Syllabus: Syntactic typology

1   Course information

Instructor	Natalia Korotkova, n.korotkova@ucla.edu
Office hours	Campbell Hall 3103A: Tu 10-11, Th 10-11, by appointment
	Skype *n.korotkova.teaching*: by appointment
Prerequisite	Introduction to Linguistics (Ling 20) or equivalent
Required textbook	Tallerman, Maggie. 2014. *Understanding syntax*, 4th edition. Routledge.

1.1   Course description

- Linguistic typology: subfield of linguistics that studies linguistic diversity and classifies languages into different types based on the shape of their grammar

- Languages may differ in many ways: some of them lack words for *a* and *the*, some of them have many words for *and*, some use only intonation to form a question, and some have different grammatical expressions for those events that happened recently and those that happened long ago.

- Focus of this course: variation and universals in the syntax, analysis of data from many languages

- Topics: language classification, methodologies of typological sampling, morphosyntactic typology, case, word order, subordination, coordination, formation of questions, language contact.

- Prior knowledge of syntax: not required but will be helpful.

1.2   Why study typology

Linguistics studies the world around us. There are approximately 6,000 languages, counts differing depending on how 'language' is defined. However, formal linguistics, which uses mathematical modelling for natural language phenomena, has long focused on English and a handful of other languages such as French and German. Just like one might need to travel far away from home to study volcano formation in order to better understand geology, we need to study other languages in order to understand human language. Many fascinating phenomena were discovered in languages distant from English, and linguists would have missed out on them if they kept looking at English only. Ultimately, drawing on data from multiple genetically and geographically unrelated languages allows linguists to understand what is and what is not universal in natural language and to determine the source of cross-linguistic variation.

1.3   Outcome

Besides learning the new content, you will also acquire a skill set that is essential for linguists and is applicable elsewhere:

- You will learn how to work with, and present, the data:

  — work with primary data from unfamiliar languages;
  — work with published sources, e.g. reference grammars and language-structure databases;

— using interlinear notation for non-English examples (so that people who do not know the language can understand what is going on).

- Expressing your thoughts on paper in a concise way is indispensable. You will learn how to write a research paper:

  — read the literature;
  — analyze the data;
  — structure the arguments;
  — write in scholarly English.

1.4   Resources

- Genetic classification: Ethnologue, Languages of the world (http://www.ethnologue.com/)

- Data representation: Leipzig rules (http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php)

- Language-structure databases:

  — Syntactic Structures of World's languages (SSWL), based on native speakers' intuitions and work with consultants (http://sswl.railsplayground.net/);
  — World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS), based on reference grammars (http://wals.info/);
  — The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English (eWAVE), based on native speakers' intuitions (http://ewave-atlas.org/).

- Not to be used in class, included for your reference: linguistic and language documentation software and fonts developed by SIL International, http://www.sil.org/resources/software_fonts.

2   Requirements

- Reading assigned chapters from the textbook is required, other readings are optional.

- Homeworks and in-class quizzes are required.

- Attendance per se will not be taken but not attending can harm you in several ways. First, you are responsible for the entirety of class content, whether it is lectures or the texbook. Second, there is a participation grade for your engagement in discussions.

2.1   Final project

The class has a final project. There are many topics you can write on:

— describe a phenomenon of choice in a language that was not discussed in class (lectures or textbook);

— compare English and some language along several typological parameters;

— provide a typological portrait of a language that was not discussed in class based on properties from Syntactic Structures of World's languages.

Any project can be based on secondary data from grammars, or on primary data if you have access to consultants or speak the language(s) yourself. Each project should include a short literature review.

Options above are to give you some ideas, not to limit your choice. The key to success is (i) to stay in close communication with me, and (ii) to allocate enough time to work on the project. This applies to

all aspects of this class, as well other classes in general, but is crucial for the final project, so as to avoid confusion and frustration and lead to an interesting paper.

In the second half of the class, you are required to have at least two 20-minute appointments with me to discuss your project: to discuss your proposed project and to discuss your progress. There will also be a mini-conference for project presentations, so that you can get feedback before papers are due.

Project timeline	
Week 6	choose a topic, schedule an appointement with me to discuss it
Week 8	submit a progress report, schedule an appointment with me
Week 10	short in-class presentation
Final week	term papers are due

3 Policies

3.1 Grading

Activity	Contribution to the final grade
Class participation	3%
8 weekly quizzes (equally weighted)	10%, one lowest grade will be dropped
8 weekly homeworks (equally weighted)	48%, one lowest grade will be dropped
Final project, choice of topic	2%
Final project, progress report	2%
Final project, in-class presentation	5%
Final project, paper	30%

- Short 5-minute quizzes will take place at the beginning of every other class starting from week 2. They will cover content from the two previous lectures and required readings.

- There will be several types of homeworks: solving linguistic problems, answering short questions on the content of assigned readings, work with typological resources.

- Grade for the project topic choice is there to guarantee that you have a topic on time.

- You can earn extra-credit (up to 2%) by signing up to the Psychology Experiment Subject pool and participating in an experiment.

3.2 Homework submission

- Homeworks are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Late homeworks are penalized by taking 25% off the grade per late day. This does not apply to documented cases of illness and emergency.

- If homeworks are handwritten, they should be legible, otherwise they cannot be graded.

3.3 Academic honesty

You are encouraged to discuss assignments with others but everyone should submit their own write-up. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean.

4   Schedule

Week 1	
Tu	Introduction: ways to classify languages	
Th	History and methodology	Read: Handbook Ch.1 (pp.9-24), Ch.2 (pp.25-42), Ch.6 (pp.100-129)

Week 2	
Tu	Word classes and parts of speech	Assignment 1 out Read: *Text Ch.2, Handbook Ch.14 (pp.280-302)
Th	Morphological typology	Quiz 1 Read: Handbook Ch.22 (pp.487-503)

Week 3	
Tu	Heads, head-marking vs. dependent-marking	Assignment 1 due; Assignment 2 out Read: *Text Ch.4
Th	Constituency	Quiz 2 Read: *Text Ch.5

Week 4	
Tu	Basic word order and Greenberg universals	Assignment 2 due; Assignment 3 out Read: *Text Ch.6.1,6.2,6.5,6.6; Handbook Ch.13 (pp.253-279), WALS Ch.81-97, Greenberg 1963
Th	Markedness	Quiz 3 Read: Handbook Ch.7 (pp.131-147)

Week 5	
Tu	Case systems	Assignment 4 due; Assignment 5 out Read: *Text Ch.6.3,6.4; Handbook Ch.15 (pp.303-321)
Th	Pronouns and the Silverstein hierarchy	Quiz 5 Read: Silverstein 1976

Week 6	
Tu	Voice and transitivity	Assignment 3 due; Assignment 4 out Read: *Text Ch.7, Handbook Ch.17 (pp.346-367), Ch.18 (pp.368-398), Hopper & Thompson 1980
Th	Tense and aspect systems	Quiz 4 Read: Handbook Ch.20 (pp.445-465)

WEEK 7		
Tu	Clausal complementation and clause-taking predicates	Assignment 5 due; Assignment 6 out Read: *Text Ch.3.2.1
Th	Clausal adjuncts and relative clauses	Quiz 6 Read: *Text Ch.3.2, 3.3.2, 8.2; Handbook Ch.21 (pp.465-486), Keenan & Comrie 1977
WEEK 8		
Tu	*Wh*-movement and *wh*-dependencies	Assignment 6 due; Assignment 7 out Read: *Text Ch.8.1, Handbook Ch.21 (pp.465-486)
Th	*Wh*-scope marking	Quiz 7
WEEK 9		
Tu	Borderline cases: complex predicates	Assignment 7 due; Assignment 8 out Read: *Text Ch.3.3.1, 3.3.3
Th	Communicative intentions and clause typing	Quiz 8
WEEK 10		
Tu	Language contact and language unions	Assignment 8 due Read: Handbook Ch.26 (pp.568-590)
Th	Mini-conference: Project presentations	
FINALS WEEK: papers are due		

Optional readings

- *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Typology.* Jae Jung Song (Ed.). 2012. OUP.

- Chapters from the *World Atlas of Language Structures Online.* Dryer, Matthew S. and Haspelmath, Martin (eds.) 2013. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. (Available online at http://wals.info/chapter).

- Greenberg, Joseph H. 1963. Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements. In Greenberg, Joseph H. (ed.), *Universals of Human Language*, 73-113. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

- Hopper, Paul and Thompson, Sandra A. 1980. Transitivity in grammar and discourse. *Language 56*, 251-299.

- Keenan, Edward L. and Comrie, Bernard. 1977. Noun phrase accessibility and universal grammar. *Linguistic Inquiry 8*, 63-99.

- Silverstein, Michael. 1976. Hierarchy of features and ergativity. In Dixon, R. M. W. (ed.), *Grammatical Categories in Australian Languages*, 112-171. Canberra: Australian National University.