

Semantics Exercises

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1 Semantics Exercises

Consider the following sentences:

1. John is laughing and dancing.
2. John is dancing.
3. Bob is a teacher.
4. Bob is a good teacher.
5. Funny students are students.

Determine whether the following entailments are true or false.

1. (1) entails (2)
2. (2) entails (1)
3. (3) entails (4)
4. (4) entails (3)
5. (5) entails (2)
6. (3) entails (5)

Now do exercise 7.1 from Fromkin (p. 377)

2 Extensional Semantics

Consider the following world.

[[Laugh]] = {John, Mary, Igor, Sue, Bob, Victor}
[[Cry]] = {Steven, Sarah, Jonathan, Victor, Anna}
[[Teachers]] = {Sarah, Jonathan, Anna}
[[Students]] = {Mary, Igor, Sue, Steven}
[[Funny]] = {Jonathan, Sarah}
[[Plays Basketball]] = {John, Mary, Igor, Sue, Bob, Steven, Sarah, Jonathan, Anna, Victor}
[[Plays Basketball Well]] = {John, Sue}
[[Plays Soccer]] = {Sarah, Steven, Jonathan}

1. Draw a picture of these sets.
2. For each of these sentences, write out a set-theoretic interpretation, and then say whether the sentence is true or not.

Remember rule (17) from Fromkin: if DP is a proper name, then a sentence [DP VP] is true if and only if [[DP]] is in [[VP]], that is [[DP]] \in [[VP]]. When there aren't names involved, you'll use the rules from 7.3.3 (or similar rules that you can make up on your own); here, you'll use the *subset* relation \subseteq .

- John laughs.
- Steven cries.
- Steven and Bob cry.
- John laughs and cries.
- Victor laughs and cries.
- Sue plays basketball.
- Sue plays basketball well.
- Every teacher cries.
- Some teachers cry.
- Some students cry.
- Everyone¹ plays basketball.
- Someone laughs and cries.
- All teachers play soccer.
- All funny teachers play soccer.
- A student plays soccer.
- A funny student plays soccer.
- A student laughs and plays soccer.
- A student laughs and a student plays soccer.
- Everyone who plays basketball well laughs.²

¹Assume that the only people who exist are the ones listed above. (There are ten people total.)

²For this we haven't stated a precise rule yet for relative clauses like *who plays basketball well*. Try writing a rule that applies to this first, and then apply it here.

3 Restrictiveness Exercises

For each of these sentences: (a) label whether the italicized phrases are restrictive or non-restrictive; (b) fill in any blanks; and (c) add any appropriate punctuation. A few of these phrases could be both restrictive or non-restrictive. If that's the case, note that, think about the different senses of the restrictive versus non-restrictive versions, and figure out which is the more natural interpretation.

- John _____ *is quite smart* didn't study very much.
- Sarah was afraid that she'd forgotten to pay her tuition bill _____ *was due yesterday*.
- After school, we went to the library _____ *was fun*.
- Ulysses *a novel by James Joyce* is one of the great works of the 20th century.
- The book _____ *he ordered from the library* finally arrived.
- The president *John F Kennedy* was notable for his speeches.
- I played basketball with some friends _____ *weren't very good at basketball*.
- In Kerrytown there's a store _____ *reminds me of home*.
- Marcel Proust *who is considered one of the greatest writers of the 20th century* spent years working on his great novel.
- This semester I'm studying French _____ *I find quite interesting* and Economics _____ *I don't*.