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
   Follow-up readings: Eckardt (2002)

2. Temporal Modification
   Interaction of tense and temporal modifiers
   Stacked modification
   Temporal clauses
   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

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

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)
References


