

Syntax – Theory and Analysis

An International Handbook

Volume 1

Edited by

Tibor Kiss

Artemis Alexiadou

Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science
Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft

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*This handbook is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend Ursula
Kleinhenz (1965–2010).*

The light that burns twice as bright burns half as long.

Preface

When our friend Ursula Kleinhenz approached us during the annual meeting of the German Linguistic Society (DGfS) in Mainz in 2004, it was not to piece together the events of the previous evening. Being without the benefit of a screenwriter and a director, we usually had to figure out the events from the nebula of a hangover ourselves (but we never woke up next to a tiger). Ursula was just as hilarious as she was professional and could switch between these personas just as easily as she could be both simultaneously. If any consolation can be found in her premature death, it is only because her life was as intense as that of two others. Ursula's proposal was that we should edit the *syntax handbook* in the HSK series. Like other handbooks in the series, the syntax handbook had a predecessor (published in 1993 and 1995), but Ursula (and de Gruyter) thought that it was about time to take a fresh look. Presumably, she also had a deeper insight in the process of conceiving, compiling, and editing such a handbook. Perhaps she could even foresee how much time would pass until the idea became a published book.

With its present structure, the handbook aims to provide a valuable source not only for the professional syntactician but also for the linguist who wants to gain information about the current state of the art in syntax; in particular it should facilitate the advanced student's way into syntax.

Syntax can look back on a long tradition. The term itself is ambiguous. On the one hand, it is understood as a means of structural and descriptive analysis of individual languages using clearly defined instruments. Naturally, syntactic analyses can be comparative, spanning several languages. On the other hand, *syntax* is understood as syntactic theory, the aim of which is to decide which instruments can be sensibly applied to syntactic analysis. Syntactic theory thus defines the aims of syntactic research. Especially in the last 50 years, however, the interaction between syntactic theory and syntactic analysis has led to a rapid increase in analyses and theoretical suggestions. This increase has been accompanied with the impression that *syntax* is a fragmented discipline. This impression is not wrong in so far as syntactic theory cannot be traced back to one school, but rather to a great number of approaches in competition with each other. It should, however, not be forgotten that the competitive situation in most cases was

triggered by empirical problems and that complex problems may be approached in more than one way. Precisely this situation has led to very decisive progress in syntactic analysis in the last 50 years. This result would probably have never been achieved if syntax had been limited to just one dispute about theory or method.

This handbook – which is spread out over three volumes, containing 61 articles in nine sections – adopts these unifying perspectives and places at the fore the increase in knowledge that results from the fruitful argumentation between syntactic analysis and syntactic theory. To reflect this, the handbook contains articles on syntactic phenomena from two different angles: one perspective is mainly descriptive, allowing linguists to grasp what is at issue when a particular phenomenon is subjected to sometimes heated debate. Thus Section III (Syntactic Phenomena), which covers the bulk of Volume I of the handbook, contains descriptions of a set of phenomena that are called *syntactic*. The phenomena comprise the argument-adjunct distinction, negation, agreement, word order, ellipsis, and idioms, among others. We would like to note that the phenomena were not selected on the basis of the personal preference of the editors. Instead, we asked our colleagues around the world to take part in a survey in order to determine which phenomena should be dealt with in such a handbook.

Four of the phenomena are taken up again in Section VI (Theoretical Approaches to Selected Syntactic Phenomena) and receive theoretical analyses. The reader of the handbook may thus approach syntactic phenomena from the perspective of what is in need of an analysis. We assume that a description can be provided prior to (even if it is not entirely independent of) an analysis since the phenomena are natural – at least in parts. Alternatively, the reader may approach syntactic phenomena from the perspective of what has been, and also what has not been, covered by an analysis. We believe that those issues in particular that have been omitted from current analysis provide good starting points for future syntacticians to gain access to the syntactic community. Such gaps in analysis should thus not be seen as flaws but as open questions to be dealt with promptly.

As for the structure of the handbook as a whole, the first volume (Sections I–III) is devoted to the position of syntax in linguistics (including its interfaces to other linguistic domains), to the syntactic tradition prior to the advent of structuralism and generativism, and – as already mentioned – to syntactic phenomena.

The second volume (Sections IV–VI) begins with a survey on the dominant syntactic theories and frameworks (in the Introduction to the handbook we deal with the perennial question of why we have

more than one theory (cf. 1)), and continues with a detailed description of the relationship between syntax and its major interfaces. Considering the relationship of syntax to other neighbouring disciplines, we note that, right up to the 1990s, an artificial comparison between formal models and models dealing with content was postulated, for example using the key phrase of “the autonomy of syntax”. However, it has become clear in the meantime that syntax based on formal options interacts with other components of linguistic knowledge, for example through correspondence rules or through defined interfaces. The chapters in Section V (together with the overview on Syntax and its interfaces in Section I) provide a picture of syntax as placed among the other linguistic domains.

The second volume closes with theoretical analyses of several of the aforementioned phenomena.

The third volume (Sections VII–IX) provides syntactic sketches of various languages, language types, and language families (the Bantu language family, Bora, Creole languages, Georgian, German, Hindi-Urdu, Japanese, Mandarin, Northern Straits Salish, Tagalog, and Warlpiri). It then deals with the cognitive environment of syntax, covering language acquisition, language disorders, and language processing, and finally deals with the broader role of syntax when dealing with corpora, lexicographic resources, stylistics, computational linguistics, the development of reference grammars and the documentation of (endangered) languages, and finally, what role syntax might play in the classroom.

In conclusion, this handbook highlights syntax as a mature discipline, whose state of knowledge concerning the languages of the world has rapidly increased.

This brief preface cannot and should not be concluded without an expression our gratitude to the various groups of people without whose participation this handbook would have been an even more impossible mission.

We thank our authors, which are not named here, as their articles speak for themselves.

Each article has been subjected to an anonymous review process, and individual articles as well as the handbook as a whole profited enormously from the comments and the suggestions made by these reviewers. We would like to thank Peter Ackema, Susan Bejar, Eva Belke, Adriana Belletti, Miriam Butt, Katharina Colomo, Jeroen van Craenen-broeck, Berthold Cysmann, Holger Diessel, Laura Downing, Stanley Dubinsky, Susann Fischer, Bart Geurts, Kook-Hee Gill, Michael Hahn, Hubert Haider, Daniel Hole, Joachim Jacobs, Jaklin Kornflit, Beth Levin, Terje Lohndal, Anke Lüdeling, Stefan Müller,

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Finally, a very special thank you to Alicia Katharina Börner. Without her rigorous and thoroughgoing assistance in the preparation of the final manuscripts, we would perhaps still be awaiting the publication of the handbook.

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