

## **Syntax seminar: Comparatives**

### **Technical specs:**

Time: Fridays 1:30-4:20pm  
Place: Cobb 204

Office hours: Fridays 12-1pm or by appointment  
Office: Classics 305  
Tel: (70)2-8523  
email: merchant@uchicago.edu

### **Goals and course description:**

This course is an advanced look at the syntax of comparatives, exploring the interaction between the lexicon, phrase-structural properties, and A'-dependencies in explaining the range of attested manifestations. Comparatives are well known for their complexity, and as such have proven a fruitful ground for research over the past three decades, including forming the central arena for the debate on the nature of 'unbounded' dependencies in syntax. We will review this literature and examine in depth recent analyses that address both the empirical richness within English (comparatives involving differing or multiple standards, subdeletions, VP-ellipsis, gapping, pseudogapping, stripping, and other missing material) and cross-linguistically. We will focus on a close reading of recent work by Kennedy and Lechner.

### **Coursework:**

The required work for this courses consists mainly of reading and discussion of the assigned chapters, papers, and books. Each participant in the seminar will be expected to present one or two of the readings to the class in a presentation with a handout. You will also be required to write a final paper of 10-15 pages. Papers are due Wednesday, March 19, as files (preferably pdf, though Microsoft Word is acceptable) emailed to merchant@uchicago.edu.

### **Evaluation:**

Your evaluation for this course will be based on the above coursework as well as on class participation.

**Schedule:** (Parenthesized readings are background, to be read as supplementation)

- 1 [Jan 10] General overview (McCawley 1998)
- 2 [Jan 17] No class
- 3 [Jan 24] Bresnan 1973, 1975, Chomsky 1977 (Hankamer 1973, Postal 1974)
- 4 [Jan 31] Kennedy 1997 [modulo 3:30pm Heim colloq at Northwestern]
- 5 [Feb 7] Kennedy 1997 continued
- 6 [Feb 14] Kennedy and Merchant 2000, Kennedy 2002 (Pinkham 1982)
- 7 [Feb 21] Lechner 1998 (Hazout 1995)
- 8 [Feb 28] Lechner 1998 continued
- 9 [Mar 7] Lechner 2001

**Readings:**

- Bresnan, Joan. 1973. Syntax of the comparative clause construction in English. *Linguistic Inquiry* 4:275-343.
- Bresnan, Joan. 1975. Comparative deletion and constraints on transformations. *Linguistic Analysis* 1.1:25-74.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1977. On *wh*-movement. In Peter Culicover, Thomas Wasow, and Adrian Akmajian (eds.), *Formal syntax*, 71-132. Academic Press: New York. Hankamer
- Hankamer, Jorge. 1973. Why there are two *than*'s in English. In C. Corum, T.C. Smith-Stark, and A. Weiser (eds.), *Papers from the 9th regional meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society*, 179-191. Chicago Linguistics Society: Chicago, Ill.
- Hazout, Ilan. 1995. Comparative ellipsis and Logical Form. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 13:1-37.
- Kennedy, Christopher. 1997. *Projecting the adjective: The syntax and semantics of gradability and comparison*. PhD thesis, University of California, Santa Cruz. [Published 1999 by Garland; can be ordered at <http://ling.ucsc.edu/research/index.html>, SLUG Pubs link]
- Kennedy, Christopher. 2002. Comparative deletion and optimality in syntax. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 20: 553-621.
- Kennedy, Christopher and Jason Merchant. 2000. Attributive comparative deletion. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 18:89-146.
- Lechner, Winfried. 1998. *Comparatives and DP-structure*. PhD thesis, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Can be ordered at <http://www.umass.edu/linguist/GLSA>
- Lechner, Winfried. 2001. Reduced and phrasal comparatives. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 19: 683-735.
- McCawley, James. 1998. *The syntactic phenomena of English*, second edition. Chicago University Press: Chicago. Chapter 20 'Comparative constructions', pp. 692-740.
- Pinkham, Jesse. 1982. *The formation of comparative clauses in French and English*. Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University. Distributed by IULC.
- Postal, Paul. 1974. On certain ambiguities. *Linguistic Inquiry* 5.