

Preface

This volume presents a series of articles dealing with questions of current interest within the field of generative syntax. If syntax has played a central role in the development of linguistic theory in the second half of this century, it seems clear that generative approaches occupy a central position in the area of syntactic research. Actually, it is to a large extent as a result of concerns addressed within the generative paradigm that syntax has emerged as the single most important field in theoretical linguistics. Since the publication of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* back in 1957, the 'generative enterprise' has managed to provide an appealing research program which has unified and guided the activity of a growing number of linguists.

The generative paradigm found an early echo in the Basque Country, and, for example, the late Mitxelena was among the first linguists, if not the first, to quote Chomsky in Spain. De Rijk's 1968 MIT thesis on Basque relative clauses and the publication of a descriptive generative grammar of Basque in Basque, Goenaga's *Gramatika bideetan*, in 1978 triggered the beginning of what is by now a fully established academic tradition. *ASJU-International Journal of Basque Linguistics and Philology* was also highly responsive to these developments, and already as early as 1972 produced a special issue devoted to American contributions to Basque generative studies.

We believe the present volume comes out at a specially interesting time in the development of both ends of our general topics, syntactic theory and Basque syntax. Since the late 80's, this field seems to have been gaining momentum among Basque linguists, and the quantity and quality of research has experienced a dramatic increase. The surge in generative studies of recent years coincides with a change in approach and emphasis within the theory of syntax. The development of the Principles and Parameters framework has revived interest in the parameters allowed by UG whose setting accounts for interlinguistic variation. This has led recently to a renewed interest in the study not only of related language groups (Romance, Germanic, Slavic, etc.), but also of typologically divergent languages. This new 'comparatist' research strategy has been extremely fruitful, even if we only take into account the sheer mass of data gathered in the last years from widely different languages and which have become standard research material practising linguists must reckon with.

In this context, the purpose of this collection of articles is to present current research framed within this new approach, trying to provide an accurate picture of the types of theoretical concerns and data configurations that spur research in this

field rather than producing a homogeneous volume devoted to a more or less broad topic. Thus, the articles range from particular analyses of very specific data to the consideration of general principles of language design. The core data base is also supplied by a wide variety of languages apart from the usual Germanic and Romance: Basque, of course, but also Quechua, Hungarian, Slovak, etc. The unifying force behind these articles is precisely the same one that guides the efforts of so many linguists today: the presence of a formal research program powerful enough to address the problem of accounting at the same time for the evident diversity found in natural languages and for the also evident underlying similarity.