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The Syntactic Power of Transformational Rules in Shona

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Abstract
The paper ventures into the Linguistic branch of syntax with the goal of finding out how much power transformational rules possess in Shona sentences. Focus is on the effects that application of various transformational rules may have on the various components of the sentences. It has been realised that transformational rules have the power to rearrange, delete or add some words into sentences. In the process forms of the words may also be altered for various reasons. It was also demonstrated that at times one finds himself bound to apply certain rules or risk making people draw various implications in response.
Keywords: Shona, syntactic, transformation, power, linguistic, rules

Introduction and Brief Literature Review

Fowler (1971) asserts that the grammarian's task is to describe sentences in such a way as to account for what native mature speakers of the language know about those sentences. Fowler further observes that one kind of generative grammar that performs these tasks particularly well is called a transformational grammar. Transformational grammar is a grammar that recognizes deep structure and surface structure distinction in syntax and employs certain formally distinctive kinds of linguistic rules linking the two distinct levels. Fowler (ibid) also describes transformational rules as rules that relate sentences to each other adding that this is done by relating partially overlapping derivations.

Ouhalla (1994) also asserts also that transformational rules are rules that displace noun phrases (NPs) to other positions in sentences. They may move words and at times alter their forms in sentences in the process. Householder (1976) demonstrates a greater relationship between Binding in Government and Binding theory and the NP-movement transformational rule. He describes the relationship of movement between surface and deep structures as a restricted one in terms of what can be moved, where and how. This involves movement, structure dependency as well as binding theory that limits the distance an item may move. It, thus, concerns reference relationship in a sentence. Therefore, he is of the position that, though transformations have power to displace and alter words in sentences, there is a binding theory that also determines what can be moved, how and the distance it can move etc.

Harris (1976) assumes a similar position when he comments that the study of transformations arose with the attempt to construct a method for analysing language samples longer than a sentence. They have a particular effect on the overall structure of the language and make possible unbounded sentences due to the unbounded repeatability of various sequential transformations. He adds that they give an organised view of complex sentences and, thus, provide solutions for the structure of some constructions, which are hardly solvable in the usual linguistic terms, for example, the English structure of 'flying planes' in 'Flying planes is my hobby.' They can explain what the differences in the two structures of such a homonymous sentence are.

Robins (1991) assumes a related position further commenting that transformations overcome structural restrictions of the kernel grammar. For example, that the subject be dropped by transforming into the passive and then carrying out the pro-drop transformation. Freidin (1992) shares the view noting that in many cases transformations add flexibility in a direct way and may change the grammatical status of a sentence into that of an NP. This makes it possible, for example, to relate the sentence to an outside noun verb or verb order. They may bring out one part of the sentence for primary attention and, thus, yielding stylistic variations.

According to the Dictionary.Com/AbstractSyntax (1998-2004), kernel sentences contain two essential parts, that is, an NP and a VP. All other sentence types are transformations or derivations of transformational rules. The transformations are said to be of three basic types and this paper focuses on demonstrating their syntactic power in Shona.

Deletion transformations

These involve the subtraction of a part of the original or deep structure sentence. For example, consider examples 1 and 2 below:

1. John uya pano.
   John uy- a pano
   cl.1a 'John' VR 'open' TV cl.16 'here'
   "John come here".

2. Iwe vhura gonhi.
iwe vhur- a gonhi
cl.1 'you' VR 'open' TV cl.5 'door'
"You open the door."

These are two separate deep structure or kernel sentences. They sheepishly obey the original dictates of the language's phrase structure grammar. However, In Shona and English, people normally use their transformed versions as shown in examples 3 and 4 respectively:

3. Uya pano
uy- a pano
VR 'open' TV cl.16 'here'
"Come here".

4. Vhura gonhi.
vhur- a gonhi
VR 'open' TV cl.5 'door'
"Open the door."

In each case, the subject has been deleted as it constitutes a piece of obvious information to the hearer. If one chooses not to delete the subject phrase in each case, people would find his/her speech style very marked and listeners may consider it quite rude. This shows that transformational rules can force one into deleting certain sentential elements in order to avoid redundancy and if one decides to go against that he/she might not fit properly into the speech community as people would be bound to draw various implicatures. However, it is important to note that if there are many people around and the speaker has an obligation to specify the one being instructed, it would be different. The subject NP would need to be specified unless there is employment of some gesture (such as pointing at) to specify the one being addressed.

Addition transformations

These involve the addition of a new component in to the original sentence pattern. For instance, consider the following sentences:

5. *Gonhi ra*shanduka rudzi.
gonhi *ra-* shanduk a rudzi
cl.5 door cl.5AGR VR 'change' TV cl.11 'colour'
"The door has changed colour."

6. Mwana atiza pamba.
Mwana a- tiz- a pamba
cl.3 child cl.3 AGR. VR 'run' TV cl.16 home
"The child ran away from home".

To generate questions from these sentences, one would be forced to have these sentences as follows:

7. *Gonhi ra*shanduka rudzi kuenda kuchii?
gonhi *ra-* shanduk- a rudzi kuenda kuchii?
cl.5 'door' cl.5 AGR. VR. 'change' TV cl.11 'colour' cl.15 'to' 'what'
"The door changed its colour to what?"

8. Mwana atiza pamba kuenda kupi?
Mwana a- tiz- a pamba kuenda kupi
cl.3 child cl.3 AGR. VR 'run' TV cl.16 home cl.15 'to' cl.15 'where'
"The child ran away from home to where".

It is evident in the two transforms or derived questions that some new elements have been introduced that is *kuenda kuchii* "to what" and *kuenda kupi* "to where". This was done to generate questions related to the original sentence structures. This demonstrates that transformational rules have the power to force one into adding new sentence components in a bid to capture certain situations.

Rearrangement transformations

These involve the movement of some parts of the original sentence to derive a new sentence effect. For an example based on the above sentence structures (7 and 8), one may have the following sentences:

9. *Ra*shanduka rudzi *gonhi* kuenda kuchii?
Ra- shanduk- a rudzi *gonhi* kuenda kuchii
cl.5 AGR. VR 'change' TV cl.11 'colour' cl.5 'door' cl.15 'to' cl.15 'what'
"It changed its colour the door to what?"

10. Atiza pamba kuenda kupi mwana?

a-	tiz-	a	pamba	kuenda	kupi	mwana
Cl.3 AGR.	VR 'run'	TV	cl.16 home	cl.15 'to'	cl.15 'where'	cl.3 child

"He ran away from home to where child?"

Though meanings have not been changed in each case, there is evidence of words being displaced from their original positions within the sentence. For instance, in example 9 *gonhi* "the door" has been moved from the sentence-initial position to a gap at the middle of the sentence. In example 10, *mwana* "child" has been shifted from the sentence initial position to the sentence final position. This has been done in both cases to demonstrate that focus is no longer on the subject phrase but on something different. In either case the focus is now on the destination of the action. Therefore, the transformational rules may also force one to rearrange words or risk failing to present the correct effect and not attaining the intended response.

These three types of transformations yield a variety of transformational rules as clearly demonstrated by Mhute, Kadenge and Mutasa (2013). These include topicalisation (raising an entity to topical or sentence initial position), passivisation (making a non subject entity the subject), question formation (generating a question out of a non question sentence) and reflexivisation rule (managing co-reference by deleting an object where it refers to the subject and inserting a reflexive phrase in its place).

Conclusion

The paper has demonstrated that transformation rules have the power to delete, add and rearrange certain entities in sentences. It has been demonstrated that at times they even force one to implement them in order to achieve the intended effect. Shona is not spared by such rules and also bow to the transformations' demands.

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