



Department of  
Linguistics and Modern Languages  
語言學及現代語言系

# Phases in Top-down Syntax

Linguistics Seminars

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**Eötvös Loránd University and**  
**Research Institute for Linguistics, Budapest**

**Date:** 22 September, 2020 (Tuesday)  
**Time:** 4:30pm - 6:15pm  
**\*Seminar will be conducted via ZOOM**

**Registration Deadline:**  
**12:00nn of 20 September 2020 (Sunday) – Hong Kong Time**  
**The Zoom Meeting details will be provided on 21 September 2020**



**Prior registration is required**

## Abstract

The mission of this talk is to design analyses for the two types of locality restriction on filler–gap dependencies — absolute and intervention islands — such that these restrictions fall out directly from a top-down theory of syntactic structure building. The crux of the top-down analysis of filler–gap dependencies is the idea that a filler encountered in a position in which it cannot be fully interpreted is uploaded onto a pushdown stack or memory buffer, and subsequently downloaded from the stack onto the edge of the first predication structure constructed in the course of the downward structure-building process, at which point it either is interpreted in situ or, if it cannot, starts a search for a gap farther down the tree. This search for a gap is interfered with by islands. Structural domains that are in an Agree relationship with an asymmetrically c-commanding head are transparent for the establishment of filler–gap dependencies across their boundaries, whereas domains that are not in such an Agree relation are absolute islands ('phases'). In the absence of an absolute island, the search for a trace will still be halted by an intervener of the same type as the filler. Argumental fillers (but not non-argumental ones) that bump into an intervention island can be re-uploaded on the back of an intervener that needs to be uploaded onto a pushdown stack for independent reasons. This provides simple and empirically highly accurate analyses of 'intervention effects'.

## Speaker

Marcel den Dikken received his MA in English language and literature in 1988 and his PhD in linguistics in 1992, both from the University of Leiden (Netherlands). Since 2015, he has held a dual appointment as a Research Professor at the Department of English Linguistics of the School of English and American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University and as a Senior Researcher at the Research Institute for Linguistics in Budapest. He is the editor of *The Cambridge Handbook of Generative Syntax* (CUP 2013) and served as editor-in-chief of *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* from 2008 till 2015. He is the author of *Particles: On the syntax of verb-particle, triadic and causative constructions* (OUP 1995), *The structure of the noun phrase in Rotuman* (LINCOM 2003), *Relators and linkers: The syntax of predication, predicate inversion, and copulas* (MIT Press 2006), and *Dependency and directionality* (CUP 2018), and co-author of volume 2 of *Syntax of Dutch: Nouns and noun phrases* (AUP 2012). He has published over 100 papers in leading peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes and encyclopedias, and is the (co-)editor of several volumes and special issues of journals. His research covers a wide variety of aspects of the syntax of natural language and its interfaces with morphology and semantics.

**All are Welcome**

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