Event encoding in a crosslinguistic perspective

Syllabus

Instructor: Beth Levin
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Course web page: http://web.stanford.edu/~bclevin/lsa15.html
Dates/time: Mondays and Thursdays, July 20-July 30, 2015, 10:30am-12:20pm
Place: Social Sciences 302
Office hours: By appointment

Course Description: Talmy’s work on the lexicalization of motion events draws attention to significant differences in the strategies languages use to describe such events. This work shows that languages may differ in how they distribute the semantic components of a motion event description across the syntactic constituents of the clause. This course examines motion and other event types which show multiple encodings within and across languages. It investigates to what extent the attested encoding options stem from the interaction of crosslinguistically applicable argument realization principles with the varying lexical and morphosyntactic resources available to individual languages and to what extent they reflect alternate conceptualizations of certain event types. Examples and case studies involve the event types described by a subset of change of state verbs, ditransitive verbs, hitting verbs, motion verbs, psych-verbs, and weather verbs. Concomitantly, the course considers conceptual categories that find expression in languages, including affectedness, external/internal causation, motion, and scalar change.

Prerequisites: The course will be most profitable for those with some familiarity with basic semantic and syntactic concepts.

Course Requirements and Grading: Attendance and a written assignment will count equally in the final grade for the class.

- Students are expected to attend all 4 class meetings. Students who attend only 2 class meetings will have their grade lowered by “one letter” from the grade on their assignment; students who attend only 1 class meeting will not receive a passing grade or credit for the course.

- Students must also complete a written assignment intended to make them think about key concepts introduced in the class. The assignment is likely to include several questions, and each student will be asked to choose one of these to complete. The assignment will be handed out on Monday, July 27, 2015. Hard-copy typed answers are due at the beginning of the last class meeting on Thursday, July 30, 2015. I will not accept e-mailed answers because of the large number of students registered. Due to the tight grading deadline, absolutely no late assignments will be accepted. Remember that the Institute has a strict “no Incompletes” policy.

Course Readings: A list of suggested readings related to the lectures appears on the next page. These readings are available electronically via the University of Chicago library, unless an alternative source is given. Course lecture handouts will be posted on the course web page. They will include references to considerable additional literature.
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Lecture outline (Tentative)

**Lecture 1 (Monday, 7/20):**
Event encoding: The basic issues introduced
The notions of manner and result
The crosslinguistic encoding of hitting events I: The empirical landscape
Course organization and overview
SUGGESTED READING: Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2010

**Lecture 2 (Thursday, 7/23):**
The crosslinguistic encoding of hitting events II: Probing crosslinguistic differences
— The varied lexicalization of manner
— The realization of surfaces and force recipients in general; semantic determinants of objecthood
SUGGESTED READING: Levin in press, Lundquist & Ramchand 2012

**Lecture 3 (Monday, 7/27):**
Expressing directed motion events: Lexicalization patterns as epiphenomena of morphosyntax
SUGGESTED READING: Beavers, Levin & Tham 2010; Imbert 2012

**Lecture 4 (Thursday, 7/30):**
Talking about the weather: Crosslinguistic differences in the construal of precipitation events
Course wrap-up: The emerging larger picture
SUGGESTED READING: Eriksen, Kittilä & Kolehmainen 2012

Suggested course readings


