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The Cambridge Handbook of Generative Syntax

Syntax – the study of sentence structure – has been at the center of generative linguistics from its inception, and has developed rapidly and in various directions. *The Cambridge Handbook of Generative Syntax* provides a historical context for what is happening in the field of generative syntax today, a survey of the various generative approaches to syntactic structure available in the literature, and an overview of the state of the art in the principal modules of the theory and the interfaces with semantics, phonology, information structure, and sentence processing, as well as linguistic variation and language acquisition. This indispensable resource for advanced students, professional linguists (generative and non-generative alike), and scholars in related fields of inquiry presents a comprehensive survey of the field of generative syntactic research in all its variety, written by leading experts and providing a proper sense of the range of syntactic theories calling themselves generative.

MARCEL DEN DIKKEN is a professor of linguistics at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

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Edited by Marcel den Dikken
Frontmatter
More information

Contents

List of contributors *page* vii
Preface ix

Part I Background 1
1 Introduction *Marcel den Dikken* 3
2 Brief overview of the history of generative syntax *Howard Lasnik and Terje Lohndal* 26
3 Goals and methods of generative syntax *Frederick J. Newmeyer* 61

Part II Modern generative approaches to the study of sentence structure 93
4 Principles and Parameters theory and Minimalism *Željko Bošković* 95
5 Minimalism and Optimality Theory *Hans Broekhuis and Ellen Woolford* 122
6 Lexical-Functional Grammar *Peter Sells* 162
7 Phrase structure grammar *James P. Blevins and Ivan A. Sag* 202
8 Tree Adjoining Grammar *Robert Frank* 226

Part III Syntactic structures 263
9 Argument structure and argument structure alternations *Gillian Ramchand* 265
10 The syntax of predication *Caroline Heycock* 322
11 Lexical categories and (extended) projection *Norbert Corver* 353
12 The functional structure of the sentence, and cartography *Luigi Rizzi* 425
13 Adverbial and adjectival modification *Artemis Alexiadou* 458

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978-0-521-76986-0 - The Cambridge Handbook of Generative Syntax
Edited by Marcel den Dikken
Frontmatter
More information

Part IV Syntactic processes: their nature, locality, and motivation 485
14 Economy of derivation and representation *Samuel D. Epstein, Hisatsugu Kitahara, Miki Obata, and T. Daniel Seely* 487
15 Syntax, binding, and patterns of anaphora *Ken Safir* 515
16 Raising and control *Maria Polinsky* 577
17 Agreement and Case *Mark C. Baker* 607
18 The locality of syntactic dependencies *Marcel den Dikken and Antje Lahne* 655

Part V Syntax and the internal interfaces 699
19 Ellipsis phenomena *Jeroen van Craenenbroeck and Jason Merchant* 701
20 Tense, aspect, and modality *Karen Zagona* 746
21 Negation and negative polarity *Hedde Zeijlstra* 793
22 The syntax of scope and quantification *Veneeta Dayal* 827
23 Syntax, information structure, and prosody *Daniel Büring* 860

Part VI Syntax and the external interfaces 897
24 Microsyntactic variation *Sjef Barbiers* 899
25 Parameters: the pluses and the minuses *Rosalind Thornton and Stephen Crain* 927
26 Syntax and the brain *Jon Sprouse and Ellen F. Lau* 971

References 1006
Index of language names 1140
Index 1143

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978-0-521-76986-0 - The Cambridge Handbook of Generative Syntax
Edited by Marcel den Dikken
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Frontmatter
More information

Preface

This handbook was an ambitious project – and as Sir Humphrey Appleby would never fail to remind his (Prime) Minister, Jim Hacker, in the episodes of the legendary BBC series *Yes Minister* and *Yes Prime Minister*, the epithet 'ambitious' usually means 'beyond an individual's capacity' or even 'dangerous'. If I have managed to avoid the many potential pitfalls of an undertaking of this magnitude and complexity, and have steered clear of the dangers inherent in it, I certainly have many people to thank for it.

Before I thank the people who have helped bring this project to fruition, I should mention the essential role played, at the very outset, by Maria Polinsky. If Masha had not suggested my name to the people at Cambridge University Press as a potential editor of the syntax handbook that they were seeking to publish, and had not instilled in me the necessary confidence to take this project on, I would never have been in the happy position to write this preface and to present this book to you, the reader. I will be eternally grateful to Masha for giving me this opportunity and for convincing me that I could pull this off.

Two of my compatriot colleagues, Hans Broekhuis and Norbert Corver, and my CUNY colleague Christina Tortora, also made immensely valuable contributions to this project at its inception. They served as sounding boards for the ideas that I had put together on the content and organization of the handbook. Whatever its shortcomings, the finished project is infinitely better than it would have been if I had not listened to and acted upon their input.

Masha, Hans, and Norbert all ended up contributing chapters to the handbook, and Christina served as the reviewer of one of the chapters. This leads me to some heartfelt words of gratitude toward the authors and reviewers for the handbook. It was very gratifying to see so many colleagues respond immediately and enthusiastically to my invitation to

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Frontmatter
More information

contribute a chapter to the book. Almost all the linguists I approached signed on to the project. There were a few personnel changes along the way (I am especially grateful to Jon Sprouse and Ellen Lau for stepping in so late in the game, and for going about the writing of their difficult chapter so expeditiously and efficiently), and three of the chapters originally planned and solicited did not materialize; but overall, the response to this project has been overwhelmingly positive. I thank the authors for their excellent work on their chapters.

Each chapter, besides being commented on by the editor, was sent to one external reader. The reviewers were asked to evaluate their chapter for content and presentation as well as adherence to the detailed guidelines provided by the editor to the authors. I am very grateful for the highly valuable input provided by the reviewers, which led to many substantive and presentational improvements.

At the Press, I thank Helen Barton and Joanna Breeze for their excellent support throughout the project, and Adrian Stenton for his copy-editing work. Helen deserves special thanks for always backing me on my suggestions, responding promptly to my queries, and keeping my spirits up with her positive attitude.

At the CUNY Graduate Center, I am very grateful to Michelle Johnson for helping me to keep track of progress (there was a time at which some chapters had not been written at all, others were being reviewed, a third set was being revised, and a few chapters were already finished in their revised form; Michelle's spreadsheets helped me to stay on top of things), and for her wizardry with Word's index function in linking the index entries to their occurrences in the chapters.

Finally, my special thanks go to my most precious one, my friends and my family for their support throughout this period.

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