<u>The Syntactic Phenomena of English</u>, by James D. McCawley, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, paper, vol I, 366 pages, $19.95 US, ISBN 0-226-55624-7; vol. II, xliv, 402 pages, $19.95 US, ISBN 0-226-55626-3.

These volumes (henceforth SPOE) represent, in a number of ways, a synthesis of the ideas in syntax (and related domains of linguistics) that have been developed by McCawley over the years. The book shows how these ideas are tied together to constitute a coherent theory which can probably only be called 'McCawleyan syntax.'[1] Having said that, however, I do not wish to give an impression that the central theme — and purpose — of the book lies in the laying out and justification of his particular version of syntactic theory. (Although, of course, that such might be a by-product is not ruled out.) That this is not the case is clear from the following passage in the preface (x, Vol. I):

> Throughout most of the book I give top billing to the phenomena and second billing to the theory, not because of any disdain for theory (much the contrary!) but because I think the greatest value of any theory is in the extent to which it makes phenomena accessible to an investigator: the extent to which it helps him to notice things that he would otherwise have overlooked, raises questions which otherwise would not have occurred to him, and suggests previously unfamiliar places in which to look for answers to those questions.

SPOE is a faithful embodiment of the philosophy revealed in these statements. A vast range of syntactic phenomena in English are explored in detail and with a thoroughness that linguists have not come to expect from a book of this kind, i.e., a book which is primarily meant to be a textbook in syntax courses. Another remarkable feature of the book lies in its complete honesty — at least as complete as linguists have any right to expect other linguists to be: at each step of the way, assumptions are pointed out and justified, the degree to which each assumption may be valid is discussed, and the degree to which each conclusion depends on a particular set of assumptions is indicated. This may seem like one of the most basic sorts of requirements in scholarly writing, but I believe I am not alone in finding this to be one of the less commonplace qualities in the field of linguistics.

SPOE also puts into practice, perhaps implicitly, other philosophical and methodological beliefs (besides the one mentioned above via a quote) that McCawley has held, for which the reader is referred to works such as McCawley 1976 and 1980. One of these concerns his rejection of the notion that there is such a thing as a sentence that is grammatical or ungrammatical independent of context. That is, grammaticality judgements are valid only in relation to context and, therefore, what are often taken to be absolute judgements on grammaticality are actually judgements of something else, e.g., judgements of whether an acceptable use can be found for the sentence in question. Thus, the sentence <u>John left until 6 p.m.</u> (McCawley 1976:236) is much more likely to be judged grammatical by those who are told that it is supposed to mean that 'John left and is to return at 6 p.m.' than by those who are told nothing about the purported meaning.[2]

One pleasant surprise comes from the inclusion of a considerable amount of material that falls into the realm of psycholinguistics. In this domain, too, McCawley presents many insightful viewpoints. One of them is revealed in the following passage on page 9:

> I find it plausible to suppose that there are neural structures specific to the acquisition, retention, and use of linguistic knowledge, though I find it extremely implausible to suppose (as many linguists appear to) that neural structures specific to language are responsible for the whole of language acquisition or the whole of language processing; rather, there is surely a division of labor between neural structures that are specific to language and structures not dedicated to linguistic knowledge (e.g., your general-purpose learning faculties don't turn themselves off while you are acquiring your native language).

It would be fair to say that this view of the language-mind-acquisition connection is a theme implicit throughout SPOE (as well as the rest of M's linguistics): it is connected to his aforementioned regard for grammaticality judgements, leading him to admit seemingly non-linguistic facts as data relevant to linguistics, and in general guides his value judgements on the content of linguistic claims.[3]

As a result of these features, SPOE will have uses far beyond that of a textbook and will be particularly useful as a reference

book in English syntax.   I am certain that most, if not all,
linguists will find much to learn in these two volumes, ranging from
facts of English to theoretical insights.   This is also in accord
with the fact that the book is much closer to being an original work
(or collection) than one would envision a textbook to be.   It is
full of less-than-well-known facts of English and original analyses
of them (much of which has appeared elsewhere, often in longer
forms).   McCawley also cites a large number of other people's works
and provides a very useful list of references as well as numerous
contentful footnotes.

Practising linguists can also use SPOE in the study of language
acquisition and language variation.   Aside from M's stated
philosophy on the former subject (discussed above partially), his
analyses often have specific as well as broad theoretical
implications concerning these two areas and the implications are
quite testable.   (Some of the implications are explicitly pointed
out in various places.)

As a textbook, SPOE will be appropriate for at least two types
of courses.   First, it can be used in syntax courses for students
who have had some linguistics and are interested in serious
linguistic analyses of actual data.   In my opinion, "some
linguistics" here should include, at a minimum, an introduction to
linguistics and, preferably, some exposure to syntactic theories,
enough to give the student some perspective.[4]   (There are occasional
remarks − mainly in footnotes − concerning other syntactic theories
which assume some familiarity with, e.g., Relational Grammar.)   Some
background in semantics, especially first-order predicate calculus,
will be definitely helpful (though perhaps not obligatory), in view
of McCawley's use of notions such as logical quantifiers, variables,
n-place relations, propositions, etc.   The second type of course
that SPOE will serve well is that which concentrates on
argumentation.   The aforementioned rigour and honesty in
argumentation that McCawley imposes on himself has produced
countless model arguments from which a developing linguist can learn
much about (a) what it means to have supporting evidence for one's
claim − e.g., determining what aspect of the claim a piece of
evidence is evidence FOR, (b) detecting and evaluating implicit as
well as explicit assumptions, and (c) what it means to falsify a
hypothesis or a theory.

2.   As can be expected, much of the content and organization of
SPOE was determined by the nature of the particular syntactic theory
that McCawley subscribes to.   Therefore, it will be useful, before

discussing the actual content of the book, to review at this point some of the more important aspects of his syntactic theory.

A theory that will serve well as a starting point in explaining McCawley's syntactic theory is perhaps standard transformational grammar, with which the former shares some important features and from which it differs in several important ways.

The respects in which McCawley's syntactic theory is similar to (or at least is not a radical departure from) standard transformational grammar are as follows:

(a)   Multiple levels, i.e., surface, deep, and intermediate levels of syntactic structures, and accordingly, transformations, are accepted.

(b)   Transformational interaction can be characterized primarily by reference to the principle of the cycle.

(c)   All the semantic distinctions that are syntactically relevant are explicitly represented in deep structures.[5]

Among these, point (b) is derivative of his belief that there are far fewer cases in which rules apply to the same domain than is generally alleged' (158). (Some arguments for this interesting claim are provided in Ch. 6.) Note that if this is the case, the question of rule interaction other than that which falls within the realm of cyclicity would simply not arise and thus 'rule interaction' can be considered synonymous with 'cyclicity.'

Much more interesting, perhaps, are the respects in which McCawley's theory differs from standard transformational grammar, all of which should provide any thinking linguist with plentiful reasons to reconsider many notions the correctness of which s/he takes for granted. What follows are three of the theoretical positions which are most important to McCawley.

(a) McCawley emphasizes the need to reject some of the ideas that derive from the 'grammar–as–a–sentence–factory' (GASF) metaphor. This common metaphor has it that grammar 'produces' a sentence by first putting together a deep structure (where all the important syntactic properties are determined) and then successively applying required transformations. While McCawley does take advantage of the convenience of this metaphor (by using expressions such as

('derivation' or 'generation'), he regards as pernicious some of its effects. McCawley believes the metaphor conceals the fact that no level takes any precedence over any other level of linguistic description and any level is as 'real' as any other level. Put differently, he believes each level is relevant to a unique set of generalizations.

The significance of the way one understands the notion 'derivation' is reflected in the following case in point. Under the GASF conception, deep structure takes on prime importance, since that is where the fate of any derivation will be determined. Therefore, linguistically significant generalizations such as what kind of syntactic categories and configurations a language allows must be stated at the deep structure level. It follows, then, that the phrase structure rules must be directly relevant only to deep structure; all and only the categories needed in the grammar are specified in deep structure. This explains the uneasiness that was felt about output constraints (Perlmutter 1968). Under the GASF conception, output constraints are a problem: if a derivation does its job, i.e., starts out with a proper deep structure and involves correct application of correctly stated transformations, there shouldn't be any need to readjust its final product.

Under a syntactic theory which consciously refuses to take the GASF metaphor literally, none of the just mentioned conclusions are valid. In particular, it is not surprising — in fact, it is expected — that there might be combinatoric restrictions that apply only to the surface level. This brings us to the next point with respect to which McCawley's syntactic theory differs from standard transformational grammar:

(b) It rejects 'combinatoric platonism' (McCawley 1980: 169), i.e., the prevalent view that rules specifying how syntactic elements combine with one another have only to do with the level of deep structure (or with any SINGLE level, for that matter). In McCawley's scheme, such combinatoric rules may be relevant to deep OR surface level (though to which level a given combinatoric rule relates is uniquely determined).

McCawley accepts the standard arguments for underlying syntactic structure as providing evidence that strict subcategorizational and selectional restrictions are combinatoric rules that apply to the deep structure level.

However, for McCawley, admitting such deep combinatoric rules does not have any implications concerning the existence of restrictions on other levels, and, in particular, on the surface level. In fact, McCawley points out that the generalization that Emonds (1970) discovered, i.e., that the kinds of syntactic operations allowed in a language are those which generate configurations that exist in the language independently of any given operation, points toward the existence of such restrictions. That Emonds took his discovery to be indicative of the 'structure-preserving' nature of transformations is a direct consequence of the assumption on his part that the relevant 'structure' that was to be preserved existed in deep structure. Given McCawley's view, however, one can naturally express Emonds' generalization by way of constraints on possible configurations of surface structure.

This approach has many interesting consequences, as convincingly argued in SPOE. What many of the arguments show is that the details of certain transformations follow from surface combinatoric rules. (For example, McCawley demonstrates that the position of passive be is predictable from the various limitations put on English surface structure.) Thus, one gains the ability to account for some seemingly arbitrary facts about the shape of transformations. Perhaps the most interesting generalization that is made possible by McCawley's approach is what accounts for this last fact itself, and that is the following: in terms of possible combinations that are allowed, surface structure turns out to be much more restricted than deep structure, and this is why transformations exist — they fill the resulting gap.[6]

The third theoretical position on this list concerns McCawley's notion of syntactic categories:

(c) Syntactic categories are derivative of more basic notions. In particular, this view regards category names such as S or NP as mere abbreviations for the combinations of factors that play a role in determining the syntactic behavior of the units in question. This differs from the standard view of categories wherein syntactic categories are defined by base rules and, therefore, to what category a given unit belongs at some stage of the derivation (other than the deep structure stage) has primarily to do with what it originated as in the deep structure. M's notion of syntactic categories as labels for syntactic factors frees categories from being tied to base rules (and therefore deep structure) and makes it possible for categories to change in the course of a derivation,

since the factors may (and often do) change. For instance, a PP is
simply any syntactic unit consisting of a preposition and a NP; no
other factor plays a role in determining the category membership of
such a unit. In particular, HOW the unit came to assume the
relevant shape is not a factor: the preposition may have been
present in deep structure; or it may not have, and has been inserted
in the course of a derivation; it may even have replaced some item
that is not a preposition (see pp. 196-7 for an example of the last
case). In all such cases, and at all levels, such a unit will be
labelled as a PP according to the above definition. The
generalization that this approach embodies is that such a unit will
behave syntactically just like any other PP, regardless of the
derivational history.

As can be inferred from the above example, a consequence of
this view of syntactic categories is that the set of categories that
appear in deep structure and surface structure need not be
identical, since transformations may delete or insert elements or
otherwise change things in such a way that some of the syntactic
factors relevant to category membership will be present only in one
of the levels.

3.   The book consists of 23 chapters (11 in Vol. I and 12 in Vol.
II) plus a list of abbreviations and special symbols, a section
entitled 'Selected Wrong Answers to Exercises,' a 15- page long
bibliography, and a meticulous index. (All of these four 'extra'
sections are included in both volumes.)

Six of the eleven chapters of Vol. I are devoted to subjects
which concern McCawley's conception of syntactic theory, discussed
in the previous section. They are: Ch. 1, 'Introduction' (1-11);
Ch. 2, 'Overview of the scheme of syntactic analysis adopted below'
(12-46); Ch. 3, 'Some tests for deep and surface constituent
structure' (47-74); Ch. 6, 'Rule interaction' (152-81); Ch. 7,
'Syntactic categories' (182-206); Ch. 10, 'Surface combinatoric
rules' (290-318). The other five are Ch. 4, 'Some subject-changing
transformations' (75-108); Ch. 5, 'Complements' (109-51); Ch. 8,
'Auxiliary verbs' (207-61); Ch. 9, 'Coordination' (262-89); and Ch.
11 'Anaphora' (319-66).

Vol. II is organized as follows. Ch. 12, 'The structure of
noun phrases' (367-416); Ch. 13, 'Relative clauses' (417-63); Ch.
14; 'Interrogative clauses' (464-500); Ch. 15, 'Constraints on the
application of transformations' (501-21); Ch. 16, 'Syntactic rules
for coordinate structures' (522-45); Ch. 17, 'Negation' (546-93);

Ch. 18, 'Scope of Quantifiers and Negations' (594–630); Ch. 19, 'Adverbs' (631–62); Ch. 20, 'Comparative constructions' (663–703); Ch. 21, 'Other types of nondeclarative sentences' (704–30); Ch. 22, 'Patches and syntactic mimicry' (731–53); Ch. 23, 'Discourse syntax' (754–68).

4.   On the whole, SPOE is remarkable in the completeness of its coverage of syntactic phenomena of English.[7] Many of the chapters include thorough and insightful surveys of the analyses in the literature. (This is especially true of Ch. 11, 'Anaphora,' and Ch. 19, 'Adverbs;' the former is also notable for its unified discussion of many different kinds of anaphoric devices that syntax books usually treat separately from, say, personal pronouns – null-VPs or words like such in such people, for instance.)

A great number of original analyses and insightful new approaches to phenomena also pervade the book. The chapters of which this is especially true include Ch. 8, 'Auxiliary verbs,' Ch. 9, 'Coordination,' Ch. 13, 'Relative clauses,' Ch. 16, 'Syntactic rules for coordinate structures,' and Ch. 22, 'Patches and syntactic mimicry' (see below about Ch. 22).

Many chapters contain materials organized and/or presented in ways quite different from other books dealing with the same subjects. In Ch. 3, 'Some tests for deep and surface constituent structure,' for instance, McCawley is careful to point out the fact that a test for constituency does not necessarily tell you to WHAT level it is relevant (and that therefore one needs to consider other things to determine the relevant level). Ch. 15, 'Constraints on the application of transformations,' puts Ross's Island constraints in a proper perspective by discussing original motivations for them.

In countless places, data that are uncommonly seen in other books of this type are introduced and discussed. For example, McCawley's constituency tests make use of facts regarding where even, only, also, too can occur acceptably: the first two indicate the beginning of a constituent while the last two mark the end of one; McCawley's discussions of coordination include constituents conjoined by expressions such as as well as or in addition to.[8]

There are some aspects in McCawley's conception of syntactic theory that may strike some people as being novel. One example is his postulation of discontinuous constituents as being a legitimate part of linguistic description. (McCawley's analyses of parenthetical constructions, comparatives, verb particles,

Right-node-Raising, and Extraposition all involve discontinuous constituents. See McCawley (1982), as well as the relevant chapters of SPOE for arguments in favour of this treatment.) The power of McCawley's arguments, however, is such that, after examining them in detail, one is left with the feeling that his conclusions are inevitable if one was willing to think without (often fairly groundless) preconceptions and remain faithful to facts. This applies to whatever other novelties one may encounter in McCawley's theory and analyses (the number would differ greatly depending upon who's doing the counting) and, in fact, I believe that his commitment to the discovery of linguistic generalizations – a commitment unblinded by doctrinal concerns – should be an inspiration to any linguist regardless of her/his orientation.

5.   One of the last chapters of SPOE contains matters that are not often encountered in syntax books and deserves special attention.

Ch. 22, 'Patches and syntactic mimicry,' one of the chapters that I found the most interesting, deals with phenomena that may fall under the general rubric of 'systematic irregularities of syntax.' One of the less involved examples in this category is the one concerning verb agreement in English. One of the aspects of syntactic rules that is not very often noticed is that they are formed and presented on the implicit assumption that, given any syntactic environment, whether and how the rule should apply would be unambiguously determinable. Morgan (1972), as cited in this chapter, pointed out that this assumption is not always tenable. For example, an agreement rule is generally given 'as if it would associate a determinate output to every structure in which a subject is combined with a finite [VP]' (p.746). However, there are many cases in which no determinate person and number can be ascribed to the subject: either two women or one man, for example. Thus, a grammar needs to come up with ways of dealing with such cases, and employing those means are called 'patches' by Morgan. (A 'patch' in the case of agreement is to have the verb agree with the nearest conjunct: There were/*was either two women or one man in the room vs. There was/*were either one man or two women in the room.)

McCawley presents a number of cases of syntactic irregularities in this chapter. One surprising thing about them is that each is quite different from the next in the nature of the irregularity but they are all systematic in revealing ways. Thus, very different from patches are a group of cases all of which involve a kind of syntactic metonymy (pp.736-7).[9] McCawley points out, e.g., that in

I was amazed at what the Cubs paid Sutcliffe, for example, the object of at should actually be analyzed as standing for that the Cubs paid Sutcliffe what they paid him, in view of the fact that the following inference is not valid: I was amazed at what the Cubs paid Sutcliffe. What the Cubs paid Sutcliffe was $500,000 a year. *Therefore, I was amazed at $500,000 a year.

A use of metonymy is also involved in the case of what McCawley calls 'vicarious quantification,' observable in examples such as Most cars are stolen by teenagers. What most restricts here is not the domain consisting of cars (as the straightforward and regular interpretation of it would have it) but the domain consisting of car thefts. In other words, what the sentence says is not that most cars are stolen and that they are stolen by teenagers, but that most of the car thefts are committed by teenagers. McCawley concludes that such a use of a quantifier involves attaching the quantifier to the noun denoting the object most salient (car) in the event, that is, the actual denotation of what the quantifier attaches to (event of car theft).

6. As must be apparent by now, SPOE contains a great deal of material. I believe it would probably be a strain to attempt to cover the two volumes in a two-semester course (13 weeks each semester with 2 to 3 class-hours each week), especially if everything in the book is included in the ·:lass material. However, such wealth of material is of course a positive aspect of the book, so long as the instructor is willing to work on choosing and organizing the subjects to be dealt with in class (which is a good idea and normal practice in any case). Also, there are a few chapters (especially Ch. 7, 'Syntactic categories') that read more like abridged versions of books than chapters of a book, and these sometimes require assumptions that need quite a bit of explaining (some of which is provided in footnotes) and contain parts that need more elaboration than is provided. They would thus require more careful attention from the instructor.

Except for Ch. 1 ('Introduction'), each chapter contains exercise problems which are somewhat unique in that they are the kind that require students to be engaged in actual linguistic analyses. (In many cases, doing the exercises would mean a fair amount of work for the instructor as well. An example: 'Find at least three words or expressions whose syr tactic categorization is problematic ... and say what the difficulty in categorizing them is'

(p.203).) This is consistent with another characteristic of the book, namely, that of not ever introducing 'temporary' pseudo-analyses to get around the problem of having to use concepts or constructions that are either deemed too complicated or will be 'officially' introduced later in the book. Both reflect the policy on McCawley's part of letting students confront ideas and phenomena of genuine linguistic interest from the very beginning.

It is my hope that this book will find the wide use that it deserves both among professional linguists and students of linguistics (and related fields), for I believe it is that rare kind of book that would deepen the collective knowledge of the field and change for the better the attitudes of its practitioners, if given a chance.

FOOTNOTES

[1]McCawley's profound reluctance to give a name to his syntactic theory is mentioned in the preface to the book and explained in McCawley (1980), which, to my knowledge, is the only paper which discusses the general framework of McCawley's syntactic theory.

[2]See McCawley (1976) for the significance of this view in relation to the theory of language acquisition.

[3]Despite the fact that there is a considerable amount of material on psycholinguistics, this material is scattered throughout the two volumes. It seems unfortunate to me that McCawley did not gather this material in one chapter, which would have drawn more attention to it.

[4]In this respect, SPOE differs from Baker (1989), which is much less technical.

[5]Thus, in the terms of Government and Binding theory, McCawley's deep structure corresponds more to Logical Form than D-structure. Note also that McCawley's syntactic theory and GB theory share a common belief: in both frameworks, no essential distinction exists between syntactic and semantic rules.

[6]One of the intriguing consequence of this approach concerns the notion of obligatoriness (p.173): a transformation which must

apply when its conditions for application are met need not be technically obligatory, if there is a surface combinatoric rule that would rule out the ill-formed surface form that would result from non-application of the rule (assuming that such a surface combinatoric rule is needed anyway). For example, non- application of <u>Do</u>-support would give rise to ill-formed sentences such as <u>Sarah -sn't like Proust</u>. This, however, is ruled out by the very general constraint that a surface form must be in a proper configuration that the morphology of the given language allows. Therefore, <u>Do</u>-support can be technically treated as an optional rule.

[7]Thus, the title McCawley says (p.xiv, Vol.1) he originally intended for the book ('More about English syntax than you probably want to know.') would have given a fairly accurate description of the contents of the book.

[8]McCawley's treatment of conjunctions such as <u>as well as</u> gives rise to an interesting proposal (p.281). Observing that these expressions differ in one respect from conjunctions like <u>and</u> in that the former do not in general allow inflections appearing on the verb of the second conjunct (<u>The president is incompetent in addition to the governor being/*is crooked</u>), McCawley proposes separating the notion of coordination into two dimensions: syntactic and morphological. Thus, two conjuncts conjoined by <u>as well as</u> are syntactically coordinate but the second conjunct is subordinate to the first morphologically. An example of the opposite case (i.e., that of morphologically coordinate but syntactically non-coordinate conjunction) involves some asymmetric conjunctions in English, e.g., the <u>go and</u> construction, where the conjuncts must bear identical inflection (<u>He went and told the police about us</u> vs. <u>*He went and will tell the police about us</u>) but, as is well known, do not act like syntactic coordinates in that extraction is acceptable out of the second conjunct only (<u>Which secret did she go and reveal to them?</u> (Schmerling 1975, Na and Huck 1989)). (He points out that this separation is necessary in any case to accurately describe coordination in, e.g., Japanese, where all verb morphology occurs in the last VP of conjoined VPs only.)

[9]In general, 'metonymy' refers to something standing for something else that is related to it. Thus, <u>The White House isn't saying anything</u> (Lakoff 1987:77) involves metonymy in that <u>the White House</u> (or its denotation) is standing for something like <u>the administrators (residing in the White House)</u> (or its denotation).

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