

Review

van Gelderen, Elly. 2002. *An Introduction to the Grammar of English: Syntactic arguments and socio-historical background*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins. xxiv + 200 pp.

Carsten Breul

1 Intended readership and theoretical framework

Elly van Gelderen's *Introduction to the Grammar of English* (henceforth *IGE*) is designed as a textbook for a one semester course in English syntax. The readership aimed at is "English, Humanities, Philosophy, and Education majors as well as others taking an upper level grammar course in an English department at a North American university, or those in an English department in a European country." (p. xi) The book is said to be in the tradition of the "Quirk family of grammars" (p. ix), which, according to van Gelderen (henceforth vG), includes the work of Aarts & Wekker, Burton-Roberts, Huddleston in addition to that of Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik.¹ vG being a linguist with a strong background in generative grammar (see e.g. vG 1993, 1997), it is natural to see some generativist influences at work in *IGE* as well. This is acknowledged by the author when she writes (p. ix): "the present book focusses on the structure and makes the function derivative, as in more generativist work". Thus, *IGE* is a textbook which introduces the reader to syntactic structures and functions as conceived of in traditional descriptive grammar, but occasionally borrows concepts from generative grammar (such as X'-categories, trace, empty category) without undermining the traditional framework in general.

2 Summary

IGE comprises eleven chapters. Chapter 1 ("Introduction") familiarises the reader with the idea that a grammar is a knowledge system stored in the minds of speakers. The nature of the rules which form such a system is opposed to that of prescriptive rules. vG points out that it is the main point of *IGE* "to provide the vocabulary and analytical skills to examine descriptive as well as prescriptive rules." (p. 7)

Chapter 2 ("Categories") discusses the distinction between lexical (Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Preposition) and grammatical (Determiner, Auxiliary, Coordinator, Complementizer) categories. It is mentioned that pronouns are classified differently by different linguists with respect to this distinction; vG treats them as lexical. The fact that "children learn lexical categories before grammatical ones, and [that] aphasics can have difficulties with either lexical or grammatical categories" (p. 22) is presented as empirical evidence for this distinction.

Chapter 3 ("Phrases") is concerned with the structure of NP, AdjP, AdvP, VP and PP. The author explains the advantage of hierarchical structures over flat ones. For example, she points out that a (completely) flat structure for the NP *the unpleasant unicorn from Malacandra*, i.e. one that lacks internal bracketing, "does not say whether *from* is more connected to *Malacandra* or to *unicorn*." (p. 33) By contrast, the hierarchical structure in (1), given in tree format on p. 33, does make this clear.²

(1) [_{NP} the [_{N'} unpleasant [_{N'} unicorn [_{PP} from [_{NP}Malacandra]]]]]

Coordination is presented as being problematic with respect to an analysis as a hierarchical or flat structure. Several tests for identifying the extension of phrases are briefly (and rather superficially and inconclusively) discussed.

Chapter 4 ("Functions in the sentence") presents the functional notions subject, predicate, direct object, indirect object, subject predicate and object predicate. The guiding principle here is that functions are derived from positions in the tree structure. For example, the subject is defined as "daughter of S" and the direct object as "sister of V" (p. 61). The ditransitive pattern is represented by a flat structure. VG notes that "[t]hat there are ways of expressing this in a non-flat/hierarchical structure but they are complicated and still controversial." (p. 68) The complex transitive pattern (e.g. *She found it nice*) is represented by a hierarchical structure by making use of the notion of small clause (SC):

- (2) [s She [vp found [sc it nice]]]

In chapter 5 ("More functions: of prepositions and particles"), VP-adverbials are introduced as sisters of V' and sentence adverbials as sisters of S. Prepositional verbs, which take a PP as object, are distinguished from phrasal verbs, which have incorporated a particle. The analysis of a PP as adverbial or prepositional object is presented as leaving room for interpretation in some cases. For example, with respect to (3a, b),

- (3) a. I went to the library.
b. I swam in the pool.

vG explains (p. 87):

Some speakers regard the information contained in the PP as essential and others consider it less so. If the goal of the going is seen as obligatory in [(3a)], one might call the PP an object, a prepositional object in this case; if the goal is seen as optional, the PP would be an adverbial. Hence, for sentences such as [(3a) and (3b)], there are two different analyses: the verbs can be intransitive ones with the PPs functioning as adverbials or the verbs can be prepositional ones with the PPs functioning as prepositional objects.

This quotation may be taken as an illustration of the guiding principle that "the emphasis in this book is on the argumentation, and not on presenting 'the' solution" (p. x), i.e. that principle which the first part of the book's subtitle alludes to.

Chapter 6 ("The structure of the Verb Group in the VP") discusses the characteristics of auxiliaries and their order in the Verb Group (VGP), which is represented as having a flat structure. The fact that a perfect(ive), progressive and passive auxiliary requires a correspondingly inflected following verb form is explained in terms of 'affix-hop': "As mentioned, the verb that immediately follows a particular auxiliary bears the ending, also called affix, of that auxiliary. Since the affix associated with a particular auxiliary does not appear on the auxiliary but on the next verb, this process is called affix-hop." (p. 103f.)

Chapter 7 ("Finite clauses: Embedded and coordinated") shows that finite clauses may be embedded, i.e. may function as direct object, subject, subject predicate or adverbial in their superordinate clause. VG's claim that finite clauses may not function as indirect object or object of a phrasal verb (see p. 120) needs to be revised in view of such examples as in (4).

- (4) a. The security-guards gave whoever entered the bank a penetrating look. (finite clause as indirect object; from Aarts & Aarts (1982: 158), who note that these cases are rare)
b. {She found out / It turned out} that he had been lying. (finite clause as object of phrasal verb)
c. He put in that the decision would not be supported by the majority. (ditto)

The words which introduce embedded clauses, such as *that*, *whether*, *because* etc. are analysed as complementizers, i.e. as sister to the embedded S under S'. VG briefly mentions that, as with coordinated phrases, there is a debate on how to analyse the

structure of coordinated sentences. There are reasons and examples which favour an analysis in terms of a flat structure and other reasons and examples which support one in terms of a hierarchical structure. The latter make a finite clause introduced by *and* rather like an adverbial, as arguably in (5).

- (5) She arrived and he left.

"Some people argue that the coordinator *and* really means 'and then' or 'while' and that the second clause is subordinate to the first." (p. 124)

The various kinds and sentence level functions (subject, direct object etc.) of non-finite clauses are the topic of chapter 8 ("Non-finite clauses"). VG opts for an analysis of a non-finite as an S' with daughters C (complementizer) and S, in which C may be empty, as in (6a), or realised by *for*, as in (6b).

- (6) a. I want [_{S'} Ø [_S him to go]]
b. I want [_{S'} for [_S you to do your homework]]

An empty NP as daughter of S is assumed for those cases where the embedded non-finite does not have a subject, as in (7).

- (7) [Ø To hike around Weaver's Needle] is pleasant

Chapter 9 ("The structure of the NP, AdjP, AdvP, and PP") is concerned with the internal structure of NP, AdjP, AdvP and PP in terms of the functions head, modifier and complement as well as determiner in the case of NP. Both modifier and complement are claimed to be optional as components of AdjP and NP (see pp. 149, 152), a claim which cannot be maintained in view of obligatory complementation of adjectives like *contingent* (e.g. *Our success is contingent *(upon your support)*), predicative *fond*, *proud* etc. (e.g. *He was very {fond / proud} *(of her)*). A complement is defined as sister of a head X and a post-modifier as sister of X'. The difficulty of distinguishing between post-modifier and complement of an N-head is addressed. A test to keep them apart along the following lines is suggested (see p. 154) – albeit rather implicitly: A contrast such as the one between (8a) and (8b) shows that the proform *one* is an N'-category rather than an N-category, for it can substitute for *teacher of physics*, but not for *teacher*.

- (8) a. I know the teacher of physics from England and the one from France.
b. *I know the teacher of physics from England and the one of chemistry.

Consequently – but this consequence is not explicitly stated – if a phrase whose status as complement or post-modifier of an N-head is in question cannot be combined with the proform *one*, it should be complement, otherwise post-modifier.³

- (9) a. She suggested the book by Smith and the one by Jones.
b. *He initiated the construction of the bridge and the one of the new school.

Chapter 10 ("Clauses as parts of NPs, AdjPs, and PPs") shows that the modifier and complement functions within NP and AdjP may also be realised by clauses. Both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses are discussed as clausal post-modifiers of an N-head. The concept of trace is introduced "[t]o indicate the function of the modified noun inside the RC [i.e. relative clause]" (p. 170). The fact that there are relative clauses functioning as post-modifier of a noun which heads an NP in adverbial function is somewhat misleadingly illustrated by the following examples (p. 172):

- (10) a. The time when/that you should be here ...
b. The place where/that you should go ...
c. The reason why/that I avoided that party ...

It would have been clearer if complete sentences had been given in which the respective NPs are actually seen to perform adverbial function. (The way the examples in (10) are presented misleadingly suggest NP-subjects.)

Interrogatives, exclamatives, passives, (pseudo-) clefts and clauses showing fronted constituents are briefly considered in the final chapter 11 ("Special sentences"). While the auxiliary is analysed as having moved to the C-head position (sister to S under S') in *yes/no*-interrogatives, the position of the *wh*-XP in *wh*-interrogatives is left open: "Some people have argued that the C position [...] can contain both the *wh*-word. Others have argued that there are two separate positions." (p. 182)

Each of the eleven chapters is accompanied by a section with exercises and topics for class discussions. VG provides (proposals for) solutions for each of the exercises, while she leaves the treatment of the topics for discussion in the teacher's responsibility. In this way, the student reader may check and apply their knowledge and understanding of the contents of each chapter on their own, and the teacher may benefit from suggestions for the elaboration and deepening of the respective issues in class. Some of the exercises involve the analysis of authentic texts, partly literary, which will appeal especially to those readers who are interested in seeing how a thorough foundation in syntactic analysis may help in literary analysis. The book contains three review sections, after chapter 3, 6 and 11, each containing further questions and exercises, partly with and partly without solutions. Especially the reviews proper of the first and third review sections are very short (see also below). All chapters except the first end with a brief discussion of a topic from prescriptive treatments of English grammar, such as negative concord (i.e. multiple negation), split infinitive, dangling participles etc. There is a glossary, unusually placed before chapter 1 rather than at the end of the book, which covers technical terms used in the book as well as some items used elsewhere in the literature. There is also a section providing chapter by chapter references to further reading, the bibliographical details of which given in the list of references. Some of the suggestions, though, such as e.g. Chomsky 1995 and Newmeyer 1998 do not seem appropriate to me as follow-up readings to *IGE*, for these require a much more advanced level of proficiency and background knowledge in syntax and linguistics in general than can be expected even from very successful members of the intended readership of *IGE*.⁴

3 Critical evaluation

With its extensive exercises and topics for discussion and its review sections, prescriptive topics, glossary etc., *IGE* is a well-designed and, despite some typographical errors,⁵ by and large well-edited introductory textbook. At various places, however, the execution of the design suffers from being too brief and superficial. For example, the reader does not benefit much from a review of chapters 1-3 consisting of the following few lines.

The first chapter shows that we know quite a bit about language intuitively without formal training and the second and third chapters make some of this knowledge explicit. Chapter 2 lists the lexical and grammatical categories we make use of, and Chapter 3 shows how sentences can be divided into phrases, each of which is centered around a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, or preposition.

Or consider the account of the category Determiner. It "includes the articles *a(n)* and *the*, as well as demonstratives, possessive pronouns, possessive nouns, some quantifiers, some interrogatives, and some numerals." (p. 17) Their semantic contribution is said "to specify which noun is meant or whose it is"⁶ (p. 17), to point out "which entity is meant (it specifies)" (p. 18). While this explanation may be plausible for demonstratives and possessives, it would seem to require elaboration as far as the definite and indefinite article are concerned. For in which sense does the article 'specify' the referent or denotatum of the noun in sentences like *The sun has risen* or *She has seen a ghost*, for

instance? To give one more example: VG claims that "optional/deletable elements can be moved more easily than obligatory ones. This is shown in [(11a) and (11b)]; in [(11a)] the optional *to the store* is moved with a grammatical result, but in [(11b)], when the non-optional *the woman* is moved the result is an ungrammatical sentence" (p. 44).

- (11) a. To the store she ran.
b. *Ran to the store the woman.

There are several problems and questions raised by this explanation, which astute students may easily come up with. For example: Why do we assume that *the woman* has moved to the right in (11b), why not *ran to the store* to the left, just as *to the store* did in (11a)? Why is it possible to say *Beans I don't like*, in which *beans* has moved to the left, although it is obligatory? Why is it not possible to move *with silver hair* in *She greeted a man with silver hair* (cf. **With silver hair she greeted a man*), for instance, although it is optional? I would not know how to handle such questions on the basis of the above quotation. There are several passages in *IGE* which may provoke criticism along these lines. Most of the problems involved are certainly due to the limitations posed by the design of *IGE* as a brief introductory textbook.

In sum, *IGE* is a good choice as a textbook for the intended readership (see sect. 1 above), but perhaps more so for students in their first and second years at university than for more advanced students. I would not have objected to 40 or so more pages to see some issues treated in more detail.

References

- Aarts, Flor & Aarts, Jan. 1982. *English Syntactic Structures: Functions and categories in sentence analysis*. Oxford et al.: Pergamon; Utrecht & Antwerp: Bohn, Scheltema & Holkema.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1986. *Barriers*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
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- van Gelderen, Elly. 1993. *The Rise of Functional Categories*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins.
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Notes

- ¹ These authors as well as Jespersen, Kruisinga, Poutsma and Zandvoort as earlier representatives of this tradition are mentioned in the book's preface, but do not all appear in its bibliography. But most of the preface is for the teacher rather than the student anyway (see p. ix).
- ² Actually, vG gives an alternative analysis to the one in (1), namely (i) below, saying that the "meaning difference between [(1)] and [(i)] is minimal" (p. 34).
 - i. [_{NP} the [_{N'} [_{N'} unpleasant unicorn] [_{PP} from [_{NP}Malacandra]]]]
- ³ The examples in (9) are mine. Note also that I am not saying that the results of an application of the test can generally be judged easily, nor that it can be generally applied or applied with an appropriate result. I am only saying that its applicability follows from vG's exposition.
- ⁴ But note also that vG acknowledges that Chomsky 1986 and vG 1993 "is somewhat difficult reading." (p. 197)
- ⁵ As many textbooks have second or more editions, a list of the typographical errors I have detected may become helpful: p. 35, (9b): read "Adv" for "Adj"; p. 42: read "in favour of (26b)" for "in favour of (19b)"; "rephrased" for "rephased"; p. 81: read "in which case" for "in which case, "; p. 125: read "or in the phrase" for "or in that phrase"; p. 140, (27): read "VGP" for "VGp"; p. 152, (11): read "[that Arafat met Clinton] was reported widely" for "[that Arafat met Clinton was reported widely]"; p. 162: read "*on his desk*" for "*on my desk*"; p. 163: read "*cloth of gold*" for "*cloth of of gold*"; ". It could" for ". it could"; p. 176, B.: read "N'" for "N" (sister of D *the*); delete "N'" (dominating N *javelina*); p. 180: read "to people or to animals" for "to people of to animals"; "The debate on the use" for "The debate on use"; p. 184: read "N'" for "N" (sister of D *the*); p. 185: read "VGP" for "V". Note also that the list of tables (p. xiii) mentions the table headings "Some quantifiers and determiners" and "Determining phrases" whereas the actual table headings are "Determiners" (p. 18) and "Finding a phrase" (p. 43) respectively. The reference to Holt (p. 180) is not documented in the list of references. There is a reference to O'Grady et al. 1993 on p. 195 and one to O'Grady 1987 on p. 196. The former is probably a later edition of the latter, but only the latter is documented in the list of references.
- ⁶ It is more appropriate to refer to the referent or denotatum of the noun rather than the noun itself in this context.