# Introduction to Formal Semantics Lecture 10: Event Semantics

Volha Petukhova & Nicolaie Dominik Dascalu
Spoken Language Systems Group
Saarland Univeristy
04.07.2022







### Overview for today

- Recap: tense and aspect
- Why event semantics?
- Verbs as predicates
- Verbs as quantifiers
- Conjunctions
- Negation

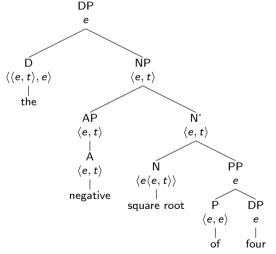


#### Reading:

 Coppock, E., and Champollion, L. (2021). Invitation to formal semantics. Manuscript, Boston University and New York University (Ch.11)

# Quizz (Presupposition)

Compute a derivation for the following tree, translating square root as a constant type  $\langle e\langle e,t \rangle \rangle$  and four of type e:



# Quizz (Aspect)

#### Compute 'inner' aspect of the following sentences, use Verkuyl's approach:

a. John drank the beer.

$$[+Ts[+SQA] \quad [+Tvp[+ADDTO] \quad [+SQA]]]$$
 (terminative)

b. Ivan drinks beer.

$$[-Ts[+SQA] \quad [-Tvp[+ADDTO] \quad [-SQA]]]$$
 (durative)

c. Students met the teacher.

$$[-Ts[-SQA] \quad [+Tvp[+ADDTO] \quad [+SQA]]]$$
 (durative)

d. Three girls lifted four tables.

$$[+Ts[+SQA] \quad [+Tvp[+ADDTO] \quad [+SQA]]]$$
 (terminative)

e. Judith ate sandwiches.

$$[-Ts[+SQA] \quad [+Tvp[+ADDTO] \quad [-SQA]]]$$
 (durative)

#### **Event Semantics: Motivation**

#### What we did so far:

- We argued that the invented, symbolic language of logic and math is good way to think about natural languages
- We used symbols to represent meaning:
  - connecting terms like ∧ ∨
  - ullet track the order for meaning composition applying  $\lambda$
  - to separate the actual from possible, ∃ from ◊
  - ullet to visualize how meaning can be narrowed down  $\cap$  to nothing  $\emptyset$  or expand  $\cup$
- Basic assumption: verbs act as n-place predicates, e.g. travel  $\rightsquigarrow T(x,y)$

#### Example 1

Katarina grieved for many years  $\rightsquigarrow$  G(k,m)Katarina grieved  $\rightsquigarrow$  G(k)

#### Example 1

Katarina grieved for many years  $\rightsquigarrow$  G(k,m)Katarina grieved  $\rightsquigarrow$  G(k)

Are they two different events of grieving?

#### Example 1

Katarina grieved for many years  $\rightsquigarrow$  G(k,m)Katarina grieved  $\rightsquigarrow$  G(k)

Are they two different events of grieving?

- (1) Brutus stabbed Caesar.  $stab_1(b, c)$
- (2) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum  $stab_2(b, c, f)$
- (3) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon  $stab_3(b, c, n)$
- (4) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon on the forum  $stab_4(b, c, n, f)$
- (5) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum at noon  $stab_5(b, c, f, n)$

#### Example 1

Katarina grieved for many years  $\rightsquigarrow$  G(k,m)Katarina grieved  $\rightsquigarrow$  G(k)

Are they two different events of grieving?

#### Example 2

- (1) Brutus stabbed Caesar.  $stab_1(b, c)$
- (2) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum  $stab_2(b, c, f)$
- (3) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon  $stab_3(b, c, n)$
- (4) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon on the forum  $stab_4(b, c, n, f)$
- (5) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum at noon  $stab_5(b, c, f, n)$

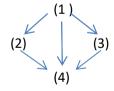
How to explain the systematic logical entailment relations between the different uses of 'stab'

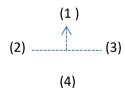
#### **Event Semantics: Diamond Entailment**

- (1) Brutus was a famous Roman politician.
- (2) Brutus was a Roman politician.
- (3) Brutus was a famous politician.
- (4) Brutus was a politician.

#### **Event Semantics: Diamond Entailment**

- (1) Brutus was a famous Roman politician.
- (2) Brutus was a Roman politician.
- (3) Brutus was a famous politician.
- (4) Brutus was a politician.



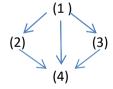


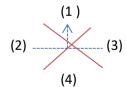
### Event Semantics: Diamond Entailment (cont.)

- (1) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon on the forum.
- (2) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum.
- (3) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon.
- (4) Brutus stabbed Caesar.

### Event Semantics: Diamond Entailment (cont.)

- (1) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon on the forum.
- (2) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum.
- (3) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon.
- (4) Brutus stabbed Caesar.





Davidson (1967) proposed a new view - event semantics.

Davidson (1967) proposed a new view - event semantics. Events are entities with locations in time and space. G(e)

Davidson (1967) proposed a new view - event semantics.

Events are entities with locations in time and space. G(e)

Events have participants - entities that are related to events by relations as thematic (or semantic) roles

Davidson (1967) proposed a new view - event semantics.

Events are entities with locations in time and space. G(e)

Events have participants - entities that are related to events by relations as thematic (or semantic) roles

#### Example

```
Katarina grieved \rightsquigarrow \exists e.[G(e) \land agent(k, e)]
```

Katarina grieved for many years  $\rightsquigarrow \exists e.[G(e) \land agent(k,e) \land time(e,many\_years)]$ 

### Event Semantics: Events and Participants

Eventuality: event, state, process or action which is being referred to by a verbal, adjectival or nominal predicate argument structure.

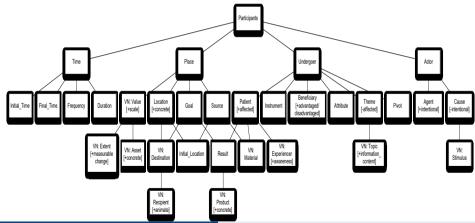
NOTE: Eventualities can also be described as "something that can be said to obtain or hold true, to happen or to occur"

Participant in an eventuality: entity involved in the eventuality

Semantic (themantic, theta) role: type of involvement of a participant in an eventuality.

#### **Event Semantics: Semantic Roles**

PropBank (Palmer, et. al., 2005):  $Arg_1$ ,  $Arg_2$ ,  $Arg_n$ ,  $Arg_{MOD}$ FrameNet (Fillmore 1976, Fillmore 1985, Fillmore & Baker 2010): Byer, Seller, Thing-To-Sell, Selling-Time, ... VerbNet (Dang et al., 1998; Kipper et al, 2000; Kipper Schuler, 2005; Kipper et. al., 2008): Agent, Theme, Patient, ... ISO 24617-5



### Event Semantics: Approaches to Verbal Denotation

#### Example

Brutus stabbed Caesar.

Approach	Verbal denotation	Example
Traditional	$\lambda x \lambda y[stab(x,y)]$	stab(b,c)
Classical Davidsonian	$\lambda e \lambda x \lambda y [stab(e, x, y)]$	$\exists e[stab(e, b, c)]$
Neo-Davidsonian	$\lambda e[stab(e)]$	$\exists e[stab(e) \land agent(e,b) \land theme(e,c)]$
Landman (1996)	$\lambda e \lambda x \lambda y[stab(e) \wedge agent(e, x) \wedge theme(e, y)]$	$\exists e[stab(e, b, c)]$
Kratzer (2000)	$\lambda e \lambda y[stab(e,y)]$	$\exists e[agent(e,b) \land stab(e,c)]$

### **Event Semantics: Advantages**

Capturing diamond entailments, classical Davidsonian style:

- (1) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum at noon.
- $\exists e[stabbing(e, brutus, caesar) \land loc(e) = forum \land time(e) = noon]$
- (2) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum.
- $\exists e[stabbing(e, brutus, caesar) \land loc(e) = forum]$
- (3) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon.
- $\exists e[stabbing(e, brutus, caesar) \land time(e) = noon]$
- (4) Brutus stabbed Caesar.
- $\exists e[stabbing(e, brutus, caesar)]$

### Event Semantics: Advantages (cont.)

Capturing the same entailments, Neo-Davidsonian style:

- (1) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum at noon.
- $\exists e [\mathit{agent}(e) = \mathit{brutus} \land \mathit{stabbing}(e) \land \mathit{theme}(e) = \mathit{caesar} \land \mathit{loc}(e) = \mathit{forum} \land \mathit{time}(e) = \mathit{noon}]$
- (2) Brutus stabbed Caesar on the forum.
- $\exists e[\mathit{agent}(e) = \mathit{brutus} \land \mathit{stabbing}(e) \land \mathit{theme}(e) = \mathit{caesar} \land \mathit{loc}(e) = \mathit{forum}]$
- (3) Brutus stabbed Caesar at noon.
- $\exists e[agent(e) = brutus \land stabbing(e) \land theme(e) = caesar \land time(e) = noon]$
- (4) Brutus stabbed Caesar.
- $\exists e[agent(e) = brutus \land stabbing(e) \land theme(e) = caesar]$

### Event Semantics: Advantages of the Neo-Davidsonian approach

- Makes it easier to state generalizations across the categories of nouns and verbs, and to place constraints on thematic roles
- Good for formulating analyses without committing to an argument/adjunct distinction
- Lends itself to a natural compositional process in terms of intersection with an existential quantifier at the end

```
a. [[agent]] = \lambda x \lambda e[agent(e) = x]

b. [[theme]] = \lambda y \lambda e[agent(e) = y]

c. [stab] = \lambda e[stab(e)]

d. [[agent]Brutus] = \lambda e[agent(e) = brutus]

e. [[theme]Caesar] = \lambda e[agent(e) = caesar]

f. [Brutus stab Caesar] = (c) \cap (d) \cap (e) (sentence radical)

g. [Brutus stab Caesar] = \exists e \ e \in (c) \cap (d) \cap (e) (full sentence)
```

### Event Semantics: Advantages (cont.)

Antecedents for anaphoric expressions like pronouns, and referents for definite descriptions and the like

#### Example

Jones did it slowly, deliberately, in the bathroom, with a knife, at midnight. What he did was butter a piece of toast. (Davidson, 1967)

Perceptual reports (Higginbotham, 1983), as an alternative to situation semantics

#### Example

John saw Mary leave.

Semantic relations between gerunds and verbs (Parsons, 1990)

#### Example

They sang the song.

The singing of the song

### Event Semantics: Advantages (cont.)

Various semantic relations between causatives and their intransitive counterparts (Parsons, 1990)

#### Example

Marry felled the tree.

The tree fell.

Aspectual phenomena and measurement (Krifka, 1998; Champollion, 2010)

#### Example

- a. three litres of water
- b. three hours of running
- c. run for three hours

and many more

#### Predicates

stab  $\rightsquigarrow \lambda e.Stab(e)$ butter  $\rightsquigarrow \lambda e.Butter(e)$ 

#### Predicates

stab  $\rightsquigarrow \lambda e.Stab(e)$ butter  $\rightsquigarrow \lambda e.Butter(e)$ 

#### Syntax

 $\mathsf{DP} \to \theta \; \mathsf{DP}$ 

#### **Predicates**

```
stab \rightsquigarrow \lambda e.Stab(e)
butter \rightsquigarrow \lambda e.Butter(e)
```

#### Syntax

 $\mathsf{DP} \to \theta \; \mathsf{DP}$ 

#### Lexicon

 $\theta$ : [agent], [theme], [instrument], [recipient], [goal], [location], [time], ...

#### **Predicates**

```
stab \rightsquigarrow \lambda e.Stab(e)
butter \rightsquigarrow \lambda e.Butter(e)
```

#### Syntax

 $\mathsf{DP} \to \theta \; \mathsf{DP}$ 

#### Lexicon

 $\theta{:}~[\mathsf{agent}],~[\mathsf{theme}],~[\mathsf{instrument}],~[\mathsf{recipient}],~[\mathsf{goal}],~[\mathsf{location}],~[\mathsf{time}],~\dots$ 

#### theta Mapping

```
[agent] \rightsquigarrow \lambda x \lambda e.agent(e) = x
[theme] \rightsquigarrow \lambda x \lambda e.theme(e) = x
[instrument] \rightsquigarrow \lambda x \lambda e.instrument(e) = x
```

We need to introduce an operation that existentially binds the event variable – *existintial closure* as a type-shifting rule

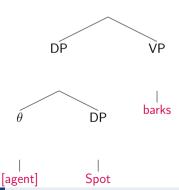
#### Type-Shifting Rule 5: Existential Closure

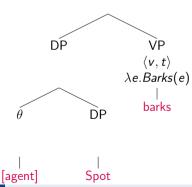
if  $\alpha \leadsto \alpha'$ , where  $\alpha'$  is of a category  $\langle v, t \rangle$ , then:

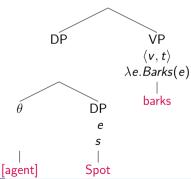
 $\alpha \rightsquigarrow \exists e.\alpha'(e)$ 

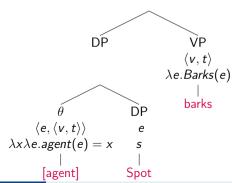
as well (as long as) e does not occur in  $\alpha'$ ; in that case, use a different variable of the same type

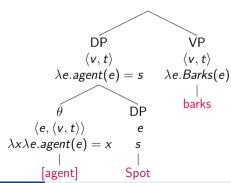
 $\nu$  stands for the type of event, so  $\langle \nu, t \rangle$  is the type of an event predicate

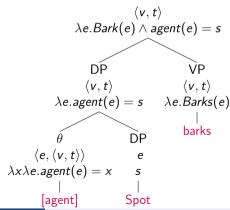




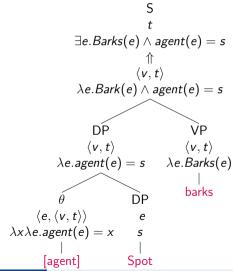


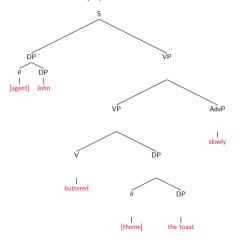


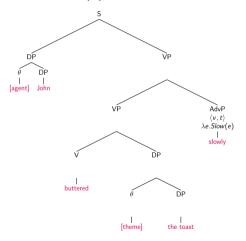


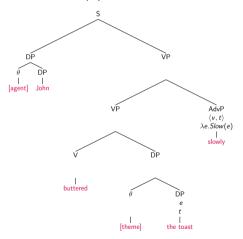


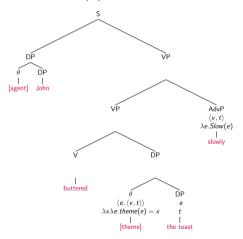
## Event Semantics: Composition (cont.)

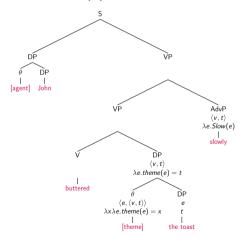


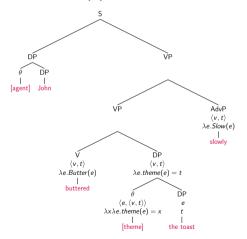


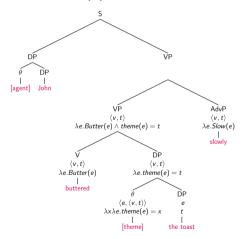


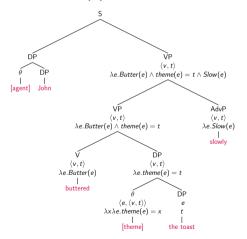


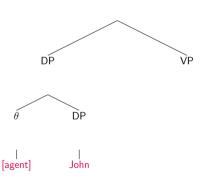


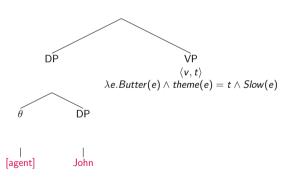


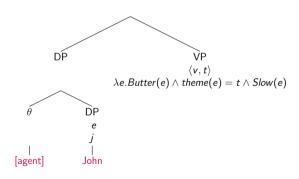


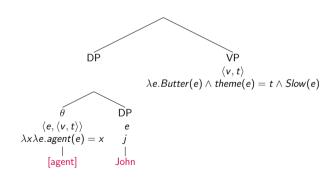




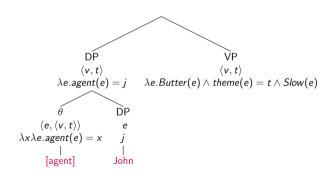


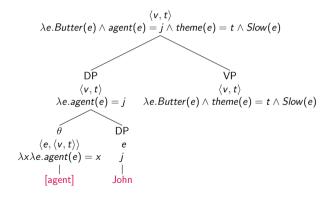


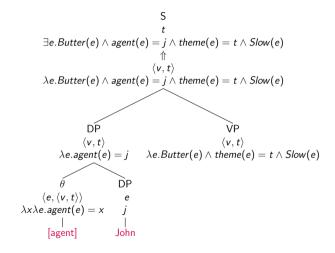




ŝ







#### **Event Semantics: Quantification**

Generalization: the event quantifier always takes lowest possible scope with respect to other quantifiers

#### Scope: example 1

No dog barks.

(a) 
$$\neg \exists x [Dog(x) \land \exists e [Bark(e) \land agent(e, x)]]$$

There is no barking event that is done by a dog

(b) 
$$*\exists e \neg [Bark(e) \exists x [Dog(x) \land \land agent(e, x)]]$$

There is an event that is not a barking by a dog

#### Scope: example 2

Every dog barks.

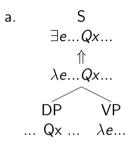
a. 
$$\forall x[Dog(x) \rightarrow \exists e[Bark(e) \land agent(e) = x]]$$

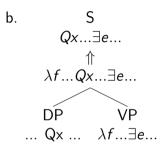
For every dog there is a barking event that it did

b. 
$$*\exists e \forall x [Dog(x) \rightarrow [Bark(e) \land agent(e) = x]]$$

There is a barking event that was done by every dog

#### **Event Semantics: Quantification**





Verbs denote generalized quantifiers over events; introduce CONTINUATION VARIABLE (Barker & Shan, 2014)

Verbs denote generalized quantifiers over events; introduce CONTINUATION VARIABLE (Barker & Shan, 2014)

```
New representation for Verbs \langle\langle v,t\rangle,t\rangle
```

```
barks \rightsquigarrow \lambda f \exists e.Bark(e) \land f(e)
butter \rightsquigarrow \lambda f \exists e.Butter(e) \land f(e)
```

Verbs denote generalized quantifiers over events; introduce CONTINUATION VARIABLE (Barker & Shan, 2014)

#### New representation for Verbs $\langle \langle v, t \rangle, t \rangle$

```
barks \rightsquigarrow \lambda f \exists e. Bark(e) \land f(e)
butter \rightsquigarrow \lambda f \exists e. Butter(e) \land f(e)
```

#### New representation for $\theta$ of $\langle e, \langle \langle \langle v, t \rangle, t \rangle, \langle \langle v, t \rangle, t \rangle \rangle$

```
[agent] \rightsquigarrow \lambda x \lambda V \lambda f . V(\lambda e. agent(e) = x \wedge f(e)
[theme] \rightsquigarrow \lambda x \lambda V \lambda f. V(\lambda e. theme(e) = x \wedge f(e)
```

a.  $\lambda f \exists e. [Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land f(e)](\lambda e. true)$ 

- a.  $\lambda f \exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land f(e)](\lambda e.true)$
- b.  $\exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land (\lambda e.true)(e)]$

- a.  $\lambda f \exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land f(e)](\lambda e.true)$
- b.  $\exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land (\lambda e.true)(e)]$
- c.  $\exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land true]$

- a.  $\lambda f \exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land f(e)](\lambda e.true)$
- b.  $\exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land (\lambda e.true)(e)]$
- c.  $\exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land true]$
- d.  $\exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s]$

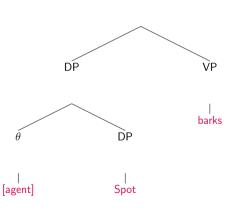
- a.  $\lambda f \exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land f(e)](\lambda e.true)$
- b.  $\exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land (\lambda e.true)(e)]$
- c.  $\exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s \land true]$
- d.  $\exists e.[Barks(e) \land agent(e) = s]$

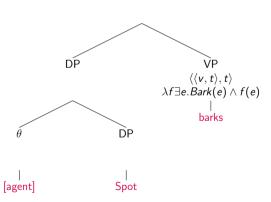
#### Type-Shifting Rule 6: Quantifier Closure

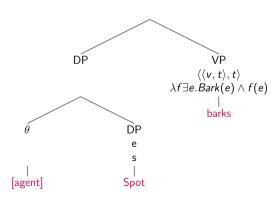
if  $\alpha \rightsquigarrow \alpha'$ , where  $\alpha'$  is of a category  $\langle \langle v, t \rangle, t \rangle$ , then:

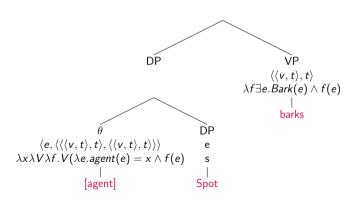
$$\alpha \rightsquigarrow \alpha'(\lambda e, true)$$

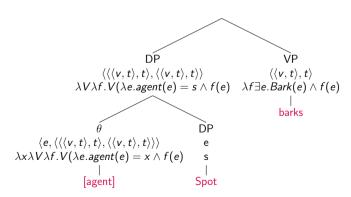
as well.

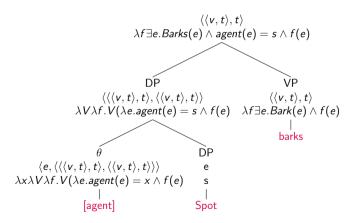


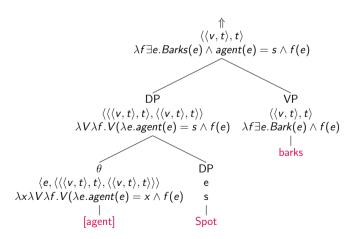


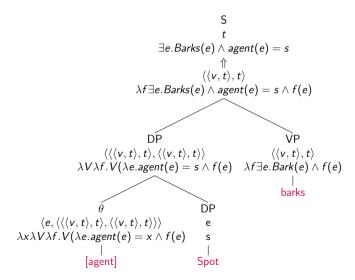




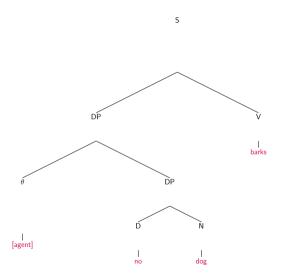




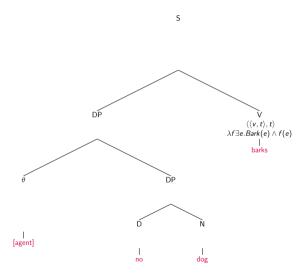




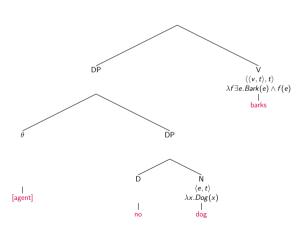
## Event Semantics: Quantificational Noun Phrase



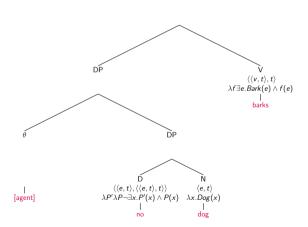
#### Event Semantics: Quantificational Noun Phrase

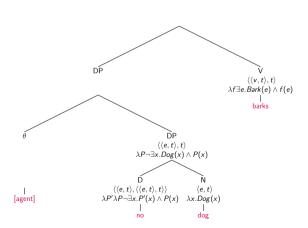


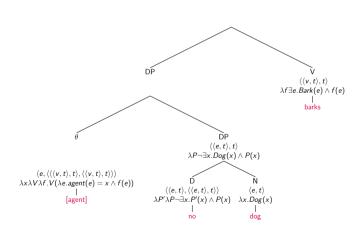




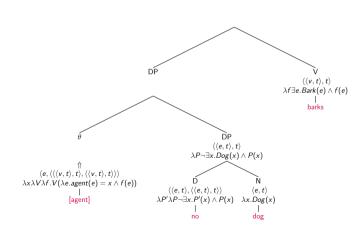


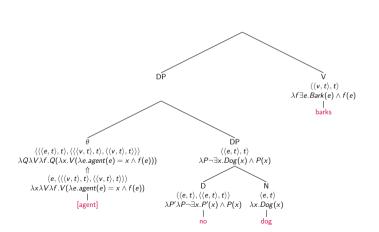


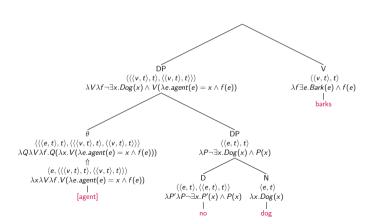


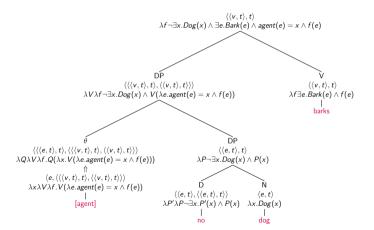


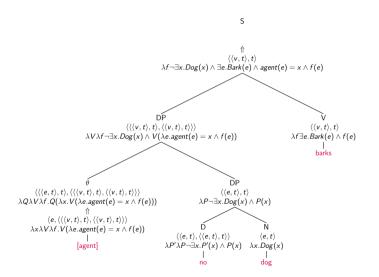


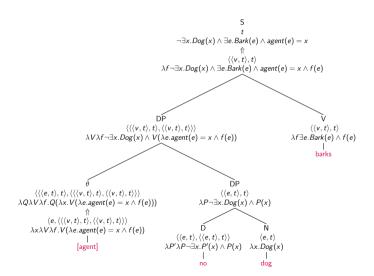






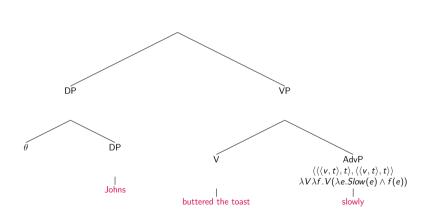


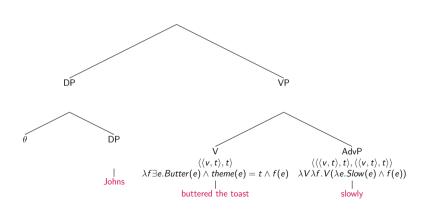


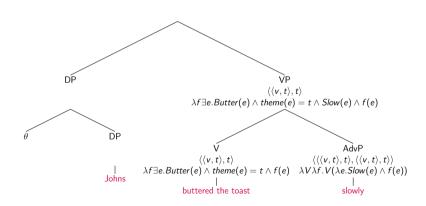


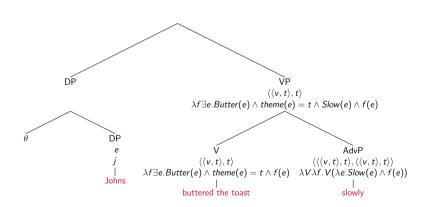
S DΡ ĎΡ AdvP **Johns** buttered the toast

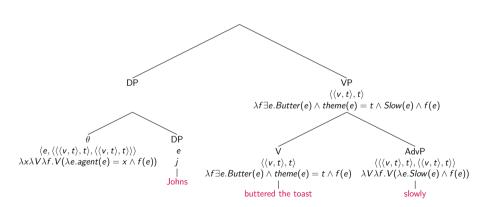


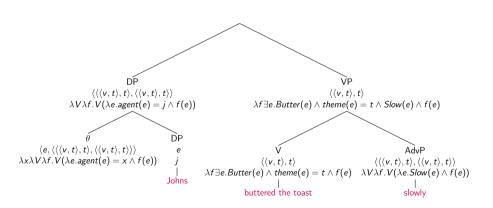


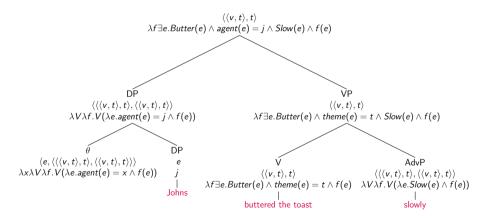


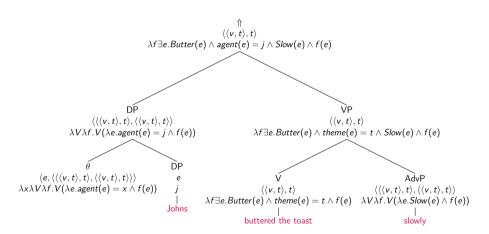


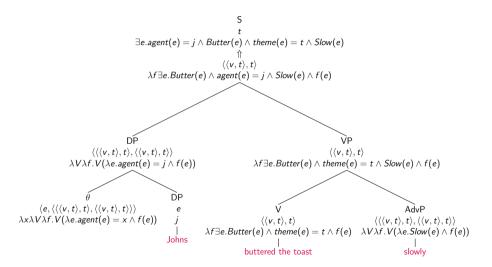












#### **Event Semantics: Negation**

#### Example

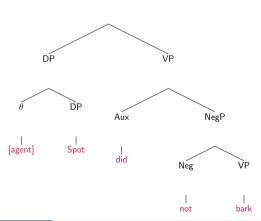
Spot didn't bark.

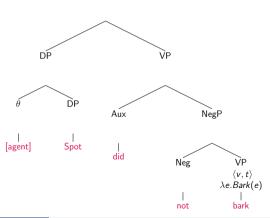
a. 
$$\exists e. \neg [Bark(e) \land agent(e) = s]$$

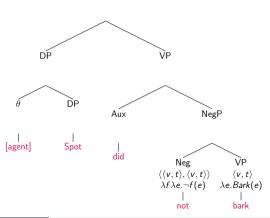
There is an event that is not a barking by Spot

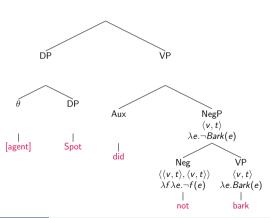
b. 
$$\neg [\exists e. Bark(e) \land agent(e) = s]$$

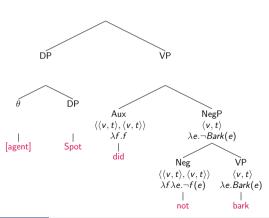
There is no barking event that is done by Spot

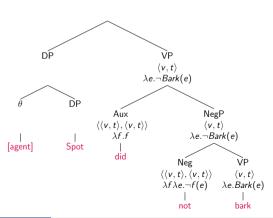


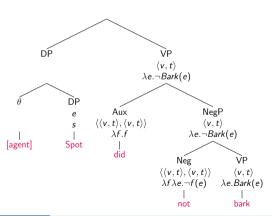


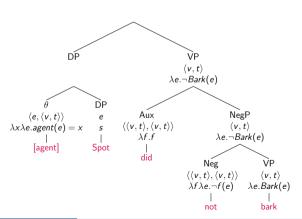


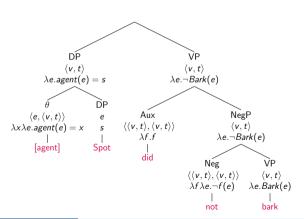


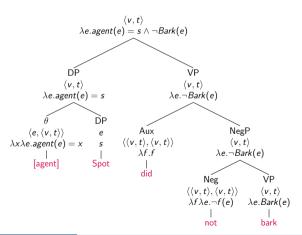


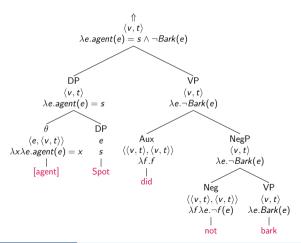


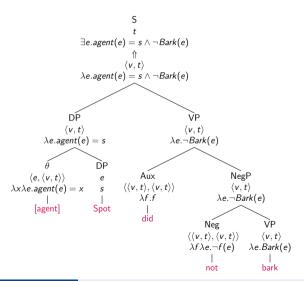


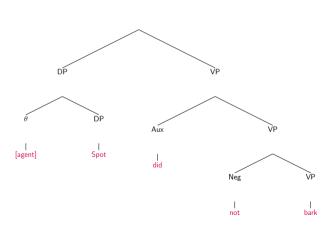


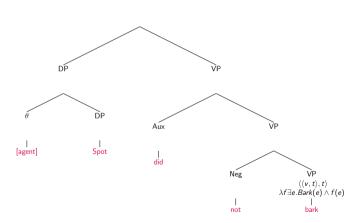


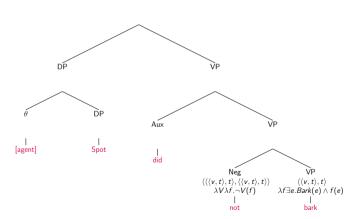


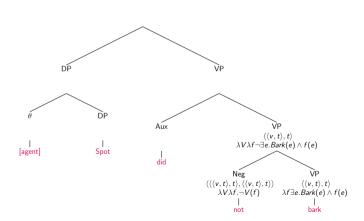


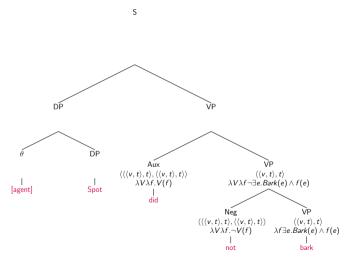


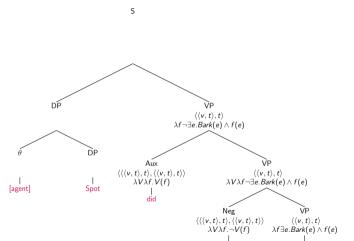












not

 $\langle\langle v,t\rangle,t\rangle$  $\lambda f \neg \exists e. Bark(e) \land f(e)$ ĎΡ Aux  $\langle\langle\langle v,t\rangle,t\rangle,\langle\langle v,t\rangle,t\rangle\rangle$  $\begin{array}{c} \langle \langle v, t \rangle, t \rangle \\ \lambda V \lambda f \neg \exists e. Bark(e) \land f(e) \end{array}$  $\lambda V \lambda f. V(f)$ [agent] Spot did Neg VΡ  $\langle \langle \langle v, t \rangle, t \rangle, \langle \langle v, t \rangle, t \rangle \rangle$  $\langle\langle v, t \rangle, t \rangle$ 

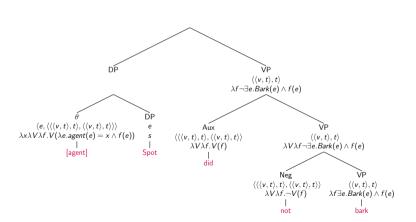
S

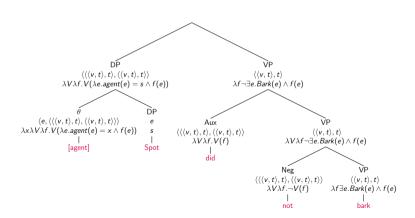
 $\lambda f \exists e. Bark(e) \land f(e)$ 

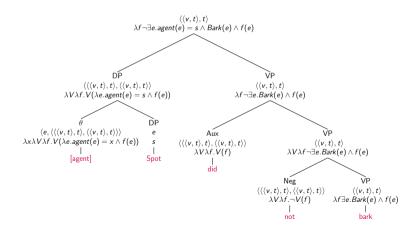
 $\lambda V \lambda f. \neg V(f)$ 

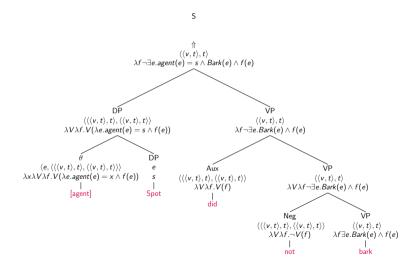
not

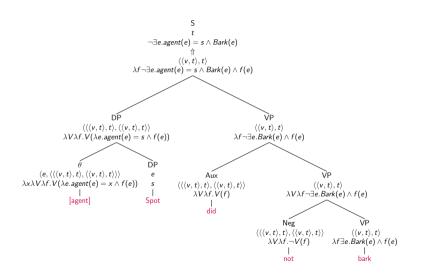












## Quizz for Today

TBA