Official Morphology & Syntax syllabus

Linguistics 4050 – Morphology & Syntax
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Goals: To provide an introduction to the structure of words, phrases and clauses. To hook the unwary into an unending fascination with structure. To reawaken in you the sleeping morphopragmantactician you have always been and loved being.
(Hint: who was it who easily mastered at least one mother tongue without any vocabulary drills, explicit grammar instruction, boring drills, etc.? Who has always been the best linguist in the world??) Well then. Step into your own magnificence. Take a bow.


The good news: Any tests will be open book – any books or other materials may be brought to the tests. More likely, they will be take-home. You will be able to consult more there than you can carry.

The bad news: None of your materials will help much, if you have not learned to think for yourself about our DRINK ME reawakening potion. This course is not about memorization of a set of concepts and definitions. Rather, what is required is a general dancingness of mind, and the exercise of intelligence and
creativity. What is not required, but is fervently hoped for, is that you become fascinated with language in general and grammar in particular, and find that you cannot live without it. [BTW: you can’t]

Grading policy: To be discussed in class. Unreasonable numbers of unexcused absences may result in grade deflation.

Disabilities: In accordance with the terms and spirit of Public Law 101-336 (Americans with Disabilities Act) and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act, I will cooperate with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable special arrangements for students with disabilities. If you have a disability which will require some accommodation under the terms of these acts, please come to me and discuss your individual needs, or give me a written statement. If you have not registered yet with the Office of Disability Accommodation, I encourage you to do so. Their telephone number is (940) 565-4323; TDD access (940) 565 2958.

General: Insofar as this is possible, nothing is written in stone. No significant learning is possible in contexts which are not as kind and flexible as possible. We are all humans, trying to learn from each other. If there are special problems for you, come and talk to me about them.

It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands warmly in need of freedom; without this, it goes to wrack and ruin without fail.

Albert Einstein

The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science.

Albert Einstein
The World As I See It
"I never try to teach my students anything. I only try to create an environment in which they can learn."

Albert Einstein

Section I – Morphology – the Grammar of Words

Week 1. Basic distinctions


2nd class: Thumbnail history of English. The three major (and two minor) sources of English vocabulary: Germanic, Latin, and Greek (and a bit of French and Danish)

Homework: Read chapters on morphology in a variety of too-expensive textbooks. Do exercise on Luiseño.

Week 2. Morphological trees

3rd class: The grammars of a number of prefixes and suffixes. The two prefixes un-. The two suffixes -ly. The two meanings of unlockable, and the tree associated with each meaning. Conclusion: words are not just strings of morphemes – they are bracketed strings of morphemes.

4th class: Homebrew etymology: how to tell from the spelling of a word whether it is Germanic, Latin, or Greek. Morphemic miscegenation – starting a word in Greek and ending it in Latin. Not starting one Germanically and trying to end it Latinly.

Homework: Do Tim Montler's morpheme-finding exercises. Morpheme trees for a crapload of words.
Week 3.  
Markedness

5th class:  
Wording up.  World order and freezes.  Sounding laws.

6th class:  
The sound of meaning.  Immediacy.

Homework:  
Read Cooper and Ross, and Greenberg.  Do Turkish.

Week 4.  
Category space – can’t tell the players without a scorecard.

7th class:  
Criteria for nouns; for verbs; for adjectives; for prepositions; for adverbs.  Valence.

8th class:  
Morphological types of language: isolating, agglutinative, synthetic.  Inflection and derivation.  Head-final vs. head-initial initial languages.

Homework:  
Read Donegan and Stampe.  And Dixon.

Week 5.  
The source of affixes

9th class:  
Grammaticalization. Universal pathways of change.

10th class:  
Types of nouns; what nouns do.  Types of verbs – the rainbow from acts to states.  What adjectives are for.  What prepositions are for.

Homework:  
Types of adjectives – where have all the adjectives gone?

Section II – Syntax – the Grammar of Clauses, Higher Constituents

Week 6.  
The (re)discovery of syntax

11th class:  
Zellig Harris’s three foundational insights.  Kernel sentences.  Transformations.

12th class:  

Homework:  
Read Harris, Chomsky, Postal (on constituent Structure, on *remind*).

Week 7.  
Types of transformations.

13th class:  
Harris: unary and binary transformations.  Ordering of transformations.

14th class:  
The notion of deep structure.

Homework:  
Kernelize 17 sentences.  Find a sentences whose depth of rule ordering is >5.

Week 8.  
How to draw a tree.

15th class:  
The Three Operations written in stone: \( L : B : M \) – Labelling, Ballooning, Mother-henning.

16th class:  
Problems with the trees produced by \( L : B : M \) *rules*.

Homework:  
Draw the Famous Fifty-Four Trees.

Midterm.
Week 9.  Syntax “and” semantics

17th class:  Generative semantics / Interpretive semantics.  
Abstract syntax.  The performative hypothesis.  
Auxiliaries as verbs.  The remote structure of actions.  
Predicate Raising.  What was wrong with Generative Semantics (?)

18th class:  Logical categories and deep syntactic categories.  What nouns are for, what verbs are for, what adjectives are for.

Homework:  Read Postal, Huck & Goldsmith.

Week 10.  The 130 ± major transformations

19th class:  Grammatical relations.  Relational grammar.  
Governed rules.

20th class:  Rippers.

Homework:  Read Ross on declaratives, Ross on where to do things with words.

Week 11.  The architecture of emphasis.

21st class:  Clefts and pseudoclefts.

22nd class:  Questions and answers.  Conjunctive and disjunctive wh-clauses

Homework:  Read Ross on wh-clauses.

Week 12.  Islands.

23rd class:  Cleft and pseudocleft sentences.

24th class:  Left and right dislocation.  Left and right deictic dislocation.

Homework:  Read Ross, excerpt from Constrains on Variables in Syntax, Ross on frozenness.  Postal on a/c.

Week 13.  The so-called “distinction” between syntax and discourse.

25th class:  Siamese sentences.

26th class:  Particularly.

Homework:  Read Ross on these two topics.


27th class:  The art of fusion.  The space of creation.  The immortal Roman.  The equi-immortal Pete.

28th class:  How to use syntax to go beyond itself.

Homework:  Read Jakobson on verbal art, Ross on hologramming & languages as poems, Becker on silence.

Week 15.  Review, summary, prospects.

29th class:  The Great George.  Language and world view.

30th class:  What we have learned so far.  So what?  Next steps?  TAKE-HOME FINAL.
READINGS


Dixon, Robert. Where have all the adjectives gone?

Donegan, Patricia J. & David Stampe, Rhythm and the holistic organization of language structure


“Languages as poems.” In Deborah Tannen (ed.), *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1985: Languages and Linguistics - The Interdependence of Theory, Data, and Application*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C., pp. 180-204. (1986)


