

# **The linguistics of desire (4)**

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## Four days in, a note

- we know very little
- even about English
- so, there's much to do
- join us!

## Want, hope, temporal orientation

- Abusch, Dorit. 2004. On the temporal composition of infinitives. In Jacqueline Guéron & Jacqueline Lecarme (eds.), *The syntax of time*, 27–53. MIT Press.
- Banerjee, Neil. 2017. Embedded subject licensing properties of *hope*. ms, MIT. [linked on class website]

## **Class 4: Desires and their prejacent**

- a bit more on underspecified attitudes
- mood selection and related phenomena
- how the predicate and its complement “communicate”
- a new-ish theory: complements are not complements

## ***want* is underspecified, *hope* less so**

Both the “modal base” and the ordering of *want* are not fully specified lexically and are subject to contextual resolution.

*Hope* seems to have stronger requirements on its modal base.

OTOH, *hope* is temporally more liberal than *want*.

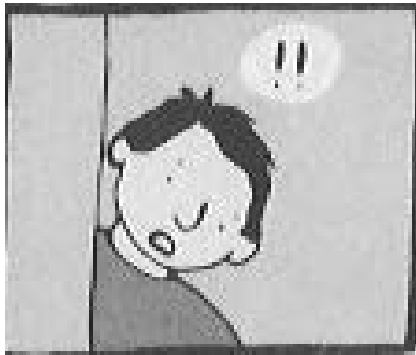
## More on underspecified attitudes

- Hindi *should/want/need*
- Bogal-Albritten on Navajo attitudes
- Abusch on attitudes in visual narratives

# Navajo

Navajo does not have different verbs with meanings like English *think*, *want*, and *wish*. There is just one general attitude verb (*nízin*), which occurs in Navajo sentences translated into English with *think*, *want*, and *wish*.

# Fluffy





## The rest of today

- mood selection
- severing the complement

## **Propositional attitudes should get propositions**

Our semantics just asks the prejacent to supply a proposition. There may be different ways of expressing propositions, but the semantics of the attitude shouldn't care about how the proposition is expressed.

# **Propositional attitudes and their prejacents are mutually dependent**

Mood selection, or more generally complement selection!

## The simplest picture

- *believe* “selects” indicative mood
- *want* “selects” subjunctive mood

(1) *Indicative-selecting verb:*

- a. Alice croit que Blanche est végétarienne.  
Alice thinks that Blanche is.IND vegetarian
- b. \*Alice croit que Blanche soit végétarienne.  
Alice thinks that Blanche is.SBJV vegetarian

(2) *Subjunctive-selecting verb:*

- a. \*Alice veut que Blanche est végétarienne.  
Alice wants that Blanche is.IND vegetarian
- b. Alice veut que Blanche soit végétarienne.  
Alice wants that Blanche is.SBJV vegetarian

## Three tasks

1. What precisely is the empirical distribution of the different moods across attitude predicates and across languages?
2. What is the rhyme or reason for the distribution? Do the licensors form natural classes?
3. How do we formally account for the mutual dependencies?

# Caution

The empirical situation is a mess.

But grappling with it has led to useful work on the meaning of attitudes.

## Some intuitions

- indicative: someone believes  $p$
- indicative: representational
- subjunctive: comparative/evaluative



## Puzzle 1: Dreams/Fictions

- (7) Alice a rêvé que Blanche était/\*fût végétarienne.  
Alice dreamed that Blanche was.IND/\*was.SBJV vegetarian

## Puzzle 2: Emotive factives

- (5) Alice est heureuse que Blanche soit/\*est végétarienne.  
Alice is happy that Blanche is.SBJV/\*is.IND vegetarian
- (6) Alice sait que Blanche est/\*soit végétarienne.  
Alice knows that Blanche is.IND/\*is.SBJV vegetarian

## Puzzle 3: Hope

- (8) Alice espère que Blanche est/\*soit végétarienne.  
Alice hopes that Blanche is.IND/\*is.SBJV vegetarian

## Higher interpretable feature

Portner & Rubinstein 2016: there is an interpretable but inaudible mood feature on the higher verb which licenses the uninterpreted but morphologically real mood feature on the lower verb.

## Testing the modal parameters

The semantics of the interpreted mood feature is a test on the modal parameters of the higher verb.

(41) Alice [[[ [+*ind*] croit] *f*] *g*] que Blanche être-ind végétarienne.  
Alice thinks that Blanche be-indic vegetarian

(42) Alice [[[ [+*sbjv*] veut] *f*] *g*] que Blanche être-sbjv végétarienne.  
Alice thinks that Blanche be-sbjv vegetarian

## Silk's idea

- The mood test compares the values of  $f$  and  $g$  against the more general state of mind associated with the relevant attitude event.
- The indicative requires that the modal parameters are “live” from the point of view of the relevant State of Mind.
- *want* takes the subjunctive because its modal base is never contained in the DOX set. It always includes at least some non-DOX worlds.

## Silk's second thought

Maybe the reason for the difference in mood selection is that *want* can express conflicting desires, whereas *hope* cannot.



- (59) a. ?? J'espère épouser Alice, et j'espère épouser Sue.  
?? I hope to marry Alice and I hope to marry Sue
- b. Je veux épouser Alice, et je veux épouser Sue.  
I want to marry Alice and I want to marry Sue

## **Severing the complement**

We will now review an idea explored in recent work by Kratzer, Moulton, Bogal-Albritten, and (in somewhat different form) Moltmann.

## The idea

- Attitude predicates are not possible worlds quantifiers.
- They are predicates of eventualities (event/states).
- Their complements aren't complements but also predicates of (the same eventualities).
- Quantification over possible worlds is introduced by the “complement”.

(1) Naby believes that Brianna is in Rethymno.

- There is an eventuality  $s$ 
  - that is the belief state of Naby's in  $w$
  - and in all worlds compatible with  $s$ , Brianna is in Rethymno

$x$  believes that  $p$

$$\exists s: \text{belief}(s, x, w) \ \& \ \forall w' \in f(s): p(w') = 1$$

# Why?

- complements to nominals
- coercion into attitude semantics
- harmonic modals
- lack of existential attitudes
- underspecified attitudes
- [one more possible motivation to be revealed on Monday]

## Nominal modifiers

- *That*-clauses can appear with nouns where they don't fill argument positions.
- The idea, the myth, the story that Ortcutt is a spy baffles me.
- Stowell 1981, Grimshaw 1990, Moulton 2009.

## Speech report

Ralph tobte, dass man ihn nicht

Ralph raged that they him not

informiert habe.

informed have.SUBJ.

Ralph raged that they hadn't informed him.



## Harmonic deontic modals

He

{motioned, proposed, insisted, suggested,  
recommended, advised, demanded, petitioned,  
urged, begged, requested, required, wanted,  
pleaded}

that we **should** set up an emergency fund.

**In 2016  
America voted that  
Trump should be  
President.**

**We actually meant  
“shouldn’t.”**

## Harmonic epistemic modals

- (2) Heather believes that Brianna might be in Rethymno.

## **(Almost) No existential attitudes**

- attitude verbs do not express quantification
- quantification comes from “harmonic modals”, overt or covert
- there is no covert existential modal

# **Underspecified attitudes**

Remember Navajo

Alice [nahodoołtʃɪl] nízin.

Alice 3S.rain.FUT 3S.ATT.IMPF

(i) 'Alice **thinks** it will rain.'

(ii) 'Alice **wants** it to rain.'

(Future-marked verb, no particle)

# Resolving the underspecification with particles

- (14) a. Nahaltin                      laanaa.  
ArealS.rain.IMPF wishful  
'I wish it were raining.' (Speaker's desire)
- b. Kii [nahaltin                      laanaa] nínin.  
Kii ArealS.rain.IMPF wishful 3S.ATT.IMPF  
'Kii wishes it were raining.' (Subject's desire)
- (15) a. Nahaltin                      sha'shin.  
ArealS.rain.IMPF probably  
'It's probably raining,' 'It must be raining.'  
(Epistemic likelihood given speaker's beliefs)
- b. Kii [nahaltin                      sha'shin] nínin.  
Kii ArealS.rain.IMPF probably 3S.ATT.IMPF  
'Kii thinks it is probably raining,' 'Kii thinks it must be raining.'  
(Epistemic likelihood given subject's beliefs)

# The beginnings of a system

**Attitude verb:** *Nízin* contributes the part of meaning held in common by beliefs and desires: it denotes ‘mental attitude’ situations.

- In (36), I have added worlds of evaluation back in, whereas they were suppressed in entries above.

$$(36) \quad \llbracket nízín \rrbracket = \lambda s. \lambda w. \text{mental-attitude}(s)(w)$$

**Simplified<sup>5</sup> inventory of modal operators:**

$$(37) \quad \begin{array}{ll} \text{a.} & \llbracket sha'shin / \text{ASSERT} \rrbracket = \lambda p. \lambda s. \lambda w. \forall w' : w' \in \text{EPI}(s)(w). p(w') \\ \text{b.} & \llbracket laanaa \rrbracket = \lambda p. \lambda s. \lambda w. \forall w' : w' \in \text{DES}(s)(w). p(w') \end{array}$$



# Where we are at the end of Week 1

- sophisticated Hintikka semantics for desire predicates
- intriguing differences between *want* and *hope*
- more context-dependency/underspecification than usually assumed
- why so similar to modal semantics? maybe it **is** modal semantics
- lots of open questions
- a gigantic amount of cross-linguistic work needs to be done

## What we'll do next week

Monday conditional desires

Tuesday anankastic conditionals

Thursday X-marking

Friday X-marked desires