

225: Topics in Syntax

Experimental Syntax

Course goals

The major goals of this course are to:

- critically assess the role of acceptability judgments in syntactic research
- learn how to design and run acceptability judgment experiments from start to finish
- become familiar with current thinking and debate on the proper role of experimental syntax
- critically assess the results that have been obtained in experimental syntax so far

Tentative schedule

Week	Topic	Reading/assignment
1	Introduction Syntax, judgments, gradience, stability of judgments	Schütze (1996), ch. 2 Cowart (1997), ch. 1, 2
2	Overview of field How to do it: experimental design, creating materials	Myers (2009a) Cowart (1997), ch. 3, 9
3	How to do it: the task Magnitude estimation	Cowart (1997), ch. 4, 5, 6 Myers (2009b) Bard, Robertson, Sorace (1996)
4	Critiques of magnitude estimation Is experimental syntax worth the trouble?	Homework #1 (Monday) Sprouse (2008) Weskott & Fanselow (2008) Featherston (2007)
5	Commentary on Featherston (2007)	Fanselow (2007) Grewendorf (2007) Haider (2007) Den Dikken et al. (2007) Newmeyer (2007) Bornkessel-Schlesewsky et al. (2007) Homework #2 (Wednesday)
6	Results of experimental syntax	Sprouse (2007) Alexopoulou & Keller (2007) Hofmeister et al. (2007)
7	Results of experimental syntax Veterans' Day (Wednesday)	Goodall (in press)
8	Satiation Statistics	Snyder (2000) Sprouse (2009) Goodall (forthcoming)
9	Student presentations	
10	Student presentations	

Grading

- 10% Homework #1
- 10% Homework #2
- 15% Participation
- 15% Presentation
- 50% Paper

Details

Homework #1: Factorial design for an experiment, creation of token sets.

Homework #2: List of stimuli using Latin Square design.

Participation: You are expected to have read and thought about the readings, and to be prepared for class discussion.

Presentation: Oral presentation of proposed experiment

Paper: Written presentation/discussion of proposed experiment.

Readings

- Alexopoulou, Theodora, and Frank Keller. 2007. Locality, cyclicity and resumption: at the interface between the grammar and the human sentence processor. *Language* 83.110–60.
- Bard, Ellen Gurman, Dan Robertson, and Antonella Sorace. 1996. Magnitude estimation of linguistic acceptability. *Language* 72.32–68.
- Bornkessel-Schlesewsky, Ina, and Matthias Schlewsky. 2007. The wolf in sheep's clothing: against a new judgement-driven imperialism. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33.319–33.
- Cowart, Wayne. 1997. *Experimental syntax: applying objective methods to sentence judgments*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Den Dikken, Marcel, Judy B. Bernstein, Christina Tortora and Raffaella Zanuttini 2007. Data and grammar: Means and individuals. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33.335–352.
- Fanselow, G. 2007. Carrots – perfect as vegetables, but please not as a main dish. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33. 353–367.
- Featherston, Sam, 2007. Data in generative grammar: the stick and the carrot. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33.269–318.
- Goodall, Grant (in press). Experimenting with wh-movement in Spanish. In Karlos Arregi, Silvina Montrul, Annie Tremblay, Zsuzsanna Fagyal (eds.). *Interactions in Romance*. John Benjamins.
- . forthcoming. Syntactic satiation and the inversion effect in English and Spanish wh-questions. *Syntax*.
- Grewendorf, Günther 2007. Empirical evidence and theoretical reasoning in generative grammar. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33.369–380.
- Haider, Hubert. 2007 As a matter of facts – comments on Featherston's sticks and carrots. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33.381–394.
- Hofmeister, Philip, T. Florian Jaeger, Inbal Arnon, Ivan Sag, and Neal Snider. 2007. Locality and accessibility in wh-questions. In *Roots: Linguistics in Search of its Evidential Base*, ed. by Sam Featherston and Wolfgang Sternefeld. Berlin: Mouton.
- Myers, James. 2009a. Syntactic judgment experiments. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 3/1: 406–423
- . 2009b. The design and analysis of small-scale syntactic judgment experiments. *Lingua*. doi: 10.1016/j.lingua.2008.09.03
- Newmeyer, Frederick J. 2007. Commentary on Sam Featherston, 'Data in generative grammar: the stick and the carrot'. *Theoretical Linguistics* 33.395–9.
- Schütze, Carson T. 1996. *The empirical base of linguistics: grammaticality judgments and linguistic methodology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Snyder, William. 2000. An experimental investigation of syntactic satiation effects. *Linguistic Inquiry* 31.575–82.
- Sprouse, Jon. 2007. Continuous acceptability, categorical grammaticality, and experimental syntax. *Biolinguistics* 1.117–28.

- . 2008. Magnitude estimation and the non-linearity of acceptability judgments. *Proceedings of the 27th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, ed. Natasha Abner and Jason Bishop, 397-403. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- . 2009. Revisiting satiation: Evidence for an equalization response strategy. *Linguistic Inquiry* 40-2.
- Weskott, Thomas, and Gisbert Fanselow. 2008. Scaling acceptability – different measures, same results. Paper presented at the 27th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics, UCLA.

Other articles of interest

- Baayen, R. H. 2008. *Analyzing linguistic data: a practical introduction to statistics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Braze, Forrest David. 2002. *Grammaticality, acceptability and sentence processing: a psycholinguistic study*. Storrs: University of Connecticut dissertation.
- Clifton, Charles, Jr, Gisbert Fanselow, and Lyn Frazier. 2006. Amnestying superiority violations: processing multiple questions. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37.51–68.
- Featherston, Sam, 2005a. That-trace in German. *Lingua* 115.1277–302.
- . 2005b. Magnitude estimation and what it can do for your syntax: some wh-constraints in German. *Lingua* 115.1525–50.
- Francom, Jerid. 2009. *Experimental syntax: Exploring the effect of repeated exposure to anomalous syntactic structure – evidence from rating and reading tasks*. University of Arizona Ph.D. dissertation.
- Hiramatsu, Kazuko. 2000. *Assessing linguistic competence: evidence from children's and adults' acceptability judgments*. Storrs: University of Connecticut dissertation.
- Johnson, Keith. 2008. *Quantitative methods in linguistics*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Keller, Frank. 2000. *Gradience in grammar: experimental and computational aspects of degrees of grammaticality*. Edinburgh, UK: University of Edinburgh dissertation.
- Keller, Frank, and Theodora Alexopoulou. 2001. Phonology competes with syntax: experimental evidence for the interaction of word order and accent placement in the realization of information structure. *Cognition* 79.301–72.
- Luka, Barbara J. 1998. Example sentences in syntax articles: the influence of asterisks and affinity towards author. *Chicago Linguistics Society* 34.269–80.
- Luka, Barbara J., and Lawrence W. Barsalou. 2005. Structural facilitation: mere exposure effects for grammatical acceptability as evidence for syntactic priming in comprehension. *Journal of Memory and Language* 52.436–59.
- Mayo, Neil, Martin Corley, and Frank Keller. 2005. *WebExp2 experimenter's manual*. University of Edinburgh, ms. <www.hrcr.ed.ac.uk/web_exp/docs/UserManual.pdf>
- McDaniel, Dana, and Wayne Cowart. 1999. Experimental evidence for a minimalist account of English resumptive pronouns. *Cognition* 70.B15–24.
- Nagata, Hiroshi. 2003. Judgments of grammaticality of Japanese sentences violating the principle of Full Interpretation. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 32.693–709.
- Newmeyer, Frederick J. 1983. *Grammatical theory: its limits and its possibilities*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1998. *Language form and language function*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Phillips, Colin, and Howard Lasnik. 2003. Linguistics and empirical evidence: reply to Edelman and Christiansen. *Trends in Cognitive Science* 7.61–2.
- Phillips, Colin. forthcoming. Should we impeach armchair linguists? *Japanese/Korean Linguistics* 17, ed. by Shoichi Iwasaki. Palo Alto, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information.
- Phillips, Colin, and Matt Wagers. 2007. Relating structure and time in linguistics and psycholinguistics. *Handbook of psycholinguistics*, ed. by Gareth Gaskell, 739–56. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- R Development Core Team. 2008. *R: a language and environment for statistical computing*. Vienna, Austria: R Foundation for Statistical Computing. <www.R-project.org>.
- Sorace, Antonella, and Frank Keller. 2005. Gradience in linguistic data. *Lingua* 115.1497–524.
- Sprouse, Jon. 2007a. *A program for experimental syntax: finding the relationship between acceptability and grammatical knowledge*. College Park, MD: University of Maryland dissertation.
- . 2008. The differential sensitivity of acceptability to processing effects. *Linguistic Inquiry* 39.686–94.
- Wasow, Thomas, and Jennifer Arnold. 2005. Intuitions in linguistic argumentation. *Lingua* 115.1481–96.