

**The International Conference Investigating Semantics: *Empirical and Philosophical Approaches*, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany,  
October 10-12, 2013**

The international conference *Investigating semantics: Empirical and philosophical approaches* held on October 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> at the Ruhr University Bochum had the objective of studying natural language semantics utilising the methodology adapted to contemporary communicational necessities. Within the field of theoretical semantics there are countless areas of expertise: formal semantics, possible world semantics, and discourse representation theory. A similar heterogeneity has puzzled numerous empirical researchers who analysed psycho- and neuro-linguistics, corpus linguistics and neurobiology.

The conference proposed a division of labour separated into two distinct domains dealing with *topics* and *methods*.

The topics expanded a wide analytical architecture which offered particular focus towards the following areas: Compositionality; Computational complexity in language; Discourse semantics; Generalized quantifiers; Implicatures and presuppositions; Interfaces between syntax, semantics and pragmatics; Lexical semantics; Possible worlds semantics; The nature of meaning: abstract-symbolic or embodied-simulative.

The methodology involved in the proper functionality of the conference performed not only a symbiosis with the topics but also acted as a catalyst, as a generator of synergy allowing the examination to come full circle and provide a comprehensive outlook on the research matters at hand. The methods included the following categories: Formal semantics; General philosophical issues regarding semantics; Philosophy of linguistics; Semantics in experimental philosophy – experimental pragmatics; Semantics with corpus-linguistic methods; Semantics with neuro-linguistic methods; Semantics with psycho-linguistic methods.

Several experts were invited to discuss major issues or to give overview reports with regard to the general themes of the conference. A few keynote speakers were invited to offer plenary lectures, setting the tone for the subsequent operational proceedings of the conference. Here are some of the key speakers and the papers they presented: Giosuè Baggio (SISSA, Trieste): “Following the Neural Footprints of Semantic Composition off the N400 Path”; Derek Ball (U St. Andrews): “Idealisation, Abstracta, and Semantic Explanation”; Emma Borg (U Reading): “Facing the Evidence: What can Empirical Facts Tell us about Semantics?”; Max Kölbel: “Making Sense of the Methods of Natural Language Semantics”; Manfred Krifka (ZAS, Berlin): “The Mass/Count distinction: Philosophical, linguistic, and cognitive aspects”; Paul Pietroski (U Maryland): “What is a Theory of Human (Linguistic) Understanding?”.

The conference took place within a stimulating and auspicious research and communicative environment. The papers and ideas were perfectly structured and adapted to the thematic apparatus and the methodology of the conference. It can therefore be considered a success as all the main objectives were adequately accomplished, answering a wide range of questions while at the same time opening the door for more analytical research, objectives and dilemmas.