

LESSON THREE IN LINGUISTICS

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(to group 1,2,3,4,5&6)

SYNTAX

INTRODUCTION

The study of the grammatical aspect of language dates back to ancient times .Aristotle was regarded the father of grammar in the western world His teacher Plato divided the sentence (the maximal unit of language) into **actor** and **action** (today it is referred to by the **binary nature** of language).

Aristotle subdivided the sentence further ,naming eight parts of speech noun ,verb ,adjective& so forth (word classes becoming the basis for higher units construction :the units of syntax)

The stoics also made a remarkable contribution .They identified four vital aspects of language : **Tense** (present ,past) **voice** (active &passive) **Mood** (indicative ,imperative, interrogative ...) and **Case** (direct & indirect speech)

This early progress allowed the analysis of the words of a sentence according to **parts of speech** known as **parsing** .

Modern time linguists like D.Crystal (p115) believe parsing had an ill and good effect .We will follow in the development of this course how its drawbacks were contested in modern time urging language research to take the course of a viable science .Likewise ,the post renaissance period (the age of reason)marked the beginning of prescriptive grammar .The Italian academy Della Crusca was the first to teach prescribed rules of correct usage (F.West p25) Decades later prescriptive grammar was rejected (Why ? please see details in your first term course)A great number of eminent scholars (namely W.Whitney ,F.Boas ,E.Sapir ,O.jesperson ,C.Fries and F.DeSaussure)all favoured and encouraged strongly the description of language as it is actually used i.e to describe language objectively as it is =as it actually works which is the surest way to collect accurate information about language . This has become the shared aim of language researchers starting respectively with the structuralists ,the functionalists and the generativists .

Grammar has known a turning point hereafter .It has moved from emphasizing the **parts** of the sentence primarily to becoming centered on the whole structure first , embracing the study of the phonological (phonology) ,the morphological (morphology) and the syntactical study of language (syntax) &more (to be developed later) .

Briefly , such a shift in regarding the hefty task and aspect of grammar illustrates the perennial and perfectible motion of language research.

Linguistic theories have differed in many respects but what matters most is the continuity and the palpably clear and convincing results the contribution of all has made possible ,leaping a philosophical debate across the centuries to become a recognized subject in cognitive science.

(Please , take a copy of my coverage of L.Bloomfield 2012 available in shourouk)

A-SYNTAX

In our previous lessons we followed scantily how languages differ in their aspects of phonology (phonemes & allophones)and morphology (morphemes & allomorphs).Languages also differ in their syntax .Grammar consists of rules of syntax . These rules describe how words and phrases combine to form sentences in the same way as morphology describes how word forms are constructed .

Syntax is taken from the Greek word **syntaxis** meaning **arranging together** .It is the study of sentence structure like morphology is the study of word structure .The typological classification revealed differences between languages with respect to syntax or patterns of word order that is how words combine to form sentences example :English ,French, Spanish,Russian ,Chinese,Italian,Thai ... are **SVO** LANGUAGES (subject+verb+....)

Arabic ,welsh ,Berber,Hebrew,Irish....are **VSO** LANGUAGES (verb +subject+....)

Japanese ,Korean,Persian,Hindi..... are **SOV** LANGUAGES (subject+object +...) -Word Order Typology Wikipedia -

These patterns of arrangement involve principles ,devices & knowledge about which words combine with which ones ,in what order and what morphological changes if required . All these insights are described by

linguists as **tacit knowledge** that the speakers of any language possess and which allows them to make judgements about grammaticality (correct) or ungrammaticality(odd) in their native languages.

Example: The cows have grazed in the meadow for many hour(**s**) = number category (plurality)

The cowsgrazed (sense relations –meaning category)

Grazed the meadow (meaning category)

Have grazed..... for many(tense category)

She looked at himself in the mirror =(at **herself**) gender category

Disturb remarks = grammatical category ,derivation ing (**disturbing**)

This apples are ripe = grammatical category ,plurality (**these** apples)

She hid her toys willingly=hid (**hid** her toys) grammatical category (tense)

Word order regards grammatical category involving derivation, inflection and others as in disturbing ,hid , hours .. .etc

Native English speaking children tend to overgeneralize the past tense regular rule saying hided for **hid** ,sitted for **sat** ,sleped for **slept**.....etc but they end up assimilating the correct forms subconsciously (implicitly).The explicit distinction between regular and irregular verbs is a detail they learn about once at school .

This is a distinction linguists made between knowledge **of language** :tacit & subconscious one and **knowledge about language** : taught content which makes explicit what we know implicitly .They conclude that all native speakers have **knowledge of their language** but few only have **it about** their language .(J.Ornstein , W.Gage & C.Hayes (1964 p3-4))

Clearly ,the views about well formedness that speakers know well and may or may not be able to explain linguistically speaking are the major concern of descriptive grammarians .That is why modern syntacticians insist on describing **how people do actually speak** their language to formalize the rules which make the speakers tacit knowledge .They are believed to be the organizing principles of syntax.

B –F.De Saussure Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic relations

Since the beginning of the 20th century succeeding theories have purported to develop insightful and objective accounts of the principles which govern the organization of words into longer stretches of speech-the sentences –

F.De Saussure anticipated modern linguists in attempting to describe explicitly the speakers 'knowledge of their native language believed to be tacit ,subconscious or implicit knowledge . He studied **word classes** (parts of speech) in terms of **syntagmatic** and **paradigmatic** relations that morphemes (words) have with each other in sentences :

He regarded a syntagm as a sequential pattern (a chain of a combination of words)which reflects the limits or restrictions on word order with respect to syntax eg : He climbed the tall tree= a syntagm

He : He climbed tall the tree OR: He climbed the tree tall =**rejected by a native speaker of English**

A paradigm is a set of alternative morphemes (substitutions or choices) which could be equally used at a particular point in the syntagm .They do so because they belong to the same word class (they are interchangeable units). Syntagmatic relations are **combinatorial** while paradigmatic relations are **substitutional** eg: He climbed the tall tree → a syntagm

Painted-described-destroyed-burned-watched..... —paradigmatic substitutes (choices) but walked = rejected by a native speaker of English

Syntagmatic and paradigmatic restrictions can be clearly observed in :

Shops are open all days of the week .

Shops refuse access to people not wearing masks . But not

Shop is open . ⇔ plural noun shop can occur at the beginning of the syntagm but the singular noun shop must be preceded by the ,every , each a , thisetc otherwise the syntagm is anomalous (syntagmatic relations)

Paradigmatic substitutes are provided by open and closed sets eg shop& week and all & the (paradigmatic relations) D.J Allerton(1979 p34) .

C -Immediate Constituent Analysis

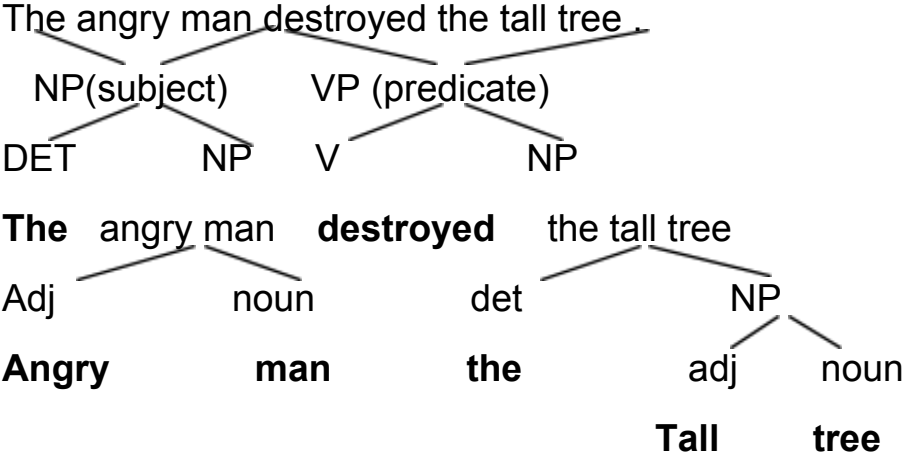
To examine the structure of words and sentences, linguists resort to a method known as immediate constituent analysis. It was used by many linguists namely C. Fries & L. Bloomfield in the early fifties of the 20th century. It aims to produce an accurate analysis of the sentence

Bloomfield made a distinction between **immediate** and **ultimate** constituents. He proposed breaking down a sentence stage by stage: first into its immediate constituents, then those constituents into their immediate constituents.....and so on until the ultimate constituents are reached (that can not be analysed further).

Poor John ran away – was Bloomfield’s famous example to illustrate the way in which it was possible to split up a sentence into its immediate constituents: poor John and ran away, those being in turn analyzable into further constituents until there were no more divisible chunks (the irreducible ones). At that point the ultimate constituents were reached: poor-John-ran-away. In that way, a sentence was not seen as a string of elements poor + John + ran + away, but as being made up of **layers** of constituents.

The immediate constituent analysis (I.C) can be portrayed by using bracketing, the Chinese boxes or a labelled tree diagram as presented with the example below. Feel free to take a look at the example:

the old man hit the muddy ball (J. Ornstein, W. Gage & C. Hayes 1964 p70 using the Chinese boxes, bracketing and a tree diagram)



This analysis displays relationships or layers of constituents and their order within the sentence. In this way, the structuralists moved syntactic

analysis some steps forward .They disagreed with the rigid definition of the parts of speech made by their predecessors.They improved it by focusing on both form and function in relation to other criteria such as inflection derivation and word position .Study carefully the examples below :

- It is a **metal** bar /**Metal** is shaped in coins . (adj verb)
- **Staying awake late at night** is a bad habit . (NP+VP)
- **Sleep** is a relief to headaches /He drank a **sleep** inducer tea (N adj)...

The analysis revealed the constituents as basic units belonging to a specific grammatical category and serving a specific grammatical function .
(the ABC's of language and linguistics p 67).

IC is thought to be more powerful than traditional Parsing but critics of this method pointed at its drawbacks by demonstrating :

- its emphasis on form (the structure) to the expense of meaning .
- its disregarding of some insights of grammar (binary division) such as at which point the cut between similar constituents ought to be made eg:

That old hoar haired weak lady ambled down to her house .

Where should the cut be in the adjective sequence (old hoar weak)?

Many linguists believed that the IC analysis is not the key to the understanding of grammatical structure in language .Z.Harris (one of Sapir's students and teacher of N.Chomsky) called our attention to sentences with equivalent meaning but expressed in different surface forms eg :Robert ate the orange.

The orange was eaten by Robert .

What Robert ate was the orange .

It was the orange that Robert ate .

The IC analysis treated those sentences as independent (isolates)of one another \implies meaning is not the central focus ,the patterns (structures) are .

The IC analysis could not provide the information that all those sentences meant the same thing (I.E) the intuitive correlation between the active and passive forms was ignored (**meaning relations**)

-the IC analysis failed to perceive ambiguity(I.E)that a structure may have more than one interpretation or meaning eg

Visiting relatives bored me .

Other scholars (like N.Chomsky) pointed out that meaning and grammatical analysis are two facets of the same coin. Chomsky took two sentences which have the same structure on the surface but underneath they are different :John is eager to please /John is easy to please \implies John has two very different roles in the first he is doing the pleasing .in the second he is being pleased. The IC analysis would not make this difference.

Increasing comments of the kind developed above led to the general assumption for language having an underlying component + a surface component that is a reflection of the underlying one (deep +surface structures as named by N.Chomsky).**How these components relate has become the continuous research since the 2nd half of the 20th century**

D- TRANSFORMATIONAL GENERATIVE GRAMMAR

The posthumously published book of F.de Saussure (1916) 'A Course in General linguistics' conditioned theoretical linguistic thinking over a long period until the publication of N.Chomsky 's Syntactic Structures

(1957)followed by a second title Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (1965) which came to reinforce the views developed in his earlier book .Chomsky 's transformational generative grammar (T G G) works with two rules :

1-Phrase Structure rules (P rules)+ **2**- Transformational rules (T rules).

The first provide deep structural information about the sentences ,together with a second set of transformational rules for generating surface structures.

The syntactic rules specify the deep structure of a sentence then transform that deep structure into surface structure(P rules+T rules) . In addition **the Semantic rules** provide an interpretation for the sentence .**the**

phonological rules specify information necessary in pronouncing the sentence

According to Chomsky the syntactic rules of a complete grammar should account for the relationship between **conceptual** (deep) and **surface** structures meaning by that a grammar ought to account **explicitly** for :

- a- The fact that two or more sentences have the same kind of surface structure with different underlying deep structures(as)in john is eager / easy to please)

The picture was painted by a new student .

The picture was painted by a new method .

Paraphrasing the sentences : john is And the picture was.....

We realize that in each pair the sentences have different underlying structures (deep structures)

- b-that a sentence may be structurally ambiguous: visiting relatives bored me .The sentence has two underlying structures : the act of visiting bored me **or** relatives visiting bored me .

Chomsky 's work postulated a hierarchical structure to language : surface structure displays the parts of the actual sentences which can be identified in terms of verbs ,adj,noun,adv ...(this is the part on which researchers have worked for many centuries .)

Deep structure is believed to contain the essential meaning of the concept (deep structure) to be articulated .By the operation of transformational rules (**t** rules) the linguistic concept or idea is possible to develop in a number of syntactically different sentences with a change in the order of surface structure elements .Briefly the same deep structure (concept) may code the production of two or more different sentences as in:Robert ate the orange and

1=the orange was eaten by Robert.

2= what Robert ate was the orange

3=it was the orange that Robert ate

The native speaker of English senses that 1,2,3 are sentences with equivalent meaning .He makes an intuitive correlation between active and passive sentences .This is what the I C analysis fails to regard instead it treats sentences with equivalent meaning but with syntactically different structures as independent of one another .

TGG treats them as **variants** of a basic sentence type (Z.Harris calls **kernel** = the simplest form of sentence or deep structure =Chomsky

's term) Briefly kernel sentences win the primary concern ,variants such as passive sentences are seen as derived forms from kernels with which they are equivalent and the term **transformation** (T rules) describes the relationship between kernel and variants **explicitly** . Here is then the answer to the question which pre occupied the reseachers'minds (transformation ,go back to p7 of this lesson) We conclude that TGG grew out of a linguist 's concern with what came to be called deep **structure** and the native speaker's intuition described earlier is prima facie evidence to it (transformational generative grammar ,the ABC's of language and linguistics P79). Indeed the concept of deep structure was raised in the ancient Greek philosophers 'debates (language is mental) ,in James Harris (1751)a philosophical enquiry concerning universal grammar ,in Otto Jespersen 's instinctive rules ,in Z.Harris kernels & variants and in F.de Saussure langue et parole ..But ,N.Chomsky is credited with displaying a revolutionary work providing a more revealing explanation of syntax than had been done previously . Chomsky pushed much farther ,he targeted **cognition** ('what human beings know " as expressed by A.Radford)His approach to grammar is cognitive aiming to describe cogently how language is cognitively represented which means clearly to make explicit what the native speaker knows subconsciously of his language. Succeeding in this would mean reaching the elements that are common to all languages representing the principles of cognitive organization which (in his belief) **are innate** and universal .

E-THE MAIN ASSUMPTION OF TGG

This new grammar seeks to demonstrate that every speaker of a language has mastered and internalized a generative grammar that expresses his **knowledge** of his language (remind yourself of the past tense example used earlier on page 3) .It assumed that a speaker has **an intuitive command** of the language he /she speaks It is therefore concerned with this ability a speaker possesses and which allows him to use the inherent rules of a given language system to construct grammatical sentences ,make transformations interpret new sentences ,distinguish between paraphrases and ambiguous phrases and reject anomalous ones.

Moreover ,TGG regards the deep structures as the basic ones (meaning is more closely related to them) happening in the mind of the speaker then he transforms them into surface structures by way of the inherent rules (T rules).His innate ability allowing all these operations makes up his **competence** .

F- LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE /PERFORMANCE

1-Competence: the speaker's knowledge of his language is labeled competence .It is all the linguistic knowledge and grammar that is necessary to understand and speak one's language .

2- Performance : it is the actual use of language in concrete situations .It refers to the particular utterances that speaker and listener actually produce and understand

According to Chomsky ,when it concerns deep structure all **languages are fundamentally alike** =representing the thought level Languages differ only in their surface structures = representing the actual speech performance (les paroles) He believes human linguistic competence is **innate** and the universals of grammatical deep structure reflect this .Evidence is provided by the rapidity and accuracy with which children end up speaking their mother tongue with ease and speed and this is common to all children no matter how complex or simple their mother tongue is .

This reality attests of the fact that language is not only picked up inductively (entirely formed by experience) but rather triggered as a result of an innate pre-disposition to understand grammatical relationships ,extract the rules of the language children hear around them and they use these in producing new combinations of their own. (from 6months to 2 years, very attentive then from 2 to 7 years the latest children develop their mother tongue very fast , effortlessly and without receiving any explicit instruction .they even tend to be impervious to correction during this phase: 2.....7).They compose sentences never heard previously.

Chomsky believes that language is a distinct part in the biological structure of the brain. In his LANGUAGE ACQUISITION DEVICE (**LAD**) 1962 he regarded it as being innate in human beings & enabling them to easily acquire language .(reread linguistic ontogeny first term course+ A.Radford (2004 p 4) + **Please watch this**

useful video by Steven Pinker (2012) Linguistics as a window to understanding the brain (Video on YouTube)

CONCLUSION

Reaching this length in the development of this lesson , suffice it for now to conclude that the aspect of grammar gained various forms of investigation throughout the centuries : philosophical , notional /relational (traditional parsing) ,descriptive (structural taxonomic) and cognitive (transformational generative) .

Truly ,it is unarguable that all attempts to study grammar are credited with making real accomplishments dispelling with their views a great number of the blurred sides of the human language multifaceted grammar (morphology +syntax +phonology and semantics).Hence making progress a continuity and who knows perhaps a path to an end :” **the study of human language is the most fruitful way of discovering what constitutes human intelligence ”**

N.Chomsky

Dear students ,

Since class work and revision have been limited to 5 days ,sending you the last pdf files would be most convenient to all of us .

Concerning the exam of linguistics,you will have to choose to answer **2** out of **3** questions corresponding to 3 lessons (**lesson 1 ,2 and 3**)

So the choice **is yours** in revising which **2** of the **3**

No question about **Lesson Four** which you will receive soon it gets typed out .

GOOD LUCK

REMINDER

Some of the books I have used are also available for free downloading .Those marked you can find them in lhaj lakhdar library

D.Craddol ,J.Cheshire & J.Swann(1987) Describing Language

D. J Allerton (1979) Essentials of Grammatical Theory .

Fred West (1975) The Way of Language
An Introduction

- Andrew Radford (2004) English Syntax

*R.H . Robins (1964) General Linguistics
An Introduction Survey

- Lyle Campbell (2007) The History of Linguistics

- Jacob Ornstein , William W Gage & C.Hayes (1964)The ABC's of Languages and Linguistics

* John Lyons (1981) Language and Linguistics
An introduction

- F . De Saussure (2002) Cours De Linguistique Générale

* David Crystal (1971) Linguistics

- Steven Pinker (2012) Linguistics as a window to understanding the brain (Video on YouTube)