**Course Content**

1. **The Basics of Syntactic Theory**
   1. Recapitulation: revision of basic notions: what is the study of syntax, clause types, syntactic categories, heads and modifiers, argument structure, subcategorisation frames, grammatical functions, clause types
   2. Basic structural notions, terminology and grammatical functions revisited
   3. Constituent tests
   4. X-bar Theory: heads, complements, adjuncts, specifiers
   5. Movement and related notions
2. **Phrase Structure**
   1. The Verb Phrase I.
   2. The Verb Phrase II.
   3. The CP

**Set Texts**

* Newson, M. et al. 2006. *Basic English Syntax with Exercises*. Bölcsész Konzorcium, ELTE
* Radford, A. 2009. An Introduction to English Sentence Structure. CUP.
* Pesetsky, D. 2012. Introduction to Linguistics Lecture Notes: Syntax Summary. <https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/linguistics-and-philosophy/24-900-introduction-to-linguistics-fall-2012/lecture-summaries/MIT24_900F12_Syntaxsummary.pdf> retrieved on 8 February 2018

**Additional material**

* Greenbaum, S. and Quirk, R. 1990. *A Student’s Grammar of the English Language*. Longman
* Miller, J. 2001. *An Introduction to English Syntax*. Edinburgh University Press

**Introduction**

Grammatical competence: the native speaker’s tacit (not explicit) knowledge about the grammar of their language. Thus, grammar is part of the more general human knowledge, i.e. cognition, so what is itt hat native speakers know that enables them to speak and understand their native language.

Traditional grammar: taxonomic approach.

Descriptive linguistics: cognitive approach, concerns itself with devising a theory of Universal Grammar, i.e. a set of hypotheses about the nature of possible and impossible grammars of human languages.

Criteria for such a theory of grammar:

* universality: it should be universal in the sense that it should provide tools adequate for the the description of the grammar of any natural language (a theory of Universal Grammar),
* descriptive adequacy: it should correctly describe how expressions in a given language are formed and interpreted,
* explanatory adequacy: it should explain why grammars have the properties they do,
* it is constrained: it should be maximally restricted in the sense that the devices it uses can only describe natural languages and are inappropriate for the description of other communication systems,
* learnability: it must satisfy the criterion of learnability, that is, it must provide grammars which are learnable for very young children within a relatively short period of time.

language acquisition: the uniformity and rapidity of the process (though target to a lot of individual variation, multi-word speech starts in general at around the age of eighteen months) suggest that humans are biologically endowed with the Language Faculty of the human mind (innateness hypothesis)

Critical Period Hypothesis: children not exposed to any language experience will not acquire syntax after a certain age, e.g. Genie, aged 13 when found ([https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-superhuman-mind/201707/the-feral-child-nicknamed-genie retrieved 11 / 12 /](https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-superhuman-mind/201707/the-feral-child-nicknamed-genie%20retrieved%2011%20/%2012%20/) 2018)

Components of grammar:

1. the lexicon: list of all the words in a language and their idiosyncratic properties,
2. the syntactic/computational component: the ’grammar rules’,
3. the semantic component: maps syntactic structure onto a corresponding semantic representation (meaning),
4. the Phonetic Form component: maps syntactic structure onto a phonetic representation (pronunciation).

Universal Grammar: principles and parameters

Through experience of a language L (linguistic input of the given language)

(Radford, 2005: Chapter 1: Grammar)

1. **Recapitulation: revision of basic notions**
   1. Sentence (clause), phrase (constituent), word

A sentence is a string of words organised according to the grammatical rules of a language expressing a unit of meaning (a complete thought). The meanings of whole sentences are seen as basic propositions. A proposition is a claim about the world, a statement, a (potential) fact, which can be true or false. A sentence has two main parts: a subject and a predicate. A claim (statement, etc…) is made about something(s) or someone(s), that’s the subject, and the claim itself is the predicate. There are simple and complex sentences, see (1).

1. a. Hodgins left.

b. Brennan knew that Hodgins left.

In complex sentences there are more than one clause, which, in turn, also contain a subject and a predicte. Clauses can also be characterised by whether they are finite or non-finite:

1. a. Hodgins tried to open the door.

b. For Hodgins to try to open the door was a mistake.

c. Angela considereed Hodgins brilliant / a mad scientist.

In English finite clauses must contain an overt subject, while non-finite clauses can appear with overt or non-overt (covert) subjects.

* 1. Basic categories

thematic (lexical / contentive) categories ([-F]) functional categories ([+F])

nouns (N) determiners (D)

verbs (V) inflection (I)

adjectives and adverbs (A) degree words (Deg)

prepositions (P) complementisers (C)

N: [-F, +N, -V] D: [+F, +N, -V]

V: [-F, -N, +V] I: [+F, -N, +V]

A: [-F, +N, +V] Deg: [+F, +N, +V]

P: [-F, -N, -V] C: [+F, -N, -V]

Underspecified Categories

1. measure (group) nouns:

3 a. a bottle of wine

b. a picture of Mary

1. aspectual auxiliaries

4 a. should have tolerated more

b. to have tolerated more

1. post-determiners

5 a. his / the few friends

b. \*his friends are less

1. non-thematic, non-functional prepositions: passive *by* and the possessive

marker *of*

* 1. Argument-taking predicates

In a sentence like *Hodgins left* (see (1)), the verb ’leave’ takes one argument. Arguments are obligatory participants necessary to express an argument-taking predicate’s meaning. The verb ’leave’ is a so-called one-place predicate as if one participant is added, its meaning is expressed. The verb ’love’ is a two-place predicate, the verb ’put’ is a three-place predicate. But it is not only verbs that take arguments.

1. a. Brennan is very intelligent.

b. Everybody considers Brennan the most intelligent of all.

(4) a. Brennan is in the lab.

b. The FBI wanted Brennan out of the lab.

(5) a. \_\_\_ leave, \_\_\_ love \_\_\_ , \_\_\_ put \_\_\_ \_\_\_ , \_\_\_ destroy \_\_\_

b. \_\_\_ intelligent, \_\_\_ fond \_\_\_

c. \_\_\_ in \_\_\_

d. destruction, \_\_\_ destruction \_\_\_

* 1. Theta-roles and theta-grids

Agent: the participant who deliberately initiates the action denoted by the verb (usually animate).

Theme: an affected participant (animate or inanimate) undergoing the action or moved by the action.

Experiencer: the participant (animate or inanimate) that experiences some (emotional, psychological) state.

Beneficiary/benefactive: the participant that gains by the action denoted by the verb.

Goal: the participant towards which the activity is directed.

Location: a place where the action or state denoted by the verb is situated.

Instrument: the means used to perform some action.

1.5 Subcategorisation

The argument that precedes the matrix verb is the subject. The argument(s) that follow the matrix verb is (are) complements. A verb chooses (selects) what category the complement should be and it also selects how many it takes. Subcategorisation frame: contains the number and type (category) of complements.

* 1. Grammatical functions

subject, predicate, object (direct, indirect), adverbial [complement: subject, object]

* 1. Clause types

1. matrix declaratives: *Peter loves Mary*.
2. matrix interrogatives:

* yes-no: *Does Peter love Mary?*
* wh: *Who does Peter love?*

Matrix clauses are by definition finite.

1. finite embedded declaratives: *Frank knows [that Peter loves Mary]*.
2. finite embedded interrogatives:

* yes-no: *They wondered [if/whether Peter loves Mary]*.
* wh: *They wondered [who Peter loves]*.

1. non-finite embedded declaratives: *They would have preferred [for him to leave].*
2. non-finite embedded interrogatives:

* yes-no: *They wondered [whether to leave]*.
* wh: *They wondered [what to do]*.

Small Clauses: *They considered [him innocent]*.