REVIEWS

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Zoltán Gendler Szabó (ed.). 2008. *Semantics versus Pragmatics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 465 pp.

What is the distinction between semantics and pragmatics? These two linguistic areas have become increasingly sophisticated in the last decades and the answer to the initial question has thus become increasingly problematic.

Semantics versus Pragmatics, edited by Zoltán G. Szabó presents ten original essays to this topic by renowned linguists and philosophers of language. The book contains a list of contributors, an introduction by Szabó, the main part – the ten essays – and an index. The list of contributors includes: Kent Bach, Herman Cappelen, Michael Glanzberg, Jeffrey C. King, Ernie Lepore, Stephen Neale, François Recanati, Nathan Salmon, Mandy Simsons, Scott Soames, Robert J. Stainton and Jason Stanley.

The volume addresses graduate and postgraduate students with advanced knowledge in linguistics, linguists, philosophers of language and researchers. It can also be used in teaching of advanced linguistic courses. The main focus is on the interface between semantics and pragmatics, but the reader will come in touch with a variety of linguistic phenomena, such as focus, pronouns, presupposition, deixis, anaphora, sentential and non-sentential assertion. Every essay (with the exception of the essays by Nathan Salmon and Scott Soames) ends with a list of references.

In the very informative Introduction (pp. 1–14) Szabó elaborates the traditional, orthodox conception of the interface between semantics and pragmatics and the reason why it has been recently criticized. How should we evaluate the sentence, *I tried to drink my coffee*, if it is used as a description of a perfectly usual breakfast during which the speaker easily drank two cups? Shall we say, the sentence is not true in that sort of situation or shall we say, the use of this sentence is not appropriate in that sort of situation? The first systematic attempt to answer this question is due to Paul Grice, Szabó calls it the "traditional view". According to the traditional view, an utterance of, *I tried to drink my coffee*, in the above context is true but, inappropriate because the speaker falsely implicated that he had some difficulty in imbibing. What is said is true, what is implicated is false; what is said is the domain of semantics, what is implicated is the domain of pragmatics.

This traditional view is said to lack clarity. Grice himself was not very explicit about the meaning of *what is said* and *what is meant*. These two expressions allow a variety of interpretations and the way they are actually used is somewhat undisciplined. In order to advance conceptual and explanatory clarity, Szabó suggests to "see beyond the blanket terms" – not to focus on the semantic-pragmatic distinction in general, but to catalogue the criteria for this distinction and discuss their relation to one another. He proposes six criteria which he calls distinctions (p. 6):

• *Competence*. Typically, some but not all of what the speaker conveys could be grasped by any competent speaker without special knowledge.

• *Encoding*. Typically, some but not all of what the speaker conveys is encoded in the expression uttered.

• *Compositionality*. Typically, some but not all of what the speaker conveys is compositionally determined (by the syntax and the lexicon).

• *Rules*. Typically, some but not all of what the speaker conveys can be ascertained by following rules, as opposed to elaborate cognitive strategies.

• *Truth-conditionality*. Typically, some but not all of what the speaker conveys is truth-conditionally relevant.

• *Intention-independence*. Typically, some but not all of what the speaker conveys is independent of the speaker's specific intentions to talk about this or that.

Questions about linguistic phenomena concerning these distinctions lie at the border of semantics and pragmatics. For example: Is our knowledge of the fact that *John is a bachelor*. entail that *John is unmarried*. part of our linguistic competence or is it part of what we know about the world? To take another example, is it linguistically encoded in *Jack hates Jack* that in an utterance of such a sentence the names are presumed to refer to different people or is it just our assumption about the context?

In the introduction, Szabó also states the central aim of the volume: to base the discussion about the semantics-pragmatics interface on the particular phenomena; to present different (often tacit) conceptions of this interface by different authors and thus to contribute to a new debate.

The first essay by Kent Bach, "Context *ex Machina*" (pp. 15–45), opens up the discussion with a relatively traditional view on the semantics–pragmatics distinction. Bach agrees with Grice that the domain of semantics is marked by what is said (in the locutionary sense – as a sequence of linguistic expressions). Nevertheless, and here comes his original idea, what is said is never complete. When I utter *Alice hasn't taken a bath* I mean she hasn't taken a bath *today* or *since she fou/nd a dead rat in the tub* or something else. So the semantic content of a (declarative) sentence cannot be equated with what it is normally used to assert. Since it is not a complete proposition it also cannot be meant by the speaker. Bach refines this view as he argues for ten key theses. His basic idea is the following: what a speaker says depends on the semantic content of the sentence he utters and not on the communicative intention, or on the cognitive context of the utterance. Furthermore, pragmatics contributes not to what is said, but only to the speaker's decision about what to say and to the listener's identification of what the speaker means. The essay proceeds with a list of 13 polysemies (like: *semantic*, *reference*, *meaning*, *say*, *interpretation*, etc.) Bach disambiguates these terms. He proposes two uses for each of them, the first one being semantic and the second one pragmatic in character.

The chapter by Herman Cappelen and Ernie Lepore, "Radical and Moderate Pragmatics: Does Meaning Determine Truth Conditions?" (pp. 45–71), is a defense of the truth-conditional semantics ("Meaning determines truth-conditions") against Radical and Moderate Pragmatics (RP and MP) ("Truth Conditions of all or some disambiguated declarative sentences respectively are not determined by the meaning but by contextual factors"). Thus semantic content cannot be truth-conditional. Cappelen and Lepore argue that neither RP nor MP has good argu-

ments against the truth-conditional thesis and that they are internally inconsistent. The authors limit the effects of context on assigning truth conditions to an utterance to fixing the values of context sensitive linguistic items, specifying vague terms and disambiguating ambiguous expressions – only to cases indicated by the grammar of the sentence. They also comment on the notion of what is said. According to Cappelen and Lepore, not sentences but, utterances of sentences trigger what is said. The speaker says something as he performs a speech act of stating. So, contrary to Grice and Bach, the notion of what is said has no place in semantics.

Michael Glanzberg in his Essay "Focus: A Case Study on the Semantics–Pragmatics Boundary" (pp. 72–110) approaches the linguistic phenomenon which is often of special interest for those who seek to understand semantics-pragmatics distinction: focus. In the view of the author, focus provides us with very hard examples of the interaction between semantics and pragmatics. In this case, the interaction requires an especially complex explanation. He develops a kind of pragmatic discourse-based account for focus as a phenomenon which regulates the flow of information in the discourse. This complex kind of pragmatic process fixes the semantic contribution of focus. Thus, the semantic contribution of focus turns out to be heavily context-dependent. Eventually we arrive at an idea very far from the traditional view: pragmatics triggers semantics.

The fourth text is less linguistic but more philosophical in character. "Semantics, Pragmatics and the Role of Semantic Content" (pp. 111–164) by Jeffrey C.King and Jason Stanley, concerns three different conceptions of the distinction between semantics and pragmatics. The authors accept one of them, according to which semantic content may depend on context to some degree, as long as this dependence is constrained by linguistic meaning. Another contribution of the essay is to argue that much more counts as genuinely semantic than skeptics about the scope of semantic content (such as Kent Bach (2002) Herman Capelen and Ernie Lepore (2002)) have maintained. To illustrate this, King and Stanley refer to examples from Robin Carston and Stephen Levinson where the implicature is supposed to enrich semantic content. However, they argue against the idea of pragmatic intrusion.

Chapter five, "Pragmatism and Binding" (pp. 165–285) is the longest part of the volume. It is devoted to the ambiguity of pronouns. Even though it seems not to be very fashionable nowadays and the distinction semantics–pragmatics seems to be often used to avoid postulating ambiguities, Stephen Neale doesn't try to avoid this. To the contrary – postulating ambiguity of pronouns (*John says that Paul loves his wife*) is his best theoretical option. The analysis is based on a few ideas from generative grammar (mainly Binding Theory), the philosophy of language, philosophical logic and comparison of third-person pronouns in English and Icelandic. The reader will find a lot of syntax here but also some formulas of the λ-calculus and in the end – an extensive list of references. The essay begins and ends with the Neal's appeal for cooperation between linguists and philosophers.

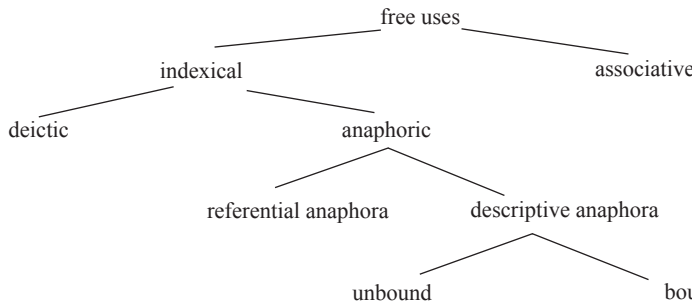
The next Essay "Deixis and Anaphora" (pp. 286–316) by François Recanati continues the discussion about pronouns. By contrast, Recanati argues against the idea of ambiguity in pronouns in general. He outlines a version of the pragmatic theory of anaphora which makes three important points:

1. Anaphoric uses of pronouns turns out to be very similar to deictic uses – they are both indexical. For anaphoric uses the index (that means some feature of the situation of utterance) is a position in 'discourse space' (while for demonstratives it is a position in space).

2. The character (in terms of Kaplan) of anaphora and deixis is in both cases context-dependent. An anaphoric pronoun acquires a character only when its index has been contextually fixed.

3. Anaphoric uses can be subdivided into two categories: referential and descriptive anaphora with bound uses as a special case of descriptive anaphora.

The outcome of the chapter is the following classification of uses of pronouns (p. 314):



Chapter 7 "Two Conceptions of Semantics" (pp. 317–328) by Nathan Salmon is a general, philosophical attempt to distinguish semantics from pragmatics. The author doesn't focus on any particular phenomenon. According to him, the problem of correctly characterizing this distinction is dependent on the problem of correctly characterizing the notion of semantics. Salmon discusses two established accounts of semantics: "speech-act centered conception of semantics", according to which illocutionary acts that would normally be performed in using some expressions determine semantic features of these expressions, and the "expression centered conception of semantics" according to which semantic features are intrinsic to the expressions as expressions of a particular language. The first conception is criticized, because it contains a lot of pragmatic intuitions. This may be true, but it seems to be a circular argument, since the difference between semantics and pragmatics has to be established first. Salmon suggests accepting the alternative semantic notion. The harm of this would be that we can't explain the origins of semantic features any more, the advantage, however, would be a clean semantics–pragmatics distinction.

Mandy Simsons in her paper "Presupposition and Relevance" (pp. 329–355), proposes a new pragmatic, relevance-theoretic approach to presupposition. She claims that presuppositions of an utterance are the propositions which the hearer must accept to make the utterance relevant for him. Presuppositions are "relevance establishers". This view is based on one hand, on the Stalnaker's conception (Stalnaker 1999) and on the other hand, on the relevance-theory of Sperber and Wilson (Wilson 2004). Potential strength of the proposed account in comparison with the Stalnakerian picture is the convenience of explaining the informative presuppositions (the ones that are not common ground at the moment of utterance).

The two last essays provide the reader with the discussion about assertion. The first of them (the 9th essay in the volume) "Naming and Asserting" (pp. 356–382) by Scott Soames, inquires about the relationship between the semantic content of the sentence (what is said in the locutionary sense) and the content asserted by an utterance of the sentence (what is said in the illocutionary sense). To explore this, the author further elaborates his earlier

conception (Soames 2002). He concludes that the relationship in question is very indirect. The semantic content of the sentence is often not something asserted by an utterance of the sentence. Its function is merely to constrain the candidates for assertion. As examples serve sentences with negation, propositional attitude verbs (*Mary just learned that Peter Hempel is Carl Hempel.*) and the constructions of the type NP's N (*John's car is a Corvette*). The semantic content of the last sentence is not a complete proposition, but rather something like the propositional matrix with a gap in it to be filled by a contextually determined relation. In consequence, semantic content cannot be asserted. What is asserted is instead a proposition that has been contextually supplemented.

Robert J. Stainton in the last chapter "In Defense of Non-Sentential Assertion" (pp. 383–457), defends the view that the speaker can make assertions in uttering linguistic expressions that are less than complete sentences. When someone holds up a letter and says *from Spain* he seems to assert (not to implicate!) something like [*This letter is*]*from Spain*. The proposal is pragmatics-oriented, that means pragmatics is allowed to do the main job. The sub-sentential speaker intends the hearer to recover the missing property or the missing object (as in the above example). This kind of inference is context-sensitive. So the pragmatics fills the gap between the linguistically encoded content and the content of the assertion. And this is more than traditionally expected from pragmatics. The question about where to draw the semantics–pragmatics boundary becomes especially apparent in face of the phenomenon of sub-sentential speech. Does pragmatics merely disambiguate or disclose content for unpronounced indexicals, demonstratives, tense markers, covert variables provided by semantics? Or does pragmatics do more and semantics less? Stainton responds to this question similar to the thesis of the last essay: it is pragmatics and not semantics that determines what is asserted. The analysis involves detailed discussion with the opponent of this idea: Jason Stanley (Stanley 2000) who thinks that there is not a unified set of phenomena that can be treated as sub-sentential assertion.

All of the accounted phenomena are of great relevance to anybody interested in the semantics–pragmatics distinction. The choice of papers is very well balanced between linguistics and philosophy of language, thus the book is of great use in both of these academic areas. The arrangement of the essays seems also to be well considered. The first two essays discuss the notion of what is said from different points of view. Chapter five and six both account for pronouns, whereas Neal accepts the ambiguity of pronouns and Recanati, who seems to be his opponent, argues against it. The two last essays also concern the same phenomenon, namely the assertion and they both agree on the point that it is pragmatics and not semantics which determines the content of assertion.

One very interesting phenomenon that is not accounted for in the volume but, relevant to the discussion between semantics and pragmatics are the scalar terms (e.g. *some*, *good*, *possible*) that trigger scalar implicature – the inference from *p or q* to *p or q but not both*; or from *some Fs are G* to *not all Fs are G* amongst others. Gricean account of these inferences is based on the pragmatic maxim of quantity of information: if a speaker could have made use of the stronger, more informative proposition, she would have done so. The fact that she didn't, means that she has grounds not to (or that she has no grounds to) and that she is communicating this to her interlocutor. But there is also another approach to scalar implicatures. That approach indicates that scalar implicatures are generated by the semantic component

of grammar. The semantic approach acts on the assumption of the ambiguity of scalar items between a "lower-bound" sense where all that is relevant is the plain meaning of the scalar term, without the scalar implicature, e.g.:

(1) *A: Who is able to write a paper on semantics for the next issue of "Linguistics and Philosophy?*
B: Mayer or Zimmermann from the Institute of Linguistics. (and maybe both of them)

And an "upper-bound" sense with the scalar implicature where it has to be inferred beyond the semantic content:

(2) *A: Who is writing the paper on semantics for the next issue of "Linguistics and Philosophy"?*
B: Mayer or Zimmermann from the Institute of Linguistics. (but not both)

Which interpretation is favored depends on the semantic properties of the sentence. For example scalar implicature is not licensed in the downward entailing structures, like the antecedent of conditionals (3a), the scope of negation (3b) or the restrictor of the universal quantifier (3c):

(3a) *If Mayer or Zimmermann are writing a paper on semantics, the reader will get an interesting material.*
b) *It is not true that Mayer or Zimmermann are writing a paper.*
c) *Everyone who reads the paper by Mayer or Zimmermann was interested in the semantics.*

According to this approach the interpretation of the scalar items occurs locally, below the level of the full sentence (as it is in the pragmatic approach) and belongs to the compositional semantics processes. Discourse context can cancel the scalar implicature in some cases at a later stage, but it cannot trigger new implicatures and thus it is of secondary importance.

The work of authors who represent this semantic account to scalar implicatures, e.g. Gennaro Chierchia and Sally McConnell-Ginet, Danny Fox, Uli Sauerland, certainly would be worth including in a book about interfaces between semantics and pragmatics.[1]

All the essays included in the volume are highly informative, and they all present current viewpoints on the semantics–pragmatics distinction. Moreover, the introduction to the volume is worth reading, indeed. It presents the origins of the whole discussion in a very comprehensive manner and gives a very good background to the particular essays. It would have been nice, however, to receive some kind of final summary of the whole discussion that would point out the similarities and the differences between the accounted concepts from the semantics–pragmatics borderland.

To sum up, *Semantics versus Pragmatics* is a very well composed book in which the authors scrutinize a broad variety of linguistic phenomena from the frontier area between semantics and pragmatics. For sure, it will be appreciated both by linguists and by philosopher of language. The book is definitely not an introductory book but rather a research volume

[1] For references see: Chierchia 2004.

that can be recommended to researchers in the field and to those who look for interesting references.

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