

NYU Semantics Group 05/16/25
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Title. Decomposing dynamic semantics

Abstract. Dynamic semantics is a marriage of three *effects*:

1. Input: anaphoric expressions depend on the context for their values
2. Output: drefs are created by writing to the context
3. Nondeterminism: indefiniteness is indeterminacy

Although these are traditionally a package deal (e.g., Groenendijk & Stokhof 1991, Muskens 1996, Charlow 2014), this talk makes the case for decomposing dynamic semantics – that is, treating these effects as distinct and independent lexical and compositional primitives.

I'll develop a framework for *effect-driven semantics* based on Bumford & Charlow (to appear, lingbuzz/008912). We'll see how to simply and conservatively extend vanilla schemes of type-driven interpretation (Klein & Sag 1985, Heim & Kratzer 1998) into infinitely variegated modes of effectful composition based on functors, applicatives, adjunctions, and their interactions. Though we decomposed dynamic semantics, these interactions will recreate it in the aggregate, and "on the fly" (Szabolcsi 2003).

Aside from the usual benefits of effect-oriented theorizing (e.g., Charlow 2020), I'll argue that decomposing dynamic semantics leads to a new take on crossover and, more generally, linear asymmetries in binding. Traditional dynamic theories of anaphora offer only partial accounts of linear asymmetries in binding. Conversely, semantic accounts of crossover (Buring 2004, Barker & Shan 2008, Chierchia 2020) offer only partial accounts of characteristically dynamic patterns of anaphora. I'll argue that our decomposed dynamic semantics gives us the best of both worlds.
