REVIEW: Poole, Geoffrey (2002) *Syntactic Theory*, New York: Palgrave

The book is an introductory syntax textbook. Actually, it's about two things: syntax and theory building, i.e. examining linguistic data, making and testing hypotheses and evaluating results. Based on a balance between empirical and theoretical arguments, Poole succeeds in building a generic Government & Binding model. It introduces generative linguistics as an empirical science. Instead of merely looking at and describing behaviour, linguists aim to build a theory of the underlying competence that will be able to explain behaviour. The reader learns about the crucial differences between competence and performance, grammaticality and acceptability, description and explanation, and principles and parameters. Throughout the book there are small in-text exercises with answers, which is a very good idea. It familiarizes the readers with the analytical machinery and forces them to actively follow the empirical argumentation.

Poole provides a good and clear presentation of syntactic categories, phrases, constituency tests and relations of dominance, precedence and c-command, which together form a cornerstone of generative linguistics. However, his analysis of "the third level", the X-bar level, is obsolete or at least not standard. Instead of restricting e.g. adjunction to apply to maximal projections (XP), Poole uses the X'-level thus reserving the XP label for only the top-most node. As the theory is supposed to be a generic model providing students with the background needed for reading primary linguistic literature, this is unfortunate. At times, theoretical moves are completely unmotivated, such as the idea of using CP as the level for all main clauses because "it's a good habit". Furthermore, the introduction of the determiner phrase DP is much too brief, and it is completely unexplained why the possessive "-s" is a head. It would have made better sense to start out with an example with *the* in D° instead of a possessive construction.

The treatment of thematic roles and case theory is generally quite good and comprehensible. Yet, as with many other terms, it is irritating that Poole doesn't provide the reader with any idea of what the "Θ" in Θ-roles means or how to pronounce it.

The chapter on Binding Theory is very good and sets the fine standard for the remainder of the book. From here on, the book is remarkably better than the first part. It appears that the more advanced material is much better explained than the more basic ideas. As with "Θ", Poole seems to care little about explaining the terminology. The readers are not told what the "R" in R-expression stands for.

Chapter 6 on syntactic transformation is good. Poole brings in cross-linguistic empirical evidence from Spanish and Irish to support the proposed theoretical analyses of movement and cyclicity. It is nice to see how the theoretical framework actually applies to a range of different languages, which in turn supports the theory. With the introduction of logical form (LF) in the following chapter, Poole completes the standard generative model of grammar. Unfortunately, he calls it "the Y model" even though it is known as "the T model". Still, the presentation of logical form (LF), based on a neat comparison of English with Japanese and Chinese, is very good. Tying the theory of movement together, Poole shows rather nicely how the Binding categories for overt constituents also apply to covert ones. However, I find the introduction of the Functional Determination Algorithm at best superfluous, and otherwise dimming the lucid presentation of binding.

Increasing the level of complexity, Poole elegantly moves on to show how the principles of subjacency and ECP interact in constraining *wh*-movement. It does, however, seem rather strange that Rizzi's highly influential and standardly accepted theory of Relativised Minimality is not incorporated into the theory building but is only treated as an open issue. Along the same line, in chapter 10, the VP-internal Subject Hypothesis is tacitly

assumed but neither introduced nor explained, even though it is increasingly becoming part of the standard.

Finally, the so-called Split-INFL Hypothesis is introduced. Based on evidence from French, English, and Icelandic, it is argued that the sentence contains a number of functional projections, i.e. AgrSP, AgrOP, NegP, and TP.

Even though the book is an introductory book, it seems to presuppose some sort of "linguistics 101" course. Many central linguistic terms such as e.g. subject, object, morpheme, agreement, gerundive, "Plato's Problem", *wh*-island etc. and abbreviations like sg, poss, imperf, ø, Q, TOP, DAT, and ACC are used without explanation. At other times terms are introduced and not explained until later sections.

The book contains a fair number of typos and errors, which together with the lack of basic definitions weakens the readability for beginners. All the same, it must be stressed that Syntactic Theory by Geoffrey Poole is very suitable as an introduction to generative syntax and that it constitutes a viable alternative to Haegeman & Guéron 1999 and to Radford 1997.

References:

Haegeman, Liliane & Jacqueline Guéron (1999) *English Grammar. A Generative Perspective*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Radford, Andrew (1997) *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English. A Minimalist Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.