Introductory Transformational Grammar of English

Second Edition

MARK LESTER

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Preface

Introductory Transformational Grammar of English is intended to give the reader a great deal of information about English grammar. It uses transformational grammar as the vehicle for presenting that information, but the theory and machinery of transformational grammar are treated as means to an end rather than ends in themselves. Furthermore, the book assumes an audience that has had little or no background either in English grammar or in linguistic theory.

After finishing this book, the reader should be equipped to do the following: read and understand the applications of transformational grammar that appear in the language arts journals; evaluate and teach the commercial grammar programs now available in a thorough and professional way; modify and supplement existing language programs with confidence; use quite different types of reference works on English grammar, such as Jespersen's *Essentials of English Grammar* and Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik's *A Grammar of Contemporary English*; and, most important of all, look at nearly any English sentence with a fair amount of insight about how it is put together.

The content of the book focuses on the main grammatical features of English: (1) the major constituents of simple sentences; (2) how active sentences can be turned into passives, statements into questions, positive sentences into negative sentences, and unemphatic sentences into emphatic sentences; (3) how simple sentences are combined to produce more complex sentences. The theoretical approach adopted is a simple and basic form of transformational grammar. The book concentrates on those areas of transformational grammar that have provided insights that have stood the test of time. Accordingly, it avoids those areas (such as the relation of the lexicon to the grammar) where there is considerable dispute among linguists. It also avoids any special terminology or notational system that is tied to one particular theoretical camp.

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of this book is the pedagogical approach. There is a lengthy introductory essay on what transformational grammar is, how it differs from structural linguistics, and how it works, complete with a mini-grammar so that the reader can see how the phrase structure and transformational rules fit together. Each chapter begins with an overview of the main points covered. Every point is illustrated with multiple examples and has one or more sets of exercises (with answers provided) for readers to test their understanding. Each chapter concludes with a review exercise that incorporates all points taught in the chapter and deliberately pulls in material covered in previous chapters. There is a compilation of all phrase structure rules at the end of Part I, and there is an appendix that gives a

chapter-by-chapter summary of all rules introduced, with examples of all transformational rules.

The second edition of this book, like all revisions, is partly similar to and partly different from the first edition. It was quite clear from the comments of users that the most satisfactory aspects of the book were its general organization around rule types (phrase structure rules, simple transformational rules, and sentence-combining rules) and the copious examples and exercises. Most criticisms were of specific pieces of analysis. In the second edition I have kept the same basic organization and have expanded the number of examples and exercises (actually, there are more than twice as many exercises in the revised edition). The actual text itself has been substantially rewritten; in fact, about 75 percent of the text is new material. I have incorporated a number of new insights gained in the interval since the first edition was published. However, probably the most important factor in the revision was Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik's *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, which provided me with a great deal of data. On the whole, the second edition covers generally the same material as the first edition but in greater depth. Occasionally this means greater complexity and more rules, though sometimes a clearer analysis is both more complex and more simple (for example the treatment of tag questions).

There appear to have been three main ways in which the first edition was used. One way was to use the book as the main text for the course, usually supplemented by discussion of lectures on other grammatical approaches or applications, depending on the purpose of the course. A second way was to use it in conjunction with another text, usually either another grammar book or a book of readings about language. A third way was to use it as a self-teaching supplementary text not dealt with during class time. In my opinion, this second edition will continue to be useful in the same three ways. The only difference is that the second edition is somewhat longer and will take a little longer to cover than the first edition.

My thanks to these people whose detailed criticisms and suggestions were so helpful to me: Professors Irene Brosnahan, Robert H. Canary, Millard C. Dunn, Elizabeth Eddy, Robert J. Geist, Ralph J. Goodell, William B. Hunter, Jr., and Lee Little. I would also like to thank Victor Askman, Karen Shiroma, and Donna Sugihara for help in preparing the manuscript.

M.L.

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INTRODUCTION

An Elementary Transformational Grammar of English

The great Danish scholar of the English language Otto Jespersen wrote the following paragraph in the introductory chapter of his book *Essentials of English Grammar*:

> The chief object in teaching grammar today—especially that of a foreign language—would appear to be to give rules which must be obeyed if one wants to speak and write the language correctly—rules which as often as not seem quite arbitrary. Of greater value, however, than this *prescriptive* grammar is a purely *descriptive* grammar which, instead of serving as a guide to what should be said or written, aims at finding out what is actually said and written by the speakers of the language investigated, and thus may lead to a scientific understanding of the rules followed instinctively by speakers and writers. Such a grammar should also be *explanatory*, giving, as far as this is possible, the reasons why the usage is such and such. These reasons may, according to circumstances, be phonetic or psychological, or in some cases both combined. Not infrequently the explanation will be found in an earlier stage of the same language: what in one period was a regular phenomenon may later become isolated and appear as an irregularity, an exception to what has now become the prevailing rule. Our grammar must therefore be *historical* to a certain extent. Finally, grammar may be *appreciative*, examining whether the rules obtained from the language in question are in every way clear

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(unambiguous, logical), expressive and easy, or whether in any one of these respects other forms or rules would have been preferable. (Jespersen, pp. 19–20)[1]

Jespersen draws a distinction between two different kinds of grammar. One kind, the prescriptive, gives non-native speakers a set of rules that they must follow in order to use the new language correctly. In other words, a prescriptive grammar tries to modify the learner's linguistic behavior. Jespersen obviously has considerable reservations about the value of prescriptive grammars for native speakers. Instead, he would prefer the second kind of grammar, the descriptive, which does not aim at changing behavior, but rather tries to discover what, in fact, the speaker's linguistic behavior actually is. Furthermore, a descriptive grammar may become the basis for more sophisticated investigations which will enable us to understand and explain the instinctive rules that underlie the speaker's linguistic behavior.

The need to distinguish between the two types of grammar can hardly be overemphasized. There is no need to apologize for linguistic prescriptivism as long as the basis for correction is understood by all parties concerned. In a beginning foreign language class, for instance, the views of the learner about what should or should not be said in the new language are worthless: the role of the teacher is purely prescriptive.

When dealing with native speakers of a language, the situation is naturally quite different. Children do not go to school to learn their own language in the same sense that they go to school to learn a foreign language. They "know" English in a way that they will never "know" any foreign language, no matter how much they are schooled in it. At this point we must distinguish sharply between two kinds of "knowing": conscious and unconscious. Most speakers, adults as well as children, do not know much about their language consciously. They do not know its history or why it works the way it does. This book is an attempt to give readers a conscious awareness of some aspects of their own language. Unconscious knowledge is what all speakers of a language share, namely, the ability to produce, understand, and make judgments about the grammaticality and structure of sentences in their language. By the time children come to school they already have a vast unconscious knowledge of their language.

However, their unconscious knowledge is immature as compared to that of adult speakers in at least two ways. The most obvious way is vocabulary. The vocabulary of even an illiterate adult is much greater than that of a child. If we broaden the meaning of vocabulary to include the grammatical properties of the word as well as its literal denotation, the difference between adults and children is even greater.

A second way that adults' unconscious knowledge is greater than children's is in the area of what we might call role playing. Throughout the course of a day

[1] From *Essentials of English Grammar* by Otto Jespersen, published in 1933 by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Reproduced by permission of the publisher. (Whenever Jespersen is cited throughout this text, the reference is to *Essentials of English Grammar*.)

each of us shifts linguistic gears as many times as we enter into different personal and professional relationships. It is a mistake to think of the changes as being along a single axis that ranges from formal to informal. We have many different axes. We can range from shop talk to baby talk; from intimate to highly impersonal; from solemn to facetious. We talk one way to superiors, another way to subordinates; we talk one way to our children, another way to our parents; we talk one way to men, another way to women. Young children know a few of these roles and the linguistic conventions that go with them, but their repertoire is naturally quite limited. Some of the linguistic conventions they will learn as a direct result of their schooling (for instance, the ones that pertain to some of the conventions of written English), but most they will learn as a sheer function of growing up and taking part in the various roles.

Since the publication of Jespersen's *Essentials*, the United States has seen the evolution of two new and quite different schools of language study. The first school had its roots in the 1930s, but did not gain wide recognition until after World War II. This school is commonly known as *structural linguistics*. The second new school can be dated from the publication by Noam Chomsky in 1957 of a monograph entitled *Syntactic Structures*. This school is usually referred to as *transformational grammar*. What are the main claims of these new schools, and how do they differ from each other and from what had gone before?

Both of these schools consider themselves scientific revolutions, so perhaps a good way to begin is to examine what it is that they are revolting against. The tradition that preceded structural linguistics is called *traditional grammar*. This term means different things to different people. At its worst, it means a confused blend of prescriptive and descriptive grammars aimed at changing linguistic behavior along the most artificial lines. At its best, however, it means the work of a scholar such as Jespersen. His *Essentials of English Grammar* belongs to a long and honorable tradition, and one that is still alive. The following passage on reflexive pronouns from Jespersen's *Essentials of English Grammar* is a good example of the best kind of traditional grammar. The passage is taken from a chapter that deals with the "relations of verb to subject and object."

> When the subject and object are identical, we use for the latter a so-called reflexive pronoun, formed by means of *self*, e.g. *I defend myself*. The pronouns are the following:

> | (I) myself | (we) ourselves. |
> |---|---|
> | (thou) thyself⎫
(you) yourself⎭ | (you) yourselves. |
> | (he) himself⎫
(she) herself⎬
(it) itself⎭ | (they) themselves. |

> (one) oneself (rarer one's self).

> A few verbs are always used reflexively:

> She prides herself on her good looks.
> He absented himself from all committee meetings.

There is a tendency to get rid of these pronouns whenever no ambiguity is to be feared:

> I washed, dressed and shaved, and then felt infinitely better.
> He is training for the race.
> He drew back a little.
> The army retired in good order.
> The disease spread rapidly.
> You must prepare for death.

Sometimes a difference is made, or may be made, between the fuller and the shorter expression; *behave oneself* is often used of good manners and breeding, while *behave* is used for action generally: the troops behaved gallantly under fire.

> He settled himself comfortably in an easy-chair | They settled in Australia.
> No opportunity offered | He offered himself as an interpreter.

Sometimes there is an element of exertion in the reflexive use: *We kept ourselves warm by walking to and fro* is more deliberate than *we kept warm*, etc.; cf. *the soup did not keep warm* very long. *He proved himself a fine fellow* emphasizes his endeavours, while *he proved a fine fellow* merely means that people saw that he was.

It is natural that the tendency to use verbs without the reflexive pronouns is stronger in English, where these pronouns are heavy and cumbersome, than in other languages where the corresponding forms are short and light (French *se*, German *sich*, etc.).

The reflexive pronouns are also used after prepositions:

> He looked at himself in the glass.
> He lives by himself in an old cottage.

But if the preposition has a purely local meaning, the simple forms without *self* are used:

> Shut the door behind you!
> I have no change about me.
> She stood, looking straight in front of her.
> They had the whole afternoon before them. (Jespersen, pp. 111–112)

From the purely descriptive standpoint of presenting accurate information about the usage of the reflexive, this passage would be hard to improve on. Note that the explanations Jespersen gives are almost always concerned with the meaning of the usage; for example, the reflexive can be deleted from the sentence when "no ambiguity is to be feared" or when the reflexive follows a preposition of "purely local meaning." Jespersen also points out that the presence or absence of a reflexive sometimes changes the meaning of the verb. For Jespersen, a descriptive grammar describes usage, and usage can be explained in terms of its effect on meaning.

THE STRUCTURAL REVOLUTION

The one book written from the viewpoint of structural linguistics that has probably had the greatest impact on the teaching of English is Charles Carpenter Fries's (pronounced *freeze*) *The Structure of English*. Let us look at the main ideas in this book in some detail in order to see how a leading structural gram- marian viewed the structural revolution. Bear in mind, however, that there were other structural linguists besides Fries, and that what is true for Fries may not be necessarily true for them. No field of study is perfectly monolithic.

At the end of the first chapter, Fries states that the purpose of his book is to

> challenge anew the conventional use of "meaning" as the basic tool of analy-
> sis in the area of linguistic study in which it has had its strongest hold—
> sentence structure and syntax. (Otto Jespersen insists, for example, "But in
> syntax meaning is everything." *A Modern English Grammar* (Heidelberg,
> 1931), IV, 291.) [Fries's footnote.] (Fries, p. 7)[2]

In this quotation we see one of the key ideas of structural linguistics. Linguistics cannot use meaning as a tool in the analysis of language, a position diametrically opposed to the basic ideas of traditional grammar. The structuralists argued that the goal of linguistic analysis is to see how meaning is conveyed. Since meaning is the goal, it cannot at the same time be a means used to reach the goal, or else the discovery process is completely circular: meaning is discovered by the use of meaning. For Fries, language is a physical, observable phenomenon that must be studied objectively.

Fries criticizes traditional grammar for providing analyses that merely label the elements in a sentence but do not explain how meaning is conveyed.

> In the usual approach to the grammatical analysis of sentences one must
> know the total meaning of the utterance before beginning any analysis. The
> process of analysis consists almost wholly of giving technical names to por-
> tions of this total meaning. For example, given the sentence *the man gave the
> boy the money*, the conventional grammatical analysis would consist in at-
> taching the name "subject" to the word *man*, the name "predicate" to the
> word *gave*, the name "indirect object" to the word *boy*, the name "direct
> object" to the word *money*, and the name "declarative sentence" to the
> whole utterance. If pressed for the basis upon which these names are given to
> these words, one would, in accord with the traditional method, say that the
> word *man* is called "subject" because it "designates the person about whom
> an assertion is made"; that the word *gave* is called "predicate" because it is
> "the word that asserts something about the subject"; that the word *boy* is
> called "indirect object" because it "indicates the person to or for whom the

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[2]From *The Structure of English* by Charles Carpenter Fries, copyright   1952 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., and reprinted with their permission. (Whenever Fries is cited throughout this text, the reference is to *The Structure of English*.)

action is done"; and that the word *money* is called "direct object" because it "indicates the thing that receives the action of the verb." The sentence is called a "declarative sentence" because it "makes a statement." The whole procedure begins with the total meaning of the sentence and consists solely in ascribing the technical terms "subject," "predicate," "indirect object," "direct object," and "declarative sentence" to certain parts of that meaning. "Knowing grammar" has thus meant primarily the ability to apply and react to a technical terminology consisting of approximately seventy items. It is this kind of "grammatical knowledge" that is assumed in the usual discussions of the value of "grammar" for an effective practical command of English, or for English composition, or for mastery of foreign language. It is this kind of grammatical analysis, this starting with the total meaning, *and the using of this meaning as the basis for the analysis*—an analysis that makes no advance beyond the ascribing of certain technical terms to parts of the meaning already known—it is this kind of grammatical analysis that modern linguistic science discards as belonging to a prescientific era. (Fries, pp. 54–55)

Fries begins his analysis of the sentence *the man gave the boy the money* by distinguishing between two different kinds of meaning. One kind of meaning is *lexical meaning*. The lexical meaning of *man*, for instance, is the dictionary definition of the word: it tells us what the word *man* refers to in the real world. However, what the dictionary cannot tell us is how the word *man* is used in the sentence quoted above. In the sentence *The boy gave the man the money*, the function of the word *man* is quite different from its function in the first sentence. The grammatical function of a word in a sentence is called the *structural meaning* of the word in Fries's terminology. Thus, in order to understand a sentence, we must know both what its words mean (the lexical meaning) and their grammatical function within the sentence in question (the structural meaning).

Fries next addresses himself to the question of how we recognize structural meaning. He argues that structural meaning is "signalled by specific and definite devices. It is the devices that signal structural meanings which constitute the grammar of a language. *The grammar of a language consists of the devices that signal structural meanings*." (p. 56) When the appropriate structural signals are absent from a sentence, the sentence will be ambiguous because we can assign it more than one possible structural meaning. Fries illustrates this point with the sentence

Ship sails today.   (Fries, p. 62)

The sentence is ambiguous because both *ship* and *sails* could be either a noun or a verb. However, if the appropriate structural signals were present, the sentence would not be ambiguous; for example,

The ship sails today.
Ship the sails today.

In this case, *the* signals the structural meaning of *ship* and *sail* in the two sentences.

One of the deeply held tenets of structural linguistics is that the recognition of structural meaning is independent of lexical meaning. In other words, speakers of a language do not depend on the meaning of the word in a sentence to tell them what its grammatical function is. In support of this position, Fries makes up sentences with words that have structural meaning but no lexical meaning, for example, *Woggles ugged diggles.* (p. 71) The fact that we know that *woggles* and *diggles* are nouns and that *ugged* is a verb means that we identify parts of speech without reference to meaning.

Fries also discusses the inadequacy of the traditional definitions of parts of speech. Again, the basis of his objection to traditional definitions is not that their classification is faulty, but that their definitions are not really defining:

> What is a "noun," for example? The usual definition is that "a noun is the name of a person, place, or thing." But *blue* is the "name" of a color, as is *yellow* or *red*, and yet, in the expressions *a blue tie, a yellow rose, a red dress* we do not call *blue* and *yellow* and *red* "nouns." We do call *red* a noun in the sentence *this red is the shade I want. Run* is the "name" of an action, as is *jump* or *arrive. Up* is the "name" of a direction, as is *down* or *across.* In spite of the fact that these words are all "names" and thus fit the definition given for a noun they are not called nouns in such expressions as "We *ran* home," "They were looking *up* into the sky," "The acid made the fiber *red.*" The definition as it stands—that "A noun is a name"—does not furnish all the criteria necessary to exclude from this group many words which our grammars in actual practice classify in other parts of speech. (Fries, p. 67)

However valid Fries's criticism of certain kinds of traditional grammars may be, it is not a valid criticism of sophisticated traditional grammarians like Jespersen. In his *Essentials of English Grammar*, Jespersen makes no attempt to define nouns, either by meaning or otherwise. He simply gives a list of typical types of nouns with the following comment: "It is practically impossible to give exact and exhaustive definitions of these [part of speech] classes; nevertheless the classification itself rarely offers occasion for doubt and will be sufficiently clear to students if a fair number of examples are given. . . ." (Jespersen, p. 66)

Fries also rejects the traditional meaning-based definitions of such functional relationships as subject, direct object, indirect object, appositive, and the like. Instead, he identifies these relationships in terms of formal signals of structure. For example, "subject" is defined as being that noun which is "tied" to a verb by agreement, that is, by the change in the form of the verb that is correlated with the number of the preceding noun; for example:

The boy *loves* ice cream.
The boys *love* ice cream.

Other functional relations are defined in terms of linguistic formulas or patterns. For example, given the pattern

determiner–noun–verb–determiner–noun

the second noun, by definition, is a direct object.

Fries's task is to identify the structural signals by which speakers actually recognize the speech class of a word. Here are structural signals by which Fries claims that speakers recognize a noun to be a noun:

1. Contrast of form between nouns and other parts of speech. For example, noun/verb: *arrival/arrive, defense/defend*; noun/adjective: *bigness/big, truth/true*.
2. Compounds ending in *-one, -body, -thing, -self/selves*. For example, *someone, somebody, something, myself*.
3. Contrast of singular versus plural forms marked by "s." For example, *boys/boy, desks/desk*.
4. Irregular contrasts of singular and plural forms. For example, *men/man, children/child*.
5. Possessive "s." For example, *man/man's/men/men's*.
6. Position after determiners. For example, in the following phrase the italicized words are nouns because they follow determiners:

   The *poor* and the *rich*, the very *lowest* and the very *highest* are. . . . (p. 118)

7. Position after prepositions. For example, *at school, by telephone*.
8. Recognition of the other parts of speech in the sentence. Fries gives an example of this category the following newspaper headlines: (p. 119)

   Bus Fares Cheap in Emergency
   Bus Fares Badly in Emergency

We recognize *Fares* to be a noun in the first sentence and a verb in the second sentence because we recognize the part of speech of the word following *Fares*.

The formal characteristics of nouns that Fries gives above break down into two types: characteristics of the form of the word (groups 1–5) and characteristics of position within the sentence (groups 6–8). These two basic types of characteristics are also used in the characterization of the other three parts of speech.

At the risk of dreadful oversimplification, structural linguistics (as represented by Fries's *The Structure of English*) may be described as a revolutionary departure from traditional grammar in terms of what there is in language that needs to be explained. For Jespersen, explanation means discussion of how a certain form or construction came to be used the way it is. The explanation can be semantic or purely historical. For the structural linguist, the basic question of linguistics that needs explanation is a psychological one: How does language convey meaning? The structuralists' answer to this question is, I think, fairly summed up in this quotation from Fries:

> The total linguistic meaning of any utterance consists of the lexical meanings of the separate words plus such structural meanings. No utterance is intelligible without both lexical meanings and structural meanings. How, then, are these structural meanings conveyed in English from the speaker to a hearer? Structural meanings are not just vague matters of the context, so called; they are fundamental and necessary meanings in every utterance and

are signalled by specific and definite devices. It is the devices that signal structural meanings which constitute the grammar of a language. *The grammar of a language consists of the devices that signal structural meanings.* (Fries, p. 56)

For the structuralist, two basic conclusions follow from the position just stated:

1. There is a one-to-one tie between structural signals and meanings. The language learner comes to associate certain meanings with certain forms. As Fries puts it:

> One of the earliest steps in learning to talk is this learning to use automatically the patterns of form and arrangement that constitute the devices to signal structural meaning. So thoroughly have they become unconscious habits in very early childhood that the ordinary adult speaker of English finds it extremely difficult not only to describe what he does in these matters but even to realize that there is anything there to be described. (Fries, pp. 57–58)

2. Linguistic analysis needs to distinguish between the kind of information available to the user and the kind of information that is not. The former will have relevance to the acquisition and use of language, while the latter will not. Historical information about the English language may be of interest to the specialist, but it is obviously irrelevant to any examination of how language conveys meaning, since the typical speaker does not have historical information available. From this point of view, Jespersen's excursions into the history of the language are irrelevant to the central topic of how language conveys meaning.

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL REVOLUTION

For the structural grammarian, the goal of linguistics is to account for linguistic behavior. The basis of the transformational revolution is ultimately the simple observation that explanations of our linguistic behavior cannot account for the extent of our linguistic knowledge. For example, Fries demonstrates the importance of structural signals by showing that if these signals were omitted from a sentence (as in newspaper headlines), the resulting sentence would be ambiguous. Chomsky points out that there are other kinds of ambiguity that have nothing to do with structural signals. A well-known example from *Syntactic Structures* is the phrase

The shooting of the hunters

This phrase can mean either (1) the hunters shot something, or (2) someone shot the hunters. Here we have one form with two different meanings. However, unlike the ambiguity of *ship sails today*, it is very difficult to see how the phrase can be made unambiguous by adding structural signals. In other words, the ambiguity of *the shooting of the hunters* is not due to a confusion as to the proper part of speech classification. There is no doubt that *shooting* is a gerund (a verb changed into a noun by the addition of *-ing*) and that *hunters* is a noun. Even knowing this, the sentence is still ambiguous.

One possible solution from a structural standpoint would be to argue that the ambiguity is due to the function word *of* in that particular pattern. In other words, when we have the sequence

gerund—of—noun

the sequence will be ambiguous in the same way that *the shooting of the hunters* is. The problem with this solution is that it does not work. Chomsky cites two phrases that appear to have exactly the same structure as *the shooting of the hunters*:

The growling of lions
The raising of flowers

Neither one of these phrases is ambiguous in the sense that *the shooting of the hunters* is. This is a fact that native speakers of English simply know. Furthermore, we know that the relation of the gerund to the noun in the two phrases above is not alike. In *the growling of lions* the relation of *lions* to *growling* is similar to the relation of *hunters* to *shooting* in the first meaning of *the shooting of the hunters*, namely, the lions growled and the hunters shot. In *the raising of flowers*, the relation of *flowers* to *raising* is similar to the relation of *hunters* to *shooting* in the second meaning of *the shooting of the hunters*, namely, someone grew flowers and someone shot the hunters.

Another frequently cited pair of sentences that illustrate the discrepancy between the information contained in the structural signals and what we actually know is the following:

John is easy to please.
John is eager to please.

In terms of sentence structure, these two sentences are identical. However, every native speaker of English knows that these two sentences are really totally different. The first sentence states that John is an easy person to please, while the second sentence states that John is eager to please us. There is nothing in the sentence structure of these two sentences that could account for the difference in the way we understand them. A possible explanation could be that the difference is in the lexical meaning of the two adjectives *easy* and *eager*. We can show that this is not the case, however, by substituting other adjectives into the same position. For example, we know that *John is difficult to please* is like *John is easy to please*, while *John is anxious to please* is like *John is eager to please*. Consequently, the difference between the two sentences is more basic than just the lexical meanings of *easy* and *eager*.

Ambiguity results when one form has two or more meanings. The opposite of ambiguity is when one meaning is embodied in two or more forms. For the sake of a term, let us call the opposite of ambiguity *paraphrase*. The classic instance of paraphrase in English is the relation between the active and passive versions of the same sentence; for example: