On Information Structure
Preliminary description

Tom Lentz

November 27, 2017

Set-up   The details of this project will be determined based on the previous knowledge of the participating students and their number

In the first two weeks (8-19 January), meetings will have to be in the (early) evening due to conflicting teaching.

In the first weeks, we will be selecting articles and focussing the project on one or two issues/questions that arise from these papers. In the last week(s), we will try to work out a comparison (hopefully unifying) of information structure and epistemic logic.

Description of the topic   When only looking at languages such as English and Dutch, prosody (mainly accents on phrases, lengthening, pausing) has the function of focussing or topicalising certain information within an utterance. These functions are sometimes pragmatic in the sense that it does not affect truth values, and sometimes even semantic, as scope demarcation can affect truth conditions.

However, linguistic work often simplifies information structure a lot and I want to improve by reaching a useful ontology or topology of information structure, first of all for the functions performed by prosody in English and Dutch. *Possible extension/deviation: functions performed by syntax, such as word order alternations, or other languages.*

The literature on these pragmatic functions that could be considered to be part of logic seems to be limited, but many (epistemic) logical insights could be applied to this project. We will be looking for relevant papers, which will be more difficult than a mere Google Scholar query due to the use of different terms. *Possible personalisation: students have a change to enter their own favourite literature if it is relevant.* An example of relevant work is Krifka (2007). See the website of the journal Interdisciplinary Studies on Information Structure for examples of application of theoretical ideas about information structure to linguistic data:
https://www.sfb632.uni-potsdam.de/en/isis-en/isis-volumes.html.

References

Krifka, M. (2007). Basic notions of information structure. *Interdisciplinary Studies on Information Structure*, *6*, 13–56.