



# Understanding Syntax (Understanding Language)

By Maggie Tallerman

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Assuming no prior knowledge, *Understanding Syntax* illustrates the major concepts, categories and terminology associated with the study of cross-linguistic syntax. A theory-neutral and descriptive viewpoint is taken throughout. Starting with an overview of what syntax is, the book moves on to an explanation of word classes (such as noun, verb, adjective) and then to a discussion of sentence structure in the world's languages. Grammatical constructions and relationships between words in a clause are explained and thoroughly illustrated, including grammatical relations such as subject and object; function-changing processes such as the passive and antipassive; case and agreement processes, including both ergative and accusative alignments; verb serialization; head-marking and dependent-marking grammars; configurational and non-configurational languages; questions and relative clauses. The final chapter explains and illustrates the principles involved in writing a brief syntactic sketch of a language, enabling the reader to construct a grammatical sketch of a language known to them. Data from approximately 100 languages appears in the text, with languages representing widely differing geographical areas and distinct language families. The book will be essential for courses in cross-linguistic syntax, language typology, and linguistic fieldwork, as well as for basic syntactic description.

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#### Review

"The fourth edition of *Understanding Syntax* is a thorough and accessible introduction to the major syntactic concepts and constructions in the world's languages. It is one of the most versatile textbooks I have ever encountered: it provides a solid basis in syntactic typology and theory in a friendly and informal style that works very well for students with no background in linguistics, while also being an eye-opener for students who have studied some syntax but are aware only of patterns and categories that are familiar from European languages. This textbook should be on the reading list for all introductory syntax courses."

Mary Dalrymple, Oxford University, UK

"This new edition is just as sparkingly written as ever; it gives students a real flavour of the richness of the syntax of human languages, as well as a clear, engaging explanation of the fundamental concepts needed to understand this core aspect of language."

David Adger, Queen Mary University of London, UK

#### About the Author

**Maggie Tallerman** is Professor of Linguistics at Newcastle University, UK.

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