What is said: default semantics vis-à-vis the Gricean program

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Post-Gricean pragmatics is generally understood as an approach to meaning that combines a truth-conditional approach to what is said with an inference-based approach to pragmatic components of meaning, also allowing for some limited role of conventions. This combination gave rise to four decades of disputes concerning the boundary between what is said and what is implicated, allowing for more, or less, pragmatic contribution to the truth-conditional content and resulting in the formation of different general orientations such as contextualism, relativism, and also, in response, semantic minimalism, each of them comprising several different theories. Default Semantics (Jaszczolt, e.g. 2005, 2016) is one of such voices in the post-Gricean 'border wars' (Horn 2006). It belongs to the contextualist camp but is characterised by a radical departure from the what is said/what is implicated distinction. Default Semantics adopts the distinction between *primary meaning* understood as the main, salient message intended by a Model Speaker and recovered by a Model Addressee, and *secondary meanings*, where each of these can be explicit or implicit, producing as a result a distinction that is orthogonal to the traditional said/implicit divide. Since there is no evidence that enriched logical forms are cognitively plausible candidates for what it said, implicit and explicit meaning are treated uniformly. The primary meaning, irrespective of its relation to the logical form of the uttered sentence, acquires on this theory a formal analysis in terms of truth-conditional representations called *merger representations*, loosely modelled on discourse representation structures of Discourse Representation Theory (Kamp and Reyle 1993) but construed on the level of conceptual rather than syntactic structures, with the corollary that compositionality is predicated of the level of such conceptual structures.

In this talk I address the question as to whether adopting such a distinction, orthogonal to the said/implicit one, places Default Semantics in the post-Gricean camp or rather the departure is too significant to place it within the Gricean ideology. Default Semantics rejects the post-Gricean 'imbricated picture of meaning' (Parikh 2010: 5) but preserves the core Gricean assumptions concerning the provenance and type of meaning that constitutes the object of analysis: intended, recovered, based on general principles of rationality, formalizable, truth-conditional. In other words, it rejects the

Gricean 'pipeline picture' of meaning (Parikh 2010, 2016) according to which semantics produces underspecified representations that are enriched, modulated, and so forth by pragmatic processes and in addition are further complemented by implicated (and as such inferred, Horn 2012) additional meanings. I argue that Default Semantics is a 'non-pipeline' but essentially Gricean account in which implicating and inferring play an important role. But this role is built into a construal on which various linguistic and nonlinguistic sources of information contribute on an equal footing to the truth-conditional representation.

I illustrate the benefits of such a construal of meaning with an application to two kinds of indexicality: (i) temporal reference and (ii) first-person reference.

Select references

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