
24.903
Language & Structure III: Semantics and Pragmatics
Spring 2003, 2-151, MW 1-2.30
February 10, 2003
Assignment 1, due in class on February 17

- (1) Many words can be thought of as related by a subset relation e.g. *dog* and *mammal*. The set of dogs is a subset of the set of mammals. Such words are said to be related by the hyponymy relation with *dog* being a hyponym of *mammal*. In many cases, hyponymy between words relates to entailment between sentences in the following way:
If we have a sentence [... α ...], and β is a hyponym of α , then the sentence [... β ...] entails (is a hyponym of) the sentence [... α ...]. Example: *chihuahua* is a hyponym of *dog*; hence *Halle owns a chihuahua* entails *Halle owns a dog*.
Find an example in which this rule does **not** hold.
- (2) The principle of compositionality states that the meaning of a complex expression can be derived from the meanings of its syntactic parts. Discuss why this is a plausible principle for human languages. Are there exceptions to this principle? If you find any, discuss how they may fit into the general picture of a semantic theory that takes the compositionality principle for granted.
- (3) Describe the readings of the following ambiguous sentences:
- a. Everything doesn't fit into this container.
 - b. Ludo saw her duck under the table.
 - c. The missionaries are too hot to eat.
 - d. Visiting relatives can be pleasant.
 - e. They decided to meet on Tuesday.
 - f. The first book that John said that Tolstoy wrote is on sale.
 - g. My father tells me to work harder than my boss does.
- (4) Identify the assertion, the implicatures, and the presuppositions (if any) of the following sentences.
- a. Mary danced, too.
 - b. It has been five years since I've seen John.
 - c. I haven't seen John in five years.
 - d. Only Sally talks to Sam.
 - e. Even Sally talks to Sam.
- (5) Exercise on Page 9 of Heim & Kratzer.