

EL5101 Grammatical Analysis

National University of Singapore

2017–2018 Semester 1, Thursdays 18:00–21:00, AS5 room 03-09

Instructor

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Office: AS5 06-09

Office hours: Thursdays 2–4pm, Fridays 3–4pm

Also join us for the **syntax/semantics reading group** (completely optional)
Thursdays at 11am, AS5 fifth floor
<https://mitcho.com/nus/synsem/>

Description

“A logical theory may be tested by its capacity for dealing with puzzles, and it is a wholesome plan, in thinking about logic, to stock the mind with as many puzzles as possible, since these serve much the same purpose as is served by experiments in physical science.”
Russell (1905, 484–485)

This course is a graduate-level introduction to modern syntactic theory. Emphasis will be placed on the the process of analysis and argumentation. Empirically, the course will cover a range of grammatical phenomena in English and other languages, to “stock the mind with as many puzzles as possible,” and to motivate and evaluate hypotheses under discussion. Students will complete the class with both the technical expertise and theoretical foundation to comfortably approach a range of work in contemporary syntactic literature.

Website

- Lecture notes will be posted on the public website, <https://mitcho.com/nus/gram2017/>
- IVLE will be used for submitting assignments and posting additional readings. Please make sure you are in the **EL5101** module on IVLE.

Textbook

Adger, David. 2003. *Core Syntax: A Minimalist Approach*. Oxford. We will use almost all of this book, so you should buy a copy.¹ Additional readings will be on IVLE.

¹If you search online, I know you can easily find a PDF for this book, but *that PDF is not of the final, published version of the book* so there may be important differences. I haven't checked. You have been warned.

Requirements

Your grade will be determined by your performance on the following:

1. **Attendance and participation (10%):** Active attendance, participation in class, and preparation (doing the readings) are crucial for success in the class.
2. **Problem sets ($5 \times 8\% = 40\%$):** Problem sets are an opportunity to apply the techniques developed in class and in the readings to original data.
3. **Quizzes ($2 \times 10\% = 20\%$):** Two quizzes will test knowledge of the empirical phenomena covered in the class and application of technical concepts to new data and puzzles.
4. **Language report (30%):** Students will study one aspect of an unfamiliar language through elicitation with a native speaker. Guidelines on possible topics will be given later. The language must be a language that (a) you are not a native speaker of and (b) cannot be English, Singlish, Mandarin Chinese, or Singapore Malay. Should be approximately ten pages. Due **Saturday, November 18th**.
5. **Consultation (1%):** Come meet me during my office hours, or by appointment, to receive one bonus point.

If you registered for EL5101R: There will be one additional problem on the problem sets and quizzes.

Schedule

The schedule is subject to change. Consult the website. CS refers to *Core Syntax*.

| Date | Topic |
|--------|--|
| Aug 17 | Grammatical knowledge; constituency |
| | <i>Reading:</i> CS1, CS3.2; optional: Chomsky (1986) |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Survey on IVLE |
| Aug 24 | Building structure |
| | <i>Reading:</i> CS2, 3, 4.2 |
| Aug 31 | Argument asymmetries, <i>vP</i> |
| | <i>Reading:</i> CS4; optional: Barss and Lasnik (1986) |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Problem Set 1 |
| Sep 7 | Subjects |
| | <i>Reading:</i> CS6.1–6.2; optional: McCloskey (1997) |

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| Sep 14 | More subjects |
| | <i>Reading:</i> CS4.5, 6.4 |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Problem Set 2 |
| Sep 21 | Case and agreement (+ Quiz 1) |
| | <i>Reading:</i> Pesetsky and Torrego (2011), CS6.3 |
| Sep 28 | Recess Week: No class |
| Oct 5 | Ergativity |
| | <i>Reading:</i> TBA |
| Oct 12 | Auxiliaries and head movement |
| | <i>Reading:</i> CS5 |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Problem Set 3 |
| Oct 19 | Embedded clauses |
| | <i>Reading:</i> CS8 |
| Oct 26 | V2 and <i>wh</i> -movement |
| | <i>Reading:</i> CS9 |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Problem Set 4 |
| Nov 2 | More movement |
| | <i>Reading:</i> CS10 |
| Nov 9 | TBA |
| | <i>Reading:</i> TBA |
| | <i>Submit:</i> Problem Set 5 |
| Nov 16 | TBA (+ Quiz 2) |
| | <i>Reading:</i> TBA |
| Saturday, November 18: language report due | |

Rules of note

- **Cooperation:** You are encouraged to discuss the problem sets with other students. However, you must always submit your own write-up, and you should list the students who you worked with on your assignment.
- **Integrity:** The use of others' ideas or expressions without citation is plagiarism. You must declare all sources in submitted work. Citations don't need to be in any particular format, but they have to be there.
- **Talk to me:** I want you to succeed in this class. If any material or requirement is unclear, let me know. In extreme cases, alternative arrangements can be made for some of the course requirements, but only by talking to me first.

References

- Adger, David. 2003. *Core syntax: A minimalist approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Barss, Andrew, and Howard Lasnik. 1986. A note on anaphora and double objects. *Linguistic Inquiry* 17:347–354.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1986. Knowledge of language as a focus of inquiry. In *Knowledge of language: Its nature, origin, and use*, 1–14. Praeger.
- McCloskey, James. 1997. Subjecthood and subject positions. In *Elements of grammar*, ed. Liliane Haegeman, 197–235. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Pesetsky, David, and Esther Torrego. 2011. Case. In *Oxford handbook of linguistic minimalism*, ed. Cedric Boeckx. Oxford University Press.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1905. On denoting. *Mind* 14:479–493.