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**Required Textbook** Huddleston & Pullum, *A Student's Introduction to English Grammar* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), referred to below as *SIEG*. [Ordered at the Brown University Bookstore.]

**Other useful books** The following books are also relevant to the material under discussion in the course, but they are not required (see bibliography for full publication details):

- *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, by Rodney Huddleston & Geoffrey K. Pullum et al. (2002). [A constantly presupposed background source, too big to buy, but available in good libraries everywhere. Every student should consult it as necessary.]
- *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (1994). [A wonderful resource for study of the most controversial points of standard English grammatical usage, with rich exemplification from literature. Every serious student of English should be familiar with it.]
- *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*, by Joseph Williams (1995). [As a supplementary text on writing and style, you might consider buying this. It's a well-informed and interesting study of how to write well, uninfected by the usual grammatical shibboleths.]
- *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk and E. B. White (2000). [This is a small and very famous example of what is wrong with the traditional texts on English grammar. Many professors love this horrid little book, and it is recommended to millions of students every year. I think it is toxic effluent, but you should be familiar with it, and aware of the controversy about it.]

**Introduction**

This course is an introduction to English grammar that tries to make the topic intelligible. English grammars have been plagiarizing each other's inaccurate analyses and repeating each other's confused nonsense for more than 200 years. The tradition should have been radically revised long ago, but unfortunately grammar seems to have proved most attractive to people who were conformist and authoritarian by nature, or lacking in intellectual curiosity, or both. Instead of progress we got just reverent repetitions of familiar dogma.

This course does not follow the tradition. It tries to provide the subject with a much-needed conceptual shake-up.

This iconoclastic aspect will make it easier for students in some ways and harder in others. It will be fairly easy for those who attend every class, because the subject will emerge as refreshingly straightforward and plausible compared with traditional grammar. It will make descriptive sense, and the way that evidence bears on it will become clear. There will be some new terminology and definitions to take in, but not a large amount.

On the other hand, the course will be tough or impossible for students who skip classes and then try to catch up by putting half-remembered previous recollections together with misunderstandings picked up from skimming someone else's notes. Repeating the familiar 200-year-old confused blah-blah on the final exam is one way to guarantee a fail.

There is an ulterior motive to this course: to teach you to think **syntactically**. That is, to teach you to reason using evidence drawn from facts about the structure of sentences rather than their meanings. How to do this will become clearer as the course proceeds. It is fundamental to having any grasp of modern linguistics.

Underlying this is a requirement to think **scientifically** about the subject. Many people seem to treat grammar more like a body of religious doctrine, as if the rules come to us with an authority stemming from somewhere outside of our world. This religious view seems to assume that it is our duty to obey the rules, rather than to discover or analyse or question or test them.

Linguists, by contrast, assume that the task is to find out **what the right rules are**. Grammar is taken to be a subject for **investigation**, not obedience. We discover the rules, bit by bit, through studying the facts of how the language is used by the real experts: the people who speak the language natively. We who are native speakers of English are the ultimate experts.

Of course, it is always possible for anyone using their language (or doing anything else) to make unintended mistakes. We are not infallible. Nonetheless, the structure of English depends ultimately on the way we, the speakers, naturally use it (at least on those occasions when we were sober, and said what we intended to say, and phrased it the way we intended to phrase it). (There is a lesson here about what philosophers call **normativity**, and about why research in any cognitive, linguistic, or psychological science is difficult.)

## Overview

The first few weeks of the course will look intensively at the very basic matter of how we assign words to syntactic categories (“parts of speech” as they used to be called): Verb, Noun, Determinative, Adjective, Adverb, Preposition, Subordinator, Coordinator, Interjection. We also distinguish various elementary grammatical functions: Head, Dependent, Subject, Object, Complement, Determiner, Adjunct, Modifier, and others. Most of these can be illustrated from the structure of very simple positive active declarative clauses, and we will begin that way. But as we move on we consider more complicated and interesting ways of putting sentences together: negation, non-declarative clauses, subordinate clauses, coordination (chaining phrases or clauses together with words like *and*), special stylistic effects, and so on.

The exposition follows the structure and assumptions of *CGEL* closely. *CGEL* is not being presupposed as necessarily always correct, of course. But it makes a real effort to be consistent and fairly clear, so where it is wrong we should be able to identify exactly which wrong turn it took. That is important: in an empirical discipline (any subject where factual evidence matters), it is much better to be wrong with clarity than to be fuzzily and evasively maybe-sort-of right.

## Schedule

We will try to follow something like the following schedule (no guarantees about the exact timing, because this course has not previously been taught as a 15-week semester course):

**Week 1** **General introduction:** Rules, policies, and expectations. Aim and structure of the course. Terminology, concepts, overview. Basics of syntactic argumentation.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Chapters 1 and 2, pp. vii–28.

**Verbs and their inflection:** Finiteness, auxiliaries, tense, aspect, modality

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 3, pp. 29–62. More detailed background: *CGEL* Ch 3.

**Week 2** **Canonical clause structure:** simple active positive non-coordinate main clauses with no special style features.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 4, §§1–3, pp. 63–81. More detailed background: *CGEL* Ch 4 on complements and canonical clauses, and Ch 8 on adjuncts.

**Nouns:** Their definition and their main properties — the features count, number, gender, person, and pronoun.

- Week 3 **Determinatives and the Determiner function:** Building noun phrases (NPs)  
• Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 5, §§1–3, pp. 82–93. More detailed background: *CGEL* Ch 5.

**NPs: complements, modifiers, fused heads, and pronouns**

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 5, §§4–6, pp. 93–97.

Week 4 **Adjectives and Adverbs**

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 6, pp. 112–126. More detailed background: *CGEL* Ch 6, §§1–4, pp. 525–562.

**Prepositions and Preposition Phrases:** classifying words as prepositions.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 7, pp. 127–137. More detailed background: *CGEL* Ch 7.

Week 5 **Stranding of Prepositions:** clauses with gaps, where those gaps can be, and how prepositions can accompany gaps.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 7, pp. 137–148.

**Negation:** the grammar of saying no — modifying a clause to reverse its truth conditions.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 8.

Week 6 **Prepositions vs. Subordinators and Coordinators:** Introduction to content clauses

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 10, §3.1, pp. 175–176 and §4.1, p. 178; Ch 14, pp. 225–227.

**More on clauses with gaps:** Unbounded dependencies and island constraints. Open interrogatives, relative clauses, comparative clauses. Preposed items and gaps.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 11, §§1–3, pp. 183–191; Ch 12.

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[Round about here we may have a little  
midterm assignment. Details to be announced.]

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Week 7 **Relative clauses:** Integrated and supplementary relative clauses. Fused relatives. Ch 11, §4, pp. 191–192.

Week 8 **Non-finite clauses:** Raising and control; predication and ‘dangling participles’; infinitivals and gerund-participials.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 13, pp. 204–224.

Week 9 **Coordination** Linking with words like *and*, *or*, and *but*.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 14.

Week 10 **The syntax of passive constructions** The many kinds of passive clause, their syntax, and their discourse role — plus the absurd story of their denigration by prescriptivists.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 15, §1–2, pp. 238–247.

Week 11 **Extrapolation and postposing** Using a dummy pronoun to mark the spot where a later content clause would have been (compare *That she never said goodbye bugs me* with *It bugs me that she never said goodbye*).

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 15, §3, pp. 247–249.

Week 12 **Existential and presentational clauses** Sentences with dummy *there*, such as *There is a god*, *There are staff available to help you*, and *There remains only one thing left to do*.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 15, §4, pp. 249–251.

**Week 13** ***It*-Clefts:** Sentences formed with a dummy *it*, copular verb, focused constituent, and relative clause (compare *The dog gives her companionship* with (i) *It's the dog that gives her companionship* and (ii) *It's companionship that the dog gives her*).

***Wh*-Clefts:** Sentences formed with a *wh*-phrase, a clause with a gap, a copular verb, and a focused constituent (compare *I'll give you one more chance* with *What I'll do is give you one more chance*).

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 15, §§5–6, pp. 251–254.

**Week 14** **Dislocation and preposing** Sentences like *He's a nice guy, my brother* (subject kicked to the end); *This, nobody ever imagined they would see \_\_\_ in their lifetime* (object kicked to the beginning); *He had \_\_\_ with him a live alligator* (object kicked to the end); *Only later did I realize* (subject shifted to after the auxiliary); *On the top was a maraschino cherry* (adjunct before verb, subject after).

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 15, §8, pp. 255–258.

**Reduction and ellipsis** Grammatical ways of making sentences shorter by leaving stuff out.

- Reading from *SIEG*: Ch 15, §9, pp. 259–263.

**Week 15** **Reading and review week**

## Requirements

Attendance at class is **required**. Be there every time. Homework exercises, roughly once a week, will be turned in at class. So that they can be difficult and provoke discussion, they will not be a major factor in computing your final grade (at most 20%) — but not doing them could lead to a fail. Their main function is to force you to confront the issue of whether you are developing a command of the material. The homeworks must be done and turned in for inspection. Late submission = no submission. Your worst single homework will be ignored. Thus **one** failure to hand work in will disappear from the record (no performance = worst possible performance). But otherwise any missing homework will have to be justified in writing by a note from a doctor or a dean. The final grade will be based mostly (80%) on a **final exam scheduled for December 20**, which will have several components, including elementary right-or-wrong questions, open-ended analysis tasks, and short-essay questions.

## Further reading

There is much more to be studied in the vast literature on English. What follows is a few suggestions for independent study and research by those who want to pursue things further. Many of the items call for a certain amount of background in linguistics.

**General introduction and overview** Read *CGEL* Chs 1 & 2. Study Huddleston (1988), a detailed critical review of the grammar by Quirk et al. (1985): the shortcomings that Huddleston highlights led him to propose *CGEL*. Culicover (2004) gives a detailed review of *CGEL* that relates it to current issues in syntax, particular his own approach as detailed in Culicover (1999). While you are familiarizing yourself with important reference sources, you should look (if you haven't so far) at the magnificent *Oxford English Dictionary* in its latest edition, and also at *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (or *Merriam-Webster's Concise Dictionary of English Usage*, which is just as good, and more recent). This superb reference work on controversial points of modern English usage is one that every linguist should become familiar with. (It is often referred to on Language Log simply as *MWDEU*.)

**Verbs** *CGEL*: Ch 3. The 'dependent auxiliary' analysis stems from Fries (1952) and later Chomsky (1957). Many have argued against it, and it is rejected in *CGEL*. Huddleston (1976) offers a detailed defense of the catenative complement analysis of auxiliaries, in the process of criticizing Frank Palmer's book *The English Verb*. For detailed arguments that the 'auxiliaries' of English are full verbs taking clausal complements, see *CGEL* pp. 1209–1220; Pullum & Wilson (1977); Huddleston (1974); Huddleston (1976); McCawley (1975); Gazdar, Pullum & Sag (1982).

**Clauses** *CGEL*: Ch 4. Beth Levin's book *English Verb Classes and Alternations* (1993) is a very useful reference work on subcategorization — the details of the complements that go with particular lexical heads. Keenan (1976) is an interesting attempt to provide a working definition of the Subject function on a cross-linguistic basis.

**Nouns and noun phrases** *CGEL*: Ch 5. For a detailed conceptual overview and defense of the fused Determiner-Head and Modifier-Head analyses that are introduced here, see Payne, Huddleston & Pullum (2007), where it is argued that all the dictionaries are wrong about *once*: it is not an adverb, it is actually a determinative, somewhat comparable to a word like *everyone* in that it has the special property of being required (not just permitted) to appear in fused Determiner-Head function. It has been claimed (by Abney 1987, unfortunately a never-published PhD dissertation) that the head of a phrase like *the police* is the determinative *the* and the label of the whole phrase should be DP. This analysis has been very widely adopted, without much real defense. Radford (1993) departs from it by arguing that both *the* and *police* are heads. Payne (1993), however, gives some simple arguments that the best analysis has just the noun as head, and *CGEL* endorses that view (pp. 357–358).

**Adjectives and adverbs** *CGEL*: Ch 6. Jackendoff (1977) offers one of the most detailed attempts at studying the internal structure of adjective phrases. He also treats adverb phrases, though (as the second half of Ch 6 of *CGEL* makes clear) he makes a major mistake (it's not true that adverbs don't take complements). Intensive argumentation for the distinctness of the adverb and adjective categories, and a demonstration that they cannot be collapsed or regarded as complementary in function, is presented in Payne, Huddleston & Pullum (2009).

**Prepositions** *CGEL*: Ch 7. Emonds (1972) and Jackendoff (1973) are the classic transformational readings on the diagnosis of prepositionhood and the internal structure of PPs, though they are actually only reviving ideas first urged by Otto Jespersen in his *The Philosophy of Grammar* (1924), a classic that every linguist should be aware of.

**Preposition stranding** *CGEL* contrasts preposition stranding (*Who did you hand it to?*) with preposition fronting (*To whom did you hand it?*).<sup>1</sup> There is a rich variety of transformationalist work on the syntax of stranding and fronting in both relative clauses and interrogatives. And just about every usage handbook (like Fowler 1926, Evans & Evans 1957, Morris & Morris 1985, Merriam-Webster 1994) has an article with a title something like 'Preposition at end'; it is worth looking at what such handbooks say.

**Subordination and content clauses** *CGEL*: Ch 11. A classic early paper on this topic is Bresnan (1970), which introduced the term 'complementizer'; *CGEL* uses the term **subordinator** instead (with good reason: subordinators don't always turn clauses into complements!); and *CGEL* claims subordinators are not heads. Later work in transformational grammar claims they are, so subordinate clauses are labelled CP ('complementizer phrase').

**Open interrogatives** *CGEL* Ch 11. See also Baker (1970) for an important study that opens by drawing a careful distinction between open interrogative clauses and relative clauses.

**Relatives** *CGEL* Ch 12, especially pp. 1058–1066. The vast literature on relative includes interesting vintage transformational discussions in Ross (1967). An interesting new proposal for describing relative clauses without using transformations was proposed in Gazdar (1981). Supplementary ('**appositive**' or '**non-restrictive**') relative clauses have been the subject of controversy: Emonds (1979) argues that they have no special syntactic properties', but Arnold (2007) disagrees. Fused relatives are often known as 'free relatives' or 'headless relatives' (*CGEL* regards these as inappropriate terms). Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) is an interesting transformationalist paper on the topic.

**Non-finite clauses** *CGEL*: Ch 14. The treatment of 'dangling modifiers' in *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (or the newer paperback version *Merriam-Webster's Concise Dictionary of English Usage*) is well worth studying.

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<sup>1</sup>In the transformational literature, fronting is known as 'pied piping'. The whimsical term is due to John Robert Ross, who sees prepositions as dancing along with fronted *wh*-words the way the children of Hamelin followed the legendary Pied Piper.

**Raising & control** Pollard & Sag (1991) present compelling evidence that ‘control’ (determining appropriate understood subjects for subjectless non-finite subordinate clauses) is a **semantic** matter, not purely syntactic. Pullum (1991) defends the view that expressions like *his having won the race* (‘nominal gerunds’) are noun phrases with verb-phrase heads, but *CGEL* adopts a different view, taking them to be gerund-participial clauses. Both these conflicting views have some solid support, yet they cannot both be right.

**Coordination** *CGEL*: relevant part of Ch 15. The discussion of the Coordinate Structure Constraint in Ross (1967) and the reanalysis of that material in Gazdar (1981) make a very interesting study in syntactic theory.

**Passives** *CGEL*: relevant section of Ch 16, pp. 1427–1447. Among the huge number of treatments of English passives, the relevant section of Chomsky (1957) is of course classic. Freidin (1975) argues against transformational treatment of passive clauses; Bresnan (1982) claims the right approach is lexical; Keenan (1980) disagrees, claiming that passivization maps phrases to phrases; Bach (1980) offers a rich compilation of novel facts plus some new analytical proposals. For a cross-linguistic comparative view see Keenan (2006).

**Extraposition and existentials** *CGEL* Ch 16. Extraposition is a term introduced by Jespersen (1909–1949). It was first treated in transformational terms by Rosenbaum (1967).

**Clefts** *CGEL*: relevant sections of Ch 16. See Birner & Ward (1998) for a treatment of various information-packaging constructions, focusing mainly on the pragmatics. Ross (1967) is also a classic source on syntactic phenomena of this kind.

**Reductions** *CGEL*: Ch 17. There is a huge literature on such topics as VP ellipsis (better called post-auxiliary ellipsis). Look for names like Hankamer, Merchant, Sag, and Schachter.

## Bibliography

The list below includes all of the items referred to by author and date above. There are occasional square-bracketed annotations giving extra information.

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ARNOLD, DOUGLAS (2007) Non-restrictive relatives are not orphans. *Journal of Linguistics* **43** (2), 271–309. [Answers Emonds 1979.]

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BAKER, CARL LEROY (1970) Notes on the description of English questions: The role of an abstract question morpheme. *Foundations of Language* **6**, 197–219. [Very useful on the distinction between interrogative and relative subordinate clauses. Reprinted in Pieter A. M. Seuren, ed., *Semantic Syntax* (Oxford University Press, 1974), 123–142.]

BIRNER, BETTY & GREGORY WARD (1998) *Information Status and Noncanonical Word Order in English*. John Benjamins. [A study of the ‘information packaging’ issues that *CGEL* deals with in Chapter 16 and *SIEG* deals with in Chapter 15.]

BRESNAN, JOAN W. (1970) On complementizers: Toward a syntactic theory of complement types. *Foundations of Language* **6** (3), 297–321.

BRESNAN, JOAN W. (1982) The passive in lexical theory. In Joan W. Bresnan (ed.), *The Mental Representation of Grammatical Relations*, 3–86. MIT Press. [Stresses the evidence for the active/passive alternation in English being exception-riddled and lexical, not a simple regular syntactic relationship between constructions.]

BRESNAN, JOAN W. & JANE GRIMSHAW (1978) The syntax of free relatives in English. *Linguistic Inquiry* **9**, 331–391. [‘Free relatives’ is another term for what *CGEL* calls **fused relatives**, and this is an interesting detailed attempt to analyse them in transformational terms.]

CHOMSKY, NOAM (1957) *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton. [The classic first proposal for transformational

- treatments of passive, *wh*-movement, and coordination.]
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## Instructor

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PDF | On Jan 1, 2006, Renaat Declerck and others published The Grammar of the English Tense System.Â students of English with a basic knowledge of descriptive linguistics and a.Â 1.4 The structure of the book. The book falls roughly into three parts: chapters 1 and 2 provide essential. background to the study of tense; chapters 3 to 11 gradually build up a picture. of the function of tenses in discourse in English; finally, chapters 12 to 14.