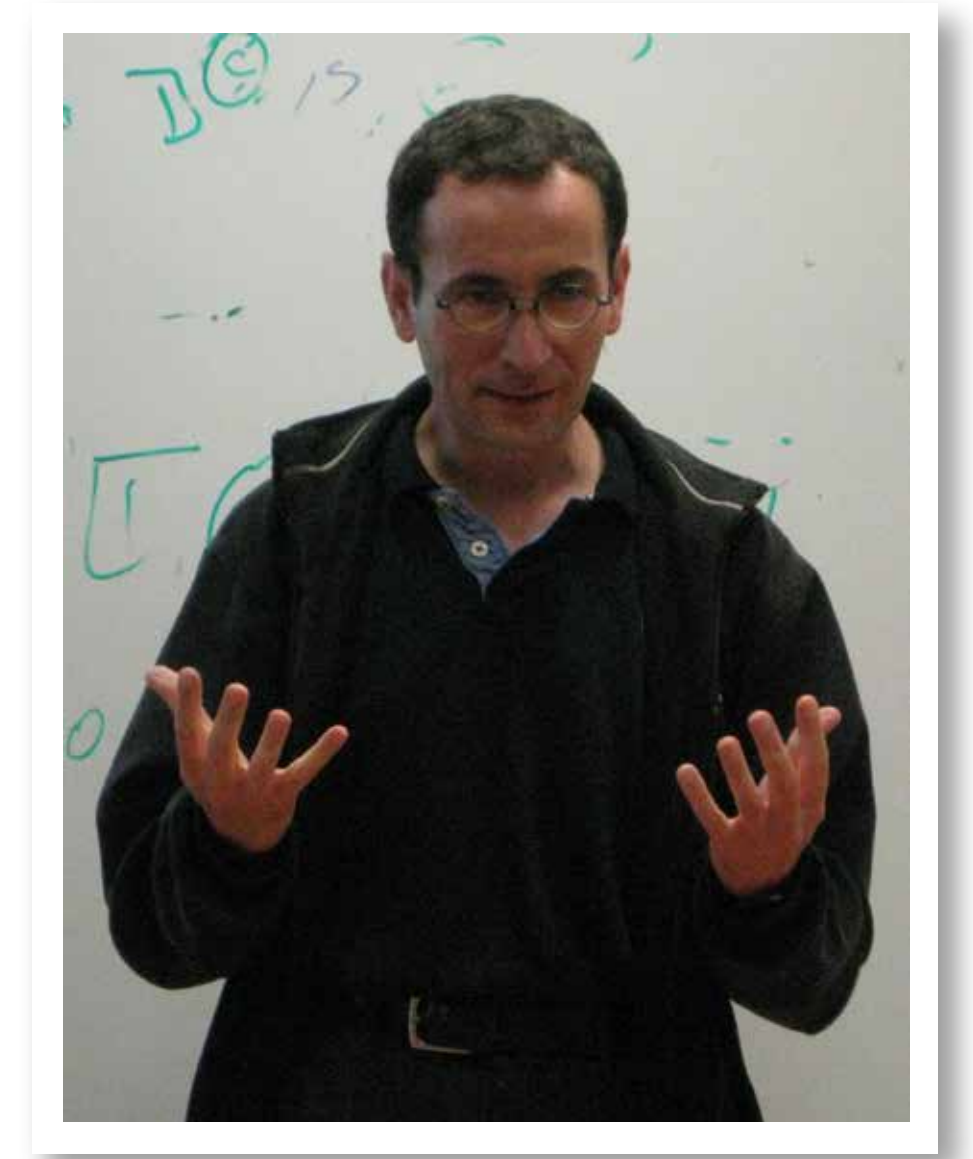# Supplements without Bidimensionalism: a Liberalized McCawley Analysis

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Date: March 2, 2021 (Tuesday)
Time: 4:30pm - 6:15pm (Hong Kong Time, UTC +8)
*Seminar will be conducted via ZOOM

Registration Deadline:
12:00nn of 28 February 2021 (Sunday) – Hong Kong Time
The Zoom Meeting details will be provided on 1 March 2021

Prior registration is required

Abstract

In seminal work, Potts 2005 claimed that the behavior of 'supplements' – appositive relative clauses (ARCs) and appositive nominals – offers a powerful argument in favor of a multidimensional semantics, one in which certain expressions fail to interact scopally with various operators because their meaning is located in a new semantic dimension. An older account, due to McCawley 1981, took instead the behavior of ARCs to be due to their syntax: for McCawley, the ARC in "I doubt that Sam, who is smart, is competent" is syntactically attached with matrix scope despite being apparently embedded (hence completely different truth conditions from: I doubt that Sam is smart and competent).

Focusing on ARCs, with data from English, French and German (Poschmann 2019), we argue for a liberalized and expanded version of McCawley's account in which (i) appositives may be syntactically attached with matrix scope, despite their appearance in embedded positions; (ii) they may also be syntactically attached within the scope of other operators, in which case they semantically interact with them; (iii) they are semantically conjoined with the rest of the sentence, but (iv) they give rise to non-trivial projection facts (reminiscent of presuppositions) when they do not have matrix scope. (Data from American Sign Language (ASL) also provide evidence for 'high in situ attachment' as in (i)-(ii).)

In effect, our analysis accounts for most of the complexity of these data by positing a more articulated syntax and pragmatics, while keeping the semantics 'lean' and unidimensional.

Speaker

P. Schlenker is a senior researcher at CNRS (Institut Jean-Nicod, Paris) and a Global Distinguished Professor at New York University. He was educated at École Normale Supérieure (Paris), and obtained a Ph.D. in Linguistics from MIT, and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from EHESS (Paris). He has taught at École Normale Supérieure, Paris, at the University of Southern California, at UCLA, and, since 2008, at NYU. P. Schlenker's early interests included semantics, pragmatics, the philosophy of language and philosophical logic. He has conducted research on indexicals and indirect discourse, intensional semantics, anaphora, presuppositions, as well as semantic paradoxes.

In recent work, he has advocated a program of 'Super Semantics' that seeks to expand the traditional frontiers of the field. He has investigated the semantics of sign languages, with special attention both to their logical structure and to the rich iconic means that interact with it. In order to have a point of comparison for these iconic phenomena, P. Schlenker has also investigated the logic and typology of gestures in spoken language. In collaborative work with primatologists and psycholinguists, he has laid the groundwork for a 'primate semantics' that seeks to apply the general methods of formal linguistics to primate vocalizations. And in recent research, he has advocated the development of a detailed semantics for music, albeit one that is very different from linguistic semantics.

All are Welcome

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