

Grammatical theory

From transformational grammar to
constraint-based approaches

Second revised and augmented edition

Stefan Müller

Textbooks in Language Sciences 1



Textbooks in Language Sciences

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This title can be downloaded at:

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ISBN: Digital, complete work: 978-3-96110-074-3;

Hardcover: vol1: 978-3-96110-075-0; vol. 2 978-3-96110-076-7

Softcover: vol1: 978-3-96110-077-4; vol. 2 978-3-96110-078-1

ISSN: 2364-6209

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.1193241

Source code available from www.github.com/langsci/25

Collaborative reading: paperhive.org/documents/remote?type=langsci&id=25

Cover and concept of design: Ulrike Harbort

Translator: Andrew Murphy, Stefan Müller

Typesetting: Stefan Müller

Proofreading: Viola Auermann, Armin Buch, Andreea Calude, Rong Chen, Matthew Czuba, Leonel de Alencar, Christian Döhler, Joseph T. Farquharson, Andreas Hölzl, Gianina Iordăchioaia, Paul Kay, Anne Kilgus, Sandra Kübler, Timm Lichte, Antonio Machicao y Priemer, Michelle Natolo, Stephanie Natolo, Sebastian Nordhoff, Parviz Parsafar, Conor Pyle, Daniela Schröder, Eva Schultze-Berndt, Alec Shaw, Benedikt Singpiel, Anelia Stefanova, Neal Whitman, Viola Wiegand

Open reviewing: Armin Buch, Leonel de Alencar, Andreas Hölzl, Dick Hudson, Gianina Iordăchioaia, Paul Kay, Timm Lichte, Antonio Machicao y Priemer, Andrew McIntyre, Arne Nymos, Sebastian Nordhoff, Neal Whitman

Fonts: Linux Libertine, Arimo, DejaVu Sans Mono

Typesetting software: \LaTeX

Language Science Press

Unter den Linden 6

10099 Berlin, Germany

langsci-press.org

Storage and cataloguing done by FU Berlin

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For Max

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Preface

This book is an extended and revised version of my German book *Grammatiktheorie* (MuellerGTBuch2). It introduces various grammatical theories that play a role in current theorizing or have made contributions in the past which are still relevant today. I explain some foundational assumptions and then apply the respective theories to what can be called the “core grammar” of German. I have decided to stick to the object language that I used in the German version of this book since many of the phenomena that will be dealt with cannot be explained with English as the object language. Furthermore, many theories have been developed by researchers with English as their native language and it is illuminative to see these theories applied to another language. I show how the theories under consideration deal with arguments and adjuncts, active/passive alternations, local reorderings (so-called scrambling), verb position, and fronting of phrases over larger distances (the verb second property of the Germanic languages without English).

The second part deals with foundational questions that are important for developing theories. This includes a discussion of the question of whether we have innate domain specific knowledge of language (UG), the discussion of psycholinguistic evidence concerning the processing of language by humans, a discussion of the status of empty elements and of the question whether we construct and perceive utterances holistically or rather compositionally, that is, whether we use phrasal or lexical constructions.

Unfortunately, linguistics is a scientific field with a considerable amount of terminological chaos. I therefore wrote an introductory chapter that introduces terminology in the way it is used later on in the book. The second chapter introduces phrase structure grammars, which plays a role for many of the theories that are covered in this book. I use these two chapters (excluding the Section ?? on interleaving phrase structure grammars and semantics) in introductory courses of our BA curriculum for German studies. Advanced readers may skip these introductory chapters. The following chapters are structured in a way that should make it possible to understand the introduction of the theories without any prior knowledge. The sections regarding new developments and classification are more ambitious: they refer to chapters still to come and also point to other publications that are relevant in the current theoretical discussion but cannot be repeated or summarized in this book. These parts of the book address advanced students and researchers. I use this book for teaching the syntactic aspects of the theories in a seminar for advanced students in our BA. The slides are available on my web page. The second part of the book, the general discussion, is more ambitious and contains the discussion of advanced topics and current research literature.

This book only deals with relatively recent developments. For a historical overview, see for instance Robins97a-u; JL2006a-u. I am aware of the fact that chapters on Integra-