

Syntax

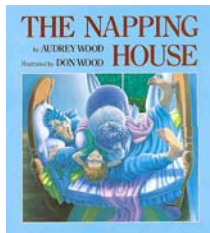
- The study of sentence construction: how words are put together to form phrases and sentences
- Human-specific aspect of language

Recursion

- Syntax is fun.
- John thinks that syntax is fun.
- Mary suspects that John thinks that syntax is fun.
- Sue knows that Mary suspects that John thinks that syntax is fun.
- ...

Recursion

- My older brother's wife's father was the voice of Nemo's dad.
- Audrey Wood's *The Napping House*



And on that cat, there is a mouse
A slumbering mouse
On a snoozing cat
On a dozing dog
On a dreaming child
On a snoring granny
On a cozy bed
In a napping house, where everyone is sleeping.

Syntax

- Is syntax a study of grammar?
- Prescriptive grammar
 - Don't say, "I ain't do nothing wrong."
 - Avoid split infinitives: "He is made to quickly go."
- **Grammar:** principles about the sound system, the form of words, phrases and sentences, etc.
 - How to produce and interpret sentences
- So, syntax is a part of grammar.

Two opposing views

- Structuralism

Chomsky: A grammar is a model (= systematic description) of those linguistic abilities of native speakers of a language which enable them to speak and understand their language fluently. (Radford 1988)

– Competence vs. Performance

Two opposing views

- Functionalism

Givón: It is through language use that language is acquired, and grammar is shaped or changed.

– “...The functional approach to grammar is founded on the assumption that grammar...is adaptively motivated and thus in principle non-arbitrary...”

Linguistic typology

- Cross-linguistic diversity and universals
- Linguistic universals: common properties that all languages have
- What types of construction are possible and what types are impossible in the world's languages
- Factors that constrain diversity

Grammar

- Native speaker's intuition
 - Able to tell whether a sentence is 'well-formed'
 - Able to tell whether a sentence has a certain structure
- Well-formed vs. ill-formed
- Grammatical vs. ungrammatical
- Acceptable vs. unacceptable

Native speaker's intuition

- Intuitions about syntactic well-formedness

I gave a cat to her.

I gave her a cat.

*I gave a cat her.

ฉันให้แมวกับเขา

ฉันให้แมวเขา

*ฉันให้เขาแมว

Syntactic ill-formedness

- Pragmatically and semantically anomalous sentence

John killed the stone.

John killed Mary, but she didn't die.

Killed Mary John.

Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.

Native speaker's intuition

- Intuitions about syntactic structure
 - Know which words go with other words

สายสมรไว้ใส่เสื้อสวยมาก

You could not go to her party.

Syntactic rule

- Structure-independent rule

You are watching TV.

Are you watching TV?

Pat will come to the party.

Will Pat come to the party?

I must go.

Must I go?

- Move the 2nd word in a sentence in front of the first word.

The president will come to the party.

*President the will come to the party?

Syntactic rule

- All grammatical rules are structure-dependent.
- NP-AUX inversion: Invert a noun phrase (NP) with an immediately following auxiliary verb (AUX)
- Must know syntactic structure and grammatical categories

What does syntax express?

- Word order
 - Basic word order: SVO (English, Thai), SOV (Japanese, Korean), VSO (Welsh), VOS, OVS, OSV
- Most rap, I don't like. (Gregory & Michaelis)
- Marked vs. Unmarked

What does syntax express?

- Structures
 - Embedded clauses
I think [Nancy will come].
 - Recursion

I ran into a tree.
I ran into a friend.

What does syntax express?

- Promotion and demotion processes
 - Passive: promotion to subject position, and demotion of old subject (and a change in verb form)

Pat hit the ball.
The ball was hit by Pat.