

## BARE GRAMMAR

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By contrast with Cinque, Edward Keenan offered a very simple answer to the theme question: "None whatever." And he justified his verdict by claiming: "As you increase theory you decrease comparability." Next he warned that descriptive adequacy is much more important than comparability (agreeing thus explicitly with Maddieson and implicitly probably with all panelists: comparison of inadequately described languages is useless).

What he required for linguistic descriptions is very little indeed: A formalism called Bare Grammar (BG; a full description can be found in Keenan & Stabler 1994) consisting of a syntax (a set of structure building functions feeding on a lexicon, i.e. a set of categorized morphemes) and a semantics, a class of compositional interpretations of the expressions thus generated. BG allows a language independent and therefore comparability increasing definition of 'structural element' and of 'grammatical morpheme' (the latter is a structural element in the lexicon). Thus syntactic relations like C-command and identity of morphemes (morphological relations) are independent instances of structural relations.

Keenan anticipated and replied to two related objections to his approach: First, BG is too weak and allows arbitrary variation among grammars, and therefore, second, it cannot not secure comparability of descriptions (one might add, even of the same language). The reply was twofold: First, reality, not notation limits variation in description. For instance, the expressive power of all languages includes the ability to make claims that can be true or false, "all can assert existence, express possession, deny what someone has said, request information; all can refer to objects, ..."

Second, on a more abstract level, the formal systems used in language description have much in common with one another and with BG. "It is when we introduce theoretically specific notions like Head-Feature Convention, 1-chomeur, tree, sponsor arc, empty category, ECP, LF, Spell Out, QR, ... that incomparability arises."

Keenan argued for a maximum degree of freedom in the use of descriptive tools, since preoccupation with notation hampers the efforts at understanding. Forcing Chinese Logical Forms to look like English surface structure does not add to our understanding of either language.

Seen from the point of view of Bare Grammar, the transition from the Government and Binding framework to the Minimalist Program (MP) is a big progress, since the latter gets rid of many arbitrary stipulations and acknowledges the autonomous role of Phonological and Semantic structure.

The next contribution showed, however, that there still is quite a difference between BG and the MP.