



SYLLABUS

Theoretical models in minimalist syntax

Academic year 2025-2026

1. Information about the study program

1.1. University	Babeș-Bolyai University
1.2. Faculty	The Faculty of Letters
1.3. Department	English language and literature
1.4. Field of study	Language and literature
1.5. Study cycle (BA/MA)	Master
1.6. Study programme/Qualification	Current Trends in Linguistics (DAL)
1.7. Enrolment frequency	Full time

2. Information about the subject

2.1. Course title			Theoretical models in minimalist syntax (taught in English)				Course code		LME2243		
2.2. Course tutor					Adriana Todea, PhD lecturer						
2.3. Seminar / practical course (laboratory) tutor					Adriana Todea, PhD lecturer						
2.4. Year of study		2	2.5. Semester	4	2.6. Type of assessment		E	2.7. Course status		Contents	DA
										Mandatory	DO

3. Total estimated time (teaching hours per semester)

3.1. Number of hours per week	4	of which: 3.2 course	1	3.3 seminar / practical course (laboratory)	3
3.4. Total number of hours in the curriculum	48	of which: 3.5 course	12	3.6 seminar / practical course (laboratory)	36
Allotted time for individual study (ID) and self-study activities (SA)					hours
Study based on textbook, course manual, recommended bibliography, personal notes (SA)					70
Additional research (in the library, online scientific databases/platforms, or field documentation)					43
Preparation for seminars / laboratory classes/ essays/ projects/ homework/ portfolios and reports					50
Tutoring					2
Assessment (examinations)					2
Other activities:					10
3.7. Total hours for individual study (ID) and self-study activities (SA)					177
3.8. Total hours per semester					225
3.9. Number of credits					9

4. Prerequisites (if necessary)

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4.1. curriculum	
4.2. skills	A CEFR B2 level of language proficiency in English necessary to enable a comprehensive access to course content bibliography.

5. Conditions (if necessary)

5.1. for delivering lectures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom with media equipment
5.2. for teaching seminars / practical courses (laboratory classes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom with media equipment

6. Acquired specific skills

Professional/essential skills	<p>C1 Appropriate use of fundamental concepts in the study of general linguistics, theory of literature and comparative literature.</p> <p>C2 Efficient written and oral communication in English.</p> <p>C2.2 Appropriate and ethical use of scholarly literature;</p> <p>C3 Description of the grammatical structure of the English language and its use in text production and verbal interaction;</p> <p>C3.2 Explanation of syntactical, semantic and pragmatic classifications of linguistic data, analysis of spoken and written discourse in the English language by using conceptual frameworks of theoretical linguistics;</p> <p>Linguistic analysis using specialized concepts and terminology;</p> <p>Explanation and interpretation of syntax in natural languages;</p> <p>C5 Description of the phonetic, lexical, syntactic and semantic system of the English language and its use for the text production and translation, and verbal interaction</p>
Transversal skills	<p>CT1 Using the instruments of linguistics and literary studies in accordance to professional ethics.</p> <p>CT2 Teamwork; interpersonal communication, taking on specific roles.</p>

7. Course objectives (derived from the acquired specific skills)

7.1 General objective of course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This course is for students who already have a background in linguistics and syntax and are familiar with the earlier <i>Government and Binding</i> (GB) version of Generative Grammar. It presents the <i>Minimalist Program</i> as a working research project whose technical proposals show how minimalism has replaced and rethought GB's theoretical model without changing the fundamental assumptions of Generativism, whose theoretical approach has gained in the process a larger scope. The course offers an enriched general view of the Language Faculty by adding an evolutionary background to its already fertile research grounds in Language Acquisition. The goal of this course is to equip students with enough minimalist working knowledge to enable them to pursue minimalist research on their own.
7.2 Specific objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present and discuss evidence that support the innateness hypothesis; Explain the architecture of syntactic phrases; Explain concepts such as <i>language faculty</i> and <i>Universal Grammar (UG)</i>; Have an up-to-date understanding of English syntax; Acquire a universal perspective on language acquisition and production; Acquire skills and knowledge that enable the student to use a generativist theoretical model for syntactic analysis: generate linguistic binary trees, distinguish between uninterpretable and interpretable features, identify traces of Movement operations, acquire modern perspectives on the nature of verb and noun phrases.

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8. Contents

8.1 Course	Teaching methods	Remarks
1. Language and the brain	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing.	
2. Language as an instinct	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing.	
3 Darwin's Problem.UG minimalism and the problem of language evolution: gradual vs. saltational evolution.	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing.	
4. Nativism and Child Language Acquisition. Plato's problem	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing.	
5. Properties of phrase structure: endocentricity, binary branching, single motherhood, order of merger, theta-marking, feature-checking. Syntactic operations: merger and adjunction	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing. Animated generation of binary trees	
6. Syntactic Types: unaccusativity, unergativity, transitivity, ditransitivity	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing. Animated generation of binary trees	
7. VP-shells, syntactic types and passive voice	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing. Animated generation of binary trees	
8. Basic operations: Merge & Copy vs. Move. Movement economy guidelines and constraints: Last Resort, Greed, Enlightened Self-Interest	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing. Animated generation of binary trees	
9. Control structures I. Reducing empty categories: PROs, pros, and DP-traces.	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing. Animated generation of binary trees.	
12. Reducing the levels of syntactic representation. Overt and Covert movement. Computing features instead of lexicon: Move F!	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing. Animated generation of binary trees	
11. Left periphery. The complementizer phrase: subclauses and interrogatives	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing. Animated generation of binary trees	
12. The Agree-based model	PowerPoint supported lecture: exemplification, problematizing.	
Bibliography		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guasti, Maria Teresa (2002) <i>Language Acquisition. The Growth of Grammar</i>, MIT press, Cambridge, Mass Hauser, M., N. Chomsky, and W. T. Fitch (2002) "The Language Faculty: What is it, who has it, and how did it evolve?" in <i>Science</i>, 298, 1569-1579 Hornstein, Norbert, Jairo Nunes, and Kleanthes K. Grohmann (2006) <i>Understanding Minimalism</i>, Cambridge University Press Hornstein, Norbert (2008) <i>A Theory of Syntax. Minimal Operations and Universal Grammar</i>, Cambridge University Press Radford, Andrew (2004) <i>Minimalist Syntax. Exploring the structure of English</i>, Cambridge University Press 		
8.2 Seminar / practical course (laboratory class)	Teaching methods	Remarks
1. Language and the brain	Readings due,; problem-solving task, group work, debate	
2. Language as an instinct	Readings due,; problem-solving task, group work, debate	



3 Darwin's Problem.UG minimalism and the problem of language evolution: gradual vs. saltational evolution.	Readings due,; problem-solving task, group work, debate	
4. Nativism and Child Language Acquisition. Plato's problem	Readings due,; problem-solving task, group work, debate	
5. Properties of phrase structure: endocentricity, binary branching, single motherhood, order of merger, theta-marking, feature-checking. Syntactic operations: merger and adjunction	Practical aplication of theoretical knowledge: exemplification, exercises, pair/ group/ individual work.	
6. Syntactic Types: unaccusativity, unergativity, transitivity, ditransitivity	Practical aplication of theoretical knowledge: exemplification, exercises, pair/ group/ individual work.	
7. VP-shells, syntactic types and passive voice	Practical aplication of theoretical knowledge: exemplification, exercises, pair/ group/ individual work.	
8. Basic operations: Merge & Copy vs. Move. Movement economy guidelines and constraints: Last Resort, Greed, Enlightened Self-Interest	Practical aplication of theoretical knowledge: exemplification, exercises, pair/ group/ individual work.	
9. Control structures I. Reducing empty categories: PROs, pros, and DP-traces.	Practical aplication of theoretical knowledge: exemplification, exercises, pair/ group/ individual work.	
12. Reducing the levels of syntactic representation. Overt and Covert movement. Computing features instead of lexicon: Move F!	Practical aplication of theoretical knowledge: exemplification, exercises, pair/ group/ individual work.	
11. Left periphery. The complementizer phrase: subclauses and interrogatives	Practical aplication of theoretical knowledge: exemplification, exercises, pair/ group/ individual work.	
12. The Agree-based model	Practical aplication of theoretical knowledge: exemplification, exercises, pair/ group/ individual work.	
<p>Bibliography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guasti, Maria Teresa (2002) <i>Language Acquisition. The Growth of Grammar</i>, MIT press, Cambridge, Mass • Hauser, M., N. Chomsky, and W. T. Fitch (2002) "The Language Faculty: What is it, who has it, and how did it evolve?" in <i>Science</i>, 298, 1569-1579 • Hornstein, Norbert, Jairo Nunes, and Kleanthes K. Grohmann (2006) <i>Understanding Minimalism</i>, Cambridge University Press • Hornstein, Norbert (2008) <i>A Theory of Syntax. Minimal Operations and Universal Grammar</i>, Cambridge University Press • Radford, Andrew (2004) <i>Minimalist Syntax. Exploring the structure of English</i>, Cambridge University Press 		

9. Validating course contents based on the expectations of epistemic communities, professional associations and of potential employers related to the field of study.

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- The topics discussed are based on the international bibliography in this field;
- The instructor has publications and PhD in the fields of Generative Grammar;
- Part of the aspects discussed in the course and the seminar have been presented at international or national conferences.

10. Assessment (examination)

Type of activity	10.1 Assessment criteria	10.2 Assessment methods	10.3 Weight in the final grade
10.4 Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written exam with two theoretical subjects 	Written exam	50%
10.5 Seminar/practical course (laboratory class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written exam: 2 practical subjects requiring the application of theoretical knowledge in the analysis of linguistic data: 	Written examination	50%
10.6 Basic performance standard			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student is able to understand and define the main concepts of linguistics • Basic language knowledge, correctly used • 50% correct answers 			

11. Labels ODD (Sustainable Development Goals)

	General label for Sustainable Development

Date:

Course tutor's name and signature

.....Adriana TODEA.....

Seminar tutor's name and signature /
Practical course tutor's (Laboratory tutor's)
name and signature,
.....Adriana TODEA.....

10.02.2025

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Date of approval:

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Head of Department's name and signature,

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Date of approval
Name and signature of Dean