

Assignment 1: Modality and Reference

Ling 406/802; Spring 2005

Due Feb. 9 in class

Your answers should be clear and well-organized. Please type your answer as much as possible.

1. The expressions ‘Venus’, ‘the morning star’ and ‘the evening star’ have the same extension, and (1a) and (1b) are both true. However, while the meaning conveyed by (1a) is uninformative, the meaning conveyed by (1b) is. Using Possible-worlds Semantics, account for the difference in meaning conveyed by (1a) and (1b).
 - (1) a. Venus is Venus.
 - b. The morning star is the evening star.
2. The following sentence is ambiguous. Derive the two different meanings compositionally. That is, provide two LF trees, and do compositional semantics on the two trees. In the end, you should arrive at a clear paraphrase of the truth conditions for each LF, in a way that makes it clear whether they are equivalent or not. (Problem based on the first part of Exercise 4 in p. 302 from the textbook)
 - (2) Every person can read.
3. Assume that (3b) is interpreted as indicated and that (3a)-(3c) are uttered in the same context. In principle, two possible LFs can be assigned to (3a), with two possible corresponding interpretations (truth-conditions). What are they? In order for (3a) and (3b) to jointly entail (3c), which LF must be assigned to (3a)? Why? (Problem based on the second part of Exercise 4 in p. 302 from the textbook)
 - (3) a. The prime minister must vote.
 - b. Paul Martin is the prime minister.
 $\exists x[\text{prime_minister}(x) \wedge \forall y[\text{prime_minister}(y) \leftrightarrow x = y] \wedge [x = \text{Paul_Martin}]]$
 - c. Paul Martin must vote.
4. In the context-dependent theory of modalities given in the textbook, under what conditions would (4a) entail (4b)? Explain. (Problem based on the third part of Exercise 4 in p. 302 from the textbook)
 - (4) a. Paul Martin must vote.
 - b. Paul Martin can vote.