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Jaszczolt, Kasia (2002), *Semantics and Pragmatics. Meaning in language and discourse*, London: Longman.

“**Semantics and Pragmatics**” is first of all a handbook. Its origins are in the homonymous course that professor Jaszczolt has been giving over the last few years at the University of Cambridge. Its major goal is to provide a unitary explanation of what meaning is; more precisely the author wants to provide a unitary account of meaning in language, in the mind and in discourse. Semantics and Pragmatics are therefore seen as two complementary disciplines dealing with meaning from different perspectives.

Jaszczolt's approach is primarily objectivist, assuming the notion of truth as corresponding with reality, but it integrates to various degrees various proposals pertaining to different traditions of research such as cognitive semantics.

In her book, she presents the most outstanding questions in semantics as well as the dominant theories and approaches to these issues comparing them in a “ problems and possible solutions” style of presentation.

### SYNOPSIS

The first chapter, “**Word meaning, sentence meaning, speaker meaning**”, introduces the reader to the fundamental concepts and distinctions in the domain of meaning. First, the author distinguishes semantics from pragmatics, identifying different objects of study for the two disciplines. Then the notions of proposition, sentence and utterance are defined and several theories of meaning are presented in their attempts to solve the important question of what meaning is. None of these (referential theory, mentalist theory, use theory and truth-conditional theory) is discarded: they are viewed as interconnected.

The rest of the chapter is dedicated to word meaning. Jaszczolt introduces the reader with the major proposals, which are analysed and commented upon. The “meaning-as-definition approach” is refuted because of the infinite regress or the circularity it implies and because it doesn't seem to say anything about the source of these definitions, neglecting also the problem of the boundaries between linguistic and encyclopaedic knowledge. The division between literal, conventional, context-independent and context-dependent aspects of meaning are also criticised.

After quickly mentioning the “meaning-as-concepts approach”, the author contrasts the “meaning-as-reference approach” with the structuralist approach. This latter provides the opportunity to introduce the notions of structuralist sense vs. philosophical sense, and to better explain the notion of reference and to contrast it with denotation, also introducing the notion of the expression's extension. The philosophical debate relative to definite descriptions is introduced as well as the wider issue of intensional contexts and of non-substitutivity.

The exploration of the studies on word meaning continues with an overview of paradigmatic lexical relations, such as the relations of inclusion, sameness, and opposition and hyponymy and meronymy and of their treatment in logic. In the following sections the holistic structuralistic approach is then compared to various atomistic componential analysis. After presenting several examples of lexical decomposition, Jaszczolt introduces the major models developed within this approach. Attention is devoted to Carnap's meaning postulates and to some further development within the componential framework such as the generative approach by Katz and Postal (1964). This approach, bringing semantics and syntax in contact, is shown to have opened the way for research on thematic roles, of which a list is provided. Talmy's cognitive approach to the syntax-semantics interface is also presented and the overview of componential analyses is closed with a quick description of Jackendoff's conceptual semantics and Wierzbicka's semantic primes.

The last approach to lexical meaning presented in this very rich first chapter is Pustejovsky's generative lexicon, in which pragmatics and semantics interact, since world knowledge is considered indispensable for drawing inferences. The overview of theories of word meaning is closed by the presentation of Blutner's lexical pragmatics.

The second chapter, “**Concepts**”, deals with one of the most controversial notions in linguistics and in philosophy of language, although the central one in representational approaches to meaning. The author poses some fundamental questions such as: what are representations and how do they work? Are meaning as mental representation and meaning as reference compatible? What information do concepts contain?

In order to answer the first question, several representational approaches (the imagist, the structuralist and the atomistic) are compared and contrasted with externalism: the author's conclusion seems to be that meanings are not in the head, but in the world. The author presents then the possibility of merging representational and referential approaches to meaning, including truth-conditional and cognitive, as a very promising eclectic direction in semantics.

As to what concepts are constituted by, both the images and the necessary and sufficient semantic features hypothesis are ruled out. The major problem with concepts seems to be boundary fuzziness, and some non-compositional theories which tried to account for that are commented on, such as Rosh and Labov's Prototype Theory, Wittgenstein's family resemblances, Lakoff's Idealized Cognitive Models, Fillmore's Frame Theory, Johnson-Laird's Mental Models and Fauconnier's Mental Spaces. Non-compositionality is indicated as the major problem with these theories, since in Jaszczolt's view any successful theory of meaning need be compositional, therefore concepts cannot be prototypes (p.37). In line with Fodor's view, concepts are better thought of as productive and systematic compositional constituents of thoughts. The author then focuses on the relation between thought, language and concepts. Concepts are clearly defined as constituent parts of propositions, and together, concepts and propositions are the units of thought (p.38).

As far as the relationship between thought and language, the second is, in ultimate analysis, considered to be dependent on the first. Two opposite views are presented: linguistic relativity (Whorf and Sapir) and linguistic universalism (Talmy, Kay and in general all the cognitive linguists). Through this comparison, the author arrives at proposing an approach in which both relativity and universalism (in various degrees) could be integrated, although primacy is granted to the hypothesis that thought determines language.

The next question considered concerns the nature of the "language" used in computations, and the author tries to answer it comparing Fodor's language of thought hypothesis (*mentalese*) and his theory of modularity of the mind with the contrasting opinion of people like Cohen or Carruthers who claim that although there is no strong evidence against *Mentalese*, the language of thought is anyway better conceived as resembling natural language.

In the very few lines of the chapter the author makes clear his position, that is, he states his preference for a propositional-based approach to meaning "in the form of truth-conditional semantics, supplemented with a pragmatic theory compatible with it" and in which "concepts have to have their rightful place" (p.51).

Chapter three, "**Sentence meaning**", introduces the reader to the main concepts of truth-conditional semantics, which is the approach that the author overtly supports throughout the book and which is defined as "the most successful theory of sentence meaning".

Jaszczolt proposes an eclectic truth-conditional model. Within this theory, sentences are about the world and meaning follows from the notion of truth, which is taken to mean correspondence with facts (correspondence theory of truth). Knowing what a sentence means, equals knowing under what conditions it would be true. The author underlines how, although being a referential approach, truth-conditional semantics, as she interprets it, is an idealization, and therefore there are many sentences for which the denotational approach doesn't work, and the only possibility is to resort to mental representations and contextual clues.

In the remaining sections of the chapter, the reader is introduced to several fundamental notions pertaining to this domain of research such as analytic and synthetic truth, deductive, propositional and predicate logic. The role of the principle of compositionality in truth conditional semantics is explained and some limitations of this approach are acknowledged, such as the lack of an adequate account of word meaning, the inability to account for non-declarative sentences and the problems created by such constructions as propositional attitude reports.

The theory of Possible Worlds and Montague's Model Theoretic Semantics, as well as some of its developments (Kamp & Reyle's Discourse Representation Theory) are presented as an exemplification of applied truth-conditional semantics. The author concludes the chapter stating her position in favour of an approach which has as a promising starting point, truth-conditional semantics, to which "lexical semantics adds the compositionality of word meaning and pragmatics adds truth-conditionally relevant but context-dependent aspects of meaning and the formalization of non-declarative" (p.70).

In chapters four, “**Sentential connectives**”, five, “**Quantified expressions and predicate logic**”, and six, “**Syntax and the Semantics of predicate logic: an overview**”, Jaszczolt introduces the operators of first order logic, as well as the rules for the formation of logical formulae. In the fourth chapter, she discusses logical connectives, i.e. truth-functional operators of propositional logic, whose meaning is constant and can be precisely defined, and which perform logical operations over simple propositions (conjunction, disjunction, implication, equivalence and negation). The relationship between logical connectives and their English counterparts is illustrated, in a rich argumentative style, and emphasis is put on the fact that, even if logical operators help specify the meaning of natural language connectives, there are all the same aspects of meaning that the logical meta-language cannot capture.

Frequent reference is made to the debate at the semantics/pragmatics interface, especially to the question of the underdeterminacy of meaning and of pragmatic enrichment as well as to the question of the ambiguity vs. truth-functional or sense-general approach to the analysis of negation. In the fifth chapter, the author moves on to predicate logic, which is presented as a meta-language allowing for the translation of “both simple and complex sentences”, building “on the logical forms of propositional logic and going deeper into the structure of sentences to account for their internal structure” (p.89). Quantifiers are presented as important operators of predicate logic and important building blocks of logical forms.

After the description of standard quantifiers of first-order logic (the existential and the universal quantifier) and of their relationship with quantified expressions in English, generalized quantifiers are introduced. Jaszczolt provides a quick sketch of Kamp and Reyle’s Discourse Representation Theory as well as Neale’s approach to binary and restricted quantifiers. The notions of conservativity, monotonicity and the distinction between weak and strong quantifiers are illustrated and, as in the previous chapter, the problem of ambiguity is considered, with reference to the semantics of numerals and of scalar expressions.

In chapter six, the author summarizes the points made previously, providing a list of the symbols used in predicate logic and of the rules for the proper formation of logical formulae. A list of limitations of this approach, such as the treatment of non declarative sentences and propositional attitudes reports is provided as well as some of the solutions proposed by intensional logic.

Chapter seven, “**Referring expressions**”, illustrates the complex problems posed to the philosophical and truth-conditional semantic models by referring expressions, such as proper nouns, definite descriptions and deictics, all areas where semantics and pragmatics seem to meet. Jaszczolt presents several approaches to referring expressions and illustrates the “degree of reference” hypothesis.

The last section of the chapter is devoted to referring expressions in the scope of propositional attitudes, that is, in those intensional contexts where an ambiguity between transparent and opaque reading is present and where, in the case of opaque reading, substitutivity “*salva veritate*” is not possible. The *de re/de dicto* distinction is introduced and extended to a tri-partite distinction, where *de dicto* reading is further specified in *de dicto proper* and *de dicto* about someone else (*de dicto1*). The major problem created by the failure of substitutivity in intensional contexts is individuated in the menace it represents for a compositional theory of meaning, and in fact several philosophers have proposed to abandon such an approach or at least to integrate pragmatic information into the semantics of these expressions. Several proposals are presented, such as the hidden indexical theory by Schiffer or the neo-Russellian positions of scholars like Ludlow, proposing interpreted logical forms, or, again, Davidson's paratactic account. The contextualist vs. anti-contextualist debate is presented, that is, the opposition between theories allowing for the contextual information to contribute to the propositional force of an utterance and theories regarding contextual information as working externally to the proposition, as an implicature. Jaszczolt seems to favour a moderate contextualist approach, in which a proposal such as that of modes of presentation has an epistemic significance and must have a role to play in various degrees.

Chapter eight, “**Topic, focus and presupposition**”, deals with some central notions pertaining to the analysis of meaning in discourse. The goal of the author is to try to demonstrate that formal and functional approaches are not irreconcilable. She supports her thesis by presenting some crucial problems in functional linguistics, such as the question of information structure and its relevance in creating text coherence and the fundamental notion of topic.

After further specifying the distinction between discourse topic and speaker's topic, the author introduces the topic/comment opposition and compares it to the theme/rheme one. The survey on information structure also has the scope of bringing the notion of focus into the discussion, which is further developed so as to analyse the role of focus in truth-conditional semantics. Focus is seen as having truth-conditional

effects and triggering presupposition and implicatures, its semantics depending on “evoking the so-called alternatives to the focused element” (p.172). Three types of focus are distinguished: semantic, contrastive and psychological focus, and prominence is assigned to the first type. The other fundamental concept introduced in the 8th chapter is presupposition and its major characteristics (defeasibility and projectability), with several approaches to the problems it raises and the solutions proposed, such as the treatment of presupposition as anaphora.

The approach which the author favours is, as usual, an approach which can accommodate both semantic and pragmatic suggestions, and in this sense she illustrates in detail the influence of focus in determining presuppositions, and the possible formalisations of these mutual relations. She concludes that separating semantic and pragmatic approaches to the problem of presupposition is sterile, since meaning in discourse is created through the interaction of sentential, contextual and co-textual links. She hypothesizes that these meaning relations can be formalised somehow, and presents several proposals, such as van der Sandt’s ordering of the operations performed by the hearer, or Asher and Lascaride’s rules of discourse coherence, anticipating her proposal to formalize the speaker’s intentions considered as an overarching principle for ordering interpretations.

Chapter nine, “**Deictic expressions**” illustrates the problems that certain lexical items encoding contextual information pose to a formal truth-conditional approach to meaning. Deictics are linguistic expressions whose meaning can be recovered only recurring to the available contextual information. They represent an area in which semantics and pragmatics both have a role to play, or as Jaszczolt says, “the pragmatic processes of reference resolution intrude into the semantics” (p.192). They must be pragmatically interpreted by a hearer in order to allow for the assignment of a truth value to a proposition; in other words, the situation must be constructed before the semantic interpretation can be carried out. The author proposes to classify deixis into 5 types (person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis and social deixis) and offers a brief characterisation of the groupings. She then turns to the question of non-deictic use of pronouns and of problematic anaphors, such as the E-type or “donkey” anaphora.

The last section of the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter is devoted to the relationship between deixis and reference. Deixis is seen as sharing many features with proper nouns, in that they select a referent and the proposition corresponding to the sentence in which they occur can be assigned a positive truth-value only if and only if the predicate predicates something true of the referred individual. The fundamental difference lies though in the fact that, contrary to proper nouns, deictic expressions have a variable reference, and the logical form of the proposition must be completed with contextual information. Philosophers and truth-conditional semanticists have put forward many different proposals in order to try to formalise this context-dependence, ranging from sequencing of indexicals to the dynamic Fregean thought. All these proposals are presented in the final pages of the chapter.

Chapters 10 and 11, “**Implicature**” and “**What is said**”, continue the exploration of the domains that are not satisfactorily described by truth-conditional semantics. In chapter 10, the author presents several approaches to the distinction between sentence meaning and speaker’s meaning. She introduces the Gricean approach (the Cooperative Principle, the Maxims, etc.) and the problem area of implicatures, as well as some post-Gricean approaches, in particular those which rearrange Grice’s maxims while remaining close to the spirit of the original maxims, such as Levinson’s and Horn’s developments, and those which substitute the original proposal with a more general cognitive principle, such as the relevance-theoretic proposal.

Chapter 11 presents a theoretically advanced discussion of the post-Gricean developments in semantics and pragmatics. More precisely, Jaszczolt presents the discussion concerning the boundaries between the two domains, attempting to answer some fundamental questions relative to how many levels of meaning there are, the way they can be defined and the criteria to distinguish between implicatures and what is said. She presents an overview of the debate relative to very important issues such as explicatures and implicatures (RT) and the levels of meaning (Levinson 1995; 2000), ambiguity and underspecification, and terminological and theoretical issues concerning the distinction between logical form, semantic representation and prepositional representation. Particular attention is dedicated to default semantics, which is favoured by the author.

Chapter 12, “**Temporality**”, acknowledges the context dependent nature of tense and underlines the necessity to incorporate temporality into any truth-conditional approach to language meaning. In the first two

sections, Jaszczolt introduces eventualities as proposed by Bach (1981) and then she illustrates the Davidsonian proposal for the integration of events and logical forms. The following section is devoted to the distinction between tense, mood and aspect as three inalienable but distinct dimensions for the description of situations. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to the distinction between temporality and tense and to the way in which the former has been integrated in truth-conditional treatments of language, with particular attention to the two major theories about events, namely the A-theory (there is no real past or future, but the present moment of thinking which makes them “past” and “future”) and the B-theory (there is a sequence of unchanging events lined up as before than/after than). The author concludes the chapter reminding the reader that tense must be considered in the broader framework of expressing temporality in language and since this latter is expressed through other dimensions as well, such as aspect, anaphoric dimension, conversational implicature and common-sense reasoning (p.271).

Chapter 13, “**Dynamic semantics and Discourse Representation Theory**”, is the last chapter dedicated to approaches to the analyses of discourse based to a different extent on the formal methods of truth-conditional semantics. The title of the chapter is self-explanatory. It essentially deals with the illustration of DRT itself as well as with some more general considerations on which DRT and File Change Semantics are based. The author underlines the difficulty with adequately representing many different types of sentences, because of the lack of a “uniform connection between the output of grammar and the situation referred to by the utterance of a sentence” (p.272). Since reality changes in the ongoing communicative process, both because of the participants and of the greater available information, incorporating both context and its changes into semantics becomes essential. This idea is at the basis of DRT, whose potential is illustrated in the treatment of quantified expression, time representation, prepositional attitude report analysis and multiple interpretations. The last section is dedicated to a theoretical-terminological issue, namely that of the way in which the label “dynamic semantics” is used.

Chapter 14, “**Speech acts and intentionality**”, is the first chapter dedicated to the approaches which do not resort to the suggestions of truth-conditionally oriented semantics, and which are rather based on the idea that meaning is use. The major advantage of this tradition initiated by Wittgenstein and then developed by “ordinary language philosophers” such as Austin and Searle is identified in the capability for these theories to account for sentences that do not have clear truth-conditions since they do not express obvious propositions, such as requests. The author illustrates the major theoretical issues relative to the Speech Act Theory: felicity conditions, illocution, perlocution and force, speech act types, and presents the problems connected with the ethnocentricity of speech act classification. This problematic area is illustrated through the problem of indirect speech act and of the different ways in which indirectness and politeness interact in different languages. The last section is dedicated to a brief history of speech act.

In chapter 15, “**Linguistic politeness**”, the problems raised by ethnocentric approaches are considered in depth and illustrated through an overview of the studies on politeness, especially of those trying to overcome the limits of cultural specific proposals. Jaszczolt introduces Lakoff’s rules of pragmatic competence (‘be clear’ and ‘be polite’), Leech’s Politeness Principle complementing Grice’s Cooperative Principle and consisting of at least six maxims, and Brown and Levinson’s adoption of Goffman’s sociological notion of face, which is central to their theory of face-threatening acts (FTAs) and their role in strategies of politeness.

The last section introduces the cognitive approach to politeness proposed by Escandell-Vidall (1996, 1998) which, with the notion of “social adequacy”, opens the path for the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter 16, “**Cross-cultural Pragmatics**”, intends to explain what pragmatics means in this tradition of research. This discipline is presented as still vague and speculative, but at the same time, the importance of certain observations deriving from this area of research is underlined, since they might help cast more light on semantic and pragmatic theories. The first section is dedicated to the anthropological notion of culture, as described by Scollon and Scollon (1995). The author then presents the issue of a metalanguage which can express concepts in a non-cultural-specific way. In particular, Jaszczolt presents Wierzbicka’s Natural Semantic Metalanguage. In the next section, the author introduces cross-cultural pragmatics, exemplifying the cultural-specific layer of utterance interpretation with tautologies. The last section is dedicated to Dan Sperber’s epidemiology of representations, that is, Sperber’s hypothesis relative to how culture is formed.

The 17<sup>th</sup> and final chapter, “**Metaphor**”, is dedicated to this problematic area, which moves the discussion towards the cognitive tradition of research. The debate about metaphor is presented from different theoretical perspectives: the “ traditional views” and Searle's pragmatic account, Cohen's revival of the semantic approach, Moran's truth-conditional account of metaphor and Lakoff's cognitive approach to the issue. The last section is dedicated to a proposal for a possible reconciliation of cognitive and truth-conditional approaches to the study of metaphor.

The “**References**” and the “**Index**” close the book.

## EVALUATION

Despite the fact that the book leads the reader from the more basic semantic and pragmatic notions to very complex theoretical issue, "Semantics and Pragmatics" is not an ingenuous handbook. The clarity of the exposition and the excellent organisation of very rich and diverse contents in a gradual and well interconnected sequence, ordered according to the complexity of the problems described, should not hide the original theoretical contribution of this work.

On one hand, the author presents the semantic and pragmatic debate in a very didactic and informative way, with particular attention towards truth-conditionally oriented approaches, while on the other, she carefully underlines the fallacies in the different approaches, providing sound arguments for her criticism.

It is evident that the book is supported by strong theoretical premises and is in itself a very well built account of the author's theoretical stance, the one which inspires such monographic works as "Discourse, Beliefs and Intentions: Semantic Defaults and Propositional Attitude Ascriptions" (1999), where she tries to bring closer approaches which apparently are quite irreconcilable, such as the cognitive and the truth-conditional approach, using the representation tools of DRT and the assumptions of “default semantics”. This effort brings her in line with the most recent proposals at the semantics-pragmatics interface (Levinson 2000, Kamp and Reyle 1993).

Thus, if from the perspective of the researcher or the advanced student of linguistics the book is a useful overview of the fundamental problem areas in the semantics/pragmatics debate, and a useful preparatory reading to the monographic work of Jaszczolt, from the less advanced student's perspective, “Semantics and Pragmatics” is a very useful handbook providing all the necessary information about the truth-conditional approaches to the study of discourse, including the philosophical debate, and a good presentation of non-truth-conditional approaches to language. Every chapter is accompanied by a list of suggested readings, both “general” and “advanced/detailed”, which is a very useful resource. The author provides, moreover, excellent introductions and summaries of the contents of the single chapters which make it very easy for the reader to follow the discussion.

To conclude, I think that “ Semantics and Pragmatics” makes for an excellent didactic resource both for graduate and undergraduate students, provided it is read with a critical eye, that is, provided it is clearly understood that the book is not a “neutral” introduction to the two disciplines and their interface, but a strongly theoretically oriented approach, a sort of “manifest”, a premise to Jaszczolt’s original work.

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