MA course, spring 2019-2020

The relation of verbal atoms to sentence structure

We explore one theory of the lexical representation of argument and aspectual information and see how it compares to other theories in predicting the range and types of structures/constructions found in a language.

Background assumed

Students are expected to be familiar with aspectual classification and diagnostics and the relation between aspectual function and syntactic position:


Requirements (The percentages may change slightly, depending on student numbers)

(1) Critical article responses – written 20%
(2) Article presentations – oral 15%
(3) Final course paper:
   a. Proposal/abstract 5%
   b. Annotated bibliography 5%
   c. Class presentation (+handout) 20%
   d. Written paper 35%

Notes: Late assignments or presentations will receive a grade of zero.
Part of the grade for (2) and (3)c will be based on participation/attendance at your colleagues’ presentations.

The course consists of readings and discussion. Students are expected to prepare the readings for each class, present when scheduled, and to actively participate in class discussion. Attendance is therefore required. (No more than three absences allowed.)

Each student will write critical responses to several articles.

Each student will choose a topic, collect relevant data in their native language, and compile a list of relevant references. The result, together with observations and the outline/directions of an analysis, will be presented in class, accompanied by a professional-level handout (or presentation).

Based on the presentation and the comments made by your colleagues, each student will write a final paper (approximately 15 double-spaced pages), making use of the theoretical tools assembled during the semester.
Partial Bibliography


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Some of the topics we will be examining (order and selection depends, in part, on class choice):

Transitivity alternations – constrained by verb class
Word order in Arabic and Hebrew – the relation to verb class
The conative and object drop—defocussing Result
Result adverbs – defocussing Manner
Denominal verbs
The locative alternation and stativity