Syllabus
Formal Syntax
(3 ECTS)

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1. CourseDescription

a. Pre-requisites

The course presupposes the knowledge of general syntax (theory of language). The course is taught in English: students need to have the level of English proficiency not lower than B2 in CEFR scheme.

b. Abstract

The *Formal Syntax* course provides an introduction to the formal study of the natural language syntax. Since the 1950s, syntactic theory has been the cornerstone of theoretical linguistics, especially within the "generative" tradition. Hierarchical syntactic structures have proven useful in analyzing various linguistic phenomena, ranging from sentence prosody to pronominal reference. In class, we will go through the major advances of modern syntactic theory and evaluate its potential and limitations. We start from the basics of the Principles and Parameters model (Chomsky 1981, 1986) and then move to the minimalist syntactic theory (Chomsky 1993 and subsequent work). The enrolled students will have access to contemporary research articles (with the focus on Russian) so that they can get used to the style of argumentation as well as to the use of different syntactic formalisms. We will pay particular attention to the explanatory power of formal syntax and the applicability of its methodology to the study of typologically diverse languages. In the best-case scenario, by the end of the course, students should be able to read and critically assess current syntactic literature, as well as apply their knowledge to various research problems in both theoretical and computational linguistics.

2. Learning Objectives

The learning objectives of the course are to introduce students to:

- theoretical apparatus, key notions, and main principles of formal generative linguistics;

- the logic of formal hypothesizing in the light of language data;
- methodological aspects of formal linguistics;
- critical thinking and reasoning within formal linguistics;

3. Learning Outcomes

After completing the course a student should:

- understand the principles of language research within formal generative linguistics;
- understand the mainconcepts and terms of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995 and subsequent work);
- be able to read and critically assess current syntactic literature;
- be able to make empirical observations and theoretical generalizations (in English);
- be able to apply their knowledge of the essentials of formal syntax to various research problems in both theoretical and computational linguistics;

4. Course Plan

1. Introduction. Course outline. The main assumptions of generative grammar – Seminar, 2h
2. Constituency, trees, and rules. Structural relations – Seminar, 2h – Test#1, multiple-choice questions, 7 min.
3. X-bar theory. Extending X-bar theory to functional categories. Theta-theory – Seminar, 4h – Written home assignment #1, 1h.
4. Binding Theory. Anaphors, pronominals and binding domains – Seminar, 2h – Written home assignment #2, 1h; test #2, multiple-choice questions, 7 min.
5. Movement: head-to-head movement, wh-movement, DP movement–Seminar, 4h – Test #3, multiple-choice questions, 7 min.
7. Raising & control. Control Theory – Seminar, 4h – Written home assignment #3, 1h.
8. Ergativity. Unaccusative predicates – Seminar, 4h
9. A unified theory of movement. Agreement. – Seminar, 4h – Written home assignment #4, 1h; test #4, multiple-choice questions, 7 min.
10. Split projections. Ellipsis – Seminar, 4h
11. Minimalism. Phases – Seminar, 2h
12. Student presentations – Seminar, 4h.

Total: Seminars 36h.

5. Reading list
   a. Required
Carnie, A. (2013) *Syntax: A generative introduction. Third edition.* Oxford: Blackwell.

   b. Optional
Koeneman, O. & H.Zeijlstra (2017) Introducing syntax. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

      c. InRussian:

Тестелец Я. Г. (2001) Введение в общий синтаксис. М.: Издательство РГГУ.

6. Grading System

Type of grading	Type of work	Characteristics in modules 1 and 2		
		Module 1	Module 2	
Continuous	Assigned reading	X	X	Reading tasks for seminars.
	Written home assignments	X	X	Analyzing problem sets.
	Class participation	X	X	Short tests on the main concepts of the course at the beginning of the class.
Final	Exam		X	Oral presentation of a paper demonstrating deeper understanding of the logic and concepts of generative grammar.

Continuous assessment: in the tests and home assignments students have to demonstrate their acquaintance with the basic facts, concepts, and notions in formal studies of language. When solving problem sets students have to demonstrate their ability to apply concepts and theories discussed in class to a given set of data. By the end of the course students are expected to be able to apply their knowledge in their independent work on topics in linguistics.

Final assessment: students have to demonstrate the knowledge of the theoretical concepts, their command of analysing problems using methods of formal generative linguistics, and their ability to understand and interpret these problems.
All grades will be given on the ten-point scale.

7. ExaminationType

The final grade (**G_f**) for the course is the sum of the following elements:

G_f=0.05 * Test#1 + 0.05 * Test#2 + 0.05 * Test#3 + 0.05 * Test#4 + 0.1 * HA#1 + 0.1 * HA#2 + 0.1 * HA#3 + 0.1 * HA#4 + 0.3 * FP + 0.1 * Q

HA = Written home assignment
FP = Final presentation, prepared in groups of two (the presenter outlines the main arguments in favour of the analysis, the discussant presents problems and alternative approaches)
Q = Participation in the discussions of peers' presentations

All tests have 10 questions, if all 10 are answered correctly, the grade is 10. If none or just one is answered correctly, the grade is 1. If a student missed a test, the grade is 0.

Written home assignments are graded as follows:
- If all the tasks are completed and the choices made are explained in full, the grade is 10.
- If all the tasks are completed, but there are some minor shortcomings (e.g. typos), the grade is 9.
- If all the tasks are completed, but there is a mistake or a flaw in the argumentation (i. e. one point is mentioned, but the other is not), the grade is 8.
- If the tasks are completed correctly, but only some of the choices are explained, the grade is 7.
- If the tasks are completed, but only some of the choices are explained plus there are one or two mistakes in the argumentation, the grade is 6.
- If the tasks are completed, but the argumentation provided is far from complete and it is not clear whether the author understands what she writes, the grade is 5.
- If the tasks are not completed, but the author really tried, the grade is 4.
- If the tasks are not completed in full and there is no argumentation, the grade is 3.

Answers to HA should be submitted within a week after they were assigned (i.e. before the beginning of the next class). The deadline is hard, answers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The grades are rounded in favour of the student.

Table of Grade Accordance

Ten-point Grading Scale	Five-point Grading Scale	
1 - very bad 2 – bad 3 – no pass	no pass – 2	**FAIL**
4 – pass 5 – highly pass	pass – 3	**PASS**
6 – good 7 – very good	good – 4	
8 – almost excellent 9 – excellent 10 – perfect	excellent – 5	

The only element that can be redone if failed is the final presentation. In this case a student has to select a new paper for presentation and prepare the presentation within the two weeks (or before the end of the exam period, depending what happens first).
During *the re-examination*, the student has no option of obtaining additional mark to heighten the grade for current or intermediate controls.

The resultant grade for the course goes to the certificate of Bachelor's degree.

8. Methods of Instruction

The following educational technologies are used in the study process:
- group discussions and analysis of the results of home reading;
- group discussions and analysis of task problems;

To excel in this course a student should attend seminars and complement it by reading the relevant chapters of the textbook before the next lecture (or, at the very least, skimming through the slides).

As the course progresses, more and more complex ideas are introduced building on the knowledge and understanding of the notions explained previously. This means that if a student failed to learn the facts from seminars 1 to 4, understanding the contents of seminar 5 and further will prove challenging.

9. Special Equipment and Software Support (if required)

The course requires a laptop and a projector.