Introduction to Linguistics
handout 5

SYNTAX

The number and length of sentences is infinite → need for deductive definition instead of enumeration (sentences).

PRINCIPLES AND PARAMETERS, UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR

Earlier structuralist approach: languages can vary in unpredictable ways, seems to be wrong. The central role of rule-formation, overgeneralisation as evidence for it. Genetic background: language faculty, universal properties of language expected/predicted.

Sound (phonological structure) & meaning (semantic structure) are not directly relatable, have to be encoded on different levels: intermediate (syntactic) levels.

Syntax relates form and meaning

Simple rules can produce complex phenomena if they interact in complex ways: e.g. chess.

X-BAR THEORY: the structure-building module

A module of the Principles and Parameters model containing three very simple rewrite rules to describe the structure of the expressions of a language:

1. the specifier rule: XP → Specifier X'
2. the complement rule: X' → X Complement
3. the adjunct rule (optional, recursive): XP → XP, Adjunct

Functional and lexical categories: same structure everywhere.

Lexical noun: nouns	Functional nouns:	determiners, pronouns
Lexical verbs: verbs	Functional verbs:	inflections (past *–ed*, present *–s*, infinitival *to*, modals)

**Student arrived*. → functional information missing from nominal expression
**The student arrive*. → functional information missing from the verb

In order to form a minimal sentence nouns have to be specified for definiteness, verbs for finiteness. Zero forms!

Structure and movement: at times the same constituent belongs to more than one position, appears only once in the structure with a trace in the original position.

What$_i$ *did you say* t_i?