The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Modal and Scalar Semantics - 36632

Last update 08-07-2015

HU Credits: 4

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Linguistics

Academic year: 2

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Aynat Rubinstein

Coordinator Email: aynat.rubinstein@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: By appointment

Teaching Staff:

Aynat Rubinstein

Course/Module description:
Modal expressions (such as 'must', 'possible', and 'necessarily') and gradable adjectives (such as 'cute', 'straight', and 'full') have traditionally been the focus of largely separate lines of research in linguistics. In recent years, an emerging interest in the meaning of gradable modal expressions (for example, 'more necessary than', 'as crucial as') has raised the question of how these two subfields of linguistic semantics interact. This course provides an in-depth introduction to modality and scale-based semantics and explores various recent theoretical approaches to modeling the interaction between them.

Course/Module aims:
The main goal of the course is to familiarize students with the subfields of modality and scalarity and to explore their interaction in the domain of gradable modal expressions. The course provides a solid introduction to each of the two subfields, starting from classic work and building up to state-of-the-art research. Open questions in the domain of gradable modality will be presented and jointly explored in a seminar-style setting.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:
• *Access and read relevant scholarly research in semantics*
• *Describe, compare, and evaluate classic and contemporary work in two important areas of semantics*
• *Analyze linguistic data at various levels of structure and use*
• *Construct clear linguistic arguments*
• *Integrate existing research on modality and scale-based semantics and identify theoretical and practical issues it applies to*
• *Conduct in-depth independent research on modality and scalarity*
• *Report on the design, findings, and conclusions of their research*

Attendance requirements(%):
100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Class periods will consist of lectures as well as more interactive teaching modules. Students are required to participate actively in frequent Q&A sessions about the assigned readings. Outside of class, students will need to meet with the instructor as they formulate and carry out their research project.

Course/Module Content:
  i. Conceptual and formal foundations (truth-conditional semantics; adjective-noun modification; intensionality)
ii. Modality (quantificational possible worlds semantics; context dependency; grammatical constraints on the interpretation of modals)
iii. Scalarity (semantics of adjectives; degree constructions; vagueness, gradability, and degrees)
iv. Modality and scalarity (the desideratum of compositionality, probabilistic approaches, quantitative approaches, probability statements, modal gradability for epistemic and root modals)

Required Reading:
 Bochank, M. R. and Bogal-Allbritten, E. (to appear). Investigating gradable predicates, comparison, and degree constructions in underrepresented languages. In M. R. Bochank and Matthewson, L. (eds.), Methodologies in Semantic Fieldwork. Oxford University Press, New York.

Finlay, S. (2009). Oughts and ends. Philosophical Studies 143:315-340.

von Fintel, K. and Heim, E. (2011). Intensional semantics. Manuscript, MIT. Available at: http://web.mit.edu/fintel/fintel-heim-intensional.pdf

Hacquard, V. (2011). Modality. In Portner, P., Maienborn, C. and von Heusinger, K. (eds.), Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning, pp. 1484-1515. de Gruyter, Berlin.

Kennedy, C. and McNally, L. (2005). Scale structure, degree modification, and the semantics of gradable predicates. Language 81(2):345–381.

Klecha, P. (2012). Positive and conditional semantics for gradable modals. In Guevara, A. A., Chernilovskaya, A., and Nouwen, R. (eds.), Proceedings of Sinn and Bedeutung 16, volume 2, pp. 363–376. MITWPL.

Kratzer, A. (1981). The notional category of modality. In Eikmeyer, H.-J. and Rieser, H. (eds.), Words, Worlds, and Contexts, pp. 38–74. de Gruyter, Berlin.

Kratzer, A. (1991). Modality. In von Stechow, A. and Wunderlich, D. (eds.), Semantik/Semantics: An International Handbook of Contemporary Research, pp. 639–650. De Gruyter, Berlin.

Lassiter, D. (2011). Measurement and Modality: The Scalar Basis of Modal Semantics. PhD thesis, New York University.

Portner, P., and Rubinstein, A. (to appear). Extreme and non-extreme deontic

modals. In N. Charlow, & M. Chrisman (eds.), *Deontic Modality*. Oxford University Press.

Rotstein, C. and Winter, Y. (2004). Total adjectives vs. partial adjectives: Scale structure and higher-order modifiers. *Natural Language Semantics* 12(3):259–288.

<u>Additional Reading Material:</u>
Goble, L. (1996). Utilitarian deontic logic. *Philosophical Studies* 82:317-357.

Kamp, H. (1975). Two theories about adjectives. In E. Keenan (ed.), *Formal Semantics for Natural Language*, pp. 123–155. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Katz, G., Portner, P., and Rubinstein, A. (2012). Ordering combination for modal semantics. In Chereches, A. (ed.), *Proceedings of SALT 22*, pp. 488–507. CLC Publications.

Kratzer, A. (2012). *Modal and Conditionals: New and Revised Perspectives*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Levinson, D. (2003). Probabilistic model-theoretic semantics for want. In Young, R. B. and Zhou, Y. (eds.), *Proceedings of SALT 13*, pp. 222-239. CLC Publications.

Morzycki, M. (forthcoming). *Modification*. Cambridge University Press. Draft available at: https://www.msu.edu/~morzycki/work/papers/modification_book.pdf

Nauze, F. D. (2008). *Modality in Typological Perspective*. PhD thesis, ILLC, University of Amsterdam.

Palmer, F. R. (2001). *Mood and Modality*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 2nd edition.

Portner, P. (2009). *Modality*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Sassoon, G. W. (2013). *Vagueness, Gradability and Typicality: The Interpretation of Adjectives and Nouns*. Brill, Leiden.

Sloman, A. (1970). 'Ought' and 'better'. *Mind* 79:385-394.

Yalcin, S. (2010). Probability operators. *Philosophy Compass* 5(11):916–37.

<u>Course/Module evaluation:</u>
End of year written/oral examination 0 %
Presentation 20 %

Participation in Tutorials 15 %
Project work 0 %
Assignments 15 %
Reports 0 %
Research project 50 %
Quizzes 0 %
Other 0 %

<u>*Additional information:*</u>