Ling 207r Topics in Semantics, Spring 2018

Formal Semantics and Pragmatics in Sign Languages

Instructor: Kate Davidson, Boylston 305, *kathryndavidson@fas.harvard.edu*

Class meets: Tuesdays 1:20-3pm, Boylston 303

Expected background

1. Either: a two-course graduate sequence in formal semantics (can be currently enrolled in Semantic Theory 2)

2. Or: At least one course (undergrad/grad) in formal semantics plus knowledge of a sign language that is equivalent to two semesters (can be currently enrolled in ASL 2), or active research in sign language semantics

Most students should also expect to spend time outside of the course gaining additional familiarity with sign languages (in Case 1 above) or practicing semantics (in Case 2) in order to understand some of the readings below.

→ We've scheduled ASL-English interpreters at each class, but if you have any accessibility concerns of any sort please don't hesitate to reach out.

Course aims

- To explore central debates about: the nature of the semantic representations, especially the role that language modality (signed vs. spoken) may play in the construction of meaning

- To introduce signers with basic experience in semantics (the linguistic study of how language encodes meaning) to semantic questions in sign linguistics

- To increase semantic students' comfort and proficiency with reading and discussing sign language research.

- To provide opportunities to practice constructing and defending arguments based on empirical evidence.

Tentative syllabus

1. **Introduction to formal approaches to meaning and background in sign language linguistics - Shopping week (Jan 23)**

    - Sign languages in linguistics
    - Semantics in sign languages
    - Challenges of semantic fieldwork

- Transcribing visual languages
- Basic phonology and syntax in ASL and other sign languages
- Language processing and arbitrariness of the sign

- *Optional readings:*
  - Zucchi (2012)
  - Sandler and Lillo-Martin (2006) Chapter 1

2. **Negation and Modals (Jan 30)**

   Negation and Scope, Modals and Variation

   - *Readings:*
     - Deal (2015)
     - Zeshan (2004)
     - Shaffer and Janzen (2015)
     - Pfau and Quer (2007)
   - *More optional readings*:
     - Ferreira-Brito (1990)
     - Geraci (2005)
     - Herrmann (2014)

3. **Pragmatics and Information Structure (Feb 6)**

   Topics and sentence-initial position, Focus and sentence-final position, Backgrounding

   - *Readings:*
     - Kimmelman and Pfau (2016) (overview)
     - Wilbur and Patschke (1999)
     - Herrmann (2014)
     - Caponigro and Davidson (2011)
   - *More optional readings*:
     - Wilbur and Patschke (1998)
     - Matsuoka and Gajewski (2013)
     - Pfau et al. (2010)

4. **Arbitrary referential loci (Feb 13)**

   Arbitrary locus assignment, Loci as variables

   - *Readings:*
     - Lillo-Martin and Klima (1990)
     - Rathmann and Mathur (2002)

– Steinbach and Onea (2015)

5. **More on Loci (Feb 20)**

　　Analysis as variables, features, and/or pictures, Dynamic accounts and loci

　　• *Readings:*
　　　　– Kuhn (2015b) (overview handbook article)
　　　　– Schlenker (2011)
　　　　– Schlenker (2013)

　　• *More optional readings*:
　　　　– Schlenker (2016)
　　　　– Kuhn (2015a)

6. **Quantification (Feb 27)**

　　• *Readings:*
　　　　– Petronio (1995)
　　　　– Abner and Wilbur (2017)
　　　　– Kuhn (2017a)

　　• *More optional readings:*
　　　　– Kimmelman (2017)

7. **Connectives, demonstratives, and more on loci (March 6)**

　　• *Readings:*
　　　　– Nevins (2011)
　　　　– Koulidobrova and Lillo-Martin (2016)
　　　　– Davidson (2013)

　　• *More optional readings:*
　　　　– Graf and Abner (2012)
　　　　– Asada (2017)

　　(Spring break, March 13)

8. **Motivated referential loci (March 20)**

　　Motivated locus assignment, Presuppositions and locus height, Plural sets and quantifier domains, Definiteness and specificity

　　• *Readings:*
　　　　– Schlenker et al. (2013)
　　　　– Barberà (2016)

– Davidson and Gagne (2017)
- *More optional readings*:
    – Barberà and Hofherr (2017)

9. **Event structure and Verbal Form (March 27)**

   Morphology and/or iconicity?, Telicity, Verbs and adjectives
   - *Readings:*
       – Rathmann (2005) (Select portions)
       – Malaia and Wilbur (2012)
   - *More optional readings*:
       – Kuhn (2017b)
       – Davidson et al. (2018)
       – Kuhn and Aristodemo (2017)
       – Aristodemo and Geraci (2017)

10. **Embedding and Role Shift (Apr 3)**

    Evidence for embedding, Interpretation of indexical expressions, Point of view (POV) predicate, Demonstrations, Monsters
    - *Readings:*
        – Quer (2005)
        – Davidson (2015)
        – Schlenker (2017)
    - *More optional readings*:
        – Benedicto and Brentari (2004)

11. **Grammaticalization and Emergence of semantic structure (Apr 10)**

    Recursion, quantification, temporal sequencing, scales
    - *Readings:*
        – Pyers and Senghas (2007)
        – Kocab et al. (2016)
        – Pfau and Steinbach (2011)

12. **Experimental Pragmatics and Acquisition (Apr 17)**

    Further experimental studies involving loci
    - *Readings:*
        – Davidson and Mayberry (2015)

– Frederiksen and Mayberry (2016)

13. **Final project presentations (Apr 24)**

    Final paper due May 4

Course requirements

All students will be required to present at least two papers during the course of the semester (20% of final grade), participate in class (10% of final grade), complete 500-word reading comments for each of 10 weeks (30% of final grade) and turn in a final research paper on a topic in sign language semantics/pragmatics (40% of final grade). Collaboration on final projects is encouraged, as is course synergy (presenting on a topic that you also write about), although collaborators will be evaluated semi-independently.

Course website

The course website supercedes the tentative schedule outlined in this document. The most recent schedule and PDFs of all readings can be found be on our course site at:
`https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/38320`

Bibliography

Abner, N. and Wilbur, R. B. (2017). Quantification in american sign language. In *Handbook of Quantifiers in Natural Language: Volume II*, pages 21–59. Springer.

Aristodemo, V. and Geraci, C. (2017). Visible degrees in italian sign language. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, pages 1–15.

Barberà, G. (2016). Indefiniteness and specificity marking in catalan sign language (lsc). *Sign Language & Linguistics*, 19(1):1–36.

Barberà, G. and Hofherr, P. C. (2017). Backgrounded agents in catalan sign language (lsc): Passives, middles, or impersonals? *Language*, 93(4):767–798.

Benedicto, E. and Brentari, D. (2004). Where did all the arguments go?: Argument-changing properties of classifiers in asl. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 22(4):743–810.

Caponigro, I. and Davidson, K. (2011). Ask, and tell as well: question–answer clauses in american sign language. *Natural language semantics*, 19(4):323–371.

Davidson, K. (2013). And'or 'or': General use coordination in asl. *Semantics & Pragmatics*, 6(4):1–44.

Davidson, K. (2015). Quotation, demonstration, and iconicity. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 38(6):477.

Davidson, K., Kocab, A., Sims, A. D., and Wagner, L. (2018). The relationship between verbal form and event structure in sign languages.

Davidson, K. and Mayberry, R. I. (2015). Do adults show an effect of delayed first language acquisition when calculating scalar implicatures? *Language acquisition*, 22(4):329–354.

Deal, A. R. (2015). Reasoning about equivalence in semantic fieldwork. *Methodologies in semantic fieldwork*, pages 157–174.

Ferreira-Brito, L. (1990). Epistemic, alethic, and deontic modalities in a brazilian sign language. *Theoretical issues in sign language research*, 1:229–260.

Frederiksen, A. T. and Mayberry, R. I. (2016). Who's on first? investigating the referential hierarchy in simple native asl narratives. *Lingua*, 180:49–68.

Geraci, C. (2005). Negation in lis (italian sign language). In *PROCEEDINGS-NELS*, volume 35, page 217.

Graf, T. and Abner, N. (2012). Is syntactic binding rational? In *Proceedings of the 11th international workshop on Tree Adjoining Grammars and related formalisms (TAG+ 11)*, pages 189–197.

Herrmann, A. (2014). *Modal and Focus Particles in Sign Languages: A cross-linguistic study*, volume 2. Walter de Gruyter.

Kimmelman, V. (2017). Quantifiers in russian sign language. In *Handbook of Quantifiers in Natural Language: Volume II*, pages 803–855. Springer.

Kimmelman, V. and Pfau, R. (2016). Information structure in sign languages. *The Oxford Handbook of Information Structure*, pages 814–833.

Kocab, A., Senghas, A., and Snedeker, J. (2016). The emergence of temporal language in nicaraguan sign language. *Cognition*, 156:147–163.

Koulidobrova, E. and Lillo-Martin, D. (2016). A 'point'of inquiry: The case of the (non-) pronominal ix in asl. *The impact of pronominal form on interpretation*, pages 221–250.

Kuhn, J. (2015a). Asl loci: Variables or features? *Journal of Semantics*, 33(3):449–491.

Kuhn, J. (2015b). Discourse anaphora–theoretical perspectives.

Kuhn, J. (2017a). Dependent indefinites: the view from sign language. *Journal of Semantics*, page ffx007.

Kuhn, J. (2017b). Telicity and iconic scales in asl.

Kuhn, J. and Aristodemo, V. (2017). Pluractionality, iconicity, and scope in french sign language. *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 10(6).

Lillo-Martin, D. and Klima, E. S. (1990). Pointing out differences: Asl pronouns in syntactic theory. *Theoretical issues in sign language research*, 1:191–210.

Malaia, E. and Wilbur, R. B. (2012). Kinematic signatures of telic and atelic events in asl predicates. *Language and Speech*, 55(3):407–421.

Matsuoka, K. and Gajewski, J. (2013). The polarity-sensitive intensifier mouth gestures in japanese sign language. *Journal of Japanese Linguistics*, 29(1):30–49.

Nevins, A. (2011). Prospects and challenges for a clitic analysis of (a) sl agreement. *Theoretical Linguistics*, 37(3-4):173–187.

Petronio, K. (1995). Bare noun phrases, verbs and quantification in asl. In *Quantification in natural languages*, pages 603–618. Springer.

Pfau, R. and Quer, J. (2007). On the syntax of negation and modals in catalan sign language and german sign language. *TRENDS IN LINGUISTICS STUDIES AND MONOGRAPHS*, 188:129.

Pfau, R., Quer, J., et al. (2010). *Nonmanuals: their grammatical and prosodic roles*. na.

Pfau, R. and Steinbach, M. (2011). Grammaticalization in sign languages. In *The Oxford handbook of grammaticalization*.

Pyers, J. and Senghas, A. (2007). Reported action in nicaraguan and american sign languages: Emerging versus established systems. *Trends in Linguistics Studies and Monographs*, 188:279.

Quer, J. (2005). Context shift and indexical variables in sign languages. In *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*, volume 15, pages 152–168.

Rathmann, C. and Mathur, G. (2002). 14 is verb agreement the same cross-modally? *Modality and structure in signed and spoken languages*, page 370.

Rathmann, C. G. (2005). *Event structure in American Sign Language*. PhD thesis.

Sandler, W. and Lillo-Martin, D. (2006). *Sign language and linguistic universals*. Cambridge University Press.

Schlenker, P. (2011). Donkey anaphora: the view from sign language (asl and lsf). *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 34(4):341–395.

Schlenker, P. (2013). Temporal and modal anaphora in sign language (asl). *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 31(1):207–234.

Schlenker, P. (2016). Featural variables. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 34(3):1067–1088.

Schlenker, P. (2017). Super monsters i: Attitude and action role shift in sign language. *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 10.

Schlenker, P., Lamberton, J., and Santoro, M. (2013). Iconic variables. *Linguistics and philosophy*, 36(2):91–149.

Shaffer, B. and Janzen, T. (2015). Modality and mood in american sign language. In *The Oxford Handbook of Modality and Mood*. Oxford University Press.

Steinbach, M. and Onea, E. (2015). A drt analysis of discourse referents and anaphora resolution in sign language. *Journal of Semantics*, 33(3):409–448.

Wilbur, R. B. and Patschke, C. (1999). Syntactic correlates of brow raise in asl. *Sign Language & Linguistics*, 2(1):3–41.

Wilbur, R. B. and Patschke, C. G. (1998). Body leans and the marking of contrast in american sign language. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 30(3):275–303.

Zeshan, U. (2004). Hand, head and face-negative constructions in sign languages. *Linguistic Typology*, 8(1):1–58.

Zucchi, S. (2012). Formal semantics of sign languages. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 6(11):719–734.