

Events: Modification, Aspect and Lexical Meaning

Course Number: LSA.315

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Course description

This course sets out with an examination of the role of events in accounting for inferential properties of modification. It presents a model of the logic of modification following the neo-Davidsonian mode of composition but reworking the Davidsonian framework. The approach is shown to accord with more intuitively appealing notions of event individuation and to afford a uniform treatment of individual-denoting and quantificational arguments/modifiers, a standard semantics for negation, and a relatively straightforward account of stacked temporal modifiers. The exploration of the role of events in aspectual composition, in other types of telicity phenomena, and in lexical meaning motivates a novel approach to telicity which correlates event structure with the grammar of measurement and scalar semantics. The focus will be on extending the empirical domain to data that have so far not been (easily) tractable within any single proposal, on cross-linguistic variation in the expression of telicity, and its relation to perfective and imperfective aspect.

Course prerequisites

Introduction to formal semantics.

Course requirements

E-mail us questions about any of the material presented in class or answers to open questions raised during the lectures. You should send us four questions or answers if you are taking the class for Credit/NoCredit. You should send us six questions or answers if you are taking the class for a grade.

Course Outline

1. Motivations for events and for event semantics
 - Davidson's original proposal
 - Events and grammar
 - Logic of modification and predicate polyadicity

Readings: Davidson (1967), Landman (2000) Lec. 1
Follow-up readings: Eckardt (2002)
2. Temporal Modification
 - Interaction of tense and temporal modifiers
 - Stacked modification
 - Temporal clauses

Readings: Pratt & Francez (2001), von Stechow (2002)
Follow-up readings: Dowty (1982), Artstein (2006), Condoravdi (in press),
Beaver & Condoravdi (2003)
3. Composition in event semantics
 - Events as truth makers
 - An event-free neo-Davidsonian syntax-semantics interface
 - Event individuation and the fine-grainedness of thematic roles

Readings: Krifka (1989), (1992), McConnell-Ginet (1982),
Landman (2000) Lec 2–3, Schein (2002)
Follow-up readings: Kratzer (1996), Engelberg (2002)
4. Aspect, grammar, event semantics with lattice structures
 - Readings: Partee (1999)
5. Aspectual composition: Semantic and pragmatic determinants
 - Readings: Krifka (1998)
6. Direct object, case and telicity
 - Readings: Kiparsky (1998), Kratzer (2004)
7. Perfectivity and telicity
 - Readings: Borer (2005) ch. 14–16, Filip (2005a,b)
8. Scales, measures and maximalization in deriving telic interpretations
 - Readings: Kennedy & Levin (2007)

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