

## Review

Torbjørn Nordgård and Tor A. Åfarli: *Generativ syntaks. Ei innføring via norsk*. Oslo: Novus Forlag, 1990. 250 pp.

It is becoming increasingly harder every year to teach syntax to beginners, at least if one wants to give them a glimpse of the exciting development that is going on in this field. As many people have pointed out, it is much easier for beginners to grasp the fundamentals of the Standard Theory, for instance, and many convincing arguments for phrase structure, movement etc. can be constructed within the frames of ST, without assuming too much previous knowledge of the students (cf., for instance, Perlmutter and Soames 1979). Nowadays, one has to become familiar with a lot of ever-changing principles and definitions, which are more or less interrelated in a nonobvious manner. It takes more than just a few weeks to get students integrated in all this.

This means also that it is very difficult to write a good introduction to modern generative syntax. If one wants to write a chapter on Case theory, for instance, it presupposes some knowledge of government, and in a chapter on government it would be natural enough to discuss the fundamentals of Case theory. It is thus a nontrivial problem to organize an introductory syntax book such that every chapter can be read and understood without reference to later chapters.

I think Torbjørn Nordgård and Tor Åfarli have done a good job in writing and organizing *Generative syntaks*. The book contains chapters on phrase structure and X'-theory, the lexicon and basic sentence structure, word order, Case theory, traces and government, infinitival sentences and small clauses, passive and ergative sentences, binding, *wh*-movement and relative clauses, subjacency, and the ECP. There is also a short chapter where the basic sentence structures of Norwegian and Icelandic are compared, and an appendix on formal grammars.

The book is easy to read for someone who has some basic knowledge of the development in generative syntax in the last decade. However, I am afraid that beginners will have difficulties in following the argumentation and understanding the analyses. Even though the book is 250 pages (and thus more than twice as long as Christer Platzack's (1982) *Modern grammatisk teori*, for instance) it does not contain a detailed argumentation for most of the analyses presented. It is quite clear that the authors would have been capable of giving such argumentation; they know very well what is going on in the generative world, as is shown by various comments in the footnotes, as well as the list of references at the end of each chapter. They also mention at several places in the text that other solutions than the one they present have been suggested.

However, the "principles and parameters" theory is simply too complicated to be presented with much argumentation in 250 pages. The book attempts to cover almost as much material as the 600 pages volume by Liliane Haegeman (1991), *Introduction to Government & Binding Theory*. I have not had the opportunity to use the book in an introductory syntax course, but judging from my experience, I think it could only be used together with much explanation given by the teacher.

The book is based on the *Barriers*-model (and some subsequent modifications). It may thus seem a bit surprising that some of the central concepts in *Barriers* are not mentioned at all; such as *theta*-government, *m*-command, *L*-marking, and the Minimality Condition. There is also no mention of *pro* and NP-movement, for instance. Even Move *alpha* is never mentioned, although various types of movement are of course discussed.

Since this is a textbook for beginners and not a theoretical study, I will have little to say about the specific analyses chosen and the subjects treated. Most of them are more or less standard in current GB theory, and either originate in some of Chomsky's works from the last decade, or have been incorporated in his books. In some cases, the authors depart from Chomsky's ideas, especially where they have been demonstrated to be inadequate for the Scandinavian languages. For instance, they adopt Platzack's and Holmberg's analysis of the basic sentence structure in Mainland Scandinavian, and they make use of their own original contributions regarding Passive and IP-adjunction.

In the first chapters, the authors use the standard sentence scheme with both an I- and a C-projection. In chapter 4.4 they introduce Platzack's and Holmberg's reanalysis of this general scheme for "Mainland Scandinavian". This scheme is necessary to explain several differences between Norwegian and Icelandic in chapter 6, and it is used in the next few chapters, but in chapter 9 onwards the "standard" scheme is used again. The authors explain that this is done in order to make it easier for the readers to read the generative literature, and also to emphasize that there are more than one ways to analyze sentences. However, I am afraid that many beginners will be confused because of this shift in sentence scheme. Perhaps it would have been better to move the chapter on comparative Norwegian and Icelandic syntax to the end of the book; then the authors could have stuck to the standard scheme throughout the main body of the book, and would only have had to switch in the final chapter (or appendix).

It would not be fair to criticize the authors for not going into details in every analysis they present. But when their analysis clearly contradicts the general principles they assume, one would at least expect a footnote pointing out that this is a puzzle. On p. 81 the authors point out that their model predicts that topicalization in embedded clauses should not be possible. Since some such sentences are well-formed in Norwegian (as in many other languages), they comment that "it seems that we must allow such subordinate clauses to have **two** C-projections" (Det ser ut til at vi må tillate at slike leddsetningar har *to* C-projeksjonar). Given the model that is assumed, this is the obvious way out, of course (for another solution, see Røgnvaldsson and Thráinsson 1990). But isn't this a bit of a problem for the model? When is such doubling of CP allowed? At first, one could maybe think of this as adjunction; but adjunction is not supposed to alter the feature composition of the phrase. Nothing is said about this being a problem or an exception to otherwise general principles. At least, the authors should have referred to Platzack (1986), where their analysis originated.

Although I have no reason to doubt that the analysis presented can account correctly for the Norwegian data it is supposed to account for, I must point out that some parts of it do not seem to fit with Icelandic data. For instance, it has been shown conclusively by Sigurðsson (1991) that one must allow for the possibility of PRO being governed and Case-marked, contrary to the standard analysis, which the authors present on p. 117. In the chapter on passive, the authors point out that their analysis requires that we accept Case-conflict, since both Nominative and Accusative Case is assigned to the same chain. Evidence from Icelandic shows however that this analysis will have to be modified somewhat; in impersonal passives, the object always is in the Nominative if the verb takes an Accusative object in the active version. We have *Það var barinn maður* 'There was hit a man (NOM)', but not \**Það var barinn mann* 'There was hit a man (ACC)' (cf. Sigurðsson 1989).

It sometimes worries me how little attention many generative linguists tend to pay to counterexamples to their analyses. I fully agree, of course, that counterexamples do not prove or disprove anything themselves, unless they can be related to some general theory. As the authors point out (p. 27), counterexamples to generally accepted theories can be found in all branches of science, and yet they do not force scientists to abandon these theories. However, I suspect that this is new to many students, and therefore I think it is necessary to discuss this more than the authors do. I also think that counterexamples to linguistic theories cannot always be compared to counterexamples to accepted theories in physics, for instance. I think that in physics, one can easily see that the counterexamples are exceptions in some way. In linguistics, on the other hand, the counterexamples need not look exceptional in any way; it's just that they don't fit with your theory.

The difference between a rule-based grammatical theory, like TG, and a principles-based theory, like GB, is mentioned in the introduction. This difference would merit further discussion, in my view. There are still some people who avoid GB because they - or someone who has taught them - once looked at TG and found it insufficient or wrong. Perhaps the authors should have added another chapter on comparative syntax; this time not comparing the syntactic structures of two languages, but rather the syntactic analyses of a special structure according to two different theories, TG and GB.

It is a good idea to include the chapter on comparative syntax between Norwegian and Icelandic. I only wish the chapter had been longer and more detailed. The Icelandic sentences presented are only 15, and 7 of them contain errors of some sort. Some details of the Platzack/Holmberg analysis, on which the chapter is exclusively based, are also questionable for various reasons, which I cannot go into here; but cf., for instance, Sigurðsson (1989); Kosmeijer (1991).

The bibliography is good, mentioning all the most important works from the last few years together with a few classics. The index is also very good, and no important concept mentioned in the text appears to be missing. Since the book is meant to be an introduction, and most of the GB-literature is in English, it would have been very useful to add an English-Norwegian glossary. Even though the Norwegian terms are often similar to the English ones, this is not always the case; a Norwegian student who is reading some GB-work in English and comes across a term like *Feature percolation* might not realize right away that this is the same as *trekkoverføring*. When the Norwegian terms are introduced in the text, the English correlates are often given, but not always; for instance, not in the above-mentioned case.

I am not in a position to judge whether there are many misprints in the book. However, I noticed *språkæringa* for *språklæringa* on p. 20, and in fn. 43 on p. 239 I found a reference to ex. (36e), which should have been (33e). In ex. (3) and (4) on p. 189 there are several right brackets missing.

There are too many errors and inconsistencies in the bibliography. When referring to a book with more than one author or editor, one can find almost all possible combinations; "L. Hellan og K.K. Christensen" (under Platzack 1986) but "Hellan, L. og K.K. Christensen (under Taraldsen 1986b); "Maegaard, B., Prebensen og Vikner" but "Belletti, L. Brandi og L. Rizzi (under Taraldsen 1981). The University of Lund once gets a capital *U* (under Sigurðsson 1989), but otherwise *u*. Under Taraldsen (1981) we get a period after the name of his article and then a capital *I* 'in'; but elsewhere there is a comma after the name of the article and a small *i*. I found also *og* for *of* on p. 242 (under den Besten 1983); *Endahl* for *Engdahl* on p. 243, *Linguistcs* for *Linguistics* on p. 243 (under Christensen 1983) and on p. 245 (under Platzack 1983). A period is lacking after Dyvik (1989). The abbreviation for 'editor' is usually *red.* with a period, but sometimes the period is lacking. Radford (1981) and (1988) are referred to on p. 224, but are missing from the bibliography. Framton's paper is in *Linguistic Inquiry* 21.1, not 21.4.

As mentioned above, there are also several errors in the Icelandic examples on pp. 107-108. *Maria* > *María* in ex. (5a) and (6a); *seð* > *séð* in ex. (6a); and *Rignidi* > *Rignði* in ex. (7bc). In ex. (8ab) the subjunctive form *sé* must replace the indicative *er* 'is'. Furthermore, it is not correct to mark (8b) as ungrammatical without any comments. This sentence is perfectly grammatical as it stands (cf. for instance, Kosmeijer 1991). To be sure, it has been claimed that the *það* in (8b) is not the same *það* as the one we find in initial position in extraposition sentences (cf. Thráinsson 1979); but this is controversial, and would at least have deserved a footnote.

To sum up: This is a well written and for the most part well organized book. The authors discuss and explain most of the central features and concepts of GB-theory fairly well, given the limited space. It is possible to come up with a few critical remarks on the theoretical presentation, but I think the main weaknesses of the book are pedagogical: Beginners simply need more discussion and examples to become familiar with such a complicated theory, and to understand that the analyses are not built on pure stipulations, but rather on a complex machinery where everything is dependent on everything else.

## References

- Haegeman, L. 1991. *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory*. Blackwell, London.
- Kosmeijer, W. 1991. The Distribution of Það: An Argument against a Generalized COMP Analysis. In Sigurðsson, H.Á. (ed.) *Papers from the Twelfth Scandinavian Conference of Linguistics*, pp. 182-193. Reykjavík: Linguistic Institute, University of Iceland.
- Perlmutter, D., and S. Soames. 1979. *Syntactic Argumentation and the Structure of English*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Platzack, C. 1982. *Modern grammatisk teori*. Lund: Liber.
- Rögnvaldsson, E., and H. Thráinsson. 1990. On Icelandic Word Order Once More. In Maling, J., and A. Zaenen (eds.) *Modern Icelandic Syntax*. *Syntax and Semantics* 24, pp. 3-40. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Sigurðsson, H.Á. 1989. *Verbal Syntax and Case in Icelandic*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Lund, Lund.
- Sigurðsson, H.Á. 1991. Icelandic Case-marked PRO and the Licensing of Lexical Arguments. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 9:327-363.
- Thráinsson, H. 1979. *On Complementation in Icelandic*. New York: Garland.

*Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson, Institute of Linguistics, University of Iceland, IS-101 Reykjavík, Iceland.*