

The semantics of modality, evidentiality and mirativity

This course introduces an intensional semantics to deal with modality and related phenomena, using Kratzer's situations framework. Evidentiality, traditionally defined as the encoding of the source of evidence for a proposition p , is often accompanied by overtones of speaker (un)certainty, and has in fact been treated as a type of modal element in many formal approaches to the phenomenon. Mirativity, which encodes speaker surprise, has a tortuous connection with source of evidence that has only recently begun to be explored from a formal standpoint. Furthermore, both of these categories frequently are expressed through constructions that are initially temporal or aspectual, as in the inferential future of American Spanish, and the evidential use of the pluperfect in the Spanish of the Andean countries. In the course, we will examine some well-studied cases (Turkish, Bulgarian) as well as a few others only recently treated in the literature (Cheyenne, Guarani, Matsigenka) to arrive at a general semantic framework for evidentiality and mirativity that does not neglect their morphological expression. Practical considerations, such as how to carry out elicitation of evidentials and miratives in the field, will also be given attention in the latter part of the course.

A brief introduction to extensional semantics along the lines of Heim and Kratzer (1998) will be offered at the beginning of the course or through an after-class tutorial if the need arises.