

Concepts in English Linguistics

Sessions 4 and 5: Grammar and Syntax

Adjective Qualifies a noun: *grey, slow, abstract*

Adverb Qualifies a verb (i.e. describes how something is being done), adjective, or other adverb: *slowly, hardly*

Aspect The grammatical expression of an action's relation to time: simple, progressive, perfective, nonperfective

Case Grammatical category applied to nominals to classify their syntactic functions, in some languages marked by inflexion: *der, den, dem, des*

Closed word class A part of speech to which no new words are regularly added: article, preposition, auxiliary verb

Cognitive grammar An approach to linguistics that understands language as an abstract symbolic system directly rooted in the same cognitive processes used for other thought processes and thus not routed through a syntactic subsystem as proposed by generative grammarians

Conjunction Defines the relationship between two words, phrases, or clauses: *and, because*

Deep structure In **generative grammar**, this refers to an underlying structure to which any linguistic utterance (itself representing the **surface structure**) may be traced back to bring it closer to a

universal grammar.

Function word A word with mainly grammatical reference: article, pronoun, preposition, auxiliary verb, conjunction

Gender Division of (some) nominals into the classes feminine, masculine, and neuter

Grammaticalization The adaptation of a lexical item into a grammatical element (e.g. dummy *do*)

Generative (transformational) grammar A linguistic model postulating an innate set of syntactic rules from which all linguistic utterances are generated, involving a transformation from an underlying *deep structure* to the apparent *surface structure*

Interjection Isolated utterance with no syntactic connection to the surrounding content

Lexical word A word referring to concepts outside of language: noun, (non-auxiliary) verb, adjective, adverb

Modality Grammatical expression of possibility, likelihood, or necessity

Mood Verbal category expressing whether an utterance is an assertion of fact (expressed by the indicative mood), possibility or indirect assertion (subjunctive), or command (imperative)

Nominal A noun, pronoun, adjective, or article

Noun Someone or something involved in the action

Number The grammatical expression of singularity or plurality

Numeral Part of speech mathematically quantifying nominals; divided into cardinal (*five*) and ordinal (*fifth*) numerals

Open word class A part of speech to which new words are still regularly added: noun, adverb

Parameter Within **generative grammar**, this refers to a mutable “setting” that may be configured differently for different languages but still form part of **universal grammar**. For instance, some languages have heads of phrases preceding their complements, others have the complement preceding.

Phrase structure rules A set of rules for parsing syntactic structures, defining the constitution of phrases with a view to finding structural correspondences across languages: $S \rightarrow NP VP$

Preposition Defines the relationship between two or more nominals: *in, from*

Pronoun A word standing in for a noun

Surface structure In **generative grammar**, the apparent structure of any linguistic utterance, before its **deep structure** is reconstructed in order to bring it closer to **universal grammar**.

Tense The grammatical expression of an action’s point in time: present, past/preterite, future

Universal grammar Within **generative grammar**, this phrase refers to any linguistic structures believed to underly all natural languages. It comprises an immutable core linked up with as a set of **parameters** that may be set differently for different languages.

Verb Action word: describes what is being done

Voice Verbal category expressing whether a construction is active or passive

X-bar Theory A model of phrase structure postulating an element \bar{X} (commonly written X') governing the head and optional complement of each phrase