Generative Semantics

George Lakoff
Jim McCawley
John Robert Ross

“Katz-Postal hypothesis”

(1) a. Bill is dead.
   b. Bill is not alive.

$kill$

\[
S \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{cause} \\
V \\
\text{become} \\
\text{not} \\
V \\
\text{alive}
\end{array}
\]

(1) I don’t beat my wife because I like her.

(2) a. It is because I like her that I don’t beat my wife.
   b. It is not because I like her that I beat my wife.
Remarks on Nominalization

1. Certain types of transformations were abandoned

(1) a. The city was destructed by the enemy

    b. The destruction of the city by the enemy.

2. The use of movement transformations were restricted by constraints
Move $\alpha$

$S$   $NP$   $VP$

$VP$   $AUX$   $V$   $DET$   $N$

$be$   $fired$   the $man$

$CP$   $COMP$

$SQ$   $Q$   $S$

$NP$   $VP$   $VP$

$N$   $V$   $V$   $PRO$

$Peter$   $has$   $seen$   $what$
Other important constraints:

- The projection principle
- X-bar theory
- Binding theory
- θ-Theory
- θ-Criterion
- Case filter
- Empty category principle
- Bounding Theory (Subjacency)

θ-Theory
Defines θ-role assignment.

θ-Criterion
Each argument bears one and only one θ-role, and each θ-role is assigned to one and only one argument.

Case Filter
Every NP is assigned a specific morphological case at s-structure.

Empty Category Principle
A trace must be properly governed

Control Theory
Defines control properties of non-finite subordinate clauses

Bounding Theory (Subjacency)
Island constraints
X-bar Theory

1. the head
2. the specifier
3. the complement

- The head determines the categorical status of the phrase.
- The complement occurs in the subcategorization frame of the head.
- The specifier is not subcategorized for by the head.
- Modifiers/adjunct are attached to the highest node of the phrase.
a student of physics
be thinking of her
very proud of her
right out of the door

quite independently of me
Peter must go

what did you __ say __
Theoretical assumptions

- Competence vs. performance
- Autonomy of syntax
- Grammatical well-formedness
- Language is rule-governed
- Language consists of finite means that generative an infinite number of sentences
- Observational-descriptive-explanatory adequacy
- Structure-dependence principle
- Innateness hypothesis
- Parameters