

**Course:** LIN623 Advanced linguistic theory: Semantic typology  
**Semester:** Spring 2009  
**Instructor:** Bohnemeyer  
**Text:** Primary readings on reserve

**Overview:** Semantic typology (ST) studies languages as engines for external expressions of speakers' internal representations. It seeks to uncover universals and variation in the constraints different languages impose on the encoding of these representations, combining methods and approaches of semantics, pragmatics, field linguistics, language typology, and experimental psychology.

**Goals:** ST is a field of linguistic inquiry still very much in its infancy. Although the pioneering work of the Cognitive Anthropologists in the 1960s and 1970s has demonstrated the enormous potential of empirical studies in crosslinguistic semantics for shaping theoretical approaches on the interface between language and cognition, few broad-based and methodologically sound investigations have been carried out to date. An explicit research program for ST has been formulated by the members of the Language and Cognition Research Group at the Max Plank Institute for Psycholinguistics. The Nijmegen methodology involves the following steps:

- a. Preliminary determination of parameters of variation on the basis of previous research
- b. Construction of an *etic grid* that captures the possible value combinations of these parameters
- c. Exhaustive encoding of the cells of the etic grid in sets of nonverbal stimuli
- d. 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
- e. Additional elicitation aimed at probing the full semantic extension of the expressions collected in (d)
- f. Tests to filter out pragmatically generated meaning components and isolate lexical (and constructional) semantic representations
- g. Statistical analysis of correlations
- h. Formulation of implicational generalizations.

The goal of this seminar is to familiarize students both theoretically and practically with the approach to ST sketched above so as to enable them to formulate and carry out their own research projects. To this end, we will discuss theoretical and methodological prerequisites and review key studies, starting with the work of the ethnosemanticists (Berlin & Kay; Berlin, Breedlove, & Raven; Kay & McDaniel; Lounsbury) and leading via some of the work conducted by members of the Language and Cognition Group in the domain of spatial semantics to new research in the field of event encoding directed by the instructor.

ST requires the collection of primary data from a wide variety of typologically diverse languages. This in turn presupposes the ability to collect and analyze semantic data in field research, i.e., in work with native speaker consultants. Part of the seminar is dedicated to familiarizing students with methods of semantic field work. This part is designed to be useful to students, not just in carrying out ST projects, but in any field research on problems of linguistic meaning. Students will be given the opportunity to conduct term projects using a stimulus of their choosing from a battery of different elicitation tools or developing their own design.

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

**Meetings:** TR 15:30-16:50 109 Baldy

**Instructor:** Dr. Jürgen Bohnemeyer – Office 642 Baldy Phone 645-0127

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**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 carries out an ST project involving data collection from a minimum of 2-3 speakers of a language other than the student’s L1. The project can be self-designed (bonus points!) and/or rely on one of a range of different stimulus kits created by the instructor and/or his former colleagues at the MPI for Psycholinguistics. The studies will include semantic and syntactic analysis of the collected data and write-up of a 5-to-10-page summary of the results; bonus points if a comparison to data obtained from (an)other language(s) (by other students/researchers or by the same student) is added. The overall grade will be computed as follows:

- Literature presentation, including handout – 30%
- Data collection project, including analysis, comparison, and report – 50%
- Overall participation – 20%<sup>1</sup>

**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)

Part	Week	Day	Topics	Reading
I intro	1	1	this seminar; linguistic categorization; outline and course work	Levinson 2003
2 library studies		2	the classics: library studies I: lexicalization and polysemy patterns	Viberg 1984/Evans & Wilkins 2000
	3 field semantics	2	1	the classics: library studies II: motion event framing
2			field semantics; semantic elicitation	Vaux & Cooper 1999: ch.4
3		1	the empirical basis of field semantics	Bohnemeyer 2003a
	2	diagnostics in lexical semantics	Cruse 1986: ch.1	
4 ethno-semantics	4	1	folk definitions and the lexicon	Casagrande & Hale 1967/Hale 1971
		2	the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis; ethnosemantics; etic grids; ethnobiological classification	Foley 1997: ch.5/Berlin, Breedlove, & Raven 1974: ch.3/Berlin 1992: ch.1

<sup>1</sup> 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.

	5	1	kinship terminologies; color terminologies; implications	Lounsbury (1969 [1964]) /MacLaury 2001/Berlin & Kay 1991 [1969]: ch.1/Levinson 2000/ Roberson, Davies, & Davidoff 2000
		2	new frontiers: ethnophysiology	O’Meara & Bohnermeyer 2008
5 the Nijmegen approach I: space	6	1	linguistic typology; the Nijmegen approach; basics of spatial semantics	Croft 1991: ch.1/Jackendoff 1983 ch. 9/Jackendoff & Landau 1992/Levinson & Wilkins 2006a
		2	topological relations markers	Levinson & Meira 2003
	7	1	basic locative constructions	Ameka & Levinson 2007/ Bohnermeyer & Brown 2007; (Levinson & Wilkins 2006b: 512-526)
		2	spatial frames of reference I: typology	Levinson 1996
	8	1	spatial demonstratives	Levinson 2006/Enfield 2003/ Bohnermeyer ms./Diessel 1999
6 space beyond Nijmegen: MesoSpace	9	1	<b>Spring recess</b>	
		2		
	10	1	frames of reference in Mesoamerica	Brown & Levinson 1994/ /Danziger 2001 /Bohnermeyer 2008
		2	semantic composition in spatial descriptions	Pérez Báez & Bohnermeyer 2008
7 the Nijmegen approach II: event semantics	11	1	events in language and cognition: basics	Tenny & Pustejovsky 2000
		2	event segmentation: the macro-event property	Bohnermeyer et al. 2007: 495-508; (Pawley 1987)
	12	1	event segmentation: motion events	Bohnermeyer et al. 2007: 508-532; (Bohnermeyer 2003b; Givón 1991)
		2	event segmentation: causal chains	Bohnermeyer et al. in press
	13	1	verbs of cutting and breaking: lexicalization	Majid, Boster, & Bowerman 2008
		2	verbs of cutting and breaking: argument structure	Bohnermeyer 2007
8 the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis	14	1	the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis: state of the art	Gentner & Goldin-Meadow 2004; (Bohnermeyer 2002)
		2	spatial frames of reference II: evidence for Whorfian effects	Pederson <i>et al.</i> 1998
	15	1	the Levinson-Gleitman debate	Li & Gleitman 2002/Levinson <i>et al.</i> 2002/Li, Abarbanell, & Papafragou 2005/Majid <i>et al.</i> 2004
9 finale		2	the bottom line: so how much variation is there in linguistic categorization?	tba.

## Reading list<sup>2</sup>

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.

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.

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

- 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.
- Bohnenmeyer, Jürgen. (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](http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~jb77/Yuc_meronyms&FoRs_SILC_v2.pdf)
- (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., 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. (In press). The macro-event property: The segmentation of causal chains. In J. Bohnemeyer & E. Pederson (eds.), *Event representation in language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
[http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~jb77/Eugene\\_paper\\_jb&al\\_draft\\_03.pdf](http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~jb77/Eugene_paper_jb&al_draft_03.pdf)
- 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.
- 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. & D. P. Wilkins (2000). In the mind's ear: The semantic perception of perception verbs in Australian languages. *Language* 76: 546-592.
- 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.
- 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.
- Levinson, S. C. (1994). Vision, shape, and linguistic description: Tzeltal body-part terminology and object description. *Linguistics* 32(4): 791-856.

- (1996). Frames of reference and Molyneux's question: Crosslinguistic evidence. In P. Bloom, M. A. Peterson, L. Nadel, and M. F. Garrett (eds.), *Language and space*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 109-169.
- (2000). Yéí 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.
- 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., & 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.
- (2006b). Patterns in the data: Toward a semantic typology of spatial description. In Levinson, S. C. & D. P. Wilkins (eds.), *Grammars of space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 512-575.
- 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*.]
- Li, P. & L. Gleitman. 2002. Turning the tables: language and spatial reasoning. *Cognition* 83:265-294.
- 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.
- Majid, A., Bowerman, M., Kita, S., Haun, D. & Levinson, S.C. 2004. Can language restructure cognition? The case for space. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 8(3): 108-114.  
[http://www.mpi.nl/Members/StephenLevinson/PDF/2004\\_Can\\_language\\_restructure\\_cognition.pdf](http://www.mpi.nl/Members/StephenLevinson/PDF/2004_Can_language_restructure_cognition.pdf)
- 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.
- MacLaury, R. (1989). Zapotec body-part locatives: prototypes and metaphoric extensions. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 55: 119-154.
- 2001. Color terms. *Language typology and language universals: An international handbook*, vol 2, ed. by Martin Haspelmath, Ekkehard König, Wulf Oesterricher, and Wolfgang Raible, 1227-1250. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- O'Meara, C. & J. Bohemeyer. (2008). Complex landscape terms in Seri. *Language Sciences* 30(2-3): 316-339.
- 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.
- Pérez Báez, G. & J. Bohemeyer. (2008). Object to path in Mesoamerica: Semantic composition of locative and motion descriptions in Yucatec Maya and Juchitán Zapotec. *Memoria del IX Encuentro Internacional De Lingüística En El Noroeste. Vol. 2*. Hermosillo: Editorial UniSon. 269-284.
- Roberson, Debi, Ian Davies, and Jules Davidoff. 2000. Color categories are not universal: Replications and new evidence from a Stone Age culture. *Journal of Experimental Psychology General* 129:369-398.
- Talmy, L. (2000). *Toward a cognitive semantics. Vol. II: Typology and process in concept structuring*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (<http://linguistics.buffalo.edu/people/faculty/talmy/talmyweb/TCS.html>)
- Tenny, C. & J. Pustejovsky. (2000). A history of events in linguistic theory. In C. Tenny & J. Pustejovsky (eds.), *Events as grammatical objects*. Stanford, CA: CSLI. 3-37.
- Vaux, B. & J. Cooper (1999). *Introduction to linguistic field methods*. Munich: Lincom.
- 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.