

SPEAKING OF EVENTS

Instructor: Hana Filip
Time: W 8 - 10
Place: Keene - Flint Hall 0111
Office: 365 Dauer
Office hours: M 8 & by appointment
E - mail: hana.filip@gmail.com
Website: <http://plaza.ufl.edu/hfilip>
Office Phone: 392 - 2101

Course Description: We speak of events - things that happen like walking, smoking of a cigarette, jumping, rain - with the same ease we speak of people like you, your cat and various objects like the paper on which this syllabus is printed. In the last five decades (at least since the work of Donald Davidson), events, what they are, what role they play in human language and thought, have been the focus of many debates among philosophers, linguists, psycholinguists, and the results of these debates have also been applied in first and second language acquisition studies, for example.

This interdisciplinary course explores some of the most influential work done on events in the tradition of Davidson. The course has two main goals: It outlines the basic features of Davidson's account of the logical form of action sentences, and gives an overview of the main approaches within Davidsonian event semantics in recent philosophical and linguistic literature. The course also examines the link between events and language by focusing on applications of the concept of 'event' in semantics and linguistic analysis.

There is now considerable agreement that ordinary discourse involves *implicit* reference to or quantification over events, and that semantic analyses of a wide range of natural language phenomena are facilitated by (and, according to some, are only possible), if we use logical representations in which predicates introduce an extra position for events (and states), thus admitting reference to or quantification over events. Among them are: Adverbial modification, tense and aspect, anaphora, and plurality.

Apart from English, linguistic data will be mainly drawn from Slavic

languages, German and Romance languages, all of which have received much attention in linguistic studies that have recently exploited the concept of 'event.' However, all readings are in English. No knowledge of languages other than English is required.

Note: Specific topics will also be determined by students' background and interests - so do not hesitate to give me your suggestions! This also means that the course syllabus is subject to change and you need check for updates. Some of the readings given on the syllabus will only be discussed cursorily; in each given Wednesday session, we will focus on **one or two** items on the list, others will serve as reference background material. More precise reading instructions will be given in class.

Course Requirements

- **Participation in class discussions**, based on the assigned readings and questions/discussion points submitted by students: 2 questions/discussion points are to be submitted each Wednesday in class. If you are absent from class, you can e-mail me your questions/discussion points before Wednesday. Therefore, the assigned readings must be read before the class period in which they will be discussed.
Graduate students are also required to make one presentation in class. Presentations should be 30 - 40 minutes with a 30-minute question&answer period. Students can choose any of the articles or chapters on the course syllabus.
- **One research paper** at the end of the semester. You should consult with me regarding the topic by the end of the seventh week. The paper will be submitted in two drafts. The first draft is due on December 5; the second at the end of the final examination period.
OR
4 short essays or squibs: each about 5 pages long (including references), the topics will be directly related to the assigned readings and may be determined by me, if you prefer it.

Grading

- 20% class participation
- 80% one research paper or 4 short essays or squibs (each 20%)

Required Tests

- All required texts will be available electronically.

COURSE SYLLABUS
(subject to changes and students' suggestions)

Week 1: August 29
Introduction

Week 2: September 5
Background: Davidson (1967)

The point of departure for many contemporary discussions of events in linguistics, philosophy and closely related disciplines is the work of Davidson, and his idea that action sentences are descriptions of events and represented with an event argument. We will start with a review of certain aspects of Davidson's (1967) foundational paper.

To read:

- Davidson, Donald. 1967. 'The logical form of action sentences.' In: N. Rescher (ed.) *The Logic of Decision and Action*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. (Reprinted in: *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 105 – 22.)

Week 3: September 12
Events in semantics: Parsons arguments for the Davidsonian theory

In order to account for a wider range of phenomena than Davidson (1967) did, Terence Parsons (1980, 1985)—building on a suggestion of Hector-Neri Castañeda (1967)—and others advocate an analysis in which the original arguments of a verb, event participants in the described events, are separated into separate conjuncts and treated as predicates of the event argument. This approach is known as a Neo-Davidsonian framework for event - based semantics.

To read:

- Parsons, Terence. 1990. *Events in the Semantics of English: A Study in Subatomic Semantics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Ch.1 - 4, 10.
- Parsons, Terence. 2000. 'Underlying states and time - travel.' In Higginbotham, J., F. Pianesi, and A. Varzi (eds.), *Speaking of Events*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 81–93.

Week 4: September 19
The nature of events

Philosophers are concerned with the question whether events are universals or particulars. An early debate of this question starts with Chisholm and Davidson; Kim and Lewis advocate the particularist view.

To read:

- Davidson, D. 1969. "The Individuation of Events". In D. Davidson (Ed.), *Essays on actions and events* (1st ed.). 1980. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Pp. 163-181.
- Chisholm, R., 1970. 'Events and propositions.' *Noûs*, 4: 15 – 24.
- Davidson, D., 1970. 'Events as particulars.' *Noûs*, 4: 25 – 32.
- Chisholm, R., 1971. 'States of affairs again.' *Noûs*, 5: 179 – 89.
- Davidson, D., 1971. 'Eternal vs. ephemeral events.' *Noûs*, 5: 335 – 49.
- Kim, J., 1976. 'Events as property exemplifications.' In M. Brand and D. Walton eds., *Action Theory*, Dordrecht: Reidel, pp. 159 – 77.
- Lewis, D. 1986. 'Events.' In *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 241 – 69.

Week 5: September 26
Events and plurality

To read:

- Schein, Barry, 2005. 'Plurals.' Abridged in Ernie Lepore & Barry Smith, eds., forthcoming, *Handbook of Philosophy of Language*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lasersohn, Peter. 1998. 'Events in the Semantics of Collectivizing Adverbials.' In Susan Rothstein ed., *Events and Grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp.273-292.
- Landman, Fred. 1998. 'Plurals and Maximalization.' In Susan Rothstein, ed., *Events and Grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 237–271.

Week 6: October 3

Events and Thematic Roles

Many contemporary event-based semantic frameworks are enriched with thematic roles like *Agent*, *Theme*, *Experiencer*, etc. Although most linguists agree that these are useful concepts for capturing a variety of generalizations about natural languages, their nature is rather elusive. What are these roles? Are they universal across languages?

To read:

- Ladusaw, William and David Dowty, 1988. 'Toward a non-grammatical account of thematic roles.' *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 21, pp. 61 – 73.
- Dowty, David, 1989. 'On the semantic content of the notion of "thematic role".' In Chierchia, G., B. H. Partee, and R. Turner, eds., *Properties, Types and Meaning*, Vol. 2, Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 69 – 129.
- Dowty, David. 1991. 'Thematic Proto-Roles and Argument Selection.' *Language* 67:547-619.
- Parsons, Terence, 1990. *Events in the Semantics of English*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, Chapter 5.
- Carlson, Greg, 1998. 'Thematic roles and the individuation of events.' In Rothstein, Susan, ed., *Events and Grammar*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 35 – 51.
- Schein, Barry, 2002. 'Events and the Semantic Content of Thematic Relations.' In Gerhard Preyer & Georg Peter (eds.), *Logical Form, Language & Ontology: On Contemporary Developments in the Philosophy of Language & Linguistics*.

Week 7: October 10

Referring to events and propositions

Gerunds (e.g., *Reading this book is easy*) are used in English to make explicit reference to events and propositions. *That*-clauses are also standardly taken to refer to propositions. Neither assumption is uncontroversial.

To read:

- Ramsey, F. P., 1927. 'Facts and propositions.' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Suppl. Vol. 7, pp. 153 – 70.
- Vendler, Z., 1967. 'Facts and events.' In *Linguistics in Philosophy*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 122 – 46.

- Zucchi, A., 1993. *The Language of Propositions and Events*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, chapters 1 and 6.
- Davidson, D., 1968. 'On saying that.' *Synthese* 19: 130 – 46.
- Bach, K., 1997. 'Do belief reports report beliefs?' *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 78: 215 – 41.
- King, J., 2002. 'Designating propositions.' *Philosophical Review* 111: 341 – 71.
- Asher, N. 2000. 'Facts, Events, Propositions, and Evolutive Anaphora,' in J. Higginbotham, Pianesi, A. Varzi (eds.), *Speaking of Events*, Oxford University Press, pp.123-150.

Week 8: October 17

The semantics of causatives

Does 'John killed Bill' mean something like 'John did something that caused Bill to die'? Is causation built into the lexical semantics of verbs we use? Does the analysis of causatives require reference to events?

To read:

- Fodor, J., 1970. 'Three reasons for not deriving 'kill' from 'cause to die.' *Linguistic Inquiry*, 1: 429 – 38.
- Dowty, D., 1979. *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*. Dordrecht: Reidel, chapters 2 and 3.
- Parsons, T., 1990. *Events in the Semantics of English*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, chapter 6.
- Lombard, L. and P. Franken, 1992. 'How not to Flip the Switch with the Floodlight: Causative-Inchoatives, the Instrumental 'With', and the Identity of Actions.' *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 73: 31 – 43.

Week 9: October 24

The semantics of the progressive aspect: English

What is the relation between the meanings of 'Mary was crossing the street' and 'Mary crossed the street'? How come 'Mary was crossing the street' can be true, and felicitously uttered, even if Mary never actually managed to cross the street? In contrast, the same puzzle does not arise for 'Mary was running' and 'Mary ran.'

Such data point to two levels in the descriptions of events: (1) the essential Aristotelian distinction between (descriptions of) events that have some inherent limit or end (e.g., *cross the street*, *die*, TELIC verbal

predicates) and those that lack it (e.g., *run*, an ATELIC verb); and (2) distinctions in perspectives (or viewpoints) on events: for instance, we describe events as ‘ongoing’ or not, a choice that in English is enforced by the choice between a PROGRESSIVE verb form (*John was dying*) vs. NON-PROGRESSIVE one (*John died*).

To read:

- Parsons, Terence. 1990. *Events in the Semantics of English*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, chapter 9.
- Landman, Fred, 1992. ‘The Progressive.’ *Natural Language Semantics*, 1:1 – 32.
- Szabó, Zoltan. 2003. ‘On the progressive and the perfective.’ *Noûs*, 38: 29 – 59.
- Higginbotham, James. 2004. ‘The English progressive.’ In Guerdon, J. and J. Lecarme eds., *The Syntax of Time*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 329 – 58.
- Zucchi, Sandro (1999) ‘Incomplete Events, Intensionality, and Imperfective Aspect,’ *Natural Language Semantics* 7: 179–215.
- Vendler, Zeno. 1957. ‘Verbs and Times.’ *The Philosophical Review* 66:143-160. (Reprinted 1967. *Linguistics in Philosophy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Ch.5)
- Mourelatos, Alexander P. 1978. ‘Events, Processes and States.’ *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 2(3):415-434. (Reprinted in Philip J. Tedeschi and Annie Zaenen (eds.) 1981. ‘Events, Processes, and States,’ 191–212).

Week 10: October 31

The perfective and imperfective aspect: Slavic Languages

While in English, we are forced to describe events as ‘ongoing’ or not by the choice between a PROGRESSIVE verb form (*John was dying*) vs. NON-PROGRESSIVE one (*John died*), a choice between a PERFECTIVE vs. an IMPERFECTIVE verb form, as in Slavic or Romance languages, enforces a choice between describing events as ‘completed’, ‘in their entirety’ or not.

Virtually all contemporary studies on events and verb semantics in linguistics cite Slavic languages to illustrate what a paradigmatic example of the aspect category in natural languages looks like. However, in fact, it belongs to one of the most enigmatic ones. It poses many problems, and some intractable, to the state-of-the-art semantic (and also syntactic) theories, mainly developed on the basis of English data.

To read:

- Smith, Carlota. 1991. *The parameter of aspect*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. Chapter 10, ‘The aspectual system of Russian.’
- Jakobson, R. 1932. “Zur Struktur des russischen Verbums.” *Charisteria G. Mathesio*. Prague: Cercle Linguistique de Prague, pp. 74-84, translated as “Structure of the Russian Verb,” 1-14, in Linda R. Waugh and Morris Halle, eds. 1984. *Russian and Slavic Grammar: Studies 1931-1981*, by Roman Jakobson. Berlin: Mouton.
- Jakobson, R. 1957. “Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb,” 31-58, in Linda R. Waugh and Morris Halle, eds. 1984. *Russian and Slavic Grammar: Studies 1931-1981*, by Roman Jakobson. Berlin: Mouton.
- Dickey, Stephen M. 2000. *Parameters of Slavic aspect: A cognitive approach*. Stanford: CSLI Publications. TBA.
- Stoll, Sabine E. 2001. *The Acquisition of Russian Aspect*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of California at Berkeley. Chapter 1.

Week 11: November 7

Event-Semantics enriched with lattice structures I:

Some Background

One of the most influential ways of analyzing sentences as descriptions of events of various types and under different ‘perspectives’ (or ‘viewpoints’) is provided by event-semantics enriched with the algebraic structure of semilattices. It is a framework that formalizes Davidson’s (1967) idea that action sentences are descriptions of events (viewed as particulars) and provides a common basis for expressing generalizations regarding the variation in the encoding of events of various types across natural languages.

To read:

- Bach, Emmon. 1981. On Time, Tense, and Aspect: An Essay in English Metaphysics. In Peter Cole, (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics*, 63–81. New York: Academic Press.
- Bach, Emmon. 1986. The Algebra of Events. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 9:5-16.
- Link, Godehard. 1983. The logical analysis of plurals and mass terms: A lattice-theoretical approach. In *Meaning, use and the interpretation of language*, eds. R. Bäuerle, C. Schwarze and A. von Stechow, 303-323. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter. Reprinted in Link, Godehard. 1998. *Algebraic Semantics in Language and Philosophy*:

CSLI lecture notes No. 74. Stanford, Calif.: CSLI Publications. pp.11-34. Reprinted in Portner and Partee, eds., 2002, 127-146.

- Link, Godehard. 1987. Algebraic semantics of event structures. In *Proceedings of the Sixth Amsterdam Colloquium*, eds. Jeroen Groenendijk, Martin Stokhof and Frank Veltman, 243-262. Amsterdam: ITRI. Reprinted in Link 1998, pp. 251-268.
- Link, Godehard. 1998. *Algebraic Semantics in Language and Philosophy*: CSLI lecture notes No. 74. Stanford, Calif.: CSLI Publications.
- Partee, Barbara H. 1999. Nominal and temporal semantic structure: Aspect and quantification. In Eva Hajičová, Tomas Hoskovec, Oldřich Leška, and Petr Sgall, eds., *Prague Linguistic Circle Papers, Vol.3*, 91–108.

Week 12: November 14

Event-Semantics enriched with lattice structures II: interactions and mutual constraints between verbs and nouns in the encoding of events

The encoding of events in natural languages is rather complex and often distributed over various parts of their grammars. Often, it is the nominal argument of a verb that carries the crucial information about the type of event described in a sentence: cp. *drink wine vs. drink a bottle of wine*. In contrast, in languages with a rich verb morphology (e.g., Slavic languages, some native American Indian languages), it is the verb that often carries virtually all the information about the type of the described event and also whether it is presented as completed or in progress, and it is also the verb that influences the interpretation of its nominal arguments.

To read:

- Krifka, Manfred. 1992. “Thematic Relations as Links between Nominal Reference and Temporal Constitution.” Sag, I. A. and A. Szabolcsi (eds.), *Lexical Matters*, 29 - 53.
- Krifka, Manfred. 1998. The Origins of Telicity. In Rothstein, Susan ed., *Events and Grammar*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 197–235.
- Filip, Hana. 1999. *Aspect, Eventuality Types, and Noun Phrase Semantics*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 4 and 5.
- Filip, Hana and Gregory Carlson. 2001. ‘Distributivity Strengthens Reciprocity and Cumulativity Weakens It.’ *Linguistics and Philosophy* 24: 417–466.

Week 13: November 21

TBA

Week 14: November 28

Events: Cross-linguistic view

“... the true difference between languages is not in what may or may not be expressed but in what must or must not be conveyed by the speakers.” (Roman Jakobson, 1959)

To read:

- Bach, Emmon. 2004. ‘Eventualities, grammar, and language diversity.’ In Henk Verkuyl, Henriette de Swart and Angeliek van Hout (eds.), *Perspectives on Aspect*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers Group, pp. 167-180.

Week 15: December 5

Students’ presentations: Final papers

Additional references to the relevant primary and secondary material will be provided during the semester, depending on students’ interests.
