LING 204R: Headedness

Instructor: Adam Roth Singerman

This syllabus is up-to-date as of: September 21, 2021.

1   Important information

my name:	Adam Roth Singerman
how I prefer to be addressed:	Adam
my pronouns:	he/him/his
how you should contact me:	`adamsingerman@fas.harvard.edu`
when we'll be meeting:	Mondays, 12:45 to 2:45
where we'll be meeting:	Sever Hall 213
prerequisites:	LING 112 (Syntactic Theory I) or equivalent,
	or permission of the instructor

2   Course description

HEADEDNESS is a fundamental point of variation explored by typologists and theoreticians alike. At the most basic level, variation in headedness gives us the difference between prepositions and postpositions and between object-verb verb phrases and verb-object ones. But how diverse can languages be with regards to headedness? Are there any constraints on its variation? If so, what is the nature of those constraints? Is headedness subject to extralinguistic influences, such as genealogical or areal biases?

This seminar will approach the issue of headedness from several different angles. We begin by asking how headedness is conceived of in the functional-typological tradition. Beginning with typology is important since the largest crosslinguistic databases that touch on issues of headedness have come out of that tradition. Next, we'll ask how formal morphosyntactic theories have dealt with variation in headedness. This will bring us to Linear Correspondence Axiom of Kayne (1994), which remains controversial almost thirty years after it was first proposed. Regardless of where you ultimately come down on the LCA, Kayne's ideas have been very influential in Minimalist work on headedness and so we have to take it seriously.

We will also consider whether attested variation in headedness may be best explained by factors outside of the syntax proper – namely, processing/performance biases and genealogical/areal influences. An especially interesting line of research asks to what degree the typol-

ogy of headedness should be explained via diachronic mechanisms. Given our Department's strength in historical linguistics, and given my own interest in diachronic explanations for synchronic typology, I hope to spend a good amount of time on this question.

3   Grading and expectations

Your grade will be based on the following three components:

1. Participating during in-class discussions and contributing posts to the Canvas site
   33% of final grade

2. Leading at least one in-class discussion
   33% of final grade

3. Completing an original research paper or an alternative final project
   34% of final grade

Because the texts we read can get difficult, you'll be asked to post a question or comment to the Canvas website responding to each text. These posts do not need to be long; a paragraph or two is appropriate. The idea behind the posts is to get you to think critically about the readings and to engage with them in a substantive way. You'll be asked to post to Canvas by 12:45 in the afternoon the day before class is held; that way, everyone will have a full day to read the posts.

Each week a student will lead discussion on one of the readings. (My plan is to pair each of you with a reading that you're especially interested in.) As the discussion leader, you will need to prepare a handout or presentation. I'll provide you with a template for what a good handout should look like.

For the research paper / final propery, various options are available for you to choose from. You can take a look at several readings beyond those assigned on this syllabus and compare them in depth to one another, testing their effectiveness in accounting for a specific set of data. You can also take a more descriptive/analytic approach, beginning with a particular empirical puzzle and examining the broader ramifications for the theory of headedness. If you have other ideas, just let me know. The hope is that the final project will be an opportunity for you to investigate issues related to headedness in whatever language(s) you are researching. If you are already working on a project (say, an article manuscript or a dissertation chapter) that is related to the issue of headedness, you are encouraged to present on that work for feedback in this seminar. **Please get in touch with me by week 6 (at the latest) to let me know what you're planning for the final project.**

4   <u>Stress reduction measures</u>

The last year and a half have been especially draining and difficult. I want this seminar to be a refreshing return to in-person classes, rather than a new source of stress. To that end, I'd like to

make the following pledges to you:

1. I won't throw readings or assignments at you at the last minute.

2. I won't e-mail you after normal work hours or on the weekends.

3. I will aim to be accommodating if seminar-external factors interfere with your ability to complete a particular task or assignment by the predetermined date.

4. I will address as you as you wish to be addressed, and will refer to you using your preferred pronouns.

5. **I will abide by the University's public health protocols (especially mask wearing).**

In return, I'd like to request that you agree to:

1. Do your best to complete all your seminar-related responsibilities on time.

2. Give me sufficient heads-up if any seminar-external factors should get in the way of you completing #1.

3. Treat everyone in our class with respect and patience, including using preferred form of address and preferred pronouns.

4. **Abide by the University's public health protocols (especially mask wearing).**

5 Some important dates

I am hoping to move swiftly through the first two units given in Section 6 ('The basic typology of headedness' and 'Formal approaches to headedness before Minimalism') so as to leave as much time as possible to discuss the Linear Correspondence Axiom (Kayne 1994), the Final-over-Final Condition/Constraint (Holmberg 2000, Biberauer et al. 2014, Sheehan et al. 2017, a.o.), and diachronic approaches to explaining the typology of headedness (Aristar 1991, Whitman 2008, Whitman and Ono 2017, a.o.). How we divide up the readings on a week-by-week basis will be determined in great part by your interests.

Here are some important University dates we'll need to keep in mind:

- Wednesday, September 1st: first day of the fall semester

- Monday, September 6th: no class meeting because of Labor Day

- Monday, October 11th: no class meeting because of Indigenous Peoples' Day

- Monday, November 29th: last meeting before reading period / finals period

We'll be meeting exceptionally on September 1st (the first day of the fall semester, which will follow a Monday rather than Wednesday schedule). I'll use that class meeting to talk about the overall structure of the course, to introduce some basic concepts that we'll need to be familiar with going forward, and to ask for volunteers for different readings.

6   Readings

There is *far* too much literature out there on headedness for us to read and discuss in a single semester. So we'll only read a subset of the work listed here. For convenience's sake, I've divided the reading list into thematic units; we'll address these in the order they've been listed here. **All readings will either be accessible through the Harvard Library website or be made available on Canvas. You don't need to buy any books for this class.**

6.1   The basic typology of headedness

What is the basic distribution of head-initial and head-final patterns in the world's languages? To what extent do those patterns make reliable predictions about other aspects of a language's grammar?

Key readings:

- Greenberg 1963
- Dryer 1992
- Primus 2001
- Song 2012 (selected chapters)

Optional readings:

- Hawkins 1979
- Hawkins 1982

6.2   Formal approaches to headedness before Minimalism

How was headedness conceived of and accounted for prior to the advent of Minimalism? What data were researchers seeking to account for, and how successful were their analyses?

Readings:

- Muysken 1983
- Travis 1984 (selections)
- Travis 1989
- Mulder and Sybesma 1992

6.3   The Linear Correspondence Axiom & the reactions to it

According to Kayne's Linear Correspondence Axiom, all phrase structure is underlying Spec-Head-Comp; hence any and all cases of head-finality have to be derived via extra movement steps from a deep head-initial structure. Unsurprisingly, this proposal has led to a significant

amount of debate and has been polarizing. (We could spend the entire semester unpacking the formal apparatus that Kayne and his acolytes develop.)

Some LCA-friendly / pro-LCA readings:
- Kayne 1994 (selections)
- Zwart 1997
- Koopman and Szabolcsi 2000 (selected chapters only; should be paired with the detailed review by Barbiers 2002)
- Haegeman 2001
- Carstens 2002
- Aboh 2004 (selected chapters only; but see also Aboh 2020, which critiques FOFC in light of Gbe data)
- Koopman 2005 (to be read as a reply to Sells 1995, which is strongly lexicalist)
- Cinque 2005 (must be paired with responses by Abels and Neeleman 2012, Neeleman 2017, and Dryer 2018)
- López 2009
- Kayne 2013

Some LCA-skeptical / anti-LCA readings:[1]
- Kural 1997
- Büring and Hartmann 1997
- Bayer 1999
- Haider 2000 & Haider 2005
- Hróarsdóttir 2000
- Takita 2009
- Abels and Neeleman 2012 & Neeleman 2017
- Elordieta 2013
- Öztürk 2013a & Öztürk 2013b
- Halm 2021

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[1]Some of these authors aim to refine rather than refute Kayne's proposal, and in this sense their work could be seen as LCA-friendly. I use the label 'LCA-skeptical' to refer to works that posit *any* underlyingly head-final syntactic structure, since such structure runs counter to Kayne's hypothesis that all phrase structure is underlyingly Spec-Head-Comp.

6.4 The Final-over-Final Constraint / Condition

One of the most productive areas of research in recent years into morphosyntactic headedness concerns whether head-initial and head-final patterns are equally capable of embedding one another. The literature on this topic is growing fast. We start with Holmberg (2000) and work from there.

Foundational readings on FOFC:

- Holmberg 2000

- Biberauer et al. 2014

- Sheehan et al. 2017 (selected chapters)

Background on Extended Projections (used by Biberauer et al. 2014 to explain FOFC)

- Grimshaw 2000 & Grimshaw 2005

Some case studies and critique:

- Cecchetto 2013

- Hawkins 2013 (pair this with the critique by Sheehan 2013)

- Hawkins 2014 (selections)

- Biberauer 2017

- Chan 2013 & Erlewine 2017[2]

- Etxepare and Haddican 2017

- Julien 2017 (there's really fascinating North Sámi data in this chapter)

- Aboh 2020

- Kusmer 2020 (this recent paper uses phonological constraints to derive the word order typology; I am very much looking forward to reading it this semester!)

- Clem 2020

- Singerman 2021

- Simpson 2021

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[2]Since I know nothing about the syntax of Sinitic languages, I am not able to evaluate the empirical claims that underlie Chan and Erlewine's arguments. I must note, though, that the Chinese facts mentioned in the FOFC debate have been heavily critiqued: Pan and Paul 2016, Paul and Pan 2017, Pan 2018, 2020. **If any student in this class works on Mandarin/Cantonese syntax and would like to present on this set of papers, that would be great!**

6.5 Diachrony and processing

Certain non-formalist means of capturing headedness patterns (including but not limited to FOFC) have been proposed in recent years. We conclude the course by considering several of these approaches. How do they fare as far as the typological landscape is concerned? Could FOFC be satisfactorily explained through historical or processing-driven explanations?

Key readings:

- Aristar 1991

- Whitman 2008 & Whitman and Ono 2017

- Hawkins 2014 (selected chapters only)

Readings focused on diachronic stability/instability w.r.t. headedness

- É Kiss 2013

- É Kiss 2014 (selected chapters)

- Djamouri and Paul 2019

- Bell 2019 (might be worth consulting his dissertation, as well: Bell 2017)

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