

# The semantics of temporal relations

Linguistics 252, Fall 2019



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Thursdays, 10am – 1pm in Campbell 2122

**office hours:** Monday 10:00am-12:00pm, Campbell 3125

*Before* and *after* are not duals, which is to say they differ from one another in asymmetric ways. *Before* (but not *after*) can license NPIs; *after* (but not *before*) is veridical. Traditionally, these asymmetries have been accounted for by treating the two as encoding different quantifiers (Anscombe, 1964) or by proposing a null operator ‘EARLIEST,’ which provides an external, domain-specific source for the asymmetries. In this class, we explore the immediate issues – the NPI and veridicality asymmetries, the interpretation of *before* and *after* sentences – as well as some more general issues in the semantics of aspect and degree, which strongly suggest the semantics of temporal relations are part of a larger pattern of the behavior of interval-denoting plurals, relations between them, and pragmatic considerations of maximal informativity.

## schedule:

wk	date	topic	readings ( <i>optional readings italicized</i> )
0	September 26	introduction	Anscombe (1964); Heinämäki (1974)
1	October 3	pronominal tense & interval semantics	Partee (1984)
2	October 10	aspect & Aktionsart	Moens and Steedman (1988) ( <i>Dölling, 2014</i> )
3	October 17	a first pass	Beaver and Condoravdi (2003)
4	October 24	a second pass	Condoravdi (2010)
5	October 31	a third pass (HALLOWEEN  )	Krifka (2010b)
6	November 7	maximality in degree semantics	Heim (2007) ( <i>Beck and Rullmann, 1999</i> )
7	November 14	maximality in temporal semantics	Rett (2020) ( <i>Rett, 2015</i> )
8	November 21	the weirdness of expletive negation	Krifka (2010a) ( <i>Lin, 2016</i> )
9	<del>November 28</del>	THANKSGIVING 	
10	December 5	student presentations	

Students enrolled in the course for full credit will be asked to write a term paper for the course, due

**Friday December 13.** (Due to my pregnancy, I cannot guarantee grades will be posted on time.)

Students should schedule a meeting with me to discuss their topic by **Friday November 22**, and briefly present their project to the class on **Thursday December 5**.

## additional issues to explore:

- a nice introduction to aspect: Bhatt & Pancheva’s 2005 notes, <http://web.mit.edu/rbhatt/www/lisa130>
- tense embedding: Kubota et al. (2012); Grønn and von Stechow (2013); Sharvit (2014)
- NPIs, god help you: Barker (2018)
- fieldwork on tense and aspect: Cover (2015); Cover and Tonhauser (2015)
- comparative morphological strategies for *before*: del Prete (2008)
- tenseless languages: Tonhauser (2011)
- graded tense: Cable (2013); Mucha (2017)
- aspectual coercion in the experimental literature: Pickering et al. (2006); Townsend (2013); Paczynski et al. (2014)
- the lexical semantics of aspectual coercion: Pustejovsky and Bouillion (1995)

- Anscombe, E. (1964). Before and after. *The Philosophical Review*, 73:3–24.
- Barker, C. (2018). Negative polarity as scope marking. *Linguistics & Philosophy*, 41:483–510.
- Beaver, D. and Condoravdi, C. (2003). A uniform analysis of *before* and *after*. In *Proceedings of SALT XIII*, pages 37–57. CLC Publications.
- Beck, S. and Rullmann, H. (1999). A flexible approach to exhaustivity in questions. *Natural Language Semantics*, 7:249–298.
- Cable, S. (2013). Beyond the past, present, and future: Towards the semantics of ‘graded tense’ in Gĩkũyũ. *Natural Language Semantics*, 21:219–276.
- Condoravdi, C. (2010). NPI licensing in temporal clauses. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 28:877–910.
- Cover, R. (2015). Semantic fieldwork on TAM. In Bochnak, R. and Matthewson, L., editors, *Methodologies in semantic fieldwork*, pages 233–268. Oxford University Press.
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- del Prete, F. (2008). A non-uniform semantic analysis of the Italian temporal connectives *prima* and *dopo*. *Natural Language Semantics*, 16:157–203.
- Dölling, J. (2014). Aspectual coercion and eventuality structure. In *Aspects, phases, and arguments: topics in the semantics of verbs*, pages 189–226. John Benjamins.
- Grønn, A. and von Stechow, A. (2013). Tense in adjuncts part 2: Temporal adverbial clauses. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 7:311–327.
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- Heinämäki, O. (1974). *Semantics of English temporal connectives*. PhD Thesis, University of Texas, Austin.
- Krifka, M. (2010a). How to interpret ‘expletive’ negation under *bevor* in German. In Hanneforth, T. and Fanselow, G., editors, *Language and Logos*, pages 214–236. Akademie Verlag.
- Krifka, M. (2010b). *Before* and *after* without coercion: comment on the paper by Cleo Condoravdi. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 28:911–929.
- Kubota, Y., Lee, J., Smirnova, A., and Tonhauser, J. (2012). Cross-linguistic variation in temporal adjunct clauses. In *Cahier Chronos: Selected Proceedings of Chronos 8*, pages 141–161. Rodopi.
- Lin, J.-w. (2016). Negation under *yiqian* ‘before’ in Mandarin Chinese and cross-linguistic variation in expletive negation. *Language and Linguistics*, 7:1–26.
- Moens, M. and Steedman, M. (1988). Temporal ontology in natural language. *Computational Linguistics*, 14:15–28.
- Mucha, A. (2017). Past interpretation and graded tense in Medumba. *Natural Language Semantics*, 36:1–52.
- Paczynski, M., Jackendoff, R., and Kuperberg, G. (2014). When events change their nature: the neurocognitive mechanisms underlying aspectual coercion. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 26:1905–1917.
- Partee, B. (1984). Nominal and temporal anaphora. *Linguistics & Philosophy*, 7:243–286.
- Pickering, M., McElree, B., Frisson, S., Chen, L., and Traxler, M. (2006). Underspecification and aspectual coercion. *Discourse processes*, 42:131–155.
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- Sharvit, Y. (2014). On the universal principles of tense embedding: the lesson from *before*. *Journal of Semantics*, 31(2):263–313.
- Tonhauser, J. (2011). Temporal reference in Paraguayan Guaraní, a tenseless language. *Linguistics & Philosophy*, 34:257–303.
- Townsend, D. (2013). Aspectual coercion in eye movements. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 42:281–306.