Context sensitivity - Advanced course (7,5 hp)

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1 Description

The course supplies the student with the technical skills required to reason about issues concerning context sensitivity in natural language, as well as knowledge about the central arguments in the field. The course will begin by supplying some background in the semantics of first-order modal and temporal logic, which is required in order to understand the formal framework of Kaplan (1989), where the fundamental notions of character, content and extension are presented. In relation to these concepts, we also discuss the relation between semantic value and assertoric content. The original motivations behind double indexing in Kamp (1971) are discussed, especially in relation to the principle of compositionality. Then we move on to the current debate about indexicalism vs. relativism, and end with an outlook towards two-dimensional semantics.

No prior knowledge in formal semantics is required.

The course will be given in English.

2 Plan

The course consists of eight two-hour lectures (Mondays and Wednesdays) and three exercise seminars (Thursdays). The lectures will adress the following topics:

1. First-order modal logic, possible worlds semantics: No reading.

2. Double indexed semantics (formal properties): Kamp (1971), Kaplan (1989).

3. Double indexed semantics (philosophical motivations): Kamp (1971), Kaplan (1989).

4. Compositionality: Westerståhl (2012).

5. Character, content, extension: Kaplan (1989), Lewis (1980).

6. Indexicalism and relativism 1: King (2003), Stanley (2000), MacFarlane (2009).

7. Indexicalism and relativism 2: King (2003), Stanley (2000), MacFarlane (2009).

8. Two-dimensional semantics: Davies and Humberstone (1980).

The seminars will provide the opportunity to do exercises on the more technical parts of the course.

3   Examination

Take home exam.

References

Davies, M. and Humberstone, L. (1980). Two notions of necessity. *Philosophical Studies*, 38(1):1–31.

Kamp, H. (1971). Formal properties of 'now'. *Theoria*, 37(3):227–274.

Kaplan, D. (1989). Demonstratives. In Almog, J., Perry, J., and Wettstein, H., editors, *Themes From Kaplan*, pages 481–563. Oxford University Press.

King, J. C. (2003). Tense, modality, and semantic values. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 17(1):195–246.

Lewis, D. (1980). Index, context, and content. In Kanger, S. and Öhman, S., editors, *Philosophy and Grammar*, pages 79–100. Reidel.

MacFarlane, J. (2009). Nonindexical contextualism. *Synthese*, 166(2):231–250.

Stanley, J. (2000). Context and logical form. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 23(4):391–434.

Westerståhl, D. (2012). Compositionality in Kaplan style semantics. In Werning, M., Hinzen, W., and Machery, E., editors, *Oxford Handbook of Compositionality*. Oxford University Press.