



Island constraints and their exceptions

Ling 419k, Fall 2017

What is this course about?

A large part of knowing a language involves knowing its rules. In this course, we consider rules on wh-movement (questions, topicalization, relative clauses, etc.). We will also consider the phenomenon of resumptive pronouns, which are said to obviate violations of these rules.

We will also discuss issues related to methodology and scientific reasoning: how should we collect data about linguistic judgments? How should we analyze judgment data to draw inferences / conclusions about theoretical questions? How do we go from raw data to evidence that supports (or fails to support) a particular hypothesis? And vice versa: how do we test a hypothesis?

By the end of this course, students should be familiar with reading and critiquing primary literature in syntax and to have gained experience collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.

Required Resources

Readings and homework to be posted on:

<http://files.ling.umd.edu/pdflocker/LING419K-f2017/>

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Activities, Learning Assessments, & Expectations for Students

Work in this class falls into five categories.

1. 8 responses for the readings assigned (underlined on page 3, see references on page 4). A response does not have to be long, providing a summary, comments or questions about the reading. These responses will help you organize your thoughts for class discussion.
 - Responses for 2 reading assignments (Chomsky and Cowart) are compulsory.
 - You are free to pick which 6 other reading assignments to submit responses for. This should not be the paper(s) that you are presenting.
 - Each response should be emailed to me by 11:59 pm the day before the date when the readings are discussed.
2. A ~45-min class presentation, to be done in groups.
 - You will be presenting the reading(s) assigned for that day and leading class discussion.

Instructor:

Nick Huang

znhuang@umd.edu

We meet...

Tuesdays & Thursdays

12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

MMH 1304

My office hours are

MMH 3416, Tues 4-5 pm

and by appointment

Prerequisites

Syntax I recommended

Course Communication

Email!

- I expect you to be able to (i) discuss the big research question(s), (ii) discuss specific hypotheses, (iii) walk us through the data and arguments, (iv) point out weaknesses in the arguments, if any.
- 3. Class participation: please do the readings for each class, speak up, ask questions.
- 4. Homework: 3-4 questions each, to be turned in by start of class (12:30 pm).
- 5. Final project: replicating an experiment, to be done in groups.
 - One homework will be related to this project (HW4).
 - Each of you will also turn in a final paper presenting and discussing your group's findings.

Course-Specific Policies

Electronic devices: Please refrain from using your cellphone. You should use your computer only when we have paper presentations, so that you can refer to the papers easily.

- Please let me know if you are taking notes with your computer.

Group work:

- You are encouraged to discuss the material and homework in groups.
- However, please write up all your work yourself. Indicate who you worked with.
- For paper presentations, please:
 - Read the paper early – maybe 1 or 2 weeks before presentation.
 - As a group, meet with me a few days before the presentation.
 - Discuss amongst yourselves how you want to present the material.
 - Prepare slides / handouts. Let me know whether you will have slides / handouts.

Deadlines and extensions:

- Late work will be subject to a 25% penalty if turned in within 24 hours of the deadline.
- Unless you have a medical or family emergency, please let me know at least 48 hours ahead of a deadline if you need an extension (e.g. for religious, family or job-related reasons)

Need help? Learning is hard and we all need help from time to time – all you need to do is to ask. Here are some resources on campus:

- Yours truly and your classmates
- <http://ter.ps/learn>
- <http://www.counseling.umd.edu>.

Grades

We will use the following grading scheme. Please let me know if you have any questions about your grades.

Unless an extension has been given, late work will not be accepted for course credit.

| Learning Assessments | # | Points Each | Category Total | Category Weight (%) |
|----------------------|---|-------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Reading responses | 8 | 5 | 40 | 30% |
| Class presentation | 1 | 15 | 15 | 15% |
| Class participation | 1 | 5 | 5 | 5% |
| Homework | 5 | 10 | 50 | 30% |
| Final paper | 1 | 20 | 20 | 20% |
| Total Points: | | | 130 | 100% |

Final letter grades are assigned based on your overall percentage score.

| Final Grade Cutoffs | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------|---|-------|---|-------|---|-------|
| + | 97.0% | + | 87.0% | + | 77.0% | + | 67.0% |
| A | 93.0% | B | 83.0% | C | 73.0% | D | 63.0% |
| - | 90.0% | - | 80.0% | - | 70.0% | - | 60.0% |
| F | <60.0% | | | | | | |

Course schedule

| Date | Topic | What to read / what is due |
|-------|--|----------------------------|
| 8/29 | Introduction, syllabus, expectations | |
| 8/31 | Syntax refresher: C-command, X-bar, theta roles, transformations | |
| 9/5 | Syntax refresher ctd., wh-movement and unbounded dependencies | Presentation signups |
| 9/7 | “Why bother?” <u>Chomsky 1957 and 1965</u> | *RR on Chomsky due |
| 9/12 | Islands and resumption | HW1 assigned |
| 9/14 | Subjacency, successive cyclicity | |
| 9/19 | Condition on Extraction Domains, phases, strong/weak islands | HW1 due |
| 9/21 | Islands, D-linking, ctd. | HW2 assigned |
| 9/26 | “What is the source of these constraints?” Learnability | |
| 9/28 | “What about all these exceptions?” <u>Deane 1991</u> | HW2 due |
| 10/3 | “How reliable are the data?” <u>Gibson and Fedorenko 2010</u> | |
| 10/5 | Methodology: <u>Cowart 1997</u> | *RR on Cowart due |
| 10/10 | Methodology ctd. | HW3 assigned |
| 10/12 | “No worries!”: <u>Sprouse, Schuetze, and Almeida 2013</u> | |
| 10/17 | “No worries!”: <u>Goodall 2015</u> | |
| 10/19 | “Well...”: <u>Sprouse, Caponigro, Greco and Cecchetto 2016</u> | HW3 due |
| 10/24 | “Let’s refine our constraints”: <u>Chung and McCloskey 1983</u> | |
| 10/26 | Final project introduction | HW4 assigned |
| 10/31 | Final project discussion / stimuli writing session for HW4 | |
| 11/2 | No class: Nick away | HW4 due |
| 11/7 | “Maybe the constraints are not in the grammar”: <u>Kush et al 2013</u> | |
| 11/9 | No class: Nick away | |
| 11/14 | “Maybe RPs don’t make things better”: <u>Alexopoulou and Keller 2007</u> | HW5 assigned |
| 11/16 | “They don’t”: <u>Heestand et al. 2011; Han et al. 2012</u> | |
| 11/21 | “It depends”: <u>McDaniel & Cowart 1999, Keffala 2011</u> | HW5 due |
| 11/23 | Thanksgiving | |
| 11/28 | “Not acceptability, but ...” <u>Beltrama and Xiang 2016</u> | |
| 11/30 | Island phenomena outside of English | |
| 12/17 | Data analysis | |
| 12/7 | Data analysis / conclude | |
| 12/17 | | Final paper due |

* = *compulsory reading response*

Readings (in PDF Locker)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chomsky, N. (1957). <i>Syntactic Structures</i> . The Hague: Mouton. | Chs. 1-2 pp. 11-17 |
| Chomsky, N. (1965). <i>Aspects of the theory of syntax</i> . Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. | Sections 1-2 pp. 3—15; Section 4 pp. 18—27 |
| Ross, J. R. (1967). Constraints on variables in syntax. PhD dissertation, MIT. Reprinted in Gilbert Harman (ed.), <i>On Noam Chomsky - Critical Essays</i> , pp. 165–200. Anchor Press/Doubleday. 1974. | *OPTIONAL* |
| Deane, P. (1991). Limits to attention: A cognitive theory of island phenomena. <i>Cognitive Linguistics</i> , 2, 1-63. | Sections 1-3 until p. 34 |
| Gibson, E. & Fedorenko, E. (2013): The need for quantitative methods in syntax and semantics research, <i>Language and Cognitive Processes</i> 28: 88-124 | Sections 1-3 until p. 102 |
| Cowart, W. (1997). <i>Experimental Syntax: Applying Objective Methods to Sentence Judgments</i> . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. | “Experiment design” (but read Ch. 1 quickly to remind yourself of the big picture) |
| Sprouse, J., Schütze C., and Almeida, D. (2013). A comparison of informal and formal acceptability judgments using a random sample from <i>Linguistic Inquiry</i> 2001–2010. <i>Lingua</i> 134: 219–248. | |
| Goodall, G. (2015). The D-linking effect on extraction from islands and non-islands. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> 5. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01493 | |
| Sprouse, J., Caponigro I., Greco, C., Cecchetto, C. (2016). Experimental syntax and the variation of island effects in English and Italian. <i>Natural Language & Linguistic Theory</i> 34, 307-344. doi:10.1007/s11049-015-9286-8. | Sections 1-5 until p. 329 |
| Chung, S. and McCloskey, J. (1983). On the interpretation of certain island facts in GPSG. <i>Linguistic Inquiry</i> , 14, 704-713. | |
| Kush, D., Omaki, A., & Hornstein, N. (2013). Microvariation in islands? In J. Sprouse and N. Hornstein (Eds.), <i>Experimental syntax and island effects</i> . 239-264. Cambridge University Press. | |
| Alexopoulou, T., and Keller, F. (2007). Locality, cyclicity, and resumption: At the interface between the grammar and the human sentence processor. <i>Language</i> , 110-160. | Sections 1-3 until p. 120, pp. 143—146 (“Processing complexity and resumption,” but ignoring the discussion starting from ex. 54) |
| Heestand, D., Xiang, M., and Polinsky, M. (2011). Resumption still does not rescue islands. <i>Linguistic Inquiry</i> , 42(1):138–152. | |
| Han, C., et al. (2011). Processing Strategies and Resumptive Pronouns in English. <i>Proceedings of the 30th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics</i> , ed. N. Arnett and R. Bennett, 153-161. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project. | |
| Beltrama, A. and Xiang, M. 2016. Unacceptable but comprehensible: the facilitation effect of resumptive pronouns. <i>Glossa</i> 1: 1–24, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.24 | |