

EL5101 Grammatical Analysis

National University of Singapore

2020–2021 Semester 1

Meetings Fridays 18:00, online

Instructor

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Office hours: TBD

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/gram2020/>
- LumiNUS will be used for submitting assignments and posting additional readings. Please make sure you are in the **EL5101** or **EL5101R** module on LumiNUS.

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 LumiNUS.

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.

Format and schedule

This year (2020), this module will be held in a fully online format. Each week has two parts:

1. At-home activities:

- Lecture video (or two): Luminus > Module Details > Weblinks
My advice: Have your own copy of the handout (on the public website) open or printed, so you can take notes on it as you watch.
- Readings: Luminus > Files > Readings
- Forum: Luminus > Forum
The forum is available for discussing and asking questions about the material. While forum posts are not required, they will be considered as a form of participation.
- Mini-quiz: Luminus > Quiz
Weekly mini-quizzes test comprehension of the video lectures and readings. Each quiz should take less than five minutes. Complete by Friday at 3pm.
- Problem set: public; submit to Luminus > Files > Student Submission
Problem sets are an opportunity to apply techniques developed in class and in the readings to original data. Submit as PDFs with your name *in* the text, by Friday at 6pm.

2. In-person meeting:

Luminus > Conferencing

Fridays at 6pm; probably an hour or so. I will review material and answer questions, and we will solve practice problems in groups.

The overall schedule is on the public website and is subject to change. CS refers to *Core Syntax*.

Requirements

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

1. **Attendance and participation (10%):** You will receive a grade based on a combination of (a) your attendance and participation in in-person meetings (in group exercises, in discussions, etc.), and (b) participation in the Luminus Forum.
2. **Mini-quizzes (10%)**
3. **Problem sets ($6 \times 5\% = 30\%$)**

4. **Tests ($2 \times 15\% = 30\%$):** Two take-home tests will assess knowledge of the empirical phenomena covered in the class and application of technical concepts to new data and puzzles.
5. **Language report (20%):** 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 7th**.

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

Notes

- **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.
- **Late submissions:** Late submissions are not accepted except with prior permission.
- **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.
- **2020 is an experiment for everyone:** I intend to solicit feedback on the format of the class around Recess Week and adjust accordingly. This year is awful; let's be kind to one another.

References

- Adger, David. 2003. *Core syntax: A minimalist approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1905. On denoting. *Mind* 14:479–493.