

Patrick Blackburn, Classical planning and causal implicatures

The idea that the human brain is a computational device and language processing a form of computation is (nowadays) commonplace: it underlies Chomsky's theorizing about syntax, is the assumption on which contemporary formal and computational semantics is based, and (in a more overtly engineering guise) underlies much contemporary computational linguistics. But there is another way of bringing computation into the picture: via interaction between epistemic agents. Here the pioneers are the philosophers David Lewis and H.P. Grice and the level of linguistics that is most relevant is pragmatics.

What might an interactional account of meaning look like? In this talk I'll discuss some of the issues involved, and look at one particular example: handling causal implicatures via local computations that make use of classical planning techniques.

The work discussed here is joint work with Lucians Benotti (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina).