

LEXICAL SEMANTICS OF VERBS

Instructor: Hana Filip (Univ.-Professorin)
Time: Tuesday and Thursday 16:30 - 18:00
Place: Building 2513, Room U1.22

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Lexical semantics is the study of word meanings. In one way or another it revolves around the question *What can/do words mean?* There are two main ways in which this question can be addressed: namely, word meanings can be studied in connection with the principle of compositionality or the nature of the human mind.

The principle of compositionality is a methodological principle describing how a system for syntax and semantics of natural languages is to be designed. On this assumption, the answer to the question *What can/do words mean?* amounts to the claim that one central ingredient of word meanings must be their contribution to the truth-conditions of sentences.

From the cognitive point of view, the meaning of words is taken to be names for individual concepts. Hence, lexical semantics is the study of those concepts that have names. So the question *What can/do words mean?* amounts to the question *What concepts can have names?* But this leads to another basic question *What are concepts?*, which directly concerns the very nature of meaning in natural language and the notion of semantics. This opens up discussions about how concepts categorize human experience, how they are related to the real physical world, what they tell us about the nature of the human mind, given that they capture what people consider to be most cognitively significant in their experience.

This course is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the field of lexical semantics, but rather to introduce several influential approaches to verb meanings in semantics, philosophy and psychology. They will revolve around two main questions:

- (i) How do we discover meaning of verbs?
- (ii) How do we represent meaning of verbs?

Note: The class will be conducted in English and German (see below "LANGUAGE")

LEARNING GOALS

- Understand theoretical and empirical methods of linguistic analysis
- Develop skill in reading primary scientific research literature
- Develop skill in scientific writing
- Develop skill in scientific oral presentation

PREREQUISITES

Introduction to Semantics & Pragmatics, Syntax & Morphology, Logic.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (*Beteiligungsnachweis* and *Abschlussprüfung*)

- **Participation in seminar.** Active participation in seminar discussions. They will be based on lectures, assigned readings (see the COURSE SYLLABUS below) and write-ups submitted by students.

- **Write-ups.** For those weeks that you have assigned readings, you will be required to provide write-ups (in English or German). Your write-ups should include: (i) a discussion concerning some points that you found interesting and why, and (ii) questions and points of clarification. **Print out your write-ups and bring to class unless otherwise noted. Late write-ups (i.e. after the lecture has begun) will not be accepted. You are welcome to turn in your write-ups early (e.g. if you know you will miss class).**
- **One presentation in seminar.** It should be about 30 minutes long followed by about 30-minute question and answer period. (This may vary depending on the number of students in the seminar.)
- **Beteiligungsnachweis (BN):** In order to get a BN:
 - (i) You must turn in write ups with no more than two unsatisfactory grades. You will be graded on a V, V- basis, where V is satisfactory, V- is unsatisfactory.
 - (ii) One in-class presentation of your write-up (in English or German).
 - (iii) You may not miss more than 4 class meetings.
- **Abschlussprüfung (AP):** In order to qualify for the AP, you must meet the requirements for the BN and write a final paper at the end of the term (more instructions provided towards the end of the term). AP grades will be assigned according to:
 - active attendance and participation (10% of overall grade),
 - the average score on the write-ups (40% of overall grade),
 - in-class presentation and lead of discussion (20% of overall grade),
 - final paper (30% of overall grade).

Percentage	Grade
at least 90.00%	1
80.00%	2
70.00%	3
60.00%	4

You are highly encouraged to apply for the AP since most of the work that you do for the BN will count towards the AP. You can apply for the AP using the appropriate form for your course of study. The forms are available in the linguistics department office, and you can turn in your completed form there.

LANGUAGE

A lot of the lecturing will be in English, because nearly all the relevant research is published in English. However, you are welcome to participate in class by speaking English or German and you are welcome to turn in assignments in English or German. **You will NOT be penalized for any mistakes having to do with English grammar; you will be graded purely on content.**

HONOR CODE

Any kind of academic dishonesty is prohibited, specifically including plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation and fabrication.

"Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea, even if it is presented in your own style. It includes material from books, journals or any other printed source, the work of other students or staff, information from the Internet, software programs or other electronic material, designs and ideas. It also includes the organization or structuring of any such material." (Glossary, University of Wellington, New Zealand).

Your grade is based on your own individual work. This means that plagiarism is strictly prohibited. Things that make it obvious that you plagiarized: the same (spelling) mistakes,

the same formatting, the same wording, among others. If you work with another student (or several other students), you must take your own notes, and write up the assignment separately. Do not share any drafts of your assignment or meeting notes with anybody else, and do not accept drafts of assignment or meeting notes from anybody else. **You must write up the assignments in your own words, by yourself. Everything must be typed up and printed out unless otherwise noted.**

COMMON COURTESY

Turn off cellular phones and other electronic devices during class, do not send and receive text messages during class. You may use a laptop to take notes.

COURSE SYLLABUS (subject to changes and students' suggestions)

- Week 1: October 15**
- Class introduction
 - **Theme 1: Aspectual Classes: Relevant meaning components**
- Week 2: October 22**
- Theme 1: continued
- Week 3: October 29**
- Theme 1: continued
 - First write-up due:
Filip, Hana 2012. "[Lexical Aspect.](http://user.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/~filip/Publications.htm)" *The Oxford Handbook of Tense and Aspect*, edited by Robert I. Binnick. Oxford University Press.
<http://user.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/~filip/Publications.htm>
 - **October 31:** Discussion
- Week 4: November 5**
- **Theme 2: Event semantics: (Neo-)Davidsonian Frameworks**
- Week 5: November 12**
- **Theme 2:** continued
 - **November 14:** Guest Lecture TBA
- Week 6: November 19**
- Second write-up due
Partee, Barbara H. (1999). Nominal and temporal semantic structure: Aspect and quantification. In E. Hajičová, T. Hoskovec, O. Leška, and P. Sgall, eds., *Prague Linguistic Circle Papers* 3:91-108.
 - **November 21:** Discussion
- Week 7: November 26**
- **Theme 3: Individual versus Stage Level Distinction**
- Week 8: December 3 Students' Presentations**
December 5 Guest Lecture TBA
- Week 9: December 10**
- Theme 3: continued

- Week 10: December 17**
- Third write-up due: TBA
 - **December 19:** Discussion
- Week 11: January 7**
- **Theme 4: Scales**
- Week 12: January 14**
- Theme 4: continued
- Week 13: January 21**
- Fourth write-up due: TBA
 - **January 23:** Discussion
- Week 14: January 28**
- Week 15: February 4 Students' Presentations**
February 6 Students' Presentations