

Abstract

In this thesis we investigate the thematic roles associated with 'with'. Our more general goal is to understand the semantics of Prepositional Phrases and, specifically, to understand the principle behind the grouping of thematic roles among prepositions; that is, why a particular preposition is associated with the roles with which it is.

We adopt for our investigation the framework of event semantics, in particular its development in Parsons (1990), in which an adequate semantic analysis results by identifying the thematic role borne by each event participant. We examine the notion of a thematic role and the controversy surrounding it. We review Dowty's (1991) proposal that thematic roles are not primitives, but can be analyzed into more basic semantic properties and relations.

We elaborate a methodology, following along the lines of that of Dowty, for the analysis of roles in which different classes of 'with'-PPs are characterized by means of the different entailment patterns satisfied by sentences containing them. We then identify certain sets of these entailment patterns, and consequently certain classes of 'with'-PPs, with thematic roles associated with 'with' posited in the literature: Co-Agent, Co-Patient, Accompaniment, Instrument, Substance, and Co-locative. Thus defined, we undertake the analysis of these thematic roles of 'with'.

After obtaining these analyses, we introduce the distinction between Contingent and Necessary properties, which allows us to view our analyses as consisting of Contingent and Necessary components. As a corollary of this further, more fine-grained, analysis, and following Pietroski (2002) and Schein (1999), we obtain a semantics for the preposition 'with' itself, according to which 'with' is an anaphor which assigns to its argument the Contingent properties borne by the 'with'-PP's antecedent.

We then examine the consequences of the results of our investigation for the broader theories of prepositions and thematic roles, returning to our original motivating question of the principle behind the distribution of roles among prepositions and proposing a resolution of this phenomenon. Finally, we consider what our results imply about the logical form of sentences with 'with'-PPs expressing different thematic roles in light of the principle of compositionality and suggest an extension of our results concerning how thematic roles are assigned to participants introduced through 'with'-PPs to how thematic roles are assigned to all event participants in a clause.