

Уманець А. В. Generative Grammar Theories in American Descriptive Linguistics /

Антоніна Володимирівна Уманець // Наукові праці Кам'янець-Подільського національного університету імені Івана Огієнка : Філологічні науки. Випуск 36. – Кам'янець-Подільський : Аксіома, 2014. – С. 279-283. (збірник, внесений до наукометричної бази даних Index Copernicus).

УДК 811.111'28

Уманець А. В.

## GENERATIVE GRAMMAR THEORIES IN AMERICAN DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS

It is widely acknowledged that generative approach to language studies came to be an alternative to American descriptive linguistics of the 1950s that incorporated much of structural linguistics. The aim of the article is to envisage historiography of generative grammar trends in American linguistics, to treat the opposing theories and refine the main notions in terms of generative linguistics. Generative trends mark the advent of a recognizably modern approach in linguistics, the one in which formal tools and analytic method are primary objectives of our study. The tasks of this investigation are: 1) to analyze generative theories in American Descriptivism and their modern counterparts; 2) to give a thorough interpretation of syntactic structure development viewed by American descriptive linguists.

Modern American descriptivism is related to three schools: Yale, Ann Arbor, Chomskyian. Yale school (G. Trager, B. Bloch, Z. Harris) [13] advanced Bloomfield's formal methods of language analysis and ignored semantic criteria [5, 127; 7]. More in-depth extralinguistic factors (psycholinguistic, social, anthropological, ethnic, cross-cultural) were applied by Ann Arbor school (K. Pike, E. Nida, Ch. Fries). They promoted E. Sapir's extralinguistic background to experimental studies of Indian languages [2, 137; 16].

The influence of Bloomfieldian and Sapirian approaches declined in the late 1950s, and it was the generative approach to language studies that had been promoted and advanced by N. Chomsky in his works "Syntactic Structures", "Aspects of the Theory of Syntax", "Lectures on Government and Binding", "Knowledge of

Language”. Thus, the theory of Transformational Grammar developed by N. Chomsky in “Syntactic Structures” came to predominate [8].

The Chomskyan generative field of linguistics and its subsequent interpretations revolutionized linguistics, advancing the theory of generative grammar that differentiates between language competence and performance. Generative grammar assumes that an infinite number of utterances can result from a finite number of rules. The approach came to exist as an alternative to “behaviorism” developed by B. F. Skinner that sees language behavior as similar to other conditioned animal behavior learned by stimulus and response.

The Generative linguistics developed some topical features of American descriptivism: the priority of form as the basis of linguistic analysis; an assumed system of all types of grammar interaction which enables components of natural languages to relate to some appropriate context; a thorough and more in-depth investigation of all segmenting types; types of transformations and combinability in a definite language. Descriptivism needed to provide external validation for synchronic descriptions, recognition of the value of statistical, information-theoretic and corpus-based methods of analysis.

The development of generative linguistics tends to be problematic, as it combines several opposing theories.

The standard theory [6] laid out in Chomsky’s works was freely subjected to intensive criticism and esteem. The main difference between 1957 and 1965 versions is adding a semantic component suggested by J. Katz and G. Fodor, then by J. Katz and P. Postal, and some new interpreting of different levels of sentence structure made up of phrase-structure rules or PS-rules.

This theory evaluates semantic component disregarding the difference between kernel structures and transforms, insofar developing and extending treatment of transform markers. They determinate types of transformations. The standard theory ignores morphophonemic rules, expands the knowledge of phrase structure rewriting rules and lexicon.

In generative grammar the primary objective for the minimalist program is derivation rules drawn from “bare output conditions”. They constitute the interfaces of the grammar constituent with other constituents of the cognitive system. Therefore, it is viewed from logical consequences of earlier stages of the theory refining some conditions on derivations and representations. According to the minimalist program there exist two subsystems of man’s language apparatus: computational system and lexicon. Computational subsystem generates language variety and signals realization systems. It involves in one or another form different rules. This program includes two realization systems: articulatory-perceptual and conceptual-intentional. These two systems correspond to two interfaces PF (phonetic form) and LF (logical form). The minimalist program as a very young and modern trend of generative grammar which makes linguists both review well-known language phenomena and discover new ones characterizing a great variety of typologically different languages of the world.

The Extended standard theory was promoted in 1965-1973. The deficiency of the earlier model of Transformational grammar was remedied by the creation of “X-bar syntax” or “X-bar theory”. The aim of the generative “X-bar theory” was to envisage crosscategorical generalizations without using transformations. “X-bar theory” was further elaborated by J. Emonds and R. Jackendoff. The subsequent research treats the binary branching format, the antisymmetry hypothesis, the related universal base hypothesis. Radical changes in technical apparatus of the generative theory and further treatment of problems of the so-called “bare output conditions” were reflected in the minimalist program , which simplified representational levels in the grammar models, used more explicitly derivational approach to the research of syntactic structures and promoted the notions of interaction between syntax and interfaces.

The Revised extended standard theory where the grammatical model was much simplified worked out some concepts of “X-bar theory”, “D- and S-structures”, notions of “empty categories”, “case filter” [6].

The minimalist program (MP) [1] is a very vital stage of the theory of Generative Grammar. Its main goal is to derive all conditions on derivations and representations from the so-called “bare output conditions”, i.e. from conditions on the representations that constitute the interfaces of the grammatical component with other components of the cognitive system. In this respect, it is properly characterized as a logical consequence of earlier stages of the theory arrived at by way of sharpening some notions that were relevant in the earlier stages, and by eliminating certain notions that turned out to be redundant in the process. Thus, the exploration of minimalist questions has led to radical changes in the technical apparatus of generative theory: the generalization of “X-bar theory” into “Bare Phrase Structure”; the simplification of representational levels in the grammatical model, eliminating the distinction between deep structure and surface structure in favor of more explicitly derivational approach; the elimination of the notion of government; introducing a single point of interaction between syntax and the interfaces; the idea that syntactic derivations proceed by clearly delineated stages.

The external approach to syntactic structures makes descriptive linguistics concentrate on the relation of the source to extralingual phenomena and its functional design [3-4; 9-12; 14-15; 17-18]. Descriptive linguistics deems such notions as sentence parts, subject, predicate as meaningless and refuses to operate with them, which leaves the notion of sentence useless as well. Z. Harris does not explicate the methodology of distributive analysis, but it may obviously be reduced to the following stages: 1) segmenting of a sentence into components; 2) comparing the components and referring similar components to groups.

Some scholars study verbocentric conception of the sentence. They picture the sentence as a small drama, centered around an action denoted by the verb-predicate and its participants which he termed actants (the subject and the object of the sentence) and circonstants (the time, the place, the quality of the action).

American linguists P. Hopper and S. Thomson associated the interpreting of the sentence with the notion of transitivity, defining prototypical transitive constructions. They marked semantic criteria of prototypical scale: number of participants of the

event, kinesis (actional properties), aspect, affirmativeness (negativeness), mode (modality), volitionality + intentionality, degree of subject agency, degree of object affectedness, degree of individualisation of object.

Many scholars treat sentence structure in terms of schematisation or profiling, or imagery. G. Lakoff, G. Taylor study different syntactic patterns which encode transitive events of a prototypical transitive construction. The transitive events are those which involve two participants, an agent and a patient, where an agent consciously acts in such a way as to cause a change in state of a patient, and its concept-structural pattern or scheme is agent-action-patient. When the speaker uses the transitive construction for naming a particular event or situation, he profiles it a transitive event, that is he conceptualises this particular event in terms of an agent-action-patient scheme, even if this particular event is not inherently transitive.

They analyse the use of two-object constructions which encode events, where the patient is involved in the action, but does not undergo any structural changes, they profile the event in terms of an agent-action-addressee-patient scheme.

The linguistic investigations within the cognitive approach tend to prioritise cognitive concepts in a sentence structure. Syntactic concepts represent linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge in its structure (L. A. Fours). They observe the nature of the concepts represented by a sentence and suggest concepts typology. The main principle which is implied is the assumption that syntactic concepts represent linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge.

L. A. Fours claims that there are three formats of representing knowledge in the simple sentence structure: a configurational format, an actualisational format, and a format of mixed type which combines properties of the previous ones.

To conclude, the development of Generative linguistics is concerned mainly with different trends that represent formal and analytic methodology of treating syntactic structures and their transforms. Descriptivists came to focus increasingly on the techniques and devices that they employed to construct new linguistic analyses. Although, the Descriptivists were also prescient in understanding the need to justify the choice of analytic devices, the need to provide external validation for

synchronic descriptions, and in recognizing the usefulness of statistical, information-theoretic and corpus-based methods of analysis.

Generative trends involved new techniques and devices for advancing linguistic analysis and influenced much the development of other fields of science: cognitive science, psycholinguistics, ethnomethodology, sociology, theory of artificial intellect meeting further requirements of up-to date demands.

The prospects for future research well cover a more in-depth study of historiography of generative grammar trends in Modern American linguistics.

### **Список використаних джерел**

1. Алпатов В. М. История лингвистических учений : [учебное пособие] / Владимир Михайлович Алпатов — [4-е изд., исправ. и доп.]. — М. : Языки славянской культуры, 2005. — 368 с.
2. Кронгауз М. А. Семантический и прагматический аспект // Сокровенные смыслы : Слово. Текст. Культура : Сб. статей в честь Н. Д. Арутюновой / Отв. ред. Ю. Д. Апресян. — М. : Языки славянской культуры, 2004. — С. 137-141.
3. Проблемні питання синтаксису: [зб. статей] / Н.В. Гуйванюк та ін. (ред.). — Чернівці, 1997. — 228 с.
4. Проблемы функциональной грамматики. Категории морфологии и синтаксиса в высказывании. — СПб : Наука, 2000. — 346 с.
5. Селиванова Е. А. Основы лингвистической теории текста и коммуникации : Монографическое учебное пособие / Е. А. Селиванова. — Киев : Брама, изд. Вовчок О. Ю., 2004. — 336 с.
6. Современная американская лингвистика : Фундаментальные направления / под ред. А. А. Кибрика, И. М. Кобзевой, И. А. Секериной. — [2-е изд., исправ. и доп.]. — М. : Едиториал УРСС, 2002. — 480 с.
7. Bloomfield L. Language / Leonard Bloomfield. — Chicago : Chicago University Press, 1984. — 564 p.
8. Chomsky N. Syntactic structures / Avram Noam Chomsky. — The Hague / Paris : Mouton, 1957. — 117 p.

9. Crystal D.T. Who cares about English usage? / David Crystal. – London : Penguin Books, 2002. – 128 p.
10. Fauconnier G. Mapping in Thought and Language / Gilles Fauconnier. – Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1997. – 205 p.
11. Fillmore C. Toward a Frame-Based Lexicon : The Semantics of Risk and its Neighbours / Fillmore C., Atkins B. // Frames, Fields, and Contrasts : New Essays in Semantic and Lexical Organization. – Hillsdale, NJ : Lawrence Erlbaum, 1992. – P. 75-102.
12. Givon T. English Grammar : A Function Based Introduction / Thomas Givon. – Amsterdam / Philadelphia : John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993. – Volume 1. – 318 p.
13. Newmeyer F. J. Generative Linguistics : A Historical Perspective / Frederick J. Newmeyer. – N.Y. : Routledge, 1997. – 232 p.
14. Ruthrof H. The Body in Language / Horst Ruthrof. – London; New York : Cassell, 2000. – 193 p.
15. Ruthrof H. Semantics and the Body : Meaning from Frege to the postmodern / Horst Ruthrof. – Melbourne : Univ. Press, 1998. – 321 p.
16. Sapir E. Language. An Introduction to the Study of Speech [Електронний ресурс] / Edward Sapir. – Режим доступу : <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/12629>.
17. Thomas J. Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics / Jenny Thomas. – London, N.Y. : Longman, 1996. – 224 p.
18. Wierzbicka A. Cross-Cultural Pragmatics. The Semantics of Human Interaction / Anna Wierzbicka. – Berlin : Mouton de Gruyter, 1991. – 502 p.

#### Анотація

У статті подано аналіз генеративної парадигми розвитку граматичних теорій американської дескриптивної лінгвістики. Генеративна граматики має вигляд монолітної, але за її межами знаходиться велика кількість альтернативних підходів. Трансформаційні теорії ранніх генеративних граматики дали розвиток багатьом сучасним генеративним теоріям, які базуються на досягненнях функціональних теорій мови останніх років.

Ключові слова: генеративна граматика, дескриптивна лінгвістика, мовна компетенція, мовна діяльність, сегментація речення.

### Summary

The article treats generative paradigm in developing different trends of Grammar theories viewed from analytic methodology of American descriptive linguistics. It reveals some alternative generative approaches to syntactic studies, which involved different “transformation theories” at their earlier stages.

The Standard theory was immediately subjected to intensive criticism and evaluation. As a clear-cut distinction between optional and obligatory transformations becomes vague, the difference between kernel structures and transforms practically fades away. Rather, transformation markers determine different types of transformations.

Instead of the morphophonemic rules later interpretations contained non-phonological component; phrase structure rules were extended into bare rules, which were divided into phrase structure rewriting rules and a lexicon. Transformational rules remained unchanged. And as for the semantic component, it had no counterparts.

The main subjects of the extended standard theory are syntactic constraints, generalized phrase structures. The problem was that models of Transformational grammar that linguists were using did not have intermediate categories.

Further revisions and technical innovations such as introduction of “empty categories”, “X-bar theory”, “D- and S-structures”, and conditions on representations such as “Case filter” led to the Revised extended standard theory, in which the grammatical models were greatly simplified.

It should be noted that the approach suggested within descriptive linguistics for syntactic studies is of use for machine translation since it may lay the foundation for formalized symbolic syntactic description. Issues of text processing and further transferring texts to machines have become the subject of a field of linguistics called machine translation.



Principles and parameters are key-terms for generative linguistics nowadays which imparts much from functional theories of language.

Key words: generative grammar, descriptive linguistics, competence, performance, sentence segmenting.