Workshop on Experimental Pragmatics/Semantics

Organizers

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Call for Papers

In recent years, there is a lively debate on an old issue, namely the proper distinction between semantics and pragmatics. The background is the classical Gricean distinction between ‚what is said' on the one hand and ‚what is implicated' on the other. But how the boundaries are to be drawn is disputed. Neo-Griceans such as Horn, Levinson, and Atlas by and large defend the conceptual value of Griceans Maxims or Principles, Relevance Theorists such as Carston, Sperber, and Wilson argue against such principles altogether and refer instead to global cognitive principles. However, there is some common belief into the underdetermination of propositional structures and the need for their enrichment, giving rise to notions such as explicature, impliciture, and pragmatic intrusion. Others, like Cappelen, Lepore, and Borg, defend a minimalist view on truth conditions, and attack contextualists like Récanati who claims that there is a genuine distinction between c-content and i-content to be made.

From a linguist's point of view, there has always been a regrettable lack of empirical data in an otherwise sophisticated debate. Recently, a new strand of research comes in under the name of experimental pragmatics. Experimental pragmatics is the attempt to gain experimental data on pragmatic issues by using psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic methods. For example, research has been done on reference, felicity conditions, scalar implicatures, irony, and metaphor. One promising aspect of this research is that competing theories on the semantics/pragmatics distinction such as relevance theory vs. neo-Gricean pragmatics may be directly tested. Another aspect is that experiments yield fresh data that can shed a new light on old topics. Furthermore, developmental aspects such as the acquisition of scalar implicatures, metaphors, or irony may be pursued.

In this workshop, we bring together scholars interested in the semantics/pragmatics distinction as well as scholars that are interested in experimental research. The workshop will appeal to theoretical linguists, psycholinguists, neurolinguists, and language philosophers. Particularly welcome are contributions in semantic and pragmatic development as well as studies of different languages including spoken and signed languages.

Submission of Abstracts

Abstracts should be up to one page long (using 2.5cm margins on each side and 12pt font size). The head of the abstract should include the following information: author's name(s), affiliation, email address, and title of abstract. All abstracts should be submitted in English or German only. (Please use the language you intend to give your talk in.)

Presentations should last 20 minutes (+ 10 minutes for questions and discussion). Depending on the number and quality of abstracts we receive, there may be room for a few longer presentations (45 min. + 15 min. quest./disc.). Make sure to indicate in your message whether you would be interested in extending your presentation.

Your submission should be sent electronically in Word (RTF) and/or PDF format to:
Jörg Meibauer (meibauer@uni-mainz.de)

Note that the workshop is part of the DGfS conference. All participants must register for the conference. Note also that in accordance with the DGfS guidelines speakers are only allowed to give one talk in one of the 13 workshops at the DGfS main conference.

Important Dates

Deadline for abstract submission: September 1, 2007
Notification of acceptance: September 15, 2007
Provisional program: December 15, 2007
DGfS conference: February 27-29, 2008