Today

• Semantics of verbs
  - Active and stative verbs
  - Semantic roles
  - Lexical and grammatical verbs
  - Auxiliaries and Modals
  - (Verb morphology)

Reading: pp. 109-117
Verbs

Lexical
- Main
  - Active
  - Stative

Grammatical
- Auxiliary
- Modal
Semantics of Verbs

Active verbs:

Involve actions, activities that change over time ("change of state"), often with a beginning and an end

hit
play
read
drink

...
Semantics of Verbs

Active verbs:

Progressive morphology (-ing) is a diagnostic for active verbs

The boy is hitting the ball.
The children are playing.
We are reading Shakespeare.
The cat is drinking out of the toilet.
Semantics of Verbs

Stative verbs

Involve states or conditions that are static and do not change over time

States:

  *be, belong, contain, have, include, own…*

Qualities/senses:

  *appear, seem, resemble, look, taste, smell…*

Emotions/opinion:

  *love, hate, think, feel, believe, consider, know, understand…*
Semantics of Verbs

Stative verbs

*Cannot typically be used with progressive morphology*

- Hiro believes in UFOS.
  *Hiro is believing in UFOS.

- That cookie contains soy.
  *That cookie is containing soy.

- Marco resembles Robert DeNiro.
  *Marco is resembling Robert DeNiro.
Semantics of Verbs

Some verbs can have both active and stative forms with different meanings

**Stative**
- I think you’re funny.
- You look tired.
- Joe appears pleased.
- I have a son.

**Active**
- Quiet! I’m thinking.
- You are looking out the window.
- Joe is appearing on Broadway.
- I am having pie for dessert.
Semantics of Verbs

Verbs relate to other parts of the sentence, assigning them different semantic roles, depending upon the verb’s meaning.
Semantics of Verbs

Some **Semantic roles**…

**Agent**: the ‘doer’ of the action

**Theme**: the ‘undergoer’ of the action

**Goal**: the endpoint in a change of location, possession, state

**Instrument**: the means used to accomplish an action
Semantics of Verbs

Semantic roles

The dog chewed the stick.
agent theme

Monty read a book to his son.
agent theme goal

The baby ate the oatmeal with a spoon.
agent theme instrument

Different verbs assign different types/#s of roles
Semantics of Verbs

Semantic roles

The roles assigned by a verb stay the same, even if the structure of the sentence is changed.

The trainer gave a treat to the dog.
agent  theme  goal

The trainer gave the dog a treat.
agent  goal  theme

The dog was given a treat by the trainer.
goal  theme  agent
Semantics of Verbs

Lexical verbs (a.k.a. ‘main’ verbs)
Have "dictionary" definitions with distinct semantic content; assign semantic roles

Grammatical verbs (a.k.a. ‘helping’ verbs)
Have no distinct semantic content; include auxiliary verbs and modal verbs; do not assign semantic roles
Semantics of Verbs

Grammatical verbs

**Auxiliary verb:** Provides grammatical information about main verb following it

- *to be* (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been)
- *to have* (have, has, had)
- *to do* (do, does, did, done)
Semantics of Verbs

Grammatical verbs

Auxiliary verbs

*I am walking.*
*He has eaten.*
*They did sleep.*
*Georgia has been writing for days.*
Semantics of Verbs

NOTE: Some auxiliary verbs have homophonous (“same-sounding”) counterparts which are main verbs.

I am a professor.

You are a student.

Buster has a cold.

I do math for fun.
Semantics of Verbs

Grammatical verbs

Modals

Express “modality” of main verb (providing information about necessity, ability, permission, possibility, volition…)

*can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must, ought*
Semantics of Verbs

Grammatical verbs

Modals

Miles *can* talk. (ability)
Yes, you *may* go to the movies. (permission)
I *might* go too, but I might not. (possibility)
Students *must* turn in their work. (necessity)
Tomorrow they *will* set sail. (volition)

NOTE: Unlike Aux., Modals *never* occur as main verb
Morphology of Verbs

Derivational morphology

Affixation:
A/N + -ize/-ify/-ate/-en → V. “to make, cause to become_”

- legalize
- sterilize
- jeopardize
- fossilize
- hospitalize
- rarify
- clarify
- simplify
- beautify
- humidify
- activate
- regulate
- decorate
- fabricate
- gravitate
- blacken
- darken
- quicken
- lengthen
- strengthen
Morphology of Verbs

**Derivational** morphology

**Compounding:**
- steamroll
- jumpstart

**Blending:**
- chuckle + snort → chortle
- guess + estimate → guestimate

**Clipping:**
- vegetate → veg
- demonstrate → demo

**Conversion** (a.k.a. zero derivation):
- to nose (around)
- to down (a drink)
- to foot (the bill)
Morphology of Verbs

**Inflectional** morphology:

Adds *grammatical* information about …

- Person
- Number
- Tense
- Aspect

Indicated using Affixation, Internal change, or Suppletion
# Morphology of Verbs

**Inflectional** morphology

**Person** and **Number**: Verbs can be inflected for Person and Number of subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st:</td>
<td><em>I walk</em></td>
<td><em>We walk</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd:</td>
<td><em>You walk</em></td>
<td><em>You(all) walk</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd:</td>
<td><em>He/she/it walks</em></td>
<td><em>They walk</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Morphology of Verbs

Inflectional morphology

NOTE: **Auxiliaries** also inflect for **Person/Number**, but **Modals** *do not*

**Aux:**
- I am, have, do, ...
- you are, have, do, ...
- s/he is, has, does, ...
- they are, have, do, ...

**Modals:**
- I can, will, ...
- you can, will, ...
- s/he can, will, ...
- they can, will, ...
Summary: Semantics of Verbs

- **Active** and **stative** verbs differ in whether they express change of state (Diagnostic: if they can use –*ing*)
- Verbs assign **semantic roles** to other phrases in the sentence
- **Lexical** and **Grammatical** verbs differ in their semantic content
Summary: Verb morphology

• New verbs can be created with affixation (e.g., -ize, -ify, -ate, -en), compounding, blending, clipping, conversion, suppletion

• *Inflectional* morphology is used to indicate person, number, tense, aspect

• *Tense* indicates time of action, *Perfect Aspect* indicates completion of action, and *Progressive Aspect* indicates duration of action