

An Introduction to Syntax

This comprehensive new textbook is an engaging introduction to syntax. Clearly organized and accessible, it provides students with a thorough grounding in the analysis of syntactic structure using data from a typologically wide variety of languages. The book guides students through the basic concepts involved in syntactic analysis and goes on to prepare them for further work in any syntactic theory, using examples from a range of phenomena in human languages. It also includes a chapter on theories of syntax. Each chapter includes generous exercises and recommendations for further study. The emphasis on languages and data sets this book apart from other introductions to syntax.

This book is an essential text for undergraduate and graduate students on courses devoted to the study of syntax. It will also be very valuable to students in other cognitive science fields who are interested in language.

Robert D. Van Valin, Jr. is Professor and Chair at the Department of Linguistics, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York. He has published articles on syntax, universal grammar, language typology, and language acquisition. He is the editor of *Advances in Role and Reference Grammar* (1993) and also co-author of *Functional Syntax and Universal Grammar* (1984), and the co-author of *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function* (1997), both published by Cambridge University Press.

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For Anna, Alice and Bob

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Preface

If people encounter the term ‘syntax’, they usually think of ‘grammar’, and for many this term conjures up bad associations of schoolteachers’ pronouncements about how one should and should not talk, of seemingly endless conjugations of verbs or declensions of nouns that must be mastered by rote, or of dreary repetitions of insipid phrases in a foreign-language class. This book is about *none* of these things. It is, rather, about the marvelous diversity of ways of expressing itself that the human mind has created during the evolution of human language. How does an Aborigine from central Australia, a Basque from Spain or an inhabitant of the island of Madagascar put a sentence together? Is it at all similar to the way an English speaker does it? Or a Spanish speaker? Or a Russian speaker? Or a Sioux speaker? Chinese and Japanese speakers use the same characters to write their respective languages; how similar is Chinese syntax to Japanese syntax? How does a scientist go about analysing the structure of all of these different languages?

These are just some of the questions that will be answered in this book. *An Introduction to Syntax* is first and foremost an exploration of the variety of human languages, with examples drawn from every part of the globe. It is also a guide to the analysis of these languages, teaching you the techniques that the practitioners of linguistic science use to reveal and understand the structure of human languages. This book also introduces you to some of the theories that have been proposed to explain how languages work. The study of language is one of the great intellectual challenges facing the cognitive sciences today, and it is an intellectual adventure of the highest order. This book takes you into the heart of one of the most important parts of this adventure, the investigation of the syntactic structure of human languages.

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Note

The words in boldface in the text have entries in R. L. Trask's *Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics* (London: Routledge, 1993); they are in boldface only for the first mention. I strongly recommend it as an accompaniment to this book.

Abbreviations

A	actor; transitive subject ¹	CMPL	complement
ABL	ablative	CONJ	conjunction
ABS	absolute case	COMP	complementizer
ACC	accusative case	CP	complementizer phrase
ACD	accidental action	DAT	dative case
ACT	actor as nominative	DECL	declarative mood
ACTIVE	active voice	DEF	definite(ness)
ADJ	adjective	DEG	degree modifier
AdjP	adjective phrase	DEM	demonstrative
ADV	adverb	DET	determiner
AdvP	adverb phrase	dl incl	dual inclusive
AFF	affix	DOBJ	direct object
AGR	agreement	DUAL	dual number
AGR _O (P)	object agreement (phrase)	ERG	ergative case
AGR _S (P)	subject agreement (phrase)	F, FEM	feminine gender
AJT	adjunct	FUT	future tense
ALL	allative case	GB	Government-Binding Theory
ANTI	antipassive	GEN	genitive case
AOR	orist tense	GEND	gender
APL	applicative marker	GL	goal as nominative
ARG	argument	GPSG	Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar
ART	article	HPSG	Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar
ASP	aspect	ID	immediate dominance
AspP	aspect phrase	IF	illocutionary force
AUX	auxiliary verb	IMPF	imperfective aspect
CIRC	circumstantial voice	INAN	inanimate
CL	classifier	IND	indicative mood
CLM	clause-linkage marker	INF	infinitive

¹ Most of these terms have entries in Trask's *Dictionary*.

Abbreviations

INFL	inflection	PRO	pronoun
INST	instrumental case	PROG	progressive aspect
IOBJ	indirect object	PRT	particle
IP	inflection phrase	PS	phrase structure
LFG	Lexical-Functional Grammar	PSA	privileged syntactic argument
LMT	Lexical Mapping Theory	PURP	purposive
LNK	linker	Q	question particle, interrogative
LOC	locative case	QNT	quantifier
LP	linear precedence	QP	quantifier phrase
LS	logical structure	RCP	recipient as nominative
M, MASC	masculine gender	RD	relational-dependency
MOD	modifier	REFL	reflexive
N	noun; neuter gender	REL	relativizer
NEG	negation	RelG	Relational Grammar
NFUT	non-future tense	REP	reported speech
NM	noun marker	RRG	Role and Reference Grammar
NOM	nominative case	S	intransitive subject; sentence
NP	noun phrase	sg, SG	singular number
NTL	neutral case	SPEC	specifier
NUC	nucleus	SUBJ	subject
NUM	number	SUBRD	subordinator
O	transitive direct object	SUF	suffix
OBJ	object	TG	transformational grammar
OBJ ₂	secondary object	TNS	tense
OBJ _θ	semantically restricted object	TP	tense phrase
OBL	oblique	U	undergoer
PASS	passive voice	UND	undergoer as nominative
PAST	past tense	V	verb
P	preposition/postposition	VP	verb phrase
PER	person	XP	phrase with head of category 'X'
pl, PL	plural number	1	subject in RelG
PN	proper noun marker	2	direct object in RelG
POSS	possessor; possessive	3	indirect object in RelG
PP	prepositional/postpositional phrase		
PrCS	precore slot		
PRED, pred	predicate		
PREP	preposition		
PRES	present tense		
PRFV	perfective aspect		

Arabic numbers also represent noun classes in Swahili examples