

*Day 17: Syntactic properties*  
*Ling L303: Introduction to Linguistic Analysis*

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- 3 *Grammaticality*
- 4 *Co-occurrence relations*
  - Arguments and adjuncts
  - Agreement

# *What is syntax?*

*What syntax is...*

## Syntax

### *Definition (Syntax)*

The study of how sentences and other phrases can be constructed out of smaller phrases and words

## *Productivity / compositionality*

*Sentences are built productively*

Consider:

- “I learned a new word today.”

what about

- “I learned a new morpheme today.”  
new morphological process? new application of a process?

or

- “I learned a new sentence today.”

...

Sentences are built productively:

- we don't learn, store, or memorise sentences as such
- instead? we store words (mental lexicon) and rules that combine them

## *Productivity / compositionality*

### *Example*

This is the priest all shaven and shorn  
that married the man all tattered and torn  
that kissed the maiden all forlorn  
that milked the cow with the crumpled horn  
that tossed the dog  
that worried the cat  
that killed the rat  
that ate the malt  
that lay in the house that Jack built.

- one sentence
- “infinitely long”, creative
- productive
- formed based on rules
- systematic

## *Grammaticality*

### *Definition (grammaticality)*

whether a string of words forms a sentence in a language

- Assessed based on [native-speaker] grammaticality judgement
- Grammatical or ungrammatical?
  - The cat is on the mat.
  - The mat is on the cat.
  - \*The cat on is the mat.
- This shows that **word order** is important.

## *Grammaticality*

Grammatical or not?

- \*This sentence no verb.
- \*Contains a verb.

You can conclude that....

- Sentences need a subject and a verb

What about

- \*This sentence has cabbage six carrots.

# *Grammaticality*

*and the separation of semantics and syntax*

Grammatical or not?

- Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.
- \*Furiously sleep ideas green colorless.

So...

- Grammaticality and sense/meaning can be independent of one another.

Watch Human Language series clip on syntax/colourless.



# Arguments and adjuncts

## Arguments

### *Definition (argument)*

an expression whose occurrence is necessitated by the occurrence of some other expression

### Example

- \*We watched.
- We watched a video.

Here... *a video* is an argument of *watch*

So... The verb *watch* requires a noun phrase argument

# *Arguments and adjuncts*

## *Adjuncts*

### *Definition (adjunct)*

an expression whose occurrence with a another expression is entirely optional

- We watched a video.
- We watched a video about syntax.
- We watched a video about syntax in class.
- We watched a video about syntax in class a few minutes ago.
- We watched a video about syntax in class a few minutes ago to better understand the topic.
- ...

# *Arguments and adjuncts*

## *Comparison*

- Arguments
  - are obligatory
  - have to occur only the number of times specifically required
  - cannot be ordered freely (with exceptions...)
- Adjuncts
  - are optional
  - can occur any number of times
  - can be ordered freely with respect to one another (with exceptions...)

## *Agreement*

Grammatical or not?

- \*We likes learning about syntax.
- \*The class like learning about syntax.
- \*Yo vas a la escuela.
- \*Tú amo el lingüística.
- \*¿Has viste la perro penqueña?

*Definition (agreement)*

when distinct expressions are required to have the same value for a grammatical feature

# *Agreement*

Exercises: p.230-1, #2, #3, #4, #5