

24.960: Syntactic Models (Fall 2011)

Omer Preminger
omerp@mit.edu
32-D884

WHERE/WHEN: Mondays, 2–5pm, in 32-D461

CLASS WEBSITE: <https://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/24/fa11/24.960/index.html>

Overview

The course has two main goals:

1. Cross-framework “literacy”
 - We will familiarize ourselves with two frameworks that compete with what we might call the *GB/P&P/MP*¹ framework of syntactic analysis: HPSG and LFG²
 - The idea is to become comfortable enough with the notations and machinery that we can easily pick up an HPSG or LFG paper and understand it.
2. What is at stake? Where do these frameworks crucially differ from one another (and where don’t they)? And what is the historical development that has led us here?
 - Here, we will deal with some of the “bigger questions”; we want to understand how frameworks rise and fall in general, and how they have in fact risen and fallen in the history of modern syntax; we will ask ourselves questions like “what can framework *X* can do that framework *Y* cannot?”, as well as “what can they both do equally well?”
 - in other words, we want to understand which differences between the various frameworks are notational choices, and which lead to actual differences in expressive power and empirical coverage
 - We will examine these questions both synchronically (for example, comparing GB/P&P/MP vs. HPSG vs. LFG) and diachronically (e.g. why did the *Aspects* framework give way to GB? why was the *lexical decomposition* component of “Generative Semantics” abandoned in the ’70s, and effectively resurrected in the late ’90s?)

Course Requirements

1. A few problem-sets on HPSG, LFG, and other topics we will be covering.
2. HPSG/LFG and Generative Semantics class presentations (in a nutshell, you will pick a paper from each framework and give a short presentation of that paper to the class), including good handouts!
3. Perfect or near-perfect attendance, and ongoing evidence that you’ve done the readings.
4. No term-paper/squib/exam—when the class ends, you’re done!

(NOTE: You have David Pesetsky, who established this tradition, to thank for that.)

¹*Government & Binding / Principles & Parameters / Minimalist Program.*

²*Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar and Lexical Functional Grammar*, respectively.

Readings

In addition to readings that will be posted on the class website, you will need to pick up the following books (listed in the order in which we'll be using them):

- HPSG:

Sag, Ivan A., Thomas Wasow & Emily Bender. 2003. *Syntactic theory: a formal introduction*. 2nd Edition, Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.

(do get the **2nd Edition**; the differences are significant)

- LFG:

Bresnan, Joan. 2001. *Lexical-functional syntax*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

All other readings will be posted on the class website.

Class Schedule

Stay tuned for inevitable changes...

DATE	TOPIC	NOTES
9/12	Overview of the class, HPSG #1: the basics	READINGS: Sag, Wasow & Bender 2003:1–202
9/19	HPSG #2: complementation, <i>wh</i> -movement, binding	READINGS: Sag, Wasow & Bender 2003:203–467; Wechsler 1999
9/26	HPSG #3: odds & ends, LFG #1: the basics	READINGS: Bresnan 2001:1–88
10/3	LFG #2: the basics (cont.)	READINGS: Bresnan 2001:89–320
10/10	<i>Columbus Day Holiday</i>	very good time to pick papers and start working on your presentations for 10/24 (see below)
10/17	LFG #3: leftovers	READINGS: finish Bresnan 2001 if you haven't yet
10/24	Student Presentations: HPSG & LFG	Pick one NELS-length paper from the recent HPSG literature and one from the LFG literature (not necessarily related, but it's fun when they are). Present and discuss your papers.
10/31	Generative Semantics, Then and Now: #1 ("Then")	READINGS: Newmeyer 1986:81–138
11/7	Generative Semantics, Then and Now: #2 ("Now")	READINGS: Harley to appear
11/14	Crash-Proofness vs. Filters #1: The <i>Global Rules</i> debate	READINGS: Lakoff 1970; Baker & Brame 1972; Frampton & Gutmann 2006:121–131

11/21	Crash-Proofness vs. Filters #2: The rise of <i>filtration</i>	READINGS: Chomsky & Lasnik 1977 (<i>you can go easy on the particular technical details</i>)
11/28	Crash-Proofness vs. Filters #3: An empirical argument against <i>filtration</i> grammars	READINGS: Preminger 2011:85–140; Halpert to appear
12/5	Student Presentations: Generative Semantics / “Conditions”	Pick a paper from the period in which Generative Semantics was debating with Interpretive Semantics, or from the slightly later period in which the “Conditions” framework was starting to be discussed. Present it, and discuss it in light of more recent research.
12/12	TBD	Depending on progress and interest, any of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. spillover 2. Culicover & Jackendoff’s (2005) <i>Simpler Syntax</i> 3. more on Derivationalism vs. Representationalism 4. other?

References

- Baker, C. L. & Michael K. Brame. 1972. Global rules: a rejoinder. *Language* 48:51–75.
- Bresnan, Joan. 2001. *Lexical-functional syntax*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Chomsky, Noam & Howard Lasnik. 1977. Filters and control. *Linguistic Inquiry* 8:425–504.
- Culicover, Peter W. & Ray Jackendoff. 2005. *Simpler syntax*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Frampton, John & Sam Gutmann. 2006. How sentences grow in the mind: agreement and selection in efficient minimalist syntax. In *Agreement systems*, ed. Cedric Boeckx, 121–157. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Halpert, Claire. to appear. Structural case and the nature of *vP* in Zulu. In *Proceedings of the 42nd conference of the North East Linguistic Society (NELS 42)*, Amherst, MA: GLSA.
- Harley, Heidi. to appear. Lexical decomposition in modern syntactic theory. In *The Oxford handbook of compositionality*, eds. Markus Werning, Wolfram Hinzen & Edouard Machery, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lakoff, George. 1970. Global rules. *Language* 46:627–639.
- Newmeyer, Frederick J. 1986. *Linguistic theory in America*. 2nd Edition, New York: Academic Press.
- Preminger, Omer. 2011. *Agreement as a fallible operation*. Doctoral dissertation, Cambridge, MA: MIT.
URL: <<http://ling.auf.net/lingBuzz/001303>>.
- Sag, Ivan A., Thomas Wasow & Emily Bender. 2003. *Syntactic theory: a formal introduction*. 2nd Edition, Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.
- Wechsler, Stephen. 1999. HPSG, GB, and the Balinese Bind. In *Lexical and constructional aspects of linguistic explanation*, eds. Gert Webelhuth, Jean-Pierre Koenig & Andreas Kathol, 179–195. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.