

Seminar in semantics (16:615:535)

Rutgers University, Spring 2015

Instructor: Simon Charlow (simon.charlow@rutgers.edu)

Meetings: Wednesdays 9:50-12:50 (SEM 108)

Office hours: Friday 11-1, by appointment (SEM 302)

Course website: simoncharlow.com/courses/alts

1 Overview

In the last four decades, the idea that utterances invoke alternatives (roughly, things the speaker might have said, but didn't) has offered insight into indefinites, disjunction, questions, focus, adverbial quantifiers, and implicature (inter alia). Yet fundamental questions remain open. For one, as pointed out by Rooth 1985 and emphasized by Shan 2004, point-wise functional application—the standard way to compositionally integrate alternatives (cf. Hamblin 1973; Rooth 1985, 1996; Kratzer & Shimoyama 2002)—is incompatible with standard treatments of functional abstraction (i.e. for binding and intensionality). In addition, the usual way to reckon with alternatives is fundamentally unselective in a way prone to under-generation (e.g. Krifka 1991, 2006; Rooth 1996; Wold 1996; Charlow 2014; cf. e.g. Dayal 1996; Fox 2012). Finally, what connection alternatives-based semantics for indefinites and questions might have to *dynamic* treatments of indefiniteness has not been clarified, even as the latter likewise relies in an essential way on multiple realization (e.g. Heim 1982; Barwise 1987; Groenendijk & Stokhof 1991; Dekker 1994). We'll delve into these issues, with a focus on indefinites, questions, and (to a lesser extent) focus. We'll read both classic and recent literature, with an eye towards getting a better grip on various theories of alternatives, their relation to empirical matters and each other, and prospects for unification.

2 Requirements

- ▷ Come, contribute to discussion.
- ▷ Enrolled students will present readings. I'll distribute a sign-up sheet in the second week.
- ▷ A term paper (~15pp). I'll ask you to settle on a topic shortly after spring break, and we'll devote one of our final meetings to student presentations of research.

3 Tentative schedule

Think of what follows as something like a bibliography of work relevant to our goals, to be refined as the seminar progresses (i.e. we won't be reading *all* of these). The separation indicated here is somewhat artificial—many of these papers cut across two or more topics.

3.1 Indefinites (~2–3 wks)

- ▷ Choice functions: Reinhart 1997; Winter 1997; Kratzer 1998; Schwarzschild 2002; Szabolcsi 2010 Chapter 7.
- ▷ Alternatives: Kratzer & Shimoyama 2002; Kratzer 2005; Shimoyama 2006.
- ▷ Supplementary reading: Ramchand 1997; Yanovich 2005; Brasoveanu & Farkas 2011; Zimmermann 2000; Alonso-Ovalle 2006; Aloni 2007.

3.2 Questions (~2–3 wks)

- ▷ Semantics of questions: Hamblin 1973; Karttunen 1977; Heim 2000; Krifka 2011.
- ▷ Interface issues: Huang 1982a,b; Nishigauchi 1990; von Stechow 1996; Dayal 1996, 2002, to appear; Sternefeld 2001a.
- ▷ Supplementary reading: Hagstrom 1998; Cable 2010; Groenendijk & Roelofsen 2009; Roelofsen 2013; Fox 2012; AnderBois 2011.

3.3 Compositional issues (~2 wks)

- ▷ Indefinites: Shan 2004; Romero & Novel 2013; Chierchia 2001; Schwarz 2001; Ciardelli & Roelofsen to appear.
- ▷ Focus: Kratzer 1991; Rooth 1996; Wold 1996; Krifka 1991, 2006.

3.4 Dynamics (~2–3 wks)

- ▷ Core readings: Groenendijk & Stokhof 1991; Dekker 1994; Charlow 2014 (Section 2.4).
- ▷ Supplementary reading: Lewis 1975; Karttunen 1976; Heim 1982, 1983; Barwise 1987.
- ▷ Dynamic disjunction: Rooth & Partee 1982; Stone 1992.

3.5 New directions and questions (~3–4 wks)

- ▷ Charlow 2014; Bumford 2015.
- ▷ Background: Partee 1986; Barker & Shan 2014; Shan 2002; Sternefeld 1998, 2001b.
- ▷ Other potential topics: intervention effects (e.g. Beck 2006), obligatory unselectivity (e.g. Kratzer & Shimoyama 2002; Shimoyama 2006; Yanovich 2005).

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