

## THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF COMPLEX SENTENCES

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*Abstract:*

In this paper we investigate to what extent it is possible to determine a reasonable default pragmatic value of complex sentences in a compositional manner, and – when combined with a Boolean semantics – to see under which conditions it gives rise to reasonable predictions. We will discuss several notions of pragmatic value, or relevance, and compare their behavior over complex sentences. We will see that although the goal-oriented notions of relevance give rise to the same ordering relations between propositions, the conditions under which they behave ‘compositionally’ vary significantly.

*Key words:* analysis, complex sentences, many contexts, assumption, determine, compositionally.

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The semantic meaning of a sentence is that aspect of the interpretation of the utterance of the sentence that can be determined compositionally via conventional rules from the conventional meanings of its parts. It is controversial to what the extent the interpretation of an utterance can be determined semantically. The traditional assumption is that for declarative sentences, semantics determines truth conditions. It is well-known, however, that in many contexts more is communicated with a declarative sentence than standard truth-conditional semantics predicts. Grice’s pragmatic theory of conversational implicatures has been proposed to account for these extra non-truth-conditional aspects of meaning. More recently, pragmatics has been proposed to play a role in determining the truth conditions of a declarative sentence as well. Within Grice’s informal theory one assumption is of crucial importance: the assumption that speakers provide as much information as they can as far as this is required, or relevant, in the conversation. But how do we determine whether a piece of information is relevant in a particular context, or more relevant than another piece of information? Can we define a natural notion of relevance that is applicable to pieces of information given in goal-oriented discourse? Over the years, numerous notions of ‘relevance’ have been proposed in the literature, varying from ‘absolute’ via ‘comparative’ to ‘numerical’ ones. In earlier work some of these notions have been compared with each other, and the main purpose of this paper is to extend these investigations. I will discuss some notions of relevance that I have not discussed before, and compare them mostly in terms of their behavior on complex sentences. In standard model theoretic semantics it is assumed that the natural language connectives ‘not’, ‘or’, and ‘and’ should be represented by their logical analogues ‘¬’, ‘∨’, and ‘∧’ and that these are interpreted in the standard Boolean way as complementation, union, and intersection, respectively. In terms of the Boolean operations we can then determine the semantic value of a complex

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sentence in terms of the semantic values of its parts. In this paper I will adopt this assumption as well: the semantic value of a sentence is a proposition, and the semantic value of a complex sentence is determined in a Boolean manner. Let us now assume that the pragmatic value of a sentence is its relevance. The interesting question that arises then is to what extent it is possible to do something similar here.

Can we determine the pragmatic value of a complex sentence in terms of the pragmatic values of its parts? It should be clear that we should not be overly optimistic here. Consider, for instance, a sentence like John is in the middle of the lake and he does not know how to swim. This conjunctive sentence describes an emergency not present in either conjunct, and it is not easy to see how this pragmatic aspect of the conjunctive sentence can be determined from the pragmatic values of its parts. A second reason for being cautious is that the conjuncts of a conjunctive sentence can, for instance, stand in all kinds of logical relations to each other and this might give rise to strange predictions when we do not take into account the proposition expressed by the whole sentence.

To meet these worries, our aim will be to investigate under which circumstances the proposed notions of 'pragmatic relevance' behave 'compositionally' in accordance with a Boolean analysis of semantic meaning. But what, then, could be the aim of determining the pragmatic value in a compositional manner, if the result only corresponds to the actual pragmatic value of a complex sentence under these restricted circumstances? Why not first determine the semantic value of the complex sentence, and only then determine its relevance? With Merin we might propose that linguistic competence gives us rapidly the default pragmatic value of a complex sentence in terms of the values of its parts, but that this default value might be overridden when we have determined the truth conditions of the complex sentence. In any case, one aim of this paper is to investigate to what extent the pragmatic value can be determined compositionally in terms of a linear operations, and – when combined with a Boolean semantics – to see under which conditions it gives rise to reasonable predictions. The description I have given so far still leaves open various ways how to determine the relevance of a sentence, and, in turn, several ways how to determine the circumstances under which the pragmatic value of a complex sentence equals its default pragmatic value. Merin favors Good's notion of weight of evidence as his notion of relevance and shows that under particular circumstances the (default) pragmatic value of a complex sentences can be determined as a linear function of the (default) pragmatic values of its parts. I believe that has begun an interesting project, and in this short paper I will slightly extend its scope. In particular, I will describe some other possible notions of pragmatic value, or relevance, and discuss to what extent, and under which circumstances, they behave in this way. I do so by stating a lot of (many would say) elementary facts whose proof in many cases is not my own. I can only hope that this collection of facts helps some readers to increase their understanding of the relation between several possible notions of pragmatic value of sentences in the same way as it helped me when writing this paper.

Before I discuss some possible notions of pragmatic value, however, I will first give some motivation for why a default linear pragmatics makes sense in the first place. What would it mean to have a default compositional linear pragmatics for natural language? It would mean that the default pragmatic value of a complex sentence depends in a linear way on the pragmatic values of its parts. Let us assume that the pragmatic value of a proposition  $a$  is its usefulness,  $U(a)$ . Merin (1997) suggests that a straightforward linear pragmatics would then have it that the default pragmatic values of complex sentences are along the following lines: The usefulness of  $\neg a$  would be the opposite of the usefulness of  $a$  with respect to some neutral point; the usefulness of  $a \cap b$  would be, under some default conditions, the sum of the usefulness of  $a$  and the usefulness of  $b$ ; and the usefulness of  $a \cup b$  would – again

under some default conditions – be a convex combination of the usefulness of a and of b. This gives rise to the following hypothesis. The findings following the analysis of the complex sentences in 20 background of the problem of the theses show that the complex sentences in the theses written by the English Department graduates of March 2017 period were in „good“ category based on the indicators used in this study. There were 117 complex sentences which satisfy the requirements for a good sentence from 210 collected data. Each of the sentences met the three indicators of complex sentence as proposed by Altenrbeg and Vago (2010: 214-218). The data shows that, most of the complex sentences which are written by English Department“s graduates of March 2017 period in Universitas Negeri Padang are written in the right form. In addition, based on the findings, each type of the complex sentences can be described as follow. The first one is the adjective clause. For adjective clause, the number for very good is 31, good is 29, and there is 1 sentence categorized as sufficient. The second type is adverbial clause. the description of this type is 72 sentences as very good, 48 sentences as good and 6 sentences as sufficient. The last type is noun clause with 5 sentences as very good, 16 sentences as good and 2 sentences as sufficient. This discussion focuses on the three types of complex sentences which were written by the English Department graduates of March 2017 period in Universitas Negeri Padang. The first types is the complex sentence in form of Adjective clauses. There were 61 complex sentences in form of adjective clauses. Futhermore, there are 31 complex sentences in form of adjective clauses which were categorized in very good category. However, there are several problems found in this types of complex sentences. Some complex senteces has a mistake in grammatical and the using of an appropriate subordination. The mistake that commonly appears is the using of an appropriate conjunction. In line with this statement, according Adjei (2015: 2), the students faced significant level of difficulty in the use of subordination as well as difficulty with identifying the types and function of subordination in complex sentences.

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