

THE ANALYSIS OF THREE APPROACHES IN SYNTAX (TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR, IMMEDIATE CONSTITUENT ANALYSIS AND TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR): THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN MARITIME ENGLISH CONTEXT

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Abstract

There are many approaches to analyze English sentence formations. Each approach has got different view upon the analysis of the sentence formation. The aim of this paper is to compare three approaches and this paper tries to compare the use of those three approaches in the production or analysis of English sentences applied in maritime english context. This study is a type of a library research. The conclusion of this paper shows that there are some differences in the perspective use of each approach. Traditional Grammar more focusses on the correct arrangement of the word in the native language and it is based on meaning. Besides it is also based on written language which is considered better than spoken language. Immediate Constituent Analysis focusses the analysis more on the relation of each constituent in a sentence rather than on how the sentence is constructed. Whereas Transformational Grammar which studies on internal language or it is called competence focusses on the grammar which is assumed as a model or systematic description of linguistics competence. From the study It is also known that each syntax approach has their own strengths and weaknesses regarding their use in maritime english subject.

Keywords: Syntax, Traditional Grammar, Immediate Constituent Analysis, Transformational Grammar

Introduction

In relation to the use of language, speakers or writers of a language are able to produce and understand number of utterances or writing. At the same time, they are able to recognize that certain utterances or writings are not acceptable and simply do not belong to their language. This knowledge is called linguistics competence (O'Grady, Archibald, 2010). In investigating this, we can focus on the mental system that allows human beings to form and interpret the sounds, words and sentences of their language. Many linguists call this system as a *grammar* that is the study of the specialized kinds of knowledge, how it is constituted, how it is acquired and how it is used (Riemsdijk,1989). Rutherford in Purpura (2004) defines *grammar* as the analysis of a language system and the study of grammar was not just considered

essential feature of language learning but was thought to be sufficient for learners to acquire another language.

There are some components of grammar in English. Each component should be taken into consideration since they are governing the grammar itself and they are crucially construct the grammar. According to O'Grady and Archibald (2010), there are five components of grammar namely; phonetics which deals with the articulation and speech sound perception, Phonology which deals with the patterning of speech sounds, morphology which deals with word formation, syntax which deals with sentence formation and semantic which deals with the interpretation of words and sentences.

This paper will cope only about the syntax or sentence formation by analyzing three out of some approaches especially when they are implemented in the sentence formation in maritime english subject. It is due to the reason that Maritime English is the compulsory English subject which should be taught in any of maritime academy as it is governed by International Maritime Organization (IMO). According to Yakusheckina (2004), IMO requires every mariner to have adequate knowledge of English. It is hand in hand with the fact that seafaring deals with international world and regulation, therefore it becomes very crucial for seafarers to be able to communicate in English both in spoken language or in written one. Commonly, Maritime English subject will be given in at least two or even three semester in sequences. By this, it is expected that the goal of mastering english in their communication skill will be achieved. This paper will analyze how the three approaches in syntax that are traditional grammar, immediate constituent analysis, and transformational grammar are implemented in the sentence formation related to the use of maritime english sentence formation, including their strengths and weaknesses. In the discussion below we are going to discuss those three approaches one after another.

Discussion

As it is mentioned in the above introduction, the discussion will be focussed on the point of traditional grammar which is followed by immediate constituent analysis and transformational grammar. At the end of the discussion, the writer will also highlight the strengths and weaknesses points of each approach.

Traditional Grammar

Traditional grammar is one of the oldest theories to describe the structure of language. Purpura (2004) states that traditional grammar is a form-based perspective of language. It means that traditional grammar drew on data from literary text to provide rich and lengthy description of language form. It also reveals the linguistic meaning of these forms and provides informations on their usage in a sentence (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999 in Purpura, 2004).

According to Purpura, traditional grammar is oriented to Latin and Greek Language. It supplied an extensive set of prescriptive rule that is a collection of rules and concepts about the structure of language in common (Purpura, 2004). It is limited to the correct arrangement of the part of speech in the native language. It is also based on written language which is considered better than spoken language. Traditional grammar is prescriptive which also means prescribing the way of people in speaking or writting or simply telling people how to speak or write and allowing people to know the correct way of speaking or writing. Purpura (2004:8) also says that there are some examples of typical prescriptive rules of traditional grammar, such as;

The first- person singular of the present tense verb “to be” is “ I am”. Am is used with “I” in all cases except in first-person singular negative tag and yes, no questions which are contracted. In this case, the verb “are” is used instead of “am”. For example, “ I am in a real bind, aren’t I?”

Traditional grammar has been restricted mainly to syntax, that is the way of words making pattern to form a sentence. It shows how a sentence is patterned through its subject, predicate, object, adjunct. In traditional grammar, we learn the elements of a sentence which consists

of at least two important elements namely; subject and predicate. Subject of a sentence is element which is modified by predicate. Predicate must contain a verb in which the verb requires, permit, or precludes other sentence elements to complete predicate. These other elements can be object, predicatives, and adjunct. Whereas objects are divided into two namely; direct and indirect objects. Followings are some examples of sentences analyzed by using traditional grammar.

1. She reported. It is constructed of subject and verb-only predicate
2. The able-seaman paints the deck. It is constructed of subject and verb + direct object predicate.
3. The captain found the crew very panic. It is constructed of subject, predicate, direct object and object complement.
4. The first mate is tired now. It is constructed of Subject, linking verb (predicate), subject complement.
5. It is dangerous to go to such an enclosed space. It is constructed of subject, linking verb (predicate), adjective to infinitive/ clause
6. The captain asked the marchonist to send distress message. It is constructed of subject, verb (predicate), object, and predicator.
7. I saw the passenger crying. subject, predicate, object, and predicator.
8. The navigating officer chooses the road plan carefully. It is constructed of subject, predicate, object, and adjunct

From some examples above it is obvious that traditional grammar focusses more on the correct arrangement of the word in the native language and it is based on meaning. It strictly focusses on how the sentence is patterned from the traditional method by distinguishing which one belongs to subject, predicate, object, adjunct, etc in the sentence formation.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Traditional Grammar

Traditional grammar has some strengths and weaknesses. The strengths are that it is easier to understand since it focusses on the role or function of words in a sentence. In term of analyzing a sentence, it will be only based on the sentence elements. We can neglect a phrase structure rules as what we have in transformational grammar, another

syntax approach that will be discussed later in this paper. Besides, by having grammatical rule it can be used to serve and explain in a more simplified manner in second language teaching. It means that traditional grammar could be a valuable source of information for teachers or educators to teach their students as it is stated in Purpura, 2004.

On the other hand, there are some weaknesses of traditional grammar. First, it does not give any freedom to write because there is already strict rules that must be taken into consideration including the use of concord or subject and verb agreement in a sentence. If the rules are broken or disregarded it will mean that our writing is assumed to be rigid and incorrect. Second, in his book *Assessing Grammar* Purpura claims that traditional grammar has been criticized for its inability to provide descriptions of the language that could adequately incorporate the exceptions into the framework and for its lack of generalizability to other language. Third, traditional grammar postulated a separate, uniquely language-specific set of rules or parameter for every language (Purpura:2004). Thus every language has different sets of rules.

Immediate Constituent Analysis

In a sentence there is a part into which a sentence can be segmented which is called a constituent of a sentence. According to Aarts (1982), immediate constituent (IC's) refers to those constituents which together form a higher-order constituent. For instances we have *blue bag*. It means that *blue* and *bag* are immediate constituents of *blue bag*. In maritime english there is a term of *muster station*. It means that *muster* and *bag* are immediate constituents of *muster station*.

Immediate Constituent Analysis (IC Analysis) is a basic technique to analyze English syntax (Allen,1972). The basic idea of immediate constituent analysis (IC Analysis) is that there are constituents in a sentence. According to Allen, constituent is a set of words and in analyzing those words, one should focus more on the relation of each constituent in the sentence. IC Analysis can be done through three ways which is called notational devices. Aarts (1982) claims that notational devices in immediate constituent analysis functions to make the sentence

more visible by using a chinese box, diagramming, and bracketting. Therefore, immediate constituent analysis can be done by using chinese box, diagramming, and bracketting. They have the same principles in use but different in the form.

According to Quirk (1985) In each usage of the notation devices, we have to remember four important structures; first, structures of predication (p) in which it is to show the relation of the subject of the sentence to the verb as the predicate of the sentence, structure of complementation (c) that is to show that the constituent functions as a part of a phrase or clause which follows a word and complete specification of a meaning relationship which that word implies, structure of modification (\rightarrow) that is to show if the constituent may function to modify or to add descriptive information to the head and often it restricted reference of the head, and structure of coordination (=) that is to show that the constituents being related may have the same status on the grammatical hierarchy.

In her book, Baker (1989) exemplifies the use of chinese box notational device in immediate constituent analysis for the sentence *The stevedore keep loading the cargo in the holds*. From the sentence, it can be illustrated as follows;

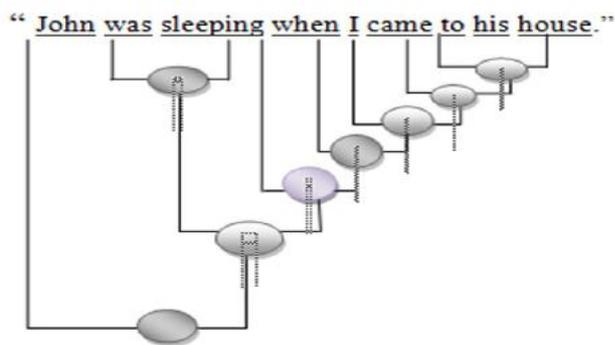
1. The word *the* joins with the word *stevedore* to make phrase *The stevedore*.
2. The word *the* joins with the word *holds* to make phrase *the holds*.
3. The word *in* joins with phrase *the holds* to make phrase *in the holds*.
4. The word *the* joins with the word *cargo* to make phrase *the cargo*
5. The word *loading* joins with the phrase *the cargo* and phrase *in the holds* to make phrase *loading the cargo in the holds*.
6. The word *keep* joins with the phrase *loading the cargo in the holds* to make phrase *keep loading the cargo in the holds*
7. The phrase *the stevedore* joins with the sentence *keep loading the cargo in the holds* to make phrase *The stevedore keep loading the cargo in the holds*

Below is an example of the use of bracketing notational device in immediate constituent analysis for the phrase *a detailed review of these studies*

[Np [Dna] [N' [Ap detailed] [N' [V review] [pp of these studies]]]]

Example 1. Bracketing Notational Device

The following is an example of the use of diagramming in immediate constituent analysis in a sentence of *John was sleeping when I came to his house.*



Example 2. Diagramming Notational Device

Three examples above show us that IC Analysis can be used to show the relationship of the element of a construction. It shows how the construction is structured but it does not show how the construction is produced or derived.

Strengths and Weaknesses Of Immediate Constituent Analysis

The advantages of IC Analysis are that first, it can be a good alternative way to learn english syntax (Allen, 1972). We can not only learn how to break down the construction of a sentence into its elements but we can also see the logical relation from each constituent by using structures of predication, complementation, coordination, and modification. Second, it is easier for us to analyze sentence because we can neglect the external part of the sentence such as the context and others but we only need to focus on how the construction is structured.

Besides, immediate constituents analysis changes sentence structure which is not directly observable in written form to be more visible by using notational devices such as bracketing, diagramming, or chinese box (Aarts,1982). This is where distinctive feature of traditional grammar and immediate constituent analysis lies in. Traditional grammar can not provide clear description on the relation of each constituent as what immediate constituent can provide. On the other hand, still traditional grammar is needed as the basic foundation of knowledge to learn immediate constituent analysis because before we analyze sentence or phrase using immediate constituent analysis we have to see the grammatical rules of the sentence at the beginning.

On the contrary, there are also some weaknesses of the use of immediate constituent analysis. Firstly, it is bias to a phrase. It is not only constituent but also phrase which may consist of single word. Sometimes it produces difficulties to distinguish constituent and phrase. Almost every phrase can be lengthened by adding more words. In doing so, we change internal structure of the phrase but not the structure of the sentence in this case constituent. Secondly, analyzing a sentence using immediate constituents analysis could be more difficult because we have to see the relation between each constituent in the sentence then we can finally break down the constituent based on the nearest relation. It means that we have to master the grammatical rules first before we analyze word relation in a sentence. We have to consider the semantic meaning of each constituent also just to see the closest relation for each constituent.

Transformational grammar

Transformational grammar which is usually called transformational-generative grammar is first introduced by Chomsky. It has been used widely in analyzing linguistic phenomenon. The object of the study in this approach is the internal language or it is called competence. It focusses on the grammar which is assumed as a model or systematic description of linguistic competence. According to Chomsky in (Radford,1988) linguistic competence is the speaker – hearer’s knowledge

of his language. So, it is what is there in our mind. Chomsky tries to contrast linguistics competence with performance in which it is what we usually see, hear, feel.

Radford in Purpura (2004) states that transformational grammar is such a universal description of language. It aims to provide description of language behaviour revealing the internal linguistic system for which all humans are predisposed. In this approach, it is said that the underlying properties of any individual language can not be covered by means of a detailed sentence-level analysis. In this regard, Chomsky proposed a set of rules known as *phrase –structural rules*. This rule describes the underlying structures of all languages. Phrase-structural rules also join with lexical items to offer a semantic representation of the rules (Chomsky in Purpura, 2004). Phrase-structural rules are also called “rewrite rules” which means they specify how sentences are structured out of phrases and phrases out of words (Radford,1988). In doing this, it will consider the context and also meaning of the writing. It will be a distinctive feature of transformational grammar from that of immediate constituent analysis. In Immediate constituent analysis, the focuss is only on how the construction of a sentence is structured by neglecting the external part or context and meaning of the sentence but in transformational grammar it focusses on how sentences are structured out of phrases and phrases out of words by considering meaning and context.

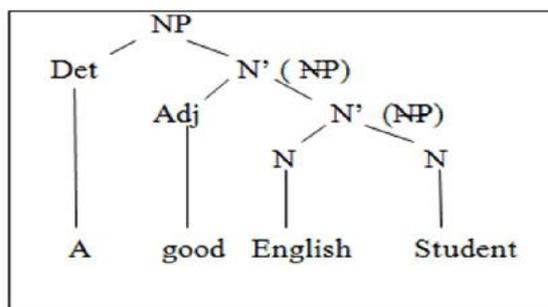
Alip (2006) states that phrase-structural rules are not limited to the structures of phrases in traditional sense. It is due to phrasal categories that can include clauses which are labeled as sentence though they might be dependent, non-finite, or even verbless. The common phrase- structural rule is *sentence* \rightarrow *NP + VP*.

Alip (2006) claims that in transformational grammar if one knows the grammar of a particular language, he or she will easily recognize which utterances are grammatical sentences and which of them are not.

In Transformational Grammar, it is understood that one’s competence is a prerequisite for his or her performance. On the other

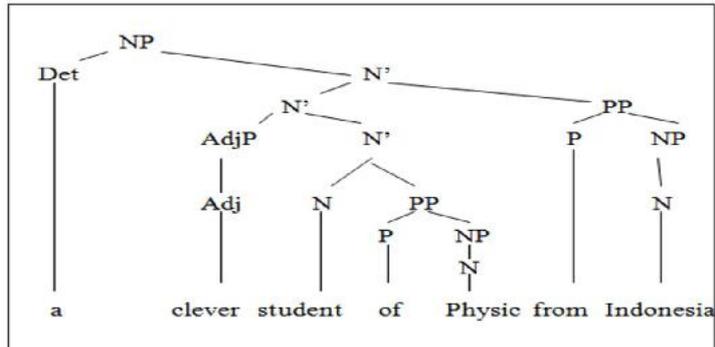
word, we can say that good performance requires good competence. In this approach it is believed that if one can master English grammar, he or she will be able to speak, write and understand English well. Consequently, his or her communicative skill will also be enhanced.

Another scope of transformational grammar is the extensive use of tree diagram. Tree diagram is basically graphic representation of phrase-structural rules. Tree diagram is more practical to use compared to phrase- structural rules because several and unlimited numbers of phrase-structural rules can be shown together. In tree diagram we can see how one element is related to another. Tree diagram in transformational grammar is usually used to explain the use of X-Bar theory. It is a theory about phrase-structural rules that can be recursive (Chomsky, 1957 in Radford, 1988). Here, a phrase might contain another phrase of the same type; for example, NP can contain another NP or other category, VP can contain another VP, etc. To avoid the repetitive use of phrasal categories (NP, VP, PP, AdvP, AdjP) the phrases between the top phrasal categories and the lowest level (lexical categories) will use X-Bar (X') in which X' can be any kind of category. Here it is example of the analysis of phrase-structural rule “ a good English student”



In transformational grammar NP, PP, AdvP are complements which are absolutely required by verb. Whereas PP is an adjunct which is an optional phrase following a verb. A complement is a sister of a lexical category or it can be a daughter of X-bar. Adjunct can be a sister or daughter of X-bar. Complement can not be separated from the head noun. For example in “ a clever student of Physic from Indonesia” the

phrase can not be restated as “ a clever student from Indonesia of Physic”. The reason is because *from Indonesia* is an adjunct and can not separate complement *of physic* with its noun head *student*. If it is written in tree diagram;



Strengths and Weaknesses of Transformational Grammar

Transformational grammar has both strengths and weaknesses in its application. The strengths lie in that transformational grammar offers strong analysis of language utterances. Transformational grammar analysis presents transparent relation among elements in language utterances. Transformational grammar also functions to describe grammatical relation not only semantically but also visually through tree diagram using X-bar theory or the phrase-structural rules.

In addition, there are some weaknesses of transformational grammar. Firstly, transformational grammar is too much theorizing. On the other hand to see whether the sentence is grammatical or not does not need much theorizing (Alip, 2006). Besides, transformational grammar also does not show relation among constituents within a phrase category but it shows more on the structure. Here it is where transformational grammar is little different from that of immediate constituent analysis and traditional grammar which have been discussed previously.

Conclusion

In relation to the use of language, speakers or writers of a language are able to produce and understand number of utterances or writing. Focussing to the use of written language, this paper tries to

elaborate the use of three approaches of English syntax, namely; traditional grammar, immediate constituent analysis, and transformational grammar.

From the analysis of those three approaches especially when it is implemented in the maritime English subject it is clearly seen that transformational grammar has been used widely in analyzing linguistic phenomenon. The object of the study in this approach is internal language or it is called competence. It focusses on the grammar which is assumed as a model or systematic description of linguistics competence. Whereas in the traditional grammar approach, the study is limited to the correct arrangement of the word in the native language. It is another approach of syntax which is based on meaning. It is also based on written language which is considered better than spoken language. Finally, there is immediate constituent analysis in which the focus of analysis is more on the relation of each constituent in a sentence rather than on how the sentence is constructed.

In addition each of approach might have strengths and weaknesses. As the study of English is getting developed, it depends on what kind of purposes we want to use the approach is. We can use the first, second or the last approaches mentioned above to analyze English sentence formation. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages.

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