On the nature of the Parallel Architecture Model

a) Semantics, Phonology and Syntax are defined and treated in Jackendoff’s model as three different generative components that interact with each other. However, we know that this modularity is merely notational and convenient for the partition of the object of study. Is it still useful to maintain the division between three generative components? Would it be equivalent to say there is a computational component (not necessarily called ‘syntax’, but including any part of the linguistic object that can be derived computationally)?

b) What must a component of grammar accomplish for it to be considered ‘generative’? A classical argument given in the generative framework to deny the generative character of phonology is to say it is not recursive and does not have levels of embedding of the kind syntax does. However, recursivity might not be the necessary condition for a component to be termed ‘generative’. An example provided by Jackendoff (p.5) is the different chunking phonology and syntax perform. Does a different partitioning of a sentence constitute a proof that two components act differently and are thus both generative?

The Lexicon

- p. 19-20: Such a treatment goes strongly against the traditional assumption that a language can be portioned cleanly into a lexicon and a grammar (...) Words are in one corner of a multidimensional continuum of stored structures, maximally general rules are in another corner, and in between are all sorts of phenomena of varying degrees of regularity.

c) Can an interface still be defined between syntax and the lexicon? Is there any sense now in which lexical items enter the derivation? If both the semantic and syntactic behaviour of lexical items (for instance, regarding argument structure) is specified in the lexicon, what work is left for syntax and semantics? Do they become redundant?
Simpler Syntax

- p. 25: There is no syntactic distinction between specifiers, arguments, and adjuncts.

   d) This is specifically set apart from linear order. However, how can we define a theory of linearization with no hierarchy between the different elements to be linearized? Or, conversely, if their linear order is specified with some kind of mark in syntax, in which sense is this different from having a hierarchy among the elements? If some element has scope over other constituents that are ‘below’ in traditional terms, and this scope cannot be relevant for semantics due to its lack of linear order, how can we account for the relationship without knowing the relative order of the constituents involved?

Syntax and semantics

- p. 25: Syntax must be simple because semantics, by definition, isn’t.

   e) It is claimed that in standard syntactic theory, the semantic component depends exclusively on the combination of elements provided by syntax. Since complex meanings require a great combinatory power, this means for Jackendoff that syntax in standard syntactic theory must be very complicated to reach that combinatory power. Is it that so?

   f) Is it coherent within a Parallel Architecture, where the three components are independent and have their own primitives and operations?

- p. 21: Unlike syntax, Conceptual Semantics has no notion of linear order.

   g) Semantics should be deprived of elements that make no sense for it, like for instance linear order. That means that all scope relations only mean something for syntax. How can we make this notion compatible with things such as covert movement?

Semantics and pragmatics

- p.3: Semantic structure, like phonology, demonstrably has an articulation into tiers, including at least propositional structure (who did what to whom) and an orthogonal dimension of information structure (topic/focus/common ground; old vs. new information).

   h) Jackendoff denies that the semantic component and the Conceptual Structure (CS) associated to it have any notion of reference, therefore constituting an I-Semantics in the sense of Chomsky’s I-language. On the other hand, it is claimed that the part of semantics dealing with propositions and the part dealing with inferences (pragmatics) are one and the same. However, it is generally acknowledged that pragmatics relies on world knowledge, shared experience and, in general, a relation to the world that may
crucially depend on referentiality. Can Jackendoff’s claim be supported with other evidence? Can we conceive of a pragmatic component without referentiality?

i) Are these two types of modules conflatable? Is their relation with the other two components of the Parallel Architecture equivalent? Aren’t the elements that the dimension of the information structure consist of analogical and, then, not equal in terms of formalization than the elements of the propositional structure?

Interfaces

- p. 6: The interface module takes only certain information from each representation into account in establishing a correspondence between them.

j) Does the Minimalist Program conceive the interfaces this way?

- p. 9: Since different languages express the same meaning in different ways, the interfaces must be language-particular, though no doubt constrained by UG.

k) Does this entail different faculties of language according to the Strong Minimalist Thesis?

l) What would we gain with parameterized interfaces?

Psychological/empirical plausibility

- p. 20: In both cases [Generative Semantics and GB/MP] the burgeoning complexity of derivations and the proliferation of hidden structure have been hailed as a great advance in understanding, but [...] rigorous empirical analysis and psychological plausibility have been sacrificed.

m) What advantages can we see in the Parallel Architecture Model that generative grammar lacks in this respect? Could we devise experiments to check the psychological reality of three independent generative components in grammar?

Idioms and semiproductivity

- p. 17-19: Idioms incorporated in the lexicon.

n) Can we consider idioms as part of the lexicon although we couldn’t use it in a productive/creative way?

- p. 28-34: The issue of semiproductivity.

o) Is semiproductivity that central as Jackendoff suggested?