

Logical Semantics for Causal Constructions
Richmond Thomason, University of Michigan

Montague's framework for semantic interpretation has always been less well adapted to the interpretation of words than of syntactic constructions. In the late 1970s, David Dowty addressed this problem, concentrating on the interpretation of tense, aspect, inchoatives, and causatives in an extension of Montague's Intensional Logic. In this paper I will try to revive this project, conceiving it as part of a larger task aiming at the interpretation of derivational morphology. I will try to identify some obstacles arising in Dowty's approach, and will suggest an alternative approach that, while it does not provide a global interpretation of causality, seems to work well with a wide range of the causal constructions that are important in word formation. I try to relate these ideas to some themes in contemporary philosophy and in the formalization of commonsense reasoning.