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## Grammars and Teaching

Elaine Chaika

*Providence College*, [echaika@providence.edu](mailto:echaika@providence.edu)

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Grammars and Teaching

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## Grammars and Teaching

PURELY THEORETICAL considerations aside, what difference does it make which grammar the English teacher uses? Why isn't traditional tried and true as it is, as good for pedagogy as the newer transformational grammar? Each provides a framework for discussing language. For composition classes, especially, one would think that's all that's necessary.

Having taught college composition before and after intensive study in linguistics, I have had much experience in teaching via pre- and post-transformational grammars. Unlike the new math which serves only to explain the old, the "new" grammar, henceforth termed "transformational" or T-G, illuminates the workings of language in ways impossible with the old. The explanatory powers of transformational grammar are not only superior to traditional models, but T-G is simpler. Furthermore, the new grammar provides a potent teaching methodology as a natural outcome of its mode of analysis (see below, and Chaika, 1974). These are not trivial concerns in college classrooms, for recent research (Krashen, 1973) suggests that, after puberty, language learning cannot be effected without overt explanation. As noted in Chaika (1974), learning to write may be akin to language learning.

It is disheartening, therefore, to hear English teachers claim that linguistics has nothing to offer rhetoric, or that, if grammar must be taught at all, it makes no difference which. What is ironical is how often those unimpressed by the revolution in syntax are the very ones who have had a course or two in current theory. Apparently the esoteric polemics of many such graduate courses are of little practical value. Indeed, people in English have been known to become downright hostile to linguistics after such exposure.

Yet, polemics about the intricate details of abstract theories aside, the fundamental insights of current syntactic models offer efficacy for teaching rhetoric superior to traditional grammar. Therefore the polemics in this paper are confined to grammars as they pertain to teaching writing. The following offers what has worked for my composition students as well as for teachers-in-service who have enrolled in my writing workshop.

Briefly, by T-G grammar I mean one that recognizes deep as well as surface structure, with transformations from a basic sentence [NP + VP + (Adverb)]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Noun phrase + verb phrase + optional adverb.

*Elaine Chaika is an Associate Professor of Linguistics at Providence College. Her interest in deviant sentence production has led her to do research both in the problems of non-proficient writers and of schizophrenics with language disorders.*

accounting for the incredible variety of sentence types and constructions found in English. According to such a view, additional sentences may be embedded wherever noun phrases may occur in the deep structure sentence, with subsequent deletions and additions producing surface forms.<sup>2</sup>

Since the same deep structure sentences may be differentially transformed, thereby producing paraphrases or near paraphrases, related sentences in a language must always be considered. Such a grammar has been lately advanced as the basis for sentence combining "grammar-free" writing programs (e.g., O'Hare, 1973). Actually, such methods are grammar free only in their non-use of jargon. Transformations and sentence embeddings can only be effected according to the grammar of a language. In fact, despite all the charges that linguists are "against grammar," T-G methods actually demand a very close attention to the rules of English. It is precisely here, in its superior evocation of those rules, that T-G grammar is so potent a teaching force, for sentence building, as worth-while as it is, is not enough. Explanation of error so that learners get insights into their own productions is equally important, as is teaching neophyte writers how to analyze language for themselves. No one knows how to write who can only mimic textbook examples or teacher correction. The essence of language use, as Noam Chomsky has so often reiterated, is to say what has never been said before, but, I add, to say it in accordance with the rules of the language. If the literature on first language acquisition has any lesson at all for us, it is that humans use language creatively only after ascertaining its rules.

Basically, traditional grammar is concerned with categorizing and labelling, whereas transformational is concerned with processes. Where traditional grammar defines terms, T-G formulates rules. Where traditional grammar looks for differences, T-G looks for "sames." Thus, where traditional grammar sees subordinate clauses, gerunds, participles, and infinitives, T-G sees only sentence embedding. The difference to pedagogy caused by such variation in approach is tremendous. The natural emphasis of T-G is not on parsing, but on the creative process itself; not what a form is, but why it is selected. The entire presentation of transformational grammar thus becomes easily entwined with the teaching of writing. Perhaps even more important, the new grammar demands the recognition of the linguistic genius of every human being, a powerful morale booster to the non-proficient writer. Often the difference between learning and not is one's belief in one's own power.

Since T-G is always concerned with why language operates as it does and how sentences are related to each other, it often uncovers meaningful explanations for what traditional grammars ignore. Once a student of mine wrote, "He succeeded to do it." My correction noted that he had to change it to "He succeeded in doing it." [(*For*) . . . *to*] can't be used after *succeed*. The student complained, "I'll never remember when to use *to* or *-ing*. It's impossible." My response was to explain that [(*for*) . . . *to*] typically is used to embed statements which are not necessarily factual, as in:

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<sup>2</sup>Since Chaika (1972, 1974) treats the uses of case grammar, a further modification of T-G, as it pertains to rhetoric, it is here ignored.

- (1a) Jack tried to get married.  
(Jack didn't marry.)
- (2a) They reported the storm to have hit the Florida keys.  
(The storm may or may not have hit the Florida keys.)
- (3a) I'd like to live on the Riviera.

Conversely, [(possessive) . . . -ing] is used for factual embedding, as in:

- (1b) Jack tried getting married.  
(Jack did marry.)
- (2b) They reported the storm's hitting the Florida keys.  
(The storm did hit.)
- (3b) I like living on the Riviera.

Actually, the student himself was able to ascertain the subtle differences in meaning between the (a) and (b) sentences above. This helped convince him, not only that he has knowledge which he can draw upon to become a competent writer, but that he is capable of thinking about language and making judgments about it. It also reinforced classroom lessons on the necessity of paraphrase to yield the precise meaning. Perhaps, most important, a lively discussion of sentence possibilities and syntactic rules ensued from the correction. It is no accident that T-G grammarians, but not traditionalists, noticed the "fact rule." Since T-G advocates are concerned with why and how all sentences of a language are generated, they constantly search for unifying principles and general processes. A theory with deep structure means searching for underlying unity. It is such a search that led syntacticians to note the deep structure similarity of infinitives and gerunds.

After this experience with my student, I asked six excellent conventionally trained English professors how they would justify such a correction. They all characterized the student error as "awkward" or explained "Because I just know what it has to be." Neither response is likely to stimulate the student to think about language. Indeed, such responses make theme correction seem like placation of an idiosyncratic teacher, not a learning experience.

The vagueness engendered by the lack of coherent theory in traditional grammar can actually be a bar to learning. For instance, *The Holt Guide to English*, published in 1972, cites as an example of "awkwardness" in a chapter on style:

- (4) When people cease to tolerate themselves is the time hypocrisy comes about.  
(Irmscher, p. 184)

Irmscher (p. 184) asserts that "the awkwardness results from trying to make a 'when clause' the subject of the sentence." Thus, Irmscher implies that (4) results from a violation of syntactic rules. Whereas it does seem most usual for *when* to embed sentences as adverbs, as in Irmscher's suggested revision,

- (4a) Hypocrisy comes about when people cease to tolerate themselves,  
there are allowable instances of *when* embedding subject sentences, as
- (4b) When people cease to tolerate themselves is when they become hypocrites.  
(suggested by Richard Ohmann)

In both (4) and (4b) the *when* clause is used as a subject, but the parallelism in the latter makes it more acceptable. Apparently, since “the time” in (4) repeats semantic features of *when*, a stylistic awkwardness results because both clauses in (4) are being used as sentence complements. Neither clause is subordinate to the other, so, stylistically, the repeated elements are best presented by repetition of the same word. Parallelism is stylistically preferable when repeated meanings are grammatically equivalent, but not to employ such parallelism does not create ungrammatically as Irmscher’s second example of awkwardness does:

- (5) With physical death does not, nor cannot die the existence of the achievements of man.

This sentence violates an important inviolable rule of English grammar: the subject of a sentence cannot be a prepositional phrase. “With physical death” has been placed in subject position. Furthermore, *die* does not allow the object position in a sentence to be filled, but here “the existence” has been placed there. Nor is (5) one of those sentences which allow inversion of subject and predicate because of a preposed negative or locative adverb, as in

- (5a) Never had she run.  
(5b) In the corner sat the frog.

Irmscher’s example is not a case of mistaken inversion as the auxiliary and verb aren’t interrupted by the subject. These are not matters of stylistic preference or awkwardness, but grammatical necessity.<sup>3</sup> By presenting (5) as well as (4) as an example of awkwardness, *The Holt Guide* makes it appear as if the usage of prepositional phrases in subject position may sometimes also be all right when, in fact, it never is. Unfortunately, students often make that error. Irmscher’s easy latching onto a label leads him to lose an opportunity to illustrate an important rule of sentence construction. Similarly, his failure to discuss the proscription of complements after *die* means that *The Holt Guide* fails to make an important point about verbs, namely that lexical rules on verbs determine whether object or indirect object positions may be filled (Fillmore, 1968; Chafe, 1970; Chaika, 1972, 1974). Because traditional grammar, unlike T-G, is content to regard each sentence as idiosyncratic and because it is not concerned with discovery of underlying principles of sentence generation, faulty analysis is inherent in it. Because T-G insists that language is comprised of interrelated rules, it allows an explanation to stand only if it provides usable rules applicable to the student’s own writing. As a direct outcome of T-G theory, these rules are related to the language as a whole. They are not presented as chaotic, idiosyncratic instances which are ultimately unlearnable. The traditional catchall “awkward” can only lead to confusion. If a stylistic deficiency is presented as a grammatical error, but a student thinks of an instance in which the supposed error is acceptable, the

<sup>3</sup>This is not to deny that T-G sometimes finds fuzzy borders between grammar and style. Considering dialectal variation and language change, this is not surprising. However, T-G, because of its emphasis on rule formation and “searching” the whole grammar, is less likely to confuse. Furthermore, it keeps an awareness of grammar vs. style before the student at all times because of the insistence on considering all paraphrases.

professor's authority is lessened. It seems to the student that English teachers are privy to mysterious, unlearnable knowledge, or that they are addled. Furthermore, the label "awkward" does not tell the student when a given construction may be used, even if the error is accompanied by a sample revision. For the student to be enlightened, several instances of both correct and incorrect usage of a construction must be offered, followed by explication of the principle underlying its use. This explication should follow from the examples. The reader familiar with modern grammars will recognize in this suggestion the typical T-G format for explaining a rule.

*Harbrace College Handbook*, although traditional, does try to be more precise than "awkward," but it, too, fails to distinguish between grammatical and stylistic criteria. For instance, in a chapter entitled "Unity and Logical Thinking," after cautioning students not to allow "excessive subordination" in a sentence (error 23b), it warns against mixing constructions, (error 23c) with

- (6) When Howard plays the hypochondriac taxes his wife's patience.  
 [An adverb clause, part of a complex sentence, is here combined with the predicate of a simple sentence] (Hodges & Whitten, 1972:262)

Clearly, this error is grammatical. Its correction is not a matter of personal preference or esthetic judgment, but one of necessity. *Harbrace's* explanation seems to be offering the student a general principle, but as noted above, there is no syntactic rule forbidding adverb clauses as subjects of sentences. For instance,

- (6a) *When Howard finds time to go* remains a mystery.

If the *when* clause in (6a) is permissible, then, clearly, (6) is not in error because of mixing constructions. Whether or not a *when* clause can appear as subject depends upon the verb used as predicate. It has long been known that selectional restrictions on verbs determine their subjects (Fillmore, 1968; Chafe, 1970; Chaika, 1972, 1974). The *Harbrace* warning against "mixed constructions" is not only in error, it denies the student a valid and rhetorically important construction: the embedded sentence as subject.

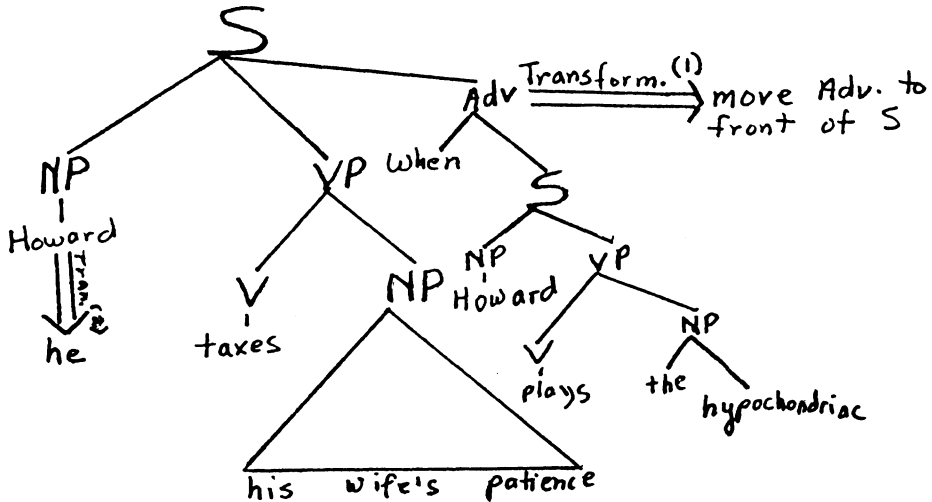
The *Harbrace* correction of (6) compounds the original misanalysis and does so directly because of the lack of a workable definition of a sentence in traditional grammar. *Harbrace* offers as correction to (6) (letters mine):

- (A) When Howard plays the hypochondriac, he taxes his wife's patience. (*complex sentence*) OR  
 (B) Howard's playing the hypochondriac taxes his wife's patience. (*simple sentence*)  
 (Hodges & Whitten, p. 262)

Why is the first correction "complex" and the second "simple" when both convey the same meaning and both contain two predications? "Howard's playing" is equivalent to "When Howard plays—", as the text itself admits by offering these as alternates. Furthermore, if "Howard's playing" is not a transformed deep structure sentence, if it is a simple [possessive + NP] subject, one wonders what Hodges and Whitten would propose to do with the fact that "playing" has an object, "the hypochondriac"? There is no way in any theory of grammar that a noun takes a direct object. With T-G, there is no problem. Both of Hodges'

and Whitten's corrections are admissible, but the reason is that "Howard plays the hypochondriac" is a deep sentence. In (A) it has been embedded under Adverb, and Howard himself taxes his wife's patience, as shown in this T-G diagram:<sup>4</sup>

(D1)



Transformation 2, changing *Howard* to *he* takes place after transformation 1. In (B), the sentence "Howard plays the hypochondriac" undergoes [poss - ing] transformation and fills the subject position, creating not only a stylistic difference, but a connotative one, as shown in diagram (D2) on the following page. Note that the T-G explanation not only explains in a manner consistent with the rest of the grammar, but also shows why (A) above actually says that Howard is taxing, whereas (B) says his action is, a distinction Hodges & Whitten don't make. Given the ad hoc, imprecise analyses that their lack of coherent theory leads to, traditionalists often don't seem to have a principled basis to justify such distinctions. Ultimately, traditional terminology like "mixed construction" and "awkwardness" leads to needless complications in the grammar. Because such terms are undefined, if not undefinable, they lack explanatory power. T-G is simpler and more effective not only because of its coherence, but because it always explains in terms of the basic sentence and a few embedding and deletion rules.

Another example of the needless proliferation of terms in traditional grammar is afforded by *Harbrace's* conventional treatment of "misplaced parts, dangling modifiers" (Hodges and Whitten, 1972:273-281). Transformational gram-

<sup>4</sup>Note that this diagram also suffices for the possible paraphrase of (A):

(A1) Howard taxes his wife's patience when he plays the hypochondriac.





ing. An unacceptable construction may be perfectly coherent, yet because it defies literary syntax, mark its writer as uneducated. Thus, the *Harbrace* example

Taking our seats, the game started. (p. 278)

apparently means *we* took our seats. However, the canons of the written dialect demand that the subject of the embedded sentence be identical to the subject of the main, so that this should mean: "The game took our seats." Our knowledge of the world tells us this is impossible, so that the correct meaning of "we took our seats" is forced. The fact that something can be understood is no guarantee that it is syntactically correct. Native speakers often reject as ungrammatical perfectly comprehensible and coherent structures; for example: "John disappeared the cake." Thus, equating ungrammatical items with incoherence, as *Harbrace College Handbook* does, vitiates the concept of correctness in syntax, so vital to the rhetoric class.

Since all of the dangling phrase-types presented in *Harbrace College Handbook* admit of the same explanation, as noted above, all will be considered together, one from each of the categories that the book presents:

- (7) The evening passed very pleasantly, eating candy and playing the radio. (p. 278)
- (8) By mowing the grass high and infrequently, your lawn can be beautiful. (p. 279)
- (9) To write well, good books must be read. (p. 279)

Students used to the concept of transformed sentences have no difficulty retrieving the deeper structures. They readily supply:

- (7a) The evening passed pleasantly. We ate candy. We played the radio.
- (8a) Your lawn can be beautiful. (by) You mow the grass high and infrequently.
- (9a) Good books must be read by anyone (in order to, for) (Anyone, People) write(s) well.

Hodges and Whitten do ask, after (8), "Who is to do the mowing?" (p. 279). Actually, no native speaker has any difficulty understanding that the mowing is done by *you*, even in the dangling construction. Furthermore, Hodges and Whitten's correction

*By mowing the grass . . . you can have a beautiful lawn*

doesn't have a surface subject on *mowing* either. Yet, no explanation is offered for this correction's not being dangling. That is, Hodges & Whitten never say why "By mowing" in one instance doesn't inform us who is doing it, but in the second, does. Using the concept of deep structure and embedded sentences, the student see graphically that the subjects of embedded and main sentences aren't identical in (7-9) above, respectively. Therefore, no subject can be deleted in any of these as they stand. The students learn one simple rule: if a subject of an embedded sentence is deleted, it must be identical to the surface subject of the main sentence. By contrast, teaching students what infinitives, gerunds, and

participles are, much less explaining when they “hang loosely,” involves needless hours of class time. Then, too, with no notion of deep structure and transformations, no rationale can be offered for when we rightly can or can’t supply a particular subject if it hasn’t been overtly stated as in (7-9) above.

For instance, *Harbrace* offers as a correction for (7):

- (7b) We passed the evening pleasantly, eating candy and playing the radio.  
(Hodges and Whitten, 1972:278)

Lacking a theory of deep structure and transformations, they offer no rationale for changing the subject of *pass*. The T-G approach demands that reasons be given for all corrections. As just noted, there is a general rule in writing “It can’t be deleted unless it’s repeated.” The subject of *eating* and *playing* have been deleted, but the only surface subject is *evening*. An *evening*, can’t eat or play; hence a subject must be provided which can. This subject must be animate and probably human, as humans play radios. *Eat* and *play*, must, of course, share the same deleted subject as they are joined by *and*. Only if the subject is identical may it be deleted and the verbs so joined. Fortunately, *pass* may also have a human subject if the time passed is made an object.<sup>5</sup> Since there is no context provided, any human subject may be selected; hence, the given correction of “The evening passed . . .” to “We passed the evening . . .” This may seem to be nit-picking. Indeed, for such a simple correction it would be, except that much of what actually occurs in themes is not so obvious. By always insisting upon principled explanations the professor ensures that students become used to analyzing language, paying close attention to sentence structure.

T-G sometimes explains to students why they are prone to certain errors. Thus, one reason for the creation of dangling constructions as in (7) is that the writer is aware of the deep structure noun. Therefore, he embeds sentences with the deep noun in mind, forgetting that, in writing at least, only surface subjects count for deletion.

The correction of (8) also proceeds by supplying a subject for the embedded sentence:

- (8b) If you mow the grass high and infrequently, your lawn can be beautiful.  
OR  
(8c) By mowing the grass . . . you can have a beautiful lawn.

Again, this last is offered by *Harbrace* and involves rewriting the main sentence. When this text does such rewriting, it offers no explanation, unlike the T-G corrections which proceed directly from the deep structures of the given sentences.

Finally, (9) can be corrected to:

- (9b) To write well, anyone must read good books.

*Harbrace* corrects (9) to:

- (9c) To write well, a student must read good books.

<sup>5</sup>For details of case grammar see Fillmore, 1968. For its application to rhetoric, see Chaika, 1972, 1974.

However, there is a general rule of deletion that says that *anyone* or its equivalent can be deleted. This operates throughout the language, as in “To know her is to love her” which means “For anyone to know her is for anyone to love her.” The problem in (9) is actually that “good books must be read” is a passive sentence with its agent deleted. It must have an active counterpart. “Anyone must read good books.” In the passive, the [*by* + *anyone*] can be omitted by regular rule of agent deletion. *Harbrace’s* making *student* the subject of *read* is unmotivated, as there is no rule of “*student* deletion” in the absence of that noun elsewhere in the grammar. Furthermore, patently (9) must refer to all people, not just students. Finally, *Harbrace* never explains that (9) dangles only because the main sentence has been passivized, so that the agent no longer appears as subject; thus, their correction simply reinstates the agent subject by conversion back to the active. A paraphrase utilizing the passive transformation might also be discussed for its stylistic effects:

(9d) For anyone to write well, good books must be read.

T-G encourages paraphrasing as traditional grammars do not. It keeps before the student always that there are many ways to express one idea but that each must conform to the rules of the language.

The dangling elliptical clause as presented by *Harbrace* can be troublesome to students, especially since the given definition is circular: “An elliptical clause—that is, a clause with an implied subject and verb . . .” (p. 280). Structural cues are more helpful. Question words: *who*, *what*, *which*, *when*, *while*, *where*, all double as sentence embedders. The NP following them must represent a complete deep structure sentence. Thus, when we see the *Harbrace Handbook* example

(10) When only a small boy, Father took me with him to Denver. (p. 280)

we know this must mean “When I was a small boy,” but that the “I was” was erroneously deleted. *Harbrace Handbook* does supply the “I was,” but gives no rationale for so doing. This makes correction a matter of mind reading.

T-G grammar automatically considers other possibilities by virtue of its rules. The verb *BE* and its subject frequently can be deleted in embedded sentences. Here it can’t be, only because the surface structure subject of the embedded and main sentences are not identical. If the main sentence is transformed so that “I” becomes its surface subject, the “ellipsis” can remain. That is “I was” can be deleted:

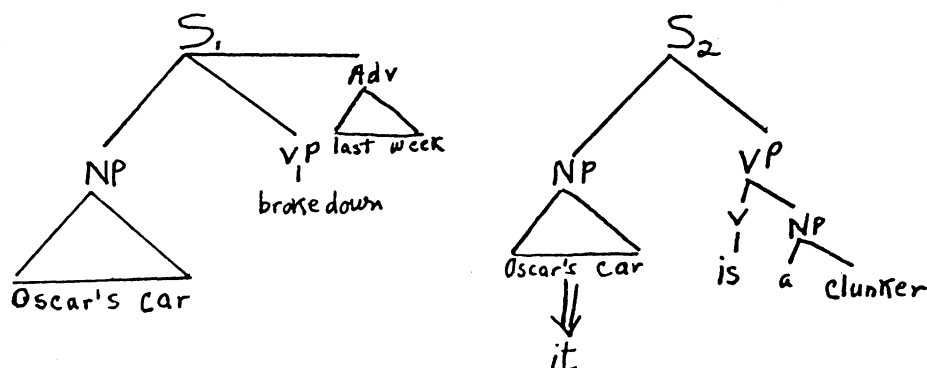
(10a) When only a small boy, I was taken to Denver by my father.

*Harbrace* doesn’t even consider this quite ordinary alternative, perhaps because it confounds the category of “elliptical clause.”

The tree diagrams of T-G grammar are exceptionally useful for two knotty composition problems: comma splices and fragments. It is very easy for students to map their theme sentences on the basic tree. If every position under S is filled and a new S must be started, the student sees where a conjunction or embedder is required. For instance, the following comma splice gets mapped in (D3).

(11) Oscar's car broke down last week, it's a clunker.

(D3)



There is no place to fit "it's a clunker" under S<sub>1</sub>. As there is no conjunction or embedder preceding "it's", there is no way to attach it to any part of that sentence. The student readily sees that this must be punctuated as a separate sentence. Alternatively, an embedder like *because* could be employed to heighten the causal relationship between the event and the explanation. Then, too, since "Oscar's car" is mentioned in both sentences, the second could be embedded by *which*, as:

(11a) Oscar's car, which is a clunker, broke down last week.

For some reason, the act of tree diagraming leads to the cessation of comma splices. There seems to be psychological validity to such an approach to "sentence sense." Peter Blackwell, Headmaster of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf reports (personal communication) that drawing trees is a potent method of teaching the deaf what a sentence is. He has elementary school children making syntactic trees. Teachers in my workshops found that tree diagraming of their own sentences was an easy task for fourth graders.

Fragments are equally amenable to visual explication. The idea of sentence must be defined in structural terms, for it is structure, not thought, complete or otherwise, that signals an independent sentence. For instance, native speakers have no difficulty distinguishing nonsense sequences as sentences or fragments, despite the fact that no "thought" can be distinguished. Note,

(12) The glorbey dale gyred a biffle.

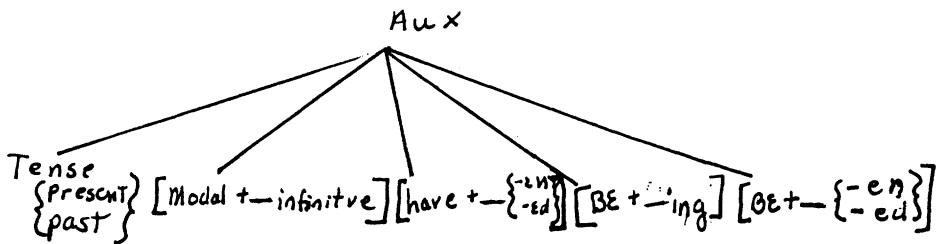
This is a sentence, whereas the following is not:

(13) Glinking a darby biffle

The structural cues in (12) show us that a [NP + VP] has been completed,

whereas those of (13) show us that the subject NP and *BE* are omitted, as *-ing* on a verb signals an independent predication only if an auxiliary *BE* precedes it, as in *is going*, *can be going*, *has been going*. The *-ing* on a verb with no auxiliary always denotes an embedded sentence. Here, there is no sentence into which (13) is inserted; hence, it is a fragment. In order to display such fragments, we must *add aux* (auxiliary) to our VP, as in (D4):

(D4)

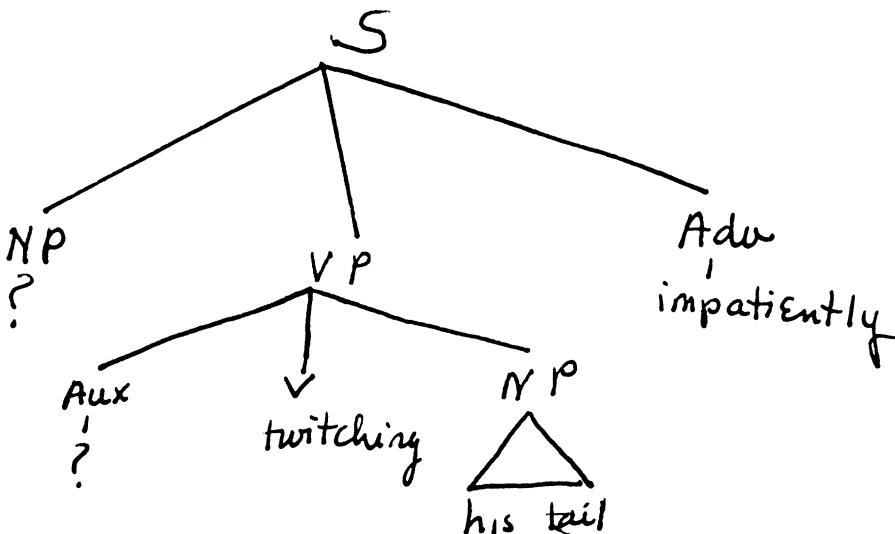


Note: Where \_\_\_\_\_ indicates, verb or next auxiliary is inserted. Examples: will go; will have gone; is going; is gone; shall be going; can have been going; must have been being paid.

If an *-ing* has been utilized as a full verb without its requisite auxiliary, this fact leaps up at the student as who is inserting a fragment into the tree. Similarly, if the vital subject NP is missing, its lack is instantly seen, more quickly than from a long-winded verbal explanation. A common fragment type serves as example:

(14) Twitching his tail impatiently.

(D5)



That the subject NP and requisite auxiliary, *BE* are missing is self-evident.

Fragments, actually, often are another instance of improper deletion. In conversation, it is usual not to repeat parts of a sentence already uttered. Instead, only the new constructions are supplied, with the understanding that they be mentally tacked onto the original. This habit not only speeds communication, but reinforces the unity of discourse. The propensity toward fragments in writing is but a carryover of this phenomenon. Indeed, students readily see that deliberate use of fragments is one way to simulate a casual, conversational style.

A complete comparison of traditional and transformational grammars in terms of efficacy for pedagogy would require a fair-sized tome. The foregoing attempts to show that T-G, because of its coherence and simplicity, provides a rational basis for correction of errors and discussion of style. Moreover, because equivalent sentences, paraphrases, are an integral part of T-G syntax, as are the consequences of applying different transformations, students are automatically taught sentence creation in the grammar lessons. Because T-G is so discoverable, whether because it conforms to the speaker's own intuitions, or its simplicity, or both, students can easily supply paraphrases and analyses on their own. This, in turn, creates an interest in discussing language which is vital to rhetoric. Using a T-G model, the professor assures students that by virtue of their humanity, they already know a great deal about language. This is reinforced when students see that they can create transformations and judge grammaticality often as accurately as the professor when syntax is discussed. It isn't that the teacher's superior familiarity with written dialect is questioned. It's just that students see they already possess a tremendous body of language knowledge upon which they can build. This is not true of complex, often counterintuitive, traditional models of grammar. Nor does traditional grammar provide a natural basis for exercises in sentence creation. T-G, with its theory of sentence embedding which emphasizes deep structure complete sentences underlying surface fragments, provides a natural model for combining and separating sentences for different effects. Hence, which grammar is chosen for the rhetoric classroom may have a profound effect on what is learned in that class. Transformational grammar, if understood by the teacher, can create a good learning environment.

The question naturally arises whether one must be a full-fledged linguist to use T-G grammar. Teachers in my writing workshop have learned enough in eight weeks to utilize T-G both for devising exciting lessons and for correcting student compositions. They report to me that their students, many very low achievers, not only responded with surprising enthusiasm to grammar discussions, but afterwards produced writing far beyond what anyone had thought possible.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Notions of deep structure and transformations were typically introduced by having students break long sentences into their several kernels; then, where possible, retransforming kernels into paraphrases of the original. It was found that even fourth graders could do this with ease. Furthermore, mapping sentences on trees was not at all difficult, even for the "lowest" high school groups. That they could do it, moreover, spurred these adolescents in subsequent writing assignments. I am especially indebted to Mr. Vincent Ciunci of Pawtucket East High School, RI, and Ms. Bonnie Olchowski of Central High School, Providence, RI for showing me what such high school students could learn from a T-G methodology. Neither of these teachers had any T-G training beyond my workshop.

The texts for this workshop were Rosenbaum and Jacobs, *Transformations, Style and Meaning*; Jacobs & Jacobs, *College Writer's Handbook*; and Elgin's *Pouring Down Words*. There are several new and old explications of modern syntax available, but since each has its merits and shortcomings, no titles can be recommended without a review, preferably comparative. For structural definitions of the parts of speech, so much more learnable than the traditional semantic ones, Francis (1958) still stands.

The unwary must be cautioned. Some texts, such as *The Holt Guide*, may actually contain sections describing T-G (pp. 496-500), apparently knowledgeably; yet in no way are they modern grammars. The section is window dressing. Most of the analyses of error are traditional; none, or virtually none, of the insights of T-G are actually applied. Irmischer, for instance, consistently fails to treat the passive as a transformation from an active (pp. 445, 453, 454), just as the bulk of his explanations are wholly pre-T-G. The mere inclusion of trees and terms like "kernel sentence" does not make a transformational grammar. Rather, look to see if the rules are presented only in the context of sentences showing when to and when not to use a construction. Note if several possible paraphrases are offered, with some discussion of when each is most appropriate. Look for discussions of presupposition as a governing factor in choice of transformation. Check whether the text consistently presents sentence types as transformations from kernel(s). Even if the text passes "the T-G test," however, don't be afraid to question any sentence analysis that doesn't accord with your native speaker intuition. Any grammarian occasionally falls into the trap of a glib analysis that doesn't cover enough instances. Besides, improving on some other scholar's rule is delicious.

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