THEORETICAL GRAMMAR

Lecture 1

* The term *grammar* is derived from the Greek word *grammatikē*, where *gram* meant something written. The part *tikē* derives from *technē* and meant art.

* Hence *grammatikē* is the art of writing.

Grammar: the origin of the term

***Practical grammar** gives practical rules of the use of linguistic structures.

***Theoretical grammar** gives an analysis of the structures in the light of general principles of linguistics and the existing schools and approaches.

Theoretical and Practical Grammar

Any course of theoretical grammar today serves to describe the grammatical structure of language as a system where all parts are interconnected.

THE AIM OF THEORETICAL GRAMMAR

Practical grammar prescribes certain rules of usage and teaches to speak or write correctly.

Theoretical grammar presents facts of language while analyzing them and gives no prescriptions.

To a **prescriptive** grammarian, grammar is rules of correct usage; its aim is to prescribe what is judged to be correct rather than to describe actual usage.

To a **descriptive** grammarian (descriptivist), grammar is a systematic description of the structure of a language.
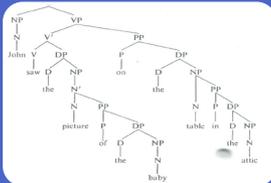
Prescriptive and Descriptive Grammar

traditional (prescriptive and non-structural descriptive)
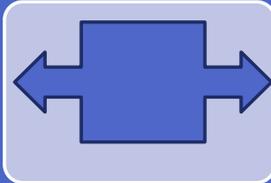
structural descriptive

transformational-generative

Historical Types of Grammars

* **Pāṇini** (4th century BCE) is known for his Sanskrit grammar, particularly for his formulation of the 3,959 rules–of S̲anskrit morphology, syntax and semantics, in the grammar known as *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, meaning "eight chapters".

* His theory of morphological analysis was more advanced than any equivalent Western theory before the mid 20th century.

A 17th century birch bark manuscript of Panini's grammar treatise from Kashmir

*In ancient Greece and ancient Rome the term 'grammar' denoted the whole apparatus of literary study.

Traditional grammar has its origins in the principles formulated by the scholars of Ancient Greece – in the works of Dionysius Thrax, Protagoras, Plato, and Aristotle.

Dionysius Thrax (c. 100 BCE)

was the first to present a

comprehensive grammar of Greek.

His grammar remained a

standard work for thirteen centuries.

The
Grammar of
Dionysios
Thrax

Dionysius, Thrax
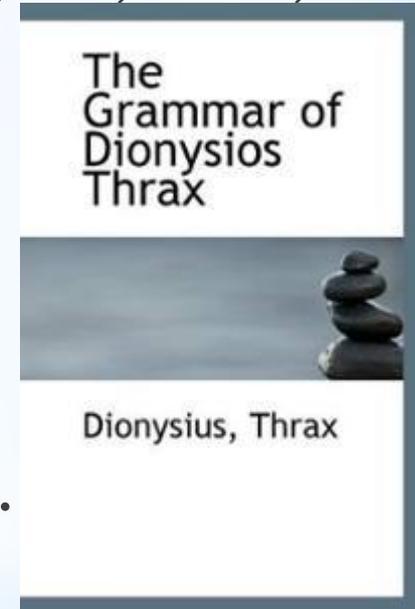
Traditional Grammar in Ancient Greece

*Thrax distinguishes two basic units of description – **the sentence** (logos), which is the upper limit of grammatical description, and **the word**, which is the minimal unit of grammatical description.

*The sentence is defined notionally as "expressing a complete thought".

Thrax's Grammar

- Constituents of the sentence (class words)
  - *onoma* (noun)

  - *rhema* (verb)

  - *metochē* (participle)

  - *arthron* (article)

  - *antonymia* (pronoun)

  - *próthesis* (preposition)

  - *epirrhēma* (adverb

  - *syndesmos* (conjunctions)

* The first Latin grammar was written by Varro (116–27 B.C.). One of Varro's merits is the distinction between **derivation** and **inflection**. Varro set up the following system of four inflexionally contrasting classes:

1) those with case inflexion (nouns including adjectives);

2) those with tense inflexion (verbs);

3) those with case and tense inflexion (participles);

4) those with neither (adverb).

M. TERENTIUS VARRO

* Traditional Grammar in Ancient Rome

* The Latin grammars of the present day are the direct descendants of the works written by late grammarians, Priscian (c. A.D. 500) in particular.

* Their aim was to transfer as far as possible the grammatical system of Thrax's grammar.

From Antiquity to Present Day

*In the middle ages, grammar was the study of Latin.

Until the end of the sixteenth century, the only grammars used in English schools were Latin grammars.

The aim was to teach the English to read, write and sometimes converse in this lingua franca of Western Europe.

**Latin Grammars in English Schools**

One of the earliest and most popular Latin grammars written in English was William Lily's grammar, published in the first half of the 16th century. It was an aid to learning Latin, and it rigorously followed Latin models.

VERA EFFIGIES

ætatis suæ 52 1520

* The Renaissance widened linguistic horizons. Scholars turned their attention to the living languages of Europe.

* Although the study of Greek and Latin grammar continued, they were not the only languages scholars became interested in.

* The first grammars of English were closely related to Latin, which scholars had treated as an ideal language.

* English, which replaced Latin, had to appear as perfect as Latin. As a result, some English scholars were greatly concerned with refining their language. Through the use of logic they hoped to improve English.

Early English Grammars

*The first grammars of English were prescriptive, not descriptive.

*The most influential grammar of this period was R.Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762)
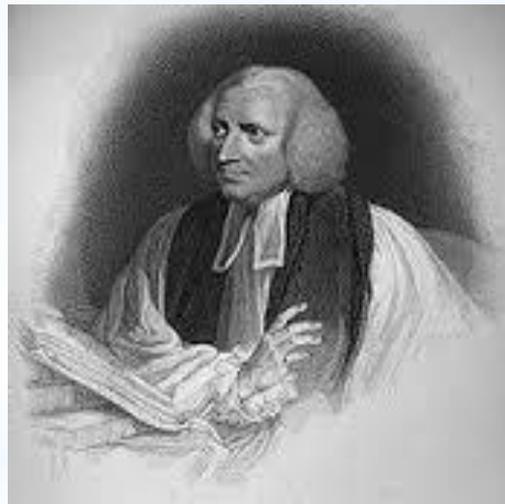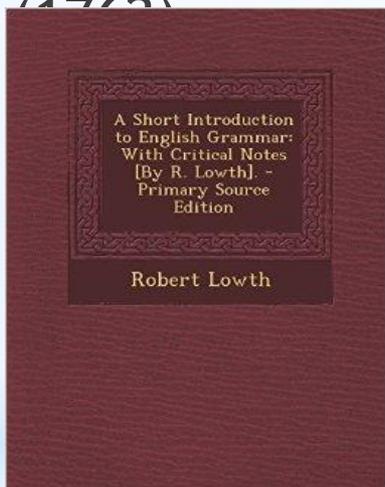
The First English Grammar

* The aim of this grammar was *"to teach us to express ourselves with propriety ... and to enable us to judge of every phrase and form of construction, whether it be right or not"*.

* The criterion for the discrimination between right and wrong constructions was Latin.

* As Latin appeared to conform best to their concept of ideal grammar, English was described in terms of Latin forms and the same grammatical constraints were imposed.

E.g,, a noun was presented in the form of the Latin noun paradigm:

* Nominative: *the house*   Genitive: *of the house*   Dative: *to the house*   Accusative: *the house*   Ablative: *in, at, from the house*   Vocative: *house*

English described through Latin

To sum up, early prescriptive grammar could be characterized by the following features:

1) patterning after Latin in classifying words into word classes and establishing grammatical categories;

2) reliance on meaning and function in definitions;

3) approach to correctness: the standards of correctness are logic, which was identified with Latin past;

4) emphasis on writing rather than speech.

The Features of Prescriptive Grammar

Descriptive (non-structural) grammar

Henry Sweet (1845–1912), "New English Grammar, Logical and Historical "(1891): " As my exposition claims to be scientific, I confine myself to the statement of facts, without attempting to settle the relative correctness of divergent usages. If an 'ungrammatical' expression such as it is *'me'* is in general use among educated people, I accept it as such, simply adding that it is avoided in the literary language."

Non-Structural Descriptive Grammar

❖Unlike prescriptivists, descriptivists focus their attention on actual usage without trying "to settle the relative correctness of divergent usages."

❖Similar to prescriptivists, descriptivists use meaning and function in their definition of parts of speech.

Non-Structural Descriptive Grammar in Summary

Otto Jespersen (1860–1943), a Danish linguist, developed the theory of grammar and the grammar of English. He proposes three principles of classification – meaning, form, and function. His theory is set out in *"The Philosophy of Grammar"* (1924).

It removes the parts of speech from the syntax, is based on the concepts of ranks and brings the concept of context to the forefront of the attention.

The Emergence of Structuralism

As a reaction to the atomistic approach to language a new theory appeared that was seeking to grasp linguistic events in their mutual interconnection and interdependence, to understand and to describe language as a **system**.

The first linguists to speak of language as a system or a structure of smaller systems were Beaudouin de Courtenay (1845-1929) and F.F.Fortunatov (1848-1914) of Russia, and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913).

Frantz Boas, linguist and anthropologist (1858-1942) is usually mentioned as the predecessor of American Descriptivism.

His basic ideas were later developed by Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Leonard Bloomfield (1887-1949).

Leonard Bloomfield:

 "The study of language can be conducted…only so long as we pay no attention to the meaning of what is spoken" ("Language",1933).

The principal approach: to study the structure of a language as objectively as possible, without reference to meaning and other languages

The analysis of sentences collected from native speakers of the language, giving preference to spoken language

The focus: to devise formal methods of analysis and replace meaning by form; interest in what is observes, i.e. objective data

The American Descriptive School

North American Structuralism

Main tenets

- Linguistics is a descriptive science.
- The primary form of language is the spoken one.
- Every language is a system on its own right.
- Language is a system in which smaller units arrange systematically to form larger ones.
- Meaning should not be part of linguistic analysis.
- The procedures to determine the units in language should be objective and rigorous.
- Language is observable speech, not knowledge.

The chief contribution of the American Descriptive School to modern linguistics is the elaboration of **the techniques of linguistic analysis.**

The main methods are

(1) the Distributional Method and

(2) the Method of Immediate Constituents.

The Descriptivist Methods

(1) The Distributional Analysis

is a method of linguistic research in which the classification of linguistic units and the study of their features are carried out on the basis of the distribution of the units in question in the spoken chain, i.e. on the basis of their combinability.

Context (unit 1) ← Unit in question → Context (unit 2)

The combinability (environment, context)

Linguistic units with similar distributions have similar meanings.

Distributional hypothesis

2. The Method of Immediate Constituents

The term *immediate constituents* (IC) was introduced by L. Bloomfield as follows: "Any English-speaking person who concerns himself with this matter is sure to tell us that the immediate constituents of

Poor John ran away

are the two forms *Poor John* and *ran away*; that each of these is, in turn, a complex form; that the immediate constituents of *ran away* are *ran* and *away*, and that the constituents of *Poor John* are *poor* and *John*".

- Poor John ran away
  - Poor John
    - Poor

    - John

  - ran away

- ran
- away

Immediate Constituents

2. The Method of Immediate Constituents

*This method is based on the binary principle, i.e. each stage of the procedure involves two components the unit immediately breaks into.

*The analysis is completed when we arrive at constituents incapable of further division.

DEFINITIONS for the Method of Immediate Constituents

Definition 1

<u>An immediate constituent</u> is a word or a group of words that functions as a single unit within a hierarchical structure.

Definition 2

The ultimate constituents are the smallest meaningful units which any given construction can be broken down to, consisting of a morpheme at the morphological level and a word at the syntactic level.

Definition 3

The linguistics procedure which divides sentences into their component parts or constituents in this way is known as <u>constituent analysis.</u>

Definition 4

The segmentation of the sentence into its immediate constituents by using binary cuttings until its ultimate constituents are obtained is called Immediate Constituent Analysis (IC Analysis).

TRANSFORMATIONAL AGRAMMAR

The idea of the Transformational Grammar (TG) was first suggested by Zellig S.Harris as a method of analyzing the "raw material" (concrete utterances) and was later(1957) elaborated by Noam Chomsky as a synthetic method of "generating" (constructing) sentences.
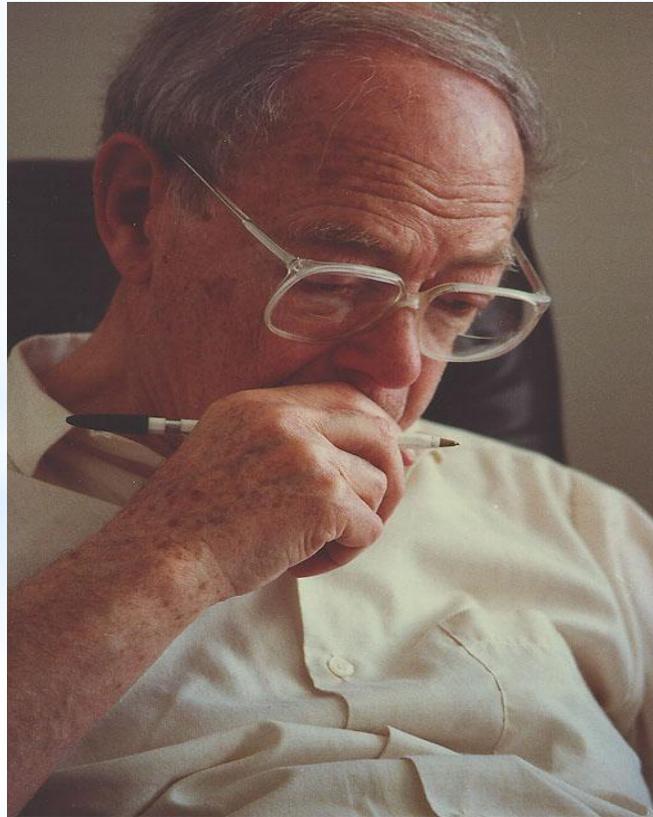
TG is a system of grammatical analysis that uses transformations to express the relations between elements in a sentence, clause, or phrase, or between different forms of a word, phrase, etc., as between the passive and active forms of a verb.

Noam Chomsky
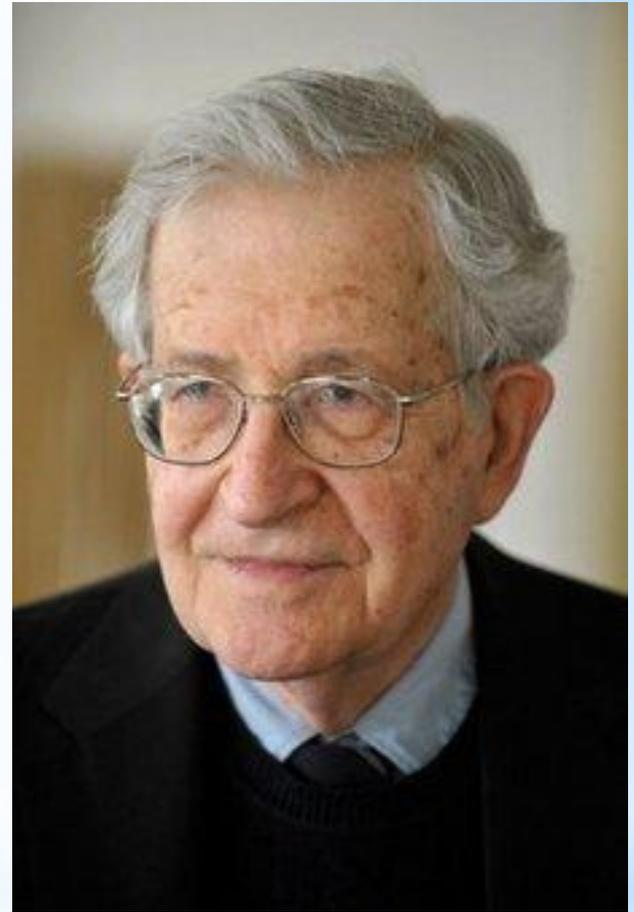
TG refers to syntax and presupposes the recognition (identification) of such linguistic units as phonemes, morphemes and form-classes, the latter being stated according to the distributional and the IC-analysis or otherwise.

According to Chomsky, the central goal of linguistic theory is to determine what it is that people know if they know a particular language.

Knowing a language involves having the ability to produce and understand an unlimited number of utterances of that language that one may never have heard or produced before.
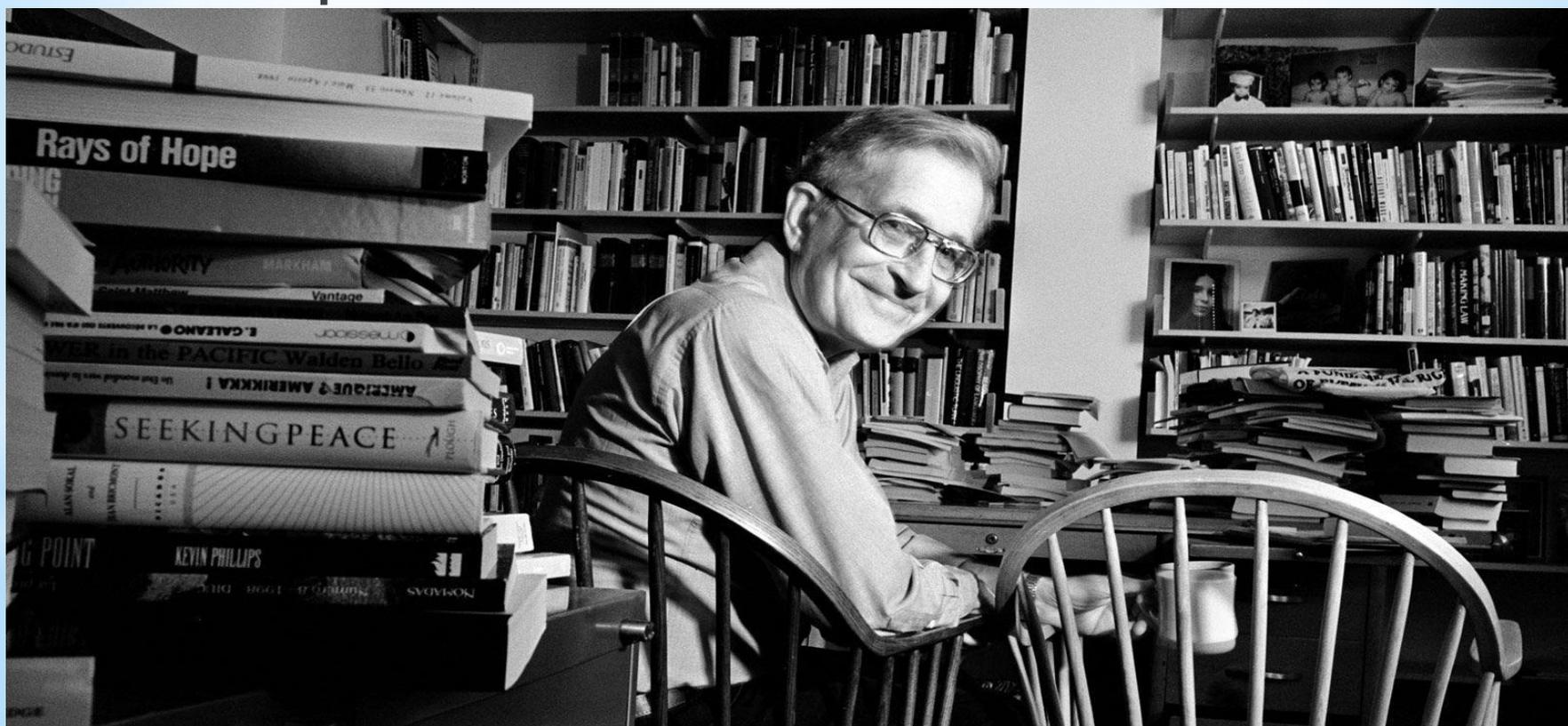
A GM is a system of explicit rules that may apply recursively to generate an indefinite number of sentences that can be as long as you want them to be.

John saw the picture of the baby on the table in the attic.

S-sentence, N-noun, NP-noun phrase, V-verb, VP-verb phrase, P-preposition, PP-prepositional phrase, DP-determiner phrase, DET-determiner.
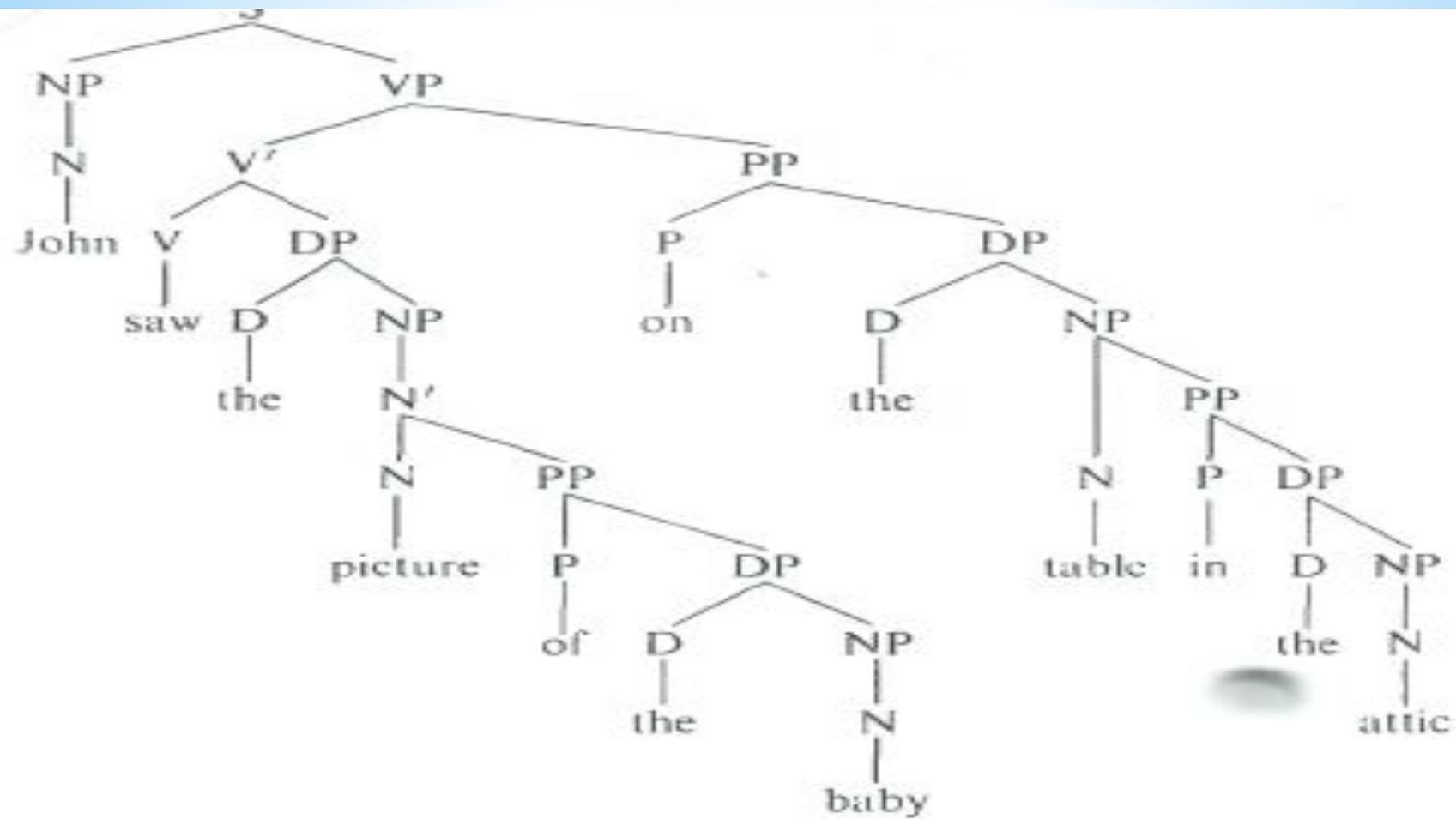
*In generative linguistics 'grammar' refers to the implicit, totally unarticulated knowledge of rules and principles of the language that people have in their heads.

*This tacit knowledge enables them to distinguish between well-formed and ill-formed words and utterances in their language, e.g. it's correct to say *a grain* but 'incorrect' to say **a oat*.

*In generative linguistics the term 'grammar' covers not only morphology and syntax but also semantics, the lexicon and phonology.

*Phonological rules, morphological rules, syntactic rules and semantic rules are all regarded as rules of grammar.

* Chomsky has shifted the focus of linguistic theory from the study of observed behaviour to the investigation of the knowledge that underlies that behaviour.

* In generative linguistics, rules are intended to go beyond accounting for patterns in the data to a characterisation of speakers' linguistic knowledge.

* The primary objective of generative grammar is to model a speaker's linguistic knowledge.

Chomsky characterises linguistic knowledge using the concepts of competence and performance.

- LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE
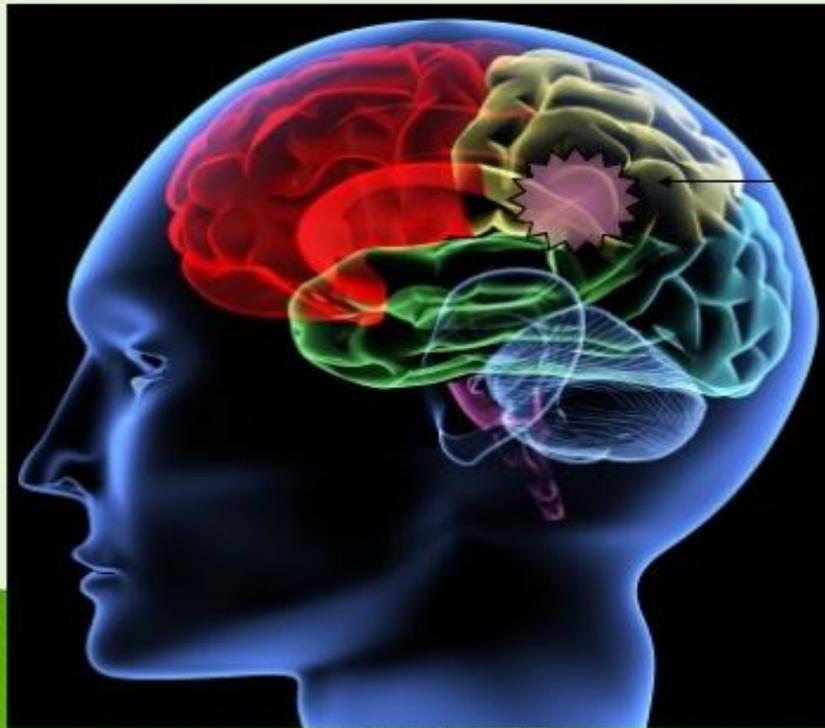 - COMPETENCE

  - PERFORMANCE

Competence is a person's implicit knowledge of the rules of a language that makes the production and understanding of an indefinitely large number of new utterances possible.

Performance is the actual use of language in real situations.

Chomsky proposes that competence, rather than performance, is the primary object of linguistic inquiry.

* Chomsky contends that the linguistic capacity of humans is **innate.** The general character of linguistic knowledge is determined by the nature of the mind, which has a specialized **language faculty.**

* This faculty is determined in turn by the biology of the brain. The human child is born with a blueprint of language that is called **Universal Grammar.**

According to Chomsky, Universal Grammar is the faculty of the mind that determines the nature of language acquisition in the infant and of linguistic competence.

Universal Grammar Theory

- Chomsky believes that children will never require the knowledge to process an infinite number of sentences if the language acquisition mechanism was dependent on language input alone.

- The theory of Universal Grammar was proposed suggesting that all children are born with ability to acquire, develop, and understand grammar regardless of where or how they are raised (noun/ verb category)

The properties that lie behind the competence of speakers of various languages are governed by restricted and unified elementary principles rooted in Universal Grammar.

UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR (UG)

The theory suggests that linguistic ability manifests itself without being taught and that there are properties that all natural human_languages share. It is a matter of observation and experimentation to determine precisely what abilities are innate and what properties are shared by all languages.

This explains the striking similarity between languages in their essential structural properties. The structural differences between languages occur within the range sanctioned by Universal Grammar.

TEST 1

1. The method based on the binary principle, which breaks each unit into two components, is called the

(A)   distributional analysis

(B)   method of immediate constituents

(C)   descriptive method

(D)   method of structural oppositions

2. Panini wrote one of the first grammars of

(A)   Latin

(B)   Ancient Greek

(C)   Sanskrit

(D)   Old Italian

3-5. Add one word into each gap. The first letter is given:

Practical grammar (3) p_____ certain rules of usage and teaches to speak or write correctly rather than to describe actual usage. (4) T_____ grammar presents facts of language while analyzing them and gives no prescriptions. To a (5) **d_____** grammarian, grammar is a systematic account of the structure of a language.

6. Show the chronological order in which the four great grammarians of the past lived and worked (1 - the earliest one, ..., 4 – the latest one):

Varro -

Lily –

Thrax –

Priscian -

7. *Choose as many possible correct answers as necessary*: In the distributional analysis the classification and the study of linguistic units are carried out on the basis of their distribution in the spoken chain, i.e. on the basis of their _____.

(A)   combinability

(B)   addition

(C)   environment

(D)   context

8. According to Chomsky, the central goal of linguistic theory is to determine

(A)   what the difference between competence is performance is.

(B)   what it is that people know if they know a particular language.

(C)   how languages differ from one another.

(D)   what methods are used in linguistic research.

9. According to Chomsky, the linguistic capacity of humans is

(A)   innate.

(B)   determined by the nature of the mind, which has a specialized language faculty.

(C)   called Universal Grammar.

(D)   dependent on the grammar of the specific language the child is exposed to.