

Compositionality Write-Up

Draft due: October 9, start of class

Final version due: October 13, 8pm

Word count: between 800 and 1200 words (typed; no other formatting requirements)

Working in Google Docs

All graded assignments for this course must be *written in in Google Docs*. This allows you to prove that you wrote the assignment yourself. Here are the steps you need to follow:

- a. Go to <https://docs.google.com>.
- b. Sign in using your Virginia Tech account. (To check which account you are signed in on, click the round button at the top right.)
- c. Create a new document.
- d. Type your entire assignment in Google Docs (except for direct quotations, do not copy-paste text from another application.)

Writing the Draft. In the first half of the course, we described an account of language according to which the meaning of a declarative sentence is its truth conditions, and those truth conditions are compositionally determined by the meanings of the words. In this short essay, you will discuss a linguistic phenomenon that challenges this standard picture.

In your essay, you should do the following:

1. Explain the standard picture.
 - a. In your explanation of truth conditions, provide at least one example of two different sentences that have the same truth conditions (i.e. two sentences that are true at all the same possible worlds). These could be sentences in different languages, or they could both be English sentences.
 - b. Explain, for a simple example (something like “Ann smokes” or “Either it’s raining or it’s snowing”), how the meanings of the parts of the sentence combine to determine the truth conditions of the whole sentence.
2. Describe *one* of the following linguistic phenomena:
 - a. Expressive language (language intuitively aimed at expressing something other than beliefs about the world).
 - b. Substitution failure (“Aristotle knows that the morning star is the evening star” ≠ “Aristotle knows that the morning star is the morning star”).
 - c. Metaphor (where the message conveyed is divorced from the literal meaning of the words).
3. Explain how this phenomenon challenges the standard picture.
4. (Optional). If you like, you can use the concluding paragraph to make a suggestion about how the standard picture should be adapted in light of this challenge, or about how the standard picture could meet the challenge.

Peer Feedback Stage

5. On October 9 before the start of class, you will submit a sharing link through Canvas.
 - a. Click “Share” at the top right of the screen
 - b. Under “General Access” modify the sharing permissions so allow anyone from *Virginia Tech* to be an *editor*.
 - c. Click “Copy Link” and paste the sharing link into the submission slot on Canvas.
 - d. Also e-mail the link to your assigned peer feedback partners (TBA)

6. In class on October 9, you will carefully read your peer feedback partners’ work, writing down any comments and clarification questions you have. During the last part of class, you will discuss the feedback you gave and received with your partner.
 - ▶ In your feedback, highlight both things you like / found interesting about the paper and also things you think could be better.
 - ▶ Focus on clarity: where does your peer’s message come through clearly, and where did you have difficulty following? If you did not understand a passage, try and be as specific as possible in your comment about what you did not understand.

7. Between October 9-11 you will edit your paper in response to the comments you received from your peers.
 - ▶ Use your judgment! Only take suggestions you feel will genuinely improve your paper.
 - ▶ Even feedback you disagree with gives you useful information about how your paper comes across, which you can be used to make improvements. For instance, if the feedback is based on a misunderstanding of what you were trying to say, that’s a good indication you should see if you can express yourself more clearly.
 - ▶ Feel free to make other adjustments and improvements too.

8. On October 11 you will discuss the improvement you made in response to the feedback during the first half of the class, and see whether there are other things to improve. In the second half of the class, we will discuss what we learnt as a group.

9. On October 13, by 8pm, you’ll hand in the final version of your paper on Canvas.