

Systemic Linguistics: Syntax

Contact

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My online office hour is Thursday 9am. Email me to request a zoom-link.

You can always e-mail with any questions or issues. We can make alternative appointments to meet if necessary.

Course Content

This course surveys the analysis of various phenomena in the syntax of English. It introduces analysis in terms of syntactic categories and phrase structure. In addition, the basic theoretical assumptions of formal linguistics will be introduced. Syntactic analysis and theoretical tools will be applied to the analysis of English language data, with a concentration on questions of variation, prescription and description in grammar. The concepts and analyses are applied to data from non-standard structures or regional varieties and dialects in students' research work leading to a proseminar paper.

Course book

Van Gelderen, E. (2010). *Introduction to the Grammar of English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins (full text available online via LISSS)

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- be able to apply syntactic tests to English language data in order to analyse constituency and syntactic structure;
- be able to use appropriate terminology for the description and analysis of English syntax;
- extend and deepen knowledge of a range of phenomena in the grammar of English and how these are analysed in syntactic theory;
- develop the research and analytical skills necessary for the study of linguistics, with a focus on syntax;
- be able to synthesise and critique linguistic syntactic analyses provided in the academic literature.

Assessment

➤ Coursework assignments	=	30%
➤ Term Paper	=	40%
➤ Term Paper Introduction	=	10%
➤ Presentation	=	15%
➤ Participation	=	5%

You will be expected to hand in your work in electronic form.

Task Information

1. Course work: the coursework will test your ability to use linguistic terminology appropriately to describe and analyse syntactic patterns in English; to develop and explain aspects of syntactic analysis; to reflect critically on problems in the analysis of syntax.
2. Term paper assignment: you will be assigned one of the 'Special Topics' from the coursebook, or a similar topic from the Yale Grammatical Diversity Project for your term paper and the work on it will come in two parts (you may also choose a different topic based on your own research). Part 1 (deadline 10th May) will be titled "*Introduction to*" – you will write an introductory essay of 600-800 words which introduces your topic and refers to at least five sources (two of which must be journal articles). You introduce the basic syntactic issue by stating why it is interesting and how it differs from standard or prescriptive syntactic patterns. At the end of the essay you will pose an open question with respect to the analysis of your special topic data. In part two of the paper, you will answer this question (deadline for submission 9th July) by continuing the introduction and including information from a minimum of 8 sources (minimum 3 journal articles).
3. Presentation: this will take the form of a 'lightening presentation' lasting maximum 5 minutes and will also be based on the topic of your paper. You will present your research on the topic for the rest of the class.

Further Reading

Information and exercises from some of these sources will be provided during the course of the semester to complement *Introduction to the Grammar of English*.

Note: There is a wide range of introductory and reference works on grammar or syntax. These provide a lot of detailed information. Different books may take different theoretical approaches or use slightly different terminology. When you consult other books or articles for your paper, you can always 'translate' any differences in terminology as you go along. For our course, remember that the analysis and argumentation is the most important thing so do not get too bogged down in details of terminology or presentation. Concentrate instead on the analyses.

- Aarts, Bas (1997). *English Syntax and Argumentation*. London: MacMillan Press.
- Aarts, Flor & Aarts, Jan (1988). *English Syntactic Structures. Functions & Categories in Sentence Analysis*. London: Prentice Hall International.
- Carnie, Andrew (2007). *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Greenbaum, S. & Quirk, R. (1990). *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.
- Haegeman, L. & Gueron, J. (1999). *English Grammar. A generative perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Huddleston, R. & Pullum, G. (2002). *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Luraghi, S. & Parodi, C. (2008). *Key Terms in Syntax and Syntactic Theory*. London: Continuum
- Miller, James (2002). *An introduction to English syntax*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Radford, A. (2004). *Minimalist Syntax. Exploring the Structure of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Radford, A. (2018). *Colloquial English. Structure and Variation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tallerman, Maggie (1998). *Understanding Syntax*. London: Arnold.
- Thomas, Linda (1993). *Beginning Syntax*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Verspoor, M. & Sauter, K. (2000). *English Sentence Analysis*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

You can also find relevant information and analyses in academic journals. Note that papers in syntax journals typically have as their goal the presentation of advanced research and so they will often be rather technical and theory-specific. Don't worry if you find the contents difficult, the main point is again the logic of how you use and interpret the ideas.

English Today; Glotta; Journal of English Linguistics; Journal of Linguistics; Language Variation and Change; Linguistic Inquiry; Linguistic Variation; Natural Language and Linguistic Theory; Syntax;

Suggested Topics

(you may also suggest your own topic for the paper – you can discuss ideas with me. A good place to start looking for ideas is the list of suggested reading above.) See also Yale Grammatical diversity Project, from which some of these suggestions below are adapted.

After-perfect - “I’m after having my dinner”

Alternating Particle Verbs – “I looked up the information” or “I looked the information up”

Auxiliary Reduction – “I could of danced all night”

Case and Coordinated Pronouns – “Between you and me” or “Between you and I”

Case and Wh-words – “Whom may I say is calling?”

Contact Relatives – “I have a sister lives in Dublin”

Double Comparatives – “Every time you ask me not to hum, I’ll hum more louder”

Embedded Inversion – “And he told them who was it”

For-to Infinitives – “I want for to meet them”

Habitual be - “Platform heel shoes be making your feet hurt”

Infinitive Splitting – “To boldly go where no one has gone before”

Medial-object Perfect - “I have my homework done”

Negative Concord – “I ain’t never been drunk”

Perfective Done - “I done lost my wallet!”

Split Subjects - “We don’t nobody know how long we have”

There and Number Agreement – “There’s three shells on the beach”