

Advanced Topics in Syntax: The Syntax and Semantics of Inner Aspect
AN5011MA
5-credit seminar
Spring 2026

Course description

This course is concerned with the syntax and semantics of inner aspect (or event aspect). A central goal of the course is to discuss important generalizations that have been made by scholars regarding this grammatical category and see how many of these generalizations have been questioned due to novel empirical data from a variety of languages and the development of linguistic theory. First, we focus on semantic approaches to inner aspect such as Verkuyl (1993) and Krifka (1998), and then we turn our attention to more recent syntactic analyses like Kratzer (2004), Borer (2005) and Travis (2010). By reading some of the most influential works on inner aspect from the past 70 years or so, the students will see numerous examples of how to provide a careful analyses of linguistic data, i.e. what it means to make falsifiable hypotheses and how to discuss predictions of analyses in linguistic science.

Grading

Your final grade will be the average of the grades you receive on an endterm test and a presentation.

Endterm test

This test will be based on the slideshows I make for this course. Each slideshow will be available on the e-learning page of the course.

Presentations

In your 15-minute presentation you will be required to describe an interesting puzzle that we discuss in the course. Since you will have to assume an audience of non-experts in this task, it is essential that you find a puzzle that you understand well and can explain in simple terms. You will also have to answer some questions in the Q&A following your presentation.

Reading assignments

We will read one or two chapters from the monographs specified in the weekly syllabus. You will be informed of what chapters to read one week before they are assigned for class. You should read book chapters and journal articles from beginning to end before they are scheduled to be discussed in class.

Attendance

No more than three absences are allowed, illness included.

Weekly Syllabus

	Class content	Reading assignments
Week 1	Introduction to the theme of the course	Filip (2012)

Week 2	A brief overview of inner aspect research	Kardos (2025)
Week 3	Aspectual classes and diagnostics	Vendler (1957), Dowty (1979)
Week 4	Telicity is a property of VPs	Verkuyl (1993)
Week 5	Measuring out	Tenny (1994)
Week 6	Telic predicates have quantized reference	Krifka (1998)
Week 7	Telicity is a syntactic matter	Kratzer (2004)
Week 8	Spring break	
Week 9	Telic expressions are quantity structures 1	Borer (2005)
Week 10	Telic expressions are quantity structures 2	
Week 11	Cross-linguistic evidence for the syntactic representation of telicity 1	Travis (2010)
Week 12	Cross-linguistic evidence for the syntactic representation of telicity 2	
Week 13	Endterm test	
Week 14	Presentations	

References

- Borer, Hagit. 2005. *The normal course of events: Structuring sense* (Vol. 2). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dowty, David. 1979. *Word meaning and Montague grammar*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Filip, Hana. 2012. Lexical aspect. In Robert I. Binnick (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 721–751.
- Kardos, Éva. 2025. Fordulópontok a belső aspektus kutatásában. *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* 121: 71–106.
- Kratzer, Angelika. 2004. Telicity and the meaning of objective case. In Jacqueline Guéron & Jacqueline Lecarme (eds.), *The syntax of time*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 389–423.
- Krifka, Manfred, 1998. The origins of telicity. In Susan Rothstein (ed.), *Events and grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. 197–235.
- Tenny, Carol. 1994. *Aspectual roles and the syntax-semantics interface*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Travis, Lisa. 2010. Inner aspect: The articulation of VP. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Vendler, Zeno. 1957. Verbs and times. *Philosophical Review* 66: 143–160.
- Verkuyl, Henk. 1993. *A theory of aspectuality: The interaction between temporal and atemporal structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Place and Time

Room 55, Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 11:40 a.m.

Contact

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Office hours: Wednesday 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Thursday 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.