

Term Paper

In this course, we have examined the nature of grammatical functions primarily from the perspective of Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), with brief comments about Relational Grammar (RG). Culicover & Jackendoff (2005) propose a new theory of grammar, which they call “Simpler Syntax.” As in LFG, Simpler Syntax recognizes an autonomous role for grammatical functions; their equivalent of LFG’s f-structure is called the GF-tier.

In preparation for the term paper, you are to read most of Chapter 6 of Culicover & Jackendoff (2005), all but §§6.4 and 6.5 (in other words, pp. 187–215 and 230–233). Of course, this chapter builds on the previous chapters in the book, and some of the terminology and formalism are introduced in those earlier chapters. However, most of the terminology and formalism should be fairly transparent. Some things to be on the lookout for:

- ↔ marks the mapping between levels. As in LFG, much of the descriptive power of Simpler Syntax (which is also a parallel-architecture theory) is embodied in the mapping between levels of representation.
- CS conceptual structure: one of the levels of representation assumed. This essentially a semantic representation, and it should be relatively straightforward.
- MGG mainstream generative grammar; i.e. transformational theory (such as GB)
- > in rules, this means “precedes”. (A notation more in line with standard mathematical notation would be <.)

The reading sets out C&J’s view of the nature of grammatical functions. As you will see, their view of the role of grammatical functions in the grammar differs somewhat from the LFG view. In your paper, you will discuss these differences. You should pay particular attention to the following questions:

- Do C&J justify the GF-tier similarly to the way we initially justified grammatical functions in this course?
- In LFG, grammatical functions are the central element in syntax. Do they play as central a role in Simpler Syntax? What is the basic role of grammatical functions in Simpler Syntax?
- In LFG, every element of the sentence is represented at f-structure. Which elements does Simpler Syntax represent in the GF-tier and which elements does it not represent? On the basis of (at least) the material we have discussed in class, are there problems with the Simpler Syntax conception of the GF-tier?
- In LFG (and RG), every item in the representation of grammatical functions (f-structure in LFG) is marked with a grammatical-function name (SUBJ, OBJ, etc.) which defines the nature of its functionality. This functionality is responsible for the kinds of properties that different elements of the sentence display. Is this true in the GF-tier of Simpler Syntax? Explain. How do C&J justify the nature of representations on the GF-tier? Comment on this difference between LFG and Simpler Syntax.

The paper is due in my mailbox in the English Department at noon on 30 July.

Bibliography

Peter W. Culicover, and Ray Jackendoff (2005) *Simpler Syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. **P 291 C84 2005**