

# PETER R. SUTTON

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## EMPLOYMENT

### **Postdoctoral Researcher, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Germany**

- October 2014 - Present
  - Project: Frame Based Approaches to Countability, part of the SFB 991 project “The Structure of Representations in Language, Cognition, and Science”.
  - PI: Prof. Hana Filip

### **Graduate Teaching Assistant, King’s College London, UK**

- October 2010 - September 2014

## EDUCATION

### **King’s College London, United Kingdom**

- Ph.D., Philosophy, December 2013
  - Dissertation Topic: “Vagueness, Communication, and Semantic Information”
  - Supervisors: Shalom Lappin (pr.), Mark Textor (sec.), Ruth Kempson (sec.)

### **University of Helsinki, Finland**

- M.A., Theoretical Philosophy (*eximia cum laude approbatur*), July 2007
  - Dissertation: “Indicative Conditionals: Assertion, Truth-Conditions and Classification”
  - Supervisor: Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen

### **University of Manchester, United Kingdom**

- B.A. (hons), First Class, Philosophy, June 2004

## PUBLICATIONS

### Journal articles, proceedings papers, and book chapters

- Burnett, H., and P. R. Sutton (2018, forthcoming). Vagueness. in L. Matthewson, C. Meier, H. Rullman and T.E. Zimmermann. Blackwell Companion to Semantics. Wiley Publishing [accepted with minor revisions, attached to this application].
- Sutton, P. R. (2015). “Towards a probabilistic semantics for vague adjectives”. In: H. Zeevat and H-C Schmitz (eds.) Bayesian Natural Language Semantics and Pragmatics, pp. 221-246, Springer. - Sutton, P. R. (2017a). Probabilistic approaches to vagueness and semantic competency. Erkenntnis [Published as an online first article, print edition in press].
- Sutton, P. R. and Filip, H. (2016a). “Countability: Individuation and Context”. In: A. Foret, G. Morrill, R. Muskens, R. Osswald, and S. Pogodalla (eds.) Formal Grammar: Revised and selected papers from FG2015 and FG 2016, LNCS 9804, pp. 290-305, Springer.
- Sutton, P. R. and Filip, H. (2016b). Counting in context. Semantics and Linguistic Theory 26:350-370.
- Sutton, P. R. and Filip, H. (2016c). Mass/count variation, a mereological, two-dimensional semantics, in Rothstein, S. & J Škilters (Eds.), The Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic and Communication, Vol. 11. New Prairie Press.
- Sutton, P. R. and Filip, H. (2016d). Vagueness, overlap, and countability. Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 20, University of Tübingen. pp. 730-747.
- Sutton, P. R. and H. Filip. (2017a). Individuation, reliability and the mass/count distinction. Journal of Language Modelling 5(2): 303-356.
- Sutton, P. R. and Filip, H. (2017b). A probabilistic, mereological account of the mass/count distinction, Lecture Notes in Computer Science, Vol. 10148, pp. 146-170. Springer.
- Sutton, P. R. and Filip, H. (2017c). Restrictions on Subkind Coercion in Object Mass Nouns. Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 21. University of Edinburgh.

### PhD Thesis

- Sutton, P. (2013). Vagueness, communication and semantic information. PhD Thesis, King’s College London.

### Under review and forthcoming

- Burnett, H., and P. R. Sutton (2018, forthcoming). Vagueness. in L. Matthewson, C. Meier, H. Rullman and T.E. Zimmermann. Blackwell Companion to Semantics. Wiley Publishing.
- Taylor, S. and P. R. Sutton. (2017, Under review). A Frame-Theoretic Model of Bayesian Category Learning. Proceedings of CoSt16.

## TALKS

### Invited Talks

- *Prototypes as Bayesian Networks*. Probabilistic Approaches to (Prototype) Concepts Salzburg, 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2017
- *Restrictions on subkind coercion in object mass nouns*. University of Göttingen, Department of Philosophy Mittel-bau Koloquium 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2017
- *Restrictions on subkind coercion in object mass nouns*. Linguistischer Arbeitskreiss (LAK), University of Cologne, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2016
- *Probabilities and Prototypes*. Workshop on Word Meaning, Cumberland Lodge, 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> April, 2014
- *it Motivating a Probabilistic Semantics*. Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Research Colloquium 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2013
- *The Role of Uncertainty in Semantics*. University of Göttingen, Department of Philosophy Mittel-bau Koloquium 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2013

### Selected Conference Talks

- *Object Mass Nouns in Japanese*. The 18th Szklarska Poreba Workshop, March 2017. (with K. Byrdeck, K. Erbach & H. Filip)
- *Hungarian measure phrases, bare singular nouns, and mass/count distinction*. TbiLLC 2017: The 12th International Tbilisi Symposium on Language, Logic and Computation, Lagodekhi, Georgia. (with K. Erbach & H. Filip)
- *Singular Count NPs in Measure Constructions*. Semantics and Linguistic Theory 27. University of Maryland, College Park, May 2017. (With H. Filip)
- *Vagueness as the product of learning over a noisy channel*. TbiLLC 2017: The 12th International Tbilisi Symposium on Language, Logic and Computation, Lagodekhi, Georgia. September 2017.
- *Mass-to-count coercion in ‘granular’ nouns*. Workshop on Coercion Across Linguistic Fields. The 39th Annual Conference of the German Linguistic Society, Saarbrücken, Germany, March 2017.
- *Mass/Count Variation: A Two-Dimensional Semantics*. Colloquium talk. Department of Philosophy, Linguistics and Theory of Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. November, 2016.
- *Countability: Individuation and Context*. Formal Grammar 21. University of Bolzano/Bozen. August 2016. (With H. Filip.)
- *Count/Mass Variation and Constraints on Mass-to-Count Coercion*. Countability Workshop, Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf, June 2016. (With H. Filip.)
- *A probabilistic, mereological account of the mass-count distinction*. CLASP Seminar, University of Gothenburg. November, 2016. (With H. Filip.)
- *Restrictions on subkind coercion in superordinate object mass nouns*. Sinn und Bedeutung 21, University of Edinburgh, September 2016. (With H. Filip.)

## DISSERTATION SUPERVISION

### Bachelor’s dissertations:

- Lisa Hofmann *How far can we deviate from the performative formula?*. Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf, 2015.  
Secondary supervisor.

#### **Master's dissertations:**

- Fabian Koglin. *Personal proper names in definite article phrases in German*. Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf, 2017.  
Primary supervisor.

#### **PhD Committees:**

- Kathrin Byrdeck. Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf. Started 2017.  
Third supervisor (Postdoc committee member).
- Kurt Erbach. Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf. Started 2016.  
Third supervisor (Postdoc committee member).
- Samuel Taylor. Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf. Started 2015.  
Third supervisor (Postdoc committee member).
- Vasiliki Tsouni. Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf. Started 2016.  
Third supervisor (Postdoc committee member).

### SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

#### **United States**

- Norman-Malcolm Fellowship - Autumn 2012 (Visiting Fellowship, Cornell University. Maintenance and travel costs. Value: approx. \$13,000)

#### **United Kingdom**

- AHRC Full Scholarship, Autumn 2010 - Summer 2012. Maintenance and tuition fees. Value: approx. £35,000
- Sorabji Graduate Bursary, Autumn 2009. Value: £1000

### PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

#### **Journal Reviewer:**

- Erkenntnis, 2013
- Linguistics and Philosophy, 2015
- Abstracta, 2016
- The Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic and Communication, 2016
- Glossa, 2017
- Topics in Cognitive Science, 2017

#### **Conference Reviewer:**

- Sinn und Bedeutung, 2016
- Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT), 2017
- North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics (NAACL), 2017

## TEACHING

### Summer/Winter Schools

Winter 2018: (upcoming) Invited lecturer: Barcelona Winter school on Semantics. Vagueness and ambiguity.

Summer 2016: ESSLLI 2016. Counting and measuring (with H. Filip)

### Teacher/Examiner, HHU Düsseldorf:

Winter 2016: Seminar on Probability theory in Semantics and Pragmatics

Spring 2016: Seminar on counting and measuring (with H. Filip)

Winter 2015: Seminar on counting and measuring (with H. Filip)

Spring 2015: Master's in Linguistics Colloquium.

### Invited Lecturer, HHU Düsseldorf:

Winter 2015: Part of an Introduction to Logic course.

### Graduate Teaching Assistant, KCL:

2013-14: Logic and Language, Foundations of Analytic Phil., Phil. of Mind.

2012-13: Topics in Phil. of Language, Formal Semantics.

2011-12 Phil. of Mind, Formal Syntax, Formal Semantics.

2010-11 Elementary Logic.

### Seminar Teacher, Helsinki:

2006-07: Intermediary Seminar in Phil. of Language,  
Intermediary Seminar in Phil. of Science.

2005-06: Preparatory Seminar in Phil. of Language.

## WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION

- The 18th Szklarska Poreba Workshop on the roots of pragmasemantics, March 2017
- The 17th Szklarska Poreba Workshop on the roots of pragmasemantics, March 2016
- *Incrementality in Linguistic and Musical Interaction*, King's College London, 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> March 2011

## Teaching Awards

- Nominated, KCL School of Arts and Humanities Teaching Excellence Award 2011-2012
- Honourable Mention, KCL Philosophy Teaching Tutor Award 2011-2012 & 2010-2011

## THESIS ABSTRACT

To be learnable, words must contribute something that is pretty stable across contexts. But equally, words must also be flexible enough to be able to stretch, in a principled way, to cover new cases. Similarly, to be effective for communication, the information that words encode must be robust enough and flexible enough to help us achieve a wide variety of goals. It is argued that truth conditions, and information understood in terms of truth conditions, cannot satisfy these requirements. A replacement for the truth conditional model is suggested based on a statistically grounded conception of semantic information. Informally, this can be understood in terms of reasonable expectations (what it is reasonable to believe, given the words that were used). Formally, this semantic information is captured using probabilistic and information theoretic tools. Vagueness,

understood in terms of borderline cases, is argued to be a byproduct of making the above learning and communication requirements central. Vagueness, understood as our ability to be vague with words, is given an information theoretic explanation. Finally, the account is defended with respect to some of the philosophical problems and puzzles found in the vagueness literature.