

## The Grammar and the User's Manual

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0. "Not every regularity in the use of language is a matter of grammar." (Pullum & Zwicky 1987:330) - language games, poetic forms, ideophone systems; "expressive word formation" (English expletive infixation, shop names in - (e) t ) eria, etc.) - Ferguson (1982, 1983) on registers

1. What do you know when you know how to speak a language? MEANINGS - SOUNDS  
- SITUATIONS

2. The linguist's tasks: to be able (in principle) to characterize this knowledge for each speaker (the DESCRIPTIVE goal); to formulate general - universally applicable - propositions about the nature of this knowledge (the THEORETICAL goal)

3. Poetic forms

- He had joined the Grecian Army, this man of delicate frame; and there he died in a distant land, and left on earth his fame. "Lord Byron's" age was 36 years, then closed the sad career, of the most celebrated "Englishman" of the nineteenth century. [Julia Moore, 'Lord Byron', as reprinted in D. B. Wyndham Lewis & Charles Lee, *The Stuffed Owl* (Coward-McCann, 1930)]  
- iambic tetrameter, with various allowable variants of the foot types and of the foot count, until it runs off the rails

4. "Overlay systems" (Zwicky 1986), extensions, or ADD-ONS: use materials of ordinary language (constructs of phonology, morphology, syntax, etc.); impose additional organization on these materials, often of a sort not found in any ordinary language; may allow expression types not otherwise attested (OVS order in English, e.g.); may show preferences or dispreferences for expression types, or combinations of preference types, otherwise attested; tend to be highly context-bound (in some cases, to the written mode); usually set off from surrounding material in ordinary language (cf. code-switching); may be acquired by explicit instruction; often imperfectly controlled, if controlled at all, by a fair number of native speakers of the language

Candidates: poetic forms (sonnets, limericks, double dactyls,...), newspaper headlines, classified ads, instruction types (recipes, instructions for assembly, medicine-bottle instructions)

5. Crucial fact for the theorist: lumping such systems with what is unproblematically the grammar of the language in question can make hash of generalizations - about that language, or about languages in general.

Strategy of modularity: conquer by dividing. (Similar strategy within grammar itself, with respect to semantics, syntax, morphology, phonology, and putative subsystems of each of these.)

Cost: an explicit account of the linking, or interface, between the divided systems.

6.1. Subjects cannot be omitted in finite clauses.

- We might go out on strike. We may go down to four days a week. Been like this all these years. ['Steve Dubi', steelworker, Studs Terkel's *Working* (1975 Avon paperback ed.), 715]

- Drinking too much again without question. Between two binges, float foggily to the surface and learn that finally I've been granted a Guggenheim. [Ned Rorem, *New York Diary* (George Braziller, 1967), 90] (Zwicky 1990)

6.2. Direct objects can be omitted in finite clauses only for certain verbs. [Omitted arguments are interpreted from the (linguistic or nonlinguistic) context.]

- Season with salt, pepper, seasoning salt, and dredge with flour. Brown to golden brown on both sides under broiler or in dutch oven on top of stove. Remove to roasting pan... ['Pheasant', in *River Road Recipes* (Junior League of Baton Rouge, 1962), 139]

- Apply three times a day. [Instructions on my Synalar prescription]

6.3. Proposals: Haegeman (1987), "a peripheral but no less systematic grammar" (245), with topic rather than subject prominence; Zwicky (1990), unclear (constraint requiring [-NULL] object "is not carried over into certain marked registers" (259)); Culy (1996), reference to a USER'S MANUAL; Bender (to appear), "a single grammar with social information integrated in the grammar itself."

7. For at least some add-ons, a user's manual, in addition to the grammar proper, seems to be the way to go. But not necessarily for all.

8. Number names: linked dependency in chains

(a) *three thousand thousand thousand thousand thousand, two hundred sixty thousand thousand thousand thousand, forty-five thousand thousand thousand,...*

(b) *\*two hundred sixty thousand thousand thousand thousand, three thousand thousand thousand thousand thousand, forty-five thousand thousand thousand thousand thousand thousand,...*

(c) **segment of order m**:  $N \text{ thousand}^m$  (where  $m \in 0$  and  $N$  is a number name for  $n$ ,  $1 \leq n \leq 999$ )

(d) The segments in a well-formed number name must be in strictly decreasing order.

(e) Each pair of contiguous segments exhibits a linked dependency.

9. How much linked dependency can languages exhibit?

(a) linked nested dependency: ...  $A_1 A_2 \dots A_n \dots B_n \dots B_2 B_1 \dots$  (CF)

*The mouse that the cat that the dog chased ate escaped.*

(b) linked serial dependency ...  $A_1 A_2 \dots A_n \dots B_1 B_2 \dots B_n$  (mildly non-CF)

*...Jan Piet Marie geld zag geven '...Jan saw Piet give Marie money'*

(c) linked dependency in chains (way non-CF; Zwicky 1963) -

So what? Not a matter of grammar proper. (Gazdar & Pullum 1985)

10. ADD-INS: special-purpose expressions embedded within ordinary language (cf. code-mixing)

Candidates: number names, expressive word formation, Nunbergian metonymies, naming patterns, mass/count conversions,...

11. Verbs agree with their subjects in person and number; pronouns agree with their antecedents in person, gender, and number.

(a) *The hamburger and french fries stand on their own.*

vs. (b) *The hamburger and french fries stands on her own.*

- (c) *The times they are a-changin'*.  
vs. (d) *The Times it is a-changin'*.

12. Special syntax for count and mass.  
(a) *There are a lot of dogs on the road.*  
vs. (b) *There is a lot of dog on the road.*  
(c) *I'd like some sand.*  
vs. (d) *I'd like a sand.*

13. For at least some add-ins, a user's manual, in addition to the grammar proper, seems to be the way to go. But not necessarily for all.

14. The Principle of Phonology-Free Syntax: A syntactic rule combining certain units cannot be conditioned or constrained by phonological properties of those units. (Zwicky 1969, Zwicky & Pullum 1986, Pullum & Zwicky 1988)

15. Avoid ending a sentence with a short phrase after a long one.  
(a) *We donated clothes to Robin. (DO - IO)*  
vs. (b) *??We donated to Robin clothes. (IO - DO)*  
(c) *??We donated piles of clothes from everyone in the family to Robin. (DO - IO)*  
vs. (d) *We donated to Robin piles of clothes from everyone in the family. (IO - DO)*

16. Avoid sequences of phonologically identical words, especially function words. (*\*that that*)  
(a) *...as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live* [Lincoln's Gettysburg Address]  
(b) *Möbel, die die Welt erobern* 'furniture that conquers the world' [Vienna shop slogan]

17. ASSEMBLAGES 1: How the expressions made available by the grammar can be deployed effectively within discourses.

18. ASSEMBLAGES 2: How the expressions made available by the grammar can be combined into discourses.

- (a) *As members of a Gray Panthers committee, we went to Canada to learn, and learn we did.* [Philadelphia Inquirer, 6/16/85, cited by Prince (1988:176)]  
vs. (b) *?As members of a Gray Panthers committee, we went to Canada, and learn we did.*  
Cf. Hankamer & Sag (1976) on anaphors requiring linguistically, not merely situationally, given antecedents; Ward & Birner (1995) on NPs in existential sentences having to represent hearer-new entities; etc.

19. Pointers from constructions in the grammar to entries in the user's manual? Or contextual conditions directly on the constructions, in the grammar itself (à la Bender)? Is there any real difference?

20. Why is this funny?

- Could this bit of flotsam cast up on a lee shore, spurned by civilization and totally dormant above the neckband, conceivably be the author of these present lines? Brother, I hope to kiss a pig he could. [S. J. Perelman, 'The Back of Beyond', from *Westward Ha!*]

21. VALUES: What is conveyed, stylistically and sociolinguistically, by the options made available by the grammar.

Lexical items (*steed* 'horse', *weed* 'marijuana' etc.) and constructions can both be restricted as to register/style/familiarity/etc.: counterfactual antecedents

- (a) *were she to answer your question,...*
- (b) *if she were to answer your question,...*
- (c) *if she was to answer your question,...*
- (d) *if she would answer your question,...*

It's natural to think of such values as information about lexical items and constructions, directly.

22. Digression. Values are not necessarily fixed, but can be constructed, negotiated, and altered, during interactions (Bender). Values can vary from person to person, over time, and across contexts. Values, and other contents of a putative user's manual, range from fluid, with a low degree of conventionalization, to fixed and highly conventionalized. (Towards the lower end of this scale: "the style of restaurant menus" (Zwicky & Zwicky 1980) - with some conventionalized features, though largely a matter of balancing the need to convey large amounts of information in a small space against the desire to advertise products attractively.)

Consequently, attempts to crisply differentiate register/style/etc., to inventory the registers etc. that might be found in a speech community, to provide a master list of values, and similar exercises in reification cannot fully succeed. Much of this knowledge of language and language use is acquired locally, in particular social and historical circumstances; the details can vary without limit.

23. Further digression. What else might be in a user's manual? COPING STRATEGIES: How the sound-meaning associations provided by your own grammar can be matched with what you hear from other speakers.

- Now, you can go out anywhere and buy a beer, and you see girls and boys a-runnning around filthy, raggedy dirty, old long hair, don't look like they've washed in six months... And, used to, you took your money in your pocket and brought the groceries back in a shopping bag... Now, they's gonna be an end to it. [67-year-old retired miner, interview cited by Wolfram & Christian (1976:175)]

24. It's often unclear whether some bit of knowledge is in the grammar or in the user's manual. Maybe the distinction is often not particularly important. Certainly, there's no reason to think it's the same for everyone. (Patterns of expressive word formation could easily become incorporated into the plain morphology. For new generations of speakers, morphology could just be morphology, whatever the history of the matter.)

25. Omission of subject and object in English, redux (item 6 above). If a grammar is entirely an account of what expressions are licensed in the language - rather than being, at least in part, a set of constraints barring certain classes of expressions (like subjectless finite clauses) - then a

missing subject construction and a missing object construction (each tied to context) would not conflict with the rest of the grammar; they would merely allow for options not otherwise licensed in the grammar. These constructions could be in the grammar or in the user's manual, without a problem.

26. And now (possibly) for something completely different: conditions on futurate *be gonna* (vs.) *be goin(g) to*

26.1. THE FINITENESS CONDITION: *be gonna* occurs only in finite forms. (Like the modal auxiliaries and prospective *be to* (Pullum & Wilson 1977).)

(a) *I might be \_goin(g) to / \*gonna visit Seattle next week.* [Base]

(b) *I've been \_goin(g) to / \*gonna finish my thesis for years now.* [PastPart]

26.2. THE EXPLICIT HEAD CONDITION (EHC): *be gonna* requires an explicit head verb *be*. (Contrasts not only with *be goin(g) to*, but also with prospective *be to*.)

(c) *with my thesis \_goin(g) to / \*gonna / \_to be finished soon,...* [with-Absolute]

(d) *Ow, that idiot \_goin(g) to / \*gonna / \_to become our boss!* [Absolute Exclamation]

[Pullum (1997): “*to*-contracted” expressions like *gonna* (*wanna*, etc.) as separate lexical items from (though morphologically related to) “uncontracted” *going* (*want*, etc.) plus a complement in *to*.]

27. CASUAL SPEECH AUX OMISSION (CSAD) (Akmajian et al. 1979:ch. 9): in informal speech and writing, a sentence-initial auxiliary, or an initial subject plus following auxiliary, is omissible.

(a) *Anyone ready for dinner?*

(b) *(You) eaten your dinner yet?*

28. If EHC is a condition on a particular lexical item, and CSAD is just a rule of grammar, then we predict that CSAD will pattern with the absolute constructions in 26.2; examples like the following are predicted to be ungrammatical, but they are fine.

(a) *Anyone gonna eat that shark steak?*

(b) *Gonna take a sentimental journey. Gonna wash that man right outa my hair.*

One solution: CSAD is a construction in an add-on volume of the user's manual.

General principle: In cases of conflict, stipulations in the user's manual **override** stipulations in the grammar.

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