

Working Group 6

Ontology Structure

Contributors

- co-chairs: Dietmar Zaefferer, Scott Farrar

- liason: Amy Renaud

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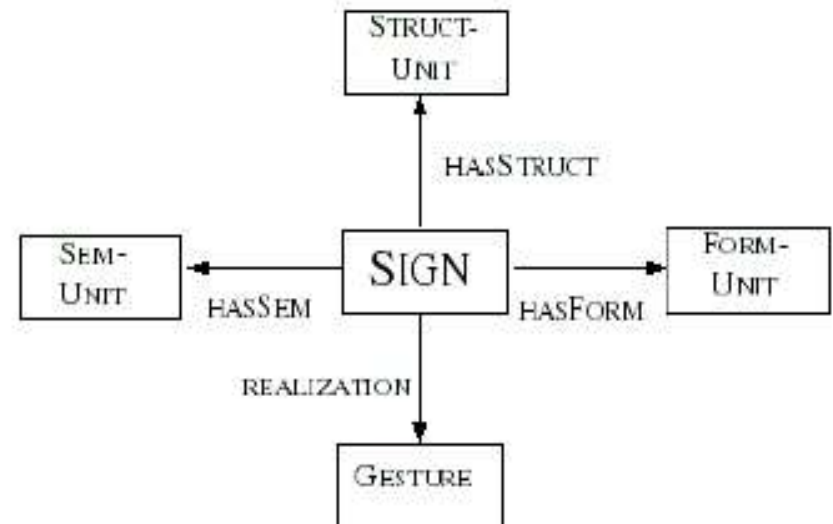
Hans-Jörg Bibiko

Session I

- Overview of upper structures
- Topics & Issues
 - **form/function separation, wrt feature values**
 - identify and classify formal categories
 - relationship between GOLD categories and language instances

LinguisticSign

- 3 aspects
 - form (phonology)
 - content (meaning, function)
 - structure (morphosyntax)
 - realization (physical)



The GOLD definitions

- Individual feature values are mixed with form/meaning notions.
- Notion of definiteness in definition of Determiner.
- Encourage field linguists to tell us what kinds of criteria are used to motivate their categories.

Indiv. Feature Values

- Stay away from complex hierarchies for the moment.
- Other than constituent order, it's hard to pinpoint purely formal features

General Methodology

- Methodologically, it's good to identify the disagreement points, i.e., 'critical choices'.
- Coherent view 1 = GOLD_1
- Coherent view 2 = GOLD_2

Residual Issues

- Version control
- non-equivalence of formal categories across languages
- semantics (for tomorrow...)

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2nd day

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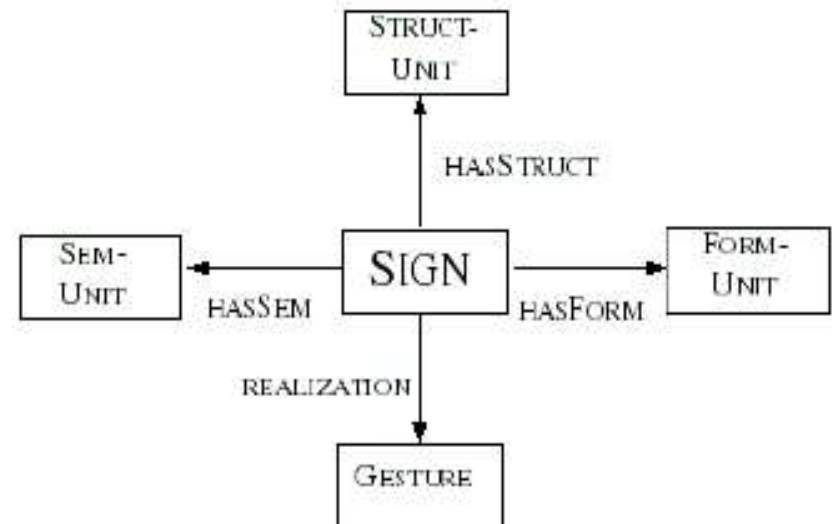
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LinguisticSign

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LinguisticSign

- Signs can be complex: a bound morpheme, a cleft sentence,... an entire text.
- Is the category SemUnit a category at all?
- Understanding of content/function/semantics is much fuzzier than the formal counterpart.
- BUT: form/function issue is much less problematic in describing content.

Major areas of concerns

- lexical semantics
- propositional acts
 - referent status
- pred-arg structure
- topic-focus
- interclausal/sentential structure
- speech act / illocution
- **there's lots of overlap!**

Features

- Still contentious regard WHAT has the feature.
- Two possibilities:
 - the sign itself has all kinds of features
 - each unit type has its particular feature
 - the semantic units have semantic features
 - the morphosyntactic units have the m/s features
- Arguments in the lit. for the former.
- Having features predicated of the sign is misleading to linguists (form/function issue).

Other remarks

- Stay with commonly accepted “carvings up” of semantic parameters (e.g., singular, paucal, plural, dual...): don't posit categories just for sake of symmetry.
- Information structure and semantics proper are two realms, logically independent, or maybe they aren't. Keep the structure flat so as not to put off users.
- Topic, focus aren't categories, but role-like.

Other remarks

- Build COPEs to account for commonly used semantic fields, e.g., kinship or color.

Lessons Learned

- Be clear about the basic formal ontological toolkit before diving in.
- BUT: a lot of progress can be made by modeling using higher levels of abstraction, e.g., writing out axioms in prose.
- Upshot: provide some guidance on the website concerning the basic tools of ontological modeling.

Lessons Learned

- Don't build in too many dependencies.
- Recurring theme: flatten the hierarchies.