

Course: LIN 621 Semantic typology
Term: Spring 2004
Instructor: Bohnemeyer
Text: Primary readings on reserve

Overview: Semantic typology aims to elucidate the workings of the syntax-semantics interface and the broader cognitive embedding of the language faculty by studying crosslinguistic variation and universals in the constraints languages impose on the semantic representation of particular "contents." In this course, we will first review some pioneering studies, such as Berlin and Kay's classic work on color terms; Talmy's typology of motion event lexicalization, and research on patterns of semantic extension in perception verbs by Viberg, Sweetser, and others. We will then take a look at more recent work carried out by the instructor and his colleagues at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics on the encoding of spatial relations and events across languages.

Goals: Semantic typology (ST) is a field of linguistic inquiry still very much in its infancy. Although the pioneering work of cognitive anthropologists in the 1960s and 1970s has demonstrated the enormous potential of empirical studies in crosslinguistic semantics for shaping theoretical approaches to the cognitive embedding of the language faculty, few broad-based and methodologically sound investigations have been carried out to date. An explicit research program for ST didn't begin to be formulated until the institution of the Language and Cognition (formerly, Cognitive Anthropology) Research Group at the Max Plank Institute in the early 1990s. The Nijmegen methodology involves (variations of) the following steps:

- initial determination of parameters of variation
- exhaustive encoding of the values of these parameters in sets of nonlinguistic stimulus items
- collection of preferred descriptions and ranges of possible descriptions in a typologically broadly varied sample of unrelated languages with multiple speakers per language according to a standardized protocol
- alternative elicitation procedures aimed at exploring the full referential potential of language-particular expressions in the target domain (in particular, referential communication tasks)
- semantic analysis to filter out pragmatically generated meaning components and isolate lexical-semantic and construction-semantic "intensions"
- the use of statistical techniques in analyzing correlations
- the formulation of implicational generalizations.

The goal of this seminar is to familiarize students both theoretically and practically with this approach so as to enable them to formulate and carry out their own research projects in ST. To this end, we will discuss theoretical and methodological prerequisites and review key readings, starting with the work of the cognitive anthropologists (Berlin & Kay; Berlin, Breedlove, & Raven; Kay & McDaniel; Lounsbury) and leading via related work on crosslinguistic patterns of semantic transfer (Evans & Wilkins; Sweetser; Viberg) and form-to-meaning mapping (Clark; Talmy) to some of the studies conducted by members of the Language and Cognition Group in the domains of spatial semantics and – under the aegis of the instructor – event construal.

Prerequisites: LIN415/515 (Syntax I); LIN438/538 (Semantics I)

Meetings: MWF 10:00-10:50 603 Baldy

Instructor: Dr. Juergen Bohnemeyer – Office 627 Baldy Phone 645-2177 ext. 727
E-mail jb77@buffalo.edu Office hours MF 14:00-15:00

Coursework: Every student is expected to present a 20-to-30-minutes oral summary of one of the readings listed on the syllabus in class, based on a handout elaborated by the student. In

addition, every student will be assigned a project involving data collection with one of a range of different stimulus kits, semantic and syntactic analysis of the data collected, comparison with the data obtained by other students using the same stimulus, and write-up of a 10-to-20-pages summary of the results. The overall grade will be computed as follows:

- Literature presentation, including handout – 35%
- Data collection project, including analysis, comparison, and report – 50%
- Overall participation – 15%.

Syllabus

Part I: Aims, methods, working assumptions

Week 1: Background: Semantics and Typology

Reading: Croft (1990: ch.s 1-3)¹

Week 2: Background: Relativism, Universalism, and the language-cognition interface

Reading: Levinson (2003b: ch. 7)

*** Mo Jan 19 MLK Day – no classes! ***

Part II: Classic studies

Week 3: Cognitive Anthropology I: Kinship terminologies; Basic Color Terms

Reading: Lounsbury (1969 [1964]); Berlin & Kay (1991 [1969]: ch. 1)²

Week 4: Cognitive Anthropology II: Basic Color Terms (Cont.); Ethnobiological taxonomies

Reading: Kay & McDaniel (1978); Berlin (1992: 20-51);
Berlin, Breedlove, & Raven (1974: ch. 3)

Week 5: Patterns of semantic transfer I

Reading: Viberg (1984); Sweetser (1990: ch. 2)

Week 6: Patterns of semantic transfer II

Reading: Evans & Wilkins (2000)

¹ 63 pages in all. The first chapter is downloadable and mandatory reading; the second and third chapters are optional. The book as a whole is on reserve as well.

² Discussion will focus on those readings that students select for presentation, and so preparatory reading should focus on those articles/chapters as well. The order of mention of publications for each week reflects the order of relevance of the publications for the topic to be discussed that week.

Week 7: Patterns of form-to-meaning mapping I

Reading: Clark (1978); Talmy (1985)

Week 8: Patterns of form-to-meaning mapping II

Reading: Talmy (1985) (Cont.); Slobin (2003)

Part III: The Nijmegen approach: Space

Week 9: Spatial frames of reference

Reading: Pederson *et al.* (1998); Levinson *et al.* (2002)

***** SPRING BREAK Mo Mar 15 till Fr Mar 19 *****

Week 10: Topological relations

Reading: Levinson & Meira 2003

Week 11: Locative predicates

Reading: Levinson & Wilkins (ms.); Bohnemeyer & Brown (ms.)

***** Students must select the topic of their data collection project by Fr Apr 2! *****

Week 12: Demonstrative systems

Reading: Levinson (2003a); Enfield (2003); Bohnemeyer (ms.); Diessel 1999

Part IV: The Nijmegen approach: Event representation

Week 13: Introducing the problem

Reading: Pawley (1987); Givón (1991)

Week 14: Constraints on macro-event encoding

Reading: Bohnemeyer (2003)

Week 15: The future of semantic typology

Reading: t.b.a.

***** DATA COLLECTION PROJECTS DUE Mo Apr 26! *****

Reading list³

- Berlin, B. (1992). *Ethnobiological classification*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Berlin, B. Breedlove, D., and P. Raven (1974). *Principles of Tzeltal plant classification*. New York: Academic Press.
- Berlin, B. and P. Kay (1991[1969]). *Basic Color Terms*. [Paperback Edition! Reprinted 1999] Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bohnenmeyer, J. (2000). Event order in language and cognition. In H. de Hoop & T. v. d. Wouden (Eds.), *Linguistics in the Netherlands 2000*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. 1-16.
- (2002). Review of Puetz, M. & Verspoor, M., *Explorations in Linguistic Relativity*. *Language and Society* 31: 452-456.
- (2003). The unique vector constraint. In E. van der Zee and J. Slack (eds.), *Representing direction in language and space*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 86-110.
- (ms.). *Two ways to skin a cat: Meaning and use of Yukatek spatial demonstratives*. Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.
- Bohnenmeyer, J. and Brown, P. (ms.). *Standing divided: Dispositional verbs and locative predications in two Mayan languages*. Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.
- Clark, E. V. (1978). Locationals: A study of 'existential', 'locative', and 'possessive' sentences. In J. H. Greenberg (ed.), *Universals of human language*. Vol. 4: *Syntax*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 85-126.
- Croft, W. (1990). *Typology and universals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Diessel, H. (1999). The morphosyntax of demonstratives in synchrony and diachrony. *Linguistic typology* 3: ???.
- Enfield, N. J. (2003). Demonstratives in space and interaction. *Language* 79: 82-117.
- Evans, N. & D. P. Wilkins (2000). In the mind's ear: The semantic perception of perception verbs in Australian languages. *Language* 76: 546-592.
- Givón, T. (1991). Serial verbs and the mental reality of 'event'. In Traugott, E. C. and B. Heine (eds.), *Approaches to grammaticalization*. Vol. 1. Amsterdam: Benjamins. 81-127.
- Kay, P. & C. McDaniel (1978). The linguistic significance of the meaning of basic color terms. *Language* 54: 610-646.
- Levinson, S. C. (1997). From outer to inner space. In J. Nuyts & E. Pederson (Eds.), *Language and conceptualization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 13-45.
- (2000). Yélf dnye and the theory of basic color terms. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 10: 3-55.
- (2002). Space: linguistic expression. In N.J. Smelser & P. Baltes (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Vol. 22 (pp. 14749-14752). Oxford: Pergamon.
- (2003a). *Deixis*. In L. R. Horn and G. Ward (eds.), *Handbook of pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp. ???
- (2003b). *Space in language and cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Levinson, S. C., Kita, S., Haun, D. B. M., and B. H. Rasch (2002). *Returning the tables*. *Cognition* 84: 155-188.
- Levinson, S. C., Meira, S., and The Language and Cognition Group (2003). 'Natural concepts' in the spatial topological domain – adposition meanings in crosslinguistic perspective. *Language* 79: 485-516.

³ All books have been or are being put on reserve, and all chapters and articles have been or are being made downloadable. Published chapters/articles can be downloaded from the UB library web site; unpublished articles/chapters can be downloaded from the Blackboard system/UBlearns. The references include additional readings not listed on the syllabus.

- Levinson, S. C. and Wilkins, D. P. (ms.). Patterns in the data: Toward a semantic typology of spatial description. In Levinson, S. C. and D. P. Wilkins (eds.), *Grammars of space*. Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.
- Lounsbury, F. G. (1969 [1964]). Crow- and Omaha-Type Kinship Terminologies. In S. A. Tyler (ed.), *Cognitive anthropology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. 212-255. [Originally published in W. H. Goodenough (ed.) (1964), *Explorations in cultural anthropology*.]
- Pawley, A. (1987). Encoding events in Kalam and English: different logics for reporting experience. In R. S. Tomlin (ed.), *Coherence and grounding in discourse*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. 329-360.
- Pederson, E., Danziger, E., Wilkins, D., Levinson, S., S. Kita & G. Senft (1998). Semantic typology and spatial conceptualization. *Language* 74: 557-589.
- Slobin, D. I. (2003). Language and thought online: Cognitive consequences of linguistic relativity. In D. Gentner and S. Goldin-Meadow (eds.), *Language in mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [pages ???]
- Sweetser, E. (1990). *From etymology to pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Talmy, L. (1985). Lexicalization patterns. In: T. Shopen (ed.), *Language typology and syntactic description*. Vol. 3: *Grammatical categories and the lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 57-149.
- Viberg, Å. (1984). The verbs of perception: A typological study. In B. Butterworth, B. Comrie, & Dahl, Ö. (eds.), *Explanations for language universals*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 123-162.