

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages
Second Term, 2021-22

Course Title: LING5602 Special Topics in Linguistics – Comparative Grammar
<p>Description:</p> <p>“[W]e suppose that the null assumption concerning language variation is that it does not exist.” - Koopman, Hilda, and Dominique Sportiche. "The position of subjects." <i>Lingua</i> 85.2-3 (1991): 218.</p> <p>There is a growing body of evidence that languages of the world do not vary at random and that many aspects of linguistic structure are universal to all languages. Meanwhile, in most structural domains where we do find variation across languages, this variation appears to follow certain identifiable patterns.</p> <p>In this course, we introduce some syntactic properties of language that appear to be universal. We will also identify several patterns of syntactic variation in a range of syntactic domains. We further explore some accounts for the range of syntactic variation and seek some explanations for restrictions on this variation.</p> <p>Content-wise, this course approaches these universals and variations from both empirical and theoretical perspectives. We will start with a general introduction to the field of linguistic/syntactic typology, its place in the overall study of linguistics, and a brief overview of genetic-areal distribution of world’s languages.</p> <p>The rest of the course will be devoted to several most developed areas in typological/comparative studies:</p> <p>We begin with the empirical domain of word order typology and then examine in detail major word order types. We will further take a deeper dive into some well-studied syntactic phenomena related to word-order variations like scrambling in Japanese/Korean, Germanic and Slavic languages, and object shift in Scandinavian languages, and, in particular, how they are handled theoretically under the framework of generative syntax.</p> <p>We then move on to two other (morpho)syntactic systems: Case and agreement systems, and wh-questions. Empirically, we will investigate the variation found in these construction types in a variety of languages. Theoretically, we will see how generative syntax can help us understand these phenomena cross-linguistically.</p>

Content, highlighting fundamental concepts

Topic	Contents/fundamental concepts
Word order	Basic Word Order Correlations, Greenberg’s Universals, OV vs. VO, Typological correlates of OV and VO orders, scrambling vs. object shift.
Case marking	Nominal case marking, Agreement, Various types of Case marking: Nom-Acc, Erg-Abs, split systems, etc.
Wh-movement	Wh-movement division, partial and multiple movement, wh-in-situ

Learning outcomes

<p>By the end of this course, you are expected to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciate both the universality and typological differences in syntactic structures across natural languages - Analyze syntactic structures and syntactic variations based on comparative data, and form empirical generalizations accordingly - Argue and reason explicitly regarding analyses of such structures and variations - Develop good insights on current issues and explanations of a selection of (morpho)syntactic phenomena cross-linguistically

Learning activities

Lecture (hr) in class	Projects (hr) out class	Assignments (hr) out class	Reading (hr) out class
6	6	3	3
M	M	M	M

M: Mandatory activity in the course

O: Optional activity

NA: Not applicable

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Homework assignments	There will be a total of 3 take-home written homework assignments, graded by the TA. 20% will be taken off for each day late. Collaboration is encouraged, and you are expected to write down the answers on your own and also specify which of your friends you have worked with.	15% * 3 = 45%
Final paper	You are expected to complete a final paper (8-10 pages, double-spaced) by the end of the term, graded by the instructor. Papers are due at 11:59pm Jul 4 . Late submissions without a documented family or medical emergency will <i>not</i> be accepted. You have three options regarding its content: a) A critical review of <i>three</i> research papers on one (morpho)syntactic phenomenon b) A descriptive paper of (morpho)syntactic properties of a language, based on data collected by yourself c) An analytical paper on one (morpho)syntactic phenomenon, can be based on either existing or novel data	45%
Participation	Active participation in lectures and class activities are required. For each missed class meeting without a documented family or medical emergence, 2% will be taken off.	10%
Bonus points	You can earn up to 2 extra points in your total grade if you present your final paper on the last day of class.	2%

Learning resources for students

- Lecture handouts will be posted on the Blackboard website for download before class.
- They are based on Keenan, Ed., H. Torrence, A. Mahajan, & T. Stowell. 2014. *Introduction to Syntactic Typology*. Ms. The University of California, Los Angeles.
- The relevant concepts and techniques will be introduced and discussed in class. They include - but are not limited to - materials found in the textbook. Most students may find the textbook helpful. Disclaimer: In case of any conflict, in-class instructions always have precedence over the textbook.
- Additional references:

Baltin, M., & Collins, C. (Eds.). (2008). *The handbook of contemporary syntactic theory*. John Wiley & Sons.

Carnie, A., Siddiqi, D., & Sato, Y. (Eds.). (2014). *The Routledge handbook of syntax*. Routledge.

Cinque, G., & Kayne, R. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The Oxford handbook of comparative syntax*. Oxford University Press.

Den Dikken, M. (Ed.). (2013). *The Cambridge handbook of generative syntax*. Cambridge University Press.

Everaert, M., & Van Riemsdijk, H. C. (Eds.). (2017). *The Blackwell companion to syntax (Second edition)*. John Wiley & Sons. (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781118358733>)

Freidin, R. (Ed.). (1995). *Current issues in comparative grammar*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Li, Y. H. A., Simpson, A., & Tsai, W. T. D. (Eds.). (2015). *Chinese syntax in a cross-linguistic perspective*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Saito, M. (Ed.). (2014). *Japanese syntax in comparative perspective*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Shopen, T. (Ed.). (2007). *Language Typology and Syntactic Description (Second edition)*. Cambridge University Press.

- Some databases you may find useful/fun to play with:

The World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS): <https://wals.info/>

Terraling: <https://terraling.com/>

Syntactic Structures of World Languages (SSWL): <https://terraling.com/groups/7>

The Yale Grammatical Diversity Project (YGDP): <https://ygdg.yale.edu/phenomena-by-category>

Feedback for evaluation

- In addition to the standard final course evaluation, we will also have a mid-term anonymous course evaluation for you to share things you like and dislike during the first half of the semester, so we can improve in the second half.
- Meanwhile, you are more than welcome to contact either the instructor or the TAs about how you feel about this course at any point throughout the semester.
- You may share your thoughts and concerns by coming to our office hours, emailing your feedback or questions to us, or making appointments with us.
- If you feel that you are falling behind and have content questions, please also do not hesitate to ask us for help!
- When you contact us via emails, please kindly put “LING5602 Comparative grammar” in the subject line and allow us 24 hours (on weekdays) to respond.

Grade Descriptors

Grade	Overall course
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes. A solid understanding of the linguistic issues of the chosen topics covered in class. Outstanding ability to analyze language data with appropriate linguistic concepts, as reflected in the assignments. Outstanding ability in reviewing selected linguistics literature and carrying out small-scale research project as reflected in the term paper.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all learning outcomes. A good understanding of the linguistic issues of the chosen topics covered in class. Strong ability to analyze language data with appropriate linguistic concepts, as reflected in the assignments. Strong ability in reviewing selected linguistics literature and carrying out small-scale research project as reflected in the term paper.
B+ B B-	Satisfactory performance on most of the learning outcomes. Satisfactory understanding of most of the linguistic issues of the chosen topics covered in class. Sufficient ability to analyze language data with appropriate linguistic concepts, as reflected in the assignments. Satisfactory ability in reviewing selected linguistics literature and carrying out small-scale research project as reflected in the term paper.
C+ C C-	Satisfactory performance on some of the learning outcomes. Satisfactory understanding of the linguistic issues of the chosen topics covered in class. Still developing the ability to analyze language data with appropriate linguistic concepts, as reflected in the assignments. Still developing the ability in reviewing selected linguistics literature and carrying out small-scale research project as reflected in

	the term paper.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on some of the learning outcomes. A basic understanding of the linguistic issues of the chosen topics covered in class. Limited ability to analyze language data with appropriate linguistic concepts, as reflected in the assignments. Limited ability in reviewing selected linguistics literature and carrying out small-scale research project as reflected in the term paper.
F	Unsatisfactory performance on all learning outcomes. Little understanding of the linguistic issues of the chosen topics covered in class. Lack the ability to analyze language data with appropriate linguistic concepts, as reflected in the assignments. Lack the ability in reviewing selected linguistics literature and carrying out small-scale research project as reflected in the term paper.

Course schedule (subject to change)

Week	Class	Date	Topic	Requirements
1	1	May 16	Introduction. Basic terminology. Various notions of Language Universals. Greenbergian Universals.	Keenan et al. (2014): Chapter 1
	2	May 18	Genetic classification of Languages. Basic techniques of language classification. Major language families.	Keenan et al. (2014): Chapter 2
2	3	May 23	Sample word order properties from WALS. Basic Word Order Correlations. Detailed discussion of basic word order typologies.	Keenan et al. (2014): Chapter 3
	4	May 25	Greenberg's Universals. OV vs. VO. Typological correlates of OV and VO orders.	Keenan et al. (2014): Chapter 4 HW 1 out (May 25)
3	5	May 30	Theoretical issues in word order variation case study I: Scrambling	(Thrainsson, H. (2000). Object shift and scrambling. In <i>The handbook of contemporary syntactic theory</i> , ed. by Mark Baltin and Chris Collins, 148-202. Oxford: Blackwell.) HW 1 due (Jun 1)
	6	Jun 1	Theoretical issues in word order variation case study II: Object shift	
4	7	Jun 6	A typology of Case Marking. Nominal case marking and Agreement.	Keenan et al. (2014): Chapter 5 HW 2 out (Jun 8)
	8	Jun 8	Various types of Case marking: Nom-Acc, Erg-Abs, Active, Mixed systems, Topic marking systems, Inverse systems, split systems. Case marking and word order.	
5	9	Jun 13	Theoretical issues in Case	(Polinsky, M., & Preminger, O. (2014). Case and grammatical relations. In <i>The Routledge handbook of syntax</i> , 168-184. Routledge.)
	10	Jun 15	A typology of wh-questions. Wh-movement parameter: +/- wh movement division.	Keenan et al. (2014): Chapter 6 HW 2 due (Jun 15)
6	11	Jun 20	Various types of wh-movement languages: partial and multiple movement languages. Wh-in-situ languages	(Watanabe, A. (2001). Wh-in-situ Languages, in M. Baltin and C. Collins (eds.), <i>The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory</i> , 203-225. Oxford: Blackwell.) HW3 out (Jun 22)
	12	Jun 22	Theoretical issues in wh-in-situ	
7	13	Jun 27	Theoretical issues in partial wh-movement	(Fanselow, G. (2017). Partial wh-movement. In M. Everaert & H. van Riemsdijk (eds.), <i>The Blackwell companion to syntax 3</i> . 437-492. Oxford: Blackwell.)
	14	Jun 29	Students presentation	HW3 due (Jun 29)

Teachers' or TA's contact details

Instructor:	
Name:	CHEN Zhuo
Office Location:	G18 Leung Kau Kui Building
Telephone:	
Email:	zhuochen@cuhk.edu.hk , costachenzhuo@gmail.com , zchen0306@ucla.edu
Teaching Venue:	Monday 18:30 – 21:15, Wednesday 18:30 – 21:15, Yasumoto Int'l Academic Park LT6 (YIA LT6)
Office hours:	Wed: 10:00-11:00 or by appointment

Teaching Assistant/Tutor:	
Name:	Shu Tong
Office Location:	
Telephone:	
Email:	tongshu@link.cuhk.edu.hk
Teaching Venue:	
Office hours:	By appointment

A facility for posting course announcements

- We will use the course Blackboard website to post course materials (lecture handouts and optional readings), assignments, and announcements.
- We will also send out email reminders once we post assignments and make announcements, please make sure to check your email regularly.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

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