英 語 史 統 語 論 の 新 展 開

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A New Approach in Diachronic Syntax

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1. **Methodological problems.** D.W. Lightfoot (1979) is the latest attempt to approach diachronic syntax in theoretical terms. He points out rightly that linguistic change does not necessarily represent a simplification of grammar because it entails that Modern English is simpler than any earlier stage of English. We should also note his remark that the postulated underlying forms which reflect an earlier stage of the language do not contribute to their plausibility as abstract constituents of a formal, synchronic grammar.

Students of diachronic syntax are placed in an unfavorable position. First, we are bound to the texts, which are usually deficient and often lack the crucial examples which will choose one grammatical hypothesis over another. Also, the available texts must be used with caution and with philological skill, since they may represent different dialects or styles. Second, there is no useful notion of what constitutes a natural kind of historical change in the case of syntax. In spite of these difficulties, there are historical facts which require description and, if they are not accidental, also demand explanation. For example, one finds clusters of simultaneous changes. The question then arises of whether their simultaneity is merely accidental or a function of abstract principles. Also there is some evidence for implicational sequences of changes, whereby it is said that if a language undergoes a certain change then it will subsequently develop some other property.

We can view syntactic change as changes in an abstract system of grammar, which has contributed to the theoretical study of diachronic syntax. It is a pity that most of the work in diachronic syntax has assumed the most powerful versions of transformational grammar. If rules can be added, lost, re-ordered, simplified and complicated, it is difficult to imagine what would constitute an impossible change. If there are many possible descriptions of the same change, the result will be of little interest. Robin Lakoff (1968) introduces abstract verbs and arbitrary rule features to the theory, which vastly extends the class of available grammars.

Traugott (1965) shows considerable indeterminacy in the description of rules.

D.W. Lightfoot (1979) takes the position of a restrictive theory of grammar. The restrictive theory of grammar will minimize the number of descriptions available for any one stage of a language. To distinguish possible from impossible changes is a central task of any theory of historical change. A theory should provide a distinction between possible and impossible changes. The restrictive theory of grammar will also provide an upper bound on possible changes. The correct grammar or theory will be the one which accounts for the maximum data with minimal machinery.

It is possible to formulate a rule in such a way that it will violate the constraint, but at a cost. In this way the conditions become an integral part of the evaluation metric, rather than absolute restrictions. This is called the logic of markedness. Markedness proposals make empirically testable claims in language change. There are changes resulting in steady complication of a grammar, rendering it as a whole more marked, less highly valued. These piecemeal changes are followed by a major reanalysis of the grammar eliminating the markedness and complexity which had been gradually accumulating. The symptoms of such a radical restructuring will be a set of simultaneous but apparently unrelated changes. Lightfoot explains how language changes along these lines, and introduces the Transparency Principle, which will account for when such re-structurings should occur.

Lightfoot's approach to diachronic syntax is promising, though he leaves us some doubt. A restrictive theory of grammar enables us to make fewer alternative analyses. Scientific theories must be falsifiable; to allow for many possible descriptions is a defect rather than a merit for theory. His theory of language change is also interesting. There are simultaneous but apparently unrelated changes in diachronic syntax. His theory gives importance to these changes in that they contribute to a radical restructuring of grammar. He says that to distinguish possible from impossible changes is a central task of any theory of historical change. This distinction is obviously important, but is this really feasible, considering the fact that there is no useful notion of what constitutes a natural kind of historical change in the case of syntax? His Transparency Principle casts some doubt. There is no clear formulation of this principle as far as I know.

The restrictive theory of grammar which Lightfoot has in mind has roughly the following structure:
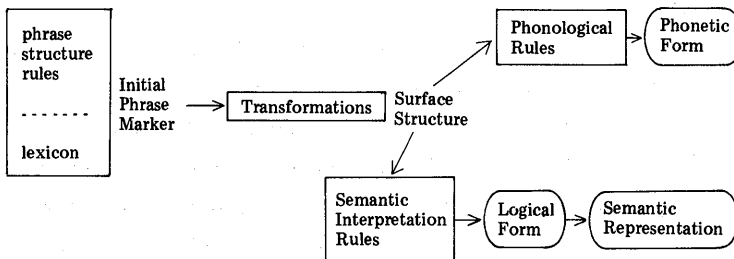
(lightfoot 1979: 49)

Phrase structure rules are subject to a version of the $\overline{\text{X}}$ convertion.

$$\overline{\overline{\text{X}}} \longrightarrow \{\ [\text{Spec } \overline{\text{X}}]\ \overline{\text{X}}\ \}$$

$$\overline{\text{X}} \longrightarrow \{\ \text{X Comp}\ \}$$

The curly brackets indicate that the categories are unordered, order being assigned by the particular grammar. All specifiers should be on the same side, and if the specifier precedes the head, the complement will follow it. The lexicon may contain redundancy rules, which is an alternative to codifying the information in a 'lexically governed transformation'. Possible transformations are strictly defined. Deletion transformations may delete only designated elements. Non-deletion transformations fall into three classes, being root, local or structure-preserving (Emonds 1976). Rules apply cyclically, and 'cyclic domain' corresponds to the nodes NP and $\overline{\text{S}}$. Just two rules, NP Preposing and *wh* Movement, will do a great deal of work. Semantic Interpretation Rules will specify the scope of quantifiers, anaphoric relations, etc. One can restrict the manner in which rules function as well as the form of rules. There are four conditions on the application of rules: the Propositional Island Constraint, the Subjacency Constraint, the Specified Subject Constraint, and the COMP-to-COMP Condition. Some generalizations are statable at the level of surface structure in terms of surface filters.

2. Changes in the base component. Lightfoot shows that changes can take place in the base component of a grammar, in particular that a new category can be introduced. He argues that a modal category was introduced into the grammar of English in the sixteenth century as well as the categories of Aux. and T. The pre-modals began to show more and more exception features, and the grammar ceased to treat them as verbs. Such quantifiers as *all, any, both, each, either, every, few, more, none, some* have undergone a category change. They were once adjectives and were re-analyzed as a new category of quantifier in the late sixteenth century. The grammatical re-analysis is indicated by the failure of quantifiers to undergo any change in distribution. Infinitives have also undergone a category change. The original, inflected infinitive had all the properties of a NP, but in the sixteenth century a series of changes takes place, all of which follow from saying that there was a category re-analysis whereby *to* infinitives lost their NP status.

The verb-adverb combination developed from the prefixed verbs in the Old and early Middle English periods. In the fifteenth centry the verb-adverb combination begins to show real strength. In Chaucer's works the verb-adverb combination appears as well as the prefixed verbs.

He was *out-cast* of manners compaignye; (B.Mk. 3405)

whiche that schrewednesse hath *cast out* (Bo. 4. p. 3 1300-5)

This development of the verb-adverb combination is an example of a category change. This case is all the more interesting because part of a lexical item, not an independent morpheme, has become a new syntactic category.

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