

Language and thought

Day 2: What is the link between language and the real world?

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1 Recap

2 Terminology

3 Two linking theories

4 Activities



Events

Causation

Participants



Events



Causation

Participants

Language and thought



Events



Causation



Participants

Language and thought



Events



Causation



Participants

Language and thought



Events



Causation



Participants



Language and thought



Events



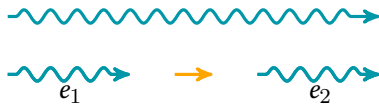
Causation



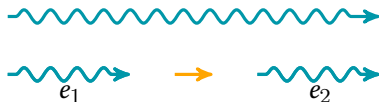
Participants



Causation is a relation between events.

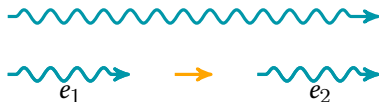


Causation is a relation between events.



Conditions (adapted from Lewis 1973):

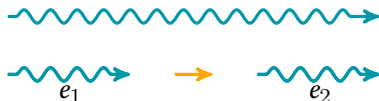
Causation is a relation between events.



Conditions (adapted from Lewis 1973):

- 1 e_1 must not follow e_2 .

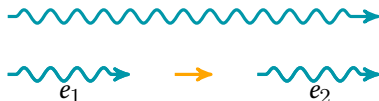
Causation is a relation between events.



Conditions (adapted from Lewis 1973):

- 1 e_1 must not follow e_2 .
- 2 If e_1 had not occurred, e_2 would not have occurred either.

Causation is a relation between events.



Conditions (adapted from Lewis 1973):

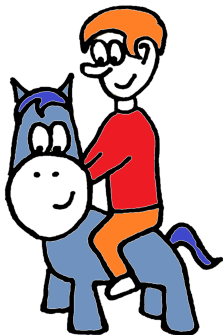
- 1 e_1 must not follow e_2 .
- 2 ~~If e_1 had not occurred, e_2 would not have occurred either.~~
If e_2 did not occur, e_1 did not occur either.

Linking problem



(1) John rode the horse.

✓



✗

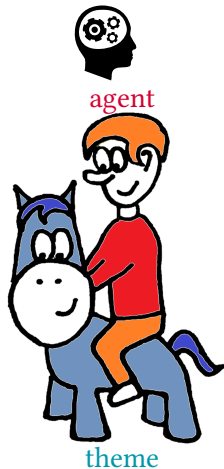


Linking problem



John rode the horse.

subject object



Linking problem

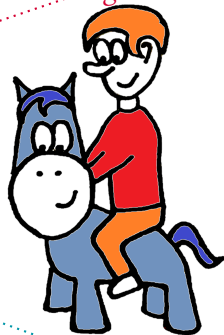


John rode the horse.

subject object



agent



theme

Linking problem





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PREDICATE(argument 1, argument 2)

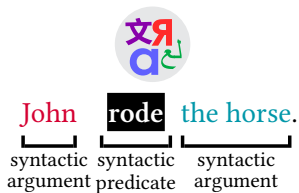


John rode the horse.

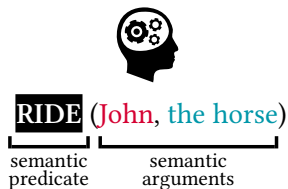


RIDE(John, the horse)

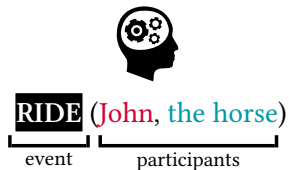
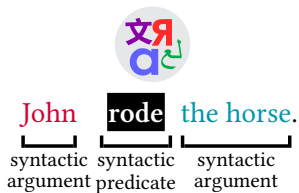
PREDICATE(argument 1, argument 2)



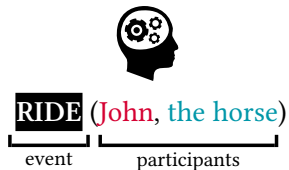
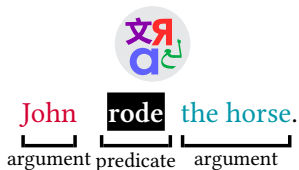
PREDICATE(argument 1, argument 2)



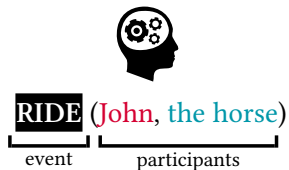
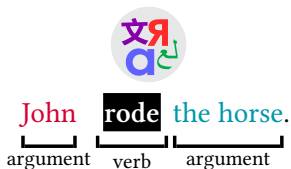
PREDICATE(argument 1, argument 2)



PREDICATE(argument 1, argument 2)



PREDICATE(argument 1, argument 2)



Syntactic arguments



John rode the horse.

└──┘ └──┘
argument argument

Syntactic arguments



Syntactic arguments



John rode the horse.

subject object



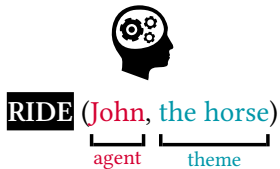
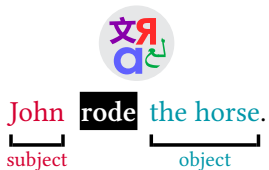
RIDE (John, the horse)
participants

Semantic arguments



RIDE (John, the horse)
agent theme

Linking problem



Linking problem





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Two linking theories



Two linking theories

Link **agent** to **subject**, **theme** to **object**



Two linking theories



Two linking theories



Link arguments in a way that preserves prominence relations (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 2005)



Two linking theories

Link arguments in a way that preserves prominence relations (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 2005)

- Syntactic prominence: **subject** > **object**



Two linking theories

Link arguments in a way that preserves prominence relations (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 2005)

- Syntactic prominence: **subject** > **object**
- Semantic prominence: **agent** > **theme**



Two linking theories

Absolute linking:

- Link **agent** to **subject**, **theme** to **object**

Relative linking:

- Link arguments in a way that preserves prominence relations
 - **subject** > **object**
 - **agent** > **theme**



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4 Activities

Activity 1: intransitive verbs



transitive verb John **rode** the horse.

Activity 1: intransitive verbs



intransitive verb John **laughed** .

transitive verb John **rode** the horse.

Activity 2: causative alternation



Transitive / causative alternant:

(2) **John** **broke** **the vase**.

agent theme

Activity 2: causative alternation



Transitive / causative alternant:

- (2) **John** **broke** **the vase**.
- agent theme

Unaccusative / anticausative alternant:

- (3) **The vase** **broke**.
- theme

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



Unergative verb:

(4) **John** **laughed** .
 └──┬──┘
 agent

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



Unergative verb:

- (4) **John** **laughed** .
└───┘
agent

Unaccusative verb:

- (5) **The vase** **broke** .
└───┘
theme

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



- (6) The audience laughed.
*the laughed audience

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



(6) The audience **laughed**.

*the **laughed** audience

(7) The vase **broke**.

the **broken** vase

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



(8) John laughed.

John deliberately laughed to lighten the mood.

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



(8) John **laughed**.

John deliberately **laughed** to lighten the mood.

(9) The vase **broke**.

*The vase deliberately **broke** to draw attention to the museum's policies.

The vase was deliberately **broken** to draw attention to the museum's policies.

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



Dutch:

- (10) Jan *heeft*/*is *gelachen*.
Jan has/is laughed
'Jan laughed.'

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



Dutch:

(10) *Jan heeft/*is gelachen.*

Jan has/is laughed

'Jan laughed.'

(11) *De vaas is/*heeft gebroken.*

the vase is/has broken

'The vase broke.'

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



Unergative verb:

(12) John laughed .
 └──┬──
 agent

Activity 3: two types of intransitive verbs



Unergative verb:

(12) **John** **laughed** .
└───┘
agent

Unaccusative verb:

(13) **The vase** **broke** .
└───┘
theme

Summary



intransitive verb

John **laughed** .
subject=agent

transitive verb

John **broke** the vase .
subject=agent object=theme

Summary



intransitive verb
(unergative)

John **laughed** .
subject=agent

intransitive verb
(unaccusative)

The vase **broke** .
subject=theme

transitive verb

John **broke** the vase .
subject=agent object=theme



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

Bonus activity 1: ditransitive verbs



intransitive verb John **laughed** .

transitive verb John **rode** the horse.

Bonus activity 1: ditransitive verbs



intransitive verb John **laughed** .

transitive verb John **rode** the horse.

ditransitive verb John **gave** the book to Bill.

Bonus activity 2: m-case (NOM/ACC)



Korean:

- (14) *John-i wus-ess-ta.*
John-NOM laugh-PST-DECL
'John laughed.'
- (15) *John-i mal-ul ta-ss-ta.*
John-NOM horse-ACC ride-PST-DECL
'John rode the horse.'

Bonus activity 3: m-case (ERG/ABS)



Tongan (Churchward 1953: 67, 68; cited in Comrie 1978):

(16) *Na'e lea 'a Tolu.*

PST speak ABS Tolu

'Tolu spoke.'

(17) *Na'e tāmata'i 'e Tēvita 'a Kōlaiate.*

PST kill ERG David ABS Goliath

'David killed Goliath.'



- Comrie, Bernard. 1978. Ergativity. In *Syntactic Typology: Studies in the Phenomenology of Language*, ed. Winfred P. Lehmann, 329–394. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Levin, Beth, and Malka Rappaport Hovav. 2005. *Argument realization*. Cambridge University Press, 1 edition.
- Lewis, David. 1973. Causation. *The Journal of Philosophy* 70:556.