

Meaning Across Modalities: Syllabus

V-NYI, Winter 2021

Up to date as of January 30, 2021

Time

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays at 10–11am EST/4–5pm CET/6–7pm Moscow

Instructor

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Course description

This course will explore how meaning is expressed through various channels in spoken and written communication (words and their parts, gestures, facial expressions, prosody, modifications of typed and handwritten text, emoji, etc.), and how the various bits of meaning thus expressed come together at different levels of representation. We will start by situating meaning and its expression within a coherent architecture of grammar, after which we will go over some broad types of meaning that can be expressed by humans (low-level intersective modifiers, high adjuncts, degree modifiers, affective and social meanings, etc.), examining channel-independent universals of meaning composition as well as channel-specific constraints on meaning expression as we go. Time permitting, we will also look at how meaning is encoded in pictorial representations and ask how we can talk about meaning in systems whose primary function is not communication, focusing on athletic movement.

Course materials

All course materials will be added to this Dropbox folder: [link removed from public version] We also have a Google doc to collect relevant examples: [link removed from public version] Please do not share these links with anyone outside V-NYI without the instructor's permission.

Readings

You are not obliged to do any readings for this course. The relevant content of the “primary” readings will be covered in class; you should read them if you want to gain a deeper understanding of what was discussed in class. The “background” readings contextualize what was discussed in class; you should read them if you want to gain a deeper understanding of a given research topic.

Schedule (subject to change)

Date	Topics	Readings
1/18	Meaning and its expression within the architecture of grammar. “Low-level” meanings: predicates and their arguments; intersective modifiers.	
1/20 & 1/22	(Not-)at-issueness across channels: restricting and non-restricting modifiers; non-subjective modifiers; high adjuncts.	primary: Esipova 2019a,b; background: Schlenker 2018
1/25	Degree modifiers.	primary: Esipova 2019b; background: Schlenker 2018
1/27	Non-truth-conditional meanings.	primary: Esipova 2020a; background: Potts 2007; Schlenker 2007
1/29	Meaning beyond language: pictures. Meaning beyond signaling: athletic movement. Wrap-up.	primary: Esipova 2020b

Bibliography

- Esipova, Maria. 2019a. Composition and projection of co-speech gestures. In Katherine Blake, Forrest Davis, Kaelyn Lamp & Joseph Rhyne (eds.), *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 29*, 111–137. doi:10.3765/salt.v29i0.4600.
- Esipova, Maria. 2019b. Towards a uniform super-linguistic theory of projection. In Julian J. Schlöder, Dean McHugh & Floris Roelofsen (eds.), *Proceedings of the 22nd Amsterdam Colloquium*, 553–562.
- Esipova, Maria. 2020a. Composure and composition: towards a cross-modal typology of affective content. Talk given at *New York Philosophy of Language Workshop*, NYU, October 26. <https://esipova.net/files/esipova-nyplw2020-hdt.pdf>.
- Esipova, Maria. 2020b. On not-at-issueness in pictures. Ms., University of Oslo, in revision. <https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/005096>.
- Potts, Christopher. 2007. The expressive dimension. *Theoretical linguistics* 33(2). 165–198. doi:10.1515/TL.2007.011.
- Schlenker, Philippe. 2007. Expressive presuppositions. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33(2). 237–245. doi:10.1515/TL.2007.017.
- Schlenker, Philippe. 2018. Iconic pragmatics. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 36(3). 877–936. doi:10.1007/s11049-017-9392-x.