

Culicover, Peter and Ray Jackendoff. (2005). *Simpler Syntax*.  
Oxford University Press: Oxford; pp. 301-338, 473-491.

**Main (relevant) claim:** Mainstream Generative Grammar assumes that *wh*-movement is totally free, and extrinsic (island) constraints such as the Left-Branch condition are needed to restrict it. *Simpler Syntax* proposes an alternative: syntactic configurations containing a trace are by default excluded unless there is positive evidence for them. The *permissible* configurations for discontinuous dependencies are learned. (e.g., p. 319)

(This raises the question of what motivates the possible dependencies, however.)

**Abbreviations:**

MGG = Mainstream Generative Grammar                      MP = Minimalist Program  
BAE = Bare Argument Ellipsis                                      CS = Conceptual Structure  
GF = Grammatical Function = Grammatical Relation    IL = Indirect Licensing

**(Reconstructed) tenets of the Simpler Syntax hypothesis:**

Like *Head-Driven/Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar*, *Lexical-Functional Grammar*, *Construction Grammar*, and *Role and Reference Grammar*, *Simpler Syntax* reassesses the relationship between the technological and conceptual aspects of syntax (especially in Mainstream Generative Grammar). Covert syntactic operations and operators are dispensed with, following Occam's Razor ("entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity"). The heavy lifting is shifted to semantics and the syntax/semantics interface.

9: Discontinuous Dependencies

Discontinuous dependencies (=long distance dependencies =A'-movement) can be accounted for using **indirect licensing** instead of **movement**. No covert syntax allowed.

9.1: There is no A'-movement

**Direct licensing:** local connection between licenser and licensee

**Indirect licensing:** licenser is in a noncanonical position with regard to the licensee

**Trace:** the syntactic gap, the presumptive position of the (directly licensed) constituent

**Chain:** links an indirectly licensed 'orphan' (head) and a trace, the orphan's 'target' (tail)

'*Virtual conceptual necessity*'?: These elements are independently motivated (in their account of bare argument ellipsis [pragmatic/discursive licensing?]), and therefore render movement conceptually non-essential. (ex. 2 on p. 303; p. 304)

9.2: Wh-questions (extraction/pied-piping, in situ/echo and quizmaster questions)

*A monostratal account:* There is no need for a covert syntactic operator or covert derivation of surface structure from deep structure(s). The operator can bind the trace in semantics (i.e., in Conceptual Structure) and this relationship can be mapped onto a syntactic chain. (ex. 11 on p. 309)

*Moving 'the spot' from the tub to the yard:* "The binding of the clause-initial *wh*-phrase to the trace is not accomplished by copying, Merge, and deletion, as in the MP, but by creation of the chain, linking both its members to the bound variable, and positioning of the head of the chain in clause-initial position. Aside from the presence of the chain, everything is done in the semantics and the syntax-semantics interface" (p. 313).

### 9.3: Other *wh*-constructions (that/bare/free relatives, multiple *wh* questions)

**Signature:** For a particular construction, the permissible configuration at the front of the clause. Long distance dependencies all have a common CS in which an operator binds a variable within its scope, but the signature differs between constructions (p. 320).

*An example of the toolkit approach (different tools for different problems):* "The simpler syntax hypothesis suggests that *wh*-chains and *wh* in situ are syntactically distinct, do not share the syntactic mechanisms such as movement and constraints on movement that follow from a Uniformity approach, and require different mechanisms for interpretation. In particular, there is not need for a syntactic chain or indirect licensing for in situ *wh*. And there is certainly no evidence aside from Uniformity for movement" (p. 326-7; & p. 307).

### 9.4: Island constraints

Syntactically:

Island constraints (and maximally short hops through intermediate traces) arise as (economy) constraints on move- $\alpha$  but there is no evidence for sites

Counter examples to the escape hatch explanation for the CNPC (45-48 on p. 328)

*Abandoning the 'escape hatch':* "The only traces that are permitted are those that correspond to actual gaps in the syntactic structure, as defined through the syntactic realization of CS." GPSG-style slash categories are adopted (p. 329).

**Subdeletion chain** examples subject to island constraints (p. 329; ex. 51 on p. 330)

Constraints on movement, in this framework, are constraints on the connection between an A'-operator and a gap, represented as slash features (ex. 52 on p. 331)

*Inverting 'constraints on variables':* Learners generalize based on what they are exposed to, but not more broadly than warranted by experience, suggesting Move-*wh* and - $\alpha$  are backwards. Assume instead you can't extract from any place and then learn the possibilities in your language from positive evidence (p. 333).

Semantically:

Bridge verbs (*say* vs. *mumble*) (ex. 55 on p. 334)

Referential dependency (*regret* vs. *think*) (ex. 56 on p. 335)

Definiteness effects (*that picture* vs. *a picture*) (ex. 59 on p. 336)

These minimal pairs preserve syntactic structure but change the referential properties of the domain of extraction and the interaction with focus (p. 337).

Constraints rise out of both syntactic and semantic structures.

**Syntactic:** operator/trace chains and the complexity in identifying a gap corresponding to the signature at the beginning of the clause

**Semantic:** referential/focus dependencies and the new/old distinction (in information structure) in Conceptual Structure

Is this a more processing- or functionally-oriented conception of syntax? (p. 337)

### 13.1: Semantic Subordination Despite Syntactic Coordination

**Left-Subordinating *and*:** syntactic coordinator, semantic subordinator (ex. 4 on p. 475)

**One-More sentences:** one conjunct behaves semantically like a subordinate clause

### 13.2: A conditional reading of *and*

Provides evidence and tests for *L(ef)S(ubordinating)-and* vs. *C(oordinating)-and*

### 13.3: LS-*and* is not a subordinating conjunction

*HypA and HypB:* Matching and Mismatching Hypotheses (table 13.1 on p. 479)

### 13.4: Interactions with binding

Conjuncts of *LS-and* are bound in Conceptual Structure, not syntax (ex. 20, 21 on p. 482)

### 13.5: Extraction

Coordinate Structure Constraint's paradoxical interaction with *LS-and* (ex. 27 on p. 485)

Conclusion: the CSC is a semantic constraint, not a syntactic one (p. 487; p. 491)

A cheeky Lakoff example: (ex. 38 on p. 490)

What is it about the semantic properties of selective (= weak?) islands that allows asymmetric extraction of arguments only? If the Simpler Syntax hypothesis is right, the answer will constitute a semantic account of selective island phenomena and a syntactic account of genuine (= strong?) ones. (p. 491, with reference back to ch.9, esp. §9.4.4)