

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE:
THE TRANSFORMATIONALIST THEORY
BY
ERNIE A. SMITH PH.D.

The Transformationalists theory or hypothesis on the origin and historical development of Black language in America is a view or perspective that is based on the use of the generative transformational theory, model and method of grammar analysis. As a method of grammar analysis, generative transformational grammar is not comparative. Hence, it does not present a discussion of the transmission process, the sequential stages or the evolutionary development of Black language in America. It is not synchronic(1). Therefore, it does not entail a descriptive analysis of field work obtained speech samples. Rather, the Transformationalist view is that underlying what is actually only superficial variation in the

1 Synchronic: A synchronic statement is a statement about a language at one period in time. (Wardhaugh, 1970:11) The basic field in which most (if not all) linguists have been trained is that which is known as descriptive or synchronic linguistics. As its names imply, this field focuses upon the systematic description of a given language in a given time and place. It is not historical; it is not comparative; it is not prescriptive. Its emphasis is definitely on spoken language, the assumption being that written language is both derivative and different from natural language or speech. (Fishman, 1975:6,7).

world's human languages there is a deep unity that makes all human languages akin. In their view this deep unity in all human languages is governed by universal principles or laws that are followed in the production and interpretation of human speech.

The Transformationalists contend that, by employing the prerequisite generative phrase structure and transformation rules, a careful and systematic analysis of any paired syntactical

strings will confirm that there is an identical underlying grammatical structure in Afro-American "Black English" (BE) and Euro-American Standard English (SAE). According to the Transformationalists, the difference in Afro-American and Euro-American linguistic behavior is superficial and mainly in the surface structure. In the deep structure(2), they are the same.

In order to understand the basis upon which Transformationalists have posited the underlying syntactical structure of Afro-American

2 Deep Structure: Deep structure is basically a system of propositions which interrelate in such a way as to express the meaning of the sentence, while surface structure is realization of these propositions in terms of the particular grammatical devices (e.g., linear ordering, grammatical categories) of the language. The knowledge of language involves the ability to assign deep and surface structures to an infinite range of sentences, to relate these structures appropriately, and to assign a semantic interpretation and phonetic interpretation to the paired deep and surface structure. (Wolfram, 1972:31)

and Euro-American speech as being essentially the same, it is helpful that we first explore and concretize the generative transformational model and method of grammar analysis. For this purpose let us consider the sentences:

- 1) He is not here. 3) He isn't here. 5) He not here.
- 2) He's not here. 4) He ain't here. 6) Hen't here.

According to the Generative Transformationalists, the underlying deep structure for all six of the above given sentences is one and the same. In their view, it is only in their surface structure that these sentences are noticeably different. To more explicitly detail this, consider for example the first sentence;

- 1) He is not here

According to the rules of generative transformational grammar, the underlying kernel string(3) which represents this thought, as a phrase or constituent structure, is roughly as follows:

pro + pres + be + adv of location

3 Kernel Sentence: In transformational-generative grammar originally a sentence which is generated by phrase structure rules

and obligatory transformations, but without optional transformations. Kernel sentences are usually simple, declarative indicative statements which can be transformed into more complex, e.g. passive, sentences, by means of optional transformation rules. (Dictionary of Language and Linguistics, R.R.K. Hartman and F.C. Stork (1976:122))

By employing the use of what Generative Grammarians call "lexical insertion rules" this phrase structure or constituent string is rewritten as the simple declarative statement;

He + is + here

As a simple declarative sentence this string does not yet reflect the fact that, in the deep structure, the idea intended is not affirmative. That is, the meaning of the sentence to be derived is negative. According to Generative Grammarians, this is done by placing a constituent or "dummy node" negative in the front of the kernel constituent string. This yields the intermediate structure;

negative + pro + pres + be + adv of loc

(*)

Via the use of lexical insertion rules the word or constituent negative is rewritten as "It is not the case that". Hence, the entire intermediate negative string would have, as its paired or

corresponding surface structure the lexicon or words:

It is not the case that + He + is + here

(*) *pro* => *Pronoun (he)*

pres => *Present tense (time or temporal aspect)*

be => *There are eight forms of the verb "to be" in*

English: is, am, are, was, were, be, being and been

adv => *Adverb (manner, location or time)*

When the negative transformation is performed on this string the "negative" constituent is removed from the front of the string and introduced into the constituent structure, after the verb. Via lexical insertion rules the negative constituent is converted to the word "not". This yields the intermediate structure and

lexicon;

(T-Neg)

pro + pres + be + neg + adv of
location
He + is + not + here

Next comes what Generative Grammarians call an "affix hop" or affix transformation. This transformation shifts the present tense constituent from the left side to the right of the verbal "be". As a result the final constituent structure becomes:

(T-Affix)

pro # be + pres # neg # adv of
location (**)

Applying lexical insertion rules, the terminal string or final surface structure for this constituent structure rewrites as;

He # is # not # here.

He is not here

*** The symbol # (a double cross) indicates word boundaries*

Let us consider now the second sentence: "He's not here."

According to the Transformationalists, sentence number (2); "He's not here" and sentence number (1); "He is not here" are both derived from the same underlying deep structure or kernel string:

pro + pres + be + adv of location

However, posit the Transformationalists, the rules of American English grammar permits the optional contraction of some verbals such as the words: is, am, are, will and have etc., to English pronouns, e.g., he, I, we, they and you. This yields the contracted forms, he's, I'm, we're, they'll, and you've, etc. The contraction of the verbs: is, has, do, can and should, to the word "not" yields of course, the contracted forms: isn't, hasn't, don't, can't, and shouldn't, etc. The Transformationalists contend that although sentence number (1); He is not here and sentence number (2); He's not here, both have the same or an

identical underlying, deep structure, they are noticeably different in that, in sentence number (1) the full form of the verb "to be" (is) appears. But, in sentence number (2), via an (optional) contraction transformation, the verb "to be" (is) has been contracted and appended to the pronoun constituent (He).

In stepwise progressions let us here apply the phrase structure rules and transformations that yield sentence number (2).

First, since only simple declarative statements exist in the deep structure, the kernel string and corresponding lexical insertions would be;

pro + pres + be + adv of location
 He + is + here

Next, in order to show that the sentence is negative, the dummy node "negative" is placed in the front of the kernel string.

This yields as the intermediate structure and corresponding lexicon;
 negative + pro + pres + be +
 adv of location

(It is not the case that) He + is + here.

Repeating initially our negative transformation, the "negative" constituent is removed from the front of the string and introduced into the structure to the right of the verb. Via lexical insertion rules the word negative becomes the word "not". This yields as the constituent structure and lexicon;

(T-Neg)

pro + pres + be + neg + adv of
 location
 He + is + not + here

As stated earlier, contraction transformations are optional. One option is that the verbal "be" can be contracted to the pronoun constituent "he". This yields the constituent structure and lexicon;

(T-Contract)

pro + apos + pres + be + neg + adv of
 location
 He + ' + s + not + here

Lastly, the affix transformation moves the present tense constituent to the right of the verbal constituent "be". This yields the constituent final structure and lexicon:

(T-Affix)

	pro	+	apos	be	+	pres	#	neg	#	adv	of
location	He		'	s			#	not	#	here	
	He's not here										

Thus, posit the Transformationalists, although sentences (1) and (2) are different in their surface structure they mean the same thing and, as has been shown, both have been derived from the same underlying deep structure or kernel string. Let us consider now sentence number (3):

He isn't here.

The Transformationalists contend that sentence number (3), He isn't here, is derived from the same underlying deep structure or kernel string which has been posited as the underlying constituent structure of sentences (1) and (2).

pro + pres + be + adv of location

The Generative Grammarians contend that the only difference in sentences (1) and (2) is that, in sentence number (1) there was no contraction transformation performed. But, in sentence number (2) a "pronoun + verb" contraction transformation has been performed. In sentence number (3) there has also been a contraction transformation. However, unlike the "pronoun + verb" contraction in sentence number (2), in sentence number (3) it is the "neg" constituent that is contracted. That is, the vowel "o" is removed from the word "not" and replaced by an apostrophe (') between the (n) and the (t). The remaining "n" apostrophe "t" (n't) is then appended to the verbal (is). Sometimes called a "negative adjunction" it is this transformation, that yields the final surface structure; He isn't here. Let us here, in stepwise progressions, perform the transformations that yields sentence number (3); He isn't here, from the kernel string or deep structure;

pro + pres + be + adv of location

First, the constituent node "negative" is placed in the front of

the kernel string to yield the underlying negative structure and lexicon:

negative + pro + pres + be + adv of
location
(It is not the case that) He + is + here

Next, the negative transformation removes the negative constituent from the front of the string and introduces it into the structure after the verb. In constituent structure and via lexical insertion rules this is rewritten as;

(T-Neg)
pro + pres + be + neg + adv. of
location
He + is + not + here

The "be + neg" contraction or adjunction transformation yields the constituent structure and lexicon;

(T-Contract)
pro + pres + be + n'g + adv of location
He + is + n't + here

Lastly the affix transformation, moves the tense constituent to the right of the verb. This yields the final constituent structure and lexicon:

(T-Affix)
pro # be + pres # n'g # adv of
location
He # is + n't # here

He isn't here

Thus, the Transformationalists contend that, since all three of the foregoing sentences have been derived from the same underlying kernel string or deep structure:

(Deep structure)
pro + pres + be + adv of location
this means that in their deep structure sentences (1), (2) and (3) mean the same thing. It is only in their surface structure that these three sentences differ. Let us turn now to sentences number

(4) and (5) - He ain't here and He not here.

As stated earlier, according to the Transformationalists sentences (4) and (5) are both derived from the same deep structure or kernel string as posited for sentences (1), (2) and (3):

(Deep structure)
pro + pres + be + adv of location

However, contend the Transformationalists, both sentences (4) and (5) differ in a fundamental way from sentences (1) thru (3). For, whereas in sentences (1) thru (3) above the underlying constituent structures were rewritten using Standard English lexical insertion rules (the contraction transformation being the essential difference in their surface structures) sentences (4) and (5) have been derived via the application of Black English lexical insertion and deletion rules. Lets consider first, sentence number (4):

He ain't here:

According to the Transformationalists, in the English language the lexical item or word "am" is just as much a present tense form of the verb "to be" as the lexical item or word "is". In fact, as cited in an earlier footnote, in English grammar, there are eight forms of the verb to be: is, am, are, was, were, be, being and been. Some grammarians also include the words become and became (see Aurbach, Cook, Kaplan et. al. 1968:35,45,46)

Where the verbs "is" and "am" are concerned, the distinction is that, in Standard English usage, the word "am" is considered to be the appropriate first person singular present tense usage, while the word "is" is considered to be the appropriate third person singular present tense usage. The Generative Grammarians contend that, although the kernel string or deep structure constituents for sentence number (4) is:

pro + pres + be + adv of location

in Black English the word "am" is selected, as the present tense form of the verb "to be" instead of the verb "is". Therefore, in consonance with the "lexical insertion" rules of Black English the kernel constituent structure:

pro + pres + be + adv of location

is rewritten with the Black English lexical insertions:

He + am + here

as opposed to the Standard English lexical insertions:

He + is + here.

Let us here in stepwise progression perform the transformations that yield sentence number (4) He ain't here from the kernel string or deep structure:

pro + pres + be + adv of location

First, the placement of the dummy node "negative" in front of the kernel string would yield the constituent structure;

negative + pro + pres + be + adv of location

Via Black English lexical insertion rules, this constituent structure is rewritten as:

(It is not the case that) He + am + here

The negative transformation would of course yield the intermediate constituent structure and lexicon:

(T-Neg)

pro + pres + be + neg + adv of
location

He + am + not + here

By performing next a contraction transformation, this yields the constituent structure or syntactic string:

(T-Contract)

pro + pres + be + n'g + adv of
location

Notice that, at this juncture, the constituent structure is in fact identical to the structure derived earlier for sentence number (3)

pro + pres + be + n'g + adv of location

However, as stated above, having applied the Black English instead of the Standard American English lexical insertion rules this constituent structure is rewritten:

He + am + n't + here

The affix transformation yields of course the constituent structure and lexicon:

pro	#	be + n'g	+ pres	#	adv of location
He	#	am + n't		#	here

He ain't here (4)

Of course, the question is immediately posed, how is it that the contraction "amn't" becomes the word "ain't" when in fact the contraction and adjunction of the "be + "neg" or "am + n't" constituents actually rewrites as, "amn't". The explanation Generative Grammarians offer for this is that, the notion Standard English has two connotations. One being the conventions or Standards for speaking English, the other the conventions or Standards for writing English. The conventions for the correct spelling of words of a language is called orthography.

4 Ain't: Nonstandard. Contraction of am not. Also extended in use to mean are not, is not, has not, and have not. Usage: Ain't, with few exceptions, is strongly condemned by the Usage Panel when it occurs in writing and speech that is not deliberately colloquial or that does not employ the contraction to provide humor, shock, or other special effect. The first person singular interrogative form ain't I (for am I not or amn't I), considered as a special case, has somewhat more acceptance than ain't employed with other pronouns or with nouns. (Ain't I has at least the virtue of agreement between am and I. With other pronouns, or nouns, ain't takes the place of isn't and aren't and sometimes of hasn't and haven't.) But ain't I is unacceptable in writing other than that which is deliberately colloquial, according to 99 per cent of the Panel, and unacceptable in speech to 84 per cent. The example It ain't likely is unacceptable to 99 per cent in both writing and speech. Aren't I (as a variant of the interrogative ain't I) is acceptable in writing to only 27 per cent of the Panel, but approved in speech by 60 per cent. (The American Heritage Dictionary 1976:27).

According to the Transformationalists, while in consonance with rewrite rules of generative grammar the contracted form of the

constituent structure "be + neg" rewrites as "amn't", as shown in the footnote above, in Black English and other Non-Standard English dialects this is not what occurs at the phonetic or pronunciation level. It is then, to account for Non-Standard and Black English usage that by convention in Standard English orthography the contraction "amn't" is rewritten "ain't". Thus, we have here culled a fourth sentence from the kernel string or deep structure;

pro + pres + be + adv of location

While on the surface structure sentence (4) is different from sentences (1) thru (3) above, the fact is sentence number (4) has been derived from the same kernel string and it means the same thing. This brings us to sentence number (5); He not here.

According to Generative Grammarians, so long as there derives, as a consequence, no change in the thought or meaning of the sentence, there are "optional" (as a matter of style) and "obligatory" (to preserve grammaticality) deletion rules in English which permit the complete deletion or removal of constituent features from a structure or sentence altogether. In fact there are generally three types of transformations that occur in all languages. Namely they are; deletion, substitution, and adjunction (See Lehmann, 1972:141). According to the Transformationalists, one of the most common transformations applied in Standard English is the complete deletion or removal of the verb "to be" to derive a final structure. To illustrate this consider, for example, the sentence:

"Three women in the group are wearing make-up."

The Transformationalists contend that this sentence has resulted from a deep structure conjunction, of two sentences, both of which originally contained identical noun phrases and identical forms of the verb "to be" in their kernel strings.

The first sentence being: a) Three women are in the group.
The second sentence being: b) Three women are wearing make-up.

The Transformationalists posit that, it has been via:

- (1) An embedding transformation (T-Embed)
- (2) An identical noun phrase deletion transformation,
(T- Id NP Deletion)
- (3) A deletion of the identical verbal "be"
(T-be deletion)

that the sentence;

"Three women in the group are wearing make-up"
has been derived. Let us in stepwise progression perform the
three transformations cited above and derive the final structure:

"Three women in the group are wearing make-up."
from the two sentences:

Three women are in the group
and
Three women are wearing make-up.

We begin, with the deep structure or kernel string for the first
sentence: a) Three women are in the group

In constituent structure and corresponding lexicon this is
written;

det + noun + pres + be + adv of location
Three + women + are + in the group

Next, the deep structure or kernel string for the second
sentence: b) Three women are wearing make-up.

In constituent structure and corresponding lexicon this is
written;

det + noun + pres + affix (5) + be + verb +
noun
Three + women + ing + are + wear + make-up

*(5) Generative Grammarians contend that as a rule in English when
the verb "to be" functions as an auxiliary or linking verb, an
"ing" affix accompanies it. Thus, it is, by virtue of the fact
that in sentence (b) the "be" verb is functioning as an auxiliary*

verb that the affix "ing" is in the kernel string. (See Aurbach, Cook, Kaplan et. al. 1968)

By performing initially an embedding transformation, (T-Embed) the entire first sentence;

"Three women are in the group"

is inserted or embedded into the second sentence, between the noun phrase and the verb phrase constituents. This yields the intermediate syntactic structure and lexicon:

(T Embed)

b) det + noun
Three + Women

a) (det + noun + pres + be + adv of location)
(Three + women + + are + in the group)

pres + affix + be + verb + noun
+ ing + are + wear + make-up

[Three women (three women are in the group) are wear make-up]

Notice that each sentence contains an identical noun phrase (three women) and they each contain identical forms of the verb "to be", i.e., the word "are".

By first employing an identical noun phrase deletion (T-Id NP) transformation, this deletes the second occurrence of the noun phrase "Three women". That is, the "det + noun" constituents are removed from the embedded string. This yields the intermediate syntactic structure and corresponding lexical insertions;

(T-Id NP Deletion)

b) Det + Noun
Three + women

a) + pres + be + adv of location
+ are + in the group
pres + affix + be + verb + noun
are + wear + make-up

[Three women, are in the group , are wear make-up]

Notice here that, the structure which now remains still contains two "pres + be" verbals (rewritten as the word "are"). Note also that this string is somewhat disjointed. That is, as it stands, this string is not syntactically grammatical. It is therefore obligatory that a "be" deletion transformation be performed. By deleting the embedded verb "to be" (are) from the second string, this yields the constituent structure or string:

(T - be deletion)

b) det + noun

Three + women

+ adv of location +

+ in the group +

pres + affix + be + verb + noun

+ ing + are + wear + make-up

[Three women --- in the group --- are -- wear --
makeup]

Lastly, the affix transformation moves the present tense constituent to the right of the verbal "be" and appends the suffix constituent "ing" to the right of the main verb "wear". This yields the final constituent structure and lexicon;

(T-Affix)

b) det # noun #

Three # women #

a) adv of location

in # the # group

be + pres # verb + affix # noun

are # wear + ing # make-up

[Three # women # in # the # group # are # wear + ing #
make-up] Three women in the group are wearing make-up

Thus, as shown in the above given example, in the grammar rules of English, as long as no change results in the meaning intended, it is perfectly consistent, with the underlying syntactic rules, and permissible to delete "noun phrases" and the verbal "be" without a change in the meaning. However, posit the Transformationalists, in Non-Standard and Black English social dialects, the deletion or

removal of the verbal "be" occurs in accordance with the "be" deletion rules of Non-Standard English and the Black English dialect. Let us now, in stepwise progression, perform the transformations which yield sentence number (5) He not here from the kernel string or constituent structure;

pro + pres + be + adv of location.

Beginning initially with the placement of the "negative" constituent in the front of the string, this yields the constituent structure and lexicon:

negative pro + pres + be + adv of location
(it is not the case that) He + is/am + here

Applying next the negative transformation, we move the "negative" constituent from the front of the string and introduce it into the structure after the verb. Via lexical insertion rules, the "neg" constituent is rewritten as the word "not". This yields once again the intermediate constituent structure and lexicon;

(T-Neg)
pro + pres + be + not + adv of
location
He + is/am + not + here

Now, at this juncture, by performing a Black English "be" deletion transformation, this yields the constituent structure and lexicon:

(T-be Deletion)
pro + pres + neg + adv of location
He + not + here

Note that, as a result of the "be" deletion transformation, in the deep structure, there is no constituent to which the "pres" or "present tense" constituent can be affixed and hence, there is no verbal left upon which an affix transformation can be applied. The Generative Grammarians posit that, just as in the Standard English "be" deletion transformation, when the "be" verb is deleted the "present tense" constituent is also deleted, in Black English, the "be deletion" transformation is the same. In Black English the be deletion transformation not only removes the verbal "be", it deletes the "present tense" constituent also. The removal of the "pres" constituent from the structure yields the

terminal syntactic structure and lexicon:

pro # neg # adv of location
He + not + here
He not here.

This brings us to our last sentence. Number (6):

Hen't here

As has been shown, the Generative Transformationalists contend that, whereas it is either a contraction transformation, a contraction and a "Black English lexical insertion" rule, or the application of a Black English "be" deletion transformation, that accounts for the differences in sentences (1) thru (5) above, sentence (6) has been derived via both a "contraction" and a Black English "be deletion" transformation.

According the Generative Grammarians, in some varieties of Black English and other Non-Standard dialects of English, what occurs is not a contraction of the "be" + "neg" constituents to yield the word "ain't". In some BE dialects, the verb "to be" is deleted altogether. The remaining "neg" constituent (the word "not") is then contracted (n't) and appended to the pronoun constituent "He", with the result being; He + n't here. Let us here, in stepwise progression, perform the transformations which yield sentence number (6) Hen't here from the constituent structure;

pro + pres + be + adv of location

First, the dummy node "negative" is placed in the front of the string. This yields the constituent structure and lexicon:

negative + pro + pres + be + adv of
location
(it is not the case that) He + is + here

Next, the negative transformation removes the "negative" constituent from the front and introduces it into the string after the verb to be. This yields the constituent structure and lexicon;

(T-Neg)
pro + pres + be + not + adv of
location
He + + is/am + not + here

Here instead of a contraction transformation appending the "be" verbal (am) to the word "not", a Black English "be" deletion transformation removes the constituent "be" and the "pres" constituent from the string entirely. This yields the constituent structure and lexicon;

(T-be Deletion)
pro + not + adv of location
He + not + here

Note that, as shown in sentence number (4) because the "pres" constituent gets removed simultaneously as part of the "be" deletion transformation the application of an affix transformation is precluded. Generative Grammarians contend that it is here (after the "be deletion") that, in some dialects of Black English, a negative (n't) contraction and adjunction transformation is also performed. This yields the final constituent structure and lexicon:

(T-Contract)
pro + n'g # adv of location
He + n't + here
Hen't here

And so, here again, as in the case of sentences (1) thru (5), we have been able to cull yet another sentence that, although different on the surface structure, is derived from the same underlying kernel string or deep structure;

pro + pres + be + adv of location

The critics of the Transformationalist view contend that, being in fact a method of grammar analysis that does not entail a comparative analysis of language samples over different periods of time, clearly the question of historical development, in terms of how the deep structure of Afro-American Black English and Euro-American English became one and the same, is not answered or even addressed by the generative method. That is, historians trace Afro-American and Euro-American people to two different linguistic continua - the Africans to Africa and the English Europeans to Europe. This genesis in Africa is incongruent with the thesis that in the "deep structure" African American speech is English.

The critics contend that when Generative Transformationalists employ phrase structure rules, lexical insertion rules, and transformational derivations to produce sentences that correspond with contemporary English language events, they are not describing or comparing Black and White American speech. What they do instead is construct a hypothetical model of what they propose is the native speaker of English's competence. Using their hypothetical model which is not based on actual speech samples and does not necessarily reflect the grammar that is in an English speaker's mind, they then propose hypothetical lexical insertion and transformational rules that are supposed to produce the same results as the internalized grammar within the minds of English speakers. The critics contend that when, based solely on their analysis of hypothetical sentences, produced entirely by hypothetical generative phrase structure, lexical insertion, and transformation rules, the Generative grammarians posit the underlying deep structure of contemporary Afro-American speech as being a mere Non-Standard social dialect of English, they actually deny the existence of an African antecedent and beg the question of genesis. This in that, despite the fact that they acknowledge that, prior to any contact with English speaking people, the African ancestors of African American people spoke languages which had their own "particular grammars", the Generative grammarians ignore the real world history of a non-English African "particular grammar" as the base from which African American speech originates.

A second argument that critics of the Generative Transformational theory pose is that, even though the grammar of all human languages consists of a phonetic component, a phonological component, a morphological component, as well as a syntactic and a semantic component (see O'Grady et. al. 1993:4), the Generative Grammarians ask us to blithely assume that syntax is the most basic level of language and that "the sentence is the basic unit of grammar that states the rules that will account for a native speaker's intuitive knowledge of his language (see Bornstein, 1977:20).

The incongruence in this is that, there is not the slightest justification for the assumption that the speaker of a language selects the syntactic, lexical and phonetic properties of

structure before selecting the topic, i.e., before deciding what he is going to talk about (see Chomsky 1972:157). Yet the Generative Grammarians would have us believe that, "to produce a sentence, the speaker goes through the successive steps of constructing a base-derivation, line by line from the initial S, then inserting lexical items and applying grammatical transformations to form a surface structure, and finally applying the phonological rules in their given order" (Chomsky *ibid*, 1972:156,157).

The fact is, posit the critics, if indeed "underlying the use of words and sentences to express meaning in human language (there) is a conceptual system capable of organizing and classifying every imaginable aspect of our experience, from inner feelings and perceptions, to cultural and social phenomena" (O'Grady, *et. al. ibid*, 1993:217), then only part of the information needed to determine the meaning of a sentence is provided by syntactic structures. Therefore, although generative grammars do address the grammaticized semantic concepts or meanings entailed in lexical affixes and the functional semantic categories, generative grammars do not address, "the speaker's and addressee's background attitudes and beliefs, their understanding of the context in which a sentence is uttered.." (O'Grady, *et. al. ibid*, 1993:234). The essential incongruence is that, the generative transformational model can only explain the nuances of sentences generated and transformed by generative transformational rules.

The critics of the generative method contend that relevant to the interpretation of a sentence is knowledge of "how language can be used to inform, to persuade, to mislead and so forth" i.e., pragmatics (O'Grady, *et.al ibid*:234). Thus, posit the critics, a vital weakness of the generative method is its inability to address "the setting" (the physical environment in which the sentence is uttered) and "the discourse" (other utterances made in the speech event). In other words, the "deep semantic" component of grammar.

In response to their critic's contention that, because their method of grammar analysis is not based on analysis of corpus utterances or actual speech samples, their theory is not valid, the

Generative Grammarians point out that they have never made any claim that their method of linguistic analysis was synchronic. Nor have they claimed that the generative method is diachronic (6). To the contrary, they explain, the concern of generative theory is with the nature of a person's knowledge of his language, and the structure in the mind that enables it to construct a grammar from sense data. As stated earlier, Generative Transformationalists presuppose the existence of an, "internalized system of rules that relate sound and meaning in a particular way" (Chomsky, 1972:26). In their view generative theory "aims, on the one hand, to determine the systems of rules that constitute knowledge of a language, and on the other, to reveal the principles that govern these systems" (Chomsky, *ibid*:28). The idealized constructs or models of competence (the hypothesized underlying generative

6 Diachronic: A diachronic statement is a statement about a change or changes that took place over a period of time. (Wardhaugh, 1972:11) Historical (diachronic) linguistics, for example, in studying the changes that occur in a given code over time (sound changes, grammatical changes, and word changes) has of necessity been interested in human migrations, intergroup contacts (conquest, trade)...Historical linguistics (also known as comparative linguistics) focuses on tracing how one, earlier, parent ("proto") code subsequently divided into several related but separate ("sister" or "daughter") codes. (Fishman, 1972:13,14)

process in human language) i.e., generative grammar "attempts to characterize in an explicit way the intrinsic association of phonetic form and semantic content in a particular language" (see Chomsky, *ibid*:126).

The Transformationalists contend that, notwithstanding the fact that their method does not attempt to trace and establish specific historical linguistic processes and events, the rules and procedures of generative transformational grammar provide substantial illumination and very insightful information about the principles that enable a native speaker of English to produce and understand an infinite number of English sentences. According to the Transformationalists, since they have never claimed that their method of analysis was historical nor that their task was to

account for and explain historical linguistic events, criticisms of their method as not being historical or descriptive are absurd. In their view, in as much as the task of the generative transformational method has always and only been to precisely analyze and correctly describe what native speakers of English intuitively know about the underlying rules of English grammar, their postulation, that Black and White American speech has the same "deep structure", is empirically valid. As for the process by which Afro-American and Euro-American speech became one and the same, the Generative Transformationalists view is that, all human beings belong to the same species (homo sapiens). They reason that, language being a specie specific attribute of homo sapiens (see Chomsky, *ibid*:79, 102) all human languages emanate from a common or specie specific base. In their view, if all human languages emanate from a common or species specific base then, in their underlying deep structure, all human languages are akin. The Transformationalists reason that, if all human languages are akin, then the universal base of African languages and European languages has always been the same. As for the manifest differences that define and distinguish human languages one from the other, the Generative Grammarians contend that the differences that exist is only in their "particular grammars", not in their universal base or underlying "universal grammar". In other words, as evidenced by properties found universally in the grammars of all human languages, the "specie specific" deep structure of all human languages is the same.

But then, posit the Africanists critics of the Transformationalists view, if this is so, i.e., if all human languages have a common universal base and it is only in their so-called "particular grammars" that human languages differ, then the postulation that all human languages have a common underlying deep structure (universal base) assumes to be fact that which has not been proved. That is, there is no empirical evidence that the proto language of all homo sapiens was a single unitary system.

Moreover, if all human languages have a common universal base and it is only in their "particular grammars" that all human languages differ, then assuming the Generative Grammarians regard Africans as being human, the conclusion is inescapable that before any

contact with English speaking Europeans, captive Niger-Congo African slaves spoke Niger-Congo African languages that contained their own "particular grammars". Now, if the "particular grammar" of the native language of slave descendants of African origin today is English, then what the Transformationalists in fact posit is that, African slaves broke with or discontinued their Niger-Congo African "particular grammars". That is, African slaves internalized the underlying "particular grammar" rules of English and adopted the "particular grammar" rules of English as their native language.

According to the Africanists, if indeed Africans internalized the "particular grammar" rules of English, then what is inferred also is that, having given up the "particular grammars" of their Niger-Congo African languages and accepted the "particular grammar" of English as their mother tongue, as a result of this, today, in both their universal base and in their "particular grammars", the underlying deep structure of Black and White American speech is the same (English). As for the differences that exist, the Generative Grammarians' explanation is that these are surface deviations made by Blacks, from the Standard or ideally competent English usage.

Thus, even though the Transformationalist concede that Africans had languages in Africa and that the Niger-Congo African languages contained their own "particular grammars", rather than acknowledge that the undeniable differences that exist in Standard American English and the so-called Black English of African Americans is directly related to and derived from the postulated "particular grammars" of the West and Niger-Congo languages of Africa, the Transformationalist deny the African antecedent.

Like their Euro-centric and white supremacist Pidgin/Creolist counterparts, the Transformationalists put forth a white supremacist thesis of Black linguistic deviance. That is, the Generative Grammarians contend that Black American speech is indeed English, but then they contend that Black speech deviates from the "norm", i.e., the "Standard" or the "ideally competent" usage. The clear implication is that, even though the African captives had the cortical capacity to grasp and internalize the

underlying "deep structure" of the "particular grammar" of English (at least sufficiently to make English their native language) the African captives and their descendants were cortically limited in their ability to comprehend the higher cortical subtleties and nuances of the ideally competent usage, - Standard American English. Thus Black English is deviant in its "surface structure".

The Africanist critics contend that it is in their positing the existence of an "ideal competence" in human language that Transformationalists reveal their white supremacists bent. Standard American English does not exist. It is a mental fiction. Yet, the Transformationalists act as if SAE does exist and as if their generative method of grammar analysis presents a very exact model of SAE competence. The problem or incongruence being, as Fromkin and Rodman attest; (ibid 1975:259) "SAE is an idealization. Nobody speaks this dialect, and if somebody did, we wouldn't know it because SAE is not defined precisely. Several years ago there actually was an entire conference devoted to one subject: a precise definition of SAE. This convocation of scholars did not succeed in satisfying everyone as to what SAE should be..".

The Africanist critics of the generative theory ask, if SAE is merely an idealization that nobody speaks and it is not precisely defined, then to what is African American so-called "Black English" being compared when the Generative Grammarians posit it as being just a different dialect of English?

The Africanist critics contend that, in their use of generative phrase structure rules and lexical insertion rules to generate syntactical patterns that they deemed to be the "ideally" competent usage, in essence what the Generative Grammarians attempt to do is reify a White vs Black American linguistic diglossia (7). That is, from a purely linguistic standpoint there is no dialect of any language that is inherently superior or inferior to another. Therefore, even if we assume that Black American speech is a dialect of English, the Black dialect of English should not be viewed as being less valid as a dialect than the dialect of Whites.

Yet, when we look at what the Generative Grammarians produce via generative rules and regard as being the "ideally competent" (Standard English) usage, it is not the patterns that more closely approximates the African American's usage but the patterns of the Euro-American's English dialect that is the "Standard or 'high' English variety. Thus, the Africanist critics ask, how and by what criteria did the Generative Grammarians decide what is and is

(7) Diglossia: The presence in a language of two standards, a 'high' language used for formal occasions and in written texts, and a 'low' language used in colloquial conversation...(Hartmann and Stork, 1976:67)

not "Standard" English? The fact of the matter is, contend the Africanist critics, because of their Euro-centric and ipso facto white supremacist bent, what the Transformationalists actually infer is that, even though Black English is a dialect of English, the African's capacity to comprehend and perform in its ideally competent usage has been only slightly above that of "Gua", "Viki", "Washoe", "Sarah" "Koko", "Nim Chimpsky" and "Kanzi" - the various chimpanzees and gorillas, that have been taught systems of communication that somewhat resemble human language. (see Fromkin, Rodman 1993:424)

In sum, the only difference in the Pidgin/Creole theory and the Transformationalists view is that whereas, the Pidgin/Creolists view is that, on the evolutionary scale, at best the cortical capacity of an African to grasp and emulate real human speech has been on a par with that of a mynah bird or parrot, the Generative Transformationalists are a bit more generous. They posit the Niger-Congo African people and their descendants as having had the cortical capacity to have internalized the "particular grammars" of the European languages with competence on a par with a human. But, in terms of their generative or mimicry skills, their performance is not much better than that of the lower primates.

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