

Minimalist Syntax

Exploring the Structure of English

Andrew Radford's latest textbook, *Minimalist Syntax: Exploring the Structure of English*, provides a clear and accessible introduction to current work in syntactic theory, drawing on the key concepts of Chomsky's Minimalist Program. Assuming little or no prior knowledge of syntactic theory, Radford takes students through a diverse range of topics in English syntax – such as categories and features, merger, null constituents, movement, case, split projections and phases – and shows how the 'computational component' works within the minimalist framework. Beginning at an elementary level, the book introduces grammatical concepts and sets out the theoretical foundations of Principles and Parameters and Universal Grammar, before progressing in stages towards more complex phenomena. Each chapter contains a workbook section, in which students are encouraged to make their own analyses of English phrases and sentences through exercises, model answers and 'helpful hints'. There is also an extensive glossary of terms.

Although designed primarily for courses on syntactic theory or English syntax, this book also provides an up-to-date, clear and straightforward introduction to the field.

ANDREW RADFORD is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Essex. He has published six books on syntax with Cambridge University Press: *Italian Syntax* (1977); *Transformational Syntax* (1981); *Transformational Grammar* (1988); *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English* (1997); *Syntax: a Minimalist Introduction* (1997) and *Linguistics: an Introduction* (co-authored with a group of his Essex colleagues, 1999). He has also published a book on *Syntactic Theory and the Acquisition of English Syntax* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1990) and numerous articles on syntax and the acquisition of syntax.

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Preface

Aims

This book has two main aims, reflected in its title and subtitle. The first is to provide an intensive introduction to recent work in syntactic theory (more particularly to how the *computational component* operates within the model of grammar assumed in recent work within the framework of Chomsky's *Minimalist Program*). The second is to provide a description of a range of phenomena in English syntax, making use of minimalist concepts and assumptions wherever possible. The book can be seen as a successor to (or updated version of) my (1997a) book *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English*. There is quite a lot of duplication of material between the earlier book and this one (particularly in the first few chapters), though the present book also contains substantial new material (e.g. on agreement, case, split projections and phases), and the analysis of many phenomena presented in this book differs from that in its predecessor (agreement being handled in terms of a *feature-matching* rather than a *feature-checking* framework, for example).

Key features

The book is intended to be suitable both for people with only minimal grammatical knowledge, and for people who have already done quite a bit of syntax but want to know something (more) about Minimalism. It is not historicist or comparative in orientation, and hence does not presuppose knowledge of earlier or alternative models of grammar. It is written in an approachable style, avoiding unnecessary complexity. I've taught earlier versions of the book to more than 200 students over the past three years, and greatly benefited from their mutterings and mystification, as well as their assignments (which told me a lot about what they didn't understand, and about what I needed to explain more carefully). I've worked through (and refined) the exercise material with the students, and the *helpful hints* which the exercises contain have been developed in order to try and eliminate some of the commonest errors students make. The book is intensive and progressive in nature, which means that it starts at an elementary level but gets progressively harder as you get further into it. A group of students I taught

an earlier version of the book to give the following mean degree-of-difficulty score to each chapter on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = *very easy* to 5 = *very hard*: chapter 1 = 1.6; chapter 2 = 1.8; chapter 3 = 2.2; chapter 4 = 2.7; chapter 5 = 2.9; chapter 6 = 3.2; chapter 7 = 3.4; chapter 8 = 3.7; chapter 9 = 4.2; chapter 10 = 4.4. Successive chapters become cumulatively more complex, in that each chapter presupposes material covered in previous chapters as well as introducing new material: hence it is helpful to go back and read material from earlier chapters every so often. In some cases, analyses presented in earlier chapters are subsequently refined or revised in the light of new assumptions made in later chapters.

Organisation

Each of the ten chapters in the book contains a detailed text discussion of a particular topic (divided into sections to facilitate reading), together with an integral *workbook section* at the end of the chapter, containing exercise material (to be done as classwork or homework) with *model answers* and *helpful hints* provided. Although the book contains numerous references to (often highly technical) primary research works, the exercises are designed in such a way that they can be tackled on the basis of the coursebook material alone. The book also includes an extensive *glossary* which provides simple illustrations of how key technical terms are used (both theory-specific terms like **EPP** and traditional terms like **subject**): technical terms are written in **bold** print in the main text (*italics* being used for highlighting particular expressions – e.g. a key word appearing in an example sentence). The glossary contains entries for key technical terms in syntax which are used in a number of different places in the text (though not for terms which appear in only one part of the main text, and which are glossed in the text where they appear). The glossary also includes an integrated list of *abbreviations*.

Companion volume

This book is being published in parallel with an abridged version entitled *English Syntax: an Introduction*. In this longer version of the text, the main text (particularly in the later chapters) is generally 30–50 per cent longer than the main text in the abridged version. This longer version is aimed primarily at students with (near-) native command of English who are taking syntax as a major rather than a minor course. The two books have an essentially parallel organisation into chapters and sections (though additional sections and technical discussion have been added in this longer version), and contain much the same exercise material (though with exercise material based on additional sections

of text included in the longer version). In keeping the two books parallel in structure and organisation as far as possible, I am mindful of the comment made in a review of two earlier books which I produced in parallel longer and shorter versions (Radford 1997a,b) that some readers may wish to read the short version of a given chapter first, and then look at the longer version afterwards, and that this 'is not facilitated by an annoyingly large number of non-correspondences' (Ten Hacken 2001, p. 2). Accordingly, I have tried to maximise correspondence between the 'long' and 'short' versions of these two new books.

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Dedication

This book (like my 1981 *Transformational Syntax* book) is dedicated to Joe Cremona, who sadly died shortly before it went to press. Joe was my tutor at Cambridge for three of my undergraduate courses (History of Italian, History of Romanian, Vulgar Latin and Romance Philology). As I wrote in the preface to my 1981 book, Joe 'did more than anyone to awaken my interest in language, and to persuade me that just maybe linguistic theory wasn't quite as pointless as it seemed at the time' (when linguistics seemed to most students to be designed solely to inflict taxonomic torture on them). Thanks for everything, Joe – you will be sorely missed by the many people you helped go on to successful academic careers.