LING 328 : Morphosyntactic Typology

TTh 10:30–11:50, VOLLUM 309

Course Syllabus
Fall 2006

MATT PEARSON

office: Vollum 307
email: pearsonm@reed.edu
phone: 7618 (from off-campus: 503-517-7618)
office hours: Wednesday 1:30-3:30, or by appointment

CONTENT AND 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** – e.g., the number and kind of ‘parts of speech’ which a language has, the number and kind of functional/grammatical categories which it are encoded in the morphology and syntax (tense, aspect, number, definiteness, etc.).

- **Morphology** – e.g., the ratio of bound morphemes to free morphemes in a language, the segmentability of words into morphemes, the word-formation strategies which a language makes use of (affixation, compounding, reduplication, stem change, etc.).

- **Syntax** – e.g., the ‘basic’ word order of sentences (if any), the configurationality of a language (viz., the degree to which deviations from the basic word order are allowed), the strategies which a language uses for expressing predicate-argument structure (or ‘who’s doing what to whom’) in terms of grammatical relations.

It is these categorial, morphological, and syntactic differences which we will focus on 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. In other words, there are non-obvious limitations on the kinds of structures that languages can have. By principled I mean that languages do not vary in structure in random ways, but according to identifiable patterns. We can express these patterns as language universals, usually probabilistic implicational statements of the form “If a language has feature X, it will (almost always) have feature Y”. Languages can thus be classified into types on the basis of shared combinations of features. 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:

- Which structural properties can vary across languages, and which cannot?
- 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 explain aspects of cross-linguistic variation).
COURSE REQUIREMENTS, GRADING, POLICIES

Expectations

Students will be expected to attend class and participate in discussion, prepare and participate in in-class presentations, and complete all written work. The written work for the course consists of seven problem sets, along with a take-home final exam (the latter being essentially a longer and more comprehensive problem set which you have to complete on your own). The take-home final will be handed out during the reading period and due one week later. Details TBA.

Approximate grading basis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem sets</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problem sets

You will notice that the problem sets count for over half of the final 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). As always in my classes, you are encouraged—nay, expected—to work on problem sets together, so long as you write up your answers in your own words. You should also feel free to come see me outside of class (individually, or better yet 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 take full advantage of my services!

Due dates for assignments are given in the table below (before fall break, assignments will be due about every week and a half; after fall break, they will be due about every two weeks). These dates are subject to modification. I will notify you of any changes as we go along.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>handed out</th>
<th>due at 5:00 PM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PS 1</td>
<td>Tues, September 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 2</td>
<td>Thurs, September 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 3</td>
<td>Tues, October 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 4</td>
<td>Thurs, October 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 5</td>
<td>Thurs, November 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 6</td>
<td>Thurs, November 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS 7</td>
<td>Tues, December 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problem sets must be received by 5:00 PM on the day they are due. Assignments may be submitted in hardcopy or electronic format. Hardcopy versions may be submitted in class, or to my office (please do not place them in the box outside my office, but slide them under my door if I’m not there). Electronic versions may be sent as email attachments (I strongly prefer PDF files, but will accept Word files as well).

Problem sets must be turned in on time if you wish to receive full credit and comments. Late assignments will be penalized 10% of total possible points for each day they are late. A late assignment will not be accepted for credit if it is turned in after the problem set is returned to students, or after it is discussed in class, whichever comes first. Also, late assignments will probably receive minimal comments, and may not be returned to you in a timely fashion.

In-class presentations

Given the breadth of the field, there are a number of areas which we won’t be able to cover as part of the regular syllabus. To help make up for this, you will each be asked to give a presentation to the class (approximately 40 minutes) on one of the topics listed below. You will also be asked to prepare a detailed
handout for the class, including definitions and discussion of important terms and concepts, and illustrative examples from various languages.

- Definiteness
- Deixis
- Mood, modality, and evidentiality
- Negation
- Number marking, noun class/gender systems
- Obliques and ‘peripheral’ roles (cases, adpositions, and serial verb constructions)
- Pronoun systems and pronominal/agreement categories (person, number, gender)
- Relative clauses
- Switch-reference and clause chaining
- Tense and aspect
- Wh-questions, focus and clefting, and/or related constructions
- (topic of your choice, subject to my approval)

Presentations will be given once a week during the second half of the semester (dates listed below). You must choose the topic and date for your presentation, and consult with me on sources, before Thursday, October 5. We will try to spread things out so that there are no more than one or two presentations per week. Presentations will count for a portion of your participation grade, and the concepts you discuss may be incorporated into the final exam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name(s)</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, Oct 26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, Nov 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, Nov 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, Nov 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, Nov 23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, Nov 30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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

_A note on readings_

There is no textbook for this class. Instead, you will be assigned selected chapters from various different textbooks, as well as articles from linguistics journals. Readings are listed after each unit, 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 explicitly listed as optional. Additional readings may be added as we go along.

All books are available on reserve (a handful of readings are also available on e-reserve, and I may add more as we go along). Journal articles can be found in the Bound Periodicals section of the library. 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 & 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 or author. You will be given options for downloading and printing. Ask for help from library staff if you get stuck.

[N.B.—There are two editions of Croft’s book Typology and Universals, both of which are on reserve for this course. These editions are very different from each other, so be sure you have the right version before you start reading. I have assigned you chapter 1 and portions of chapters 2-3 from the second edition, and chapter 4 of the first edition.]

1. INTRODUCTION: TYPOLOGY AND UNIVERSALS

Cross-linguistic variation – Overview of typology – Methods of language sampling – The question of cross-linguistic comparability – Language universals (and ‘universal tendencies’) – Formulating language universals – Overview of Greenberg’s word order universals

(1) Whaley, Introduction to Typology <P204.W48 1997>
⇒ chapter 1 “Introduction to typology and universals”
⇒ chapter 2 “A (brief) history of typology”
(2) Croft, Typology and Universals, 2nd ed. <P204.C7 2002>
⇒ chapter 1 “Introduction”
⇒ chapter 1 “Language universals” (optional: repeats many of the same points as Whaley and Croft from a slightly different perspective)
⇒ chapter 2 “Language typology”, sections 2.1–2.2 (optional, but I would recommend at least skimming)
⇒ chapter 5 “Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements” (Greenberg) (focus on sections 1–4)
(5) Croft, Typology and Universals, 2nd ed. <P204.C7 2002>
⇒ chapter 3 “Implicational universals and competing motivations”, sections 3.1–3.2

2. MORPHOLOGY AND THE LEXICON: CATEGORIES AND MARKING

Linguistic types and marking strategies – Sapir’s morphological types – On the notion ‘word’ – Lexical classes (part-of-speech systems) – Criteria for distinguishing and comparing lexical classes: noun, verb, adjective – Grammatical categories – Markedness theory – Head-marking versus dependent-marking (Nichols)

(6) Whaley, Introduction to Typology <P204.W48 1997>
⇒ chapter 7 “Morphemes” (optional: good for reviewing concepts from morphology)
⇒ chapter 2 “Analyzing word structure”
(8) Croft, Typology and Universals, 2nd ed. <P204.C7 2002>
⇒ chapter 2 “Typological classification”, sections 2.1–2.2
(9) Whaley, Introduction to Typology <P204.W48 1997>
⇒ chapter 8 “Morphological typology” (you can skim sections 2.2-2.4, which introduce the Nichols article that we’ll read later)
⇒ chapter 2 “Language typology”, section 2.3 “Morphological typology”
⇒ chapter 1 “Word: a typological framework” (Dixon & Aikhenvald)
⇒ chapter 3 “Grammatical categories”
(13) Shopen, Language Typology and Syntactic Description, vol. I <P204.L33 1985 v.1>
3. GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS: TRANSITIVITY, CASE/AGREEMENT, HIERARCHIES

Grammatical versus thematic and pragmatic relations – Predicate-argument structure and valency – Case/agreement systems: accusative, ergative, split ergative, and active systems – Relation-changing operations: passive and antipassive, causative, applicative, direct/inverse, obviation – Animacy and definiteness effects – Incorporation (Mithun) – Transitivity as scalar notion (Hopper & Thompson)

  ⇒ chapter 3 “Theoretical prerequisites”
(19) Song, Linguistic Typology <P204.S66 2001>
  ⇒ chapter 3 “Case marking”, sections 3.1-3.4
(20) Lehmann, Syntactic Typology <P204.S9 1978; also available on e-reserve>
  ⇒ chapter 7 “Ergativity” (Comrie)
(21) Song, Linguistic Typology <P204.S66 2001>
  ⇒ chapter 3 “Case marking”, sections 3.5-3.10
(22) Shopen, Language Typology and Syntactic Description, vol. I <P204.L33 1985 v.1>
  ⇒ chapter 2 “The major functions of the noun phrase” (Andrews)
(23) Song, Linguistic Typology <P204.S66 2001>
  ⇒ chapter 3 “Case marking”, sections 3.11-3.14
(24) Shopen, Language Typology and Syntactic Description, vol. I <P204.L33 1985 v.1>
  ⇒ chapter 5 “Passive in the world’s languages” (Keenan)
(25) Shopen, Language Typology and Syntactic Description, vol. III <P204.L33 1985 v.3>
  ⇒ chapter 6 “Causative verb formation and other verb-derived morphology” (Comrie)
(27) Hopper & Thompson, “Transitivity in grammar and discourse” <available through e-reserve, JSTOR, or in Bound Periodicals: Language vol. 56 (1980), pp. 251-299>
  ⇒ read the entire article, but focus your attention on sections 1-3 (section 4, on discourse, will not be discussed in detail in class)

4. WORD ORDER VARIATION

Determining ‘basic’ constituent order – Major/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)

  ⇒ chapter 6 “Determining basic constituent order”
(29) D. Payne, Pragmatics of Word Order Flexibility <P295.P64 1992>
  ⇒ chapter 2 “Is basic word order universal?” (Mithun)
(30) **Dryer**, “The Greenbergian word order correlations” <available through e-reserve, JSTOR, or in Bound Periodicals: *Language* vol. 68 (1992), pp. 81-138>
⇒ read entire article

(31) **Baltin & Kroch**, *Alternative Conceptions of Phrase Structure* <P158.3.A48 1989>
⇒ chapter 11 “Parameters of phrase structure” (Travis)

(32) **Hawkins**, “A parsing theory of word order universals” <available on e-reserve, or in Bound Periodicals: *Linguistic Inquiry* vol. 21 (1990), pp. 223-261>
⇒ read entire article

(33) **Baltin & Collins**, *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory* <P291.H246 2001>
⇒ chapter 13 “The natures of nonconfigurationality” (Baker)