

Vagueness and the Semantics and Pragmatics of Contradictions

Scientific report from short visit

Peter Pagin

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1. Purpose of the visit

The purpose of the visit was to discuss several aspects of the inclination of speakers to accept contradictions in applications of vague predicates to borderline cases (e.g. 'John is both tall and not tall'). Firstly, we wanted to relate the phenomenon to current accounts of vagueness. Secondly, we wanted to come up with hypotheses about the principles underlying such verdicts. And thirdly, we wanted to provide experimental designs to test these hypotheses.

2. Work carried out

We spent two full days discussing these aspects. We devised several models of assertibility conditions that would predict the verdicts, and discussed their merits and problems. We realized that we needed more preliminary results, since we did not have data on the disposition to accept tautologous disjunctions ('John is either tall or not tall') by those who were prepared to accept contradiction. We devised a short questionnaire pilot study to be run on the Mechanical Turk at Amazon.com, and ran the experiment.

3. Main results

The results obtained during the visit consisted in the evaluations of several models of assertibility conditions, the design and running of the test. The test result

remain to be analyzed.

4. Future collaboration

There will be more collaboration before the current project is concluded. It is also likely that there will be ideas for follow-up studies.

5. Projected publications

We plan a jointly authored article in a journal in the linguistics/philosophy area.