

Olga Mišeska Tomić, *Syntax and Syntaxes: The Generative Approach to English Sentence Analysis*; Savremena administracija, Beograd, 1987.

Olga Mišeska Tomić, professor of English Linguistics at the Universities of Skopje nad Novi Sad, has written a well-organised survey of major syntactical issues in the generative approach in general and as it applies to English sentence grammar. It is a well-researched book with an astonishing amount of information, readily comprehensible to the language student, for whom it is principally aimed. The author skilfully conducts the reader through quite complex matters, carefully avoiding confusion between simplification and distortion. The main aim of the book, as outlined in the brief Preface, is to expose the assumptions and problems involved in the conceptualisation of the issues rather than the technical, theory-internal formalizations. This is by no means a simple task and for most of the ground covered the author has had to construct the emerging picture from a patchwork of specialized contributions to individual aspects of English sentence construction.

The INTRODUCTION (pp. 13—20) helps to set the historical background to the rise of the generative approach: why it emerged, how it relates to the traditional and structuralist grammar and what sustains it. By juxtaposing the traditional teaching grammar with the structuralist approach the reader is made aware, not only of the changed fortune of syntax in linguistic description, but also of one of the most outstanding features of contemporary linguistic thought: the endeavour to construct the grammar of a language as a system of empirically verifiable hypotheses. It is the construction of such models of the possible ways one can interpret language facts that forms the main theme of the book. The distinction is drawn between the taxonomic models, which are rooted in the positivist empiricist inquiry into the seemingly infinite diversity of natural languages, and the mentalist, hypothetical-deductive generative ones, seeking to establish properties common to all languages. To avoid the error of prescriptive teaching grammars in imposing a Latin grammatical system on the language investigated, the former approach concentrated on language-specific facts, arrived at by objective techniques performed upon a corpus, whereas the latter revives the mediæval interest in language universals of the *modistae*'s speculative grammar.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part, SYNTACTIC PRIMITIVES (pp. 23—70), is a careful and meticulous introduction to linguistic terminology, starting with a layman's definition of technical terms and systemically progressing towards the generally accepted use by the *cognoscenti*. Different terms for what may at first appear to newcomers to the field to be one and the same concept are

thoughtfully illustrated. (The term “primitive“, as it is central to the generative paradigm in its relation to the psychological reality of linguistic constructs, may perhaps have merited some discussion.) The rediscovered Saussurian dichotomy between substance and form distinguishes the grammarian’s use of the term “sentence“ (context-independent, abstract sentence type) from “utterance“ (context-dependent manifestation of the former, a sentence token) and the philosopher’s “proposition“ (the entity whose truth or falsehood is to be established). Having firmly established the distinction between a sentence type and the many uses it may be put to, the author goes on to demonstrate hierarchically ordered constituent relationships between sentence, clause and phrase, their classes and internal structures. In addition to making sure that the reader’s understanding of fundamental syntactic concepts is clear, the carefully selected illustrations teach the more observant reader an even more important lesson: the list of theoretical constructs is not a random one: each one of them represents a feat of the human intellect as shown by the history of linguistics; the need for each and every category must be demonstrated by the role it is assumed to have in providing a satisfying explanation. The author’s approach to sentence structure combines three levels of description: its constituents are discussed from the functional (subject, predicate, object...), semantic (agent, patient, goal...) as well as communicative (theme vs. rheme) point of view. Departures from the prototypical sentence type, where the sentence propositionally refers to the human agency of a physical event, the grammatical role of the subject being coextensive with the agent as well as the theme, are carefully noted and exemplified. The reader, particularly if a native speaker of a Slavonic language, will appreciate the author’s discussion of the communicative function of the English passive voice as compared with the so-called “free word order“ in the Slavonic languages and the related question of formal subjects. (Whether or not one takes issue with the observation that “the Slavonic languages do not need formal subjects“ (p. 53 fn. 2; cf. also p. 62) depends, naturally, on the cut of one’s linguistics cloth. Linguists working in Chomsky’s parameter-and-principle approach address the problem of the ommissibility of communicatively unmarked pronominal subjects within a much wider context of the predictability of type and content of unexpressed categories.) The first part concludes with a lucid exposition of such generally recognised concepts as syntagmatic/paradigmatic relations (giving rise to the concepts of class and structure), dependency and constituency relations and their notational conventions. Familiarity with them is essential for a correct understanding of some of the differences between the generative approaches discussed later: part-whole constituency relationships as determined by American structuralism underlie N. Chomsky’s early versions of rewrite systems of phrase-structure building rules and structure-dependent transformational rules; constituency relations combined with an explicit recognition of the need for syntactic functions in J. Bresnan’s lexical-functional grammar or P. Postal’s relational grammar, and more European-based dependency relations in P. Sgall’s communicative grammar.

It is with *ESSENTIALS OF THE GENERATIVE APPROACH TO SENTENCE ANALYSIS* (pp. 73—163) that the actual inquiry into the construction of generative grammars starts. The fundamental aim of a generative grammar is to suggest

descriptively adequate accounts of language data such they can be incorporated into a theory of language acquisition, language use and language change. This is to be accomplished by providing a system of interrelated, explicit statements (rules, principles, categories...) relating sound to meaning. A generative grammar therefore includes three major components: phonological, syntactic and semantic. The hypothesized rules are the linguists' attempts to capture the unconscious knowledge we have of (our) language. The disagreements among the various trends in the generativist school of thought start with decisions as to which language data constitute significant language facts to be dealt with by a generative grammar as a model of the speaker's linguistic competence rather than performance, and secondly, where in the overall organization of a generative grammar should the observed regularity be best accounted for. Any survey of the rise and growth of the generative grammar cannot but leave the impression that past solutions tend to turn into future problems, if they have been made explicit enough and relate to what are considered to be significant language facts, when extended to cover larger areas of research.

Among the basic concepts of the generativist inquiry into language structure the concept of "generation" is elucidated first: "to predict what could be a sentence of a given language or to specify what are the possible sentences of that language" (p. 73). The sentences generated by the rules are grammatical sentences; they may but do not necessarily coincide with the sentences that the native speaker finds acceptable or meaningful. The rules themselves should allow for the generation of sentences the speaker knows to belong to his language (observationally adequate rules); furthermore, the formalization of the rules should express significant generalizations about the language investigated (descriptive adequacy) as well as language in general (explanatory adequacy). The author then continues by giving the reader a first glimpse into the organization of a generative grammar and the division of labour between its components. Presentation of the two rule types, phrase structure and transformational rules, rests essentially on N. Chomsky's earliest and standard versions, although more recent advances made in the extended standard model are also mentioned. Included among them are the  $\bar{X}$ -theory as a general theory of syntactic constituents replacing earlier phrase-structure rules; conditions on transformations heralding the change from construction-specific transformational rules to universal constraints on the generalized class of movement rules and their links to the theory of bound anaphora. This is combined with the insights of the generative semanticists (for instance C. Fillmore's case grammar, decomposition of lexical items into semantic primitives by McCawley, P. Postal's relational grammar), J. Bresnan's lexical-functional approach and P. Sgall's communicative grammar. Lucid and thoroughly useful is the author's survey of divergent conceptualisations of deep structure (pp. 84—112).

The last part of the book, *TOPICS IN THE GENERATIVE SYNTAX OF THE ENGLISH SENTENCE* (pp. 167—299), provides a balanced account of six very broad fields of English sentence grammar which have most frequently attracted the generativist's attention: passive, negation, interrogation, relativization, nominalization, conjoining and pronominalization. The author's treatment of each starts with a carefully selected range a language data that were at first believed to lend

themselves very naturally to a transformational derivation, and then proceeds by showing its inadequacies as the early solutions began to be tested on an ever increasing amount of evidence, inter- and intra-linguistically. Data from the author's mother tongue, Macedonian, as well as Serbo-Croatian are also brought to the reader's attention to demonstrate the merits or shortcomings of the suggested explanation. Derivational steps of the early versions of the transformational-generative grammar, which more recent writings may still refer to but no longer make explicit (such as "do" — support, affix shift, placement of "not"...), are presented with meticulous care, so that the reader should have little difficulty in pursuing later developments on his own.

In the early days of the generative grammar, the active-passive relation (THE PASSIVE, pp. 167—183) was part of a standard demonstration of the need for a transformational level of sentence analysis. The passive transformation avoided the repetition of context-sensitive rewriting rules inserting lexical items into syntactic structures. Instead of having two context-sensitive insertion rules to account for the observation that active object NPs can also be found as passive subject NPs, the transformational solution required a single statement of the selection restrictions, i.e. the distribution of appropriate NPs in the active sentence structure. In the Aspect version, the suggestion that the active-passive relation was to be dealt with transformationally retained its strength with the Katz-Postal thesis that transformations leave meaning unchanged. However, evidence soon started accumulating which cast doubt on each of the standard assumptions. There are linguists who no longer agree with the view that passive is to be conceived of as a unitary phenomenon of universal grammar, at the same time undermining the belief that there is a significant generalization to be attained in dividing transformational rules into those that apply only inter-sententially and others that are not so constrained. Their disagreement is supported by the fact that the promotion of object NPs to the subject position need not entail passivization of the verb (cf. "The soup is easy to make," "Bureaucrats bribe easily," or the "se"-passive in Slovene: "Brale so se dobre knjige"). On the other hand, neither does the passive verb form necessarily entail object advancement (cf. "It is believed that he writes poems"). Likewise, it is not intuitively obvious whether the passive rule, if retained, should not rather be defined on the semantic role of the moved NP or its grammatical function. It is evident that NPs bearing rather diverse participant roles can be affected. Notice for example the promotion of the respective roles of experiencer, locative, beneficiary and patient in "John was saddened by her behaviour," "This bed has been slept in," "John was given a present," "John was killed in the war". Additionally, movement may even affect idiomatic NPs with no easily recognizable semantic role whatsoever (cf. "Heed must be paid to urban problems"). The English passive promotes to subject position not only direct object but also indirect and prepositional objects and even some (ill-understood) adverbial material (cf. "My plate has been eaten out of," "This village has been lived in by many people"). Consequently, several solutions are being put forward in an attempt to account for the active-passive relation either in the transformational part of syntax and/or lexicon or in the phrase structure component. N. Chomsky and his followers still adhere to the transformational approach: the post-

verbal NP is promoted as part of the "blind" application of the generalized movement rule, its obligatory nature and the landing site of the affected NP are made to follow from independently motivated principles of theta, case and binding theories.

The section on NEGATION (pp. 184—192) surveys the transformational placement of the negative operator "not" and the behaviour of indefinite pronouns under negation (shown to be different from Macedonian, cf. fn. 1, p. 190). Mention is made of phrasal vs. sentential negation and negation vs. inherently negative lexical items. Interrogativization (QUESTIONS, pp. 193—205) presents elementary transformational operations in the derivation of verbal and wh-interrogatives. In the generation of the former (as in "Didn't Marina see the performance?" (4), p. 195) a systematic account is given of such steps as the placement of the negative operator "not", the introduction of the periphrastic "do", the "not" contraction, subject NP — tense inversion and the affix shift. The treatment of wh-questions introduces, among other topics, N. Chomsky's hypothesis of the repeated Comp-to-Comp movement in embedded interrogatives and the phenomenon of stranded prepositions. The reader may perhaps have been alerted to the idiosyncratic and as yet unpredictable nature of the long wh-movement (cf. "Who did you say was coming tonight?" vs. "\*What did John complain that he had to do?") The discussion of the that-t phenomenon (as in: "\*Who did you say that was coming tonight?") is, of course, beyond the scope of an introductory textbook, but the binding requirements for the anaphoric trace in the emptied deep structure position of the moved wh-element are mentioned. The movement of wh-elements into clause initial position takes place also in the derivation of relative clauses (RELATIVIZATION, pp. 206—230). Having established the traditional semantic and syntactic properties of restrictive, non-restrictive and free relatives, the author goes on to sum up the more influential transformational attempts at capturing their similarities and differences. The derivation of restrictive relatives through the generalized movement rule is discussed first, although greater weight is placed upon the standard relativization transformation of the 60s in order to bring into the open the many problems which a satisfying account of relativization should solve. Among these problems the author mentions: the constituency of the NP containing a restrictive relative clause; stacked and right-branching recursive relative structures; reduction of relatives and adjective preposing; the relation between relative and cleft sentences and derivation of nonrestrictive relatives from conjoined sentence structures. The early, transformational treatment of nominal clauses (NOMINALIZATION, pp. 231—260) incorporated the traditional observation that not only NPs but also clauses can assume typical nominal functions, hence the suggestion that they be embedded under the NP node. The NP dominance above the embedded nominal clause is retained throughout the discussion; perhaps greater emphasis could have been placed on the problematical nature of the assumed [<sub>NP</sub> it  $\bar{S}$ ] internal structure of the embedded nominal clauses as regards the dominating NP node and the suggested sentencehood of non-finite constructions (but cf. pp. 256—257). The presentation of derivational steps relies on a survey of major insights provided by such early, transformational accounts in terms of fact-deletion, it-extraposition, complementizer placement, equi-NP deletion and NP raising, combined with the more recent interpretative approaches to the predictability of the un-

derstood, unexpressed subjects of infinitival constituents. A minor objection that could be raised relates to the author's choice of verbs illustrating verb classes with infinitival complements. "Expect" in "I expect to win the race" (20b), p. 243) is not the most persuasive example with which to illustrate to the uninitiated reader the statement that "[t]hose subjects of embedded clauses which are referentially equivalent to the subjects of their matrix clauses do not appear in surface structure [...]" as the coreferential subject may nevertheless be retained (cf. "I expected myself to be the winner"; cf. also p. 248—249). "Believe" is for instance a paradigm example of a two-place predicate where deletion of the coreferential subject in the infinitival complement never takes place ("\*I believe to be honest," cf. p. 255). "Wish" in "Many people wish them to be silent" is first introduced as an illustration of a two-place subject-to-object raising predicate (cf. (27), p. 246), yet later discussion treats it as a three-place equi-NP deletion verb (cf. (30), p. 247). Perhaps something more could have been said on the complementizer "for" and the effect of interrogation on the interpretation of the understood subject of infinitives. A more general picture would have emerged if the discussion has not been restricted to sentential complementation of verbs; however, it is unreasonable to expect details when such a vast area of research is being presented. As the author herself observes, CONJOINING (pp. 268—283) has somewhat faded into the background of the generativists' attention. Her treatment is, accordingly, informative about the topics that have come under the scope of conjoining in the heyday of transformationalism. The reader is given a taste of the argumentation involved in separating sentential from phrasal conjunction with the exemplification of such transformational steps as gapping, left and right node raising ("She bought an apple and he an orange," "Mary and John like books," "Mary likes books and tennis"). Insights of the generative semanticists into the so-called „respective(ly)“ sentences (whereby the underlying string "John bought a bike and Mary sold a book" would be transformed into "John and Mary bought and sold a bike and a book respectively") and sentences containing symmetric predicates are surveyed as well. The final section (PRONOMINALIZATION, pp. 284—299) is devoted to the early transformational treatment of pronouns, where lexically specified NPs were substituted by pronouns, personal or reflexive, depending on the structurally computed distance between the lexical and the pronominalized NPs. The reader will become familiar with the distinctions between strong vs. weak pronominalization (resting on Lakoff's differentiation of identity of sense and identity of reference), and forward vs. backward pronominalization (depending on the position of the pronominalized NP relative to its antecedent). The discussion concludes with a brief survey of the basic notions employed in the government-and-binding theory of referential dependency of pronominal and anaphoric expressions.

Each of the 16 units contains a list of assignments for the reader and a reading list. In addition to the subject (pp. 321—327) and author (pp. 328—329) indexes, the book provides a very extensive Bibliography (pp. 303—319). The untutored reader, however, working through the book on his own might have welcomed suggestions for further, advanced reading of original works, particularly as they are excluded from the reading lists. The main purpose of the book is not to evaluate, but to inform the reader about generative linguistic theory and how it applies to selected

aspects of English sentence grammar. However, in the assignment pages, a greater weight could perhaps have been given to comparable data from the reader's mother tongue. I believe that it is only when one tries to construct a generative description of a fragment of one's own mother tongue that one can begin to appreciate how many bridges must be built and crossed before the first, however crude, partial or inaccurate, picture starts to emerge. One soon also learns how non-explicit and non-exhaustive the descriptions of the traditional teaching grammar may turn out to be.

Typing errors are remarkably few. Among those that may give rise to misunderstanding, the following can be mentioned: p. 61, (9b) should read "This young baby doesn't cry very often," in the text the verb "cry" is erroneously referred as the head of the adverb "often"; p. 105, reference to example (1d) in the text should actually refer to (1e), similarly for the imperative illustration (p. 136, (15) and not (5) as suggested); p. 212, structural tree (10b) should show the relative clause embedded under the matrix subject NP; p. 234, although deletion of the "nominalizer" "that" is admittedly a poorly understood area, its deletion does not apply in sentence initial subject clause, contrary to what appears to be implied in the text.

One of the most tantalising decisions the author of an introductory book on an often forbiddingly complicated area of research has to make is the decision what to include and how simplification is to be attained. The latter has to be achieved for clarity of exposition, yet always seems to require a lengthy footnote. Olga Mišeska Tomić's SYNTAX AND SYNTAXES is systematic enough to address the linguistically naive beginner as well as the more advanced reader seeking a simple guide to the generative approach. One impression the book will leave with the reader is that there is no such thing as THE generative grammar of the English (or any other) language. There are, instead, individual trends of generativist thought that have been applied, with varying degrees of success and insight, to some of the fields of the English language. It is true that one can be sceptically dismissive of some of the solutions that have made their appearance in the literature over the past three decades, nevertheless even an introductory book will convince its reader that contempt for and ignorance of the goals set by generative grammar are unfounded.