

# Tallerman: Chapter 1

## What is Syntax?

# Syntax

- How words group together to make phrases and sentences.
- The study of the syntactic properties of languages.
- Word classes; word order; constituent structure; syntactic constructions
  - The cook will cook dinner now.
  - the red shirt (English) - la chemise rouge (French)
  - Competent women and men will get the best jobs.
  - The truck hit the car. - The car was hit by the truck
  - It was the truck that hit the car.

# Morphology, Semantics

- **Morphemes**: smallest meaningful units (Wikipedia):
  - **Free morphemes** like *town*, *dog* can appear with other lexemes (as in *town hall* or *dog house*) or they can stand alone or “free”.
  - **Bound morphemes** (or *affixes*) like “*un-*” appear only together with other morphemes to form a lexeme. Bound morphemes in general tend to be prefixes and suffixes.
  - **Inflectional** morphemes modify a word's tense, number, aspect, and so on (as in the *dog* morpheme if written with the plural marker morpheme *s* becomes *dogs*).
  - **Derivational** morphemes can be added to a word to create (derive) another word: the addition of “-ness” to “*happy*,” for example, to give “*happiness*.”
- **Semantics**: the study of meaning: morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, sentences.

# Grammar: study of the organizing principles of language in general

- Not prescriptive grammar of English
  - To boldly go where no man has ever gone before.
  - Are there some prepositions that you should never end a sentence with?
- Not supposed logical properties of standard dialects:
  - Is that all the faster you can run? (Minnesota English)
  - Is that the fastest you can run?
  - I didn't do nothing wrong.
  - Je ne mange jamais de viande (French)  
I NEG eat never of meat  
'I never eat meat.'

- Interested in rules of mental grammar of native speakers, not just rules in teaching grammars:
  - Who did you say John saw?
  - Who did you say that John saw?
  - Who did you say saw John?
  - \*Who did you say that saw John?
- Interested in language universals and language typology:
  - Qui avez-vous dit que Jean voyait? (French)  
Who have you said that John saw  
‘Who did you say that John saw?’
  - \*Qui avez-vous dit que voyait Jean?
  - Qui avez-vous dit qui voyait Jean?  
‘Who did you say saw John?’
- Grammaticality judgments are the primary data of the science of syntax. Ling 222 - Chapter 1

# All Languages have Structure

- Embedded sentences
  - [I wonder [if Lee will arrive late]. ]  
[The claim [that she doesn't like Kim] is very convincing.]  
[ [Whenever Kim and Lee arrive] we'll set off.]  
[ [That we've no coffee left] isn't my fault.]
- Recursion
  - Kim couldn't swim.  
Lee thought that Kim couldn't swim.  
I said that Lee thought that Kim couldn't swim.
  - No longest sentences in any language
  - All languages have an infinite number of sentences

# Language change can interfere with grammaticality judgments

- Standard English:
  - less wheat, less boredom, less milk, less difficulty (mass nouns)
  - fewer students, fewer sheep, fewer people, fewer difficulties (count nouns)
- Nonstandard English, spreading change:
  - Less students, less sheep, less people, less difficulties

- Other grammatical indications of count-mass distinction:  
MASS: How much \_\_\_\_\_ do you want?  
COUNT: How many \_\_\_\_\_ do you want?

How do the following come out? Why?

*rice, beans, peas*

- Universal Grinder: There was dog all over the road.  
Universal Packager: I'll take three coffees.
- Do languages like Chinese only have mass nouns?  
English: three cups of coffee, three books  
Chinese: san bēi kafe, san běn shu  
three cup coffee, three volume book

# Language change can interfere with grammaticality judgments

- If any candidate hasn't got a form, **they** need to get one from the office.
- A controversy has emerged in the media concerning two students who submitted identical papers in an undergraduate education course. The instructor gave both students a failing grade for the assignment. One student admitted the work was **not their** own and accepted the failing grade, the second student appealed the failing grade that was given for "submitting identical work". (SFU VP-Academic, 1/29/03, email announcement to faculty)
- God send every one **their** heart's desire. (Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*.)

# Discourse factors can interfere with grammaticality judgments

- Topicalization:
  - **The tea Kim drank.**
  - The tea, Kim drank \_\_, but the homemade beer, she really hated \_\_.
  - Q: Which languages besides English do you know, and how well do you know them?  
A: Spanish, Italian, French, and Latin. Spanish and French I can read \_\_ well and understand \_\_ verbally, but my speaking is slow. Italian I understand \_\_, but I don't read it. I speak it less well than Spanish and French. Latin I read \_\_ pretty well, and can write it quite well.

# Psychological factors can interfere with grammaticality judgments

**The horse raced past the barn fell.**

- We used to have two race horses. Every day, one of them was raced by one of our jockeys all the way down the road and past the barn. The other one was raced along the beach. But we never got a chance to figure out which route was better, because the day before the Kentucky Derby, the horse raced past the barn fell.

# Psychological factors can interfere with grammaticality judgments

**The rat the cat the dog bit chased ate the cheese.**

The rat ate the cheese.

Q: Which rat? A: The rat the cat chased.

The rat the cat chased ate the cheese

Q: Which cat? A: The cat the dog bit.

The rat the cat the dog bit chased ate the cheese

**The man who the boy who the students recognized pointed out is a friend of mine.** [Chomsky, 1965, p. 11]

# How to Read Linguistic Examples

- Three lines
  - Words from the language itself  
Morpheme-by-morpheme gloss  
Translation into English
  - Gloss is needed:
    - Sensei ga gakusei ni tegami o kaita (Japanese)  
‘The teacher wrote a letter to the student’
    - Sgwennodd yr athro lythyr at y myfyriwr (Welsh)  
‘The teacher wrote a letter to the student’

- Sensei ga gakusei ni tegami o kaita (Japanese)  
 teacher student to letter wrote  
 ‘The teacher wrote a letter to the student’
- Sgwennodd yr athro lythyr at y myfyriwr (Welsh)  
 wrote the teacher letter to the student  
 ‘The teacher wrote a letter to the student’
  - 80% of languages are subject initial like Japanese and English
  - 12% of languages are verb initial like Welsh
- Read translation first, then examine gloss, finally look at original.
- Examples are not always word-for-word identical to English:
  - E tagi a te poki (Rapa Nui)  
 NONPAST cry PROGRESSIVE the boy  
 ‘The boy is crying.’

# Lexical and Grammatical Information

- Glosses contain LEXICAL information (ordinary type) and GRAMMATICAL information (small capitals).
  - The student-s ask-ed for these book-s  
DEF.ART student-PL ask-PAST for DEM:PL book-PL  
‘The students asked for these books.’
  - Definite article, plural, past tense, demonstrative.
  - Colon (:), dash (-), period (.)
  - Affix: suffix, prefix.

# The Categories of Person and Number

- Paradigm:
  - French present tense of *être* ‘to be’

	Singular	Plural
1st	suis	sommes
2nd	es	êtes
3rd	est	sont

- Kwamera has singular, dual, trial, plural

- Kwamera has inclusive vs. exclusive first person forms:
  - **sa-ha-akw**  
1INC-PLURAL-break.up  
‘We all break up’ (inclusive ‘we’)
  - **ia-ha-vehe**  
IEXC-PLURAL-come  
‘We came.’ (exclusive ‘we’)
  - **ia-pkagkiari-mha**  
1EXC-talk-NEG  
‘I didn’t talk.’
- Glosses for person and number:
  - 1SG, 2SG, 3SG, 1PL, 2PL, 3PL

# Writing Systems and Glosses

- Roman alphabet is used even for languages which use e.g., Cyrillic (Russian) or Chinese characters, etc.
- Lexical tones are often left off (e.g. Chinese).
- Phonetic alphabet used for languages without own writing system.
- Typography is sometimes simplified.
- Glosses are sometimes simplified to include only relevant information.