DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 028 422 AL 001 808

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Linguistic Universals, Deep Structure, and English as a Second Language.

Pub Date Mar 68
Note-18p.; Paper given at Third Annual TESOL Convention, Chicago, Illinois, March 5-8, 1969.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.00
Descriptors-Contrastive Linguistics, *Deep Structure, *English (Second Language), Grammar, *Language Universals, Linguistic Theory, *Second Language Learning, Spanish, Surface Structure, *Teaching Methods, Transformation Generative Grammar

In viewing the approach to English and other grammars in the light of linguistic universals, the author feels that the principal justification for deep structure analysis of English is that "deep structure analyses of all the languages of our multilingual world in combination can serve as a genuinely scientific basis of a defensible universal grammar." At the present time, however, teachers of English as a second language should teach "an intelligent updated traditional surface structure grammar at all levels below the graduate and even at graduate levels." Surface structure differences, which may be considered "peripheral" in considering languages in general, are nevertheless "considerable." (Given is an example of contrasts between an English and Spanish question pattern.) After having taught the Jacobs and Rosenbaum "English Transformational Grammar" in a graduate course in grammatical theory and analysis, the author contends that the terminology and format of deep structure English grammar are "unnecessarily troublesome" at present. If the purpose of English teachers is to teach the English actually spoken and written, they must teach surface structure English. The author questions and discusses the desirability of thinking in terms of transformations at all. (AMM)

LINGUISTIC UNIVERSALS, DEEP STRUCTURE, AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

In English as a second language we are generally interested in helping people master English in two quite different ways. We would like them, first, to be able to hear standard spoken English with easy comprehension and to speak English intelligibly and comfortably. This is the kind of mastery of language that children achieve much better than adolescents and adults are likely to; as such men as Wallace E. Lambert have been telling us, children do not have to "learn" spoken language, they simply "acquire" it. All that children need is to hear languages used frequently and comfortably and well in circumstances that make them want to understand what is being said. It is a saddening fact that, as Eric H. Lenneberg says in Biological Foundations of Language (1967), linguistic acquisition has been "stabilized" by adolescence. Spoken languages do have to be taught to adolescents and adults as well as to children; nevertheless if organizations of teachers of English as a second language concentrated on teaching spoken English to adolescents and adults and slighted the problems involved in teaching it to children, they would put themselves in the position organizations of dentists would put themselves in if they concentrated on filling cavities and ignored the preventive dentistry that sees to it that children grow up with teeth that do not have cavities.

In second languages as in first languages the child's mastery is not enough. People should learn to read well, and even to write well. In their use of spoken English, mature people need mature vocabularies. And mature people should be able to put fairly complex grammatical structures

to use. Kellogg W. Hunt's Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels (1965) shows even the interdependent proportionative construction of the more you think about it, the sillier it gets — which certainly cannot be described as obsolescent or even "literary" — appearing fairly late in English-speaking children's writing. The real work of teachers of English as a second language whose students are past childhood ought to be concerned with the mastery of mature written English, not with the kind of linguistic mastery that children do not need to be taught. The work of teachers of English as a second language should differ from the work of other teachers of English primarily in a single very important respect: it should always be carried on with the perspective that comes from looking at the English language, and at what has been written in the language, from the point of view of the student whose language and way of life are distinct from those of the monolingual speaker of English.

I

Since our approach to English is what it is, surely we will all welcome the extended investigation of linguistic universals that lies ahead. We know that it is not good for languages to live alone, and that indeed they cannot live alone. I myself would like to accept the view expressed in, for example, the excellent final chapter of Ronald W. Langacker's Language and Its Structure (1968): that "the same inborn structural framework underlies all languages, and . . . languages can differ from one another only with respect to the peripheral structural features that the child learns through experience." I would like to have learned in my student days, or to learn

yet, an "explicit" and generally accepted universal grammar to which the particular grammars of the two languages I live my life in, English and Spanish, could be related point by point. Traditional grammar — "Latin" grammar, its critics often call it — has the merit of rising above the narrowest varieties of linguistic nationalism; and for people like me whose practical concerns are pretty well limited to English and Spanish — the latter a form of Latin — traditional grammar does fairly well even when it is employed in rather naive varieties. The grammatical tradition needs to be reformed; all traditions need to be reformed periodically, and the most effective supporters of all traditions are those who do what they can to reform them. But like people, traditions die. Or they are absorbed in broader traditions. It seems entirely possible that traditional "Latin" grammar can be replaced by a truly universal grammar that will be a more satisfactory tool for use in describing the grammatical structures of non-Indo-European languages of Asia, Africa, Indian America, even Europe.

Clearly not all the content of an explicit universal grammar would be applicable to English. For that matter, some of the content of interlingual "Latin" grammar is not really relevant to modern English: to mention a single example, surely Jespersen was right in maintaining that in dealing with the surface structure of modern English we should avoid such terms as "dative" and "accusative." And we should not forget that the interlingual "morpheme" of Structural analysis proved unmanageable in English, as Charles F. Hockett in effect conceded when he suggested, in A Course in Modern Linguistics (1958), that in dealing with such words as remote, promote, reduce, and produce "an obvious practical step is to set the

morphemic problem aside." It remains true, however, that a generally accepted universal grammar, with a generally accepted terminology, would be of tremendous value to all students of language.

Whether or not Samuel Abraham and Ferenc Kiefer are right in saying, in A Theory of Structural Semantics (1966), that semantic categories "seem to be more universal" than grammatical ones, a universal grammar based directly in meaning should be the best possible universal grammar. The languages man has developed through the centuries are tools that are employed in the formulation and communication of thought. Up to a point, they impress us as quite satisfactory tools. When thought is complex, languages are not so easily managed; and at times we all feel as the Russian poet Tyutchev must have felt when he said that when thought is put into words it is inevitably falsified. At the present time it is much easier to describe the linguistic sequences people produce than it is to describe the thought that these sequences are intended to express. It seems quite clear that at present we simply cannot base grammatical analysis on analysis of meanings. Noam Chomsky was essentially right, for 1969 as for 1957, when he said, in Syntactic Structures (1957), that grammar is best formulated as "a self-contained study independent of semantics." At present, grammar cannot really ignore meaning, or phonology, and neither semantics (and lexicography) nor phonology can ignore grammar. No one of these divisions of linguistic analysis can be truly "independent" of the others in 1969, but each requires a considerable degree of autonomy.

However it is based, when a reasonably complete, reasonably explicit set of linguistic universals is proposed we should all examine it

carefully, neither accepting it immediately in the spirit of blind faith that has characterized entirely too many students of linguistics in recent decades nor rejecting it in the spirit of hostility to change that has characterized entirely too many supporters of traditional grammar. One religion should be enough for any of us, and this should be concerned not with language but with the meaning of the lives we live. When linguistic universals are proposed, we should insist on more than vague generalities. Thus when Roderick A. Jacobs and Peter S. Rosenbaum tell us, in English Transformational Grammar (1968), that "virtually all human languages exhibit the phenomenon of reflexivization" we should question the value of such an extraordinarily inexplicit bit of information. If we look only at English and Spanish, we see that though both languages have true reflexive pronoun forms the numbers and the uses of these forms are quite different in the two languages. Spanish has only one distinct reflexive form, se; English has ten oddly compounded forms, counting oneself and the ourself that is employed in the New Yorker at least. In Spanish one says what parallels English I hurt me, not something more exactly paralleling I hurt myself. On the other hand, Spanish puts reflexives to varied uses that have no parallels in English. For example, Spanish commonly uses active verb forms with reflexive complements where English uses sometimes passive verb forms and sometimes active forms without complements. Thus in Spanish one is likely to say what parallels English the stores close themselves at six where in English one can say the stores are closed at six, which is unfortunately ambiguous, or the stores close at six. It is important that when linguistic universals are presented, they be presented with

at least a reasonable degree of explicitness. What H. A. Gleason, Jr., has called "the current fad of free-and-easy appeal to universals" is wholly indefensible. It is going to take time to work out a universal grammar. If we think the task can be done overnight simply because computers are now available, we should read Noam Chomsky's caution in Language and Mind (1968). And of course before we give any set of linguistic universals more than tentative acceptance we must know that they are winning more than tentative acceptance among serious students of language all over the world. At the 1968 Georgetown Round Table, Professor Robert A. Hall, Jr., warned against what he regarded as a current tendency among Chomskyan linguists to substitute English for Latin "as a strait-jacket into which to force the structures of all other languages." If this tendency indeed exists, it must be combatted. Surely we do not believe that a satisfactory universal grammar can be based on deep-structure analysis of English alone.

It remains true that the central interest of teachers of English will continue to be the teaching of English. And though the structural differences that distinguish English from other languages can be regarded as "peripheral" if our interest centers in languages in general — just as the structural differences that distinguish one vertebrate from another can be regarded as "peripheral" if our interest centers in vertebrates in general — these differences are nevertheless considerable. It never ceases to amaze me that, for example, Spanish-English bilinguals (and even inadequate quasi-bilinguals like me) can ask in either of two very different formulations, rapidly and without confusion, what is in meaning a single question.

Don't you like people?
¿No te gusta la gente?

An account of the surface-structure grammatical differences between these two formulations of a single underlying question should take into account the following matters at least.

1. The English formulation follows the basic English subject-predicator-complement(s) word order of the declarative you don't like people fairly closely, though of the phrasal verb form do like only the head word like is in the basic predicator position. The Spanish formulation has the order complement-predicator-subject.
2. The English formulation is marked as a question grammatically, by the use of the expanded present form do like rather than the one-word present form like and by the presence of do in front of the subject. The distinctive grammatical form of the main-interrogative clause is indicated in this way. The Spanish formulation (like the English formulation you don't like people?) is not marked as a question grammatically; in syntax it is identical with the corresponding Spanish declarative.
3. The English negator adverb not follows the auxiliary do — and makes the use of do necessary even when the question is put into the grammatically declarative form you don't like people? In informal styles not follows do directly and merges with it; in the more formal question do you not like people? the auxiliary and the adverb are separated by the subject, you. The Spanish negator adverb no precedes the complement-predicator-subject sequence in the Spanish formulation.

4. English like and Spanish gustar have opposite directions of predication. In contemporary English the subject of like feels or might feel liking. In Spanish the subject of gustar is what might cause the liking.

5. The English verb form do like is a common-person-and-number form, usable with all subjects except those with third-person-singular force. The Spanish verb form gusta is a true third-person-singular form.

6. The English pronoun form you can carry either singular or plural number force and is usable as subject, as complement, and as object of a preposition. The Spanish pronoun form te is definitely singular in force and is one of a set of three forms (tu, te, ti) that divide the syntactic functions the single English form you performs. The use of English you suggests nothing at all about the attitude of the person who uses it toward the person or people he is addressing. The use of Spanish tu, te, ti suggests an attitude lacking in a kind of formality that would sometimes seem appropriate.

7. The English noun people is plural in force and accepts as modifiers such determinatives of number as many. The Spanish noun gente is a quantifiable, comparable to the 1611 English people of there was much people in that place. The lack of an article with people indicates that the reference is to people in general — not precisely "all" people, since allowance for exceptions is certainly implied. The use of the article with gente is ambiguous, apart from context: la gente can be either people in general or

> some particular group of people already prominent in a context. Spanish gente has true grammatical gender; it is a feminine noun, and this circumstance is clearly reflected in the form of the article. Grammatical gender does not exist in English; awareness of personality and of sex has grammatical consequences at some points (and countries, ships, and dolls can be assigned feminine personalities fictitiously), but this is a different matter.

It is true, of course, that the Spanish formulation ¿no te gusta la gente? and the English formulation don't you like people? have grammatical characteristics in common. Both formulations are "structured strings of words," to borrow a phrasing from Jacobs and Rosenbaum. Both employ what traditional grammar has long called verbs, nouns, pronouns, and adverbs to perform the grammatical functions it is convenient to call predicator, subject, complement, and adjunct. The presence of a negator adjunct serves in both formulations to indicate that the person who asks the question regards a particular answer — in this case, a disturbingly negative one — as appropriate. Nevertheless the grammatical structures of these two formulations are significantly different, and teachers of English to Spanish-speaking students ought to be able to deal fairly explicitly with such distinctions as occur.

II

The principal justification for deep-structure analysis of English, I would say, is that deep-structure analyses of all the languages of our

multi-multilingual world, in combination, can serve as a genuinely scientific basis for a defensible universal grammar. In the years just ahead, a great deal of attention should be given to this kind of analysis, especially in dissertations and monographs done by highly trained scholars. In English as a second language, however, and in English language in general, we will be wise at the present time to teach an intelligent updated traditional surface-structure grammar at all levels below the graduate and even at graduate levels. And dissertations and monographs employing the terminology and procedures of the best surface-structure traditional grammar should be done too: for most purposes, this kind of terminology and procedures are as yet unsurpassed. I say this after having taught the Jacobs and Rosenbaum English Transformational Grammar in a graduate course in problems in grammatical theory and analysis. If what I am about to say about deep-structure grammar is concerned almost constantly with the Jacobs and Rosenbaum volume, this is partly because I have taught it, but it is also partly because I know of no other treatments of deep-structure English grammar of its scope and partly because I find it widely respected. As briefly as possible, I would like to state the case for proceeding cautiously in adopting this kind of analysis.

First, I would say that the terminology and the format of deep-structure English grammar are unnecessarily troublesome at present. The intermittent effort to avoid such terms as "subject" seems unwise. This exception is a "noun phrase" in why was this exception made? in why did they make this exception? and in why this exception? The simplest thing to say is that in these three sentences the phrase is used first as

subject (in which use it determines the person-and-number form of the predicator), then as complement, and then as an isolate in a sentence that is marked grammatically as interrogative by the use of why but nevertheless lacks clear clausal structure. At the other extreme, deep-structure analysis is presenting us with new terms that seem far from satisfactory. Thus Jacobs and Rosenbaum call the that of that Mulligan had behaved recklessly worried Stephen a "complementizer" though the clause begun and marked by that is certainly not a complement, in any sense, in the surface structure. The use of chemical-looking formulas seems unwise at the present time, whatever may be the case twenty years from now. As Emmon Bach wrote in An Introduction to Transformational Grammars (1964), "unfortunately the training of most linguists has not included any work either in modern logic or in mathematics"; and the great majority of students and teachers of English are in this respect no luckier than "most linguists." One of Jacobs and Rosenbaum's doubly enlightening example sentences contains the sequence linguists scared off schoolmarms. Actually throughout most of my academic lifetime it has seemed to me that American linguists have been doing their best to scare off almost everyone, including even other linguists. A brilliant colleague of mine, European in background and in point of view, has recently contrasted the movement from Latin to the vernacular in his church with the movement from the vernacular to algebraic expression in his profession. His church, he says, is trying to clarify what has been obscure; his profession seems intent on obscuring what has been clear. At the 1968 Georgetown Round Table W. Freeman Twaddell warned that while linguists may find it exhilarating

"to play with new notations and models and speculations about various edges and depths of language and languages," this kind of thing can be undesirable for "people with work to do."

Second, we must not forget that if our purpose is to teach the English that is actually spoken and written in our day what we must teach is surface-structure English, and for our purposes the deep structure may be no more than "a superfluous ghost level," to borrow a term from Wallace L. Chafe. If in the deep structure the sentence what is the name of that artist? begins with the constituent QUESTION, continues with a noun phrase represented in the surface structure by the name of that artist, has next an auxiliary which is deleted in the intricate process of arriving at the surface structure, and ends with a verb phrase composed of the transitive verb be and another noun phrase (which in the surface structure is represented by what), then the deep structure and the surface structure are indeed two very different things. Actually intent to ask a question is signalled in various ways in contemporary English: by the use of word order in is his name Schwartz? by the use of a clause-marking word in who did that? by intonation or, as Dwight L. Bolinger tells us in Aspects of Language (1968), perhaps just by facial gesture in his name is Schwartz? And we can be fairly well along in a sentence before we know that it is intended as a question: for example, in if his wife insists on new furniture and he himself wants a new car, what will Darcy buy? If in the deep structure the sentence finding you in this library astonishes me requires that something that in an "intermediate" structure is represented by it precede finding you in this library simply because we employ it in such sentences as it astonishes me

to find you in this library, then again the deep structure is strangely unlike the surface structure.

Personally I would ask whether a deep structure in which what we begin with is constituents and features but no words, words being introduced in "lexical passes" as we go toward surface structure, is not too ghostly to have any satisfactorily definable grammatical form. I have done enough translating from Spanish into English to know that in translating a particular Spanish construction I can often choose between two English constructions which are about equally satisfactory from the point of view of meaning and yet are quite distinct in structure, and that my choice of construction is affected by my choice of words. Thus she resents irony and irony irritates her are very similar in meaning, but if resent is used as predicator its subject must be what feels emotion and if irritate is used its subject must be what arouses the emotion. We can say she resents being treated like a child or she hates to be treated like a child; if we use hate as the predicator of the main declarative we can have as its complement a to-and-infinitival-clause sequence, but if we use resent we cannot. We can say it rained all night, using the verb rain as predicator, an it we cannot define as subject, and the grammatically exceptional nounal unit all night as adjunct; or we can say rain fell throughout the night, using the noun rain as subject, the verb fall as predicator, and as adjunct a prepositional unit in which the article the is used with the noun night in grammatically ordinary fashion. We can say who owns that? or who (or whom) does that belong to? or whose is that? It is odd that though Jacobs and Rosenbaum define sentences as "structured strings of words," in their deep structures

they want to delay the introduction of words. If Lenneberg is right in saying in Biological Foundations of Language that "words tag the processes by which the species deals cognitively with its environment," I cannot see why anyone should try to keep words out of the deepest-structure grammatical analysis of the particular natural language we call English. An interlingual semantic analysis would of course be another matter.

The deep-structure distinction between constituents, features, and segments attempted in the Jacobs and Rosenbaum volume needs a great deal of pondering, I would say. Jacobs and Rosenbaum assign the this of this book the deep-structure status of a "feature" of the item represented in the surface structure by the noun book, exactly as they do the singular force of this item. "Articles" are assigned feature status, and this and that are classified as articles. What Jacobs and Rosenbaum think should be done with other determinative modifiers, such as any and every, they do not make clear; surely they know that since first Palmer and then Bloomfield made the unity and importance of the determinatives clear it has been reckless indeed to ignore the existence of the total category. When Jacobs and Rosenbaum say that in Jones approves of the city what follows approves is to be recognized as a constituent belonging to a category of prepositional phrases, surely they are on very weak ground when they describe what follows is in the tournament is in May as simply a "noun segment" in which the preposition in is merely a feature of the noun May. If in John is a hero the verb be is used transitively and has full representation in the deep structure, then surely it is more than just a feature of the adjective heroic in John is heroic. If the out of the landlord put him

out is no more than a feature of the verb put (like its tense, which in the deep structure belongs to an auxiliary that has no representation in the surface structure), then a consistent analysis of the landlord put him into a much better apartment will have to attach an extraordinarily developed "feature" to the same verb.

Finally, we must ask whether it is any longer defensible to think in terms of transformations at all. As long as I could I myself put off asking this question. For a good many years I did grammatical derivations of a naive transformational type. Thus I called interrogative main clauses such as are you next? "conversions" of semantically-grammatically-lexically parallel main clauses such as you're next. I was among those who, in print, welcomed the appearance of Zellig Harris's 1957 paper in Language and of Noam Chomsky's 1957 Syntactic Structures. I will always regard Chomsky as the Moses who led English-language people like me out of a Structuralist bondage in which for much too long we had been trying unsuccessfully to make grammatical bricks out of phonological air. If Chomsky has not led us in conquest of our Promised Land, he has at least been a tremendous influence for good; his position in American linguistics, like Harris's, is secure whether we continue to talk about "transformations" or not.

It seems quite clear that what we have in modern English is sets of forms and structures. Thus we have a set of forms of the verb know: in standard usage, know, knows, knowing, knew, known, and a number of phrasal forms within which auxiliaries are combined with know, knowing, and known. It is reasonable to regard know as "basic" among these forms

in terms of descriptive convenience. Knows, knowing, and known all combine inflectional endings with stems that are not distinguishable from this "basic" form; knew shares with known the grammatical relationship to know that the single regularly inflected form wanted has to the "basic" form want. If, as Jacobs and Rosenbaum say, transformational grammarians do not know "how to incorporate exceptions into a grammar," they certainly cannot get very far with the surface-structure grammar we all put to use every time we use the English language, and we may have to agree with Charles F. Hockett's judgment, expressed in Current Anthropology (1968), that "algebraic grammar" at present involves distortion of "the most important fact about natural human languages" — that they are "ill-defined" systems. From the point of view both of contemporary analysis and of historical development, we should avoid deriving any one of the forms know, knows, knowing, knew, known from any one of the others. Sydney M. Lamb was quite right when he suggested, in Outline of Stratificational Grammar (1966), that to derive one linguistic form from another existing alongside it is comparable to tracing man's ancestry to the apes existing alongside him on this planet at the present time. Similarly in the set of semantically, grammatically, and lexically parallel main clauses you are next, are you next? and you be next we should not try to derive any one of the three structures from any other — or from an abstract structure underlying all three — but instead should simply pick one of the three as "basic" and describe the others in terms of how they differ from this one. In his Syntax (1931) George O. Curme assigned the main imperative historical primacy among main-clause patterns, and it is noteworthy that in

both English and Spanish main-imperative clauses employ — for example, in English be and in Spanish ven (meaning "come") — verb forms whose internal simplicity suggests that they should be regarded as basic. Transformationalists have tended to downgrade main imperative clauses, first deriving them from main declaratives with future-tense predicators and now, if I understand Jacobs and Rosenbaum's discussion of wash yourself! deriving them from main declaratives with present-tense predicators by deleting subjects. I myself would take not the main imperative but the main declarative as the basic clause pattern. If I were doing deep-structure analysis and beginning main interrogatives with the separate constituent QUESTION, then I would begin main imperatives with a separate constituent REQUEST; certainly the main-imperative pattern, whether with expressed subjects as in you be next and heaven help us or without them as in be careful and damn that typewriter (where you and God are implied), deserves full membership in the set of main-clause patterns.

One of the tremendous advantages of giving up the concept of transformations is that we then have no reason at all to spend precious time running through complex strings of derivation such as transformationalists have been busying themselves developing in recent years. Thus we can say of walking down the street, in I see a man walking down the street, that it is a gerundial subordinate clause modifying the immediately preceding nounal head and getting its implied subject from this head. There is no need to start with something represented in surface structure by I see a man, and he is walking down the street and carry this through a series of eight formulations, one of them I see a man such that he is walking down

the street, as Emmon Bach did in a paper entitled "Have and Be in English Syntax" in Language (1967). We can say of Rupert himself drank the coffee that the pronoun himself is the reflexive-intensive form of he used here as a tight appositive of Rupert, without saying that himself derives from a second occurrence of Rupert drank the coffee, as Owen Thomas did in Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English (1965). And we are not tempted to run through a complicated manipulation of complex formulas to show how the I of I will sleep begins as a noun in deep structure and ends as an article in surface structure, as Jacobs and Rosenbaum do. Instead we can say simply that I is a personal pronoun, and that personal pronouns and proper nouns normally have the syntactic value of determiners and noun heads together, so that both she and Mary are syntactically much like that girl in their behavior. We can do grammar most simply without transformations, and surely simplicity is desirable in grammar. To borrow a phrase from James Sledd, we do not really want to lead our students "from morass to morass."

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