

# Linguistic Turns in Syntax: Students' Attitude towards Chomskyian Approach

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## Abstract

Linguistic or discursive turns are the innovative changes in relation to language and philosophy; they focus mainly on the linguistic landmarks and remarkable changes that leave indelible marks in linguistic circle and other humanities in relation to language, its uses and the society at large. Flourished in the Western Philosophy of the 20th century, linguistic turns spun through all fields of human language, philosophy and politics. The dynamic turns at the syntactic, semantics, phonological, morphological and at all levels of human language, their uses and interactions with other fields of human endeavors had unprecedented imprints in relation to language and philosophy. This research focuses on the ineradicable marks of Chomskyian Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG); and student's attitude towards the teaching and learning of its phrase structure rules, transformational rules, morphophonemic rules, context-free rules, context sensitive rules, etc. Convenience Sampling Technique was adopted for data collection and this entails the random selection of students who constituted a focus group. A focus group of 200 and 400 level students of Mountain Top University in Ogun State, Nigeria, was used to elicit information on students' attitude towards TGG. Data were analyzed using Chomsky's *Phrase Structure rule*, *Transformational rule* and Roman Jakobson's *Theory of Communication*. One of the major findings was that students were always irritated once TGG teaching was done. They explained that the approach is complex and burdening; and wished that a course that has anything to do with Chomsky's generative grammars should not be introduced or if taught already, should be removed from the curriculum. This paper concludes that since TGG is very necessary (especially) in linguistic history, teachers should encourage the students to develop possible attitudes towards the grammar in question and adopt a simplified method of teaching it so that students can benefit maximally from it.

**Keywords:** *Linguistic Turns, Teaching, Students' Attitude, Philosophy, Transformational Generative Grammar, Interactions.*

## INTRODUCTION

Linguistics, a scientific "study of human language" (Wikipedia, Halliday 2006, and Radford 2007) has attracted researchers' attention since its inception in the 1500BC in Ancient India. Linguistics is said to have begun with the grammarian, Panini who wrote a description in Sanskrit called *vyakarana* (en.wikipedia). Contrary to this, Joseph (2007) states that the history of linguistics itself has mid-19th century beginnings and has taken its scope as ranging over the whole of the ancient to modern continuum. The early linguistics were investigated as parts of philosophy, rhetoric, logic, psychology, biology, pedagogy, poetics and religion. It was then very difficult for people to actually separate linguistics from philosophy or intellectual history. Works on the history of linguistics, according to Campbell (2006), ranged from defending a particular school of thought to promoting nationalism and focusing on specific

topics or subtopics. From traditionalism/prescriptivism to descriptivism, transformationalism, etc to its contemporary forms, interest in linguistics has often led to one discovery or the other. It was in the light of this that the 20<sup>th</sup> century linguistics took a different look, through the works of linguistic scholars such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Leonard Bloomfield, Noam Chomsky, Roman Jakobson etc. The striking, revolutionary and dynamic changes that occurred during this century are known as linguistic turns.

Linguistic turns (hence, LTs) were shifts that occurred “in philosophical attentions during the 20th century and within a number of philosophical schools of thoughts” (Wikipedia). In linguistics, politics and philosophy, many researchers had a turnaround from the normal conventions and trends of what the normal ideas and thoughts used to be to different ideas and conceptions all together and their linguistic uniqueness, creativities, innovations and discoveries were what normally and eventually gave rise to linguistic, cultural, philosophical and other turns which relate to the philosophy of language and language use. In other words, LTs were dynamic changes from prescriptivism and descriptivism to “generativism”. For example, Robbins (2006) observes that in the middle of the 20th Century, “there was a profound change in the outlook of theoretical linguistics” (222) and that Noam Chomsky’s syntactic structures “surely made the first public appearance of a change in outlook on the study of language and the scientific stature of Linguistics” (223). These are the changes in structuralism and generative linguistics. The generativists try to get something different by establishing fundamental principles that make languages possible across the globe.

LTs in the schools of thoughts range from the traditional to contemporary themes of metaphysics and epistemology to structuralism and language usage in terms of its relationship to philosophy and politics. They are turns towards linguistic philosophy, in phonological, syntactic, morphological and other levels that are distinctive and ineffable in language theories and applications. LTs are also said to have originated from analytic philosophies which was mainly focused on logic and philosophy of language (en.wikipedia). Considering the contemporary linguistic turns, for example, (Saarbrücken (2009) explains that there are the linguistic turns in Western Civilization and that Wittgenstein’s and de Saussure’s impacts on social sciences made language a focal point in the Western intellectual globe.

Popescu (2013) further states that Wittgenstein believes that words and propositions were mental facts and therefore considered language as a “logical system of mental representation.” Wittgenstein centres his turns on the “hegemony” of language not only on structure but for the expression of things. Wittgenstein and de Saussure attributed their LTs to the LTs of an American Philosopher, Richard Rorty whose edited work, *The Linguistic Turns: Essays in Philosophical Method*, was basically on influence of language on man’s activities and sciences. Again, de Saussure is said to have “made our language an autonomous field of research.” Language is no longer just a mere expression, but a discipline of itself. Language now operates according to its rules and is related to the “real world” both present and past. De Saussure was a renowned linguistic turner of *Western Civilization*; his works opened “the gate for illusions” on words as “*signs*” and spoken and written words interpreted in the relation between “the signifier” (the word) and the “signified” (the concepts which represent the word). This illusion has the main influence on “historical knowledge” (Popescu 184).

In addition to Wittgenstein and de Saussure, Hayden White, an American historian in the tradition of literary criticism (Wikipedia), a cultural critic and a medievalist historian has a dynamic turn in Written History by regarding written history as “a linguistic and poetic act” in his work, *Metahistory*; he concludes that the past only exists as it is written in history. He

refuses to acknowledge the existence of oral history or “living history.” It is worth noting that History is indeed both oral and written; the oral history precedes the written form and as such should be made reference to in our present interactions.

Sufficeit to say that there were rapid growths of linguistic turns in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and “the emergence of new branches” and a trend in syntax; but the author only focuses attention on Chomskyian Generative Grammars :Chomsky’s 1951 *Syntactic Structures*, His 1965’s *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* , his 1970s *Extended Standard Theory (EST)* , his 1970s *Revised Extended Standard Theory (REST)*, 1981 *Lectures on Government and Binding Theory (GB)* now *Minimalist Program(MP)* based on *Principles and Parameter Theory (P&P)*.

Noam Chomsky, a 20<sup>th</sup> century American linguist, made indelible marks in the field of syntax in his Generative Grammars. Ndimile (1981:2) observes that “Generative Grammar has worn an entirely different look since the publication of *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*”, i.e. *Standard Theory*. He further adds that the “whole enterprise” (2) has become very hydra-headed and highly polyvalent (2); TGG or TG is also said to be “hugely different” from other syntaxes before and after it. In the same vein, Adgokar (2018) avers that it has transformed the whole concept of grammar and generates current thoughts. These thoughts were enveloped in *Syntactic Structures* of 1957 based on his Ph.D work written in 1955 at the University of Pennsylvania and supervised by his teacher, Zelling Harris. The online Britannia of linguistics states that the “most significant development in linguistic theory and research in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the rise of generative grammar.”

It should be noted that many types of Generative Grammars existed before the transformational Generative Grammar (TG) or (TGG). These Generative grammars begun with nothing, they moved into the rules of grammar, built up sentence structure bit by bit and added something at every step until the sentences were totally built up. Once something was added to a sentence structure, the structure was not changing, deleted or moved to various locations. TG is different from other forms of Generative Grammars, because sentences are first built using context free rules and these later resulted in the deep structure. After this, other rules are applied and these are called transformation rules or T-rules.

T-rules can change, reorder, insert (add), delete and move sentence elements from one location to another. After these, the surface structure is realized. In other words, it is the rule that “converts deep structure into surface structure” (Thesaurus). It should be noted that the deep structure is very crucial in TG in syntactic structure but with further modification, and in the era of *Extended Standard Theory*, “the D-structure is no longer the sole determinate of meaning.”(Ndimile 1981:2)

In the *Syntactic Structures* of 1957, Chomsky had a scanty explanation and transformation and that was why the structure was insufficient but simple. The inadequacy of the *Syntactic Structures* prompted Chomsky to further modify his grammar and in 1965, he also had his *Aspect Model* known as *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* or (*the Standard Theory*) which proposed a different but complete version of transformations. *The Standard Theory* was highly criticized and condemned by the Generative Semanticists. It’s worth saying that the criticisms of Generative Semanticists ended and Chomsky continued in the modification on his grammars.

The *Standard Theory* was further modified in the late 1970s to give rise to the *Extended Standard Theory (EST)*. This theory was further revised and this resulted in the *Revised Extended Standard Theory (REST)*. The first revision of *The Standard Theory* witnessed “the

inclusion of the  $X^1$  theory of phrase structure rules into the model” (Ndimele, 2). The concept of trace, a reduction in the number of transformations to two, and a shift from transformation to the constituents were possible with the publication of *Government and Binding Theory* (GB) in 1981. Further modifications, led to the Minimalist program (MP). It is observed that with the advent of MP, TGG is now “regarded as dead”. If this is the case, many Nigerian students wonder why such a dead and complicated grammar should be made compulsory to them.

It is also worth adding that the name transformation was first given by Harris but was popularized by Chomsky, and this was born out of his desire to correct some “abnormalities” in the traditional and descriptive grammars. He (Chomsky) was of the opinion that TGG has simplistic rules that can eliminate some excesses in traditional grammar. TGG is not a mechanism for the production or for generating sentences but a means of describing sentences. According to Chomsky, the goals of a linguistic theory is that the grammar of a particular language should meet two conditions for it to be adequate. These are:

- i. Adequacy ( a grammar should generate only sentences which are considered acceptable by the mature native speaker i.e. the external condition of adequacy) and
- ii. Generality (a grammar should be constructed according to a general theory of language structure i.e. in terms of the phoneme , phrase, clause, etc. without its reference to a particular language—the condition of generality)

The idea of adequacy and generality or universality of grammar is not only recommendable to be studied and understood; but more than this, researchers should attempt to find solutions to the teething problems that bedeck students as regards their attitudes towards learning especially TGG after the Covid-19 era. Hence, this study tries to fill in the gap by suggesting how these generative grammars should be acceptable and learned by students especially in Nigerian universities. If ideas stop at the conceptual level, it has little or no impact on the people and the generality of human race. It is therefore necessary to move ahead to the functionality or the impactful level where these theories are actually learnt and used in communicative events.

Also, a mere study of linguistic theories and turns (especially syntactic turns), is not sufficient in helping the upcoming linguists and students of syntax in the universities; hence the need for this paper. The present study therefore attempts to address the negative attitudes of students of English in Nigerian Universities towards Chomskyian generative grammars. Mountain Top University, in Ogun State, Nigeria, is used as a case study. Data were gathered purposively from convenience Sample Technique using a focus group of 200 and 400 level English students in the university.

It is necessary to state that Noam Chomsky’s syntactic models are compulsory for Nigerian students in the Departments of Languages and English (as prerequisites for the award of the B.A English degree for them) and as one of the course lecturers of these models, We observed that students had no interest in the course and this might have been one of the reasons these models normally record huge failures in their examinations. Again, the focus group interviews explicitly unveil many Nigerian students’ strong aversion for the models in question.

The major objectives of this paper therefore are not only to examine the linguistic turns in Chomsky’s generative grammars but to address students’ negative attitudes towards the teaching of generative grammars and suggest methods of teaching that may help to develop the communicative competence of students as they learn these concepts and theories.

## A Very Brief History of the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries Linguistics

The 18th century linguistics was characterized by a “debate on language, and that led to the formation of new conceptions. Language was concentrated on “public opinion and the profound changes in society” and the “most discussions were the role of language in thought.” Rene Descartes (1596 –1650), Antoine Atnauld (1612 –16940), Baruch de Spinoza (1632 – 1677) were among the proponents of linguistic debates on the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Campbell, 2006). Their suppositions were said to be based on the analogy between the “dualism of language”, thoughts, body and minds.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century linguistics was dominated by the works of the neogrammarians expressed through attitudes, evolutionism, positivism and comparison of natural sciences; and these were what the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed too. It is observed that the “most outstanding achievement of linguistics scholars in the 19th century was the development of the comparative method” (Britannica). Languages were compared based on their phonological properties, grammatical structures, vocabularies and shown as genealogically related. Some prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century linguists are Charles Sanders Peirce ( scientist , philosopher) , Edward Sapir, Mary Somerville ( Mathematician, linguist, translator, astronomer, scientist) , Samuel Ajayi Crowther, (Linguist) Wilhem, Grimm (lexicographer, anthropologist, librarian, writer , law librarian , children writer, educationist, linguist, etc., Roman Jakobson , linguist, ( *thefamous people*) and many others.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, structuralism was prominent (the structural linguistics in Europe begun in 1916 and witnessed the post humous publication of Ferdinand de Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics* ( *Cours de Linguistique Generale* (Britannica). Structuralism in America was anchored by outstanding linguists such as Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Leonard Bloomfield, Benjamin Lee Whorf, Nikolai Sergejevich Trubetsky and Noam Chomsky.

### Origin and Development of Linguistic Turns

The concept, “Linguistic turns,” originated with Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). It was coined by a philosopher, Gustav Bergman ( Encyclopedia) and popularised by the American philosopher Richard Rorty in 1931 (Glock & Kalhat 2018, Hacker, 2013) . Now, the phenomenon is said to be “far from unprecedented” (Rorty 1992). It focuses on the intellectual and historical history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Hirschkop). It is also known as discursive turn, cultural and aesthetic turn and “began to affect historical writing around the mid-1960s” (Yilmaz, 2007). This was witnessed between 1890 to 1950 and featured on Linguistic philosophy', Structuralist linguistics, Formalist criticism and other movements (ibid). It centres on the links between philosophy, language and politics (Ibid). Writers such as de Saussure, Russell, Wittgenstein, Bakhtin, Benjamin, Cassirer, Shklovskii, the Russian Futurists, Ogden and Richards and Sorel, Gramsci were major writers on linguistic turns. In short, all fields of human endeavors have been linguistically turned by one way or the other. LTs have had impacts “across the whole range of disciplines, whether through the idea of social construction or through the extension of the interpretive method into the human and even the natural sciences” (ibid).



## Noam Chomsky's Transformational Generative Grammar

Transformational Generative Grammar (TG ) or (TGG) was developed in 1950s by Noam Chomsky, a Mathematician , Psychologist, Sociologist, Philosopher and Linguist ( Mambrol, 2020, Adgokar, 2018, Lamidi, 2000, Adetuyi & Fidelis, 2015), and has become one of the most influential syntactic theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it “attracted the most attention and received the most extensive exemplification and further development”(Britannica). Since the inception of Chomsky's generative grammars, there have been tremendous changes and developments in the theories .These changes have informed reactions that trail the theory since its inception.

It is purely generative and focuses on the knowledge of the native speakers on a given language. It is a grammar that shows the relationship between different elements in a sentence and “among the possible sentences of the English language and process or rules” (Yadav & Yadav 2020). For example, a prescriptive grammar may study how words are ordered in a sentence but the generative grammar will be interested in how word classes are distinguished from one another across multiple languages. This brings in the notion of universality of grammar. This grammar is called transformation; and it is used to express semantics with the help of surface and deep structures. It is said to be generative because it produces other sentences from a specific one or particular sentences.

The term transformational, means the “process of changing the form of one linguistic structure to another.”(Adetuyi & Fidelis 2015, 2); the rules of this grammar are called transformations; it is said to “have the power to change the structure which is already present in a number of ways.” (Mambrol, 2020). Chomsky considers this grammar as a system of rules that generate the combination of words that form grammatical sentences in a specific language. It is believed that a sentence has more than one level of structure: the surface and the deep levels. The term, Generative means to describe (Tomori 1997) and not just to generate or produce. *TGG* is a grammar that shows how the rules that govern structural changes and the formation of utterances are explained.

### The Components of TGG

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is regarded as the era of TGG (Robbins 2006). TGG has three sections or components namely: The Phrase structure component, the transformational component and the morphophonemic component. Each component comprises a set of rules operating in a certain “input” to yield a certain “output” (Britannica, Nordquist 2019).

### The Phrase Structure Grammar

The Phrase Structure Grammar (PSG) is a generative grammar in which the constituent structures are represented by phrase structure rules or rewrite rules. It includes grammars such as head-driven phrase structure grammar, context-free grammar and context sensitive grammar. It generates and defines grammatical sentences. The constituents are exemplified with symbols as: “S” for Sentence, NP for Noun Phrase, VP for Verb Phrase, Verb for Aux and Verb, Det for Determiner, N for Noun, V for Verb and Aux for Auxiliary. It should also be noted that the NP can be complex where it includes a determiner, an adjective and a noun as in (the ugly woman, Some Nigerian students, etc).

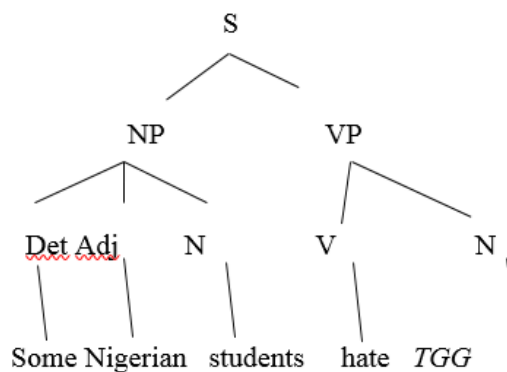
Examples of rewrite rules as represented in letters are shown below:

- i. S → NP+VP
- ii. NP → Det + N
- iii. VP → V + NP
- iv. Verb → Aux + V ( will come, may stay, etc)
- v. Det → an, the, a, etc.
- vi. N → students, chair, etc.
- vii. V → hate, talk, go, etc.
- viii. Aux → may, can, should, etc.

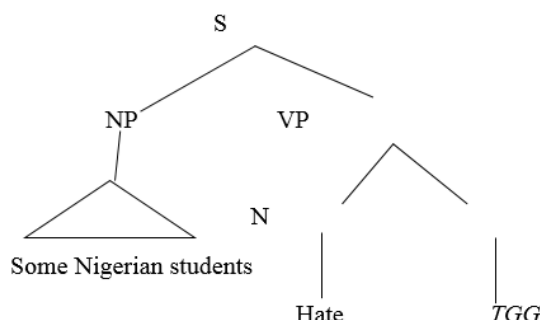
The sentence that can best represent this is, “The students will pass the course.” Here, we have the following rules:

- 1. S
- 2. NP + VP (Rule 1)
- 3. NP+Verb+NP (Rule 2)
- 4. Det+N+Verb + NP (Rule 3)
- 5. Det+N+Verb+Det+N
- 6. Det+N+Aux+V+ Det+N (5 & 6, Rule 4)
- 7. The +N+Aux+V+ Det +N (7 & 6 Rule 5)
- 8. The + students +Aux+ V+ the +N (Rule 6)
- 9. The +students + Aux + V + the + course
- 10. The + students + Aux + V + the + course (9 & 10, Rule 7)
- 11. The + students + will + V+ the + course
- 12. The + students + will + pass + the +course (Rule 8)

This can further be illustrated in a syntactic tree using the sentence, “Some Nigerian Students hate TGG.



The above sentence can also be drawn in another syntactic tree as follows:



The above rules do not operate individually but as integrated system, as in combining rules 1 to 8 in order to derive the sentence, “Some Nigerian students hate *TGG*.”

The rules can further be constructed as:

- i. S
- ii. NP + VP
- iii. NP + V + N
- iv. Det + Adj+ N + V +N
- v. Some+ Nigerian+ Noun + hate + TGG

From the above, every line is known as a string. The last line that cannot be rewritten is known as the terminal string. It should be stated that the F-rules have disadvantages; they cannot describe covert syntactic structure or underlying formation of the sentences; the rules cannot be properly put in a way that they can produce “well-formed sentences.”

### Characteristics of Phrase Structure Rules (PSR)

PSR has features that it shares with other grammars, examples:

- i. **Generativity:** this shows its description of the sentences of a language and how to build them. This feature is necessary as languages contain infinite number of sentences
- ii. **Syntactic Ambiguity:** some sentences are generated in more than one way starting from the S-rule and terminating it with the string of the sentence
- iii. **Infinite recursion:** This allows the generation of infinite number of sentences using a finite number of rules.

### Transformational Components

The transformational component is based on the terminal strings. It is the level where transformational rules “operate in reality.” (Adetuyi & Fidelis 2015). It deals with the transformations of an underlying deep structure (D-structure) into the surface structure (S-structure). Chomsky believes that in the mind of every speaker there is an “invisible, inaudible deep structure, the interface to the mental lexicon” (Nordquist 2019). The D-structure refers to the concepts, thoughts, ideas and feelings while S-structure refers to the words and languages we used to represent the D-structure. T-Rs are heterogeneous and may have more than one symbol; the passive transformation rule presupposes and depends upon the prior application of a set of phrase structures.



According to Chomsky (1957) there are five transformational rules namely: *T and*, *Inf*, *Tp*, *T not* and *Tq* rules.

- i. *T and* deals with the rule of conjoining two sentences of similar constituents. For example: (a) the smart man will marry soon. (b) The pretty lady will marry soon.
- ii. Now, (a) and (b) are conjoined to realise (c): The smart man and the pretty lady will marry soon.
- iii. *Inf* focuses on the T-R that derives the correct form of the verb in sentences; examples: Some Nigerian students hate. The verb, “hate” (and not “hates”) is used to derive the correct sentence from the example here.
- iv. *Tp* is a T-R that concentrates on the derivations of passive sentences from the active equivalents. For Examples; “Few lecturers teach *Phonetics* in Nigeria.” The passive form can be derived as follows: *Phonetics* is taught by few lecturers in Nigeria.”
- v. *T not* is a T-R that derives the negative sentences from the positive ones. For example: “Nigerian students like *Sociolinguistics*”. The negative form can be derived as “Nigerian students do not like *q*.”
- vi. *Tq* is a T-R that is used in forming questions from positive sentences. For Example: “Students prefer *Semantics* to *Syntax*” can be used to derive “Do students prefer *Semantics* to *Syntax*?”

### Morphophonemic Component

This has the form of a phonological rule but restricted to a particular morphological environment (SIL). It is at this level that morphemic terminal string is converted to the sound of a language. For example: look + ed = looked, pray + ed = prayed, cut + ter = cutter, assess + or = assessor, etc. It is worth noting that the rules that “govern the realization of morphemes” are known as morphophonemic rules.

In contemporary phonology, the phonological component replaces the morphophonemic component of *syntactic structures*. The phonetic realization is derived from its surface structure by the rules of phonological components. Grammar now covers semantics, syntax and phonology. The phonology of a sentence is related to the meaning of the sentence. Syntax is the base (categorical rules and lexicon), the heart of the system. Grammar now wears a new look of the base component (Syntax), the semantics component, the transformational component and the phonological component.

Besides these are context free rules, context sensitive rules, sub categorization rules etc. The context free rules deal with the rewriting rules that focus on the idea that sentences are combinations of NP and VP. For example: (i) The lecturer teaches *applied linguistics*. (ii) We live in Lagos. The structure of (i) and (ii) is similar, i.e. S → NP + VP. The limitation of this rule is the non-specification of which NP should be syntactically and semantically combined with the VP. Some constructions do not accept the Context-free rule. Example, “The man dies”, “The baby is crying,” and so on.

The context-sensitive rules also known as “selectional rules” are rewritten rules which describe the restrictions of some lexical items to co-occur with certain linguistic items.

For example, the context-sensitive rules would not allow the following sentences to be semantically correct (although they are syntactically well-formed).

- i. \*English teaches the students in the classrooms.
- ii. \*The paper writes the First Semester Examinations in the Hall.
- iii. \* Trees clap their hands in the forests.

It should be noted that in literary analysis, these can be taken as acceptable and correct because of the literary licenses that a writer has; but in English it's grammatically wrong.

Sub-categorisation rules restrict some classes of linguistic items to certain syntactic frames. Sub-categorisation rules display collocations with other lexical or grammatical items (Tomori 1997). This rule is similar to the notion of valence (en.wikipedia), "the number of grammatical elements with which a particular word, especially a verb" is allowed to be combined with. For example, the word, "take" has the valency of "take that/ this/it, etc, (i) from/ to him/he, etc.

In summary, the original form of TGG are tripartite, it involves the PSG, the T-Rule and the M-rule. PSG produces terminal string, the transformational component produces the final grammatical representation and the morphophonemic component rewrites sentences into proper ordering of phonemes.

### **Students' Attitude / Language attitude towards teaching and learning**

Attitude " a fundamental characteristic of human activity" ( Purschke 2020) is said to have originated in 1660s from three languages, Italian "attitudine" , Late Latin "aptitudinem" and French "attitude" (Gelisli, 2007) , meaning disposition, posture, aptness and promptitude towards things and events. Attitude is a social psychology concept and for the social psychologists, it is a bipolar evaluation using terms such as harmful-beneficial, desirable-undesirable, pro-con, pleasant- unpleasant, good-bad etc. These bipolar assessments are the characteristic attributes of attitude (Osgood et al, Hill, 1981, Oskamp, 1991, Eagly and Chaiken 1993 cited in Ajzen 2005). They include one's knowledge, values, feelings, motives and self-esteem; and shapes "individual's outlook on a certain subject" (Kid et al 2007).

The Social Psychologists further state that attitude has three components such as cognitive components, affective component and conative components (Weiten 2008; Nairne, 2009; Plotnik and Kouyoumdjian 2008; Myres 2004; Feldman 2009); Winstanley 2006 and Pastorino, Doyle-Portillo 2006; Aronso et al. 2010; and Shelly et.al 2006). In the same vein; Syyeda (2016, Garret 2010) identify affective, cognitive and behavioural as the three parts of attitude. The cognitive component is based on the knowledge, affective, on feelings and behavioral on actions. Attitude is also said to be intentional in nature. Gardner (1985) also states that there are five characteristics of attitudes namely, cognitive, bipolar, predisposed, learned and persisted. All these components affect the teaching and learning of language which TGG is part.

Attitude can make or mar the whole learning processes, Madueke (2007) states that it is very crucial in language growth. It is a major determinant force in the success or failure of teaching and learning processes; without positive attitudes students have slim opportunity to be proficient in their learning (Marzono, 2016). It is therefore necessary that students display positive attitudes towards learning so as to enhance their positive and good performance in any course or language that they learn. Language attitude is also considered as the pleasure or displeasure that students show towards a particular language, dialect, accent, etc.

In many universities in Nigeria, a lot of students consider *syntax* studies as “Almighty”, that is to say that they are extremely complicated and oppressive. They also show negative attitude towards the teaching and learning of English syntax generally. One of the factors that might have been responsible for their negative attitude towards TGG might be due to Yadav & Yadav (2020)’s observation that teaching English as a second, third or foreign language to university students is an arduous task as they are socio-psychologically and linguistically preoccupied with their native language competence. In addition to this, students’ reception and the teaching methods might have been problems too.

### **Roman Jacobson’s Theory of Communication**

Roman Osipovich Jacobson (1696–1982) was a Russian-American linguist and a literary theorist (Wikipedia). He was one of the most celebrated and influential linguist of the 20th century; his interest was initially in linguistic sound system. He later extended his dynamic new techniques to syntax, morphology and semantics. He made many contributions to Slavic linguistics. Beyond linguistics, he developed a literary theory following Ferdinand de Saussure’s structuralism (which declined in the 1970s). Jacobson further developed a theory of distinctive features of sounds and was highly influenced by Noam Chomsky.

Jacobson’s model on the functions of communication comprises six elements or factors of communication (Hebert 2011) namely: the context, addresser, addressee, contact, common code and message. Each of these elements is the crux of a relation that operates between the message and the factors. The factors of communication are: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, poetic and metalingual.

As a theory of communication, analysis can be done on words, texts or images and specification of what class or types they belong matters (for example, textual or pictorial genres), which functions are present or absent; other relations, hierarchical or otherwise can also be analyzed. Jacobson avers that any act of verbal communication comprises the six elements: the context or co-context, the addresser, (the sender, the enunciator), the addressee (a receiver or enunciatee), the contact between an addresser and addressee, a common code and a message.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Data for this research were collected from focus group interview. The term, “Focus Group” was coined in 1991 by Ernest Ditcher, a marketing and a psychological expert. Belotto (2018) observes that it is a qualitative research methodology employed to get the right insight into attitude and behavior of people. Dishad & Latif (2013) explain that Focus Group interview is a tool for qualitative research. It involves six to eight people; creates open line of communication and relies on the dynamics of interactions between participants (Lavrakas 2008). Lavrakas further observes that it offers powerful insights into people’s feelings and attitudes. In this work, a group of 200 and 400 level students of Mountain Top University who were exposed to the study of Chomskyian’s Transformational Grammar were interviewed and their randomly selected responses used for analysis.

This research adopts a qualitative design, data are gathered from focus group interview that comprises 200 and 400 level students from Mountain Top University. The questions are elicited to test their cognitive, affective and behavioural attitude towards the teaching and learning of TGG. Random Sampling technique is adopted to select questions from students’ responses and analyzed using PS rule, T-rule and Jacobson’s Theory of Function.

Fifteen (15) statements from the Focus Group Interview are randomly selected, presented in three groups and analyzed; each group contains five utterances. PS is used to analyse Group A, T-rule for *Group B* and Jacobson’s Communication functions for *Group C*. Data are presented as M- for moderator as interviewer and S- for students as interviewees. Roman numbers are used to itemize the utterances

Data Presentation and analysis from Focus Group Interview

**Group A**

M (i): What aspect of *TGG* do you like?

S (ii): None

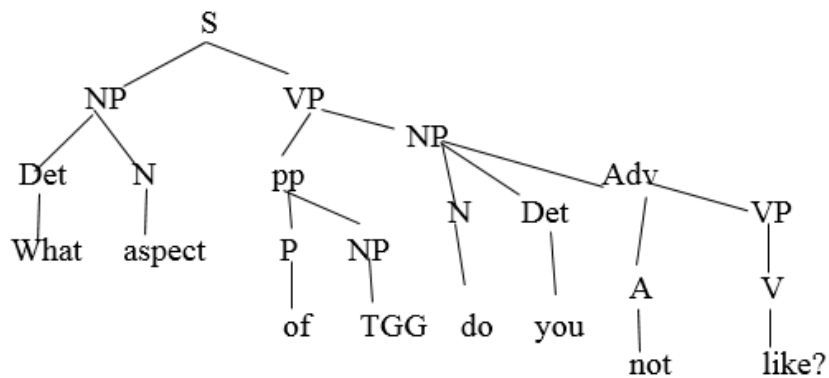
S (iii): We don’t like any aspect of *TGG*.

M (iv): Are you speaking as a group or individually?

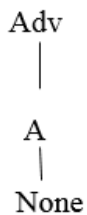
S: (v) We don’t like Chomsky’s grammar.

Data Analysis of *Group A*

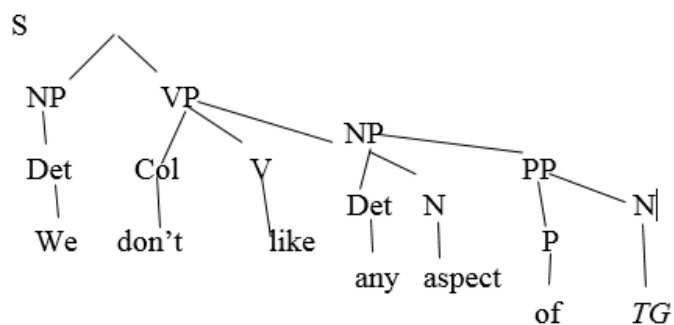
M (i)



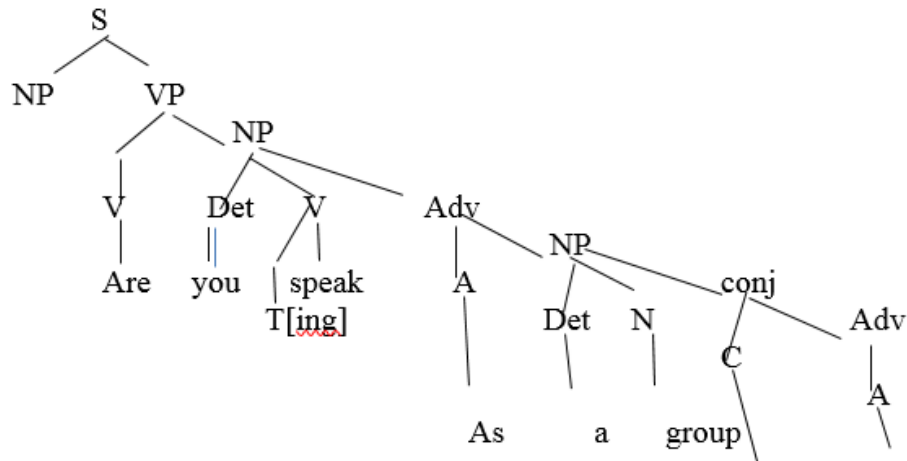
S (ii)



S (iii)



M (iii)

**Group B**

M (vi). Which aspect?

S (vii) we don't like any aspects.

M (viii): Let me mention some

M (ix) What of PS-rule, T-R, M-rule

S (x): We hate all aspects of TGG.

**Data Analysis of Group B**

T-Rules are used in analyzing utterances in Group B. The five utterances here are predominated by *TP*-rules; in other words four out of the five expressions can easily be converted to their passive transformations. M (viii)'s *Let me mention some* can be converted to "let me not mention some" and M(x)'s *We hate all aspects of TGG* can be converted to, "*We do not hate all aspects of TGG.*" Also, the grammaticality of all the expressions in Group B are informed by *Inf* rule.

There is no *T and* rule, T rule; Tq- rule can be used in (Svii) and S(X) as; "Do you like any aspects...? And "Do you hate all aspects of TGG?"

**Group C**

M (xi): What do you think, we should do with the Chomky's T- grammars?

S (xii): They should be removed from Syntax

M (xiii): Why do you think so?

S (xiv): It is very broad and confusing

S (xv): TGG is very complex

### Data Analysis of Group C

Here, Jakobson's *Function of Communication Theory* is applied for data analysis. M(xi) to S(xiv) are first of all referential; information is derived through them. In M(xi), the enunciator utters an interrogation expecting the enuciatee to offer a response which is shown in s(xii), a call for the removal of TG from syntax and English curriculum. The addresser further utters another question in M (xiii) and the students respond in S(xiv) and S(xv). These statements are all conative because the addressees are engaged directly in the course of the interactions, there is no indirect appellative function. Again, S (xii), S (xiv) and S (xv) are all emotive; they are expressives that are related to the behavioural attitudes of the students towards TGG. The phatic function is displayed in the physical connection between the speaker (M) and the hearer (S) in this FG interview. The intention of the enuciatee is obvious as shown in their call for total removal of TG from *syntax* as a result of its broadness, confusion and complexity.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Although Chomsky has made an ineradicable marks in his generative grammars; his linguistic turns are not accepted by many Nigerian students and they call for an eradication of his generative grammars from the general *syntax*. Their call is informed by the fact that Chomsky's generative grammars are very complex, confusing and now a part of history. This standpoint is not cogent because history is a part of human existence; and we cannot live successfully in the present if we don't consider our past. Again, many students of English in Nigerian university always frown at the teaching and learning of Chomskyian grammars not necessarily as a result of the methods applied by teachers but their inherent dislike of these grammars.

Besides these, we also found out that the transformational derivational T-Rule that was predominantly used in the *Focus Group Interview* was the *Inf*-rule. Another major finding was that interrogations and elliptical expressions violated the *PSG* structure where the analysis starts from the VP constituent. Also, inferential and conative communicative functions were mainly used in the *Focus Group Interview* conducted in this research. We equally found out that student's attitude to TGG were solely cognitive. They expressed strong dislike mainly on the generative theories of Chomsky (especially his *TGG*) and not to the lecturers and their lecturing methods.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chomskyian *Syntactic Structures* has been overtly acknowledged as an unprecedented turn in the syntax of 20th century (Ndimele, 1981, Adegokar, 2018) by many linguistic scholars. It was a turnaround from the culture of traditionalism where philosophers, linguists and politicians were actually using the writings of prominent scholars to judge the grammaticality or otherwise of any language, through structuralism to "transformationalism" where a particular sentence is capable of generating different sentences. Noam Chomsky, an American Mathematician, Linguist and one of the renounced critics on prescriptive grammar propounded generative grammars and submits that they are simplified and suitable for the analysis of language because of their transformational and generative nature.



We have observed that Chomsky's generative grammars have received a lot of modifications from its inception in 1950s till its derived form (now) in *TGG* and *Minimalist Program*. Having interviewed the students directly, the researcher observed that Nigerian students display negative attitudes toward the teaching and learning of TGG. We want to add that since TGG has left indelible marks in the syntax of English; and history is the central aspect of human life, the eradication of the study of TGG may be impossible( although Nigerian students have called for it).

Rather than removing TGG from English curriculum, we suggest that it is ideal that the students understand the theories and functions of TGG appropriately. Therefore, to enable the students to comprehend TGG the teacher has important roles to play. First and foremost, they should create an enabling and friendly teaching atmosphere in each class they teach. There should also be need for them to personally engage the students on attitude modification towards teaching and learning of TGG. The teachers should also demystify this grammar because TGG is an "essential aspect of learning English" (Yadav 2020) and as such should not be eradicated from the English curriculum. It may take some times, to "change" students' negative attitudes towards these grammars; but there is no harm in starting the "transformational process".

It is true that Chomsky's generative grammars, especially GB is very broad, therefore, teachers should ensure that these grammars are taught bit by bit. If it means teaching the students only the word classes first, the linguistic constituents, how to draw syntactic trees, the meaning of constituents and other elementary aspects of generative grammars for hours first, the teacher should not hesitate to do so. They should start from the known to the unknown, from the simplest aspect to the complex aspect of these grammars.

Also, student-centred teaching methods such as total involvement of students through constant questioning technique and complete supervision of teaching, use of influential students like the class governors, motivations and persistent encouragements should be adopted by the teachers of *TGG*. The theories of syntax should be taught independently in each lecture with ample examples and not just being jumbled together. Lecturers should not be in hurry in teaching these students generative grammars; they should spend quality time to ensure that students understand these grammars. First of the entire lecture atmosphere should be conducive, the teacher should be friendly but firm and the students should be encouraged to learn these grammars. If these are done consistency, the students may change from negative attitudes to a positive attitudes towards *TGG*.

Dr this is a good effort but note the following

1. No empirical review, what did others write about students attitude towards syntax generally and TGG in particular
2. I don't know which reference style you are using, most of your references with dates do not have pages and some no date.
3. The work focuses more on TGG analysis of responses, if this is your interest then you may want to change the topic. Consider Ling.....: A TG analysis of students' responses on attitudes towards the teaching of TGG in the universities
4. If you want to maintain your topic, focus more on analysing the data to find out positive and negative attitudes etc.
5. Work on the structure of the paper by organizing the segments and headings clearly eg the data presentation and analysis

## 6. Take care of grammatical issues-concord, tenses etc

I'm sure the paper will be better after making corrections.

Sorry my device puts my name everywhere correction is pointed out. That's the configuration for now. It's a new device and I'm still trying to set it right.

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