

LINGUIST9670B - Semantics, linguistic form and grammatical analysis

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Time: Tuesday 9h30 to 12h30,
Room UC 2120
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Course description

The aim of this course is to get an understanding of the nature of semantics by focusing on its relation to linguistic form and grammar. It is clear that in the case of the lexicon, there is a close relationship between (lexical) semantics and linguistic form. The association between form and meaning at this level, however, is arbitrary: it is thus an open question as to whether this relation can inform grammatical analysis in any significant way. At the other end of the spectrum, it is obvious that pragmatics significantly shapes the interpretation of linguistic expressions. But there are obvious reasons to assume that pragmatics only has a tangential relationship with linguistic form and grammar. Between the two, there is syntax and morphology, where meaning of the whole is obtained by composition. We will try to better understand how compositionality of the sentence shapes its meaning, and to establish the kind of relationship that exists between logic, general cognition and grammatical analysis.

General overview

The course will contrast two approaches to the analysis of substantive terms (simple nouns and adjectives like *dog*, *table*, *large*, etc.) in the grammar. Under the traditional view, a substantive term is generally composed of three parts: a phonological form, a meaning, and a grammatical category. In the approach that emerges from my work, a substantive term is understood as a phonological form only, a label: it has no lexical meaning and no lexical category. The role of meaning is replaced in the approach by the assumption that the domain of application of the form to a reality in the world (what is usually called its denotation), is established by tacit agreement between speakers, a process that is defined outside of grammatical analysis. The notion of grammatical category the form receives in context is a function of compositional analysis: labels receive a value when they are combined with other elements in context.

Throughout the semester, we will compare how these approaches account for two kinds of constructions in English. First, copular constructions headed by *be* and second, NPs that contain pronominal modifiers. This will allow student to understand the constructions themselves, as well as how these are generally treated in the traditional system and in the approach developed by the professor. Finally, students will be in a position to see how the theory is shaped by its fundamental assumptions about the relation between form and meaning in natural language.

Objectives

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- understand fundamental issues related to the relation between form, meaning and grammatical notions;
- understand how different hypotheses shape the analysis of data and provide a critical understanding of analyses presented in the course;
- establish the basis of a solid argumentation in linguistics;
- present the results (or the ongoing progress) of a research in the form of an abstract, an oral presentation and a short research paper.

Course format

- Lectures with discussions in the classroom
- Discussion in smaller groups
- Discovery of empirical problem through presentation of example sets.

Grading based on:

2 presentations @ 15%		30%
2 summaries @ 10%		20%
1 individual final paper for 50%		
A topic and description	5%	
A detailed outline	10%	
Final paper	35%	50%

Presentation in class: each student will be doing two presentations (maybe in a group depending on the number of students enrolled in the course) of about 15-20 minutes based on readings provided by the professor (or that the students have an interest in). The preparation of these presentations will be closely supervised by the professor; for the first presentation, the professor will be actively involved in assisting the students to establish the content and organisation of their presentation, providing specific guidelines and helping the students to construct the argumentation and how it relates to the fact presented. For the second presentation, the professor will be less involved in the preparation of the presentation, asking the students to replicate the process that was done with the professor in the first presentation.

Summaries: after each presentation, the students will produce a 750-words abstract that summarizes the content of their presentation.

Final paper: The objective of the paper is to identify an empirical or theoretical problem concerning an issue that relates to the content of the course. At the mid point during the semester, the student

Detailed information about the project will be provided during the semester. Format: 15-pages minimum and 20-pages maximum, 12-point font, 1.5 line spacing, 1-inch margins.

Attendance: Attendance and active participation in all lectures is required.

Preliminary scheduling (subject to changes depending on progress of the course). Graded activities indicated in **bold**

Date	What	Reading/ graded activity
January 8	Presentation of the course; getting to know each other	
January 15	Semantics: a brief overview	Chapters 1 and 2, Kroeger (2018)
January 22	1- What is a subject, what is a	Chapter 1, Rothstein (2004)

January 29	proposition?	Parts of Renaat (1988)
February 5	2- Copular constructions	Reading TBA. Presentation students
February 12	3- Be in an approach where lexical terms have no meaning	Reading TBA. Presentation students
February 19	Reading week	
February 26	Conclusion: form and meaning in copular constructions	Reading TBA. Presentation students Student submit: A topic and description for final paper
March 5	Nouns and Adjective: 1- Understanding the traditional view: the structure of the DP	Punske, J. 2014. Presentation students
March 12	2- Adjectival modification 3- Adjectives and Nouns without features	Alexiadou, A. 2014. Presentation students. Students submit: detailed outline
March 19	Conclusion: form and meaning in the NP	Lamarche, J. 1991. Presentation students.
March 26		Lamarche, J. to appear. Presentation students
April 2		TBA
April 7		Final paper du

All material for the course will be made available at the OWL website dedicated to the course:
<https://owl.uwo.ca/portal/site/0eb40e48-a756-4db2-aecf-8c95c3c1d47f>

NOTE regarding the bibliography. Some of the titles are available on-line (through Western Libraries or otherwise), and can be downloaded directly. A hard copy of the material that cannot be obtained online will be made available to the students by the professor.

Bibliography (to be expanded during the course).

Alexiadou, A. 2014. The Syntax of Adjectives. In Carnie, A., Y. Sato and D. Siddiqi (eds). *The Routledge handbook of syntax*, pp. 89-107. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Declerck, Renaat (1988). *Studies on Copular Sentences, Clefts and Pseudo-Clefts*. Leuven: Leuven University Press/Foris Publications.

Heycock, C. 2013. The Syntax of Predication. In den Dikken M. (ed.) *The Cambridge handbook of generative syntax*, pp. 322-352. Cambridge, England : Cambridge University Press.

Kroeger, P. 2018. Analyzing meaning: An introduction to semantics and pragmatics (Textbooks in Language Sciences 5). Berlin: Language Science Press. Can be downloaded at <http://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/144>

Lamarche, J. 1991. Problems for N-movement to NumP. *Probus* 3(2):215– 316.

Lamarche, J. to appear. Phrase Structure without Head Feature. *Proceedings from the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Linguistics Association*.

Punske, J. 2014. Functional Structure inside Nominal Phrases. In Carnie, A., Y. Sato and D. Siddiqi (eds). *The Routledge handbook of syntax*, pp. 65-88. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Rothstein, S. 2004. *Predicates and their subjects*. Dordrecht ; Boston : Kluwer.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html

A downloadable Student Medical Certificate can be found here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html

Support services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness website http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Statement on Plagiarism, Cheating and other Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence in the Academic Handbook available on the Academic Calendar website (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca>)