Syntax Seminar: Hierarchy effects  
LING 675/775 — Winter 2019  
M/W 3:00–4:30, Linguistics 117

Instructor  
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email: jessica.coon@mcgill.ca  
ofice: 1085 Dr. Penfield, 221  
ofice hours: Thursday 9–10:30, or by appointment

Content and objectives of the course

Cross-linguistically, a number of different constructions are sensitive to the position of a nominal argument—or the relative ranking of two or more nominal arguments—along some proposed feature hierarchy (e.g. person, number, animacy, salience). In some environments, certain combinations of nominals may require special morphological forms or syntactic constructions, while in other cases, specific “hierarchy-violating” combinations may be simply ineffable. In this course we will dig into the research in this area, using hierarchy effects as a window into examining some foundational issues in syntactic theory, including: feature organization in nominals and probes; the nature and representation of dependencies between nominals; case and licensing of DP arguments; whether and how hierarchies should be encoded in the grammar; the nature of Agree; morphological insertion; and the nature of repair operations.

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

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<tr>
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<th>LING 675</th>
<th>LING 775 (pass/fail)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>short assignments</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>article presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>final paper &amp; presentation</td>
<td>60%</td>
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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 having completed the reading and prepared to contribute to class discussion.

“Contribute to class discussion” does not mean that you have completely understood all of the reading, or that you are saying things that are “right”. Rather, contributing is about moving the conversation forward, has nothing to do with being “right” or “wrong”. Often the best way to move a discussion forward is to ask questions—even (or maybe especially) questions for which you worry the answers might be obvious.

To facilitate discussion, each student will contribute at least one post per week to the MyCourses Discussion site by midnight the night before class (i.e. Sunday or Tuesday). 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 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.

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. In case you consider working on related topics for term papers in two courses, you must get approval from all instructors involved ahead of time.

Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>week of March 11th</td>
<td>meet with me to discuss topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 19th</td>
<td>~1 page proposal due</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 4th &amp; 8th</td>
<td>in-class presentations (15–20 minutes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 20th</td>
<td>final paper due (max ~12 single-spaced pages)</td>
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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.

Territory acknowledgement

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.
# Timeline

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>week</th>
<th>topic</th>
<th>reading (subject to slight modification)</th>
<th>to do</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>introduction</td>
<td>Baker 2013 – <em>Agreement and case</em> (background)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Coon and Keine 2018, §1–3 – <em>Feature gluttony</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/14</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Coon and Keine 2018, §4–5 – <em>Feature gluttony</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/17</td>
<td>PCC &amp; person licensing</td>
<td>Béjar and Rezac 2003 – <em>Person licensing and PCC</em> optional: Harley and Ritter 2002 – <em>Feature Geometries</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>DOM</td>
<td>Kalin 2018 – <em>Licensing and DOM</em></td>
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<td>1/28</td>
<td>TBA (candidate 1)</td>
<td>reading for syntax job talk, TBA</td>
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<td>1/30</td>
<td>TBA (candidate 2)</td>
<td>reading for syntax job talk, TBA</td>
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<td>2/4</td>
<td>1st syntax job talk</td>
<td>reading for syntax job talk, TBA</td>
<td>assn. 1 due</td>
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<td>2/6</td>
<td>TBA (candidate 3)</td>
<td>reading for syntax job talk, TBA</td>
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<td>2/11</td>
<td>3rd syntax job talk</td>
<td>reading for syntax job talk, TBA</td>
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<td>2/13</td>
<td>TBA (candidate 4)</td>
<td>reading for syntax job talk, TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>inverse &amp; features</td>
<td>Klaiman 1992 – <em>Inverse</em></td>
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<td>2/20</td>
<td>Cyclic Agree, PCC, inverse</td>
<td>Béjar and Rezac 2009* – <em>Cyclic Agree</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>(JC away; NB leads)</td>
<td>Deal 2015 – <em>Interaction and satisfaction</em></td>
<td>assn. 2 due</td>
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<td>2/27</td>
<td>Person portmanteaux</td>
<td>Georgi 2013* – <em>Person portmanteaux</em></td>
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<td>3/11</td>
<td>K’ichean Agent Focus</td>
<td>Preminger 2014, chs. 3–4 – <em>Agreement and its Failures</em></td>
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<td>3/13</td>
<td>Algonquian inverse revisited</td>
<td>Oxford to appear* – <em>Inverse and Multiple Agree</em></td>
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<td>3/18</td>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>special guest, to be confirmed</td>
<td>proposal due</td>
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<td>3/20</td>
<td>Halkomelem</td>
<td>Wilschko 2008* – <em>Hierarchy effects</em></td>
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<td>3/25</td>
<td>Basque absolutive displacement</td>
<td>Rezac 2008 – <em>Eccentric agreement</em></td>
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<td>3/27</td>
<td>Icelandic person restrictions</td>
<td>Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008* – <em>Dative intervention</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/1</td>
<td>omnivorous number</td>
<td>Nevins 2011 – <em>Multiple Agree with clitics</em></td>
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<td>4/3</td>
<td>omnivorous number</td>
<td>Bejár 2011* – <em>Reply to Nevins</em></td>
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<td>4/8</td>
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<td>— paper presentations —</td>
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<td>4/10</td>
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<td>— paper presentations —</td>
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<td>final paper due</td>
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* – for student presentation
Readings (required and other)


Ormazabal, Javier, and Juan Romero. 1998. On the syntactic nature of the me-lui and the Person-Case Constraint. *Anuario...*
del Seminario Julio de Urquijo 32:415–434.


Preminger, Omer. to appear. What the PCC tells us about “abstract” agreement, head movement, and locality. *Glossa*.


