

SPEAKER'S COMMITMENT AND SEMANTIC COMMITMENT

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COMMON COMPLAINTS AGAINST COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS

(i) it (i.e. when done with trained probabilistic models) is extensionally poor: it doesn't get all of the data; it might manage translation and recognition, but not production etc.

(ii) it misses out on the structure (Chomsky: *Structures*, MIT 150 celebration)

But what is the structure? Do probabilistic models miss it altogether? Is it too diffuse to be of any use? Is there no reason to assume that it is real? (Are they perhaps too easy to come by?)

HOW HAS RECENT PHILOSOPHY MADE USE OF LINGUISTIC THEORY?

Williamson and Stanley: Knowledge-*how* and Knowledge-*that*. 'Knows-*how*' is not a syntactic constituent. Rather: Hannah knows [how PRO to ride a bicycle t]; cf.: Hannah knows how Pierre rides a bicycle.

Williamson: Knowledge as the weakest atomic factive. Nothing akin to 'falsely believes'. Why are the atomic interesting? Presumably because they give some indication of our deep commitments. Knowledge as a conceptual primitive. Belief as a derivative notion.

ONTOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS

Quine (roughly): *a person* is ontologically committed to those entities that their canonical theory quantifies over. Or: *a theory* is committed to those entities that it quantifies over.

Increasingly the canonical theory has been identified by using the resources of linguistic theory, esp. formal semantics. Vendler. Asher (1993): *Reference to Abstract Objects in Discourse*. Folk Metaphysics and Real Metaphysics. This done in DRT. What happens in a probabilistic account?

FACTIVES AND CONTRA-FACTIVES

The first explicit discussion of factives (nearly 100 years before the Kiparskys) in Frege:

In the sentence:

Bebel fancies that the return of Alsace-Lorraine would appease France's desire for revenge
two thoughts are expressed ... viz.:

- (1) Bebel believes that the return of Alsace-Lorraine would appease France's desire for revenge
- (2) the return of Alsace-Lorraine would not appease France's desire for revenge ...

Similar considerations apply to expressions such as 'know', 'discover', 'it is known that'.

(*'On Sense and Reference'*, about two pages from the end; Black trans.)

But in the English translation (2) isn't expressed by the initial sentence. Is 'fancy' a bad translation of 'wähnen'? Unclear. It is obsolete and nothing else is clearly better.

ARE THERE ANY ATOMIC PROPOSITIONAL-ATTITUDE CONTRA-FACTIVES?

One reveals that p, but one doesn't lie that p; one knows that p, but one isn't deceived that p; one perceives that p, but one isn't deluded that p. Other plausible candidates ('pretend that'; 'wish that'; 'hallucinate that') at most defeasibly implicate the falsity of their complements ('I wished that I had been chosen, and it turned out that I had'). One cannot add negating prefixes to factives to obtain contra-factives, not even when the same prefixes can be affixed to related constructions that don't take *that*-clauses.

I remembered her phone number

I misremembered her phone number

I remembered that she didn't have a phone

?I misremembered that she didn't have a phone

Likewise: perceive/misperceive; prove/disprove; and likewise non-factives that would have contra-factive negations: estimate/misestimate; calculate/miscalculate; judge/misjudge; understand/misunderstand; report/misreport; state/misstate.

Does the feature result from adding the negation (cf. believe/disbelieve)? No. What matters is that the result must not be contra-factive; if they are not, it's fine (misinfer).

No Contra-factives Conjecture

There are no atomic propositional-attitude contra-factives in English (or other Indo-European languages).

TWO BIRDS, ONE STONE

Facts-for-factives conjecture

The *that*-complements of atomic propositional-attitude factives refer to facts.

Facts are primitive; propositions are derivative.

ONTOLOGICAL COMMITMENT TO FACTS?

Are the speakers committed to facts? Or the language? (What does that mean?) What of speakers of languages that do have contra-factives (e.g. Mandarin; Cantonese; Turkish)? Quine said: ask the speakers. ("We cannot paraphrase our opponent's sentences into canonical notation for him and convict him of the consequences, for there is no synonym; rather we must ask him what canonical sentences he is prepared to offer") Better route: get some psychological data. False belief tasks are a start. And this might help fill out the structure of the models from computational linguistics.