ANALYTIC SYNTAX

Otto Jespersen

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With an Introduction by James D. McCawley

The University of Chicago Press



ere the great Danish linguist Otto Jespersen puts forward his views on grammatical structure in a kind of shorthand formalism, devising symbols that represent various grammatical

elements and then analyzing numerous sentences in terms of these symbols. The contemporaneity of these analyses is remarkable, for they allude to concepts that were uncongenial to linguists in 1937 when the book was first published, but which have come to be generally accepted in the linguistics community during the past twenty-five years.

"[Analytic Syntax] gives the most concentrated dose of syntactic analysis to be found in the whole Jespersen canon and presents an integrated summary of the syntactic research that had engaged much of his efforts for fifty years. Its position among his works can perhaps best be likened to the position among Bach's works of the B minor mass, a work that Bach put together late in his life out of arrangements of movements from many of his cantatas. In both cases the result is a monumental work in which a major creative figure surveys his output in a genre that was particularly close to his heart. I hope that the appearance of this reprint ... will speed the arrival of the

day when ignorance of Analytic Syntax on the part of a linguist will be as unthinkable as ignorance of the B minor mass on the part of a musical scholar."

-James D. McCawle from the Introduction

"Jespersen's continuing appeal lies in the sheer scholarly quality of the man; our awareness in reading him that we are engaged with a supremely learned and cultivated mind. He is indeed the most distinguished scholar of the English language who has ever lived, in my view: no small claim when we reflect on the distinguished scholarship that has for centuries been devoted to our language. A further and related reason is this. While being a deeply serious theoretica! linguist to whom such daunting labels as phonetician and grammarian preeminently apply, Jespersen was above all a philologist in the older senses of this word, a lover of language and of the arts that are realized in language." -Randolph Quirk, from the Foreword to Growth and Structure of the English Language

Otto Jespersen (1860–1943) was professor of English at the University of Copenhagen. Among his many works is *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, also published by the University of Chicago Press.

INTRODUCTION

JAMES D. McCAWLEY

As Jespersen's Analytic Syntax again comes back into print, I can for a second time cross it off the top of my list of important out-of-print linguistics books. I hope that it will not become eligible to hold that position of honor a third time; better that it should have a different honor that it deserves more but so far has been denied: that of remaining continuously in print and being widely read.

I first heard of Analytic Syntax (henceforth, AS) in Edward S. Klima's "Structure of English" course at M.I.T. in autumn 1961, where it was recommended to the students as an unparalleled source of insight into English syntax, but it was not until five or six years later that I actually followed Klima's advice and read AS. Since AS consists mainly of example sentences and formulaic analyses, it is not a book that one might expect to read from cover to cover in just a couple of sittings, but I did exactly that, with fascination that increased as I progressed from each group of formulas to the next. Jespersen, 20 years before the beginnings of transformational grammar (AS was originally published in 1937), had dealt with many of the same syntactic phenomena that were occupying transformational grammarians, had given analyses that had much in common with what in the mid-60s were the latest and hottest ideas in transformational grammar, and had gone in considerable depth into many important syntactic phenomena that merited but had not yet received the attention of transformational grammarians.

AS represents He promised her to go and He allowed her to go as differing with regard to whether the 'latent' subject of go is coreferential with he or with her (p. 49), and the advance of science and the advancement of science as differing with regard to whether science is the subject or object of the nominalization (p. 58):

- (1) a. He promised her to go. S V O O(SoI)
 - a'. He allowed her to go. S V O O(So(O)I)
 - b. The advance of science. X pS
 - b'. The advancement of science. X pO

(In these formulas, the o indicates 'latent,' i.e. 'understood,' and re-

peated relation letters are used to specify coreferitiality, so that the repeated S in (la) indicates an understood NP coreferential to the subject and the repeated O in (lb) an understood NP coreferential to the indirect object.) AS gives an analysis of John is easy to deceive in which John is represented as both surface subject of is and underlying object of deceive (p. 52), an analysis of She seems to notice it in which she to notice it is a sentential subject of seem (p. 47), and an analysis of I am not sure he is ill in which the complement is the object of an understood preposition (p. 62):

- (2) a. John is easy to deceive. S(O*) V P(2 pI*)
 - b. She seems to notice it. ½S V ½S(IO)
 - c. I am not sure he is ill. S Vn P pol (S2 V P2)

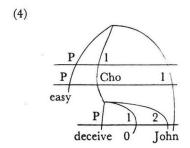
Some important things that AS helped me to see for the first time are the possibility of prepositional phrases serving as subject or object (p. 22), the existence of understood prepositions and conjunctions in several kinds of compound words (pp. 17–19), and the sentential nature of certain seemingly nonsentential NP's (p. 42):

- (3) a. You have till ten tonight. S V O(p13)
 - b. Franco-Prussian war 2(2&°-2) 1
 - c. Too many cooks spoil the broth. S(3PS2) V O

In (3c), for example, cooks is treated as the subject of too many, as it would be in the semi-sentence *Cooks being too many spoils the broth.1

In the intervening years, I have come to realize that Jespersen's scheme of syntactic analysis was not as close to that of mid-60s transformational grammar as I had thought. The current approach to syntax with which AS has the most in common is in fact relational grammatical relations such as 'subject' and 'direct object' are taken as conceptual primitives, and a syntactic analysis is regarded not (as in orthodox transformational grammar) as a sequence of syntactic structures (a deep structure, a surface structure, and various intermediate structures) but as a single structure in which underlying and surface grammatical relations are represented together. For example, the formula in (2a) conveys much the same information as does the relational diagram (4):

¹The sentential status of too many cooks in (3c) is particularly clear for those idiolects in which singular number agreement is preferred: Too many cooks spoils the broth; cf. Ross's argument (1969b:256) that which problems is a reduced form of the clause which problems he's going to give us in the sentence, He's going to give us some old problems for the test, but which problems isn't/*aren't clear.



Both (2a) and (4) represent John as underlying object of deceive (Jespersen's O means the same thing as the 2 of relational grammar), and both represent it as the surface subject of the main clause, though they differ regarding exactly what is predicated of it in surface structure (note that easy to deceive is represented as a 'predicate' in (2a) but not in (4)).²

In any event, though, many of Jespersen's analyses embody ideas that lend themselves to exploitation in transformational grammar, as in (2a), where the idea of the surface subject of be being the underlying object of the infinitive can be recast in the form of the transformation of Tough-movement, which extracts a NP from an embedded nonfinite VP and (in one formulation) puts it in place of an expletive it. Likewise, his treatment of seem, fail, happen, and be sure as having a discontinuous sentential subject can be recast in the form of a Raising transformation, in which the subject of a complement clause is made into a derived subject of the main clause.

I will devote the bulk of this foreword to details of Jespersen's notational practices that require some clarification, in the hope of rendering his ideas more accessible to the reader. Jespersen's formulas, while embodying much information that in standard transformational analyses would be matters of deep structure, are best described as 'annotated surface structures.' Each formula consists of a string of

² Also, (4) but not (2a) indicates explicitly that to deceive is a surface 'chômeur': a constituent that has lost an underlying grammatical relation as a concomitant of another constituent taking over that relation, here as a concomitant of John taking over the subject relation.

³ One respect in which this treatment of easy to deceive does not exactly match Jespersen's is that Jespersen gives It is easy to deceive John an analysis (s V P S(IO)) in which the infinitive is outside the 'predicate' constituent, whereas in his (2a) the infinitive and the adjective jointly comprise a 'predicate.' The Tough-movement transformation does not provide for such a difference.

symbols and brackets and indicates (subject to some qualifications) surface immediate constituent structure, 'latent' (= 'understood') elements, coreferentiality relations, and both superficial and underlying grammatical relations.

Constituent structure is indicated only partially, with parentheses and the presence or absence of spaces specifying those details of constituent structure that Jespersen found it convenient to indicate, but with no attempt made to represent the structure in full. A great many details of constituent structure have been left out of the formulas, though much of the evidence for this assertion must come from a comparison with other works from Jespersen's later years. For example, his formula for John and Mary came, S1 & S2 V (p. 112), contains no indication that John and Mary is even a constituent, let alone the subject of come. However, since AS is full of comments about points on which Tespersen has changed his mind, and he had stated emphatically only a few years earlier that the conjuncts of a conjoined subject are not each individually subjects,4 we can conclude from the absence of any indication that the formula represents a change of mind that he takes John and Mary to be the subject of come, which he could have represented (but for unknown reasons didn't) with the formula S(1 & 1) V, or perhaps (if he wished to adopt an analog to a Conjunction-reduction analysis) S(S₁ & S₂) V. Likewise, while (2b) does not indicate the status of seems to notice it as a surface constituent, or of she as a surface subject, Jespersen must intend she to be taken as a surface subject, in view of statements to that effect on page 47 and in 1933:107-8.

One point on which Jespersen's incomplete representation of constituent structure is liable to misinterpretation is that of how auxiliary verbs fit into surface constituent structure. Jespersen usually ignores an auxiliary verb when it is adjacent to the verb with which it is connected and represents it with a v when it is separated from the main verb. However, he states (p. 92) that he regards auxiliary verbs as true verbs, having their own subjects and objects, and occasionally writes formulas as in (5) in which that syntactic role for the auxiliary verb is made explicit:

- (5) a. He will drink whisky. S V O(I O2)
 - b. He has been drinking whisky. S V O(Y P(Y2 O2))
 - c. He was loved. S V P(Yb)

^{4&#}x27;In The cat and the dog do not agree very well, there are not two grammatical subjects, but the cat and the dog together is the subject, as will be seen from a comparison with the synonymous [sic] expression They do not agree very well' (1933:97).

He describes (5a-b) as 'a more explicit but inconvenient way of symbolising' what he usually writes as simply S V O and speaks of his practice of writing S V^b instead of (5c) as 'a practical but harmless simplification, similar in character to that which makes us write has killed, will kill, etc. simply as V.' Jespersen's analysis of auxiliary verbs is thus very close to that of Ross 1969e, in which auxiliary verbs have the syntactic as well as the morphological characteristics of verbs, but his abbreviated notations give many of his formulas the appearance of an analysis like that of Chomsky 1957, in which auxiliary verbs are treated as sui generis.

Jespersen represents 'understood' elements in the positions where items with the same syntactic function would appear if expressed overtly, with any grammatical relations or coreferentiality relations in which they participate indicated explicitly, e.g.:

(6) He is dressing. S V Oo(S)

The parenthesized S indicates that the 'latent' direct object is coreferential with the subject. (If Jespersen had meant that that element itself stood in a subject relation, he would have written S₂* rather than S, with paired asterisks indicating what it was subject of.) Another notational device of Jespersen's overlaps somewhat in applicability with the °, namely his braces to indicate that a single word incorporates elements with separate syntactic roles. It is not clear to me why Jespersen invokes the one device in (7a) and the other in (7b), both taken from his page 7:

(7) a. (Italian) Canta. 'He sings' So V b. (Latin) Amo puellam. 'I love the girl' {SV} O

With the brace notation, Jespersen adheres to his policy of writing elements in the order in which they would appear if they were expressed by separate words, even when that conflicts with the order of the morphemes within the word represented:

(8) a. (Finnish) purteni 'my boat' {121}
b. (Portuguese) É triste combateres. 'It is a pity that you fight'
V P S({S₂I})

The -ni of (8a) corresponds to the 1^2 (primary converted into secondary, e.g., genitive) and the -es of (8b) corresponds to the subject of the infinitive.

⁸ The occasional instances where Jespersen writes 'latent' elements in positions

The repeated relation symbol S in (6) is one of two ways in which Jespersen indicated coreferentiality. Specifically, he repeated S, O, or O to indicate that a pronoun or a 'latent' element had the subject, direct object, or indirect object as its antecedent. Otherwise he used his ubiquitous asterisks to mark coreferentiality, ⁶ as in:

- (9) a. (French) Il me le donne a moi. 'He gives it to me' S O* O V [pl*] (p. 37)
 - b. Zionism-what is that to me? [1*] P? V S* pl. (p. 35)
 - c. Come here at once, Mary! {S*V} 3 3 [1*]! (p. 38)

For example, the asterisks in (9c) indicate that the vocative is coreferential with the understood subject of the imperative (treated here as fused with the verb). His formulas for six readings of John told Robert's son that he must help him (p. 26) make liberal use of both asterisks and repeated relation symbols in representing the various coreferentiality relations.

Jespersen's notions of nexus, junction, and rank, which I have alluded to above several times, merit some discussion. Nexus and junction are two ways in which elements of a sentence can be combined, differing in that the parts of a nexus are connected by 'grammatical relations' such as 'subject of,' while the parts of a junction are connected only by 'dependency relations' such as 'modifies.' While a nexus can often be treated as an underlying sentence, Jespersen does not appear to have intended that all nexi be so treated. He thus anticipated Chomsky's treatment (Chomsky 1970 and subsequent works) of nominalizations as involving parallel relations among the parts of a NP to those among the parts of a sentence, e.g., ⁷

other than where overt counterparts would occur may be slips on his part, e.g.: To see is to believe. $S(IS^{\infty}) V P(IS^{\infty})$. (The ∞ of this formula, apparently meaning 'generic,' was inadvertently omitted from the list of symbols that comprises chapter 2 of AS.)

⁶ Besides indicating what a given element is connected to by a grammatical relation, as in (2a), and indicating coreferentiality, as in (9), asterisks occasionally indicate scopes of quantifiers and negations: All men are not born to reign. S(2q*1) V 3n* P(YpI) (p. 26).

⁷The O in (10) expresses a relation to the 'nexus substantive' (X) massacres, not to the preposition of. Where most linguists speak of the 'object' of a preposition, Jespersen speaks of its 'regimen'; he writes 'pO' only in cases where the 'regimen' of the preposition stands in the object relation to a verb or a nominalization. Jespersen indicates grammatical relations to a nexus substantive even when the constituent in question is separated from the remainder of the nominalization, e.g.:

J'en vois la necessite. 'I see the necessity of it' S 2(S₂)* V O(X*) (p. 58). (The 2 in this formula may be a typographical error for 3; elsewhere, e.g., p. 31, Jespersen

(10) massacres of Christians by Chinese X pO pS (p. 58)

The notion of dependency on which Jespersen based his idea of 'junction' is one of dependency between constituents of arbitrary complexity, not the standard notion of traditional grammar, in which a dependency relation can hold only, or at least, typically, between two words. Chains of dependency relations determine 'ranks,' with 'primaries,' i.e., items of rank 1, at the bottom of all chains of dependencies. Elements of rank 2 ('secondaries') are dependent on elements of rank 1, elements of rank 3 ('tertiaries') are dependent on their subjects and objects, those subjects and objects are primaries and verbs are secondaries. He in fact takes NP's to be primaries even when they are not serving as subjects or objects. In addition, he takes nouns to be primaries, so that in (11) we have three primaries: she (converted into a secondary by the genitive inflection), eyes, and the whole NP her eyes, on which are is dependent:

(11) Her eyes are blue. S(121) V P

Jespersen remarks (p. 123) that according to his system of ranks, corresponding parts of (12a) and (12b) have the same ranks.

- (12) a. The dog barked furiously.
 - b. the furiously barking dog
 - c. the furious barking of the dog

He does not comment, however, on the fact that in (12c) barking and furious differ in rank from their counterparts in (12a-b), e.g., barking in (12c) is a primary. I see no plausible way in which a consistent notion of rank could make all three of these constructions parallel as regards rank.

Rank is indeed the one major notion in AS that I doubt can be worked out in a way that is both internally consistent and consistent with Jespersen's claims. It is particularly difficult to apply the notion

treats en as a tertiary. I have added a subscript 2 on the second S, as Jespersen's notational scheme demands.)

⁸ On the history of notions of dependency and constituent structure, see Percival 1976. Percival argues that Bloomfield, who did the most to popularize immediate constituent structure as the central notion of syntactic structure, got the idea from Wilhelm Wundt.

⁹ Aside from a verb being simultaneously dependent on its subject and objects, Jespersen allows an element to be dependent on at most one thing at a time.

of rank to predicate adjectives. Jespersen speaks of them as being secondaries but also seems to regard them as standing in some dependency relation with the copula, which would make them either primaries or tertiaries (depending on which direction the relation goes), since the copula is for Jespersen a secondary. The only at all obvious way out of that difficult would be to adopt an analysis that Jespersen explicitly rejects (pp. 132-5): Hammerich's proposal (or the essentially equivalent analysis in Ross 1969a) that the copula is an intransitive verb having a sentential subject of the form NP + Adj (e.g., in *The horse is sick*, the [underlying] subject of is is *The horse sick*).

But I should not overemphasize one of the few ideas in AS that appears not to be viable. As I approach the end of this introduction, I should return to the delight that I have derived from reading AS and express my hope that by alerting readers to what lies behind its initially intimidating notational system I may have helped them to share in

that delight.

AS is one of Jespersen's last works: it was completed when he was 77 years old, and most of the remaining six years of his life were devoted to work on the fifth, sixth, and unfinished seventh volumes of his Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles. AS gives the most concentrated dose of syntactic analysis to be found in the whole Jespersen canon and presents an integrated summary of the syntactic research that had engaged much of his efforts for 50 years.10 Its position among his works can perhaps best be likened to the position among Bach's works of the B minor mass, a work that Bach put together late in his life out of arrangements of movements from many of his cantatas. In both cases the result is a monumental work in which a major creative figure surveys his output in a genre that was particularly close to his heart. I hope that the appearance of this reprint as AS will speed the arrival of the day when ignorance of Analytic Syntax on the part of a linguist will be as unthinkable as ignorance of the B minor mass on the part of a musical scholar.

¹⁰ The breadth and profundity of Jespersen's syntactic research, however, should not be allowed to eclipse his major contributions to virtually all other fields of linguistics, most notably phonetics, language change, language acquisition, and language planning.

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PREFACE

This book may be considered the crowning effort of many years' occupation with grammatical problems and thus forms a kind of supplement to my "Philosophy of Grammar" (abbreviated PhilGr) and "The System of Grammar." I sincerely hope that fellow-students will not let themselves be deterred by the look of my seemingly abstruse formulas, but will study them closely enough to realize their value in making it possible to gain a deeper insight into grammatical constructions in general. My system forces one to consider many things and enables one to express them succinctly; let me mention only two examples: the difference between usually and unusually in 10.2, and that between the infinitives after promise and allow 17.2. It should also prove useful in comparing the grammatical structure of languages not considered in this volume.

I want to thank some friends who have assisted me in various ways. Dr. F. Ohrt has aided me with what I say about Finnish-a language which I studied with Vilh. Thomsen more than thirty years ago, but have since then nearly completely forgotten. Mr. F. Y. Thompson, M.A., has kindly read parts of my book and has suggested some improvements in my English style. The greatest debt of gratitude, however, I owe to some young Danish linguists, to whom I have shown my system, or parts of it, at various stages of its completion, Poul Christophersen, Niels Haislund, Louis L. Hammerich, Aage Hansen. Not only has their kind criticism saved me from some pitfalls into which I might otherwise have fallen, but on some points they have even suggested things which I have been glad to embody in my system. To Niels Haislund I owe special thanks for the care with which throughout the whole of my work he has transcribed my notes, checked my analyses and finally read the proofs in not always an easy task. Finally, I am greatly obliged to the Directors of the Carlsberg Foundation for their support of my scientific work.

And now, with apology for some inconsistencies which I have not been able to avoid, I may say with one of my quotations:

Libro completo, saltat auctor pede laeto.

Lundehave, Helsingør. 1937 Otto Jespersen

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