Syntax

An Introduction to Minimalism

Elly van Gelderen

John Benjamins Publishing Company

Using a concise and clear style, this book highlights insights from current syntactic theory and minimalism. Chapter 1 starts with the general idea behind generative grammar and should be read from a big picture perspective.

Because the book expects no prior syntactic background, its next two chapters are on lexical and grammatical categories and on basic phrase structure rules. After these introductory chapters, the book covers the clausal spine, the VP, TP, and CP in chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively. For the VP, it emphasizes lexical aspect, theta-roles, and the VP-shell; for the TP and CP, it uses a cartographic approach and juxtaposes that to free adjunction. Chapter 7 covers the DP and Chapter 8 discusses the importance of features. Chapter 9 returns to some of the issues raised in Chapter 1 and summarizes the approach. It includes keywords, frequent summaries, exercises, and suggested answers to the exercises. Cartoons and frequent corpus examples enliven the text.

9789027212535 语言学
分类码:H0
通用
1 库 A0105

ISBN 978 90 272 1253 5

John Benjamins Publishing Company

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Amsterdam / Philadelphia

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

DOI 10.1075/z.214

Cataloging-in-Publication Data available from Library of Congress:
LCCN 2017041504 (PRINT) / 2017051536 (E-BOOK)

ISBN 978 90 272 1253 5 (HB) / ISBN 978 90 272 1254 2 (PB)
ISBN 978 90 272 6470 1 (E-BOOK)

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Syntax

Preface

This is a textbook on generative syntax. It provides general syntactic background as well as an introduction to ideas from the Minimalist Program, the most recent instantiation of generative syntax. Chapter 1 starts with the general idea behind generative grammar and should be read from a big picture perspective. Chapters 2 and 3 provide some background on lexical and grammatical categories and on basic phrase structure rules. After these introductory chapters, the book covers the clausal spine, the VP, TP, and CP in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively. Chapter 7 is about the DP and Chapter 8 discusses the importance of features. Chapter 9 returns to some of the issues raised in Chapter 1 and summarizes the approach.

If students are already familiar with categories, Chapter 2 can be skipped. For students who want to know about the clausal spine and are less interested in the fine details of feature checking, Chapter 8 can be left out.

The main goal of the book is to enable students to understand the structure of sentences in English. The framework developed can then also be applied to other languages, though not much emphasis will be put on that here, except in Chapter 7. The book represents the structure by means of trees, as is common in generative grammar (although no longer in Chomsky 2013; 2015). A second aim is to explain the generative model and some of the recent updates to it, e.g. the shift from a very rich Universal Grammar to a simpler one. Because much of the material is introductory, I have not given copious references, except in Chapter 1. The information in Chapters 2 and 3 is mostly couched in traditional grammatical terminology. In the other chapters, I have only provided references to some of the major ideas, e.g. the VPISH, the VP-shell, and the DP.

I decided to write this book because most introductory textbooks lack the basic information – here included as Chapters 2 and 3 – or are too technical for the students I have in mind, e.g. Adger's 2003 *Core Syntax*, Hornstein, Nunes & Grohmann's 2005 *Understanding Minimalism,* and van Gelderen's 2013 *Clause Structure.* Carnie's 2011 *Syntax* and Radford's 2009a–b are alternatives but have different areas of focus and do not incorporate current Minimalist ideas. I have introduced a few aspects of the current phase of Minimalism (Chomsky 2015) and present a different view of theta-roles, namely as based in inner aspect. Adger's and Radford's sentences are also often judged as too British by my students. I have used a mixture of corpus examples (marked as such) and made-up ones. The corpus examples liven up the text and are also added if the construction is a little unusual.

Chapters 2 and 3 are based on Chapters 2 and 3 in van Gelderen (2010) and Chapter 4 takes some of the ideas from van Gelderen (2013) but makes the discussion less theoretically focused. Many thanks to Naomi Danton, Terje Lohndal, Kleanthes Grohmann, Ad Foolen, and to the students at Arizona State University taking LIN 514 in the spring of 2016 and of 2017 for being so serious and motivated and for helping me clarify issues.

Elly van Gelderen, Apache Junction, AZ

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Abbreviations

(not mentioned are (N)P, V(P), P(P), and A(P))

ACC	accusative
ant	anterior
asp	aspect, also in ASPP, Aspect Phrase
C(P)	Complementizer (Phrase)
CI	Conceptional Intentional (Interface)
CL	Classifier
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English (http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/)
decl	declarative
def	definite
D(P)	Determiner (Phrase)
E	Event
ECM	Exceptional Case Marking
F	feminine
fin	finite
freq	frequentative
fut	future
gen	generic
hab	habitual
i-	interpretable feature
indef	indefinite
M(P)	Mood (Phrase)
NOM	nominative case
NPI	Negative Polarity Item
Num(P)	Number (Phrase)
OM	Object Marker
P	plural
pass	passive
perf	perfect(ive), also used in PerfP
phi	person and number
pres	present
pro	zero subject of finite verbs
PRO	zero subject of non-finite verbs
progr	progressive, also used in ProgrP
Q	Quantifier
rep	repetitive
S	singular or Speech time
T(P)	Tense (Phrase)
u-	uninterpretable feature
VPISH	VP Internal Subject Hypothesis
1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
#	pragmatically marked
*	ungrammatical

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