


Presentation

Presentation of the volume 64 – New developments in semantics and pragmatics

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In the last decades, semantics has become a well-established linguistic discipline, producing theories and analyses of an impressive array of phenomena, as documented in several wide coverage handbooks that have appeared since the beginning of this century. For the interested reader, both Maienborn, Heusinger and Portner (2011), and Gutzmann *et al.* (2021), with over a hundred contributions each, provide very comprehensive overviews of the current state of the discipline. From an initial concentration on quantification and the analysis of nominal projections, and on intensional semantics (Tense, Aspect, Modality and propositional attitudes), which figure prominently in some textbooks and collections of essential readings (e.g. Portner (2005) and Portner and Partee (2002)), the field has decisively expanded, and this in several ways.

Firstly, other topics have become an integral part of the agenda of semanticists: there is a renewed interest in the meaning of nondeclarative sentences (questions, imperatives and exclamatives) and in the interfaces between sentence meaning and discourse and verbal interaction in general. A better understanding of the interplay among different layers of meaning has brought

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pragmatics, in its interactions with a more narrowly conceived, purely representational view of semantics, to the foreground. Issues such as the nature of presuppositions and conventional and conversational implicatures, the role of context, speech acts, and expressivity, have lately become an important part of the research on linguistic meaning (Potts, 2005).

At the same time, the field has been enlivened by the interest in cross-linguistic variation – including diachronic variation and the analysis of understudied languages – and by the adoption of new methods for the gathering of empirical evidence. Von Stechow and Matthewson (2008) offer a comprehensive discussion of the question of semantic universals and their limits, and a thorough review of the topics that have been addressed from this perspective. The increasing richness and precision of methods for the elicitation of semantic data is well documented in the influential handbook by Bochnak and Matthewson (2015).

This issue of *Gragoatá* puts together a necessarily partial, but nonetheless representative sample of these new developments in semantics and pragmatics as they are practiced in the global South, thus offering a panorama of the diversity of research on semantics being conducted in this area of the world. The papers of this volume report research conducted at 8 different Brazilian universities that represent 4 of the 5 regions of the country (South, Southeast, North and Center-West) in addition to three universities abroad (in Argentina, Uruguay, and France). The contents of this volume are presented in three parts.

The first part includes papers on event semantics, TAM (tense, aspect and modality) and adverbial modification. The topic of event semantics is explored in the paper “Alternância estativo-locativa no PB: verbos com sentido de continência” (“Stative-locative Alternance in BP: container verbs”) by Letícia Lucinda Meirelles, who adopts the framework of Syntax-Semantic Lexical Interface to examine the alternance found in verbs such as *armazenar* ‘store’ in Brazilian Portuguese. The author argues that this is a phenomenon of locative inversion involving a reinterpretation of the verbal thematic structure by coercion and an aspectual change in the alternate form as an epiphenomenon of this process.

The broad field of TAM (tense, aspect and modality) and adverbial modification constitutes more than half of the volume with three papers on tense/aspect, one on modality and two on adverbial modification. The paper “Travelling in time with natural language: some cross-linguistic considerations” by Ana Müller and Marta Donazzan explores the topic of temporal reference. Starting from an investigation of grammatical strategies in Karitiana, the authors discuss different systems found in natural languages to convey the meanings of anteriority and posteriority. The paper “Interpretação Temporal de Sentenças Negativas em Karitiana” (“Temporal Interpretation of Negative Clauses in Karitiana”) by Luiz Fernando Ferreira reports on an empirical investigation of the temporal interpretation of negative sentences in Karitiana. The relevant

data basis has been collected by means of an innovative method relying on contextualized and non-contextualized audio elicitation.

The paper “Relaciones temporales en construcciones absolutas de gerundio” (“Temporal Relations in Gerund Absolute Constructions”) by Romina Trebisacce and Ana Clara Polakof presents a semantic analysis of the temporal relations in gerund absolute constructions in Spanish that attributes a crucial role to the aspectual profile of the gerund construction. The authors show that if the predicate of the absolute construction is atelic, the interpretation is one of simultaneity between events, whereas telic predicates invariably give rise to an interpretation of anteriority.

The paper “‘Se pá’ um condicional epistêmico!” (“‘Se pá’ an epistemic conditional!”) by Roberta Pires de Oliveira and Bernar Costa de Carvalho presents an analysis for sentences introduced by ‘se pá’. These sentences, which are well attested in the speech of younger speakers of Brazilian Portuguese, convey that, if everything develops normally, the proposition denoted by the consequent will follow. Their proposal allies a semantics for conditionals based on Kratzer (2012) for ‘se’ (‘if’) and an analysis based on Expressivity as in Potts (2005).

To a greater or lesser extent, all the papers on TAM may be said to involve a reflection on cross-linguistic variation. The first two do this in a more obvious way since they address their topics of investigation from the perspective of Karitiana data, a Brazilian native language. But the other two also offer an examination of underrepresented language modalities: Rioplatense Spanish and young dialects of Brazilian Portuguese. The paper on the absolute construction in Rioplatense Spanish investigates this construction by comparing it with better studied analogous constructions in English in order to evaluate if their description is also suitable to Spanish. The paper on ‘se pá’ focuses on giving a compositional analysis to a non-idiomatic construction, in which ‘se’ (‘if’) is the conditional conjunction and ‘pá’ replaces the antecedent.

The last part of this large block on TAM and adverbial modification includes two papers addressing specific adverbs in Brazilian Portuguese: ‘juntos’ (‘together’) and ‘já’ (‘already’). The paper “Sobre a semântica de ‘juntos’ no português brasileiro: tipologia e investigação preliminar” (“On the semantics of ‘juntos’ in Brazilian Portuguese: typology and preliminary investigation”) by Renato Miguel Basso and Ana Carolina de Sousa Araújo follows a comparative strategy that is similar to the one adopted in the paper on absolute constructions: it investigates if ‘juntos’ could receive the same analysis as ‘together’, its counterpart in English whose semantics has a broad research tradition. The authors propose that this adverb is involved in the creation of a (mereological) sum of entities. The paper “Considerações semântico-pragmáticas sobre o item ‘já’” (“Semantic-pragmatic considerations about ‘já’”) by Letícia Lemos Gritti, Gabriela Paulina Aparecida Aiolfi and Lovania Roehrig Teixeira explores the meanings of counter-expectation and promise of the adverb ‘já’ (‘already’) in addition to the temporal, aspectual and conjunctive relations previously described in the literature. The authors present evidence that these meanings are implicatures, and therefore pragmatic in nature.

The second part consists of papers adopting some version of Scalar Semantics as a framework. The paper “Algumas considerações sobre os minimizadores no português brasileiro: contextos (não) afetivos e escalas” (“Some remarks on minimizers in Brazilian Portuguese: (non) affective contexts and scales”) by Kayron Beviláqua is based on a more prototypical notion of scales since it addresses topics such as negative polarity in its connection to minimizers in Brazilian Portuguese. The author argues that the affectivity meaning present in the sentences with these minimizers is due to their scalar properties. The paper “Uma explicação para o licenciamento de alguns adjetivos em duas posições atributivas em italiano” (“Explaining the licensing of some adjectives in two attributive positions in Italian”) by Ana Paula Quadros Gomes and Nicolly Dutra de Carvalho Cabral, in turn, assumes a degree semantics to discuss adjective position in Italian. The authors discard an analysis based on pure syntactic properties and offer an explanation in which the semantics of the adjectives, particularly the property of gradability, plays a crucial role.

The third part of this volume comprises papers on Pragmatics. The first two articles are studies combining the investigation of meaning at the Semantics/Pragmatics interface with Psycholinguistics (language acquisition and sentence processing). “Implicaturas escalares na aquisição de português brasileiro: uma análise da teoria da otimidade para o conectivo ‘ou’” (“Scalar implicatures in the acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese: an optimality-theoretic analysis for the connective ‘or’”) by Jonathan Torres e Elaine Grolla addresses the so-called inclusive and exclusive interpretations of disjunction in the acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese. The authors confirm the existence of an asymmetry between production and comprehension in children’s behavior in this regard. They offer an analysis based on Optimality Theory, arguing that the asymmetry can be explained by the late acquisition of bidirectional optimization.

The paper “O efeito da familiaridade como variável pragmática no processamento de metáforas” (“The effects of familiarity as a pragmatic variable in metaphorical sentence processing”) by Gladiston Silva and Eduardo Kenedy focusses on the processing of metaphorical sentences and discusses the results of an online self-paced reading experiment manipulating the variable of familiarity. The authors argue that this is the only variable that has a significant effect on the processing of this type of sentences.

The third paper of this part discusses the nature of the implicature calculus in a Brazilian native language. “(In)definitude, número e implicatura de multiplicidade em uma língua sub-representada: um estudo do Kaiowá (Tupí-Guaraní)” (“(In)definiteness, number and multiplicity implicature in an under-represented language: a study of Kaiowá (Tupí-Guaraní)” by Helena Guerra-Vicente and Daiane Ramires is devoted to the nominal semantics of a native language of Brazil. The authors argue that the strong plural interpretation of the special plural marker ‘-kuera’ is derived via implicature. They provide an analysis based on a localist approach, in which the implicatures are calculated step by step.

The last paper deals with dialogue dynamics in Brazilian Portuguese. “A dinâmica de perguntas de constituinte em português brasileiro: uma proposta escalar” (“The dynamics of wh-questions in Brazilian Portuguese: a scalar proposal”) by Fernanda Rosa da Silva focuses on the nature of the inferences involved in answers to open and to wh-questions in Brazilian Portuguese. The author argues that answers are of various types and that they encompass entailments and presuppositions of exhaustiveness, but also conversational implicatures of exhaustiveness and speaker’s lack of knowledge, which suggests a logical scale based on informativity.

We hope that readers of this volume will not only enjoy their reading, but also that they will be inspired by new research topics so that the area continues to grow in Brazil.

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