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Abstract

This book is an introduction to syntactic theory, following the Generative Grammar framework (Chomsky 1986, 1995, forward). Its basic goal is to introduce students to the study of syntactic structure and to teach them the methodology and the theoretical framework in analysing empirical data. The book chapters cover the definition of syntax and its role in grammar, the mechanism producing phrase structure (how phrases are formed, the syntax-lexicon interface, and the syntax-morphology interface), as well as dependency relations amongst the lexical items in the clause structure (or phrase structure in general).

The subject-predicate relation is an important one for the definition of what qualifies as a sentence. In this context, the book examines the realization of the subject (whether it is overt or null) and its syntactic realization as a grammatical subject as an external or internal argument (e.g. passives, unaccusatives).

The positioning of arguments in certain syntactic positions (as subjects or objects) is examined in relation to the role of case and its syntactic implementation as a categorial feature. The subject position is also relevant in binding relations, such as anaphoric binding (reflexives) as opposed to pronouns. These are all dependencies involving argument positions (A-dependencies).

Dependency relations are also expressed via movement (displacement), as is the case with wh-questions and relativization. Wh- and relative pronouns have the properties of quantifiers which bind a variable. This approach also extends to other phenomena, such as topicalization and focusing (roughly for old and new information respectively). These phenomena do not involve argument positions (A'-dependencies) and include features in the left periphery of the clause, defining their scope over the variable they bind accordingly.

