

# Workshop Negation - preparatory session

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LogPrag FNS project

# Some basic facts about negation

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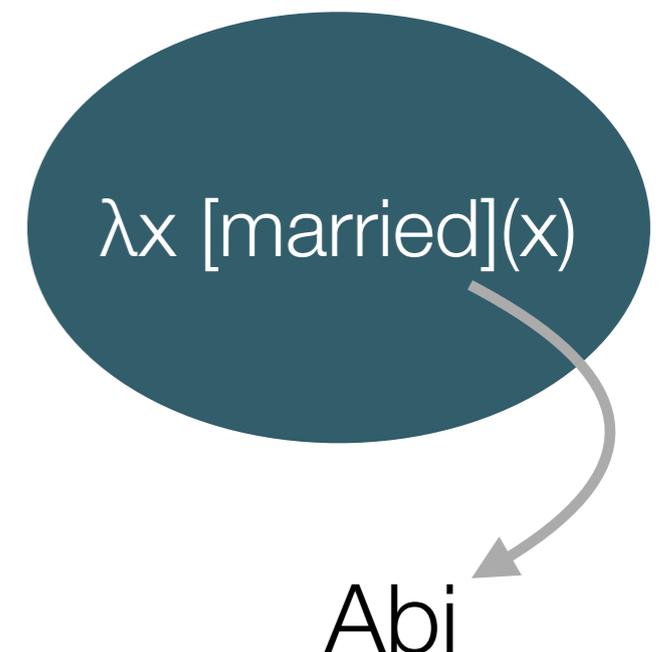
- Two main issues as regards the semantics and pragmatics of negation:
  - the scope issue
  - the descriptive vs. metalinguistic uses of negation
- One basic question is the meaning of a negative sentence.

# 1. Logical meaning vs. linguistic meaning

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- From a **logical point of view**, the meaning of the negation of a proposition  $P$  is  $not-P$ , 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,  $not-P$  is false; if  $P$  is false,  $not-P$  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)

P	not-P
1	0
0	1



## 2. The scope issue

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- 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

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- 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.  $\neg(P \rightarrow Q) \leftrightarrow (P \wedge \neg Q)$
  2. X is given penicilline 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

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- If the meaning of *it is not the case that P* is not the one of logical negation ( $\neg$ ), 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

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- 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
$$\neg \exists x [K(x) \wedge \neg \exists y [(y \neq x) \wedge K(y)] \wedge B(x)]$$

= 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
$$\exists x [K(x) \wedge \neg \exists y [(y \neq x) \wedge K(y)] \wedge \neg B(x)]$$

= 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

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- 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

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