

Syntax Seminar: Case and Agreement

LING 675/775 — Winter 2015

Th 11:25–2:25*, Linguistics 117

Instructor

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<i>office hours</i>	Mondays 2:00–3:30, or by appointment

Content and objectives of the course

This course examines topics in the syntax of case, agreement, and the interactions between the two. Broadly speaking, we are investigating the relationship between a predicate and its arguments, and how theoretical accounts of these relationships have developed over the past few decades. We will look at not only morphological reflexes of case (on nominals) and agreement (on predicates), but also the theoretical mechanisms which have been proposed to underly these phenomena, including argument licensing (“abstract Case”) and the relation *Agree*. We begin with foundational readings on case and agreement, and then see how these theories have developed to cover a wide range of empirical phenomena in languages such as Icelandic, Hindi-Urdu, Dinka, Kaqchikel, Tsez, Tagalog, Nez Perce, and Sakha. Specific topics will include: the relation between abstract and morphological case; theories of structural vs. dependent case; failed agreement and uninterpretable features; the PCC and clitic doubling; different alignment types, including ergativity and split ergativity; long distance agreement; and partial agreement.

Through careful investigation of these issues over the course of the semester, students will develop independent research and critical analysis skills, including the ability to evaluate and construct linguistic arguments. Students will also gain experience in identifying a puzzle or problem and developing it into an independent research project.

Requirements and evaluation

	LING 675	LING 775 (pass/fail)
participation	20%	60%
short assignments	10%	—
article presentation	10%	40%
final paper & presentation	60%	—

In-class participation

As with any advanced seminar, in-class participation is an essential component of this course. All readings will be posted on the MyCourses site, and required readings must be completed before coming to class. All students are expected to come prepared to contribute to class discussion.

To facilitate discussion, each student will contribute at least one post to the MyCourses *Discussion* site by midnight the night before class. The contribution may take the form of a question or comment either focusing on the reading itself, or relating the reading to other relevant material. Comments and questions should be contentful. Clarification questions are welcome, but should involve some discussion, i.e. not simply “What

*11:25–12:45 for students and auditors; 1:00–2:25 registered students only

does X mean?”. Since questions are designed to facilitate in-class discussion, late questions cannot be accepted and failure to submit these will affect participation marks.

Assignments

There will be two short assignments over the course of the semester, designed to give you a chance to go in depth in a particular reading or topic. You are encouraged to discuss assignments with classmates, but you must write up assignments on your own. More information will be provided in class.

Article presentation

Each student will be responsible for presenting one article (roughly 30 minutes). Presentations should include: a brief summary of the background, goals, and motivation for the paper, including connection to relevant material already discussed in class; presentation of the proposal and critical discussion of the arguments; discussion of the predictions made by the analysis, and any questions that arise. Presentations should be interactive when possible.

Final paper and presentation

A final paper is your chance to directly engage with the material and develop your own research project. Final papers should relate to the content of the course, and must go beyond summaries and critical review to make some original empirical and/or theoretical contribution. A successful final paper will have the potential to lead to an Evaluation paper or MA thesis topic. Your paper should be clearly organized, and it should be made clear which contributions are original.

Timeline

week of March 9th	meet with me to discuss topic
March 19th	~1 page proposal due
April 9th	in-class presentation
April 20th	final paper due (max ~15 double-spaced pages)

Regulations

Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

If you are considering working on related topics for term papers in different courses, it is very important that you discuss this with all instructors involved in order to get approval.

Right to submit in French

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Timeline

week	topic	reading (subject to slight modification)	to do
1/8	—no class; make up 1/29—		
1/15	case, Case & licensing	Marantz (1991) – Case and Licensing Bobaljik and Wurmbrand (2008) – Case in GB/Minimalism	
1/22	Features & interpretability	Chomsky (2000, 2001) – MI/Derivation by phase Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) – Interpretability of features	
1/29	Case and agreement	Woolford (2006) – Lexical case, inherent case Bobaljik (2008) – Where’s Phi?	assn. 1 due
1/29	make-up class: Jonathan Bobaljik seminar — evening read: Baker and Bobaljik (to appear) – Inherent ergative		
2/5	More on features	Harley and Ritter (2002) – Person & number in pronouns Adger and Harbour (2008) – Why Phi? Béjar and Rezac (2009) – Cyclic agree	
2/12	Structural vs. dependent	Baker and Vinokurova (2010) – Two Modalities of Case Assignment Levin and Preminger (to appear) – Are Two Modalities Really Necessary?	
2/19	Clitics & PCC	Béjar and Rezac (2003) – Person licensing and PCC Harizanov (2014) – Clitic doubling at the interface	assn. 2 due
2/26	Failed agreement	Preminger (2014, chs. 1–5) – Agreement and its failures	
—reading week—			
3/12	Ergativity & splits	Legate (2008) – Morphological and abstract case Coon and Preminger (to appear) – Split ergativity	
3/19	Structural ergative	Deal (2010) – Ergative case and the transitive subject Rezac et al. (2014) – Structural ergative of Basque	proposal due
3/26	Long Distance Agreement	Polinsky and Potsdam (2001) – LDA in Tsez Bhatt (2005) – LDA in Hindi-Urdu	
4/2	LDA II	Rackowski and Richards (2005) – Phase edge extraction van Urk and Richards (to appear) – Extraction in Dinka	
4/9	<i>paper presentations</i>		
4/20			paper due

Readings

- Adger, David, and Daniel Harbour. 2008. Why phi? In *Phi Theory: Phi-features across interfaces and modules*, ed. Daniel Harbour, David Adger, and Susana Béjar, 1–34. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, Mark C., and Jonathan David Bobaljik. to appear. On inherent and dependent theories of ergative case. In *The oxford handbook of ergativity*, ed. Jessica Coon, Diane Massam, and Lisa Travis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, Mark C., and Nadya Vinokurova. 2010. Two Modalities of Case Assignment: Case in Sakha. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 28:593–642.
- Béjar, Susana, and Milan Rezac. 2003. Person Licensing and the Derivation of PCC Effects. In *Romance Linguistics: Theory and Acquisition*, ed. Ana Teresa Perez-Leroux and Yves Roberge, 49–62. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Béjar, Susana, and Milan Rezac. 2009. Cyclic Agree. *Linguistic Inquiry* 40:35–73.

- Bhatt, Rajesh. 2005. Long-Distance Agreement in Hindi-Urdu. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 23:757–807.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan David. 2008. Where's Phi? Agreement as a Post-Syntactic Operation. In *Phi Theory: Phi-features across interfaces and modules*, ed. Daniel Harbour, David Adger, and Susana Béjar, 295–328. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan David, and Susi Wurmbrand. 2008. Word order and scope: Transparent interfaces and the λ -Signature. URL <http://ling.auf.net/lingBuzz/000723>, Ms., Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2000. Minimalist inquiries: The framework. In *Step by step: Essays on minimalist syntax in honor of Howard Lasnik*, ed. Roger Martin, David Michaels, and Juan Uriagereka, 89–155. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2001. Derivation by phase. In *Ken Hale: A life in language*, ed. Michael Kenstowicz, 1–52. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Coon, Jessica, and Omer Preminger. to appear. Split ergativity is not about ergativity. In *The Oxford Handbook of Ergativity*, ed. Jessica Coon, Diane Massam, and Lisa Travis. Oxford University Press.
- Deal, Amy Rose. 2010. Ergative case and the transitive subject: a view from Nez Perce. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 28:73–120.
- Harizanov, Boris. 2014. Clitic doubling at the syntax-morphophonology interface: A-movement and morphological merger in Bulgarian. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 32:1033–1088.
- Harley, Heidi, and Elizabeth Ritter. 2002. Person and Number in Pronouns: A Feature-Geometric Analysis. *Language* 78:482–526.
- Legate, Julie Anne. 2008. Morphological and Abstract Case. *Linguistic Inquiry* 39:55–101.
- Levin, Theodore, and Omer Preminger. to appear. Case in Sakha: Are two modalities really necessary? *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* .
- Marantz, Alec. 1991. Case and Licensing. In *Proceedings of the 8th Eastern States Conference on Linguistics (ESCOL 8)*, ed. German Westphal, Benjamin Ao, and Hee-Rahk Chae, 234–253. Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications.
- McGinnis, Martha. 2005. On markedness asymmetries in person and number. *Language* 81.
- Pesetsky, David, and Esther Torrego. 2007. The syntax of valuation and the interpretability of features. In *Phrasal and clausal architecture: Syntactic derivation and interpretation - In honor of Joseph E. Emonds*, ed. Simin Karimi, Vida Samiian, and Wendy Wilkins, 262–294. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Polinsky, Maria, and Eric Potsdam. 2001. Long-distance agreement and topic in Tsez. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 19:583–646.
- Preminger, Omer. 2014. *Agreement and its failures*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Rackowski, Andrea, and Norvin Richards. 2005. Phase edge and extraction: A Tagalog case study. *Linguistic Inquiry* 36:565–599.
- Rezac, Milan, Pablo Albizu, and Ricardo Etxepare. 2014. The structural ergative of Basque and the theory of case. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 32:1273–1330.
- van Urk, Coppe, and Norvin Richards. to appear. Two components of long-distance extraction: Successive cyclicity in Dinka. *Linguistic Inquiry* .
- Woolford, Ellen. 2006. Lexical Case, Inherent Case, and Argument Structure. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37:111–130.