

SEMANTICS MIDTERM PROBLEM 1

Utterance:

A: Do you have a Siamese?

B: I have a cat.

B': No, I don't.

Implicature:

Person B has a non-Siamese cat.

Cancellation Test:

I have a cat and it is a Siamese cat.

Good 3/3

This phrase is not contradictory and therefore the implicature is not an entailment.

Grice and Response B:

Given that B does not semantically answer A, B must have responded this way in accordance to Gricean Principles. According to Grice's maxim, cooperative conversation will focus on relevant topics of conversation. From the context of utterance A, B knew that A was referencing Siamese cats. By answering with information about their own cat ownership, B remains relevant. Phrase B provides more information than B'. Utterance B informs A that not only does A have a cat, but it is not a Siamese cat. Phrase B' only provides the information that B does not have a cat. Thus, under Grice's maxim that speakers should make their contributions as informative as required, but not more informative than necessary, this phrase is cooperative as it provides more information than B'. While an option B'': 'I have a cat, but it's not Siamese' is just as informative as B, it relays the same information in more words. Thus it is more efficient and more cooperative to say B and it implies the other information in B''.

Actually B'' is more informative in the same way that B' is more informative because B' and B'' narrow the space of possibilities: they fully answer the explicit question of siamese or not siamese. B doesn't literally narrow those possibilities at all - the implicature does that. So, this is in fact a quantity implicature but for a different reason than you give. Gricean reasoning 10/15
Alternative consideration - 10/15

SEMANTICS MIDTERM PROBLEM 3

- a. An epithet contributes an emphasized meaning to the sentence or phrase it appears in. While not contributing or detracting from the at-issue meaning of the phrase, the expressive adjective denotes an exaggerated meaning depending on the context of the phrase, although the three examples given generally bring a negative exaggeration.

Negative: (1) The damn dog ate the cake.

Good

Positive: (2) You are fucking brilliant.

Sentence (2) brings a positive exaggeration, but still does not detract or add to the original at-issue meaning of the phrase. The EAs work like the adverb 'really' but without an explicit adjective to modify. That is, in sentence (2), 'fucking' could be replaced with 'really' and keep the same at-issue meaning. However, 'really' would be a lower degree than 'fucking'. Similarly, 'damn' in sentence (1) acts as a modifier of an unnamed adjective with a negative connotation. An imperfect substitute for 'damn' would be 'really bad'. EAs aren't standard adverbs though. While the phrase, 'you are really fucking brilliant', is acceptable, it would be incorrect to say # 'That's a really damn dog.' While some adverbs work in conjunction with some EAs, others do not.

Good, but maybe also that is the literal meaning of really, whereas these interpretations don't seem to rely on the literal meaning of e.g. Fucking

Great data point

I think its actually just modifying dog

- 11/11 EAs also do not work like standard adjectives. While they might fill the same syntactic position as adjectives when modifying a noun, ('The damn dog ate the cake' versus 'The brown dog ate the cake'), they cannot stand alone with copulas: # 'The dog is damn' versus 'The dog is brown.'

Good so they are not predicative

- b. Expressive adjectives are conversational implicatures because of their dependence on context and cooperative conversation. EAs are not at-issue entailments because the positive/negative connotation of the EA is not entailed by the phrase it is in. 'The damn dog ate the cake' does not entail that the dog is bad. 'The damn dog ate the cake' does not contradict 'the dog is good'.

Should show the results of a cancellation test to support this claim

EAs seem to pass presupposition tests:

(3) The damn dog didn't eat the cake.

(4) Did the damn dog eat the cake?

Good

(5) If the damn dog ate the cake, then we should buy a new one.

In each of these cases, the negative connotation survives the test. However, a presupposition usually requires veracity in order for the whole phrase to make sense. For example, in order for the phrase, 'The King of France is bald', to be appropriate, the presupposition that there is a king of France has to be true. In the case of 'The damn dog ate the cake', the negative connotation does not have to be necessarily true, nor does it need to exist at all in order for the sentence to be appropriate. The sentence makes sense

Good

as 'The dog ate the cake'. It also makes sense even if there is confusion as to whether the speaker has a negative connotation about the dog.

Since the use of EAs relies heavily on conversational cooperation and inferences the hearer draws based on the intentions of the speaker, I posit that they are conversational implicatures. Depending on the context of use, EAs can have multiple connotations.

But which submaxims are at play for these different examples? We need something a little different from cooperativity to get at what ADJs are

(6) John is a damn fool. -> John is especially a fool/speaker is annoyed and John is a fool

(7) John is a damn genius. -> John is especially a genius/speaker is impressed and John is a genius

(8) Are you fucking kidding me? -> Speaker addressing surprise, ensuring veracity in a negative fashion or in a positively surprised fashion

10/11

Example: John: I crashed your car.

Mary: Are you fucking kidding me? (negative connotation)

Example: John: I bought you a car for your birthday.

Mary: Are you fucking kidding me? (positive connotation)

The hearer has to know the context and assume the cooperative conversational principles in order to understand the meaning of EAs.

- c. EAs as conversational implicatures add to the phrase without changing its meaning. I wanted to create a function that interacted with the phrase without changing its truth condition and at-issue meaning. I thus thought that a function similar to the copula function would create this more basic representation of the EA. I did a derivation using this function in the lambda notebook.

If I were more skilled at using the lambda notation, I would create a function that was a generalized form of connotation that based on the context of the phrase, would determine degree of the connotation and return the set containing the connotation. That is to say I would create a function $||bad||$ that would use a t^c . This function would still return the same type of the entity it is modifying (brilliant, dog, cake, computer, etc) so that way the at-issue meaning of the sentence would remain the same.

This is a reasonable first pass analysis, and you've noted some of the obvious limitations, but given your observation above about "that's a really damn dog," or even "that's a damn dog," you might also want to try and restrict what kinds of things ADJ can compose with (i.e. What makes 'really blue dog' okay but not 'really fucking computer'?)