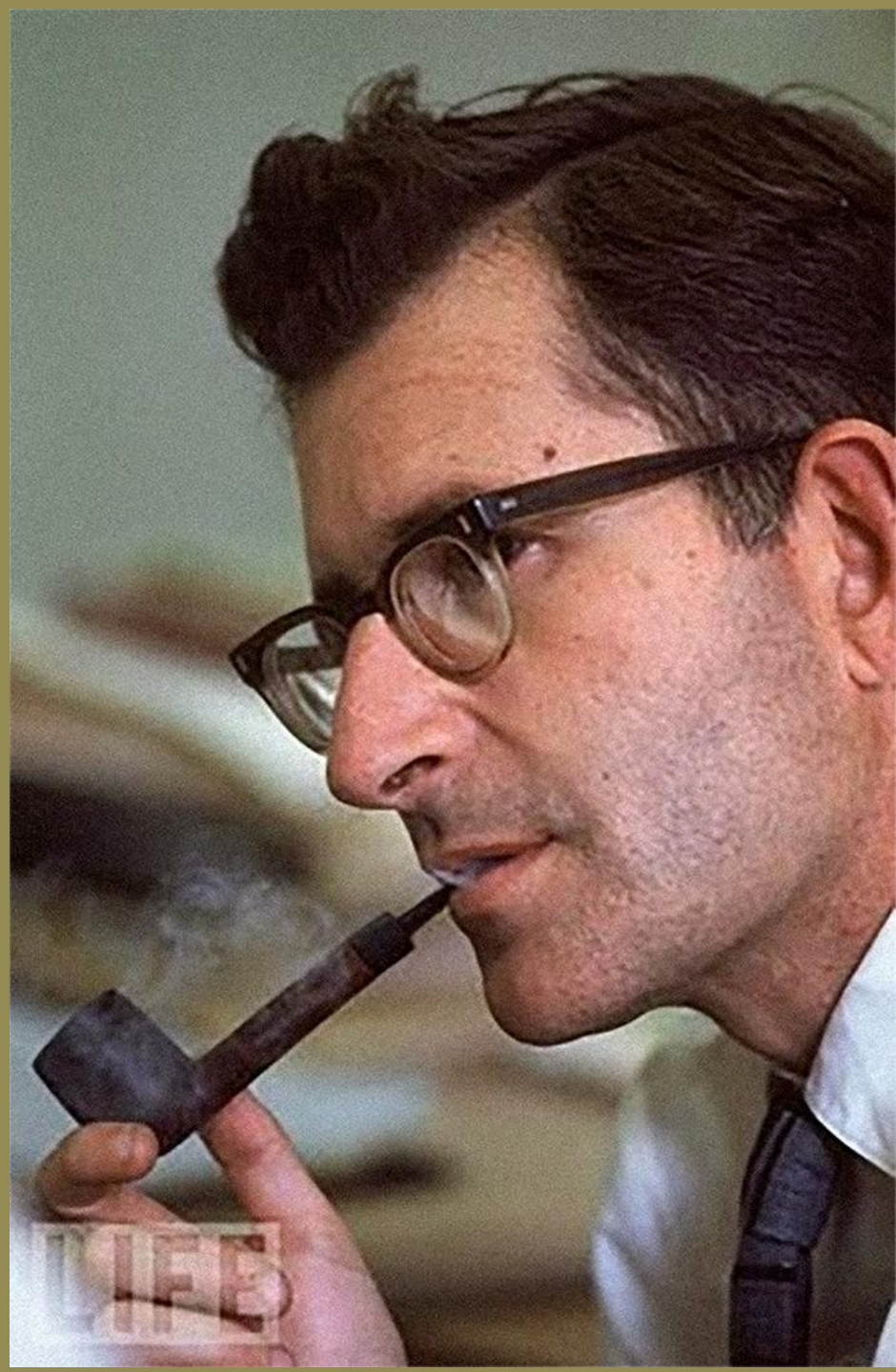


## **Neo-Structuralism of 2<sup>nd</sup> Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Chomsky's Generative Grammar (GG)  
& Universal Grammar (UG)

# Noam Chomsky (1928)

*Syntactic Structures* (1957), just 120 pages long, started a revolution in linguistics, transforming it from a rather obscure discipline, of interest mainly to PhD students and future missionaries, into a major social science of direct relevance to psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and others.



# Chomsky's Universal Grammar

Chomsky explained how/why human babies acquire language (while kittens don't) by an **innate linguistic capacity** that supplements some inborn *primary linguistic data* (PLD).

He called that uniquely human innate capacity the **Language Acquisition Device (LAD)** and he suggested that linguistics should discover what LAD is and what constraints it imposes on the range of possible human languages.

The universal features that would result from these constraints constitute '**universal grammar**'



\* Chomsky's 'innateness'

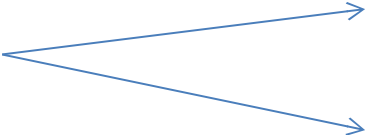
Bloomfield's 'behaviorism'

# Transformational Grammar (TG)

## Phrase structure grammar

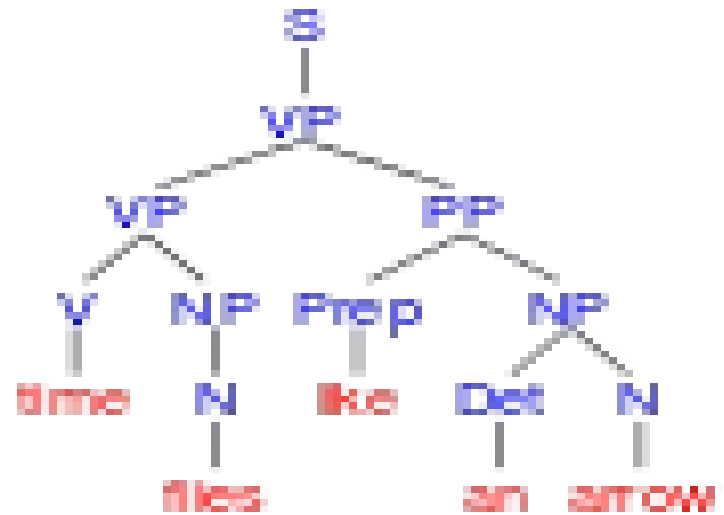
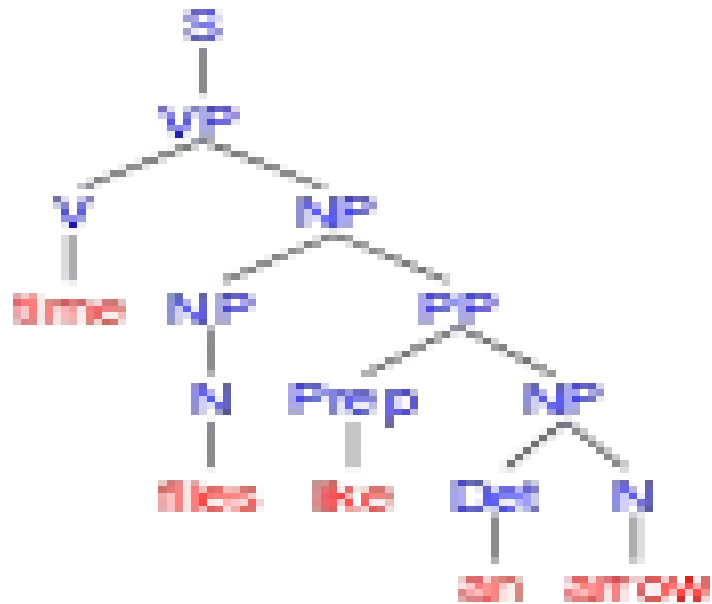
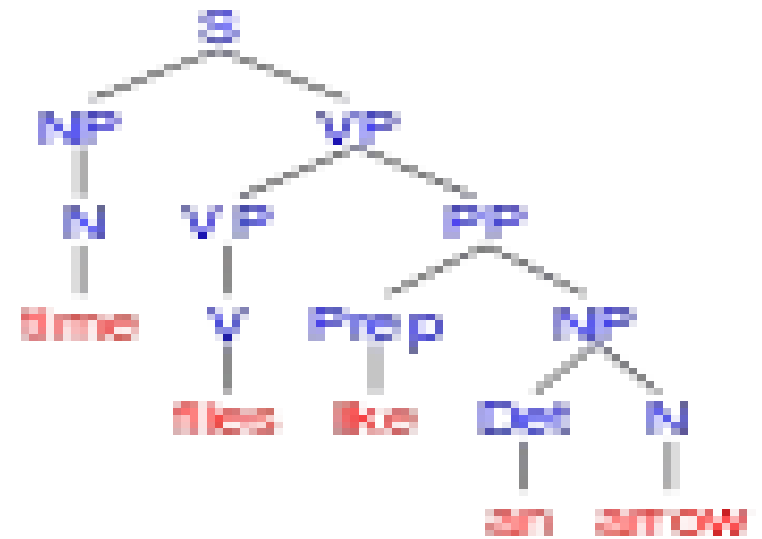
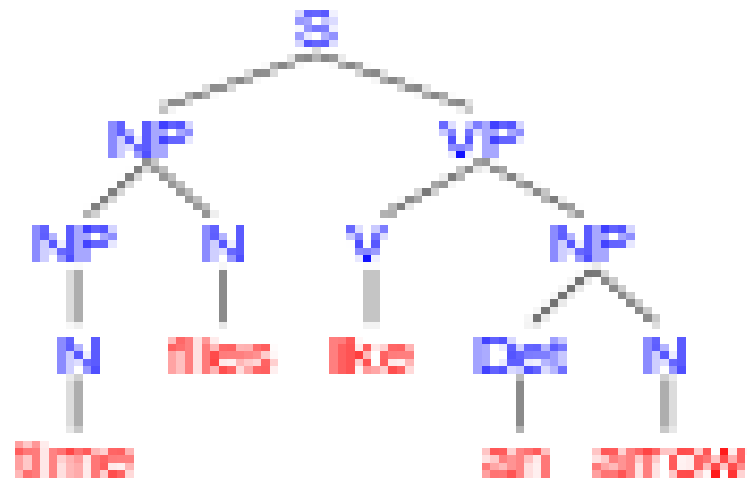
(rewrite rules to show the relations between phrases made up of words) is too:

- *Clumsy*
- *Ambiguous*



NP	V	ADJ	INF
Romeo	is	anxious	to help
Romeo	is	difficult	to help

A grammar, he claimed, should be more than a description of old utterances – How are *Deep Structures* transformed into *Surface Structures*?




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Different grammatical surface structures of a sentence



# Generative Grammar (GG)

Several different approaches to GG, all try to come up with rules/principles that would formally define all grammatical structures of a natural language. The term **GG** covers:

- **Transformational grammar (TG)**
  - Standard Theory (ST)
  - Extended Standard Theory (EST)
  - Revised Extended Standard Theory (REST)
  - Principles and Parameters Theory (P&P)
    - Government and Binding Theory (GB)
    - Minimalist Program (MP)
- **Monostratal (or non-transformational) grammars**
  - Relational Grammar (RG)
  - Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG)
  - Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar (GPSG)
  - Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG)
  - Categorical Grammar
  - Tree-Adjoining Grammar

Chomsky's **LAD** explains all languages in their  
**UNIVERSALITY**

Neither Saussure, nor Sapir tried to explain  
**language as a product of mental activity**; rather,  
they tried to *describe* physical forms/structures  
of language as they are at a point in time.

**Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis:**

*Structures/physical forms* of language *prescribe the content / meaning*. But... What **generates** language?



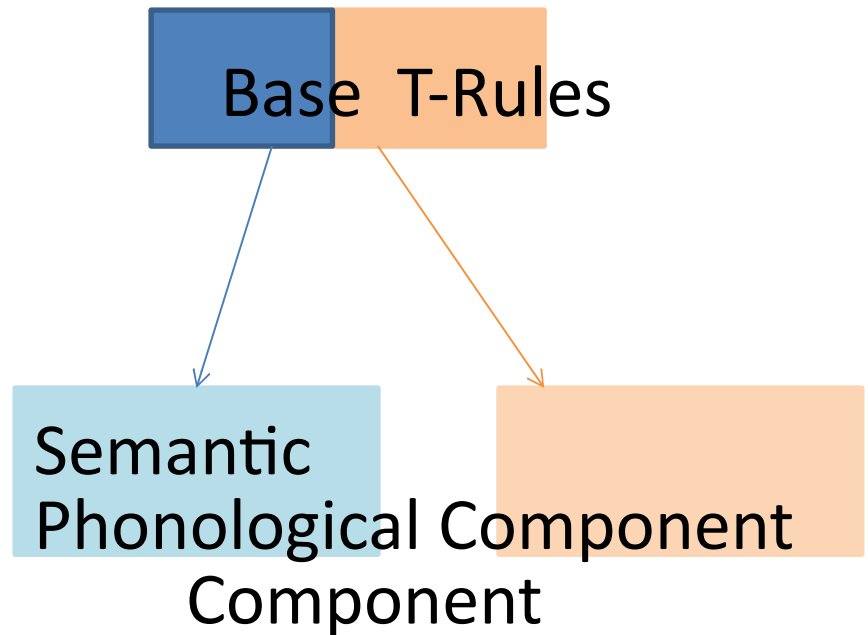
# Transformational Grammar

TG sets up two levels of structure, and relates these levels by means of operations known as *transformations*.

Like most other grammars, it has three major components: *syntax*, *phonology*, & *semantics*.

It differs from other grammars in that it splits the syntactic component into two parts: the base, and the transformational rules.

## Syntactic Component



**Content overrides form** in the process of generating verbal thought; therefore, a linguistic theory should explain the forms in relation to contents which *prescribe* forms.

“Chomsky (1965) included a semantic component, which was excluded in Chomsky (1957), accepting in part the logical claim of generative semantics that content precedes form. But content was merely additional, even in the revised theory, in which the semantic or interpretative component is secondary to the syntactic or formal component.

Inverting the logical order of content and form, Chomsky's theory never explains linguistic phenomena but only describes them with the simplest symbolization. ... his symbols are no more than a form of rewriting of concrete elements. ... Chomsky's grammar is a simple description of a given language, which never comes to explain the **generation** of that language.”

## Attempting to describe the **Language Mechanism**,

- Saussure split the Sign into the Signifier & the Signified
- Chomsky split the Sentence into Deep & Surface Structures, and tried to describe the rules of their transformation

That is really the basic difference between Saussure's **Structuralism** and Chomsky's *Neo-Structuralism*.

# Noam Chomsky (1928) is an American

- linguist
- philosopher
- cognitive scientist
- historian
- social critic and
- political activist



His TG/UG theory, however, has now largely lost its influence.

Chomsky's website ⇨ <https://chomsky.info/>



Language is a weapon of politicians,  
but language is a weapon in much of  
human affairs.


— *Noam Chomsky* —

AZ QUOTES



A basic principle  
of modern state  
capitalism is that  
costs and risks are  
socialized to the  
extent possible,  
while profit is  
**privatized.**

—Noam Chomsky



“ the  
general  
population  
doesn't  
**know  
what's  
happening,**  
and it doesn't even know  
that it doesn't know.

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— Noam Chomsky



YOUR  
IGNORANCE  
IS  
THEIR  
POWER