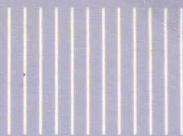


*The  
Syntactic  
Phenomena  
of English*

Volume 1

James D.  
McCawley



syntax

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*The University of Chicago Press  
Chicago and London*

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The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637

The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London

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Printed in the United States of America

97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 54321

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

McCawley, James D.

The syntactic phenomena of English / James D. McCawley.

p. cm.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-226-55623-9 (v. 1). ISBN 0-226-55625-5 (v. 2). ISBN

0-226-55624-7 (pbk. : v. 1). ISBN 0-226-55626-3 (pbk. : v. 2)

1. English language—Syntax. 2. English language—Grammar, Generative. I. Title.

PE1361.M43 1988

425—dc19

88-14818

CIP

## ||||| *Preface*

As with my logic textbook (McCawley 1981a), I have written this book because doing so was easier than not writing it. Until I reached the point of having enough of this book written that I could use the completed portions as the principal textbook in a syntax course, I was literally using a different textbook every year and vowing each year never to put up with the exasperations of that year's textbook a second time.

In most cases the syntax textbooks that I used were simply shoddy pieces of work,<sup>1</sup> in which the authors made no attempt to observe the standards of accuracy, of clarity, of solid argumentation, and of thoroughness that are usually enforced in linguistics journals. As I observed in my review (McCawley 1978) of one of the few syntax texts to rise above the dismal level that has prevailed, generally "the effort of writing a textbook affects transformational grammarians the same way that the full moon affected Lon Chaney." (In that review, I expressed relief that for once in reviewing a textbook of transformational grammar I could "concentrate on matters of substance and not spend most of my time cataloging bungling on the part of the author.") The few textbooks that displayed evidence of their authors' attempt to produce books that could be taken seriously either have shocking gaps in their coverage (as in the largely admirable book by Perlmutter and Soames [1979], whose 600-odd pages contain no discussion of either coordination or auxiliary verbs) or correspond to a very different style of syntax course from what I wanted to offer (as with the fine textbook by Matthews [1981], which is appropriate for a course that surveys ideas of syntactic structure but not for one devoted to surveying syntactic phenomena and applying a specific set of ideas in investigating those phenomena).

What I have written is a book that is useful for the sort of syntax course that I regularly participate in at the University of Chicago: a two-quarter sequence whose prerequisite is a reasonably demanding introductory linguistics sequence and which is devoted to detailed analysis of a large number of syntactic phenomena in English and to exposition of the ideas of syntactic theory that are valuable as aids to exploring and understanding syntactic phenomena. This course is taken by advanced undergraduates and first-year graduate students, most of whom are majoring in linguistics,

but many of whom are from such fields as anthropology, psychology, and philosophy. I am fairly confident that the book will be useful to a considerably broader audience than the one I have used it on so far; for example, it should be of value to students in any of the diverse fields in which a detailed knowledge of the syntactic structures of English is an asset (English as a second language and artificial intelligence are two such fields that immediately come to mind), though I must await reports from instructors in those fields before I can declare my confidence to be justified.

The syntactic theory that I develop in this book is a highly revisionist version of transformational grammar that probably no one other than myself accepts in all its details and to which I refuse to give any name.<sup>2</sup> It has been my intention in developing this approach to syntax to exploit those ideas of more orthodox transformational grammar that I find of genuine value and to provide worthy alternatives to those parts of “standard” transformational frameworks that I regard as misguided or perverse. My approach shares with orthodox transformational grammar the gross outlines of its conception of syntactic structure and of the notion of “transformation” (the transformations of a language are a system of rules specifying how underlying and surface syntactic structure are related in that language), as well as the central ideas of many well-known analyses of particular syntactic constructions; however, there are many differences with regard to the goals of syntax and of linguistics, the relationship between syntax and other things both within and outside of linguistics, and in the more specific details of syntactic structure. These differences will be commented on as they become relevant to points taken up below.

Throughout most of the book I give top billing to the phenomena and second billing to the theory,<sup>3</sup> not because of any disdain for theory (much the contrary!) but because I think the greatest value of any theory is in the extent to which it makes phenomena accessible to an investigator: the extent to which it helps him to notice things that he would otherwise have overlooked, raises questions which otherwise would not have occurred to him, and suggests previously unfamiliar places in which to look for answers to those questions. I have accordingly striven after considerable thoroughness in the coverage of the syntactic phenomena of English but have been highly selective in the coverage of theoretical ideas. Well-known alternatives to the theoretical ideas discussed here are taken up principally to clarify issues in which those ideas figure and are discussed only in as much detail as is necessary to make those issues clear. I do, however, make a real attempt to deal in detail with those analyses of specific phenomena (analyses that I regard as mistaken as well as ones that I regard as substantially correct) that have become influential enough to have acquired the status of landmarks: analyses that much of the published literature presupposes fa-

miliarity with and which are alluded to in the terminology in which the syntactic constructions are commonly described. Since I regard it as important for students in introductory syntax courses to gain knowledge that will help them to understand the scholarly literature of the field, I have included critical expositions of particularly influential analyses<sup>4</sup> of the phenomena covered below, identifying both their virtues and their shortcomings.

While the course sequence that provided me with the stimulus to write this book lasts two quarters,<sup>5</sup> the book contains far more material than could be covered in a two-quarter sequence, probably even more than could be covered comfortably in a one-year sequence. (Eight chapters per quarter, or eleven or twelve chapters per semester, is an attainable goal if a fairly strenuous pace is maintained and not everything is covered in class.) I regard this surfeit of material as all to the good. First, it provides instructors with a fair amount of choice as to which chapters and sections they will cover. (While most of the chapters presuppose considerable material from the first ten chapters, it should be possible for the instructor to skip some of the subsequent chapters without losing important prerequisites for what he wants to cover.) Second, it will substantially decrease any danger of students mistakenly drawing the conclusion that the material covered in their syntax course constitutes the entire field of syntax, and it may help get across to them the idea that syntax is a vast area that holds enough puzzles and problems to fill many lifetimes of scholarly activity. It is hard to take a field seriously if one is led to believe that it is covered in full in a 200-page paperback. And third, it will provide students with a reason for retaining their copy of the book after the course is finished and using it subsequently as a reference work. As a connoisseur of well-crafted indexes (and a frequent complainer about the nearly useless indexes that reduce the value of many books), I have reasonable confidence that the index of this book will facilitate its use as a reference work on English syntax.

An important part of this book is the exercises that follow every chapter other than the first. In making up these exercises, I have attempted as much as possible to give students practice in doing real linguistics. Many of the exercises ask various parts of a question that a linguist must always ask himself: How general are the phenomena we are discussing? There are accordingly many exercises in which the student is asked to find additional examples of a particular phenomenon or to test whether the behavior that we have observed in one class of sentences is duplicated in some other class of sentences that was not taken up explicitly. This sort of exercise is generally not very difficult, but it has considerable value, since it gives the student experience in an activity that will be a major part of the effort that he will put into any original syntactic research that he may undertake. An-

other common exercise asks the student to give analyses of particular examples in accordance with the conclusions of the text. This is likewise a part of real linguistics: checking whether one's tentative conclusions about the language under study enable one to give a plausible account of the fine details of a broad selection of examples. Other exercises ask the student to identify whether particular examples are instances of phenomena that are studied in the text. Still others ask him to explore the implications of alternative ways that the phenomena might be described; in this sort of exercise, I have confined my attention to hypotheses that either have been seriously proposed or could very well have been,<sup>6</sup> so that the exercise will provide the student with an appreciation of a real issue rather than mere brownie points for finesse in manipulating symbols. A section at the end of the book entitled "Selected Wrong Answers to Exercises" identifies some errors that can easily be made in doing particular exercises and shows why they are errors; students may find it to their advantage to consult this section before handing in their assignments (and instructors will definitely find it to their advantage to consult it before correcting their students' assignments).

Two policies that some readers may find disconcerting should be mentioned here. First, while the greater part of this book is devoted to the description of specific English syntactic constructions in accurate and precise terms, using a particular version of transformational grammar, I reject the belief common among transformational grammarians that preciseness consists in the systematic use of a fixed "official" notational system. I regard the notational systems that have been popular in transformational grammar as embodying grossly inaccurate presuppositions about what factors play a role in syntactic phenomena and as forcing their users to pay attention to factors irrelevant to the phenomena at hand and to ignore factors that are of prime importance. Accordingly, "standard" transformational notations for syntactic rules will be largely ignored in this book, appearing only in isolated passages devoted to justification of my negative evaluation of them and in critical exposition of influential analyses in which some such notational system played a significant role. In fact I regard as mere wishful thinking the common belief among transformational grammarians that a notational system must exist in which the combinatoric possibilities for the symbols correspond exactly to "possible rules" of syntax.<sup>7</sup> I will thus not adopt any "official" notational system for the rules adopted in the chapters to follow but will generally just state in English what class of "inputs" each rule allows to correspond to what sort of "outputs," aiming at complete coverage of the factors that affect applicability of the rule and of the details of the ways in which the "output" differs from the "input."

Second, I reject as counterproductive, in language teaching and music teaching as well as in the teaching of academic subjects, the remarkably popular instructional practice of purposely avoiding exposure of one's students to any topic before they have had "the lesson on" that topic.<sup>8</sup> The chapters devoted to complements and to coordination will not be the first place in which the reader of this book will encounter examples like *John thinks that Lenin was gay* or *Most linguists either have pet cats or play the piano*, nor will they be the first places in which the reader will see (perhaps simplified) versions of the analyses of those constructions that are argued for in those chapters. Arguments in earlier chapters will in many cases be accompanied by promissory notes that are to be redeemed in later chapters for justifications of premises of those arguments. In the many cases in which important insights into phenomena discussed in earlier chapters can be obtained by examining interactions with phenomena discussed in later chapters, I will conduct the discussion of those interactions in terms of the analyses that are adopted later in the book, instead of wasting the reader's time with spurious "elementary" analyses of the phenomena in question. The common practice of relying on makeshift analyses that no professional linguist would take seriously, so as to attain the dubious goal of presenting material in "logical order,"<sup>9</sup> carries with it a real danger of turning out students who are proficient users of an obscure model of crutches but find when their crutches break that the sole producer of that model has gone out of business and their own legs have atrophied.

For valuable comments on earlier drafts of parts of this book, I wish to thank Duleim Al-Qahtani, Ruth Bar-Ilan, Robert Chametzky, Richard Hudson, Jeff Leer, Li Gucheng, Li Ligang, Salikoko Mufwene, Karen Peterson, Rudolf de Rijk, Jerrold Sadock, Eric Schiller, Rebecca Wheeler, and especially, Guy Carden, Dee Ann Holisky, and Johanna Nichols. In addition I owe a great debt to the many students at the University of Chicago, and at summer courses at the University of Maryland, Georgetown University, and the University of Delhi, whose reactions to earlier drafts of many chapters and to classroom presentations of the material covered in them helped me greatly to clarify my ideas in my own mind and to put them into English that (I hope) will be intelligible to those who are not already well-informed about the questions that are taken up.

## NOTES

1. I emphasize that this remark refers only to syntax textbooks and not to logic textbooks. My complaint with the logic textbooks that I used before writing my own was not with their accuracy as expositions of logic but with their appropri-



ateness for the sort of logic course that I was teaching, which gave top priority to the analysis of meaning in natural language and was relatively unconcerned with the mathematical metatheory of logic.

2. In McCawley 1981c, I give a number of reasons for adopting the apparently perverse policy of refusing to name my approach to syntax. Probably the most important of these is that any name is bound to give undue prominence to some one of the many issues that distinguish this approach from others (the way that the name “generative semantics” misleadingly suggested that the differences between generative semanticists and Chomskyan transformational grammarians had principally to do with the question of what part of a grammar they considered “generative”). Instructors who feel the need for a name for the kind of syntax done in this book are hereby authorized to make up their own name for it, just as long as the name chosen is not too misleading.

3. The title of this book was chosen to reflect this assignment of star and supporting roles. That policy was also reflected in the title that I originally gave the book: “More about English Syntax Than You Probably Want to Know,” a title that hardly anyone but me seemed to like. (One of the few persons who said that he liked it was the representative of a competing publisher.) I encourage users of this book to refer to it informally by its original title and to complain if it does not measure up to that title, and I urge any Taiwanese publisher who rips the book off for a pirate edition to at least restore the original title.

4. The analyses alluded to here are what Kuhn (1970:187) calls **exemplars**: a scientific community’s prestigious problem solutions, typically taught to novices in the field as examples of good science. On the application of the notion “exemplar” to the recent history of linguistics, see McCawley 1985.

5. One quarter is 10 weeks of classes and one week of examinations; classes normally meet three hours a week.

6. Considering how frequently linguists have proposed thoroughly bizarre analyses, this is not a very stringent limitation.

7. See McCawley 1973c for a discussion of the nature of linguistic notation. I argue there that there is no reason to expect a notational system that exactly matches a class of possible phenomena even to be possible and note that assumptions governing the use of the notational system (e.g., assumptions about when expressions count as the same or as different) are equivalent to assumptions about the phenomena that are to be described with the notation and are responsible for any match that does exist between the phenomena and the notational system.

8. See Krashen 1980 for a frontal attack on that practice in language teaching.

9. There is no justification for the widespread belief that logic dictates a preferred order for taking up topics. Perhaps that misconception reflects confusion between the ordinary sense of the word *follow* and its technical sense in logic.

# ||||| *Abbreviations and Special Symbols*

## *Abbreviations*

A	Adjective
$\bar{A}$	Adjective phrase
AD	Anaphoric device
ad-S	Modifier of S
Adv	Adverb
$\bar{A}dv$	Adverb phrase, i.e., phrasal unit with Adv as head (do not confuse with “adverbial phrase”)
ad-V	Modifier of V
ad- $\bar{V}$	Modifier of $\bar{V}$
AE	Anaphoric epithet
An	Animator
AN	Adjectival noun
AP	Adjective phrase (replaced by $\bar{A}$ from chapter 7 on)
AT	Attraction to tense
Au	Author
CNPC	Complex Noun Phrase Constraint
Comp	Complementizer
Comp-del	Complementizer Deletion
Comp-pl	Complementizer Placement
Conj	(Coordinating) Conjunction
CR	Conjunction Reduction
CSC	Coordinate Structure Constraint
CSt	Comparative stripping
Deg	Degree expression
Det	Determiner
Equi-NP-Del	Equi-NP-Deletion
IMP	(marker of imperative sentence type)
ISD	Imperative Subject Deletion
N	Noun
$\bar{N}$	Phrasal unit with N head (do not confuse with “NP”)
NP	Noun Phrase


NPI	Negative polarity item
NR	Negative Raising
P	Preposition
$\bar{P}$	Prepositional phrase
PP	Prepositional phrase (replaced by $\bar{P}$ from chapter 7 on)
PPI	Positive polarity item
Pr	Principal
Ptcl	Particle
Q	(marker of interrogative sentence type)
Q-float	Quantifier-float
RCR	Relative clause reduction
RNR	Right Node Raising
RO	Raising to object
SpSC	Specified Subject Constraint
SSC	Sentential Subject Constraint
V	Verb
$\bar{V}$	Verb Phrase
VP	Verb Phrase (replaced by $\bar{V}$ from chapter 7 on)
X	(i) used as a variable category name, e.g., where X can stand for any part of speech, $\bar{X}$ will stand for the corresponding phrasal category; (ii) used in notation of early transformational grammar to mean “anything,” e.g., “V X PP” would mean something that begins with a verb and ends with a prepositional phrase, irrespective of what intervenes between them)
0 (zero)	Lexical unit belonging to no part of speech
$\emptyset$	Phrasal unit whose head belongs to no part of speech

### *Special Symbols*

#### i. SYMBOLS RELATING TO ACCEPTABILITY

<b>**</b> , <b>*</b> , <b>*?</b> , <b>??</b> , <b>?</b>	Unacceptability or awkwardness, decreasing in degree from <b>**</b> to <b>?</b>
<b>%</b>	Acceptability varies dialectically (also used for phrase boundary; see below)
<b>00</b>	Position that is empty both syntactically and semantically. Used in conjunction with <b>*</b> to indicate that there must be an “understood” element in the given position for the example to be acceptable (see 319, 414 n.17)

ii. ABBREVIATORY SYMBOLS

- / Used in presenting a set of examples in which different things fill a given position (see 10 n.3)
- ( ) Used in presenting a pair of examples that differ with regard to whether a particular position is filled (see 10 n.3)
- ^ Where alternative positions for an item are contrasted, carets are sometimes used to mark those positions; stigmata written under the caret indicate the acceptability of that item in that position (see 632, 659 n.2)
- [ ] Indicates a syntactic constituent made up of the material inside the brackets; the left bracket is often subscripted to indicate the category of that constituent, e.g.,  $[s_{NP} \text{ many birds}][_{\bar{V}} \text{ eat insects}]$
-  Indicates a syntactic constituent made up of the material that appears at the bottom of the triangle (thus, indicates that something is a constituent without specifying what its internal structure is; see 44 n.2)

iii. MISCELLANEOUS SYMBOLS THAT APPEAR IN DIAGRAMS OF STRUCTURES AND IN DERIVATIONS

- $S_0$ , etc. Numerical subscripts serve as an informal device for identifying nodes in a structure. The nodes usually are numbered with 0 at the top and numbers increasing as one goes down the tree (see 46 n.15).
- $he_i$ , etc. Numerical subscripts are also used to indicate purported reference; thus, items with the same subscript are to be interpreted as coreferential.
- $\emptyset$  Zero. Used (i) for morphemes that have no overt phonological form, such as the plural indefinite article in English, (ii) after an arrow, to indicate that the material before the arrow is deleted, and (iii) to indicate a position in which something has been deleted.
- Passive<sub>1</sub>, etc. Numerical subscripts on a name of a transformation indicate the application of that transformation to the constituent corresponding to that subscript, here, the application of Passive to  $S_1$  (see 153).
- Passive → An arrow connecting two structures indicates that in the given derivation the first structure is the input and the second structure the output for an application of the transformation whose name appears above the arrow. When

no transformation is indicated over the arrow, it is assumed that it is clear what the relevant transformation is.

#### iv. STRESS AND INTONATION

báseball	primary stress on the syllable indicated
whôle	secondary stress on the syllable indicated
thě	the indicated syllable is unstressed
/baseball	the indicated word bears a high rising pitch (see 498 n.1)
/baseball	the indicated word bears a low rising pitch
//baseball	the indicated word bears a pitch rising sharply from low to very high
\baseball	the indicated word bears a high falling pitch
^baseball	the indicated word bears a rise-fall contour pitch
%	phrase boundary (see 275, 288 n.12)

#### v. SYMBOLS FROM FORMAL LOGIC

$\exists$	“Existential quantifier,” roughly “there is . . .”
$\forall$	“Universal quantifier,” roughly “for every . . .”
$\lambda$	“Abstraction operator”; derives a property from a propositional formula, e.g., $(\lambda x)$ (x resembles Stalin) means “the property of resembling Stalin” (see 462 n.16).

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