SYNTAX
Handout 5

<u>**Verbs**</u>
1. The simple sentence: the seven clause types
Clause structure: SV, SVO, SVC, SVA, SVO$_i$O$_d$, SVOC, SVOA
   –verb classes: intransitive (SV), , copular (with subject complement (SVC) or adverbial
(SVA)), transitive (mono- (SVO), di- (SVOO), complex-transitive (SVOC, SVOA))
    –potential multiple class membership: *get a letter, get (sy) in trouble*
    –phrasal verbs vs. prepositional verbs: *look sg up, look at sg*

Fundamental lexico-semantic relations stay constant across structures.
1) a. [Jack]$_1$ sent [a book]$_2$ to [Jill]$_3$ b. [A book]$_2$ was sent to [Jill]$_3$ by [Jack]$_1$
   c. [Jack]$_1$ sent [Jill]$_3$ [a book]$_2$ d. [Jill]$_3$ was sent [a book]$_2$
   e. [Jack]$_1$ seems to have sent [Jill]$_3$ [a book]$_2$
   f. [Jill]$_3$ seems to have been sent [a book]$_2$

Names/definitions of relations: **thematic or theta roles** (marked by Θ = Greek letter 'theta').
AGENT: person or animate being that intentionally initiates the action in the predicate
THEME/PATIENT: person/thing affected by or undergoing the action
EXPERIENCER: entity experiencing the psychological state in the predicate
BENEFICIARY/BENEFACTIVE: entity benefitting from the action
GOAL: entity toward which the action is directed
SOURCE: entity from which something moves, inanimate cause
INSTRUMENT: means by which the action is carried out
LOCATION: place in which the action is situated
PROPOSITIONAL: event/state expressed in the (finite or nonfinite) complement clause
Examples:
2) a. <u>Jack</u> sent <u>a book</u> to <u>Jill</u>. b. <u>Jill</u> wished <u>Jack</u> well. c. <u>Jack</u> felt the <u>sting</u>.
    AGENT THEME GOAL AGENT BEN   EXP   THEME
   d. <u>The book</u> pleased <u>Jill</u>. e. <u>He</u> lives <u>in Paris</u>. f. <u>The key</u> opened <u>the door</u>.
    THEME   EXP AGENT LOCATION INSTRUMENT THEME
   g. <u>Jack</u> was blown away by <u>the storm</u>   h. <u>Jack</u> opened <u>the door</u> with <u>a key</u>.
    PATIENT   SOURCE   AGENT THEME   INSTR

  Lexical information:

  Category: [±F, ±N, ±V]

  Thematic structure/θ-grid: all the arguments./**Argument structure:** all the arguments
  Subcat(egorisation) frame: only the complements (every predicate has a subject)
  Arguments = subject + complement(s)

2. Verbs:
Verb: two senses: a) an element in clause structure b) a member of a word class, traditionally: full
lexical verbs, primary verbs (*be, have, do*), modal auxiliaries (always finite; the primary verbs *be,
have, do* have both finite and non-finite forms!)
Main verbs: if only one, or the last if more (*Peter runs three miles every day, Peter has a dog* vs. *Peter
has been running for two hours*).

The structure of the Verb Phrase: Newson, Chapter 5, pp. 153-185.
verb: central element in selecting arguments and assigning semantic roles to them
argument structure: subject + complement(s)
thematic structure (theta roles): assigned to all/only arguments: **the Thematic Criterion**

The Projection Principle: lexical information is syntactically represented.
The Extended Projection Principle: every clause has a subject.

The structure of the Verb Phrase reflects the basic properties of the verbal head.

One/two/three-argument verbs
One/two/three-place predicates

A problem for X'-Theory:
three-arguments for the two positions (specifier and complement) within the VP?!
Further problem: seemingly similar structures can have different syntactic properties.

	THERE	COGNATE OBJECT	TRANSITIVE
A letter arrived.	*There arrived a letter.*	**A letter arrived an arrival.*	**Someone arrived the letter.*
An actor died.	**There died an actor.*	*An actor died a terrible death.*	**Someone died the actor.*
A door opened.	**There opened a door.*	**A door opened an opening*	*Someone opened the door.*

Uniform Theta-role Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH): a theta-role is assigned in the same structural position in all structures in which it is present.
→ Different structural positions for agents, themes, experiencers.

Multiple complement verbs
Peter put the book on the desk.
Main problem: three arguments, but only two positions within the VP.→ a vP (light verb) layer surrounding the lexical VP.
light verbs: assigners of theta-roles regulated by the thematic verb, extended projections of VP
verbs of placement: agent, theme, location: *Kate kept the hamster in a cage.*
Some problems related to the alternation between the **dative construction** and the **double object construction** (available for verbs with goal/beneficiary PP):
Dative construction: *I gave/sent a letter* (=direct object) *to Peter* (=PP complement).
Double object construction: *I gave/sent Peter* (=indirect object) *a letter* (=direct object)

Light verbs
make the door close = close the door
Structure: Light verb: vP taking a VP complement.
　　　　　　agentive subject = specifier of vP
　　　　　　theme object = specifier of VP
　　　　　　verbs head their own projections/*close* moves to v and adjoins to it

Unaccusative verbs
a letter arrived (from my friend), the table sat in the corner
typically verbs of movement or location with a DP argument having the theta role of theme
(sometimes ambiguous between an agentive and unaccusative interpretation)
Diagnostic tests
- they can appear in existential *there* sentences (with an indefinite theme argument)
- locative inversion is well-formed: *from platform 9 (there) departed a train to Minsk*, **on the table put he the book, *in the garden smiled a boy, *on the chair deliberately sat a man*
- they do not take objects of any kind (intransitives are perfect with **cognate objects:** *he lived* (=not an unaccusative but an intransitive verb) *a happy life*)
Structure:　　theme argument = subject in specifier position within VP → theme position
　　　　　　prepositional argument = complement

Ergative verbs

The vase broke./The ship sank./The tree grew.

Difference between unaccusative and ergative verbs:
- ergatives are not movement or locative verbs, they express a change of state.
- ergatives are ungrammatical in *there* sentences or locative inversion (*grow* is ambiguous between an unaccusative and an ergative interpretation! when OK with *there*, it has a locative meaning, !**there grew a tree bigger* vs. *there grew a tree in the garden*)
- ergatives have a transitive counterpart: *I broke the vase./They sank the ship...* with a causative meaning. unaccusatives cannot appear in causative constructions. **Andrew arrived the letter.*

Structure:

–one-argument version: same as the structure of unaccusatives: theme argument = subject in specifier position within VP → theme position

–transitive version: same as the structure with a light verb (same as causative meaning with *make*)

UTAH can also be maintained: themes in Spec, VP

agents in Spec, vP

Transitive verbs

subject: agent/experiencer, object: patient/theme

Structure: subject: Spec, vP

object: Spec, VP

verb: head of VP, moving to v to adjoin to the bound empty light verb

Experiencer subjects: different theta-position? *Peter frightened me.*

Spec, vP. ?agent subject, experiencer object: 2 vPs, V undergoes movement and adjoins to v

Thematic hierarchy: agent > experiencer > theme

Experiencer role, if there is one, must be assigned to the specifier position of a light verb. If there is also an agent, you need a second vP, the agent will always be higher in the structure.

Intransitive verbs

Agent/experiencer argument, cognate object possible

Structure: vP taking VP,

subject in Spec, vP, V adjoins to v

Summary: major subcategories of verbs:
–multiple complement verbs (complex-transitive): a problem for X'-Theory, but once this problem is solved, solutions for some other VP-related problems automatically follow.
–intransitive verbs
–transitive verbs
–unaccusative verbs
–ergative verbs
–light verbs