Research Master—History of Linguistics 2008-2009

Classes on generative grammar

1. Early generative grammar (14/10)
2. Extended Standard Theory/Government and Binding Theory (28/10)
3. Minimalism (04/11)

Early Generative Grammar

5. The reception of Chomsky's ideas

In the US

(1) initially: benevolent (considered as a young American structuralist)

(2) soon: hostile (e.g. Texas Conference 1958)
   structuralists alienated by Chomsky’s attack on behaviorism

(3) 1960s: enthusiastic
   - perspective for language acquisition (Lees' review of *Syntactic Structures*)
   - emerging cognitive science
   - philosophical underpinnings (rationalism, humanism)
   - deep structure / surface structure schema

In Europe

(4) initially not much response (holistic approach of European structuralism)
   - emphasis on function/meaning

In The Netherlands

(5) Chomsky attacked by Reichling and Uhlenbeck

(6) Favorable notice in NRC by Schultink

(7) Students start reading Syntactic Structures / LSLT (Kraak, Klooster, Seuren)
    group around E.W. Beth and F. Staal

(8) 1966: first generative dissertation (Kraak)
    1968: Kraak & Klooster (textbook)

(9) Late 1960s: generative semantics as a unifying force (Dik)
    emphasis on meaning acceptable to European structuralists
(10) 1970: Chomsky visit, presents ‘Conditions on Transformations’
      students adopt autonomous syntax idea (Koster, Evers)

(11) 1970s: reshuffling of job market, generativists appointed everywhere
      Kraak: Nijmegen
      Verkuyl, Schultink: Utrecht
      Kooij: Leiden > Hoekstra, Bennis
      Van Riemsdijk: Tilburg > Koster, Everaert
      Heny: Groningen > Reuland
      Booij: VU
      Klooster: Amsterdam > Muysken, Den Besten

Extended Standard Theory and Government-Binding Theory

1. De rol van de semantiek

(1) Aspects meaning deep structure
    transformations
    surface structure sound

(2) Katz-Postal hypothesis: transformations do not change meaning

(3) emergence of abstract categories
    John leave > John left
    NEG John leave > John didn’t leave (negation not caused by transformation)
    Q John leave > Did John leave ? (question not by transformation)

(4) emphasis on meaning > lexical decomposition
    break = cause to break

(5) generative semantics: transformations operate on semantic building blocks
    (as opposed to ‘generative syntax’)

(6) alternative: interpretive semantics: transformations yield something to be interpreted
(7)  
a. everyone in this room speaks two languages  
b. two languages are spoken by everyone in this room  

> meaning affected by the passive transformation

(8)  
Chomsky’s reaction: lexicalism  
transformations operating on words  

(possible exception: inflectional morphology = weak lexicalism)

(9)  
a. the growth of tomatoes (nominalization, derivational)  
b. the growing of tomatoes (gerund, inflectional)

(10)  
new model

\[ \text{Lexicon} \rightarrow \text{DS} \leftarrow \text{phrase structure rules} \]

\[ \text{transformations} \]

\[ \text{sound} \leftarrow \text{S-structure} \rightarrow \text{meaning} \]

\[ \text{PF} \leftarrow \text{LF} \]

(11)  
LF: logical form (anaphora, scope, variable binding)

2. Conditions on transformations

(1)  
Chomsky 1964: A-over-A principle

a. Mary saw the boy walking toward the railroad station (2x)  
b. Which railroad station did Mary see the boy walking towards? (1x)  
c. Who did you see [Mary and -- ]

(2)  
Ross 1967: Constraints on variables in syntax  
identifies a range of configurations blocking movement (islands)

(3)  
Chomsky 1973: Conditions on transformations  
unifies Ross’ conditions inventing general (abstract) conditions

a. subjacency: you can’t cross two bounding nodes  
b. Comp-to-Comp condition: movement goes stepwise
(4) Structure preservingness: transformations do not affect structure movement is into an already existing position (substitution)

(5) Early generative grammar: Generalized Transformations adjunction of one clause to the next, causing complex structure

Now: slot for embedded clauses already present from the start > **recursion** (Katz & Fodor 1963)

(6) We can talk about structure in abstraction from concrete data > **X-bar theory**

(7) Starts a discussion about the nature of the clause (VP? S?)

(8) around 1980: functional elements (tense, complementizer, determiner) also subject to rules of X-bar theory

  > functional heads, functional projection
  > clause = projection of **TENSE** (IP or TP)
  > embedded clause = projection of **COMP** (CP)

(9) X-bar theory unites: structuralist distributionalism (constituency tests) traditional valency theory (selection requirement)

3. **Government and Binding theory**

(1) a. transformations curbed by diverse components

  X-bar theory
  locality theory (bounding): subejacency, Comp-to-Comp

b. grammar becomes a theory of components rather than a theory of data

(2) More components > less transformations

  Case theory
  Trace theory
  Theory of empty categories
  Binding theory (pronouns) **MOVE α**
  Control (move anything, anywhere)
  Structure (X-bar theory)
  Government (structural relations)
Components (modules) work as filters

Limiting computational power: economy (Chomsky 1989)
- triggers for movement
- fewest steps
- shortest steps (minimality)

Theory of components yields universal principles

Language variation: setting ‘switches’ in the principles = parameters

Huge impact on:
- a. typology
- b. language acquisition
- c. historical linguistics
- d. dialectology (microparameters)

1980s: floreshing period for generative grammar ...