

# 24.954 Pragmatics in Linguistic Theory

Kai von Fintel and Danny Fox

Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Fall 2002, W,F 1:30 - 3, Room E39-335  
Syllabus - September 4, 2002

## Organization

### Instructors

[Kai von Fintel](mailto:fintel@mit.edu), E39-233, [fintel@mit.edu](mailto:fintel@mit.edu)

[Danny Fox](mailto:fox@mit.edu), E39-216, [fox@mit.edu](mailto:fox@mit.edu)

### Brief Course Overview

The label “pragmatics” covers a much wider and more heterogeneous set of linguistic phenomena and research traditions than we can attend to in this course. Even the few topics that we do address could each fill an entire course, and we will only cover the basics. The semester will be divided into four somewhat independent units, devoted respectively to conversational implicature, indexicality, presupposition (and context change), and focus (in this order). The central readings and main issues for each unit are listed below. For each unit, we also list some recent research literature. We will devote some time to such ongoing work, to illustrate how the basic concepts of pragmatics are involved in cutting edge work.

The course is required for students in the 5 year semantics program. It is also appropriate for other students interested in work in syntax/semantics and for students interested in the philosophy of language.

### Prerequisites

24.970 (Introduction to Semantics) and 24.973 (Advanced Semantics), or approximately equivalent background. We will presuppose technical material more or less on the level of Heim & Kratzer (1998), as well as familiarity with the possible-worlds semantics of modal and attitude constructions. Talk to us if you have not taken 24.970 and 24.973.

## Requirements

Reading assignments. Technical exercises. A squib. In the unmarked case, a squib consists of a critical discussion of some article (or group of related articles) which is relevant to the topics covered in this class. The squib should contain a clear and self-contained presentation of the main claims and arguments in the article, explain why and how they bear on issues discussed in class, and point out problems, possible amendments, extensions and applications.

## E-Mail List and Web Page

The course has an email list [24.954-students@mit.edu](mailto:24.954-students@mit.edu), to which we will post announcements relating to the course. You may also use the list for questions and discussions that are of interest to class participants.

The course web page <https://ocw-int.mit.edu/24/24.954/f02/> will contain an up-to-date overview of the course, downloadable versions of all class handouts (in Acrobat pdf-format), and some links to relevant work on the web (including some of the readings). If all you need is a quick download of a handout from class, check <http://web.mit.edu/24.954/www/files/>

## Readings

Only a few papers will be required reading for the whole class. This will leave you plenty of time to browse through the related literature and find things to write squibs about, and you should begin with that right away. Enrolled students are expected to keep us informed about what they are reading. Copies of all the items listed on the bibliography can be borrowed for xeroxing from the instructors.

## The Units

### Unit 1: Conversational Implicature

#### Main issues

How to formulate the Maxim of Quantity. Semantic and pragmatic conditions on scales and their availability in context. Case study: implicature projection.

#### Technical exercises

monotonicity condition on scales

#### Assigned reading

- Grice, H.P. (1967/1989). 'Logic and Conversation,' in H.P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, Cambridge: Harvard UP [reprinted in many other places].

- Gamut, L.T.F. (1991) *Logic, Language, and Meaning*, vol. 1, ch. 6 ‘Pragmatics: Meaning and Usage,’ sections 6.1 to 6.8, pp. 195 – 212.
- Matsumoto, Yo (1995) ‘The Conversational Condition on Horn Scales,’ *Linguistics and Philosophy* 18.1, pp. 21 – 60.

### Case studies

- Chierchia, Gennaro (2001) ‘Scalar Implicatures, Polarity Phenomena, and the Syntax/Pragmatics Interface’, ms. U. of Milan – Bicocca.
- Sauerland, Uli (2001) ‘Scalar Implicatures in Complex Sentences’, ms, Universität Tübingen.  
<http://www2.sfs.nphil.uni-tuebingen.de/uli/implicatures.pdf>

## Unit 2: Indexicality

### Main issues

Empirical motivation for the distinction between context-dependency and contingency. Basic concepts of Kaplan’s framework. Case study: referential readings of definites and indefinites.

### Technical exercises

Review of intensional systems. Scopal properties of demonstratives, definites, indefinites under various analyses.

### Assigned reading

- Stalnaker, Robert (1972/1990) “Pragmatics,” in A. Martinich (ed.) *The Philosophy of Language* (2nd ed.), Oxford: OUP.
- Kripke, Saul (1977/1991) ‘Speaker’s Reference and Semantic Reference,’ in S. Davis (ed.) *Pragmatics*, Oxford: OUP.
- Fodor, Janet D. & Ivan Sag (1982) ‘Referential and Quantificational Indefinites,’ *Linguistics and Philosophy* 5.
- Heim, Irene (1991) ‘Articles and Definiteness’ (section 1.3 ‘Referential and attributive use,’ and section 2.2 ‘Specific and non-specific readings’).

### Case studies

- Reinhart, Tanya (1997) ‘Quantifier Scope: How Labor is Divided Between QR and Choice Functions’. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 20, 335-397.
- Kratzer, Angelika (1998) ‘Scope or Pseudoscope? Are there Wide-Scope Indefinites?’ In: S. Rothstein (ed.). *Events and Grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 163-196.

- von Stechow, Arnim (2000) ‘Some Remarks on Choice Functions and Lf-Movement’, in: K. von Heusinger & U. Egli (eds.). *Reference and Anaphoric Relations*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Chierchia, Gennaro (2001) ‘A Puzzle about Indefinites’ In C. Cecchetto et al (eds), *Semantic Interfaces*. CSLI Publications.
- Schwarz, Bernhard (2001) ‘Two Kinds of Long-Distance Indefinites’, Talk given at Amsterdam Colloquium.

### Unit 3: Presupposition, Context Change

#### Main issues

What presuppositions are (truth value judgments and other empirical criteria). The projection problem. Cancellability and accommodation. Dynamic approaches: motivation and basic concepts. Context-dependency of domains of quantification. Division of labor between truth-conditional semantics and laws of context change. Case studies: source of presuppositions, non-monotonicity of conditionals.

#### Technical exercises

3-valued truth-tables for connectives. Compositional calculation of context change potentials. Dynamic versions of logical concepts (validity, entailment).

#### Assigned reading

- Soames, Scott (1989) ‘Presupposition,’ in Dov Gabbay & Franz Guenther (eds.) *Handbook of Philosophical Logic IV*, Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Beaver, David (2001) *Presupposition and Assertion in Dynamic Semantics*, CSLI Publications.
- Lewis, David (1979) ‘Scorekeeping in a Language Game,’ *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 8, pp. 339 – 59.

#### Case studies

- Simons, Mandy (2001) ‘Why Some Presuppositions are Conversational Implicatures’, ms, Carnegie Mellon.
- Simons, Mandy (2002) ‘Presupposition and Relevance’ To appear in “Semantics vs. Pragmatics,” ed. Zoltan Szabo, Oxford University Press.

Both of Simons’ papers are available at

<http://www.phil.cmu.edu/faculty/simons/home/papers.html>

- Abusch, Dorit (2002), ‘Lexical Alternatives as a Source of Pragmatic Presuppositions’, ms, to appear in *Proceedings of SALT 12*, 2002.

- von Fintel, Kai (2001) ‘Counterfactuals in a Dynamic Context’ in Michael Kenstowicz (ed.) *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*, MIT Press.
- von Fintel, Kai (1999) ‘NPI Licensing, Strawson-Entailment, and Context-Dependency’ *Journal of Semantics*, 16(2), pp. 97-148.

## Unit 4: Focus

### Main issues

Anaphoricity (“givenness”) as the core meaning of focus. Basic concepts of Rooth’s alternative semantics. Semantic and syntactic connections to the analysis of wh-questions (including the movement issue). Association with focus. Case study: the scope of *even* and somethings about NPIs.

### Technical exercises

Calculating focus values. Calculating structured meanings.

### Assigned reading

- Rooth, Mats (1996) ‘Focus,’ in S. Lappin (ed.) *The Handbook of Contemporary Semantic Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell.

### Case studies

- Beaver, David and Clark, Brady (2002) ‘*Always* and *Only*: Why not all Focus Sensitive Operators are Alike’, ms, Stanford  
<http://montague.stanford.edu/~dib/Publications/alwaysonly.pdf>
- Beaver, David and Clark, Brady (2002) ‘The Proper Treatments of Focus Sensitivity’, in Chris Potts and Line Mikkelsen (eds.) *Proceedings of WCCFL XXI*, Cascadilla Press  
[http://montague.stanford.edu/~dib/Publications/wccfl\\_paper.pdf](http://montague.stanford.edu/~dib/Publications/wccfl_paper.pdf)
- Beaver, David and Clark, Brady (2002) ‘Monotonicity and Focus Sensitivity’, in Brendan Jackson (ed.), *Proceedings of SALT XII*, CLC Publications, Cornell.  
<http://montague.stanford.edu/~dib/Publications/salt-sd.pdf>
- Wilkinson, Karina (1996) ‘The Scope of *Even*’ *Natural Language Semantics* 4, 193-215.
- Rullmann, Hotze (1997) ‘*Even*, Polarity, and Scope’, in Martha Gibson, Grace Wiebe, and Gary Litten (eds) *Papers in Experimental and Theoretical Linguistics*, Vol. 4, p. 40-64, Department of Linguistics, University of Alberta.
- Schwarz, Bernhard (2000) ‘Notes on *Even*’, ms.