ISSUES CONCERNING LINGUISTIC MEANING AND FORM: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS[*]

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Abstract: In this introduction we present Patrick Duffley's book *Linguistic Meaning meets Linguistic Form,* as well as the contributions that each scholar has brought into the debate on linguistic meaning and form. They deal with semantic and foundational issues regarding a sign-based approach to meaning.

Linguistic Meaning meets Linguistic Form (2020) by Patrick Duffley presents new ideas about meaning and challenges widespread views in linguistics and philosophy. Among Duffley's targets are the idea that syntax is autonomous from semantics, and that meanings should be conceived as truth-conditions. He challenges these views by highlighting some of their shortcomings and arguing that "semantics plays a highly significant role in syntax" (p. 1). More positively, Duffley adopts what he calls the "semiological principle", according to which linguistic signs (i.e. words and morphemes) have stable meanings (2020, p. 36). This goes against several popular views, such as truth-conditional approaches to meaning and construction grammar, which hold, respectively, that stable meanings can be found at the level of sentences or constructions. He conceives meanings as mental contents, but he challenges different versions of cognitive semantics. Among his targets are the Prototype Theory, Conceptual Semantics, Construction Grammar, and Natural Semantic Metalanguage. In his view, the semanticist's job is to discover the stable meaning behind linguistic signs, despite the variety of messages that these signs can convey in different contexts. That is to be done by careful observation of the actual use of words, as provided by linguistic corpora.

This special issue collects original articles by scholars from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, England, the Netherlands, Scotland, and the United States about key points of Duffley's book. The papers deal with topics such as the autonomy of syntax, mental content, polysemy, sign-based

semantics, the semiological principle, the relation between semantics and pragmatics, embodied semantics, predictive processing and enactivism. They are presented in alphabetical order by authors' last names.

In "A plea for explanation" John Collins challenges Duffley's hypothesis that syntactic phenomena are explicable by the ways in which constructions are used. After offering a model of explanation, Collins proceeds to discuss 'tough' constructions and the general counterfunctionality of syntax.

In "Linguistic Meaning meets Linguistic Form in action" Nara Figueiredo and Elena Cuffari present a linguistic enactivist perspective on verbal language as a social practice and suggest that the methodological proposal of a sign-based semantics could be compatible with enactivism, once one rejects its ontological premise of mental content.

In "Linguistic meanings meet linguistic form", Raquel Krempel argues that Duffley's semiological principle and his wish to avoid polysemy lead him to an artificial description of the meaning of the preposition *for*. She also points out that the principle is not consistently followed in the book, such as in Duffley's analysis of the meaning of *start*, or in his acceptance of words with encyclopedic meanings. And these, she argues, have problems of their own.

In "Predictive processing and the semiological principle: Commentary to Duffley", Guido Löhr and Christian Michel offer an account of stable meanings inspired by the Predictive Processing architecture, which is intended to underpin Duffley's idea of stable linguistic meanings. Löhr and Michel also suggest that the semiological principle is compatible with a dynamic and flexible notion of meaning.

In "Could sign-based semantics and embodied semantics benefit one another?" César Meurer unfolds an affirmative answer to this question. In his view, these two approaches to meaning may be mutually beneficial if they are conceived as a semantic and as a foundational theory, respectively. Along

this line, Meurer seeks to show situations which Duffley's semantics could find support in embodied semantics, and vice-versa.

In "Do linguistic meanings meet linguistic form?", Andrés Saab challenges Duffley's criticism of formal semantics. According to Saab, the criticism is based on a dogma about the proper nature of linguistic signs. He also points out that Duflfey's work is lacking in an explicit theory of how syntax affects meaning realization.

In "Reflexivity, role conflicts, and the meaning of English self pronouns" Nancy Stern offers a sign-based analysis of self pronouns, conceiving them as a kind of emphatic pronoun. She explains them as semantic signals, which are deployed for communicative purposes, and argues that this explanation can account for the distribution of self pronouns in all environments.

Each contribution is followed by Duffley's reply or reaction. We would like to thank each author for their contribution, Patrick Duffley for his dedication, the reviewers for their availability and also the editorial team for their support. We hope this issue will contribute to the debate on linguistic meaning both in philosophy and in linguistics.

References

Duffley, P. (2020) Linguistic Meaning meets Linguistic Form. Oxford: Oxford University Press.