GENERATIVE PRACTICE IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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0. Various forms of work for oral practice have been used in English teaching. Among them are conventional conversation[1] and pupil-pupil dialogs, both of which have been highly evaluated by many teachers of English. As a process of acquiring enough command of English for conventional conversation or pupil-pupil dialogs, we give some easier forms of work to our students. In the 'Oral Approach' what is called pattern practice is popularized. Its aim, as C. C. Fries says[2], is thorough oral mastery by the pupil of the basic structure patterns and their content. In other words, the pattern practice aims at drilling the pupil in the oral production of the structural patterns in the dialogs. It is concerned with the use of the patterns, and it does not treat how the patterns are generated. Again in other words, it puts more emphasis on *performance* than on *competence*[3].

The chief problem in learning a language is the mastery of the sound system and of the features of arrangement[4]. In the case of children learning their native language, the problem is to determine from the data of performance the underlying system of rules that has been mastered by the speaker-hearer and that they put to use in actual performance[5]. For the students who begin to learn English as a foreign language when they are twelve or thirteen years old, it is quite necessary to know how the sentence patterns are generated as well as to practice how to use them. It will accomplish a better economy of time and effort to add generative practice to the training than to leave them to try to find the system of generative rules with repeated trial and error.

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1. The term (*i. e.* conventional conversation) may be defined as forms of dialogue between teacher and student arranged according to a systematical plan in order to bring about certain specific results.　H. E. Palmer : *The Oral Method of Teaching Languages.* p. 63
2. C. C. Fries : *On the Oral Approach*, p. 18
3. *Competence* is the speaker-hearer's knowledge, and *performance* is the actual use of language in concrete situations.　N. Chomsky : *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, p. 4
4. It (*i. e.* the chief problem in learning a new language) is, first, the mastery of the sound system —— to understand the stream of speech, to hear the distinctive sound features and to approximate their production. It is, second, the mastery of the features of arrangement that constitute the structure of the language.　C. C. Fries : *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language.* p. 3
5. N. Chomsky : *op. cit.*, p. 4

1. What is called a traditional school grammar has long been playing an important part in the teaching of English structures. The grammar, however, stays within a classification or an analysis of ready-made sentence structures. It does not fully explain the creative process of sentences[3]. For example, concerning the structure of the sentence "*I believed Sally my friend*," the traditional school grammar might provide information of the following sort :

> *I* functions as the subject of the sentence ; *believed*, which is the past form of *believe*, functions as the predicate verb ; the noun *Sally*, which is a proper noun, functions as the object of the verb *believed* ; and *my friend* functions as the complement because *Sally* and *my friend* denote the same person. Thus the sentence belongs to the pattern S+V+O+C. Such verbs as take both an object and a complement are called incomplete transitive verbs, and such complements as denote the same things or persons that the objects do are called objective complements...

The information is, without question, very convenient for us to give an account of the sentence structure itself. But it will not give any account concerning the creative process of the structure.

2. From a generative point of view, there are two base strings underlying the sentence[7]. They are :

$$\underset{(1)}{NP_1} - \underset{(2)}{\underline{Aux+be}} - \underset{(3)}{substantive} \qquad \text{(Insert)}$$

$$\text{(Matrix)} \quad \underset{(4)}{\underline{NP+Aux+Vt_3}} - \underset{(5)}{Comp} - \underset{(6)}{NP_1}$$

(where Vt_3 stands for the verb that can have a complement between the verb and the NP)[8]

The subject of the insert becomes the NP object of the matrix, and the substantive following *be* becomes the Comp of the matrix. That is, the result string is (4) + (3) + (6).

$$\text{(Result)} \quad \underset{(4)}{\underline{NP+Aux+Vt_3}} - \underset{(3)}{substantive} - \underset{(6)}{NP_1}$$

e. g.   (Insert) $\underset{(1)}{Sally} - \underset{(2)}{\underline{past+be}} - \underset{(3)}{\underline{my\ friend}}$

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6. *Ibid.*, p. 5 ff.
7. P. Roberts : *English Syntax.* p. 135
8. A **VT** construction can have (1) nothing between the verb and the NP, (2) a particle between them, (3) a complement between them. Thus we can rewrite VT as :

$$VT \longrightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textbf{Vt}_1 \\ \textbf{Vt}_2 + \textbf{Prt} \\ \textbf{Vt}_3 \\ \left. \begin{array}{l} \textbf{Vt}_{to} \\ \textbf{Vt}_{ing} \end{array} \right\} + \textbf{Comp} \end{array} \right\}$$

Ibid., p. 131, p. 151

(Matrix) $\underline{\text{I+past+believe}}$ — $\underline{\text{my friend}}$ — Sally
                   (4)   (5)   (6)

(Result) $\underline{\text{I+past+believe}}$ — $\underline{\text{my friend}}$ — Sally
                 (4)   (3)   (6)

Applying the appropriate transformations[9] and morphographemic rules, we get:

(1) I believed Sally my friend.

This kind of information gives us an account concerning the generative process of the structure. In the pattern practice, we usually direct the pupils to substitute the object and the complement and sometimes the predicate verb by other words. It is true that the practice helps them learn to produce the sentence pattern orally, but they cannot be aware of the generative process of the pattern. Besides they are apt to repeat the sentence pattern quite mechanically without considering the meaning of what they are repeating. By the generative explanation and practice, however, we are able to teach them the construction with its meaning without using difficult grammatical terms. We only explain to them that the *be* in the insert is deleted when it is inserted into the matrix.

<div style="border:1px solid">

Sally is my friend.

(*deleted*)

↓

I believed   Sally ϕ my friend.

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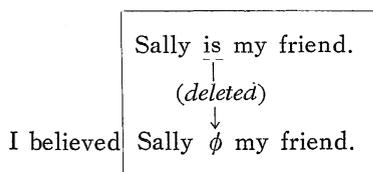
3. The structure, which A. S. Hornby described as VP 3[10], has embedded in it another structure. For example, the sentence *I persuaded John to come* has embedded in it the insert sentence *John came*[11].

(Insert)   NP$_1$ — Aux — X
              (1)   (2)   (3)

(Matrix) $\underline{\text{NP+Aux+Vt}_3}$ — Comp — NP$_1$
                 (4)   (5)   (6)

(Result) $(4)+\text{to}+(3)+(6)$
(where X stands for anything that occurs in this position)

e. g.   (Insert)   John — past — come
                      (1)   (2)   (3)

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9. The transformations are:
$$\text{Af}+\text{v} \Longrightarrow \text{v}+\text{Af}$$
$$\text{Vt}_3+\text{Comp}+\text{NP} \Longrightarrow \text{Vt}_3+\text{NP}+\text{Comp}$$
10. Vb. × (pro) noun × (not ×) to-infinitive   A. S. Hornby: *A Guide to Patterns and Usage in English*, p. 21
11. P. Roberts: *op. cit.*, p. 146 ff.

(Matrix) $\underset{(4)}{\underline{I + past + persuade}}$ — $\underset{(5)}{Comp}$ — $\underset{(6)}{John}$

(Result) $\underset{(4)}{\underline{I + past + persuade}}$ + to + $\underset{(3)}{come}$ + $\underset{(6)}{John}$

The string underlies the sentence :

    (2) I persuaded John to come.

4. The generative process by which VP 6[12] is produced is just the same as the one by which VP 3 is produced except that *to* is replaced by *ing*.

(Insert) $\underset{(1)}{NP_1}$ — $\underset{(2)}{Aux}$ — $\underset{(3)}{X}$

(Matrix) $\underset{(4)}{\underline{NP + Aux + Vt_{ing}}}$ — $\underset{(5)}{Comp}$ — $\underset{(6)}{NP_1}$

(Result)   (4) + ing + (3) + (6)

e. g.   (Insert) $\underset{(1)}{Tom}$ — $\underset{(2)}{past}$ — $\underset{(3)}{sleep}$

(Matrix) $\underset{(4)}{\underline{we + past + find}}$ — $\underset{(5)}{Comp}$ — $\underset{(6)}{Tom}$

(Result) $\underset{(4)}{\underline{we + past + find}}$ + ing + $\underset{(3)}{sleep}$ + $\underset{(6)}{Tom}$

The result string underlies the sentence :

    (3) We found Tom sleeping.

5. The formulae are inadequate for the teaching of these constructions in classroom lessons because they need the appropriate operations to produce grammatical sentences. Otherwise such ungrammatical sentences as *I persuaded to come John* or *We found sleeping Tom*[13] would be produced. Since one of the aims of English lessons is to bring up automatic habit in the oral production of English, ungrammatical sentences should be excluded[14] even during the generative processes. In order to prevent such impropriety, some practical modifications will have to be made. It is considered to be suitable to modify the formulae as follows :

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12. Vb. × (pro) noun × present participle, etc.   A. S. Hornby : *op. cit.*, p. 30
13. The sentence seems to be grammatical, but for the meaning intended here it is ungrammatical.
14. This idea has been applied to the conversion of sentences by successive small steps of contrast. Pupils are asked to convert one sentence to another according to their teacher's cue. During the practice ungrammatical sentences are excluded. For example :
                  They are playing tennis.
    Question :   Are they playing tennis?
    What :   What are they playing? (*Are they playing what?*   is excluded.)

T-Vt$_{to}$ (Insert)   NP$_1$ — Aux — X
                              (1)   (2)   (3)

            (Matrix)   NP+Aux+Vt$_{to}$ — Y
                        _____
                              (4)

            (Result)   (4)+(1)+to+(3)

(where Y shows the position in which insert sentences are to be put)

c. g.   (Insert)   Mary — will — <u>come here tomorrow</u>
                        (1)   (2)   (3)

            (Matrix)   <u>I+pres+want</u> — Y
                              (4)

            (Result)   <u>I+pres+want</u> + Mary + to + <u>come here tomorrow</u>
                              (4)   (1)   (3)

The result string underlies the sentence :

    (4) I want Mary to come here tomorrow.

T-Vt$_{ing}$ (Insert)   NP — <u>Tn+be</u> — <u>ing+X</u>
                              (1)   (2)   (3)

            (Matrix)   <u>NP+Aux+Vt$_{ing}$</u> — Y
                              (4)

            (Result)   (4)+(1)+(3)

(Notice that the insert sentences are given in the progressive form.)

e. g.   (Insert)   he — <u>past+be</u> — <u>sleeping peacefully</u>
                        (1)   (2)   (3)

            (Matrix)   <u>we+past+find</u> — Y
                              (4)

            (Result)   <u>we+past+find</u> + him[15] + <u>sleeping peacefully</u>
                              (4)   (1)   (3)

The result string underlies the sentence :

    (5) We found him sleeping peacefully.

6. The principles of the modified formulae can be put into practical use in classroom lessons. The teacher shows both an insert and a matrix sentence, and explains to the class how to make appropriate changes and how to embed one into the other to make one sentence.

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15. **T-obj** has been applied.

(Insert)   She studied hard.

(Matrix) The teacher told   her to study hard.

(Insert)   He was working at his desk.

(Matrix) We found   him φ working at his desk.

Then the pupils are given some exercises which afford good generative practice. The exercises, which are likely to be the following, can be given orally[16].

Susie knows the fact.   Tom was running on the street.
I want_____.   We found_____.

He helped her with her homework.   We were waiting for a long time.
She asked_____.   He kept_____.

We go to bed at ten and get up at six.   I was standing outside the house.
Mother always tells_____.   They left_____.

These generative exercises should be followed by the pattern practice[17] because the former is concerned with grammar and the latter with actual use. The structural patterns studied consciously through the generative practice must be repeated over and over again until they can be produced automatically in proper situations.[18]

7. In giving the generative exercises, there arises a question as to whether we should give the matrix in the form of NP−V−NP (*e. g.* We find Tom_____.) or in the form of NP−V deleting the NP object (*e. g.* We find_____.) It is very convenient for our consideration of the question to scrutinize the following pair of sentences often referred to by transformationalists.

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16. Sufficient mim–mem of the insert sentences is important when we give the exercises orally. Insufficient mim-mem will make the work too difficult to be done smoothly and effectively.

17. The following substitution work will be effective :

	She *wanted* him *to wait* outside the house.
asked :	She *asked* him *to wait* outside the house.
found :	She *found* him *waiting* outside the house.
told :	She *told* him *to wait* outside the house.
kept :	She *kept* him *waiting* outside the house.
ordered :	She *ordered* him *to wait* outside the house.
left :	She *left* him *waiting* outside the house.

18. See, for example, the following statement :
They (*i. e.* the grammar materials) must be incorporated in sentences to be practiced and repeated until the structural patterns become so fixed that all expression in the new language will follow these channels without conscious choice. C. C. Fries : *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language*, p. 34

    (6) I persuaded John to leave.

    (7) I expected John to leave.

Both of them seem to receive the same structural analysis. In fact, the traditional grammars have never pointed out the distinction between these two constructions. A. S. Hornby regards the two verbs (*i. e. persuade, expect*) as the verbs used in the same pattern.[19] Chomsky, however, explains that the two sentences are not parallel in structure.[20] The difference can be made clear by consideration of the sentences :

    (8) (i) I persuaded a specialist to examine John.

        (ii) I persuaded John to be examined by a specialist.

    (9) (i) I expected a specialist to examine John.

        (ii) I expected John to be examined by a specialist.

In surface structure, the sentences (8i) and (9i) are the same, and the sentences (8ii) and (9ii) are also the same. But this is not the case with the meaning. (9i) and (9ii) are cognitively synonymous : one is true if and only if the other is true. (8i), however, can be true or false quite independently of the truth or falsity of (8ii). The difference can be accounted for by examining the deep structures underlying the sentences.

    Figure 1, 2, and 3 make it explicit that (8i) differs from (8ii) in underlying structure although (9i) and (9ii) are essentially the same.[21] The figures also tell us that there exists a great difference between (6) and (7) in deep structure.
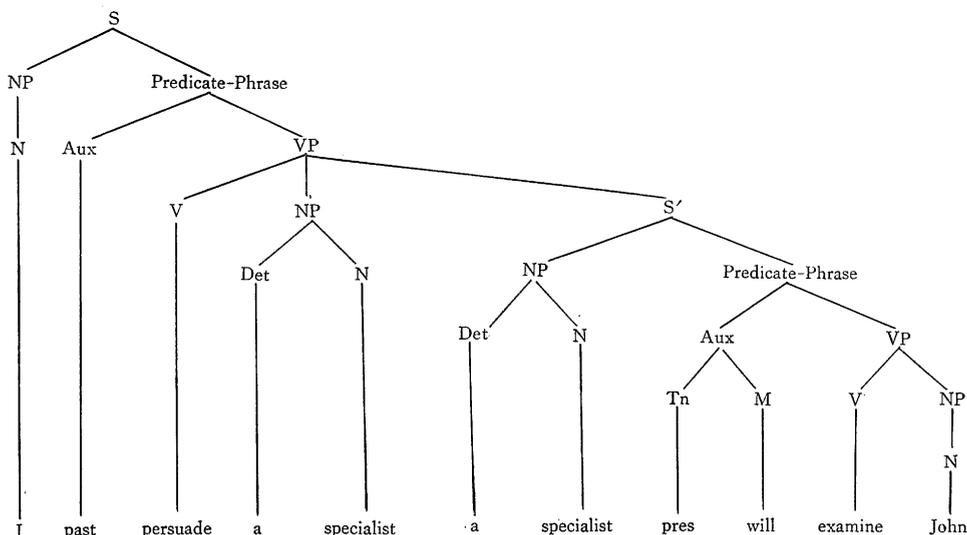

Figure 1. Sentence (8i), deep structure

19. A. S. Hornby : *op. cit.*, p. 21

20. In detail, see Chomsky : *op. cit.*, p. 22 ff.

21. In the case of (8ii) and (9ii), the passive transformation will apply to the embedded sentence, and in order to give the surface forms of the four sentences, other appropriate operations must be performed.
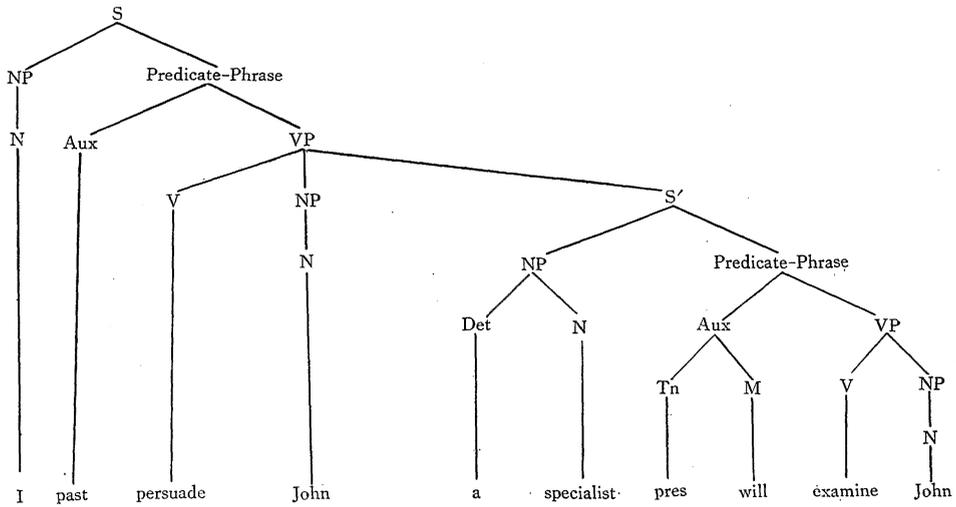
**Figure 2.** Sentence (8ii), deep structure
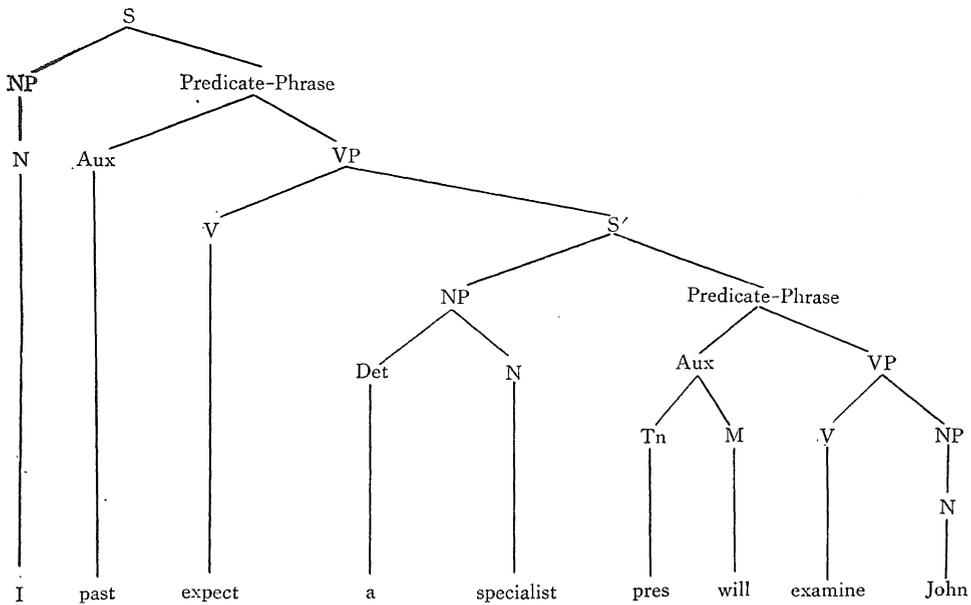
Figure 3. Sentence (9i) (9ii), deep structure

According to the analysis, it may be considered adequate that matrix sentences with *persuade*-like verbs are given in the form of NP–V–NP, and those with *expect*-like verbs in the form of NP–V.

(Insert) A specialist will examine John.

(Matrix) I persuaded *a specialist*_____.

    (Insert) A specialist will examine John.

    (Matrix) I expect_____.

  In the case of English teaching, it is a very difficult question to decide whether different forms should be given according to the verb used in the matrix or only one form should be given consistently. I am of opinion that the latter is appropriate, especially in teaching junior high school pupils. It is because, if we use different forms, the pupils will suffer from much trouble and confusion. The problem of the difference in underlying structure .might be solved by teaching the exact meaning of each verb. From the linguistic point of view, such a notion may seem quite inadequate, but teaching languages is different from teaching linguistics.

  8. We have another thing to pay attention to. That is the verb *promise*. Compare the two sentences (10) and (11).

    (10) He expected me to pay the money.

    (11) He promised me to pay the money.

  In the former the relation of dependent infinitive nexus exists between *me* and *to pay the money* while in the latter it does not exist. According to Hornby, these two sen-
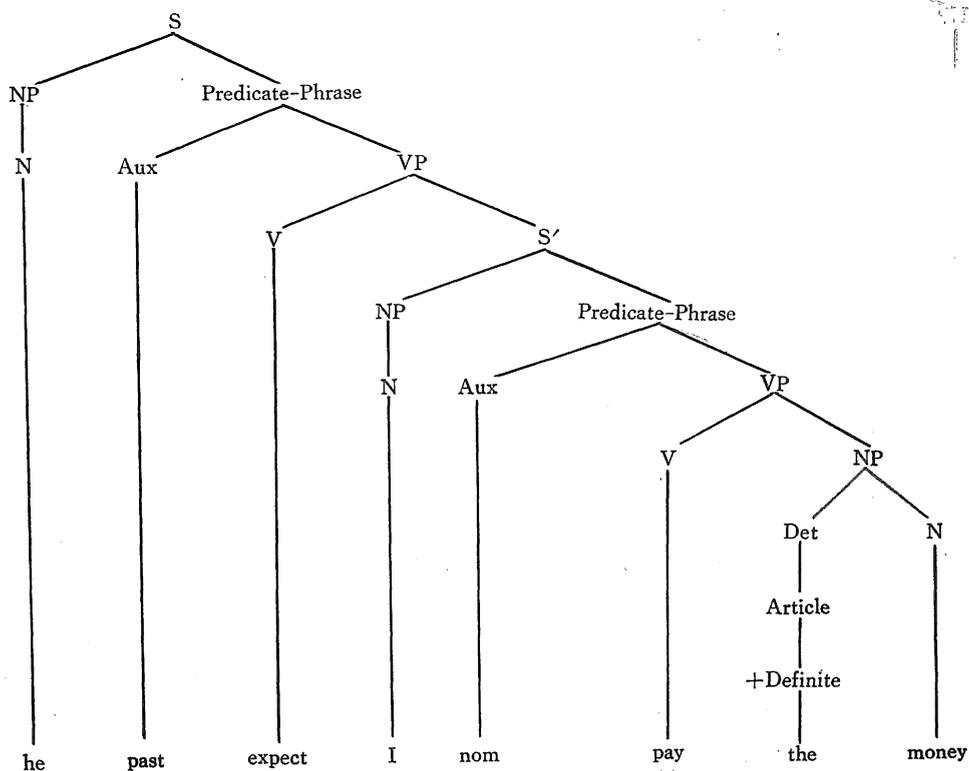

Figure 4. Sentence (10) deep structure
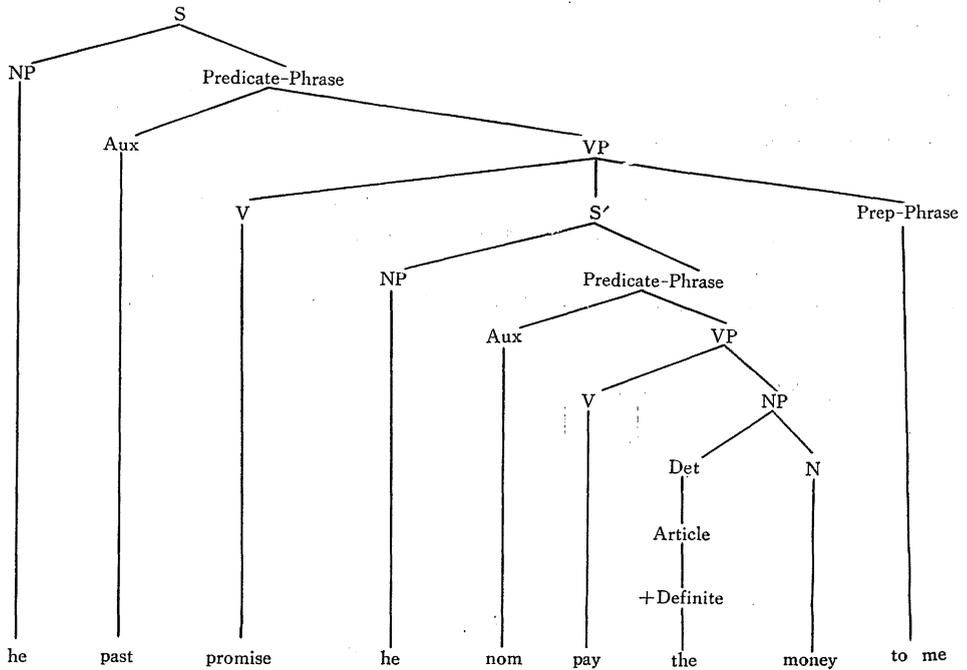
Figure 5. Sentence (11) Deep structure

tences belong to the same verb pattern (*i. e.* VP 3).[22] But they are so different in deep structure that we cannot introduce them to the pupils in the same way.

(10)′ (Insert) I pay the money.

(Matrix) He expected me to pay the money.

*(11)′ (Insert) I pay the money.
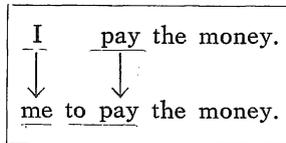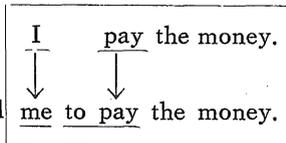
(Matrix) He promised me to pay the money.

As the branching tree diagrams (Figure 4 and 5) make the difference explicit, the verb *promise* belongs to a different group from such verbs as *expect, want, tell* etc.

9. The verbs indicating physical perceptions[23] are used both in VP 5[24] and VP 6.

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22. A. S. Hornby : *op. cit.*, p. 21
23. They are : *feel, hear, listen to, look at, notice, observe, perceive, see, smell, watch.* But *smell* is not used in VP 5.
24. Vb. × (pro) noun × bare infinitive, etc. A. S. Hornby : *op. cit.*, p. 25 ff.

(12) I saw him cross the road. (VP 5)
(13) I saw him crossing the road. (VP 6)

The difference in meaning is that (12) suggests a complete activity while (13) suggests an activity in progress.

(12) = He crossed the road, and I saw the complete action.
(13) = He was crossing the road, when I saw him.

The difference can be taught to the pupils by the generative explanation.

(12)′

| He crossed | the road. |
| I saw | him cross | the road. |

(13)′

| He was crossing | the road. |
| I saw | him ϕ crossing | the road. |
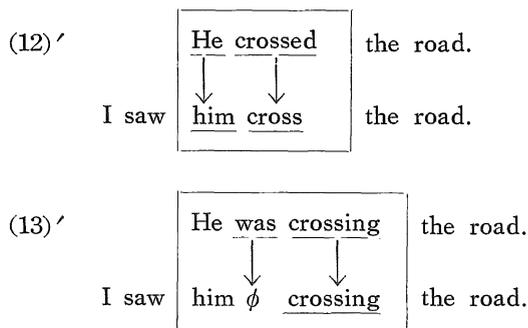
Most textbooks of English grammar used in Japan only explain that the former suggests an action while the latter suggests a state. Such a way of explanation leads the pupils to memorization without understanding, which is apt to die out promptly. By the generative explanation, however, full understanding both of structure and of meaning will come easily.

10. The five basic sentence patterns,[25] which have been used for the classification of the English sentence structures, are quite inadequate as a means of teaching English because learners cannot understand such classification until they have fully understood the meaning of the sentences. For example, let us consider the following two sentences.

(14) I made him a present.
(15) I made him an inspector.

Pupils can hardly find the difference in structure between the two sentences because they have the same surface structure. It gives them only a superficial understanding to teach that (14) belongs to S+V+O+O and (15) belongs to S+V+O+C. It is through the generative explanation and practice that the pupils can fully understand the meaning and the structure simultaneously.

My proposal in this article is that English sentences should be taught according to their generative processes. Only a few examples of the English sentence patterns are given here to explain my proposal. But the idea will be applicable to all the patterns.

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25. They are : S+V, S+V+C, S+V+O, S+V+O+O, and S+V+O+C.

The generative ⁻practice advocated here will help the pupils learn structures, and the pattern practice will help them produce the structures automatically.

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