Many areas of non-propositional semantics

- Sentiment
- Speech acts
- Rhetorical relations
- Implicit social hierarchy
- Quantification
- Definiteness and referring
- Tense and Aspect
- Comparison
- Modality
- Evidentiality
- Negation
- Information structure (old and new information)
General Properties of Non-Propositional Semantics

• There are too many meanings
  – Each meaning cannot have its own grammatical construction
  – Many meanings are conflated in grammatical constructions or closed class lexical items

• Prototypes with centroids
  – the centroids may match across languages
    • e.g., past tense morpheme indicating that something happened before the time of speech
  – the extension from the centroid almost never matches across languages

• Function drift
  – from the centroid
  – is it predictable?
Grammaticalization

- The process by which words become grammar.
- Happens over long time spans
- Examples:
  - “Go” becomes future time: I’m going to read.
  - Small thing becomes negation:
    - French “pas” (step): je n’ai pas de pain (I don’t have any bread).
Example: English “will"

• Example: English “will”
  – The Original meaning of volition grammaticalized to the current meaning of future
    • I will go to the market.
  – You can still see volition in “He won’t wash the dishes.”
    • a prediction for the future or
    • Expresses his refusal
  – Phonological reduction ‘ll
  – Function drift:
    • Presentative Construction:
      – Phone rings: That will be my son.
    • The present and past tenses diverged (will and would).
Grammaticalization with function drift

- http://www.ecenglish.com/learnenglish/lessons/will-would-shall-should

- Will is used to show desire, preference, choice or consent:
  - I will accept your offer.
  - Will you please be quiet?
  - He won’t wash the dishes

- To show the future:
  - It will be a great party.
  - I will probably go out tonight.

- To express capability:
  - The ship will take three hundred guests.
  - This bottle will hold two litres of wine.

- To express determination or insistence:
  - I will pass my driving test.
  - I will do as you say.

- Special Constructions
  - Phone rings: That will be my son
What do all multi-linguals and second language learners know?

• Function drift is never exactly the same in any two languages.

• Function drift is complicated and seems to be illogical:

  I lived here for two years.
  You can’t say this if you still live here.
  I have lived here for two years.
  You can say this if you still live here.

  I traveled here by plane.
  You can say this if you are still here.
  I have traveled here by plane.
  Experiential reading: doesn’t apply to present time.
Syntax (form) is not enough

Example: English NP-of-NP corresponds to six syntactic forms in Hmong, depending on the **communicative function**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
<th>Hmong Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>some of the students</td>
<td>cov tub-kawm-ntawv ib txha</td>
<td>CLF N ib CLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a book of mine</td>
<td>kuv ib phau ntawv</td>
<td>NP ib CLF NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a house of bamboo</td>
<td>ib lub tsev-xyoob</td>
<td>ib CLF N N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the top of the tree</td>
<td>tsob ntoo saab sau</td>
<td>CLF NP CLF NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the mother of that student</td>
<td>tug tub-kawm-ntawv hov leej nam</td>
<td>CLF NP CLF NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a bottle of liquor</td>
<td>ib fwj cawv</td>
<td>ib CLF NP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hmong examples from David Mortensen)
Differences in function drift in related languages (Croft 1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific indefinite</th>
<th>He broke a vase</th>
<th>Il a cassé un vase</th>
<th>same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific definite</td>
<td>He broke the vase</td>
<td>Il a cassé le vase</td>
<td>same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper name</td>
<td>The concert will be on Saturday</td>
<td>Le concert sera samedi</td>
<td>same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific manifestation of an institution</td>
<td>He went to the bank</td>
<td>Il est allé à la banque</td>
<td>same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partitive of a mass noun</td>
<td>I drank wine</td>
<td>J’ai bu du (=de le) vin</td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic mass noun</td>
<td>The French love glory</td>
<td>Les Français aiment la gloire</td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific manifestation of an abstract quality</td>
<td>He showed extreme care</td>
<td>Il montra un soin extrême</td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic of a count noun</td>
<td>I love artichokes</td>
<td>J’aime les artichauts</td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic of a count noun, indefinite number</td>
<td>Birds have wings</td>
<td>Les oiseaux ont des (= de les) ailes</td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicate nominal</td>
<td>He became a soldier</td>
<td>Il est devenu soldat</td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific but indefinite number of a count noun</td>
<td>Dogs were playing</td>
<td>Des (= de les) chiens jouaient</td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1** Use of articles in French and English (Croft, 1990:6-7)
Variation across languages:
- grammaticalization can be different
- same CFDs

Neha read a book.
Neha read the book.

नेहा ने किताब पढ़ी।
नेहा ने किताब को पढ़ा।

Neha  Erg  book  read.Perf
Neha  Erg  book  ACC  read.Perf
The ovals represent the points in semantic space. The outlines each represent the irrealis morpheme in one language, showing what part of the semantic space it covers.

Ferdinand De Haan, “On Representing Semantic Maps”
Relevance to conlangs

• Don’t decide how to say
  – “of”
  – “-ed”
  – “the”

• Decide how to express
  – a realized event that happened before the time of speech
  – possession
  – part-whole (meronomy)
  – kinship
  – an unspecified quantity of a substance
  – an instance of an abstract concept
  – reference to a specific, tangible object
Some areas of non-propositional semantics

- Information structure
- Tense, Aspect, Mood, Modality
- Negation
- Possession
- Definiteness
Pragmatic Roles

“The flow of given and new information”

When we hear the sentence

**Who saw Bill?,**

we understand that someone saw Bill. This fact becomes *given information*, a shared assumption between the speaker and hearer.

The question asks for a piece of *new information*, **Who?**

**Who saw Bill?**

**new**  **old/given**
How to express new information in English

• A. Who saw Bill? perceiver: who/John (new)
• B. John saw Bill/him. perceived: Bill/him (old)
  – Stress on “John”

• A. Who did John see? perceiver: John/he (old)
• B. John/he saw Bill. perceived: who/Bill (new)
  – Stress on “Bill”

• Intonation encodes new information.
How to mess up the encoding of new information (Comrie, page 56)

• A. Who saw Bill? perceiver: who/John (new)
• B. John saw Bill/him. perceived: Bill/him (old)
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• A. Who saw Bill? perceiver: who/John (new)
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  – Stress on “Bill”

• A. Who did John see? perceiver: John/he (old)
• B. #John/he saw Bill. perceived: who/Bill (new)
  – Stress on “John”
Focus Using Cleft Constructions
(Kroeger)

• English can express new information with a cleft sentence: *It's x that ...*

• The cleft sentence may take on a reading of contrastive focus.
  – Contrastive focus implies that the focused item is being chosen from a delimited set

It's **John** that saw Bill (,not Joe).
It was **Mary** that John gave the flowers to (, not Susan).
It is the **Secretary** who will visit us (, not the President).
Why is it called a cleft?

• “Cleft” is the past participle of “cleave”, to cut.

_To cleave off a subject:_

John saw Bill.

1. cut here
2. add “it’s” and “who/that”

It’s John that saw Bill.
Why is it called a cleft?

To cleave off a non-subject.

John saw Bill.

1. cut here
2. move the piece you cut off
3. add “it’s” and “who/that”

It’s Bill that John saw.
Meaning of clefts

• Note that these mean the same thing in the sense that the noun phrases have the same semantic roles:
  – John saw Bill.
  – It’s John who saw Bill. (subject is cleft)
  – It’s Bill who John saw. (object is cleft)
    • Perceiver: John
    • Perceived: Bill

• The cleft word order is not encoding semantic roles or grammatical relations. It is encoding new information.
How to express new information in English

A. Who saw Bill?  
perceiver: who/John  (new)

B. It’s John that/who saw Bill/him.
   – “John” is clefted.  
perceived: Bill/him   (old)

A. Who did John see?  
perceiver: John/he   (old)

B. It’s Bill that/who saw John.  
perceived: who/Bill   (new)
   – “Bill” is clefted.

Clefting encodes new information.
How to mess up the encoding of new information (Comrie, page 56)

• A. Who saw Bill? perceiver: who/John (new)
• B. It’s John who saw Bill/him.
    perceived: Bill/him (old)

• A. Who saw Bill? perceiver: who/John (new)
• B. #It’s Bill who John saw. perceived: Bill/him (old)

• A. Who did John see? perceiver: John/he (old)
• B. It’s Bill who John saw. perceived: who/Bill (new)

• A. Who did John see? perceiver: John/he (old)
• B. #It’s John who saw Bill. perceived: who/Bill (new)
Focus in Russian
(Comrie, p78)

• English word order codes grammatical relations. Russian word order seems free by comparison:

Tanja ubila Mašu. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
Tanja Mašu ubila. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
Mašu ubila Tanja. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
Focus in Russian
(Comrie, p78)

• Although GR’s are the same for all, Pragmatic Roles are different.

Tanja ubila Mašu. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
Tanja Mašu ubila. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’
Mašu ubila Tanja. ‘Tanja killed Masha.’

• Russian basic word order places topic at the beginning of the sentence and focus at the end.
The new information immediately precedes the verb. Since question words are asking for new information, they also immediately precede the verb. The old information can be to the left or right of the new+verb. (Comrie, page 57)

a. **Ki l’atta Zoli-t?**
   who saw Zoli
   Who saw Zoli?
   Perceiver: Vili/who (new)

b. **Zoli-t ki l’atta?**
   Zoli who saw
   Who saw Zoli?
   Perceived: Zoli (old)

c. **Vili l’atta Zoli-t.**
   Vili saw Zoli
   Vili saw Zoli

d. **Zoli-t Vili l’atta.**
   Zoli Vili saw
   Vili saw Zoli.
Hungarian

a. Ki-t l’atta Zoli?
   who saw Zoli
   Who did Zoli see?

b. Zoli ki-t l’atta?
   Zoli who saw
   Who did Zoli see?  Perceiver: Zoli (old)

c. Zoli Vili-t l’atta.
   Zoli Vili saw
   Zoli saw Vili.  Perceived: Vili/who (new)

d. Vili-t l’atta Zoli.
   Vili saw Zoli
   Zoli saw Vili
# Tense, aspect, mood, modality, evidentiality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Grammatical Aspect</th>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Modality</th>
<th>Evidentiality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>long before</td>
<td>perfective</td>
<td>declarative</td>
<td>epistemic</td>
<td>first hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>just before</td>
<td>imperfective</td>
<td>interrogative</td>
<td>(not) possible</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before</td>
<td>completive</td>
<td>imperative</td>
<td>(not) likely</td>
<td>hearsay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>now</td>
<td>phase</td>
<td>real (realis)</td>
<td>(not) certain</td>
<td>inference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very soon</td>
<td>inceptive</td>
<td>unreal (irrealis)</td>
<td>deontic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>later</td>
<td>final</td>
<td>subjunctive</td>
<td>(not) required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>much later</td>
<td>iteration</td>
<td>hypothetical</td>
<td>(not) permitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iterative</td>
<td>counterfactual</td>
<td>try/succeed/manage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>habitual</td>
<td></td>
<td>want</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intermittent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>durative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**You probably don’t want your language to have a cross product of all of this.**

**Propositional Aspect**
- telic (process with endpoint)
- atelic (process only)
- instantaneous (endpoint only)
- stative
- semelfactive (short, repeated action)
What do real languages do?

• Not every language grammaticalizes (has grammar for) everything:
  – English does not grammaticalize phase, although we have words for:
    • fall asleep (inceptive)
    • start to speak (inceptive)
    • finish reading (end phase)
  – English does not have a lot of grammaticalization for evidentiality
    • It must be raining (inference from evidence)
    • But we can paraphrase other types of evidentiality.
      – They say that it’s raining.
      – I heard that it’s raining.
      – Apparently, it is raining.
  – Chinese doesn’t really grammaticalize tense. It grammaticalizes aspect.
What do real languages do?

• Conflate things.
• Remember that your system of verb morphology, auxiliary verbs, etc. is a *lossy* encoding of the cross product of all of the stuff.
• future tense=unreal mood
• past tense= completed or perfective aspect