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Modern Syntax

This practical coursebook introduces all the basics of modern syntactic analysis in a simple step-by-step fashion. Each unit is constructed so that the reader discovers new ideas, formulates hypotheses and practices fundamentals. The reader is presented with short sections of explanation with examples, followed by practice exercises. Feedback and comment sections follow to enable students to monitor their progress. No previous background in syntax is assumed. Students move through all the key topics in the field including features, rules of combination and displacement, empty categories, and subcategorization. The theoretical perspective in this work is unique, drawing together the best ideas from three major syntactic frameworks (Minimalism, HPSG and LFG). Students using this book will learn fundamentals in such a way that they can easily go on to pursue further study in any of these frameworks.

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For my mother, Jean

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Somewhat unconventionally, I'd also like to thank an editor at a different press, Danielle Descoteaux from Wiley-Blackwell, who was both gracious enough to grant me permission to write a competing book to my other textbook (Carnie 2006) and who was very flexible in our negotiations over the naming of the present work. It should be noted that some of the exercises and definitions used in this work are adapted from Carnie (2006) and used with permission.

Several anonymous reviewers gave me great advice in putting together this book. As did comments from William Alexander, Fiona Carnie, Oded Haber, Heidi Harley and Arthur Torrance. Mistakes and missteps in this book exist despite all their best efforts. Finally, I'd like to thank my supportive colleagues and co-workers (Mike Hammond, Diane Ohala, Diana Archangeli, Adam Ussishkin, Andy Wedel, Heidi Harley (again), Simin Karimi, Amy Fountain, Marian Wiseley, Kimberley Young, Jennifer Columbus and Andy Barss) and my family Jean, Fiona, Morag and Pangur.

AHC, March 21, 2010

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is different from many other syntax textbooks in that it attempts to teach syntax through discovery rather than through simple presentation. Like other books in the Cambridge Coursebook series, this book is structured as a series of definitions, comments, discussion, and exercises that allow you, the reader, to explore the material on your own. Learning syntactic analysis is best done in consultation with an experienced linguist, so if you are tackling this book on your own, you might contact your local university to see if there is an advanced undergraduate or (post-)graduate student who would be willing to answer those questions that you have.

Unlike other books in the Coursebook series you will need your own notebook to answer many of the questions in this volume. You will be drawing syntactic diagrams, which take up a fair amount of space. In order to reduce production costs, we haven't included that space in this book. All the questions that you should try to answer are marked with a **Q** followed by a number. The questions are divided into three types.

- 1. **Notebook questions:** These questions should be answered in your own notebook or on a sheet of blank paper. They are marked by an open book symbol (📖). The answers to these questions can be found at the end of each chapter.
- 2. **Answer-on-the-page questions:** These questions are usually *yes/no*, multiple choice or short-answer questions. They can either be answered right in this book or recorded in your own notebook. These are marked with a pencil symbol (✎). The answers to these questions can be found at the end of each chapter.
- 3. **Challenge questions:** Throughout the book there are a few questions that are more challenging than the others. These challenge questions are designed to make you critically evaluate the theory being presented to you. I have not provided answers to these questions. You'll have to figure them out for yourself. Some of these questions have clear answers. Others present mysteries that puzzle even experienced syntacticians. Perhaps you'll be the one to figure them out!

How to use this book

I hope that these questions will not only give you plenty of practice in syntactic analysis but will help you to discover the basic methodologies and formalisms that syntacticians use in analyzing sentences.

Inevitably, mistakes, errors and inconsistencies creep into a book like this as it is written, revised, rewritten, edited, and typeset. I’ve done my best to minimize this, but you should look for the errata sheet on the website: <http://dingo.sbs.arizona.edu/~carnie> for any corrections.

A NOTE ON THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE BOOK

Before we set out on our voyage of discovery in syntax, I want to offer a few words about the theoretical perspective of this book. The title of this book, *Modern Syntax: A Coursebook*, is deliberately vague about the particular theory you'll be learning in this book. There are almost as many syntactic theories as there are syntacticians and most syntax textbooks take you down very specific theoretical paths.

One of the things I've tried to do in this book is offer a theoretical perspective that is compatible with several different theories. I've chosen the three most popular modern approaches to syntactic analysis: Chomskyan Minimalism (also known as the Minimalist Program or MP), a relatively simplistic version of Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG), and Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG); and I've picked out what I liked best out of each theory. The result is *nothing* that usual practitioners of any of these theories will recognize as uniquely their own. For example, the system of syntactic constituent analysis given here is taken almost exclusively from MP, as is the analysis of DP movement. From HPSG and LFG, I've drawn upon their rich and precise featural notations, but the features I'm using are more like those in MP. From HPSG, I've borrowed the tagging notation (albeit slightly differently construed from the normal view in HPSG) and their system of subcategorization. From LFG, I've borrowed their view of head movement/head mobility (with a twist) and their treatment of long-distance dependencies.

It should be obvious, then, that by the time you finish this book you will not be completely fluent in any of the current major theories. But this isn't a drawback! My goal is to take you to a place where you can successfully pursue *any* of them in depth. I think this is better than making you choose one approach before you have the tools to decide what makes the most sense to you. Unit 26 of this book offers you some guidance on good textbook material that will help you pursue one or more particular frameworks of analysis in more detail.