

Association for Linguistic Typology

Syllabi for typology classes

On this page ALT provides a data-bank of syllabi of typology courses. All who have taught typology courses are encouraged to post their syllabi. Please send an electronic copy of your syllabus, preferably using only standard ASCII characters, by e-mail to both Bernard Comrie (*comrie at eva.mpg.de*) and the webmaster (*webmaster at linguistic-typology.org*). Please include the following information:

1. your name and e-mail address, with the same information for others who have cooperated substantially in devising or teaching the course,
2. the institution at which the course is taught,
3. the level of the course (e.g. advanced undergraduate, beginning graduate), and
4. the number of hours of the course.

You may, of course, omit information that is unlikely to be of interest to other readers (e.g. something that is specific to the institution where the class is taught). Please address any questions to Bernard Comrie (*comrie at eva.mpg.de*)

Available syllabi and reading lists

[Linguistics 533, Spring 1997 – Bernard Comrie](#)

[Linguistics 410: Language Typology –Tucker Childs](#)

[Themes in Typology: Basic Reading List – Frans Plank](#)

Language Universals and Typology

Instructor: Bernard Comrie

Institution: University of Southern California

Level: Graduate, first- or second-year

Schedule: 14 sessions of 2 1/2 hours each

Aim of the course: to provide an introduction to the typological study of language, in particular contrasting alternative approaches to language universals research, including current work on the crosslinguistic examination of various syntactic/semantic topics.

Requirements:

1. Regular attendance.
2. Thoughtful completion of reading assignments (see below).
3. Completion of homework assignments.
4. Term paper of ca. 20 pages on a topic related to the course. Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor as soon as possible during the course about their paper topic, and in any event this topic must be agreed with the instructor by Tuesday, March 4. The paper is due in on Thursday, May 1.

NB: Final grade will be based on homework (30%) and term paper (70%).

Syllabus and reading assignments:

Basic course book: *Comrie, B. 1989. Language universals and linguistic typology. 2 ed. Chicago: U of Chicago Press*(hereafter abbreviated as Comrie (T)).

Jan 14: **Introduction to universals and typology**

Comrie (T), ch. 1-2.

Jan 21: **Sampling**

Dryer, M.S. 1989. 'Large linguistic areas and language sampling', *Studies in Language* 13, 257-292.

Rijkhoff, J., D. Bakker, K. Hengeveld, & P. Kahrel. 1993. A method of language sampling', *Studies in Language* 17, 169-203.

Jan **Word order**

28, Feb 4:

Comrie (T), ch. 4.

Greenberg, J.H. 1966. 'Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements', in J.H. Greenberg (ed), *Universals of language*, 2 ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 73-113.

Vennemann, T. 1974. 'Theoretical word order studies: results and problems', *Papiere zur Linguistik* 7, 5-25.

Hawkins, J.A. 1983. *Word order universals*. New York: Academic Press, ch. 1-2.

Dryer, M.S. 1988. 'Object-verb order and adjective-noun order: dispelling a myth', *Lingua* 74, 185-217.

Hawkins, J.A. 1990. 'A Parsing Theory of Word Order Universals', *Linguistic Inquiry* 21, 223-261.

Feb 11, 18: **Clause structure typology**

Comrie (T), ch. 3, 5, 6.

Fillmore, C.J. 1968. 'The case for case', section 3, in E. Bach & R.T. Harms (eds), *Universals in linguistic theory*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 21-51. (The whole article is pages 1-88.)

Dowty, D. 1991. 'Thematic proto-roles and argument selection'. *Language* 67, 547-619.

Chafe, Wallace L. 1976. 'Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics, and points of view', in C.N.Li (ed), *Subject and topic*. New York: Academic Press, 25-55.

Prince, E.F. 1981. 'Toward a taxonomy of given-new information', in Peter Cole (ed), *Radical pragmatics*, New York: Academic Press, 223-255.

Comrie, B. 1978. 'Ergativity', in W.P.Lehmann (ed), Syntactic typology. Austin: U of Texas Press, 329-394.

Mithun, Marianne. 1991. 'Active/agentive case marking and its motivations'. Language 67, 510-546,

Keenan, E.L. 1976. 'Towards a universal definition of subject', in C.N.Li (ed), Subject and topic. New York: Academic Press, 303-333.

Feb 25, Mar **Typology of Russian, Dyirbal, Tagalog**

4:

Comrie, B. 1979. 'Russian', in T. Shopen (ed), Languages and their status. Cambridge, MA: Winthrop, 91-115 (sec. 1.1-1.2).

Schachter, P. 1977. 'Reference-related and role-related properties of subjects', in P. Cole & J.M.Sadock (eds), Syntax and semantics 8. New York: Academic Press, 279-306.

Moravcsik, E.A. 1978. 'On the distribution of ergative and accusative patterns', Lingua 45, 233-279.

Keenan, E.L. 1984. 'Semantic correlates of the ergative/absolute distinction', Linguistics 22, 197-223.

Comrie, B. 1988. 'Passive and voice', in M. Shibatani (ed), Passive and voice. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 9-23.

Du Bois, J.W. 1987. 'The discourse basis of ergativity', Language 63, 805-855.

Mar 18: **Relative clauses**

Comrie (T), ch.7.

Keenan, E.L. & B.Comrie. 1977. 'Noun phrase accessibility and universal grammar', Linguistic Inquiry 8, 63-99.

Matsumoto, Y. 1988. 'Semantics and pragmatics of noun-modifying constructions in Japanese', Berkeley Linguistics Society 14, 166-175.

Mar 25: **Causative constructions**

Comrie (T), ch.8.

Comrie, B. 1975. 'Causatives and universal grammar'. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1974, 1-32.

Cole, P. 1983. 'The grammatical role of the causee in universal grammar'. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 49, 115-133.

Kozinsky, I. & M. Polinsky. 1993. 'Causee and patient in the causative of transitive: coding conflict or doubling of grammatical relations?'. In B. Comrie & M. Polinsky (ed), *Causatives and transitivity*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 177-240.

Apr 1: **Tense systems**

Reichenbach, H. 1947. *Elements of symbolic logic*. New York: Free Press, 287-298.

Comrie, B. 1981. 'On Reichenbach's approach to tense'. *Chicago Linguistic Society* 17, 24-30.

Comrie, B. 1993. 'Towards a general theory of tense', in B. Lakshmi

Bai & Aditi Mukherjee (eds), *Tense and aspect in Indian languages*. Hyderabad: Centre of Advanced Study in Linguistics, Osmania University and Booklinks Corporation, 1-18.

Apr 8: **Reference tracking**

Foley, W.A., and R.D. Van Valin, Jr. 1984. *Functional syntax and universal grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, ch. 7.

Comrie, B. 1989. 'Some general properties of reference-tracking systems', in D. Arnold et al. (eds), *Essays on grammatical theory and universal grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 37-51.

Apr 15: **Parameters**

Comrie B. 1991. 'Holistic versus partial typologies', in W. Bahner, J. Schmidt, D. Viehweger (eds), *Proceedings of the Fourteenth International Congress of Linguists*, vol. I. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 139-148.

Nichols, J. 1986. 'Head-marking and dependent-marking grammar', *Language* 62, 56-119.

Apr 22: **Explanations for language universals**

Comrie (T), sec. 1.3.

Comrie, B. 1984. 'Form and function in explaining language universals', in B. Butterworth et al. (eds), *Explanations for language universals*. The Hague: Mouton, 87-103.

Hawkins, J.A. 1988. 'Explaining language universals', in J.A. Hawkins (ed), *Explaining language universals*. Oxford: Blackwell, 3-28.

Comrie, B. 1993. 'Language universals and linguistic typology: data-bases and explanations', *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung* 46, 3-14.

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Linguistics 410: Language Typology

Instructor: Tucker Childs (childst at pdx.edu)

Institution: Applied Linguistics, Portland State University

Level: Mixed graduate and undergraduate

Schedule: quarter hours.

[A comprehensive course-outline can be downloaded [here](#).]

In this course students will be introduced to the structural typing of languages with respect to both phonology and morphosyntax. This introduction will necessarily involve a broad familiarity with language structure in general but there will also be some concentration expected of each student. At the beginning of the course students will choose or be assigned a language (or group, if preferred) to serve as the focus of their presentations and final paper. With reference to that choice students will consider issues in description, typological classification, universals, and markedness. On the basis of their own work and that of others in the course, students will learn to evaluate what is unusual and what is expected in a language. Most often English will serve as the reference language, but we will also identify what is atypical about English (quite a bit) as well as consider a wide variety of languages.

We will also investigate attempts to explain these patterns. Functional explanations, e.g., physiological constraints for phonology, cognitive constraints for syntax, will be explored for understanding both expected and unexpected features of languages of the world. We will include what many consider to be outlier

types of language (sign language, child language, pidgins and creoles) for their contributions to a fully articulated typology of languages.

In addition to examining the current features of languages of the world, we will also look at diachronic aspects, i.e., how languages change. To understand how languages change, we will evaluate the dynamicization of language types by Joseph Greenberg and others as well as recent formulations within the approach known as “grammaticalization”. More generally, we will look at expected and unexpected ways languages evolve.

Besides introducing students to language structure, the course will have relevance to patterns of first and second language acquisition, to historical linguistics, to language variation and change, to sociolinguistics, and to general linguistic theory. At the end of the course students will have some familiarity with languages of the world and with the descriptive apparatus used to characterize them. They will also have some experience with functional explanations in linguistics, i.e., explaining language origin, language structure, and language change in terms of language’s communicative function.

Evaluation: Class participation (15%), class presentations (20% each), final paper (45%). Students will be asked to make two class presentations (including an extensive handout), both of which presentations will be evaluated for a grade. An outline of the presentations follows.

1. Introduction.

Location, historical background, classification, typological overview, salient features, etc. The first presentation will familiarize the rest of the class with the student’s chosen language and prepare the student for the second presentation. 2. Contrastive analysis. The second presentation will compare the student’s language(s) of choice to English and other languages with which the student is familiar. Reference will also be made to universally attested features in both phonology and morphosyntax.

The student’s final paper will be on a topic determined on the basis of consultation with the instructor. Topics could come from any three of the following major areas of the course: language universals, functional explanation, and language change. The paper can be broad in its approach, treating all areas of a language’s grammar, or narrowly focused on a particular language structure of interest to the student. The paper could also draw on collateral interests, e.g., in language acquisition, language pedagogy, or sociolinguistics. Graduate students will be expected to outline their paper to the class as a whole in an oral presentation at the end of the course. Papers are due Monday, Dec 8th, the first day of exam week.

Texts

Croft, William. 1990. *Typology and Universals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reading packet

Childs, G. Tucker. 1994. African ideophones. *Studies in Sound Symbolism*, ed. L. Hinton, J. Nichols, J. Ohala, pp. 247-279. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Comrie, Bernard. 1989. *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology: Syntax and Morphology*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. Ch 1 Language universals (pp.1-29).

Greenberg, Joseph H. 1969. Some methods of dynamic comparison in linguistics. *Substance and Structure in Language*, ed. J. Puhvel, pp. 147-203. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Linguist List exchange (mostly on methodology)

Maddieson, Ian. 1984. *Patterns of Sounds*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters Ch 1-3, and 10.

Recommended books and articles

Comrie, Bernard. 1989. *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology: Syntax and Morphology*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Foley, William A., Van Valin, Robert D., Jr. 1984. *Functional Syntax and Universal Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Greenberg, J. H. 1974. *Language typology: a historical and analytic overview*. *Janua Linguarum, Series Minor*, 184 The Hague and Paris: Mouton.

Greenberg, Joseph H., Ferguson, Charles, Moravcsik, Edith A., eds. 1978. *Universals of Human Language*, 1: Method and Theory. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Greenberg, Joseph H., Ferguson, Charles, Moravcsik, Edith A., eds. 1978. *Universals of Human Language*, 2: Phonology. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Greenberg, Joseph H., Ferguson, Charles, Moravcsik, Edith A., eds. 1978. *Universals of Human Language*, 3: Word Structure. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Greenberg, Joseph H., Ferguson, Charles, Moravcsik, Edith A., eds. 1978. *Universals of Human Language*, 4: Syntax. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Heine, Bernd. 1980. Language typology and linguistic reconstruction: the Niger-Congo case. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 2:95-112.

Heine, Bernd, Claudi, Ulrike, H=FCnnemeyer, Friederike. 1991. Grammaticalization: A Conceptual Framework. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Heine, Bernd, Reh, Mechthild. 1984. Grammaticalization and Reanalysis in African languages. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag.

Hopper, Paul J., Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 1993. Grammaticalization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hyman, Larry M., Schuh, Russell G. 1974. Universals of tone rules: evidence from West Africa. *Linguistic Inquiry* 5:81-115.

Lyovin, Anatole V. 1997. *An Introduction to the Languages of the World*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maddieson, Ian. 1972. Tone system typology and distinctive features. *Proceedings of the 7th International Congress of the Phonetic Science*, ed. A. Rigault, R. Charbonneau, pp. 957-61. The Hague: Mouton.

Maddieson, Ian. 1978. Universals of tone. *Universals of Human Language*, ed. J. H. Greenberg, C. Ferguson, E. A. Moravcsik, vol. 2 Phonology, pp. 335-365. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Newmeyer, Frederick J. 1991. Functional explanation in linguistics and the origin of language. *Language and Communication* 11:3-28.

Newmeyer, Frederick J. 1992. Iconicity and generative grammar. *Language* 68:756-796.

Nichols, Johanna. 1986. On form and content in typology. *Language typology 1985*, ed. W. P. Lehmann, pp. 141-162. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Nichols, Johanna. 1992. *Linguistic Diversity in Space and Time*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, Heine, Bernd. 1991. *Aspects of Grammaticalization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Periodicals containing articles on language typology:

Studies in Language

STUF (Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung) (most articles are in English, despite the title)

Linguistic Typology [publication of ALT](#) (Association for Linguistic Typology)
