

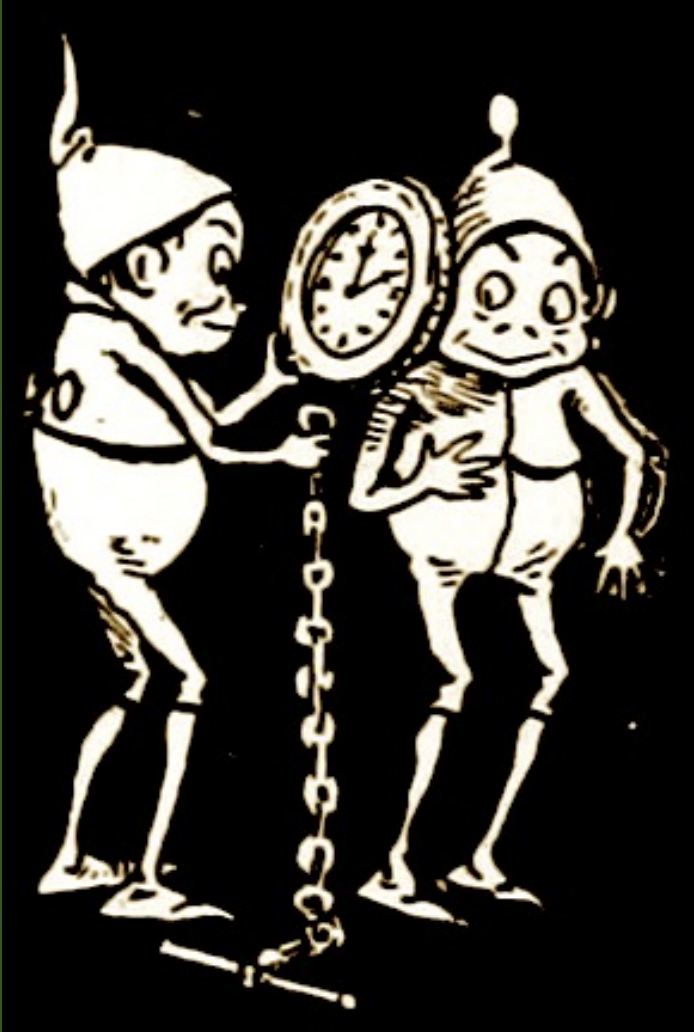
Syntax I

Ling 301 (Spring 2021)

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Midterm

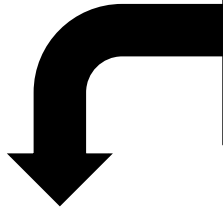


Your midterm is due now!

Don't be late!

Submit it now (if you haven't already)!

Syntax



Phrases are combinations of words.
Examples include *out the window*, *my cake*,
and *Bob ate my cake*.

- How **words** and **phrases** are combined into larger phrases.
- Words and phrases are **linguistic expressions**.
- Linguistic expressions have a form, meaning, and syntactic properties.
- To rephrase: Syntax involves how expressions combine to form larger expressions.

Syntax

Not all combinations of linguistic expressions are grammatical. Some are ungrammatical.

Sally likes Bob.

Bob likes Sally.

Bob Sally likes.

Likes Sally Bob.



Syntax

Not all combinations of linguistic expressions are grammatical. Some are ungrammatical.

Sally likes Bob.

Bob likes Sally.

*Bob Sally likes.

*Likes Sally Bob.

The * indicates that a sentence is ungrammatical.



Syntax

- What does it mean for something to be grammatical?
- Native speakers of a given language can innately make **grammaticality judgements** about their language. Many L2 speakers can do this as well.
- Prescriptivism says some things are bad. For example, splitting infinitives as in “I want to quickly run,” or saying *ain’t* as in “I ain’t running.”
- These sentences are grammatical, despite what prescriptivists say.
- When making a grammaticality judgement, consider “whether you could utter the string [of words] in question, whether you have heard it uttered, and whether you know or can imagine other native speakers of the same language who would utter it” (*Language Files*: 203).

Remember, in linguistics, we practice descriptivism, not prescriptivism!



Syntax

Which of these sentences are ungrammatical?

He is going to give me a hard time.

He's gonna give me a hard time.

He gives me a hard time.

He's gonna gives me a hard time.

I'm gonna give him a sandwich.

I'll give him a sandwich.

I'll gonna give him a sandwich.



Syntax

He is going to give me a hard time.

He's gonna give me a hard time.

He gives me a hard time.

*He's gonna gives me a hard time.

I'm gonna give him a sandwich.

I'll give him a sandwich.

*I'll gonna give him a sandwich.

*He's is grammatical.
Gonna is grammatical.*



Syntax

- Syntax interacts with semantics.
- **Semantics** involves meaning. (We've used this word before in talking about morphology.)
- **Syntax** concerns how linguistic expressions – words and phrases – are combined.
- The way that linguistic expressions are combined affects the meaning of the utterance.

Sally likes Bob. vs. Bob likes Sally.



Syntax

Sally likes Bob.

- Sally is the one who likes Bob.
- Bob is the one who is liked.
- Bob might not like Sally, and thus, Sally might not be liked – the sentence doesn't tell us that information.
- Sally is the **subject** of the sentence.
- Bob is the **object** of the sentence.



The subject is the one who 'does' the verb; the object is the one the verb is 'done' to.

I put 'does' and 'done' in scare quotes because you don't actively do much for many verbs, including *like*.

Syntax

Bob likes Sally.

- Now Bob is the one who likes Sally.
- Sally is the one who is liked.
- Sally might not like Bob, and thus, Bob might not be liked – the sentence doesn't tell us that information.
- Bob is the **subject** of the sentence.
- Sally is the **object** of the sentence.



The subject is the one who 'does' the verb; the object is the one the verb is 'done' to.

I put 'does' and 'done' in scare quotes because you don't actively do much for many verbs, including *like*.

Syntax

Identify the subject and object in the following sentences:

- Maria made salad.
- Mice love cheese.
- I called Susan.
- She writes music.
- Ziggy played guitar.
- The mosquito bit me!
- I bit the mosquito.



Syntax

- The meaning of a sentence depends on the meanings of the expressions it contains and how they are syntactically combined.
- “Bob likes Sally” gets its meaning from:
 - the meaning of “Bob,” “likes,” and “Sally”
 - the order in which these elements are arranged/“syntactically combined”
- This is called the **principle of compositionality**.
- When you know a language, you can produce and understand an infinite number of sentences because you know the meanings of the lexical expressions (words) and the way that arranging them impacts meaning.
- All languages allow for an infinite number of meaningful sentences.

Syntax

- Syntax and semantics are thus quite intertwined.
- But they sometimes contradict one another.
- Grammaticality judgement: what do you think of this sentence?

Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.

This is grammatical – the syntax is excellent – but the meaning is nonsense.

- How about this one?

* Me bought dog!

This is ungrammatical – you can parse the meaning, but the syntax is all wrong. (*Me* is an object, not a subject, and *dog* needs a determiner, like *a*, *the*, or *this*.)

Syntax

Sometimes, words that have basically the same meaning have very different syntactic properties.

eat & *devour* both have very similar meanings.

- Sally ate an apple.
- Sally devoured an apple.

BUT:

- Sally ate.
- *Sally devoured.

Remember, the * means this sentence is ungrammatical.



This means that, while *eat* and *devour* have very similar meanings, their syntactic properties are different.

Review

- Words and phrases are linguistic expressions.
- Linguistic expressions have form, meaning, and syntactic properties.
- Syntactic properties dictate how expressions combine to form larger expressions.
- A sentence might be grammatical or ungrammatical. You do a grammaticality judgement to tell which applies.
- Principle of compositionality: The meaning of a sentence depends on the meanings of the expressions it contains and how they are syntactically combined.
- Meanings do not determine syntactic properties of words.

For next week...

- Read pp.207–216 in *Language Files*, up on the Readings page of our site.
- I'm going to shift the syllabus so that Quiz #4 is assigned *next* week, rather than this week.
- Next week, we'll go over the midterm.