

Meaning in fieldwork and typology
Linguistics 252, Spring 2025
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class: Thursdays 1-4 in Campbell 2122

office hours: Mondays 12-2pm in Campbell 3103M

about

The goal of this class is to teach you some methods for conducting fieldwork on meaning in a given language, and for constructing typologies of meaning across languages. I'm using the term 'meaning' because it's non-committal with respect to whether the meaning is semantic (i.e. explicitly, conventionally encoded) or pragmatic (i.e. context-sensitive, or not conventionally encoded). But I'll rely on the terms 'semantic fieldwork' and 'comparative semantics' as a shorthand way to gesture towards these broad areas of study.

schedule¹

wk	date	topic	readings (optional italicized)
1	April 3	introduction: what we can learn & how	(Bohnemeyer 2015 ^{BM} , Deal 2015 ^{BM})
2	April 10	semantic fieldwork: context FTW	Tonhauser et al. 2013 (McKenzie 2015 ^{BM} , Louie 2015 ^{BM} , AnderBois & Henderson 2015 ^{BM})
3	April 17	semantic fieldwork: degrees	Bochnak & Bogal-Albritten 2015 ^{BM} (Rett 2015 §2.1, Beck et al. 2009, Bochnak 2015)
4	April 24	comparative semantics: degrees	Kennedy 2007, Rett 2020 (Bobaljik 2012)
5	May 1	comparative semantics: mirativity	AnderBois 2018 (Aikhenvald 2012)
6	May 8	comparative semantics: mirativity in questions	Bhadra 2025a, Bhadra 2025b
7	May 15	semantic fieldwork: times	Cover 2015 ^{BM} , Cover & Tonhauser 2015 ^{BM} (Moens & Steedman 1988, Bar-el 2015 ^{BM})
8	May 22	comparative semantics: times	Tonhauser 2011, Tonhauser 2015 (Partee 1984, Cable 2013)
9	May 29	(in)definiteness & evidentiality	Dawson & Jenks 2023 <u>or</u> Korotkova 2020 (choose your own adventure)
10	June 5	student presentations	

required readings

AnderBois, S. 2018. Illocutionary revelations: Yucatec Maya *bakáan* and the typology of miratives. *Journal of Semantics* 35(1): 171–206.

Bhadra, Diti. 2025a. Counterexpectational *wh*-questions with miratives. *The Oxford Handbook of Non-Canonical Questions*.

Bhadra, Diti. 2025b. Methodology paper.

Bochnak, Ryan and Matthewson, Lisa. 2015. *Methodologies in Semantic Fieldwork*. Oxford University Press.

Dawson, Ginny and Jenks, Peter. 2023. Describing definites and indefinites. *Key topics in language documentation and description*, 99–174.

Kennedy, Chris. 2007. Modes of comparison. *Chicago Linguistics Society* 43.

Korotkova, Natasha. 2020. Evidential meaning and (not-)at-issueness. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 13(4).

Rett, Jessica. 2020. Separate but equal: a typology of equative constructions. *Degree & Quantification* 163–204.

¹I superscript readings ^{BM} when they come from the Bochnak & Matthewson volume.

- Tonhauser, Judith. 2011. Temporal reference in Paraguayan Guaraní, a tenseless language. *Linguistics & Philosophy*, 34:257–303.
- Tonhauser, Judith. 2015. Cross-Linguistic Temporal Reference. *Annual Review of Linguistics* 1: 129–154.
- Tonhauser, J., Beaver, D., Roberts, C. and M. Simons. 2013. Toward a taxonomy of projective content. *Language* 89(1):66–109.

optional readings

- Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2012. The essence of mirativity. *Linguistic typology* 16(3): 435–485.
- Beck, S., Krasikova, S., Fleischer, D., Gergel, R., Hofstetter, S., Savelsberg, C., Vanderelst, J. and E. Villalta. 2009. Crosslinguistic variation in comparative constructions. *Linguistic Variation Yearbook* 9: 1–66.
- Bochnak, M. Ryan. 2015. The Degree Semantics Parameter and cross-linguistic variation. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 8(6): 1–48.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan. 2012. *Universals in comparative morphology*. MIT Press.
- Cable, Seth. 2013. Beyond the past, present and future: towards the semantics of ‘graded tense’ in Gĩkũyũ. *Natural Language Semantics* 21:219–76.
- Matthewson, Lisa. 2004. On the methodology of semantic fieldwork. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 70(4): 369–415.
- Moens, Marc and Steedman, Mark. 1988. Temporal ontology and temporal reference. *Computational Linguistics* 14(2): 15–28.
- Partee, Barbara. 1984. Nominal and temporal anaphora. *Linguistics & Philosophy*, 7:243–286.
- Rett, Jessica. 2015. *The semantics of evaluativity*. Oxford University Press.
- Rullmann, H., Matthewson, L., and H. Davis. 2008. Modals as distributive indefinites. *Natural Language Semantics* 16:317–57.

course expectations

All students in this class will be responsible for doing (most of) the readings and attending lecture regularly.

4 units: Full-time students in this class (and, if I can pull it off, the instructor) will conduct their own ongoing mini-fieldwork projects throughout the course of the quarter. Ideally students would choose their topics in Week 1 and follow roughly this track:

- weeks 2-4: read up on topic; design a short & contained elicitation
- weeks 5-6: conduct elicitation (with one or more speakers of one or more languages, depending)
- weeks 7-8: aggregate results & generalizations; check theoretical literature for context
- weeks 9-10: write up presentation; present
- write up an abstract for [TripleA 12](#) in Tokyo in Sept 2025, **currently due May 10**

We will spend the first few minutes of each class checking in on these projects and brain-storming solutions to problems that arise. I expect the presentation to report on: i) the language(s) (briefly); ii) the phenomenon, in general; iii) the fieldwork or comparative methodology / design; iv) the novel results; and v) as much as possible, the theoretical significance. Presentations will be 30 minutes (20 minute presentation; 10 minute Q&A).

2 units: Part-time students in this class can choose from one of two tracks:

1. **fieldwork**: follow the steps above for the mini-fieldwork project, minus the presentation
2. **presentation**: instead of conducting fieldwork, present one of the required reading papers for the course (let me know which ASAP) for roughly an hour

potential topics

- apprehensional constructions: Dąbkowski & AnderBois 2024
- (more on) degrees
- determiners / articles: Gillon 2015^{BM}, Dawson & Jenks 2023

- disjunction (<- Hannah has dibs)
- evidentials: Aikhenvald 2006, Murray 2017, Bary & Korotkova 2023
- negation (<- Jessica has dibs): Miestamo 2007, Phillips 2023
- free relatives: Caponigro 2004, Little, AnderBois & Coon 2024
- sentential mood: Palmer 2001, Aikhenvald 2010, Portner 2018
- indefinites: Haspelmath 2000
- (more on) mirativity
- modals: Rullmann et al. 2008, Portner 2009
- (more on) pluractionals: Cusic 1981; Wood 2007; Cable 2013; Henderson 2019a
- positionals (Mayan): Henderson 2019b
- reflexives & reciprocals: Murray 2015^{BM}, Janic, Puddu & Haspelmath 2023
- serial verbs: Aikhenvald 2018
- speaker certainty: Aikhenvald & Dixon 2014
- (more on) tense / times: Arregui et al. 2014