LING 328 : MORPHOSYNTACTIC TYPOLOGY

TTh 2:40–4:00 PM, Vollum 120

Course Syllabus
Fall 2012

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	(or by appointment)

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 *lexically*. Languages also exhibit *morphosyntactic* variation, and it is this kind of variation which we will examine in this course. Domains of morphosyntactic variation include:

- *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 argument structure, 'who's doing what to whom', in terms of grammatical relations (word order, case marking, agreement, etc.).

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 natural human 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 grammatical theory is called *Linguistic Typology*.

There are two broad questions which typologists seek to answer: Which structural properties can vary across languages, and which cannot? And 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, DEADLINES

Expectations — Students are expected to attend class, participate actively in discussion, and complete all readings and written work by the assigned dates. For certain readings, students will also be expected to prepare ahead of class by submitting questions and discussion topics to the course Moodle page. The written work will consist of six problem sets (no term papers or exams). The problem sets will count for approximately **75%** of the course grade, while in-class and Moodle participation count for approximately **25%**.

Readings — There is no single 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. *Please bring the week's readings with you to class, since we will be referring to them in our discussion.*

All book chapters are available on print reserve and/or through the course Moodle page. To access readings on Moodle, just scroll down to the appropriate unit and click on the link. Note that links to journal articles take you to the relevant page on the JSTOR website (*www.jstor.org*). There you can read the article online, or download and print it as a PDF document by clicking on "View PDF" in the upper right corner of the screen. (These journal articles are also available in print form, and can be found in the Bound Periodicals section of the Library.)

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 (if any). The problem sets are meant to be challenging. You should feel free to come see me outside of class—individually, or in groups—if you get stuck or need extra help. 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 will be distributed in class, and electronic copies posted to the Moodle page. The due dates for these assignments (subject to change) are listed below. Completed papers must be received by **5:30pm** on the day they are due.

	handed out	*due at 5:30pm*
PS 1	30 August	**13 September**
PS 2	13 September	**27 September**
PS 3	27 September	**11 October**
PS 4	11 October	**1 November**
PS 5	1 November	**15 November**
PS 6	15 November	**4 December**

Assignments can be turned in in class or brought to my office (please do *not* place papers in my box, but slide them under the door if I'm not there). Given the large size of the class, I strongly

prefer that you submit papers in hard copy. However, if circumstances beyond your control make it impossible to hand in your assignment in person—e.g., illness, last-minute printer failure—you may send it to me as an email attachment. Late assignments are an exception to the rule: these *must* be submitted via email so that they have a time stamp.

Problem sets must be turned in on time if you wish to receive full credit and comments. Extensions can be negotiated under certain circumstances, such as 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 receive fewer comments and may not be returned in a timely fashion. *As mentioned above, late assignments must be submitted electronically.*

A note on collaboration and academic integrity — Learning cannot happen in a vacuum, but requires close collaboration with your colleagues. You are therefore encouraged—indeed, expected—to work through the data 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. In addition, please do not consult outside sources on the problem set language, but confine your attention solely to the data provided in the problem set. If you have any questions, let me know.

Formatting your problem set answers — Problem set write-ups must be typed, and should have 1- to 1.5-inch margins on all sides to give room for comments. You may organize your write-ups in any way you like, so long as you answer all of the questions asked in the problem set. Papers may be single-spaced or double-spaced, but should on no account exceed 20 pages (I expect it will take far fewer pages than this to address all of the questions asked; remember to be concise).

In providing your answers, each major claim should be illustrated with one or more examples. For instance, if you claim that the problem set language has SOV word order, you should support this claim by including an example sentence from the data set which explicitly shows the subject preceding the object and the object preceding the verb. The point here is not just to answer questions about the data set, but to gain practice in describing morpho-syntactic phenomena clearly and precisely. Approach your write-ups as though you were writing a mini-grammar of the problem set language. Pretend 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.

With regard to data presentation: Example sentences should be separated from the surrounding text by empty lines, and presented in the standard 3-line format. Consider this example sentence from Kinyarwanda.

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

The first line of the example gives the original sentence, with words divided into morphemes using hyphens; the second line gives word-by-word or morpheme-by-morpheme glosses, also known as *interlinear glosses*; and the third line gives the English translation (usually between single quotes). Notice that each word in the original sentence is left-aligned with its gloss to make the examples easier to read. Grammatical labels like "present tense" are normally abbreviated in the interlinear glosses, and the abbreviation is either capitalized (e.g., "Pres") or given in all caps (e.g., "PRES"). For more instructions on how to format your examples, please consult the attached handouts on presenting data in problem sets and the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

Online resources — The following online reference tools are useful to know about. Links to these websites can be found on the course Moodle page.

> **The World Atlas of Language Structures** (wals.info) — A joint project of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and the Max Planck Digital Library, this online atlas includes articles and interactive maps showing the cross-linguistic distribution of structural features in various domains (phoneme inventories, morphological structure, word order, case systems, etc.) in over 2600 languages. A useful source for locating examples of languages with particular grammatical properties.
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> **The Universals Archive** (typo.uni-konstanz.de/archive/intro) — Sponsored by the University of Konstanz, this archive provides a searchable database of proposed language universals. The source is given for each universal, along with commentary, and a list of languages which provide (apparent) counterexamples.
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> **The Leipzig Glossing Rules** (www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php) — Another project from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology: a proposed set of rules and abbreviations for standardizing the way in which interlinear examples (see below) are formatted.

Other useful resources can be found at the resources page of the Association for Linguistic Typology (www.linguistic-typology.org/resources.html).

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

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

Call numbers are given for readings on print reserve, while "Moodle" indicates that there is a link to the reading on the course Moodle page. 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 2–3 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.

UNIT 1: Introducing language universals

Introduction to linguistic typology and cross-linguistic variation. The question of cross-linguistic comparability. Types of universals. Universals versus 'universal tendencies'.

1. **Croft**, *Typology and Universals* (2nd ed.), chapter 1 "Introduction" (pp. 1–30). [P204.C7 2002, Moodle]
2. **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). [P204.C6 1989 or P204.C6 1981, Moodle]

UNIT 2: Morphology, categories, and markedness

Morphological analysis. The Sapir-Comrie morphological types. Lexical classes (part-of-speech systems). The universality of lexical classes: noun, verb, adjective. Marking grammatical dependencies. Head-marking versus dependent-marking (Nichols). Markedness asymmetries and hierarchies.

3. **Kroeger**, *Analyzing Grammar: An Introduction*, chapter 2 "Analyzing word structure" (pp. 7–25). [P126.K76 2005 (on print reserve for LING 211), Moodle]

4. **Haspelmath and Sims**, *Understanding Morphology* (2nd ed.), chapter 2 "Basic concepts" (pp. 14–29), chapter 3 "Rules", section 3.1 (pp. 33–40). [P241.H37 2010 (on print reserve for LING 211), Moodle]

5. **Whaley**, *Introduction to Typology*, chapter 8 "Morphological typology" (pp. 127–148). [P204. W48 1997, Moodle]

6. **Comrie**, *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*, chapter 2 "Language typology", section 2.3 "Morphological typology" (pp. 42–52). [P204.C6 1989 or P204.C6 1981, Moodle]

7. **Payne**, *Describing Morphosyntax*, chapter 3 "Grammatical categories" (pp. 32–70). [P241. P39 1997]

8. **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, Moodle]

9. **Croft**, *Typology and Universals* (2nd ed.), chapter 2 "Typological classification", sections 2.1–2.2 (pp. 31–45). [P204.C7 2002, Moodle]

10. **Nichols**, "Head-marking and dependent-marking grammar", *Language* 62 (1986), pp. 56–119. [Moodle, bound periodicals] <*read entire article, but focus on sections 1–3; sections 4–5 can be skimmed*>

11. **Croft**, *Typology and Universals* (1st ed.), chapter 4 "Markedness in typology" (pp. 64–94). [P204.C7 1990, Moodle]

UNIT 3: Word order universals

Determining 'basic' constituent order. Configurational versus non-configurational languages (Mithun). Major and minor constituent order types. Greenberg's word order correlations. Dryer's technique for language sampling. Refinements to the Greenbergian typology (Dryer). Explaining word order universals (Dryer, Hawkins).

12. **Whaley**, *Introduction to Typology*, chapter 6 "Determining basic constituent order" (pp. 96–107). [P204.W48 1997, Moodle]

13. **Mithun**, "Is basic word order universal?", chapter 2 in *Pragmatics of Word Order Flexibility*, ed. D. Payne (pp. 15–61). [P295.P64 1992, Moodle]

14. **Greenberg**, *Universals of Language* (2nd ed.), chapter 5 "Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements" (pp. 73–113). [P23.C65 1961, Moodle] <*focus on sections 1–4*>

15. **Croft**, *Typology and Universals* (2nd ed.), chapter 3 "Implicational universals and competing motivations", sections 3.1–3.2 (pp. 49–59). [P204.C7 2002, Moodle]

16. **Dryer**, "The Greenbergian word order correlations", *Language* 68 (1992), pp. 81–138. [Moodle, bound periodicals]

17. **Hawkins**, "A parsing theory of word order universals", *Linguistic Inquiry* 21 (1990), pp. 223–261. [Moodle, bound periodicals]

UNIT 4: Grammatical relations: case and agreement

Grammatical relations versus thematic and pragmatic roles. Argument structure and valence. Alignment systems: accusative, ergative, split ergative, active. Relation-changing operations: passive, antipassive, causative, applicative, obviation. Animacy and definiteness. Transitivity as a scalar property (Hopper and Thompson). Noun incorporation (Mithun). More on animacy hierarchies and obviation (Aissen).

18. **Comrie**, *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology* (2nd ed.), chapter 3 "Theoretical prerequisites" (pp. 57–85). [P204.C6 1989, Moodle]

19. **Song**, *Linguistic Typology*, chapter 3 "Case marking", sections 3.1–3.4 (pp. 138–156). [P204.S66 2001, Moodle]

20. **Comrie**, "Ergativity", chapter 7 in *Syntactic Typology*, ed. Lehmann (pp. 329–394). [P204.S9 1978, Moodle]

21. **Song**, *Linguistic Typology*, chapter 3 "Case marking", sections 3.5–3.14 (pp. 156–210). [P204.S66 2001, Moodle]

22. **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]

23. **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]

24. **Hopper and Thompson**, "Transitivity in grammar and discourse", *Language* 56 (1980), pp. 251-299. [Moodle, bound periodicals] *<read sections 1–3 (pp. 251–280) only>*

25. **Mithun**, "The evolution of noun incorporation", *Language* 60 (1984), pp. 847–894. [Moodle, bound periodicals]

26. **Aissen**, "On the syntax of obviation", *Language* 73 (1997), pp. 705–750. [Moodle, bound periodicals] *<skip the appendix, which we will not discuss in class>*