

Negation at the syntax, semantics and pragmatics interfaces: theoretical, empirical and experimental approaches

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Description of the workshop

Negation is a very crucial issue as regards the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of natural language. Often given as a criterion for disentangling semantic meaning from pragmatic meaning (presupposition is not sensitive to negation, while entailment is), and generally associated with truth-conditional meaning (whereas metalinguistic uses are not), negation is one of the most important linguistic phenomena at the interfaces of syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Although negation is a very basic phenomenon in natural language, it exhibits multifaceted and complex behaviours in its scope and variety of usages not only across different languages but also within a particular language. In propositional logic, the meaning of negation is straightforward: the fundamental logical property of negation lies in its taking wide scope over the whole proposition and in reversing the truth-value of the proposition. However, the behaviour of negation in natural languages is more complex. Linguistic negation exhibits mainly three properties: (i) scope properties; (ii) the distinction between descriptive and metalinguistic usages; (iii) the derivation of descriptive and metalinguistic negation.

Because of the current growing interest in negation and in its cognitive processing, we would like to gather researchers working on negation in order to develop a comprehensive and unified picture of this topic. In this panel, we would like to address questions about the meaning of negation, its syntax, semantics and pragmatics, and most importantly, issues that arise at the interfaces between syntax, semantics and pragmatics. We aim at addressing, using different methodologies and theoretical approaches, the following research questions:

1. What do the syntactic properties of negation reveal about its scope properties?
2. What are the main pragmatic uses of negation?
3. How can a general semantics of negation account for its various uses?
4. What are the main domains of variation for negation (in syntax, semantics and pragmatics)?
5. What are the main morphosyntactic strategies used to convey negative meanings?
6. What is the relation between the logical properties of negation and its semantics and pragmatics?

The panel aims at gathering together researchers working on different languages, in different linguistic fields (from syntax to pragmatics, but also psycholinguistics and corpus linguistics among others), taking different theoretical, empirical and experimental perspectives. The presentations included in this workshop will target the following general topics:

- Logical form and the syntactic structure of negative sentences
- Expletive negation
- NEG raising
- NEG concord
- Morphological negation
- Negative Polarity Items
- The syntax-semantics interface of negation
- Descriptive and metalinguistic negation
- Causality in negative sentences
- The semantics-pragmatics interface and negation
- Corpus-based approaches to negation
- Experimental approaches to negation