Workshop Negation - preparatory session

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LogPrag FNS project
Some basic facts about negation

• Two main issues as regards the semantics and pragmatics of negation:
  • the scope issue
  • the descriptive vs. metalinguistic uses of negation
• One basic question is the meaning of a negative sentence.
1. Logical meaning vs. linguistic meaning

- From a **logical point of view**, the meaning of the negation of a proposition \( P \) is \( \neg P \), that is, « it is not the case that \( P \) »
  - Negation is a truth-functional connective, inverting the truth-value of a proposition: if \( P \) is true, \( \neg P \) is false; if \( P \) is false, \( \neg P \) is true.

- From a **semantic point of view**, negation scopes over a predicate: the semantic value of the argument of a negative sentence is said to be outside the set of individuals describing the semantic value of the predicate:
  
  1. **Abi is not married**

    - = the individual Abi does not belong to the set of individuals who are married

One issue is whether we process negative meaning incrementally or not (Kaup)
2. The scope issue

- A negative sentence is underdetermined as regards its scope:
  
  1. Mary did not kiss John.

- Question: what is the scope of negation?

- Answers: correctives sentences make the scope of negation explicit
  
  2. Mary did not kiss John, Sue did.
  3. Mary did not kiss John, but Paul.
  4. Mary did not kiss John, she insulted him.
  5. Mary did not kiss John, Sue kissed Paul.
  6. Mary did not kiss John, Sue insulted Paul.

- All these corrective clauses answer different QUDs.

- How much is the processing of negative sentence depending on QUD (Breheny)?
3. Descriptive vs. metalinguistic uses of negation

- Horn (1985) seminal paper on negation made a crucial distinction between two uses vs. two meanings of negation:
  - descriptive use: truth-conditional
  - metalinguistic use: not-truth-conditional
- Horn’s argument is based on one of Grice’s example in his W. James lectures (1967, V, 5):
  1. *It is not the case that, if X is given penicillin, he will get better.*
     a. \(\neg(P \rightarrow Q) \leftrightarrow (P \land \neg Q)\)
  2. X is given pénicilline and X will get better.
- Logical consequences:
  - (1) logically means (a)
  - (1) is logically equivalent to (2)
  - hence (1) means (2).
- But this prediction is false.
- Why?
Truth vs. assertability

• If the meaning of it is not the case that P is not the one of logical negation (¬), what is it?
• In the clause it is not that, if P then Q, what the speaker refuses is not the truth of the conditional if P then Q.
  • The speaker refuses to assert the conditional clause.
• Examples of metalinguistic negation:
  1. a. We don’t like L.A. we love it.
     b. Anne does not have three children, she has four of them.
     c. Anne has not read some of Chomsky’s books, she read all of them.
     d. I am not his son, he is my father.
• Meaning of metalinguistic negation
  2. a. I cannot affirm that we like L.A., since we love it.
     b. I cannot affirm that Anne has three children, since she has four of them.
     c. I cannot affirm that Anne has read some of Chomsky’s books, since she read all of them.
     d. I cannot affirm that I am his son, since he is my father.
• How is the scope of metalinguistic negation obtained? (Spector)
A second type of metalinguistic use: presuppositional negation

- Descriptive negation is narrow scope, metalinguistic negation is wide scope (internal vs. externe negation)
- Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions:
  1. *The King of France is bald*
  2. *The king of France is not bald*
  3. *The king of France is not bald, because there is no king of France*
- Wide scope interpretation
  \[\neg \exists x \ [K(x) \land \neg \exists y [(y \neq x) \land K(y)] \land B(x)]\]
  = it is not the case that there is an \(x\) such that \(x\) is a king, and there is no \(y\) such that \(y\) is different of \(x\) and \(y\) is a king and \(x\) is bald.
- Narrow scope interpretation
  \[\exists x \ [K(x) \land \neg \exists y[(y \neq x) \land K(y)] \land \neg B(x)]\]
  = there is an \(x\) such that \(x\) is a king, and there is no \(y\) such that \(y\) is different of \(x\) and \(y\) is a king and \(x\) is not bald
The limits of the debate

• Examples of metalinguistic or echoic use of negation:
  
  1. *Around here we don’t eat tom[eiDouz] and we don’t get stressed out. We eat tom[a:touz] and we get a little tense now and then.*
  2. *Mozart’s sonatas weren’t for violin and piano, they were for piano and violin.*
  3. *I didn’t manage to trap two mongeese: I managed to trap two mongooses.*

• What is the semantics of metalinguistic negation: wide or narrow scope?

  • *Marguerite Duras n’a pas écrit que de la merde; elle en a aussi filmé* (Pierre Despoges)
The program

• 14h30-15h45: presentation of paper by Levy (Paola & Kristina)
• 16h15-17h30: presentation of papers by Kaup, Breheny and Spector (Joanna, Cristina, Karoliina)