24.910 Topics in Linguistic Theory: Propositional Attitudes
Spring 2009

Assignment for Week 4 (March 3)

Exercise on *think … might*:

Here is an exercise related to our discussion of the semantics of attitude predicates, which you are to do as part of your assignment for this week. Consider (1)-(2):

(1)   Sue thinks it might be raining.

(2)   Joe thinks that Bush might be president.

Assume for the purposes of this exercise that there is a single lexical item *think-might*, which represents the attitude held by Sue/Joe in the sentences above, and that the structure that is interpreted is as shown below:

- **Structure for (1):**   Sue [think-might [it's raining]]
- **Structure for (2):**   Joe [think-might [Bush is president]]

Do the following things (two parts):

- **Part I:** Give a meaning for *think-might*. As far as possible, try to express *think-might* in terms of other attitudes we have talked about in class.

  Note: You can write the meaning either in the form $[\![\text{think-might}]\!]^w = \ldots$ (a lexical entry), or as rule of the form $[\![\text{x think-might } \phi]\!]^w = \ldots$

  Support your answer in a few sentences, briefly discussing the truth conditions they would predict for a sentence like (1) or (2).

- **Part II:** Now think about the <u>accessibility relations</u> between worlds for the attitude expressed by the *think-might*. Discuss whether this relation would be reflexive, symmetric, and/or transitive. Support your answers briefly (a sentence or two for each property).

Reading

Two papers by Lauri Karttunen:

- L. Karttunen, 1971a: Implicative Verbs
- L. Karttunen, 1971b: Some Observations on Factivity

As you read: Keep a running list of the different attitude predicates that Karttunen discusses, making notes about their relevant properties.

Assignment to Turn in:

- Exercise on *think…might* from above (parts I and II)
- List of attitude verbs discussed by Karttunen with their properties related to factivity

Your assignment may be typed or handwritten, but please make it neat and organized.

- And of course, be ready to give your presentation!