

## Beginning Syntax

A coherent introduction to generative syntax by a leader in the field, this textbook leads students through the theory from the very beginning, assuming no prior knowledge. Introducing the central concepts in a systematic and engaging way, it covers the goals of generative grammar, tacit native-speaker knowledge, categories and constituents, phrase structure, movement, binding, syntax beyond English and the architecture of grammar. The theory is built slowly, showing in a step-by-step fashion how different versions of generative theory relate to one another. Examples are carefully chosen to be easily understood, and a comprehensive glossary provides clear definitions of all the key terms introduced. With end of chapter exercises, broader discussion questions, and annotated further reading lists. *Beginning Syntax* is the ideal resource for instructors and beginning undergraduate students of syntax alike. Two further textbooks by Ian Roberts, *Continuing Syntax* and *Comparing Syntax*, will take students to intermediate and advanced level.

IAN ROBERTS obtained a BA in Linguistics with a French minor from the University of Bangor in 1979. From 1981 to 1985 he attended the University of Southern California, obtaining a PhD in Linguistics in 1985. He took up his current post as Professor of Linguistics at the University of Cambridge in 2000. In 2007 he became an Ordinary Fellow of the British Academy. He has published eight monographs and three textbooks, and has edited several collections of articles. He was Joint Editor of *Journal of Linguistics*, the journal of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain, for 1994–8.

An excellent textbook for introductory syntax. The explanations are clear and concise, and the topics explored are reinforced through well focused exercises and discussion questions. Highly recommended for students in linguistics and related fields.

Brian Agbayani, Department of Linguistics,  
California State University, Fresno

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Roberts manages with great gusto and authority the very difficult task of providing a coherent, contemporary view of generative syntax. For the student, it provides an understanding of the conceptual continuity underlying the theory. For the instructor, it will be a joy to use.

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A thorough and comprehensive introduction to syntax for beginners, with clear and easily analyzable examples. The coverage is impressive, preparing students to delve deeper into syntactic theory for future, more advanced courses.

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# Beginning Syntax

## An Introduction to Syntactic Analysis

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IAN ROBERTS

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## Preface

The purpose of this book is to present the essential elements of the theory of syntax, presupposing no prior knowledge of either syntax or linguistics more generally. The first chapter introduces the thinking behind modern formal linguistics, defining the core background concepts. The second chapter is an extended demonstration of linguistic competence, revealing to an English speaker their tacit, untutored knowledge of the intricacies of the syntax of the language. The next four chapters introduce the core technical concepts of syntax: phrase structure, constituency, movement rules and construal rules. Chapter 7 is a very brief introduction to comparative syntax, illustrating how the theory developed in the earlier chapters can apply to languages other than English. Finally, Chapter 8 discusses the overall architecture of grammar, introducing several levels of representation, including the interface levels of Phonological Form and Logical Form.

The book is based on a first-year lecture course I have taught at Cambridge for most of the past ten years, called ‘Structures’. That course has successfully laid the groundwork for more advanced study; several professional syntacticians had their first exposure to the subject in that context.

I do not attempt to review either the history or the state of the art in contemporary generative syntax. Instead, the book is intended to provide a solid basis from which the student can move on to more advanced topics. In the decades since its inception, generative theory has yielded a range of core insights and concepts which can be studied independently of the details of a given framework and which form the core of any formal approach to syntax (and core background to the formal study of other areas of linguistics, in particular semantics). These are the focus of this introduction, where the theoretical orientation of the book is most clearly set out. This volume is intended as the first in a series; future volumes will build on the material presented here, as well as both adding an explicitly comparative and typological dimension and engaging more directly with the minimalist programme for linguistic theory. The overall aim of the series is to provide a complete course in syntax, taking the student from beginner level to being able to engage with contemporary research literature.

This volume is intended for students starting out in syntax and assumes no prior knowledge. As mentioned above, it corresponds to a first-year course taught at Cambridge. It can be taught over a single term or semester with tutorial

support (as I have done at Cambridge) or over an entire year as a lecture course. The book tries to introduce the main concepts of syntactic theory in an engaging way with a minimum of technicalities. Each chapter features exercises, some straightforwardly testing the material covered in the chapter, others raising further questions for reflection and discussion (e.g. in tutorials), as well as suggestions for further reading. Model answers are provided separately for the first type of exercise. The second type presupposes student participation in discussions. Chapter 1 is somewhat different from the others in that it introduces some fairly complex data; the point at this stage of the exposition is to demonstrate tacit knowledge, i.e. native-speaker competence; the technical issues are, as appropriate, revisited and introduced more gradually later. Instructors may wish to skip over some of this material and/or revisit it later (for example, the Italian data can supplement the material covered in Chapter 7).

I would like to thank the other people who have taught this course in whole or in part over the years: Dora Alexopoulou, Theresa Biberauer, Craig Sailor and Jenneke van der Wal, as well as the many doctoral students, postdocs and others who have given tutorials for the course. Most of all, I'd like to thank the students themselves: you ultimately make everything happen. Thanks also to Bob Freidin and Dalina Kallulli for comments on early drafts. And of course, thanks to the two Helens at Cambridge University Press: Helen Barton and Helen Shannon, whose tolerance of missed deadlines fully matches my capacity to bring them about.

## Abbreviations

AAVE	African-American Vernacular English
ACC	accusative case
Agr	agreement
A(P)	adjective (phrase)
Adv(P)	adverb (phrase)
ASL	American Sign Language
Aux(P)	auxiliary (phrase)
BSL	British Sign Language
C(P)	complementiser (phrase)
CNPC	Complex NP Constraint
Comp	complementiser
Conj	conjugation
D(P)	determiner (phrase)
GEN	genitive case
LBC	Left Branch Condition
LF	Logical Form
M	mood
Mod	modifier
Neg(P)	negation (phrase)
NOM	nominative case
N(P)	noun (phrase)
NSL	Nicaraguan Sign Language
NUM	number
OV	object-verb
OSV	object-subject-verb
OVS	object-verb-subject
PF	phonological form
Pl	plural (preceded by an Arabic numeral, denotes the relevant person, e.g. 3Pl = third-person plural)
P(P)	preposition(al phrase)
Perf(P)	perfect (phrase)
Pres	present
Prog(P)	progressive (phrase)
PST	past

Q	Question
QR	Quantifier Raising
S	sentence
SASL	South African Sign Language
Sg	singular (preceded by an Arabic numeral, denotes the relevant person, e.g. 3Sg = third-person singular)
SOV	subject-object-verb
SVO	subject-verb-object
Spec	specifier
TOP	topic (marker)
T(P)	tense (phrase)
UG	Universal Grammar
VO	verb-object
V(P)	verb (phrase)
VOS	verb-object-subject
VSO	verb-subject-object
WALS	<i>World Atlas of Language Structures</i> (Haspelmath et al. 2013)