subkinds”, i.e. individuals which have properties only *qua* representatives of a certain kind. In this role, individuals

become "exemplars" of a kind. Properties can be attributed to exemplars only when they tend to also apply to other exemplars of the same kind. Habituals like "John smokes" can be analyzed in a parallel fashion, i.e. as the statement that John is the participant of an event which is an exemplar of the "smoking events" kind. "Dogs bark" becomes a statement that an exemplar of the dog kind is taking part in an exemplar of barking event.