

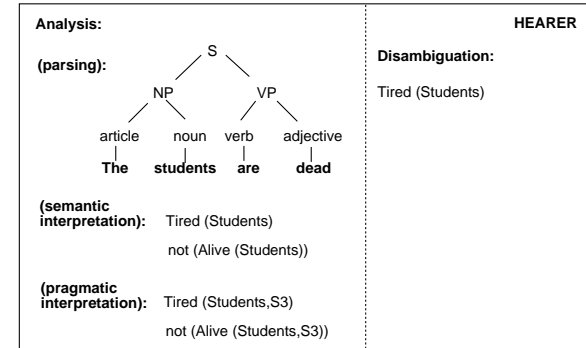
Today: Pragmatics and the problem of inference

- Text coherence
- Scripts for text understanding

Slide CS674-1

Pragmatics

Understanding sentences in context.



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Interpretation in Context

Jack took out a match. He lit a candle.

Jack took out a match. The sun set.

Useful to divide context into:

- **discourse context:** information from preceding sentences
- **situational context:** relevant world knowledge

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The Problem of Inference

When the balloon touched the light bulb, it broke. This made the baby cry. Mary gave John a dirty look and picked up the baby. John shrugged and picked up the balloon.

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NLU as Abduction

If $A \rightarrow B$ is true and B true, then A true.

X = *Fred desperately needed money for the mortgage payment.*

B = *Fred called his sister.*

Rule1 = If you need money then you can get it from a family member.

Rule2 = If you want to get something from someone, then you can ask them for it.

Rule3 = One way to ask someone for something is to call them.

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Framework for Using World Knowledge

Expectation-Based Processing

1. Assume setting of discourse is represented by content of previous sentences and any inferences made when interpreting those sentences.
2. Use this information to **generate a set of expectations** about plausible eventualities.
3. **Match** possible interpretations of new sentences against expectations generated from the previous discourse.

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Knowledge About Action and Causality

Forms of Causality:

[**effect causality**] Set of intended effects or side effects typically caused by an action.

[**precondition causality**] Set of conditions that typically must hold just before action starts.

[**enablement**] A enables B if the effects of the first establish the preconditions of the second.

[**decomposition**] A is a substep of B if A is one of a sequence of steps that constitute the execution of B.

Slide CS674-7

Definition of BUY

Roles: Buyer, Seller, Object, Money

Constraints: Human(Buyer), SalesAgent(Seller),
IsObject(Object), Value(Money, Price(Object))

Preconditions: AT(Buyer, Loc(Seller)), OWNS(Buyer, Money), OWNS(Seller, Object)

Effects: \neg OWNS(Buyer, Money), \neg OWNS(Seller, Object),
OWNS(Buyer, Object), OWNS(Seller, Money)

Decomposition: GIVE(Buyer, Seller, Money), GIVE(Seller, Buyer, Object)

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Scripts [Schank & Abelson]

- Prepackaged chain of causal relations between events and states that encodes expectations.
- Don't have to generate expectations from first principles using causality reasoning.
- Knowledge structure that encodes stereotypical sequences of events.

John was hungry. He went into Schneider's and ordered a pastrami sandwich. It was served to him quickly. He left the server a large tip.

Slide CS674-9

\$RESTAURANT Script

Roles: Customer(S), Server(W), Cook(C), Cashier(M), Food(F)

Props: Table, Utensils, etc.

Constraints: HUMAN(S), HUMAN(W), etc.

Preconditions: HAS-MONEY(S)

Effects:

HAS-LESS-MONEY(S), HAS-MORE-MONEY(M),
-HUNGRY(S), -PLEASED(S)

Slide CS674-10

Decomposition (Conceptual Dependency form):

1. **Enter:** S PTRANS S into Restaurant; S ATTEND Eyes to Tables; S MBUILD where to sit; S PTRANS S to Table; S MOVE S to sitting position.
2. **Order:** S MTRANS food-order to W (main)
3. **Eat:** S INGEST X (main)
4. **Exit:** S ATRANS money to M (main)

Slide CS674-11

Using Scripts to Understand a Story

Assume: script \$S, consisting of events e_1, e_2, \dots

For each sentence, s in text:

1. Parse s into its propositional CD form.
2. While event, e , in list of script events:
 - (a) If s matches e ,
 - i. Instantiate e with current script roles.
 - ii. Instantiate all intervening events, i , with current script roles.
 - (b) Else move pointer to next event, saving e in i .

Output is instantiated script.

Slide CS674-12

Problems with Scripts

1. Script selection
2. Managing multiple scripts
3. Aborting scripts
John went to Schneider's. He left.
4. Allowing for optional paths through scripts
John was pick-pocketed on the way to restaurant.
5. Knowledge engineering requirements

Slide CS674-13

Novel Situations

John was hungry. He took out some ground beef.

John was hungry. He took out the Yellow Pages.

John needed money for the mortgage payment. He called his sister.

John needed money for the mortgage payment. He got a gun.

Slide CS674-14