

24.951 (2022): *Introduction to Syntax*

MW 10-11:30, 36-372

(plus recitation to be arranged)

Instructors: Ksenia Ershova (kershova@mit.edu), David Pesetsky (pesetsk@mit.edu)
TA: Giovanni Roversi (grovers@mit.edu)

Website: <https://canvas.mit.edu/courses/16343>

Topic

This class is concerned with the concepts and principles that have been of central significance in the recent development of syntactic theory.

We will begin by developing a particular architecture for thinking about syntactic phenomena: based on the operation "Merge". We then turn to a variety of topics that put this simple idea to the test. We will also touch occasionally on the interaction of syntactic processes with semantics and phonology.

The Spring semester continuation of this class (24.952) will build on this semester's material, focusing more intensively than this semester on so-called \bar{A} ("A-bar") phenomena.

Level of the class

This class serves as the first foundational course in syntax within our graduate program. Experience teaches us that among our first-year graduate students, there is usually significant diversity in the nature and degree of preparation. In response, we have tried to craft a first-year sequence (24.951 and 24.952) that covers basic discoveries and issues in a systematic way, while offering enough glimpses of current controversies and the unknown to keep those with more preparation learning new things. We need your feedback throughout the term so we can tell how well we are serving your syntactic needs, and we urgently need to know if we are leaving you confused or unproductively frustrated.

Graduate students from other departments and motivated undergraduates are also welcome if they have taken a previous syntax course. If you are new to syntax, you should not sign up for this class. Instead, you should take 24.902/24.932.

Requirements and Expectations

Participation:

The **class meetings** are the most important part of the class. Your participation, questions and comments will guide us in our teaching, and will help determine the breadth and depth with which we examine the topics that we will cover. We know that people's personalities differ in ways that influence their class participation, but we do expect every member of the class to talk and to help guide the discussion. This is a serious expectation.

Reading:

We have designed the class requirements in part around our knowledge that your backgrounds will be diverse. This is particularly the case when it comes to the readings.

Many of the readings (though not all) are survey articles— with some other readings labeled as "extra" or "fyi" (for your information), for the enthusiasts among you.

You must do the readings assigned, but contact Ksenia, David, or Giovanni with your questions about them — or bring these questions to class.

Problem sets:

These will be assigned almost every week, trailing off during the last several weeks of the semester, when you are working on your squib. Problems will range from mechanical exercises to critiques of the literature to empirical problems that we would love to solve but can't.

There is a very helpful MIT tradition of first-year students working together on the homework assignments, which we encourage you to continue. So feel free and discuss the problem sets among yourselves, argue about them, work on them together, etc. *But: do write the problems up on your own.* And if you collaborated with classmates, indicate their contribution.

Problem sets will be made available by Saturday evening each week on the Stellar website, and will be due on the *Friday* of the week after they are assigned. Late problem sets will not be accepted except by prior arrangement, for special reasons.

Help and conversation:

There will be a *Piazza* forum linked from the Canvas site that we will monitor where you can ask questions about the class and assignments — and get answers from us and from each other. Please make active use of this, but also feel free to write to us with your questions as well, or make an appointment with either instructor or the TA.

Class presentation and squib:

By **November 4**, consult with the instructors and TA with the goal of finding a compact syntactic puzzle in your native language or one that you can do research on effectively. Think about what it might conceivably be teaching us. Develop a short squib about it that you (1) present in the last week of the semester (details to be announced), and (2) submit in written form no later than one week after the last class (exact date to be announced).

Diversity and inclusion statement:

Both MIT [1,2] and MIT Linguistics [3] value diversity of backgrounds and perspectives in an inclusive and respectful environment. We would like to echo these values and policies here, and we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the relevant resources made available to you in the links provided below. We also provide a venue in the form of an anonymous survey to reach out to us if you encounter issues that go against these values. The survey will be active throughout the semester (and the link will also be available through Canvas).

Anonymous survey: <https://forms.gle/MFrGdaFZXvXE6fie6>

[1] <https://hr.mit.edu/diversity-equity-inclusion>

[2] <https://studentlife.mit.edu/impact-opportunities/diversity-inclusion>

[3] <https://linguistics.mit.edu/diversity-statement/>

SYLLABUS

This syllabus is *aspirational*. It represents carefully formulated plans and good intentions, and can be relied upon as guide to the overall structure of the class. Based on past experience, however, we can assure you that it is *overwhelmingly* likely that the details will need repeated revision as the semester progresses. We will take as much time for each topic as our progress and your questions warrant, regardless of what it says on the syllabus. In general, even if the dates listed become pure fantasy, we will be moving to the next listed topic whenever we finish the one we're on. If we need to make decisions about omitting certain topics, we will issue revised syllabuses.

W Sep 7 **Constituency and constituency tests**

Everaert, B.H., Marinus A.C. Huybregts, Noam Chomsky, Robert C. Berwick, and Johan J. Bolhuis. 2015. Structures, Not Strings: Linguistics as Part of the Cognitive Sciences. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*. 19:729-743.

M Sep 12 *continued*

Phillips, Colin. 2003. Linear order and constituency. *Linguistic Inquiry* 34:37-90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4179220>.

- W Sep 14
- Subcategorization and selection: basic clause structure
 - Principle C effects as a diagnostic of structure
 - Subcategorization/Selection: complements vs. adjuncts
 - X-bar Theory, Bare Phrase Structure

M Sep 19 *continued*

W Sep 21 **Introduction to movement: \bar{A} -constructions**

- the phenomenon of movement
- the \bar{A} -family of movements: interrogative and relative clauses, topicalization/focalization
- Interactions with Principles A and C
- Late Merge (and some history: the demise of "Deep Structure")

Pesetsky, David. 2013. Phrasal Movement and Its Discontents: Diseases and Diagnoses. In Cheng, Lisa Lai-Shen and Norbert Corver, eds. *Diagnosing Syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 123-157.

fyi: Lebeaux, David. 1998. Where does the Binding Theory Apply?. NEC Research Institute Technical Report. [pp. 1-37]

- M Sep 26
- Islands as a test for movement
 - Strong vs. Weak Crossover
 - Superiority effects: probes and goals
 - Brief introduction to overt vs. covert \bar{A} -movement

W Sep 28 *continued*

M Oct 3 **Head movement**

- head movement to T and to v (introducing vP)

for reference: Roberts, Ian. 2001. Head movement. In Mark Baltin & Chris Collins (eds.), *Handbook of syntactic theory*, 112-147. Oxford: Blackwell. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470756416.ch5>

for reference: Roberts, Ian. 2011. Head movement and the minimalist program. In Cedric Boeckx (ed.), *Handbook of Linguistic Minimalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, .

fyi: Pollock, Jean-Yves. 1989. Verb movement, Universal Grammar, and the structure of IP. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20.365-424.

- Head movement to C: Verb-second

Holmberg, Anders. 2010. Verb second. In Tibor Kiss and Artemis Alexiadou, eds. *Syntax – an International Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Research*. 2nd Edition. Berlin:de Gruyter.

or Zwart, Jan-Wouter. 2022. Verb Positions and Basic Clause Structure in Germanic. <https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/006788> [to appear in *Oxford Handbook of Germanic Linguistics*]

W Oct 5

- The debate over head movement

Harley, Heidi. 2013. Diagnosing Head Movement. In Cheng, Lisa Lai-Shen and Norbert Corver, eds. *Diagnosing Syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 112-119.

fyi: Matushanky, Ora. 2006. Head Movement in Linguistic Theory. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37.69-109.

Harizonov, Boris and Vera Gribanova. 2019. Whither head movement? *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*. 37:461-522 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11049-018-9420-5>

W Oct 12 *continued*

M Oct 17 **A-movement and case**

- Vergnaud's proposal

Pesetsky, David, and Esther Torrego. 2011. Case. In Cedric Boeckx (ed.), *Handbook of Linguistic Minimalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 52-73.

Bobaljik, Jonathan and Susi Wurmbrand. 2009. Case in GB/Minimalism (with Susi Wurmbrand). In Andrej Malchukov and Andrew Spencer, eds. *Handbook of Case*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 44-58.

- case as a motivation for movement: raising, passive, unaccusative constructions

Baltin, Mark. 2003. A-Movement In Mark Baltin and Chris Collins, eds. *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*. Oxford:Blackwell.

Miyagawa, Shigeru, in press, Numeral quantifiers. In Masayoshi Shibatani, Shigeru Miyagawa, and Hisashi Noda, eds., *Mouton Handbook of Japanese Linguistics*, de Gruyter. To appear.

- raising vs. control

W Oct 19 **Unaccusativity**

Introductory chapter (pp. 1-21) of: Alexiadou, Artemis, Artemis, Elena Anagnostopoulou, and Martin Everaert, ed. 2004. *The unaccusativity puzzle: Explorations of the syntax-lexicon interface*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Krejci, Bonnie. 2020. *Syntactic and Semantic Perspectives on First Conjunct Agreement in Russian*. Dissertation, Stanford University. Chapter 3

M Oct 24 *continued*

W Oct 26 **The VP-internal subject Hypothesis**

McCloskey, James. 1997. Subjecthood and subject positions. In Liliane Haegeman (ed.) *Elements of Grammar*. Kluwer, Dordrecht.

M Oct 31 **little vP**

Harley, Heidi. 2013. External arguments and the Mirror Principle: On the distinctness of Voice and v. *Lingua* 125:34-57.

Kratzer, Angelika. 1996. Severing the external argument from its verb. In *Phrase structure and the lexicon*, ed. Johan Rooryk and Laurie Zaring, 109-137. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

W Nov 2 **Passive**

Baker, Mark, Kyle Johnson, and Ian Roberts. 1989. Passive arguments raised. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20, 219-251.

Collins, Chris. 2005. A smuggling approach to the passive in English. *Syntax* 8.81-120

fyi: Alexiadou, Artemis, Elena Anagnostopoulou, and Florian Schäfer. 2018. Passive. in Norbert Hornstein, Howard Lasnik, Pritty Patel-Grosz, Charles Yang, eds. *Syntactic Structures after 60 years*. Berlin:Mouton de Gruyter pp. 403-425.

M Nov 7 Legate, Julie Anne. 2012. Subjects in Acehnese and the nature of the passive. *Language* 88.495-525.

W Nov 14 **Restructuring and the vP/VP distinction**

Wurmbrand, Susi. 2002. 'Semantic vs. Syntactic Control', in Jan Wouter Zwart and Werner Abraham, eds. *Studies in Comparative Germanic Syntax: Proceedings of the 15th Workshop on Comparative Germanic Syntax*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 93-127.

M Nov 9 **Case cross-linguistically**

- dependent case theories of accusative (and ergative)

Yip, Moira, Joan Maling and Ray Jackendoff. 1987. Case in Tiers. *Language* 63.217-250

fyi: Marantz, Alec. 2000. Case and Licensing. In E. Reuland, ed. *Arguments and Case: Explaining Burzio's Generalization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. [excerpts TBA]

Baker, Mark. 2015. *Case: its principles and its parameters*. Cambridge University Press. [chapters 1 and 2]

W Nov 16 Baker, Mark and Nadya Vinokurova. 2010. Two modalities of case assignment: case in Sakha. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 28:593-642

fyi: Levin, Theodore and Omer Preminger. 2015. Case in Sakha: are two modalities really necessary? *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*. 33:231-250.

- M Nov 21
- ergative alignment

(selection from readings below TBA)

Deal, Amy Rose. 2015. Ergativity. In Artemis Alexiadou and Tibor Kiss (eds.), *Syntax – Theory and Analysis. An International Handbook*, volume 1. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Legate, Julie Anne. 2008. Morphological and abstract case. *Linguistic Inquiry* 39:55–101.

Baker, Mark and Jonathan Bobaljik. 2017. On Inherent and Dependent Theories of Ergative Case. In Jessica Coon, Diane Massam, and Lisa Demena Travis eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Ergativity* DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198739371.013.5

Legate, Julie. 2017. The Locus of Ergative Case. In *ibid.* DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198739371.013.6

Yuan, Michelle. 2020. Ergativity and Object Shift across Inuit. <https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/004942>

W Nov 23 *continued*

M Nov 28 **The control debates**

- control as movement
- backwards control
- varieties of control

Bobaljik, Jonathan and Idan Landau. 2009. Icelandic Control Is Not A-Movement: The Case from Case. *Linguistic Inquiry* 40.113-154.

Hornstein, Norbert. 1999. Movement and Control. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30, 69-96.

Landau, Idan. 2003. Movement out of control. *Linguistic Inquiry* 34, 471-498.

Polinsky, Maria and Eric Potsdam. 2002. Backward Control. *Linguistic Inquiry* 33, 245-282.

W Nov 30 Ershova, Ksenia. 2019. *Syntactic ergativity in West Circassian*. University of Chicago dissertation. Chapter 5.

Pietraszko A. 2021. Backward Control without A-movement or ϕ -agreement, In A. Farinella & A. Hill (Eds.), *Proceedings of NELS 51* (pp. 139–152).: UMass GLSA.

M Dec 5 **Argument structure and syntax**

- double-object structures

Harley, Heidi, and Shigeru Miyagawa. In press. Syntax of ditransitive verbs, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia in Linguistics*.

W Dec 7 • applicative constructions

Pylkkänen, Liina. 2008. *Introducing arguments*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. pp. 17-43.

McGinnis, Martha. 2000. Phases and the syntax of applicatives. In: Min-Joo Kim and Uri Strauss, editors. *NELS 31. GLSA*. 333–349.

M Dec 12 lightning squib presentations

W Dec 14 *continued*