Sense and Sensitivity: How Focus Determines Meaning
David I. Beaver, Brady Z. Clark

DESCRIPTION

Sense and Sensitivity advances a novel research proposal in the nascent field of formal pragmatics, exploring in detail the semantics and pragmatics of focus in natural language discourse. The authors develop a new account of focus sensitivity, and show that what has hitherto been regarded as a uniform phenomenon in fact results from three different mechanisms. The book

• Makes a major contribution to ongoing research in the area of focus sensitivity – a field exploring interactions between sound and meaning, specifically the dependency some words have on the effects of focus, such as "she only LIKES me" (i.e. nothing deeper) compared to "she only likes ME" (i.e. nobody else)

• Discusses the features of the QFC theory (Quasi association, Free association, and Conventional association), a new account of focus implying a tripartite typology of focus-sensitive expressions

• Presents novel cross-linguistic data on focus and focus sensitivity that will be relevant across a range of linguistic sub-fields: semantics and pragmatics, syntax, and intonational phonology

• Concludes with a case study of exclusives (like “only”), arguing that the entire existing literature has missed crucial generalizations, and for the first time explaining the focus sensitivity of these expressions in terms of their meaning and discourse function
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David I. Beaver is Associate Professor of Linguistics and Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of *Presupposition and Assertion in Dynamic Semantics* (2001); is co-editor of several books, including *The Construction of Meaning* (2002); has authored numerous articles for prestigious journals including *Linguistics and Philosophy*, and *Language*; is on the editorial team or board of all the three leading journals in semantics; and is co-founder of a new open access journal, *Semantics and Pragmatics*, supported by the Linguistic Society of America.

Brady Z. Clark is Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Northwestern University and a faculty member at the Northwestern Institute on Complex Systems. He is co-editor (with Beaver, Casillas-Martínez, and Kaufmann) of *The Construction of Meaning* (2002). He has published in journals including *Natural Language Semantics* and *Language*, on topics ranging from semantics to historical syntax and tutorial dialogue systems.

FEATURES

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