

Preface

This book is an introduction to some classic ideas and analyses of transformational generative grammar, viewed both on their own terms and from a more modern perspective. Like *A Course in GB Syntax* (Lasnik and Uriagereka 1988), the book grew out of a transcript (created from tapes) of a portion of a course, in particular, the first several units of the first-semester graduate syntax course at the University of Connecticut. The tapes were made in the fall of 1995, and Marcela Depiante, a UConn graduate student, did the transcription and initial editing the following year. Arthur Stepanov, another UConn graduate student, did the subsequent editing, including organizing the material into chapters, numbering the examples, and providing bibliographic references.

In the book, as in the course, I examine in considerable detail the central analyses presented by Noam Chomsky in *Syntactic Structures* (1957) and the theory underlying those analyses, a theory completely formulated in Chomsky's (1955) *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory*. The major focus is on the best set of analyses in *Syntactic Structures* and *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory* (and, in many respects, the best set of analyses in the history of our field), those treating English verbal morphology. I show how the technology works, often filling in underlying assumptions and formal particulars that are left unstated in *Syntactic Structures*. I emphasize the virtues of these analyses because those virtues have been overlooked in recent decades.

However, as is well known, the analyses are not without defects, particularly with respect to questions of explanatory adequacy, that is, questions of how the child, faced with limited data, arrives at the correct grammar out of the vast set of possible grammars made available by the theory. Thus, in this book, after laying out the *Syntactic Structures* account, I follow the pendulum swing the field took toward greater explanatory adequacy, as I present successive theoretical developments

and revisions, both in general and, particularly, as they pertain to treatments of verbal morphology. I explicate Chomsky's first economy-based account, in "Some Notes on Economy of Derivation and Representation" (1991), and then compare it with his minimalist approach in "A Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory" (1993). The discussion culminates in a presentation of a hybrid theory of English verbal morphology (my "Verbal Morphology: *Syntactic Structures* Meets the Minimalist Program" (1995)), one including elements of both *Syntactic Structures* and "A Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory."

Chapter 1 presents two of the most fundamental properties of human language: that sentences have structure, and that there are an unlimited number of possible sentences. Early generative theories of these two properties, and of the intimate connection between them, are presented. Finally, the central phenomena of English verbal morphology are introduced and generalizations developed.

Chapter 2 introduces the transformational mechanisms of *Syntactic Structures* and their application to the phenomena presented in chapter 1. The framework behind the transformations is elaborated and examined; some problems, mainly in the realm of explanatory adequacy, are investigated; and directions for solutions are considered. Both chapters 1 and 2 contain exercises on the technical material.

Chapter 3 carries these solutions further, along the way introducing some of the technical developments of Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965), "Remarks on Nominalization" (1970), and *Barriers* (1986), before arriving at recent economy/minimalist accounts.

I would like to thank Amy Brand and Jay Keyser for their encouragement in this project, and my wife Roberta for her encouragement in all of my endeavors. I am also indebted to the Department of Linguistics at the University of Connecticut for making it possible for me to annually teach my somewhat unconventional introduction to syntax course, of which this book represents a part. Special thanks to Adolfo Ausín and Cédric Boeckx for extensive corrections and suggestions on the previous draft and to Anne Mark, arguably the second most important person in the field, for her usual outstanding editing job. My deepest appreciation goes to the students who have taken the course over the years, especially those who took it in 1995, the year the tapes that turned into this book were made. The students who are quoted in the discussion are Deborah Chen, Marcela Depiante, Edita Gutiérrez, Saša Vukić, and Maki Yamane.

Howard Lasnik

We have been fortunate to attend Howard Lasnik's unique syntax course, which focuses on the ideas and analyses underlying early generative grammar and their relevance in contemporary syntactic theory. We have been even more fortunate to be involved in the project of editing his lectures and putting them together as a book. Our goal was to preserve the overall perspective, as well as those subtle and insightful remarks that characterized this course. It is our hope that students beginning to work in generative syntax and other interested readers will find exploring this book as useful and inspiring as working on it was for us.

For their participation, we would like to thank those who attended the course in the fall of 1995: Dan Blair, Deborah Chen, Edita Gutiérrez, Saša Vukić, and Maki Yamane. Special thanks to Dan Blair for providing us with a good portion of the tapes needed for transcribing the lectures and to Cedric Boeckx for help with the index.

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