This slim volume is intended to be a supplementary resource to students’ textbooks and class discussions. It is clearly laid out with a detailed table of contents as well as an author and subject index and extensive 16-page reference section. New to this second edition is a lengthy appendix (at sixty pages it covers almost one-third of the book) entitled “Reference Guide to Syntactic Description.” From CHOMSKY ADJUNCTION to PIED-PIPING and SENTENCE RAISING, the appendix describes most of the structures and rules discussed in transformational grammar. These are often referred to by their traditional names in the literature (even from other theories) and many of them are said to have counterparts in other languages. Most rules are illustrated with extensive examples. Annotations to major references are included with each rule to help guide further research.

Chapter 1 ("What a Grammar Is, and Isn’t") discusses the basic assumptions of generative grammar. For generative grammar the goals of linguistic theory are psychological, namely to explain the “miracle” of language acquisition. It is not a comprehensive theory of communication nor—and this may come as a surprise to many—a theory of how speakers actually produce sentences. As in playing chess, the rules of language are not to be interpreted as some kind of algorithm by which the speaker produces sentences. Unfortunately, many misleading metaphors have found their way into generative grammar. These include procedural terms like OUTPUT, INPUT, DELETE, etc. Others (such as RULE and APPLY) give the impression that the grammar is consciously manipulated. Such terms, the authors argue, should be avoided. (It might be added that the name GENERATIVE or TRANSFORMATIONAL grammar itself may have added to the confusion.)

This being a “practical guide,” chapters 2 to 4 describe the procedure for doing and presenting syntactic analysis. Chapter 2 ("Topics and Hypotheses") shows how to prepare the research plan. It is helpful to formulate the topic in terms of a set of questions to be answered. In testing a hypothesis, “extra-linguistic” explanations are to be avoided. Truly syntactic facts are only those that can be explained without reference to morphology, pragmatics, psychology, culture, etc. Chapter 3 ("Argumentation") emphasizes two principles in presenting evidence: precision and universality. One should always aim for the strongest claim that is supportable by the facts. An argument consists of a claim and predictions based on the claim, followed by evidence (both
positive and negative) that demonstrates the predictions are borne out. Chapter 4 (“Presentation”) shows how to lay out the argument. Without clear writing, the best research will be wasted. At every point in the presentation, the reader (or, I suppose, the listener) must be shown how each piece fits into the overall argument being made.

The remaining chapters provide a theoretical overview of the generative model itself and its major developments. Chapter 5 (“The So-Called Standard Theory”) summarizes Chomsky’s model as articulated in his *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). This is useful for any student of syntax because “many influential linguists write as if their audiences were familiar with it” (p. 65). Various syntactic restraints, some of them universal, were postulated subsequently. These are summarized in chapter 6 (“Developing Constraints on Possible Descriptions”). The final chapter, chapter 7 (“Theoretical Frameworks”), provides an overview of three influential frameworks that evolved in the 1970s, all of them based on the Standard Theory. These are: modern Phrase Structure theories, Chomsky’s Government and Binding theory, and the Relational Grammar theories. I found the description of these models very challenging and fear that the student may be left feeling overwhelmed and confused. Its usefulness is primarily in showing how these various theories fit in the big picture.

I take issue with one recommendation made by the authors. It concerns the method for determining which sentences are acceptable. They write: “Determine (empirically) which sentences are acceptable: ask a native speaker whom you can trust to understand what kind of information you are seeking—often you can act as your own informant” (p. 22). The validity of this methodology is questionable. As in anthropology, the most reliable results are obtained when the objects of the study are unaware of what is being asked for. Relying on one’s own intuition would only apply when the researcher is a native speaker of the language being researched, and even then caution must be exercised to allow for regional variation.

Whether or not one chooses to work within the generative model, field linguists and graduate students alike will find this volume a profitable resource, especially because of the practical help in preparing one’s research for publication. I hesitate to recommend it for students at an undergraduate level, however, in spite of the stated intent that the book is meant “for students of syntax at all levels” (p. xi). I would have liked to see more application of the model to non-European languages. Almost all the examples in the book are taken from English. The reference section includes numerous studies done on English but very few on other languages. This is in spite of the fact that, as explained in the first chapter, “detailed analysis and comparison of the grammars of a significant variety of languages is a crucial source of potential data on the structure of the human language faculty” (p. 4). Perhaps here is where as field linguists we can make an important theoretical contribution.

There is an additional reason why we should be encouraged to contribute to the discussion on universal grammar. Personally, I am intrigued by the Innateness Hypothesis, the hypothesis that “every human is genetically endowed with the potential to develop certain brain structures which influence the course and outcome of language acquisition” (p. 4). This seems to confirm that man is made in the image of God, the gift of language being one of the distinctive qualities defining this image. In this light the study of syntax takes on an even more meaningful role: not only to explore our own finite minds but to have a glimpse of the mind of our Creator God.
Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1: What a Grammar Is, and Isn’t

In addition to Chomsky’s difficult writing style, generative grammar has often been misunderstood for two reasons: critics’ failure to see the big picture and the use of certain metaphors by linguists using the theory. The goals of generative grammar are summarized as follows:

1. the mind is innately structured (the INNATENESS HYPOTHESIS),
2. the mind is modular (the MODULARITY HYPOTHESIS),
3. there is a distinct module for language,
4. the central question is language acquisition,
5. syntax is formal or autonomous; that is, it has to do only with linguistic form and is separate in the mind from meaning and function, and
6. knowledge of language itself is modular, corresponding roughly to phonology, lexicon, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

The generative model is not to be taken as a model of a speaker’s speech process (PERFORMANCE) but of his knowledge (COMPETENCE). In the same way, the Modularity Hypothesis does not mean that in producing sentences the mind works “bottom up,” first doing a complete phonological analysis, then a morphological analysis, and so on. Admittedly, many metaphors have contributed to this misunderstanding, giving the impression of processes taking place in time and space and implying manipulation or control. One should make an effort not to use them. The chapter concludes with a list of sample metaphors to be avoided.

Chapter 2: Topics and Hypotheses

Syntactic analysis is about “learning how to test and compare analyses” (p. 15) and then being able to show why one’s own analysis is preferred. It begins with a universal hypothesis. The best way to start is to compose a list of specific questions to be tackled with one or more languages and one or more theories in mind. In formulating a topic, three questions are to be asked:

1. why do you want to know the answer? (what does it matter?),
2. what assumptions does the question presuppose?, and
3. what will count as an answer? (what evidence is required?).

In explaining the distribution of syntactic forms, one needs to be able to distinguish syntactic phenomena from nonsyntactic ones. Nonsyntactic explanations are a last resort. These may be:

1. morphological (e.g., inflection),
2. pragmatic (the use of a structure rather than its form),
3. processing or psychological (e.g., what the mind is able to process),
4. logical or semantic (e.g., something may be unacceptable because it is a tautology or contradiction),
5. phonological, or
6. cultural (e.g., taboos).
Chapter 3: Argumentation

A guiding principle is that “the best hypothesis is the simplest one with no empirical failures” (p. 37). As in other sciences, one’s hypothesis must be “intersubjectively testable,” that is, it can be repeated by others and yield the same results. To ensure this, a hypothesis must be stated precisely with any assumptions stated explicitly. At the same time it must be as universal or general as possible. One must beware of devising ad hoc hypotheses by rewriting one’s hypothesis to exclude counterexamples. Arguments may be of different kinds but always involve comparing hypotheses, one of which may be a null hypothesis. The form of an argument consists of:

1. a claim,
2. predictions based on the claim,
3. evidence that the predictions are borne out, and
4. a conclusion restating the claim.

Chapter 4: Presentation

Many linguists underestimate the importance of clear writing. An important first step is to define who the reader is. A helpful strategy is to assume a reader who is “trained in linguistics, intelligent but not brilliant, with a limited attention span” (p. 54). In organizing one’s paper, it is important at the outset of every point to state precisely what the purpose is of the following section. Do not refer the reader to examples until their relevance has been explained. It is not enough to display the data; one must make explicit for the reader what the data illustrates. In writing the paper,

1. make an outline,
2. write a section describing the problem, including the phenomenon with some examples, the hypothesis to be defended or refuted, or the hypotheses to be compared, and the relevance of the study,
3. describe the logic of the arguments, including the assumed premises and the theoretical framework, and the structure of the paper,
4. lay out the arguments (the claim, predictions, and evidence), and finally
5. provide a summary.

The chapter concludes with a note on how to include citations in the paper.

Chapter 5: The So-Called Standard Theory

The various components of the grammar as articulated in Chomsky’s *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965) are briefly discussed here:

1. the base component (in Chomsky’s *Aspects*, a set of ordered rewriting rules, but later considered a set of node admissibility conditions or filters),
2. transformational rules (reflected in the notation by the STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION/DEEP STRUCTURE and the STRUCTURAL CHANGE/ SURFACE STRUCTURE),
3. the lexicon (the set of lexical items with syntactic, semantic, and phonological information),
4. semantic interpretation rules, and
5. the phonological component.

The last two were just being developed at the time *Aspects* was published.

The chapter further discusses various types of relationships among rules: feeding (one rule providing the input for another), bleeding (one rule preventing another rule with the same input conditions from being applied), intrinsic ordering (the structural description of one rule depending on the application of another rule), and extrinsic ordering (so that their application in one order generates grammatical sentences and in another order ungrammatical sentences). The last part of the chapter discusses cyclic application of rules.

Chapter 6: Developing Constraints on Possible Descriptions

Rules may apply to elements indefinitely far apart, creating so-called UNBOUNDED DEPENDENCY CONSTRUCTIONS. Two kinds of variables in rules can be distinguished: ABBREVIATORY ones (which are not essential to the rule but can be replaced by a finite list of constituents) and ESSENTIAL ones (which cannot be abbreviated with a finite listing). A number of constraints were discovered by Ross (1967) to restrict the interpretation of essential variables. Of these, two were considered universal: the COMPLEX NP CONSTRAINT and the COORDINATE STRUCTURE CONSTRAINT. The others were believed to be language specific: the SENTENTIAL SUBJECT CONSTRAINT and the LEFT BRANCH CONDITION. These are defined and illustrated with example sentences. This is followed by further discussion that ensued concerning OUTPUT CONDITIONS versus SURFACE STRUCTURE CONSTRAINTS as well as other kinds of constraints.

Chapter 7: Theoretical Frameworks

From the Standard Theory three influential frameworks evolved in the 1970s, all of which shared the goal of describing language acquisition and assumed an innate universal grammar. These are:

1. MODERN PHRASE STRUCTURE theories, including LEXICAL FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR, GENERALIZED PHRASE STRUCTURE GRAMMAR, and HEAD-DRIVEN PHRASE STRUCTURE GRAMMAR,
2. Chomsky’s GOVERNMENT AND BINDING THEORY, and
3. RELATIONAL GRAMMAR.

Each of these is briefly discussed.

Appendix: Reference Guide to Syntactic Description

The appendix covers most of the transformational rules discussed in transformational grammar, as well as some conventions and definitions. The rules are classified as SINGLE-CLAUSE and MULTIPLE-CLAUSE phenomena. They are further subcategorized as REORDERING, INSERTION, COPYING, etc. This makes it convenient to look up a rule for whatever phenomena one is
researching. Each rule is defined and illustrated with examples from English. At times, pragmatic explanations are given for the choice of one form over another.

References
