

WEEK 2

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Title of the course: *Linguistic applications of mereology*

Section: Language and Logic

Level: Introductory

Content of the course:

Expressions like ‘John and Mary’ or ‘the water in my cup’ intuitively involve reference to collections of individuals or substances. The parthood relation between these collections and their components is not modeled in standard formal semantics of natural language (Montague, 1974; Heim and Kratzer, 1998), but it plays central stage in what is known as mereological or algebraic semantics (Link, 1998; Krifka, 1998; Landman, 2000). In this course, I present an introduction into algebraic semantics and selected applications involving plural, mass reference, measurement, aspect, and distributivity. I discuss issues involving ontology and philosophy of language, and how these issues interact with semantic theory depending on how they are resolved. Course script: www.ling.upenn.edu/~champoll/champollion-esslli-2012.pdf.

Outline:

Lecture 1 - Mereology: general introduction; motivation of algebraic semantics; axiomatization of classical extensional mereology; comparison of mereology to set theory

Lecture 2 - Nouns: semantic theories of singular and plural; cumulative, divisive, quantized reference; group nouns; mass nouns; atomicity

Lecture 3 - Measurement: temporal and spatial trace; measure functions and degrees; measure nouns; pseudopartitives and the measurement puzzle

Lecture 4 - Verbs: event semantics; thematic roles; aspectual composition

Lecture 5 - Distributivity: lexical and phrasal distributivity; meaning postulates; D operator; leakage; nonatomic distributivity; covers

REFERENCES

- Heim, I. and Kratzer, A. (1998). *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Krifka, M. (1998). The origins of telicity. In Rothstein, S., editor, *Events and grammar*, pages 197–235. Kluwer, Dordrecht, Netherlands.
- Landman, F. (2000). *Events and plurality: The Jerusalem lectures*. Kluwer, Dordrecht, Netherlands.
- Link, G. (1998). *Algebraic semantics in language and philosophy*. CSLI Publications, Stanford, CA.
- Montague, R. (1974). *Formal Philosophy: Selected Papers of Richard Montague. Edited and with an introduction by R. H. Thomason*. Yale University Press, New Haven.