

RADFORD, Andrew. *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English. A Minimalist Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997. xii + 558pp. ISBN: 0-521-47125-7 (Hardback), 0-521-47707-7 (Paperback).

This review is written from the perspective of a functionally-oriented scholar who resorted to *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English* (henceforth STSE) with the aim of acquiring a view of some of the advantages and disadvantages of the treatment of syntax offered by the Minimalist Programme (MP) with respect to the views offered by some of the main functional models (Halliday 1994; Dik 1989, 1997), as regards its application to actual English sentences.

The review consists of four sections. The first two deal with STSE in particular: Section 1 concerns the general organisation of the contents, and Section 2 addresses more specific issues. Section 3 includes comments on the MP as a research programme, and Section 4 is a small concluding section which concentrates on the pedagogical adequacy of STSE.

## 1. ORGANISATION OF THE CONTENTS OF STSE

STSE contains ten chapters and a 45-page glossary. Each chapter begins with ten theoretical sections, the first and the last being always an overview and a summary of the contents, and finishes with an extensive workbook section. Chapter 1 presents the vision of language underlying the MP. Chapter 2 deals with word classes, focusing on the similarities and differences between grammatical categories, in terms of grammatical features. Chapter 3 is an introduction to syntactic structure, and Chapters 4 to 10 cover key concepts of the programme: empty categories, checking, head movement, operator movement, A-movement, VP-shells and agreement projections.

It can be said that, on the whole, STSE is pedagogically adequate. The contents and the exercises are rich for a one-year undergraduate course but, as the author specifies, STSE has been conceived as an intensive course; alternatively, STSE could very well be used as the main textbook for two one-year courses.

The main pedagogical drawback is, perhaps, that the MP is not explicitly described from a historical perspective; nevertheless, its development from earlier generative models is evident, since STSE does not present a unique syntactic model of analysis, but an initial analysis (set forth in Chapter 3) which undergoes successive modifications, as the different concepts are introduced. That is to say, STSE has the disadvantages of the historical perspective, in that the successive changes may well lead students to confusion among earlier and later ways of analysing<sup>1</sup>, but not its advantages, in that no explicit account is given of the issues which have led to the development of the MP from earlier generative models<sup>2</sup>. To my mind, it would have been more effective either to offer a straightforward historical perspective, or else to present the final model (perhaps with the exception of agreement projections) just after the first two chapters and then to introduce the main minimalist concepts gradually. This last choice would have saved the student the trouble to learn the earlier analyses, as well as a few symbols which are abandoned later, such as IP (inflectional/infinitive phrase)<sup>3</sup> and PRN (pronoun); however, it would admittedly have had the shortcomings

that more than one student would have been discouraged by the degree of abstraction (in the final analysis, the number of traces and empty constituents together is often superior to that of overt constituents), and that the treatment of complete clauses would have been postponed to a very late stage.

Contrariwise, a noteworthy merit of STSE is the pedagogical successfulness with which grammatical competence is approached as an ability gradually developed through childhood with little or no variation among individuals. In this respect, the abundant evidence of language acquisition and child language, both in the theoretical sections and in the exercises, is very much appreciated.

As regards individual chapters, it must be noted that Chapter 10 differs from the others in that its main aim is not to give an outline of the state of the art in Chomskyan linguistics (although it also does so as far as agreement projections is concerned), but rather to motivate students to read or consult more specialised references and even to do their own research when they finish STSE. In my view, this objective is fulfilled due to the challenging issues raised both in the theoretical sections, which present controversial issues (for instance, the question whether it is worth maintaining a uniform specifier-head agreement theory of case checking even if it involves considerable abstraction (pp. 453-454)), and in the exercises, in which students are often asked to choose among alternative analyses of the same sentences. With the exception of this last chapter, Chapter 6 is probably the most difficult to follow, because the modifications introduced in the syntactic analysis are more numerous and heterogeneous than in the rest of the chapters: the number of new concepts and labels is high (movement, traces, strong and weak features, tense and question affixes, etc.), and the syntactic nodes affected by these changes are also varied.

Concerning the workbook sections, they are rich in examples, but in my opinion the model answers are disappointing. On the one hand, they are insufficient, since the limitation of the keys to one or two sentences for each exercise is inconvenient for those wishing to use STSE without personal guidance. On the other, the level of difficulty is excessive: the elegant explanations offered for the different syntactic phenomena are in most cases out of reach of the average student. Occasionally, they contain even new theoretical points which could very well have been included within the theoretical issues: among many cases of this, I will mention the proposed analysis of *He cannot do anything* (pp.261-262), the exercise on the syntax of raising (pp.360-361), or the exercise on agreement projections (pp. 462-464), which questions several theoretical assumptions. In sum, most model answers are to be read just in the same way as the 'helpful hints': a comparison with the actual answers given by most students would, in all probability, lead to collective discouragement.

The explanation of the main concepts is generally clear, except for the concept of adjunction, which is introduced in an almost unnoticeable way (p. 241) despite its importance in the second half of the book.

The use of the terminology is rigorous in most cases. An exception is the treatment of *illocutionary force*, which is defined (p. 511) in terms of sentences and not of utterances and is considered as a matter of semantics instead of pragmatics (p. 246). Consequently, there is no distinction between syntactic structures and speech acts (the latter term does not appear in the final glossary, nor in the subject index), and the definitions given of *declarative*, *exclamative*, *imperative* and *interrogative* clauses

lead to the inference that they are always used to make statements, exclamations, orders and questions, respectively. As is well-known for more than two decades, these one-to-one correspondences do not hold in natural languages.

STSE has no important typographical errors, with the exception of the consistent use throughout Chapter 10 of the label AgrSP-bar instead of AgrS-bar, which can easily lead to confusion.

## 2. CRITICISM OF SPECIFIC ISSUES OF STSE

The first issue to be noted about STSE will be the absence of a diachronic perspective. There are theoretical sections and exercises on English in earlier periods (especially on Early Modern English), but these are restricted to synchronic states of the language. A consequence of this limitation is the consideration of all unergative predicates as denominal or deadjectival predicates. To my mind, this analysis is acceptable for verbs such as FISH, LUNCH, CLEAR or NARROW, which are derived from the corresponding nouns or adjectives (and, more arguably, their denominal origin is still present in the conscience of language users), but not for verbs such as PROTEST or GUESS, which are the source words of abstract nouns. And in the case of certain verbs, such as FAINT, their difference in meaning with the corresponding adjective may well lead to the view that the connection between both words is non-existent in the conscience of language users.

Another point of comments will be the treatment of tense (pp. 240-5), which, to my mind, is inadequate in three respects:

a) There is no explanation of the cases in which the 'Present' and the 'Past' affixes occur (even though the distribution of each affix can be inferred from the examples, with the exception of imperative clauses.)

b) STSE offers no examples of *will*; consequently, the reader may doubt whether utterances referring to the future and containing this modal are assigned 'Present' or 'Future' tense. However, the specification of the binary contrast 'Past/Present' found in the glossary definition of tense (p. 531) leads to infer that utterances with *will*, no matter whether they refer to future time or not, are assigned the 'Present' affix<sup>4</sup>.

c) There are no examples of the auxiliaries *do* or *did* in split-segment categories headed by a T (in the same way as there are examples of *Perfect HAVE* and *Progressive BE*), so that the reader cannot know the value to be attributed to them.

Concerning the VP-internal subject hypothesis, according to which the subject originates within VP or vp, there is an unclear issue: this hypothesis entails that the verb plus its object(s) and complement(s) constitute a V-bar; however, at first sight, this part of sentences can easily serve as a sentence fragment:

- 1) A: What will your brother do?  
B: *Throw the ball.*

STSE could advisably have given an explanation of this phenomenon. I would venture to say that perhaps the fragment contains traces of the subject. However, this cannot be ascertained without resorting to other references, since STSE does not

specify whether sentence fragments can contain traces of non-explicit constituents, nor does it show any examples of these hypothetical traces.

In the treatment of reflexives and similar uses of pronouns such as the construction ‘possessive pronoun + *own*’ (pp. 320-321), Radford does not state that reflexives require a c-commanding antecedent *as a rule* (therefore he seems to acknowledge that such pronouns can be used without an antecedent in certain discourse conditions), but he starts sentences such as (2) and (3), which are perfectly grammatical (and also acceptable in the right contexts):

- 2) John has certainly damaged my own credibility.
- 3) Damaged my own credibility, John certainly has.

The treatment of cliticisation (pp. 329-332, exercise V on pp. 358-359) is unsatisfactory in several respects: firstly, it is easy to find grammatical examples in which the contraction is attached to a DP and not to a head (4), something considered as ungrammatical; secondly, there is no explanation of why the restrictions on ‘s are less severe than those in ‘*re* or ‘*ve*, to the point that ‘s does not seem to be always blocked by traces, as (5-6) attest (cf. (7-8)); thirdly, STSE does not account for the ungrammaticality of certain cases such as (9) in which there is no trace between the contracted and the preceding verbal form:

- 4) My friend’s bought a bit of butter.
- 5) Which person do you think’[t]s upsetting her?
- 6) Which person do you think’[t]s upset her?
- 7) \*Which persons do you think’[t]re upsetting her?
- 8) \*Which persons do you think[t]’ve upset her?
- 9) \*Could he have’d a minute?

Another point of criticism is the analysis of the pronoun *it* in the construction called elsewhere extraposition as one independent element in the verb valency (pp. 380-382). In this way, the constituents of (10) are considered to be the same as those of (11), and no explanation is given of why (10), but not (11), has a variant with no change in meaning in which the subject is omitted and another constituent occupies the first place:

- 10) It strikes me that syntax really screws you up.
- (10a) That syntax really screws you up strikes me. (no meaning change)
- 11) You must satisfy the jury that you are innocent.
- (11a) That you are innocent must satisfy the jury. (meaning change)

This section will end with a brief mention of two unclear issues:

-On pp. 118-119, the nodes N dominated by DP nodes are considered to be maximal projections. However, some of these nodes N differ from other maximal projections in that they cannot always serve as sentences fragments nor can they be substituted by a proform; such is the case of the two nouns in the following example:

- 12) The *Dean* may expect you to hold a *meeting*. (example from p. 117; italics mine).

-The difference between *who* and *whom* (pp.279-280) and the agreement projection of genitive Determiner Phrases (pp. 448-449) are handled with excessive brevity. A more lengthy explanation, accompanied by syntactic trees, would have been much clearer.

### 3. COMMENTS ON THE MINIMALIST PROGRAMME AS TREATED WITHIN STSE

The Minimalist Programme, like all other theories devised by Noam Chomsky, attempts to keep syntax as separate as possible from other areas of linguistics, and to account for the grammaticality or ungrammaticality of given constructions purely in terms of syntax. These theories have the advantage of providing a straightforward explanation of syntactic phenomena which are arbitrary at first sight. To mention only an example, it accounts for the apparent idiosyncrasy of the syntax of relative clauses in an elegant way (Ch.7, exercise 4, pp. 305-307), according to which the traditionally called relative pronouns are shown to belong as different word classes: complementiser (*that*), relative pronouns (*who*, *which*) or a null relative operator (in *wh*-less relative clauses). In a similar way, this approach provides an explanation of the grammaticality of the first clauses and the ungrammaticality of the second in each of the following pairs:

- 13) (p. 258, exercise IV, sentences 21 and 22)  
 Did he not have a shower?  
 \*Did not he have a shower?
- 14) (p.311, exercise. VII, sentences 3a and 3b)  
 He can't decide whether to take the exam.  
 \*He can't decide if to take the exam.
- 15) (p. 535, exercise II, sentences 4a and 5a)  
 He has eaten all of them.  
 \*He has eaten all them.

However, due to this restriction to form, the explanations offered by the Programme for certain phenomena are unsatisfactory, in comparison to the accounts given by other models which integrate discourse analysis with syntax to a higher extent. For instance, the account of the differences in sentences with three-place predicates between the position of Complementiser Phrase complements (as in (16)) and Determiner Phrase complements (as in (17)) is done in terms of Object agreement projections (pp. 431-434). However, this analysis does not account for instances such as (18), in which the position of the *that*-clause immediately after the verb is acceptable:

- 16) He reported to the police *that there had been a robbery*.

- 17) He reported *the robbery* to the police.
- 18) Mary explained *that Peter was right* to everyone who would listen to her.

This syntactic phenomenon can be explained more satisfactorily in terms of the discourse maxim of end-weight (Leech 1983: 65), according to which shorter constituents tend to precede longer ones.

In spite of this tendency to explain syntactic phenomena by means of syntax only, it must be noted that the MP emphasises the connection between the language faculty and other components of the brain through the interface levels of Logical Form and Phonetic Form: in fact, most syntactic operations are motivated either for phonological or for semantic reasons. Even though the interface levels are treated in the exposition of checking theory (Chapter 5), STSE does not much make a point of their influence on syntax, due probably to reasons of complexity.

However, STSE does make evident the influence of semantics on syntax in the case of theta-roles: the Uniform Theta Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH), proposed by Baker (1988), maintains that every theta-role assigned to a given predicate is associated with a canonical syntactic function. Related to this treatment of theta-roles is the distinction between (a) the lexical verb, together with its subject, object(s) and complement(s), and (b) the structural opposition between declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences, as well as tense, aspect and modality. In this respect, this model is similar to several functional models, even though the differentiation is not signalled in the same way in both kinds of grammar: within the MP, it is made in terms of form; that is, the (a) elements originate within VP or vp, whereas the (b) elements originate in higher places in the trees. In the functional models, the distinction is made in terms of function: for instance, in Halliday's systemic-functional grammar (1994 [1985]), the (a) and (b) elements belong to the experiential and interpersonal metafunctions, respectively; and in Dik's model (1989, 1997), the (a) elements belong to the nuclear predication, which designates states of affairs, while the (b) elements fall outside it.

The MP also acknowledges that semantics and information structure do play a role in syntax. Concerning the latter, the clearest case found in STSE is the treatment of topicalisation (Ch.7, exercise VIII. pp. 312-314), although this treatment refers only to one grammatical mechanism for topic management, namely what is elsewhere called fronting (*This kind of behaviour we cannot tolerate*).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In spite of all the criticisms previous to this section, it must be stated that STSE is a good updated introduction to present Chomskyan linguistics, as well as an adequate starting point for students wishing to have a deep knowledge of the Minimalist Programme. Chapter 10 is particularly successful in motivating students to reflect on controversial issues and to continue their study of syntax with a critical mind. However, STSE has the drawbacks that the presence of expert personal guidance is necessary (unless the reader has sound previous knowledge of syntax), and that the difficulty of several theoretical issues and of many exercises of the workbook sections

is excessive. For this reason, the abridged version of STSE (Radford 1997b) is, in general, more recommendable for introductory courses on syntax. But, on the whole, STSE is pedagogically adequate, a merit common to other introductory books by Radford (1981, 1988). It is a privilege for the linguists' community to have a scholar so efficient at rendering the successive developments of generative linguistics accessible to students and to other academics.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In this respect, I must mention two particularly bothersome cases:

-Three different analyses are proposed for adjuncts such as *apparently* or *carefully*. The first two consider them as specifiers of intermediate projections: on pp. 142-144, they are analysed as V-bar or I-bar specifiers (depending on the individual adverb); on pp. 370-376, as V-bar or v-bar specifiers (probably there are also T-bar adverbs, but no examples have been given). The third analysis (pp. 439-444) treats them as specifiers within the maximal projections TP or VP.

-In a similar way, two successive analyses are proposed for *for*-infinitive structures: it is proposed that the objective case of the infinitive subject is checked first by attraction (pp. 147-149), and secondly by raising to specifiers within an agreement projection (pp. 448-454).

<sup>2</sup> For an introduction to these issues, see Webelhuth (1995).

<sup>3</sup> The label IP is reintroduced on p. 440ff. for cases such as *I suspect him strongly to be a liar*, but in my view this re-introduction is unnecessary: the label TP could have been used instead, since it is obvious that *to* is the head of a Tense Phrase (see the comments of examples (75) and (76) on p. 297).

<sup>4</sup> I agree with the non-existence of a future tense in English, since the reference to the future cannot be realised by inflection of the verb, and the modals *shall* and *will*, in spite of their high degree of grammaticalisation, do not completely lose their modal meanings when they refer to future time. A convincing argumentation of the epistemic value of future *will* is shown in Perkins (1983: 109-110).

Marta Carretero  
Departamento de Filología Inglesa  
Facultad de Filología - Edificio A  
Universidad Complutense - Ciudad Universitaria  
28040-Madrid  
email: fling11@sis.ucm.es

## REFERENCES

- Baker, M. (1988). *Incorporation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  
Dik, S.C. (1989). *The Theory of Functional Grammar. Part I. The Structure of the Clause*. Dordrecht: Foris. (2nd rev. ed., 1997, Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter).

- Dik, S.C. (1997). *The Theory of Functional Grammar. Part 2. Complex and Derived Constructions*. Ed. Kees Hengeveld. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1994) [1985]. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Leech, G.N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London and New York: Longman.
- Perkins, M.R. (1983). *Modal Expressions in English*. London: Frances Pinter.
- Radford, A. (1981). *Transformational Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Radford, A. (1988). *Transformational Grammar: A First Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Radford, A. (1997b). *Syntax. A Minimalist Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Webelhuth, G. (1995) *Government and Binding Theory and the Minimalist Program*. Oxford: Blackwell.