

Language and thought

Day 1: How do we think about the world around us?

Wenkai Tay

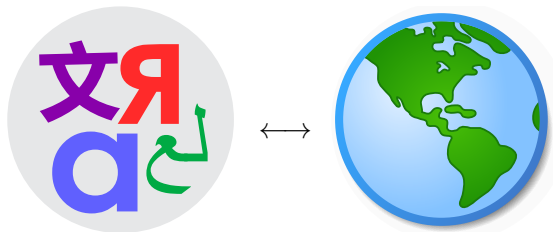
UCL Linguistics
Short Courses 2024

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taywenkai.com

Language and the real world



Language and thought





Who are you?



Who are you?

What languages do you speak?



Who are you?

What languages do you speak?

Which subfields of linguistics interest you most?



Events

Causation

Participants



Events



Causation

Participants

Events



Causation



Participants

Language and thought



Events



Causation



Participants

Language and thought



Events



Causation



Participants



Events



Causation



Participants





1 Events

2 Causation

3 Participants





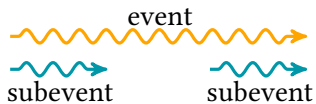
Where did you go?



Where did you go?

How many places did you visit?

event structure







How many events took place?

(Pinker 2008)



(1) John caused Bill to die on Sunday by stabbing him on Saturday.



(1) John caused Bill to die on Sunday by stabbing him on Saturday.

(2) *John killed Bill on Sunday by stabbing him on Saturday.

(Fodor 1970)



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(Fodor 1970)

(1) John caused Bill to die on Sunday by stabbing him on Saturday.


cause


die



(2) *John killed Bill on Sunday by stabbing him on Saturday.

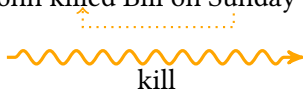


(Fodor 1970)

(1) John caused Bill to die on Sunday by stabbing him on Saturday.



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1 Events

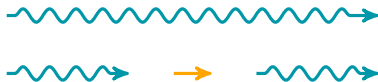
2 Causation

3 Participants

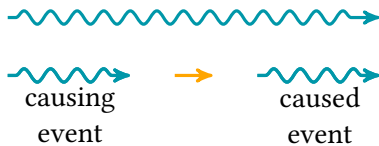
Causation



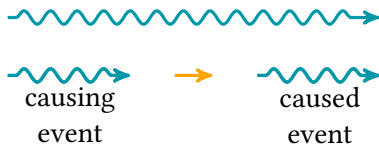
Causation



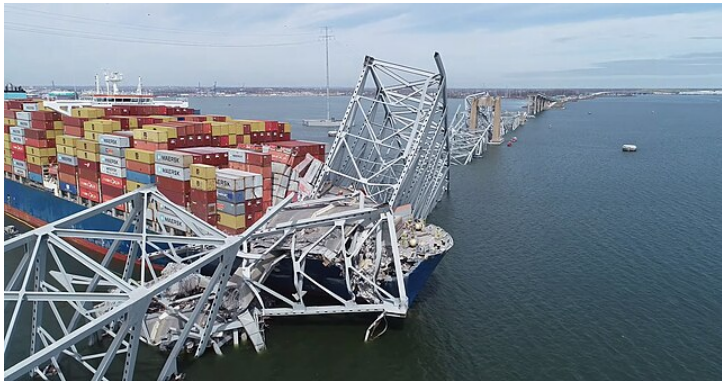
Causation



Causation is a relation between events.



Causation





Did the ship sailing into the bridge cause...

...the cars on the bridge to fall into the river?



Did the ship sailing into the bridge cause...

...the cars on the bridge to fall into the river?

...Baltimore ports to close?



Did the ship sailing into the bridge cause...

...the cars on the bridge to fall into the river?

...Baltimore ports to close?

...other ships to dock at other cities?



Did the ship sailing into the bridge cause...

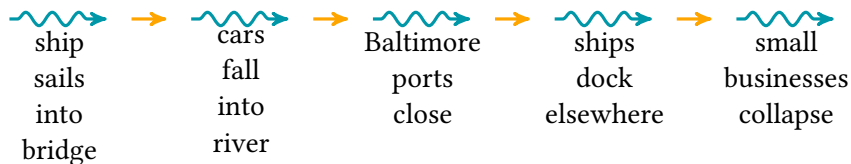
...the cars on the bridge to fall into the river?

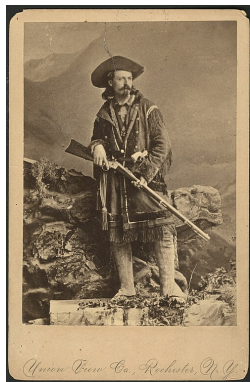
...Baltimore ports to close?

...other ships to dock at other cities?

...small businesses to collapse?

Causation







sheriff



outlaw



gunsmith

(Katz 1970)



“...the **sheriff** of an old West town is to fight a gun-duel with an infamous **badman** at high noon.



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“...so as not to take any unnecessary chances, the **sheriff** goes to the local **gunsmith** to have his trusty sixshooter put in top working condition.



“...the **sheriff** of an old West town is to fight a gun-duel with an infamous **badman** at high noon.

“...so as not to take any unnecessary chances, the **sheriff** goes to the local **gunsmith** to have his trusty sixshooter put in top working condition.

“...the **gunsmith**, who is a friend of the **outlaw**, installs an old, rusty firing pin in the **sheriff**'s gun....



“...the **sheriff** of an old West town is to fight a gun-duel with an infamous **badman** at high noon.

“...so as not to take any unnecessary chances, the **sheriff** goes to the local **gunsmith** to have his trusty sixshooter put in top working condition.

“...the **gunsmith**, who is a friend of the **outlaw**, installs an old, rusty firing pin in the **sheriff**'s gun....

“Now, when the gun-duel takes place, the **sheriff**, who draws first, is unable to fire his gun because the defective firing pin prevents it from discharging, and the **outlaw** then shoots and kills the **sheriff**.”

(Katz 1970)



(3) The **gunsmith** caused the **sheriff** to die.



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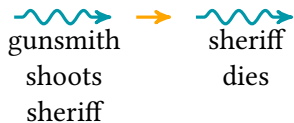
(4) The **gunsmith** killed the **sheriff**.

(Neeleman and van de Koot 2020)

Causation



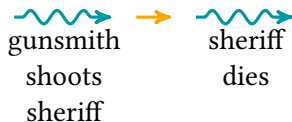
Direct causation:



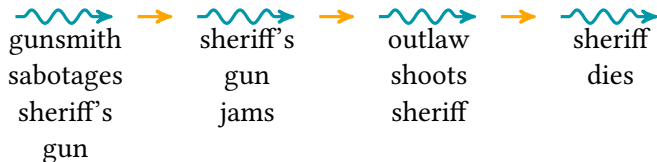
Causation



Direct causation:



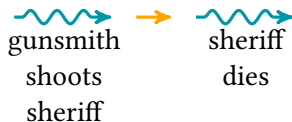
Indirect causation:



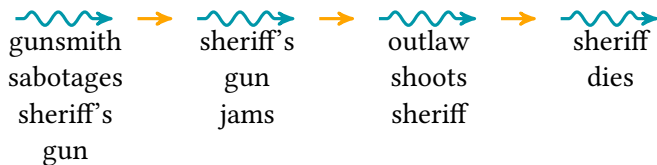
Causation



Direct causation:



Indirect causation:



It's more complicated than this! See Neeleman and van de Koot (2020).



1 Events

2 Causation

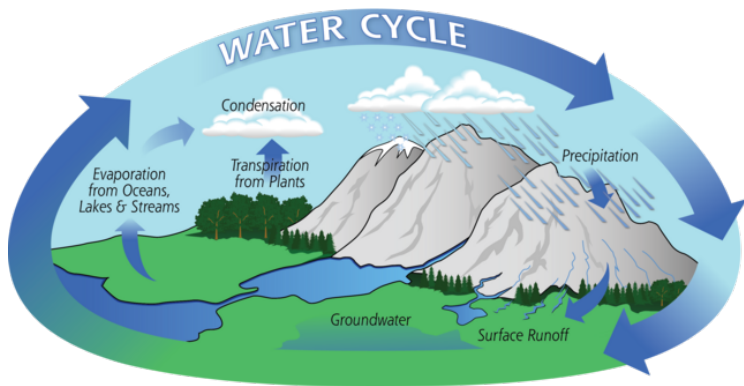
3 Participants

Participants



Participants







English:

(5) It is raining.



English:

(5) It is raining.

Russian:

(6) *Šel dožd'.*

walk.M.SG rain

'It was raining.'

(Eriksen et al. 2012)



Palestinian Arabic:

(7) *id-dunya ti-shti.*

ART-world 3F.SG-rain.IMPF

‘It was raining.’

(Givón 2001:119, cited in Eriksen et al. 2012)



Palestinian Arabic:

(7) *id-dunya ti-shti.*

ART-world 3F.SG-rain.IMPF

‘It was raining.’ (Givón 2001:119, cited in Eriksen et al. 2012)

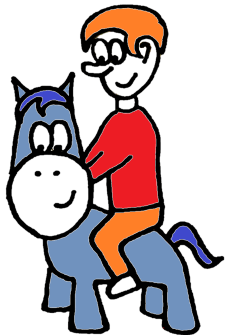
Latin:

(8) *Juppiter pluit.*

Jupiter rain.3SG.PRES

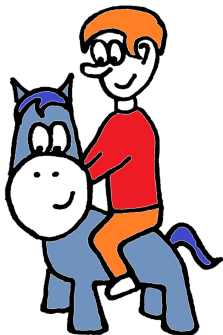
‘Jupiter rains.’ / ‘Jupiter sends rain.’ (Eriksen et al. 2012)

Participants



(9) John rode the horse.

✓



✗

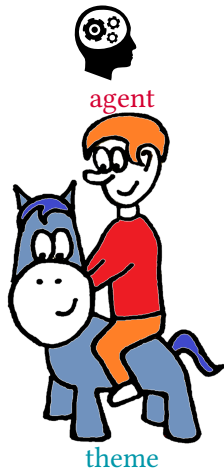


Linking problem



John rode the horse.

subject object



Linking problem

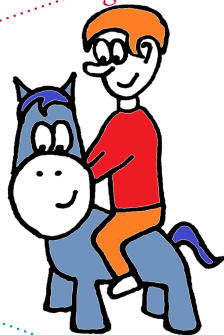


John rode the horse.

subject object



agent



theme

Linking problem



(10) John **laughed** .
subject=agent

(12) John **broke** the vase .
subject=agent object=theme

Linking problem



(10) John **laughed** .
subject=agent

(11) The vase **broke** .
subject=theme

(12) John **broke** the vase .
subject=agent object=theme



Events

Causation

Participants

Events



Causation

Participants

Summary



Events



Causation



Participants

Summary



Events



Causation



Participants

Summary



Events



Causation



Participants



Summary



Events



Causation



Participants





- 1 What is one thing that you learned today?
- 2 What is one question that you have?



- Eriksen, Pål K., Seppo Kittilä, and Leena Kolehmainen. 2012. Weather and Language. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 6:383–402.
- Fodor, J. A. 1970. Three reasons for not deriving “kill” from “cause to die”. *Linguistic Inquiry* 1:429–438.
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