

SHORTER NOTICES

Andreas Koutsoudas, *Writing Transformational Grammars: An Introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965. Pp. xiii + 368.

We have here a textbook intended for students who want to become acquainted with the theory and practice of generative transformational grammar. As such it renders good service, since we do have to teach our students generative grammar, and this book makes our teaching a good deal easier. There is, however, an inherent difficulty in writing a textbook in this field: the theory of transformational grammar is so new, is developing so rapidly and is still so much under constant revision of even its basic elements, that any textbook must rapidly become outdated. Furthermore, it is in the nature of textbooks to present matters as well-established truth: a textbook must, in a sense, be dogmatic. There is no denying that transformational grammar is, broadly speaking, well-established. That is precisely the reason why it must be taught. But it is not well enough established to teach it as a corpus of doctrine in the same way as natural sciences are taught. The pedagogical difficulty in teaching generative grammar is mainly that we want our students to become aware of the debatable and tentative nature of most, if not all, grammatical descriptions given in transformational terms. This book can, therefore, only be of limited use.

Actually, it concentrates on practice rather more than on theory. This is a good thing in so far as students must be well trained in the practice of organizing data into rules. There are a great many problems and exercises taken from a wide variety of languages. These problems and exercises, however, consist in writing rules for extremely limited quantities of data. Only a very slight amount of extrapolation from the data is occasionally expected, but never more than what is immediately obvious from the data. The main aim of generative grammar, however, it to be predictive for the whole language and to offer the best solution in the light of a wider description. We are not so much interested in rules generating just a limited amount of data: we want rules that are valid also for what is not observed data but yet belongs to the language. And if we want our students to become adequate grammarians, they must learn to write rules which provide adequate solutions for the language they are studying. Here, necessarily, the book falls short of providing training material. The title of the book promises too much: the student is not taught to write transformational grammars, but only transformational rules, and it is not *a priori* clear that the technical apparatus employed will be adequate for the complete description of any one language. The main reason, in fact, for the continuous modification and revision of the THEORY of generative grammar is its apparent inadequacy to cope, in its present form, with areas of language (specifically English) which are being studied in detail. It is one of the great merits of transformational grammar that it induced us to study the grammatical phenomena of languages with greater precision than ever before. In this field the focus of attention is still on theory; practice is still subservient to the aim of constructing an adequate theory. This being so, Koutsoudas's book is slightly premature: it tends to give the student the impression that the theory is there for him to draw upon and that he just has to learn how to work with it. One would rather see a book which concentrated on fewer problems of a less limited nature. Conceivably, a taxonomic inventory of a variety of types of, say, English nominalizations, or passives, or relative clauses, could be given, and the student could be asked to provide a general solution for these, at which he could be helped by hints or by existing but insufficient solutions. This would be more in agreement with the sort of work he will have to do as a professional linguist.

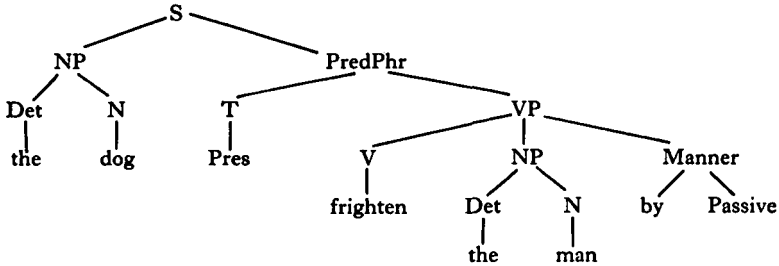
But, of course, one must be reasonable. Provided the teacher knows and tells his students how to use it, the book is an excellent introduction for beginners into the way transformational grammarians have been accustomed, over the past five years, to handle grammatical data. It is simpler and more thorough than E. Bach's *An Introduction to Transformational Grammars* (1964).

A few remarks on details remain to be made. On pp. 28–35 the author defines the conventions for assigning derived constituent structure to transforms. This is particularly

welcome, since derived constituent structure had never been defined in the literature. It would be even more welcome if the conventions were sufficient to cover all cases. This is not so, however. They will sometimes lead to undesired results. To take just one example: Suppose we have the passive transformation

$$NP_1-T-V-NP_2-by-Passive \rightarrow NP_2-T-be+en-V-by-NP_1$$

operating on the following underlying P-marker:



Suppose that this transformation is divided into three parts, *agent-postposing*: T—V—NP₂—by—NP₁, *NP-preposing*: NP₂—T—V—by—NP₁, and *be+en-adjunction*: NP₂—T—be+en—V—by—NP₁. If the convention for 'deletion and adjunction' (p. 34) is followed, the result will be that NP₂, as a result of NP-preposing, will be attached to *PredPhr*, whereas, clearly, we want it to be attached to *S*. When, occasionally, such as on pp. 208–211, the author returns to the problem of assigning derived constituent structure, he does not provide an answer. Perhaps difficulties of this sort can be overcome by a more elaborate and more rigorously defined use of plus-signs and hyphens.

Another remark must be made about Chapter 3, *Morphophonemics*. Throughout this chapter it is taken for granted that phonetic features such as vowel, consonant, bilabial, velar, etc., are somehow known, but it is never stated whence this knowledge is derived. This would not be a problem in Chomsky's model of grammar as we have known it since 1965, where phonological 'spellings' in the form of matrices of distinctive features are given in the base. But this is not the model put forward in this book. Students tend to be puzzled by this, and rightly so.

Lastly, there are numerous errors in the exercises and the solutions to the problems (apart from the fact that very often the sentences given as data are not grammatical in the language; e.g. the Spanish sentences of problem 49 on p. 185). To take just a few examples: the underlying P-marker (4) on p. 53 does have a derived P-marker, according to rule 11 on p. 52. Rule 27 on p. 198 is incomplete: it requires also *D+F* → *la*. On p. 229 Finnish *olen minä sotilas* is excluded, whereas it figures as part of the data under 19 on p. 228. These errors, however, are not very serious, provided the students are warned beforehand. They can even be taken as an advantage in that the students are made to discover them: other people's mistakes are most instructive.

On the whole, the author must be complimented on having assembled such a large variety of material, and on having written a useful book for the very beginners in transformational grammar.

Reviewed by P. A. M. SEUREN,
Darwin College,
Cambridge.

(Received 15 March 1968).

Nicolas Ruwet, *Introduction à la Grammaire Générative*. (Recherches en Sciences Humaines, 22.) Paris: Plon, 1967. Pp. 448.

This is an excellent book. For those whose knowledge of French is good enough for them to be able to appreciate the significance of the syntactic points made with reference to the