

Course: LIN622 Advanced linguistic theory 2: Semantic typology
Semester: Fall 2012
Instructor: Bohnemeyer
Text: Primary readings made available through UBlerns

Overview: This seminar summarizes and evaluates the evidence that has become available in recent years regarding just how different the languages of the world really are in terms of the meanings they express (or in other words, in terms of how they represent "reality") and discusses the implications for cognition. The discussion will be based primarily on the instructor's own research in the domains of temporal and spatial reference and event representation, but will take into account as much of the available literature as is feasible. Along the way, an introduction to Semantic typology, the study of crosslinguistic variation in semantics, will be provided.

Goals: The instructor will defend the following theses, which will be discussed during the seminar:

- There are no "fixed points" in the association between form and meaning – no concepts that are universally lexicalized or grammaticalized.
- Nevertheless, contra Evans & Levinson 2009, there are apparent semantic and pragmatic universals – albeit universals of a rather more abstract nature. Thus, the available evidence so far suggests that the semantic systems of all languages submit to an analysis that postulates basic ontological categories such as perdurants, continuants, regions of space, time intervals, and vectors. These are not uniformly expressed as such, but speakers of all languages seem to nevertheless produce utterances that refer to them. Similarly, the pragmatic machinery involved in the interpretation of utterances – speech acts, implicatures, presuppositions – seems to not be language-specific at the most basic level.
- Similarly, the mapping of form and meaning at the syntax-semantics interface is subject to "soft", violable constraints such as a preference for iconic representations.
- However, these apparently universal categories of and constraints on linguistic meaning cannot simply be derived from some innate language of thought, as proposed by Fodor 1975 and, in much more moderate form, Pinker 2007 and many others. Instead, the available evidence suggests on balance that cultural transmission and diffusion is the best explanation for these shared tendencies.

Prerequisites: If this is your first course on semantics, please talk to the instructor.

Meetings: MF 2:00-3:20pm 115 Baldy
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Coursework: Every student is expected to lead the discussion on two of the readings, for which they provide a summary handout according to specifications by the instructor. Term papers should be based on original data gathered by the student from multiple speakers of a language other than their first language (exceptions may apply) or the typological analysis by the student of available data and should address any of the questions raised during the seminar or

contribute to semantic typology in some other form. The project can be self-designed (bonus points) and/or rely on one of a range of different stimulus kits to be provided by the instructor. The studies will include semantic and syntactic analysis of the collected data and write-up of a roughly 10-page summary. The overall grade will be computed as follows:

- Leading reading discussions, including handouts – 40%
- Data collection project, including analysis, comparison, and report – 50%
- Overall participation – 10%¹

Outline

Syntax of the reading assignments:

- *a; b* – read *a* and *b*
- *a; (b)* – read *a* plus optionally *b*
- *a/b* – read *a* or *b*, depending on which one was selected for discussion in class (and read the other optionally in addition if you're interested)
- *(a,b)/c* – read either *a* and *b* or *c*, depending on which one was selected for discussion in class (and read the other optionally in addition if you're interested)

Then from there continue with: intro to typology – Matthew on word order?; Evans in press; maybe Viberg and Evans & Wilkins on polysemy studies based on dictionary data; Berlin & Kay as landmark extensional study; Lucy on etic grids; my own yet to be written paper on elicitation techniques etc.

Part	Week	Day	Topics	Reading
I Questions and hypotheses	1	1	Effability; translatability; interface uniformity; UTAH	Von Stechow & Matthewson 2008; Jackendoff & Culicover 2005: -44-56, 73-88, 94-103
		2	Semantic primitives: expressive equivalence, isomorphism, strong lexicalization;	Goddard 1994; (Durst 2003;) Bohnemeyer 2003
	2	1	LABOR DAY	
		2	Substantive universals and the toolkit hypothesis; universalism, relativism, and the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis	Evans & Levinson 2009; Levinson 2003
II Methods	3	1	Semantic categorization and linguistic typology	Evans in press; Bohnemeyer 2011; Dryer 1992
		2	Gathering extensional data; etic grids (JB on the road; videos of CIFCL lectures 5-6 will be made available to students)	Kay & Maffi 1999; Lucy 1997; Kay 2006
	4	1	ROSH HASHANAH	
		2	Primary and secondary sources	Viberg 1984; Evans & Wilkins 2000
	5	1	Analyzing extensional data: quantitative and qualitative approaches	Levinson & Meira 2003; Majid et al 2008
		2		Regier et al 2007; (Kemp & Regier 2012;)

¹ Participation is assessed as follows: regular active participation – A; regular attendance and occasional active participation – B; regular attendance, no active participation – C; irregular attendance, no active participation: D; poor attendance, no active participation: F.

				Bohnemeyer et al 2012
III Lexicalization	6	1	Lexicalization across languages	(prolly one of the CIFCL lectures)
		2	Semantic primitives and the strong lexicalization hypothesis: the AFTER story	Bohnemeyer 1998, 2003
	7	1	The lexicalization of motion paths	Bohnemeyer 2010
		2	The language-specificity of Conceptual Structure	Bohnemeyer & Romero-Méndez 2009
IV Functional categories	8	1	The grammaticalization of functional categories; temporal semantics in tenseless languages	Bohnemeyer 2009; Bittner 2005; Smith, Perkins, & Fernald 2007
		2	Tense and the cognitive representation of time	Bohnemeyer 2000; Boroditsky & Gaby 2010
	9	1	The semantic and cognitive basis of functional categories	???
V Lexical category systems		2	“Exotic” lexical categories – a survey	Schultze-Berndt 2007; Bohnemeyer & Brown 2007
	10	1	Is the noun-verb distinction universal? If so, in which sense?	Baker 2003: ch1; Evans & Osada 2005
		2	The semantic basis of lexical category systems: predication vs. dynamicity	(Koenig & Michelson 2012;) Bohnemeyer 2002
VI The syntax-semantics interface	11	1	Semantic composition	(Chung & Ladusaw 2003) Koenig & Michelson 2012
		2	The type system	(von Fintel & Matthewson 2008) Bohnemeyer et al
	12	1	Argument structure classes	Pinker 2007: 77-83; Guerssel et al 1985; Bohnemeyer 2007
		2	Constraints on form-to-meaning mapping: event segmentation	Bohnemeyer et al. 2007; (Bohnemeyer 2003b; Givón 1991) Bohnemeyer et al 2010
	13	1	The design of the interface: in search of the event phrase	Bohnemeyer & Van Valin ms.
		2	FALL RECESS	
	VII Pragmatics	14	1	Spatial frames of reference: linguistic, cultural, and environmental factors
2			Implicatures	Ochs Keenan 1974; Matsumoto 1995; (von Fintel & Matthewson 2008); (Bohnemeyer 2009)
15		1	Presuppositions	Matthewson 2006; Tonhauser et al in press
VIII How does it replicate?		2	Sources of crosslinguistic uniformity; the case for cultural transfer	tba.

Reading list²

² Readings will be uploaded to UBLearn under “Course Documents” as we go along.

- Ameka, F. K. & S. C. Levinson. (2007). The typology and semantics of locative predicates: Posturals, positionals and other beasts. *Linguistics* 45 (5/6): 847-871.
- Baker, M. (2003). *Lexical Categories: Verbs, Nouns and Adjectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 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.
- (2002). Review of Puetz, M. & Verspoor, M., *Explorations in Linguistic Relativity*. *Language and Society* 31: 452-456.
- Bittner, M. 2005. Future discourse in a tenseless language. *Journal of Semantics* 22: 339-387.
- Bohnenmeyer, Jürgen. (2000). Event order in language and cognition. In H. de Hoop and T. van der Wouden (Eds.), *Linguistics in the Netherlands 17*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 1-16.
- (2002). Parts of speech in Yukatek. Talk presented at the Americanist Colloquium, Radboud University Nijmegen.
- (2003a). NSM without the Strong Lexicalization Hypothesis. *Theoretical Linguistics* 29(3): 211-222.
- (2003b). 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.
- (2007). Morpholexical transparency and the argument structure of verbs of cutting and breaking. *Cognitive Linguistics* 18: 153–177.
- (2008). *Volumes, surfaces, and extreme points: Meronymy and object-centered geometry in Yucatec Maya*. Talk presented at Northwestern University, October.
http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~jb77/Yuc_meronyms&FoRs_SILC_v2.pdf
- (2009). Temporal anaphora in a tenseless language. In W. Klein & P. Li (Eds.), *The expression of time in language*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 83-128.
- (2011). Semantic typology as an approach to mapping the nature-nurture divide in cognition. White paper for the initiative SBE 2020: Future Research in the Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences. Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation.
http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/sbe_2020/2020_pdfs/Bohnenmeyer_Juergen_95.pdf; last accessed 3/6/2011).
- (ms.). *Two ways to skin a cat: Meaning and use of Yukatek spatial demonstratives*. Manuscript, University at Buffalo. <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~jb77/catskinpap3.pdf>
- Bohnenmeyer, J. & P. Brown. (2007). Standing divided: Dispositionals and locative predications in two Mayan languages. *Linguistics* 45(5-6): 1105-1151.
- Bohnenmeyer, J., E. Benedicto, A. Capistrán Garza, K. Donelson, A. Eggleston, N. Hernández-Green, S. Hernández-Gómez, J. Lovegren, C. O'Meara, E. Palancar, G. Pérez Báez, G. Polian, R. Romero, R. Tucker, and V. Vázquez. 2012. Marcos de referencia en lenguas mesoamericanas: Un análisis multivariante tipológico. *Proceedings from CILLA V: the Conference on the Indigenous Languages of Latin America*.
- Bohnenmeyer, J., N. J. Enfield, J. Essegbey, I. Ibarretxe-Antuñano, S. Kita, F. Lübke, & F. K. Ameka. (2007). Principles of event segmentation in language: The case of motion events. *Language* 83(3): 495-532.
- Bohnenmeyer, J., N. J. Enfield, J. Essegbey, I. & S. Kita. (2010). The macro-event property: The segmentation of causal chains. In Bohnemeyer, J. and E. Pederson (Eds.), *Event representation in language: Encoding events at the language-cognition interface*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 43-67.
- Bohnenmeyer, J. & S. C. Levinson. Ms. Framing Whorf: A response to Li et al. Manuscript, University at Buffalo.
- Bohnenmeyer, J. & R. Romero Méndez. 2009. Path to second language via Conceptual Structure. Invited talk at the workshop “The Mind-Context Divide”; University of Iowa.
- Bohnenmeyer, J., R. Romero Méndez, C. O'Meara, & G. Pérez Báez. 2009. The grammar of parts, places, and paths in languages of Mexico. Paper presented at *SULA 5: Semantics of Under-Represented Languages in the Americas*. Harvard University/MIT.

- Bohnenmeyer, J. & Van Valin, R. Jr. Ms. The Macro-Event Property and the Layered Structure of the Clause. Manuscript, University at Buffalo.
- Boroditsky, L. & Gaby, A. (2010). Remembrances of Times East: Absolute Spatial Representations of Time in an Australian Aboriginal Community. *Psychological Science*. doi:10.1177/0956797610386621
- Brown, P. & S. C. Levinson. (1994). Immanuel Kant among the Tenejapans: Anthropology as empirical philosophy. *Ethos* 22(1): 3-41.
- Casagrande, J. B. and K. L. Hale. (1967). Semantic relationships in Papago folk-definitions. *Studies in Southwestern ethnolinguistics: Meaning and history of the languages of the American Southwest*, ed. by Dell Hymes and William E. Bittle, 165-193. The Hague: Mouton.
- Chung, S. & W. A. Ladusaw. 2003. *Restriction and saturation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Croft, W. (1990). *Typology and universals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cruse, D. Allen. 1986. *Lexical semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Danziger, E. (2001). Cross-cultural studies in language and thought: Is there a meta-language? In C. C. Moore & H. F. Mathews (eds.), *The psychology of cultural experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 199-222.
- Diessel, H. (1999). The morphosyntax of demonstratives in synchrony and diachrony. *Linguistic typology* 3: 1-49.
- Enfield, N. J. (2003). Demonstratives in space and interaction. *Language* 79: 82-117.
- Evans, N. In press. Semantic typology. In J. J. Song (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of linguistic typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, N. & S. C. Levinson. 2009. The myth of language universals: Language diversity and its importance for cognitive science. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 32: 429-492
- Evans, N. & D. P. Wilkins (2000). In the mind's ear: The semantic perception of perception verbs in Australian languages. *Language* 76: 546-592.
- Fintel, K. von & L. Matthewson. 2008. Universals in semantics. *The Linguistic Review* 25: 139-201.
- Foley, William A. (1997). *Anthropological linguistics: An introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Gentner, D. & S. Goldin-Meadow. (2004). Whither Whorf? In D. Gentner & S. Goldin-Meadow (eds.), *Language in mind: Advances in the study of language and thought*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 25-46.
- 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.
- Guerssel, M., Hale, K. L., Laughren, M., Levin, B., & White Eagle, J. (1985). A cross-linguistic study of transitivity alternations. In Eilfort, William H., Kroeber, Paul D., & Peterson, Karen L. (Eds.), *Papers from the parasession on causatives and agentivity at the twenty-first regional meeting*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistic Society, 48-63.
- Hale, K. L. (1971). A note on the Walbiri tradition of antonymy. *Semantics: An interdisciplinary reader in philosophy, linguistics, and psychology*, ed. by Danny D. Steinberg and Leon A. Jakobovits, 472-482. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jackendoff, R. (1983). *Semantics and cognition*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Jackendoff, R & B. Landau. 1992. Spatial language and spatial cognition. In R. Jackendoff, *Languages of the mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 99-124.
- Kay, P. 2006. Methodological issues in cross-language color naming. In C. Jourdan & K. Tuite (eds.), *Language, Culture and Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 115-134.
- Kay, P. & L. Maffi. (1999). Color Appearance and the Emergence and Evolution of Basic Color Lexicons. *American Anthropologist* 101(4): 743-760.
- Kemp, C. & T. Regier (2012). [Kinship categories across languages reflect general communicative principles](#). *Science*, 336, 1049-1054.
- Koenig, J. P. & K. Michelson. (2012). The (non)universality of syntactic selection and functional application. In C. Piñón ed., *Empirical Issues in Syntax and Semantics* 9, pp. 1–21.
- Levinson, S. C. (1994). Vision, shape, and linguistic description: Tzeltal body-part terminology and object description. *Linguistics* 32(4): 791-856.

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- (2000). Yéǎ dnye and the theory of basic color terms. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 10: 3-55.
- (2003). Language and mind: Let's get the issues straight! In D. Gentner & S. Goldin-Meadow (eds.), *Language in mind: Advances in the study of language and thought*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 25-46.
- (2006). *Deixis*. In L. R. Horn and G. Ward (eds.), *Handbook of pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell. 97-121.
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- Levinson, S. C., Meira, S., & The Language and Cognition Group (2003). 'Natural concepts' in the spatial topological domain – adposition meanings in crosslinguistic perspective. *Language* 79: 485-516.
- Levinson, S. C. & Wilkins, D. P. (2006a). The background to the study of the language of space. Levinson, S. C. & D. P. Wilkins (eds.), *Grammars of space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1-23.
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- Li, P., Abarbanell, L., & Papafragou, A. (2005). Spatial reasoning skills in Tenejapan Mayans. *Proceedings from the 27th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
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- Majid, A., J. S. Boster, & M. Bowerman. (2008). The cross-linguistic categorization of everyday events: A study of cutting and breaking. *Cognition* 109: 235-250.
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- Matthewson, L. (2006). Presupposition and cross-linguistic variation. *Proceedings of the 26th Meeting of the North-Eastern Linguistic Society*: 63–76.
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