

# Syntactic Typology

Prof. Yehuda N. Falk

Semester B • 2010–1 (תשע"א)

“Typology” is the study of the ways in which languages differ and the ways in which they are similar. In this course, we will compare syntactic constructions in a variety of languages. We will examine issues such as word order, the relation between structure and function, properties of subjects, Case-marking patterns, and relative clauses. We will also discuss markedness hierarchies and optimality theory.

## A couple of quotes to consider

Martin Joos 1957: “[L]anguages [can] differ from each other without limit and in unpredictable ways.” [*Readings in Linguistics I* p. 96]

Hilda Koopman and Dominique Sportiche 1991: “[W]e suppose that the null assumption concerning language variation is that it does not exist.” [*Lingua* 85 p. 218f]

## Course Outline

- I. Basic concepts of typology [Chapters 1 and 2]
- II. Dimensions of linguistic representation [Chapter 3]
  - A. General issues
  - B. Configurationality
- III. Word Order Typology [Chapter 4]
- IV. Argument Typology
  - A. Ergativity
    1. Case-Marking Patterns
    2. Subjects and Pivots: Syntactic Ergativity [Chapter 5 and Falk 2006]
    3. Differential Marking I: Description [Chapter 6]
    4. Differential Marking II: Prominence hierarchies and Optimality Theory [Chapter 9]
  - B. Objects
- V. Relative Clauses [Chapter 7] (time permitting)
- VI. Causatives [Chapter 8] (time permitting)
- VII. Final comments [Chapter 11]

## Course requirements/grading

Homework—two major assignments (50%)

Final exam (50%)

Students who take this course as a seminar write a seminar paper.

## Reading

**Textbook:** Bernard Comrie (1989) *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*. University of Chicago Press.

+ **parts of:** Yehuda N. Falk (2006) *Subjects and Universal Grammar: An Explanatory Theory*. Cambridge University Press.

## Teacher information

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