The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory

Edited by
Mark Baltin and Chris Collins
The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory
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Edited by Mark Baltin and Chris Collins
This book is dedicated to our families: Roberta and Amy and Atsupe, Betty and Essi who make it all worthwhile.
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Contributors

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Mark Baltin is Professor of Linguistics at New York University, where he has taught since receiving his PhD from MIT in 1978. He has written numerous articles on movement rules, ellipsis, phrase structure, and predication, which have appeared in Linguistic Inquiry and various edited volumes. He coedited, with Anthony S. Kroch, Alternative Conceptions of Phrase-Structure, and has served on the National Science Foundation’s Advisory Panel for Linguistics.

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Jeffrey S. Gruber is known for his seminal work on semantic role structure – thematic relations or “theta-theory” – stemming from his influential MIT dissertation of 1965. He has published work on thematic, lexical, and conceptual structure, as well as essays on the adoption of a universal auxiliary language. Following field research in Botswana on the Khoisan language =Hoan in the early 1970s, he held appointments as Professor and Head of Department of
Kyle Johnson teaches theoretic syntax at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and is perhaps best known for his work on word order and its relation to grammatical functions. In recent years he has been exploring the relationships between ellipses phenomena, word order variation in Germanic, and the mechanisms that assign scope to quantificational arguments.

Anthony S. Kroch is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania and a member of the University's Institute for Research in Cognitive Science. He is a specialist in problems of natural language syntax and the syntax–semantics interface. In addition to his publications in formal syntax and the syntax–semantics interface, he has done several statistical studies of the historical syntax of English, for which he designed and supervised the construction of a one-million-word parsed treebank of Middle English, the Penn–Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English, which is available to scholars world-wide.

Howard Lasnik is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Connecticut, where he has taught since receiving his PhD from MIT in 1972. He has supervised 34 completed PhD dissertations, on morphology, on language acquisition, and, especially, on syntactic theory. His main research areas are syntactic theory and the syntax–semantics interface. His publications include scores of articles and six books, the most recent being Minimalist Analysis and, with Marcela Depiante and Arthur Stepanov, Syntactic Structures Revisited: Contemporary Lectures on Classic Transformational Theory.

Giuseppe Longobardi is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Trieste, and taught previously at the University of Venice. He is the author, with Allesandra Giorgi, of The Syntax of Noun Phrases, as well as numerous articles on various aspects of the syntax and semantics of nominal expressions.

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The goal of this *Handbook* is to provide an overview to researchers and students about the current state of research in syntax, a difficult but not impossible task because the field of syntax is not monolithic: there are schools of thought, and areas of disagreement, but there are also shared assumptions among many schools of thought which we shall try to bring out below.

We decided to follow the twin paths of ecumenicalism and comprehensiveness of empirical coverage by focussing on areas of grammar for our coverage, rather than particular frameworks, of which there are several (Government Binding, Minimalism, Categorial Grammar, Lexical Functional Grammar, Head Driven Phrase Grammar). We intended no slight to these approaches and indeed while most of the chapters in this volume are written with a Minimalist/GB orientation (but not all of them), we would hope that the observations and analyses could serve as a point of departure for investigators in other frameworks.

When we first agreed to edit the *Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory* for Blackwell, we did so in order to convey to others, both in and out of the field of syntax, the fascination that we constantly feel on an almost daily basis about how restricted syntactic systems, the systems of natural language that are responsible for the construction of sentences, are in comparison to what they could be. This emphasis, and its proper characterization, have been at the forefront of syntactic research since the 1960s, when Chomsky, in 1962, noticed the following restriction on the formation of constituent questions (Chomsky 1962). Sentence (1) is ambiguous; under one interpretation, the man is in the room, and on the other, the prepositional phrase *in the room* is an adverbial modifier of the verb *see*:

(1) John saw the man in the room.

Questioning the prepositional object of *in*, however, removes the ambiguity. Only the latter interpretation of the PP is possible: