

Linguistics 328 : Morphosyntactic Typology

MW 3:10–4:30, VOLLUM 110

Course Syllabus Fall 2009

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FOCUS OF THE COURSE

This course deals with the study of cross-linguistic variation. Even a cursory inspection shows that languages differ from one another phonologically, and of course in their vocabulary. However, languages also exhibit variation in other domains, including:

- *Lexical and functional categories* – for example, the number and kind of ‘parts of speech’ which a language has, and the kinds of grammatical categories encoded by the morphology (tense, aspect, gender, number, definiteness, etc.).
- *Morphology* – for example, the amount of bound morphology the language has, the ability to segment words into morphemes, and the word-formation strategies which a language makes use of (affixation, compounding, reduplication, stem change, etc.).
- *Syntax* – for example, the ‘basic’ word order of sentences (if any), the configurationality of the language (i.e., the extent to which deviations from the basic word order are allowed), and the strategies which the language uses for expressing predicate-argument structure, ‘who’s doing what to whom’, in terms of grammatical relations (word order, case marking, agreement, etc.).

It is these categorial, morphological, and syntactic differences which we will examine in this course.

One of the most important discoveries of modern linguistics is that morphosyntactic variation is both highly *constrained* and highly *principled*. By *constrained* I mean that only a small subset of the logically possible grammars are actually attested among the world’s languages. In other words, there appear to be non-obvious limitations on the kinds of structures that a language can have. By *principled* I mean that language structures do not vary randomly, but according to identifiable patterns. We can express these patterns as *language universals*, implicational statements of the form “If a language has feature X, it will (always, or almost always) have feature Y”. Based on these shared combinations of features, languages can be classified into *types* along various dimensions. Such a classification is called a *typology*, and the study of typologies and their implications for theories of grammar is called *Linguistic Typology*.

There are two broad questions which typologists seek to answer:

- *Empirical*: Which structural properties can vary across languages, and which cannot?
- *Conceptual*: How do we explain patterns of variation, and what do these patterns tell us about the organization of mental grammar?

We will be addressing both of these questions. The course will thus include both a descriptive component (a discussion of what kinds of phenomena are out there) and a theoretical component (a review of some classic and recent attempts to articulate and explain language universals and variation).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES, AND DEADLINES

Expectations

Students will be expected to attend class, participate actively in discussion, and complete all readings and written work by the assigned due dates. The written work will consist of six problem sets, along with a final paper. In calculating final grades, these requirements will be weighted approximately as follows: problem sets – 65%, final paper – 20%, participation – 15%.

Readings

There is no textbook for this class. Instead, we will be reading extracts from various different textbooks, together with journal articles and other original research. These readings are listed in the Course Outline below, in the approximate order in which you should tackle them, with more elementary readings (usually from textbooks) given first, followed by more technical readings. Readings are required unless listed as optional. Other readings may be added as we go along.

All book chapters are available through print reserve and/or e-reserve. Journal articles can be found in the Bound Periodicals section of the library, or on e-reserve. Articles from the journal *Language* are also available on-line through JSTOR, where they can be downloaded for printing on Reed networked computers. To access these articles, just go to the Reed Library homepage and click on *Print and E-Journals*. Then find the name of the journal – it's listed under *Language (Baltimore)* – and click on the JSTOR link. Once in JSTOR you can search for the article by title, author, or keyword. Ask for help from the library staff, or from me, if you get stuck.

Problem sets

You will notice that the problem sets count for the bulk of the course grade. In evaluating these assignments, I will look for answers that are thorough, well-reasoned, and presented with clarity, creativity, brevity, and precision. I'm less interested in how close you manage to get to the intended solution (in many cases I will be giving you data for which there is no definitive analysis anyway). The problem sets are meant to be quite challenging. You should feel free to come see me outside of class – individually, or in groups – for additional help with the homework. I am always willing to talk about any aspect of the course, and to give you whatever help you may need, so please exploit my services.

Problem sets are handed out and due approximately every 2–3 weeks (see Due Dates below). Completed assignments must be received by **5:30 PM** on the day they are due. Assignments can be turned in in class or brought to my office (please do *not* place assignments in the box outside my door, but slide them under the door if I'm not there). Given the size of the class, I strongly prefer that you submit your problem sets in hardcopy format. However, if you occasionally find that it's not possible to deliver your assignment to me in person before the deadline, you can send it to me as an email attachment.

Problem sets must be turned in on time if you wish to receive full credit and comments. Extensions can be negotiated under special circumstances, such as an illness or family emergency. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized 10% of total possible points for each full day they are late. A late problem set will not be accepted for credit if it is turned in after the assignment has been returned to students. Also, late problem sets will probably receive minimal comments, and may not be returned in a timely fashion.

A note on collaboration

Good learning cannot happen in a vacuum, but requires close collaboration with your colleagues. You are therefore encouraged – indeed, expected – to work on problem sets together. However, you are required to write up your answers *in your own words*. Copying must be treated as academic dishonesty, and a violation of the Honor Principle. If you have any questions about this, please let me know.

Final paper

In addition to the six problem sets, you will be asked to complete a research paper (approx. 10–12 pages) on a topic of your choice, subject to my approval. You have the option of either doing a general cross-lin-

guistic survey of some grammatical phenomenon, or focusing your attention on how that phenomenon manifests itself in a particular language or language family. These options are described below. Note that your paper should be primarily descriptive in focus, though you are also welcome to discuss theoretical issues related to your topic if you wish.

- *Cross-linguistic survey* – Pick one of the topics listed below and survey the range of variation found across the languages of the world with respect to the phenomenon/feature in question. Explain any important technical terms related to your topic, and discuss any relevant language universals which have been proposed in the literature. Be sure to include plenty of illustrative examples from a variety of languages and language types (fully glossed, with proper citations).
- *Language sketch* – Pick a language (or group of closely-related languages) and give a detailed description of its structure with respect to one or more of the topics below. Do not attempt to provide a complete grammatical description of the language; instead, focus on a single well-defined and interesting aspect of the grammar (e.g., noun phrase structure, incorporation, tense/aspect/mood marking, split ergativity, evidentiality, or what have you). Be sure to include plenty of examples (fully glossed, with citations).

Your research must be based on *multiple* written sources—books, articles, monographs, reference grammars, etc. You are also welcome to include original fieldwork in your paper. Fieldwork is not required, however, and may not be used in place of written sources, but only to provide additional data.

A list of possible topics is given below. If you are interested in writing on a topic not included in this list, please see me.

- Anaphora and reflexivization
- Definiteness (and related notions: specificity, referentiality, etc.)
- Deixis
- Evidentiality and mirativity
- Mood and modality
- Negation
- Nominalization
- Non-concatenative morphology (ablaut, templatic morphology, tonal morphology, etc.)
- Noun class/gender systems
- Noun phrase structure
- Polysynthesis
- Pronoun systems and pronominal/agreement categories (person, number, gender)
- Pro-drop (licensing of missing arguments)
- Quantification and/or number marking (singular, dual, plural, etc.)
- Reduplication (types of reduplication and their grammatical functions)
- Relative clauses
- Scrambling and ‘free word order’ languages
- Serial verb constructions
- Switch-reference and clause chaining
- Tense and aspect
- Wh-questions, focus and clefting, and/or related constructions

The final paper will be due on the first day of exam week. Halfway through the semester you will be asked to submit a one-paragraph paper proposal, together with a preliminary bibliography of sources. Exact dates are given below. Papers and proposals may be submitted in hardcopy format or as email attachments (PDF preferred, but Word files are also acceptable).

Formatting your problem sets and final paper

Problem sets and papers should be typed, with 1- to 1½-inch margins on all sides for comments. Example sentences are normally numbered and presented in the standard 3-line format, separated from the surrounding text by spaces. The first line of the example gives the original sentence (with words divided

into morphemes, as necessary, using hyphens), the second line gives word-by-word or morpheme-by-morpheme glosses, and the third line gives the English translation (usually in single quotes). Grammatical abbreviations are normally either capitalized (e.g., “Pres”) or given in all caps (e.g., “PRES”). These conventions are illustrated below with an example from Kinyarwanda. Notice that each word is left-aligned with its gloss to make the examples easier to read: I can show you some easy ways to do this in Word if you’re not sure how. (If you would like to try writing up your assignments in *LaTeX*, let me know and I can show you some formatting packages for doing interlinear glosses.)

- (1) Umugabo a-r-úubak-iisha abantu inzu
 man 3s-Pres-build-Caus people house
 ‘The man is making the people build the house’

In running text, non-English words and morphemes should always be given in italics, followed by the English gloss in quotes: e.g., *inzu* ‘house’, *r-* ‘Pres’ (or ‘present tense prefix’).

In your problem set answers, all examples should be given in full. Pretend that you’re writing for an audience which has no access to the problem set data, or any other information about the language apart from what you tell them.

Due dates

Due dates for written assignments are listed below. All written work is due in my office by **5:30 PM** of the date indicated. These dates are subject to modification. I will notify you of any changes as we go along.

Problem set 1	Wed, 16 September
Problem set 2	Wed, 30 September
Problem set 3	Wed, 14 October
Paper proposal/ bibliography	Mon, 26 October
Problem set 4	Wed, 4 November
Problem set 5	Wed, 18 November
Problem set 6	Wed, 9 December
Final paper	Mon, 14 December

COURSE OUTLINE

This outline lists the subjects I intend to cover in this course and the order in which I plan to cover them, together with the readings for each unit. We will be setting the pace as we go along, so I have not assigned specific dates when readings must be completed. These will be decided on in class.

Note that there are two separate editions of Croft’s *Typology and Universals* on reserve for the course. I have assigned you chapter 1 and portions of chapters 2 and 3 from the second edition, along with chapter 4 from the first edition. The two editions are very different from one another, so be sure you have the right one before you start reading the chapter in question.

1. LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS AND OTHER PRELIMINARIES

Discussion topics: Introduction to cross-linguistic variation – Overview of typology – Methods of language sampling – The question of cross-linguistic comparability – Language universals and ‘universal tendencies’ – Overview of Greenberg’s word order universals – Markedness asymmetries

- (1) **Whaley**, *Introduction to Typology*, chapter 1 “Introduction to typology and universals” (pp. 3–17), chapter 2 “A (brief) history of typology” (pp. 18–29). < [P204.W48 1997](#) >

- (2) **Croft**, *Typology and Universals* (2nd ed.), chapter 1 “Introduction” (pp. 1–30) < [P204.C7 2002](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (3) **Comrie**, *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*, chapter 1 “Language universals” (pp. 1–29), chapter 2 “Language typology”, sections 2.1–2.2 (pp. 33–42) [this reading is optional, but I recommend you at least skim it] < [P204.C6 1989](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (4) **Greenberg**, *Universals of Language* (2nd ed.), chapter 5 “Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements” (pp. 73–113) [focus on sections 1–4] < [P23.C65 1961](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (5) **Croft**, *Typology and Universals* (2nd ed.), chapter 3 “Implicational universals and competing motivations”, sections 3.1–3.2 (pp. 49–59) < [P204.C7 2002](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (6) **Croft**, *Typology and Universals* (1st ed.), chapter 4 “Markedness in typology” (pp. 64–94) < [P204.C7 1990](#) / [e-reserve](#) >

2. MORPHOLOGY AND THE LEXICON

Discussion topics: Morphological marking strategies – Sapir’s morphological types – Lexical classes (parts-of-speech systems) – Distinguishing and comparing lexical classes: noun, verb, adjective – Some common grammatical categories – On the notion ‘word’ (Dixon & Aikhenvald) – Incorporation (Mithun)

- (7) **Haspelmath**, *Understanding Morphology*, chapter 2 “Basic concepts” (pp. 13–36) < [P241.H37 2002](#) (on reserve for LING 211) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (8) **Kroeger**, *Analyzing Grammar: An Introduction*, chapter 2 “Analyzing word structure” (pp. 7–25) < [P126.K76 2005](#) (on reserve for LING 211) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (9) **Croft**, *Typology and Universals* (2nd ed.), chapter 2 “Typological classification”, sections 2.1–2.2 (pp. 31–45) < [P204.C7 2002](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (10) **Whaley**, *Introduction to Typology*, chapter 8 “Morphological typology” (pp. 127–148) [skim sections 2.2–2.4, which introduce the Nichols article that we’ll read later] < [P204.W48 1997](#) >
- (11) **Comrie**, *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*, chapter 2 “Language typology”, section 2.3 “Morphological typology” (pp. 42–52) < [P204.C6 1989](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (12) **Payne**, *Describing Morphosyntax*, chapter 3 “Grammatical categories” (pp. 32–70) < [P241.P39 1997](#) >
- (13) **Schachter**, “Parts-of-speech systems”, chapter 1 of *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, vol. I, ed. Shopen (pp. 3–61) < [P204.L33 1985 v.1](#) >
- (14) **Payne**, *Describing Morphosyntax*, chapter 5 “Noun and noun-phrase operations” (pp. 92–110), chapter 9 “Other verb and verb-phrase operations” (pp. 223–260) < [P241.P39 1997](#) >
- (15) **Dixon & Aikhenvald**, “Word: a typological framework”, chapter 1 of *Word: A Cross-Linguistic Typology*, ed. by Dixon & Aikhenvald (pp. 1–41) < [P128.W67 W67 2002](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (16) **Mithun**, “The evolution of noun incorporation”, *Language* vol. 60 (1984), pp. 847–894 < [JSTOR](#) / [bound periodicals](#) / [e-reserve](#) >

3. WORD ORDER

Discussion topics: Determining ‘basic’ constituent order – Major and minor constituent order types – Non-configurationality (Mithun) – Greenberg’s word order correlations revisited – Refinements to the Greenbergian typology (Dryer) – Explaining word order universals (Travis, Hawkins) – Non-configurationality revisited (Baker)

- (17) **Whaley**, *Introduction to Typology*, chapter 6 “Determining basic constituent order” (pp. 96–107) < [P204.W48 1997](#) >
- (18) **Mithun**, “Is basic word order universal?”, chapter 2 in *Pragmatics of Word Order Flexibility*, ed. D. Payne (pp. 15–61) < [P295.P64 1992](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (19) **Dryer**, “The Greenbergian word order correlations”, *Language* vol. 68 (1992), pp. 81–138 < [JSTOR](#) / [bound periodicals](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (20) **Travis**, “Parameters of phrase structure”, chapter 11 in *Alternative Conceptions of Phrase Structure*, ed. Baltin & Kroch (pp. 263–279) < [P158.3.A48 1989](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (21) **Hawkins**, “A parsing theory of word order universals”, *Linguistic Inquiry* vol. 21 (1990), pp. 223–261. < [bound periodicals](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (22) **Baker**, “The natures of nonconfigurationality”, chapter 13 in *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*, ed. Baltin & Collins (pp. 407–438) < [P291.H246 2001](#) / [e-reserve](#) >

4. MARKING GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS

Discussion topics: Grammatical versus thematic and pragmatic relations – Predicate-argument structure and valency – Head-marking versus dependent-marking (Nichols) – Case/agreement systems: accusative, ergative, split ergative, and active systems – Relation-changing operations: passive and antipassive, causative, applicative, direct/inverse, obviation – Animacy and definiteness – Transitivity as a scalar property (Hopper & Thompson) – More on animacy hierarchies and obviation (Aissen)

- (23) **Comrie**, *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology* (2nd ed.), chapter 3 “Theoretical prerequisites” (pp. 57–85) < [P204.C6 1989](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (24) **Nichols**, “Head-marking and dependent-marking grammar”, *Language* vol. 62 (1986), pp. 56–119 [read entire article, but focus your attention on sections 1–3; sections 4 and 5 can be skimmed] < [JSTOR](#) / [bound periodicals](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (25) **Song**, *Linguistic Typology*, chapter 3 “Case marking”, sections 3.1–3.4 (pp. 138–156) < [P204.S66 2001](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (26) **Comrie**, “Ergativity”, chapter 7 in *Syntactic Typology*, ed. Lehmann (pp. 329–394) < [P204.S9 1978](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (27) **Song**, *Linguistic Typology*, chapter 3 “Case marking”, sections 3.5–3.10 (pp. 156–181) < [P204.S66 2001](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (28) **Andrews**, “The major functions of the noun phrase”, chapter 2 in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, vol. I, ed. Shopen (pp. 62–154) < [P204.L33 1985 v.1](#) >
- (29) **Song**, *Linguistic Typology*, chapter 3 “Case marking”, sections 3.11–3.14 (pp. 181–210) < [P204.S66 2001](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (30) **Keenan**, “Passive in the world’s languages”, chapter 5 in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, vol. I, ed. Shopen (pp. 243–281) < [P204.L33 1985 v.1](#) >
- (31) **Comrie**, “Causative verb formation and other verb-deriving morphology”, chapter 6 in *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, vol. III, ed. Shopen (pp. 309–348) < [P204.L33 1985 v.3](#) >

- (32) **Hopper & Thompson**, "Transitivity in grammar and discourse", *Language* vol. 56 (1980), pp. 251-299 [read sections 1-3 (pp. 251-280) only] < [JSTOR](#) / [bound periodicals](#) / [e-reserve](#) >
- (33) **Aissen**, "On the syntax of obviation", *Language* vol. 73 (1997), pp. 705-750 [you can skip the appendix, which we will not discuss in class] < [JSTOR](#) / [bound periodicals](#) >
[A link to this article can also be found on the author's website: <http://people.ucsc.edu/~aissen/>]