

A Theory of Licensing in English Syntax and its Applications*

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Sze-Wing Tang. 2005. **A Theory of Licensing in English Syntax and its Applications.** *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics* 5-1, 1-25. Assuming that grammar is parsimonious, 'incomplete' structures should be preferred. Incomplete structures include those with null projections and those with missing projections. The missing information of the incomplete structures should be able to be recovered via licensing. Syntactic licensing strategies are costly and 'marked' while non-syntactic licensing strategies are economical and 'unmarked'. The manipulation of non-syntactic licensing in English is said to the 'emergence of the unmarked'. Evidence comes from interrogatives, absolute clauses, small clauses, copula-less sentences, and Mad Magazine sentences.

Key Words: incomplete structure, licensing, tense, focus, economy

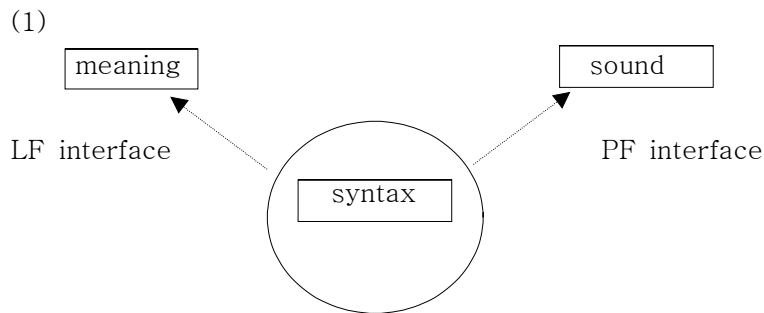
1. Licensing and a theory of grammar

In a theory of grammar, it is assumed that the language faculty, a particular component of the human cognitive system, has an initial state, genetically determined and uniform for the species (Chomsky 1995 et seq). The language faculty is

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specifically dedicated to the use and understanding of language.

In the language faculty, syntax is the component responsible for structure building.¹ Beyond syntax, there are performance systems that access the information provided by syntax. The performance systems fall into two categories: the meaning system and the sound system.² The levels at which the performance systems interact with syntax are known as ‘interfaces’. Semantic, cognitive, conceptual, as well as pragmatic information will be interpreted at the LF interface level. Phonological information is interpreted at the PF interface level. The relevant portions of the language faculty can be simply schematized as follows.



Let us assume that the model outlined in (1) is correct. In the next section, I will briefly introduce the concepts of output conditions and their significance in the study of licensing.

2. Output conditions

In the theory outlined above, it is assumed that there are output conditions imposed on the interface levels by the

¹This component is also known as ‘core computation’ or ‘narrow syntax’ in the literature.

²The meaning system and the sound system are also known as the conceptual-intentional system and the sensorimotor systems, respectively.

performance systems.³ If the expressions created by syntax do not satisfy the output conditions at the two interface levels, they will be ruled out and cannot be used by the performance systems. Let us consider the unacceptable example in (2).

(2) *John kiss Mary.

Although the SVO word order in (2) satisfies the basic syntactic structure of English and could be regarded as syntactically well-formed, (2) is still ungrammatical. A serious problem is that the verb in (2) does not have any morphology to indicate tense and thus (2) lacks temporal information. As we all know, every English verb has to express tense. Given the model outlined in (1), we may say that the fatality of the expression in (2) is due to the violation of an output condition imposed by the meaning system at the LF interface level.

3. Licensing and ‘incomplete structures’

To meet output conditions at the interfaces, an expression should have the exact symbols and features that the performance systems need. Either superfluous information or missing information should be avoided. Along these lines, incomplete structures should always be ruled out at the interfaces as they lack sufficient information that makes them complete.

What are ‘incomplete structures’? Simply speaking, these structures consist of two kinds, namely structures having phonetically empty categories and those lacking certain categories underlyingly. Suppose that there is a hypothetical complete

³Output conditions are also known as ‘bare output’ condition (Chomsky 1995 ‘legibility condition’ (Chomsky 2000, 2001, and ‘interface conditions’ (Chomsky 2001b).

structure containing four categories A, B, C, and D, each of which carries phonetic as well as semantic features, as in (3). In (4), C is a null category without phonetic features. In (5), C does not exist. Both phonetic and semantic features of C are missing. (4) and (5) are regarded as incomplete structures in this paper.

(3) A B C D

(4) A B \emptyset_C D

(5) A B D

From a different point of view, if we assume that grammar is parsimonious, which always prefers to use less symbols and features to convey the same meaning, the choice of incomplete structures should not be a bad option. A minimalist assumption is that categories and phonetic features are required only when necessary in human languages. ‘If humans could communicate by telepathy, there would be no need for a phonological component, at least for the purposes of communication; and the same extends to the use of language generally’ (Chomsky 1995:221).

In this vein, language structure should be constructed minimally and (4) and (5) should be preferred structures if they can convey the same meaning of (3). In the literature, such a claim is known as ‘markedness theory’ (Chomsky and Halle 1968), ‘deletion-up-to-recoverability’ (Chomsky 1981), ‘*STRUC’ (Prince and Smolensky 1993), ‘minimal projection’ (Grimshaw 1993), ‘economy of projection’ (Speas 1994), ‘economy of lexical insertion’ (Arnold 1997), ‘avoid structure’ (Rizzi 1997), ‘economy of expression’ (Bresnan 1998), and ‘structural economy principle’ (Tang 2002, 2003).

On the one hand, it is claimed that output conditions rule out incomplete structures. On the other hand, it is claimed that structures should be constructed minimally. How to resolve the dilemma?

Although in principle incomplete structures are more economical and preferred, the information originally carried by the missing categories and features should be recoverable and subject to output conditions. Licensing of incomplete structures is a strategy that permits the omission of certain categories and features in the structure by recovering the missing linguistic information. In the most extreme scenario, an expression with everything missing, for instance, telepathy, should be the optimal form if the linguistic information is really rich enough to recover the missing information in communication. The claim of this paper can be summarized as the following.

(6) Licensing of Incomplete Structures

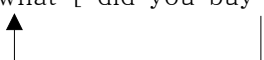
Incompleteness is subject to recoverability.

Why do we need ‘licensing’ in the study of grammar? An underlying assumption is that some expressions formed by the grammar are ‘incomplete’ and cannot be used freely unless the incompleteness of the expressions can be recovered via formal strategies. Licensing is a general term for such kind of strategies. Even though a linguistic expression derived by syntax violates no syntactic principles, the expression is not necessarily ready to be used. The language faculty has to make sure that every expression generated by syntax is accommodated to the performance systems. That is why we need licensing in the theory of grammar.

In what follows, some incomplete structures in English will be selected to illustrate how licensing works in grammar.

4. Clausal typing

It is a well-known fact that *wh*-words must undergo movement in English interrogatives. In terms of syntax, it is assumed that the landing site of *wh*-words is the specifier of CP. For instance, the *wh*-word *what* in (7) moves to the specifier of CP, as in (8).

- (7) What did you buy ___ ?
 (8) [CP what [did you buy ___]]
- 

A motivation of raising the *wh*-word to the specifier of CP in interrogatives is to avoid having an empty CP at the interfaces, assuming that projections are interpretable if and only if they are activated by lexical material (Koopman 2000). In terms of structural completeness, we may say that interrogatives that have an empty CP are incomplete structures and will eventually be ruled out by output conditions at the interfaces.

Alternatively, CP in interrogatives can be filled by *wh*-particles. Cheng (1991) argues that either a *wh*-particle in C or raising a *wh*-word to the Spec of CP can type an interrogative. For example, a *wh*-particle is used to type an interrogative instead of raising a *wh*-word to CP in Korean, as shown in (9).

- (9) Mary-ka mues-ul sa-ss-ni.
 Mary-Nom what-Acc buy-Past-Q
 'What did Mary buy?'

Let us now consider a subset of interrogatives that allow *wh*-in-situ. With some special rising intonation at the end of the sentence without changing the word order, (10) can be interpreted as an echo question, in which the *wh*-word *what*

stays in-situ. I assume that echo question sentences belong to intonation interrogative sentences, such as the intonation yes-no question in (11).

(10) You bought WHAT?

(11) You saw John?

Following Sportiche's (1995) analysis of intonation yes/no questions in French, I assume that there is a suprasegmental *wh*-particle in intonation interrogative sentences in English.⁴ If C in intonation interrogatives can be realized as special intonation, CP is no longer empty at the interfaces. Hence, *wh*-movement is not necessary in echo questions.

If there is neither *wh*-movement nor the suprasegmental *wh*-particle, such as (12), the judgment is deviant. To rule out (12), we may say that the CP domain, i.e. the shaded area in (13), is empty without being licensed by any materials. The structure in (13) is incomplete and thus ruled out by output conditions at the interfaces. Although the structure in (13) uses less (phonetic) features, the missing information carried by CP cannot be recovered and (13) should have difficulties to be interpreted at the interfaces. Supplying a suprasegmental *wh*-particle could be an alternative salvaging device for incomplete English interrogatives if there is no *wh*-movement.

(12) *You bought what?

(13) [_{CP} C [you bought what]]

Based on the above discussion, we conclude that given the prohibition of empty projections in grammar, empty projections

⁴I have argued elsewhere that TP undergoes movement to the specifier of CP in English intonation interrogatives triggered by the affix feature of C (Tang 1998).

can be licensed by raising an element within the same structure or filling in an element, either segmental or suprasegmental.

5. English absolute clauses

Consider the following sentences in (14)-(18). Notice that all the bracketed clauses lack a verb.

- (14) [Christmas then only days away], the family was pent up with excitement. (Quirk et al 1985:1120)
- (15) [Confident of the justice of their cause], they agree to put their case before an arbitration panel. (Quirk et al 1985:1121)
- (16) [With Mary still in Florida], Fred must be lonely. (McCawley 1998:209)
- (17) [With Mexico City currently the world's largest city], I'm surprised that your company doesn't have an office there. (McCawley 1998:209)
- (18) [With these issues already old hat], we'll have to look for some more topics for position papers. (Riehemann and Bender 1999:487)

As the bracketed elements are not explicitly bound to the matrix clause syntactically, they are known as 'absolute clauses' in the literature (Quirk et al 1985), in which verbs are missing. Absolute clauses are clauses instead of nominals, as illustrated by the distribution of adverbs, such as *then* in (14), *still* in (16), *currently* in (17), and *already* in (18).

Notice that absolute clauses are subordinate clauses, functioning as adverbial clauses. For example, the bracketed

element in (14) cannot be used independently, as illustrated in (19).

(19) *Christmas then only days away.

I assume that absolute clauses are sentential adjuncts adjoined to the main clause CP. Regarding the internal structure of absolute clauses, I assume that there is a null verb ' \emptyset ', whose interpretation is equivalent to the copula *be* (Tang 2003). The possibility of having adverbs in absolute clauses suggests that they are not really 'verbless'; instead, there should be a verbal projection, for instance, VP, to license adverbs (Travis 1988).

In addition to VP, absolute clauses should have a full-fledged clausal structure, i.e. that the null verb has its extended projections TP and CP in the structure, along the lines in Grimshaw (1991). 'SU' in (20) is the subject, which could be optionally omitted in the structure. The predicate is the object of the null verb.

(20) ... [_{CP} C [_{TP} (SU) T [_{VP} \emptyset_V predicate]]]

C in absolute clauses is not always empty. I assume that it can be overtly realized as *with* in (16), (17), and (18), that is treated as a complementizer. Although *with* is usually regarded as a preposition, there is a close relation between prepositions and complementizers in English. Semantically, *with* in absolute clauses functions as a marker indicating a conditional relationship (Quirk et al 1985:1090).⁵ Along these lines, *with* in absolute clauses can be analyzed as a 'prepositional complementizer'.

⁵*With* is analyzed as a 'subordinator' in Quirk et al (1985).

T is empty in the examples of absolute clauses, perhaps due to finiteness of these adverbial clauses. Let us assume that T in absolute clauses is nonfinite.

If my analysis is correct, why is it the case that the verb is phonetically null in absolute clauses? A minimalist assumption is that incomplete structures are preferred. In other words, null verbs should be more economical than overt verbs. Consequently, empty categories should always be preferable!

How does the incomplete structure in (20) satisfy licensing at the interfaces? T in absolute clauses is nonfinite. The embedded absolute clause is linked to a larger context which itself will have temporal interpretation evaluated with respect to the matrix clause. In other words, the embedded T is licensed by the tense of the matrix clause and eventually receives proper temporal interpretation. The relation between T in the embedded clause and the temporal interpretation of the matrix clause could be subsumed under binding.

For the null verb in absolute clauses, its semantics is 'vacuous' to a certain extent. I assume that the null verb is a copula whose existence is basically required by syntax, particularly by the principle of extended projections, along the lines in Grimshaw (1991). According to the principle of extended projections, V has to be in the structure in order to project its extended projections like T and C. For the meaning of the null verb in absolute clauses, it is almost 'empty', similar to the copula *be* in English. Due to its 'vacuous' nature, the content of the null copula can be easily recovered in the context without ambiguity. If the omission of its phonetic features does not affect predication as well as the interpretation of the absolute clause, a simpler structure is always preferred.

6. English small clauses

In English, a small clause contains neither a finite nor infinitival verb preceded by *to* (Stowell 1981, 1983, among many others). The following examples are considered to be the ‘canonical’ epistemic small clause construction.

(21) John considers [Mary a genius].

The noun a *genius* is analyzed as a predicate nominal which is predicated of *Mary* in the bracketed nominal small clause in (21). The small clause is the complement of an epistemic verb (Svenonius 1994). The embedded clause describes a characterization about which a judgment or an opinion can be expressed (Rapoport 1995: fn13).

For the internal structure of English small clauses, I assume that there is a predicative head which is dominated by its ‘extended projections’, namely TP and CP, similar to absolute clauses that have a full-fledged clausal structure. The partial structure of (21) is represented in (22). The embedded V is regarded as a null copula ‘ \emptyset ’. English small clauses are ‘not-so-bare’ (Tang 1998), contra Stowell (1981, 1983).

(22) ... [CP=SC C [TP SU T [VP \emptyset_V predicate nominal]]]

How are the null copula and T licensed? Similar to the analysis of absolute clauses, I assume that the semantic information of the null copula in small clauses can be recovered without ambiguity by virtue of its ‘vacuous’ content. T in the embedded small clause is linked to a larger context via binding which itself will have temporal interpretation evaluated with respect to the matrix clause. In other words, the embedded T is

licensed by the tense of the matrix clause and eventually receives proper temporal interpretation.

7. English copula-less sentences

After discussing embedded/subordinate clauses, let us consider the case of root clauses. As we all know, every root clause in English must have a verb. Basically, root clauses without a verb are ungrammatical. In order to make predication possible in (23) and (24), a verbal category is needed in the structure. Omission of the copula in these two sentences is prohibited.

(23) John *(is) a genius.

(24) John *(is) very clever.

Bare verbs are prohibited in English, as illustrated in (25). Whenever there is a verb, it must be associated with some tense morphology. The contrast between (25) and (26) shows that the copula in predicative sentences is inflected to indicate tense. Along these lines, verbs cannot be missing because they are required to support the inflectional suffixes. I assume that the copula *be* is used to bear tense features; its existence is required by tense morphology.

(25) *John be a genius.

(26) John is/was a genius.

Even if we suppose that there is a 'null verb', its existence is ruled out as it cannot support the inflectional tense morphemes. (27) is ruled out by the morphology of English that suffixes cannot be attached to null elements.

(27) *John \emptyset -s/-ed a genius.

In the previous section, I have argued that English could have a null copula in some contexts, such as absolute clauses and small clauses. Why is (28) unacceptable?

(28) *John \emptyset a genius.

Without tense morphology, (28) could be analyzed as a nonfinite clause. To rule out (28), we assume that English does not allow root infinitives. The ungrammaticality of (28) could be treated on a par with (29), in which the copula is infinitival.

(29) *John to be a genius.

All English nonfinite clauses, including absolute clauses and small clauses, are embedded clauses. The embedded nonfinite clause is linked to a larger context which itself will have temporal interpretation evaluated with respect to the matrix clause. (28) as well as (29) are ruled out at the LF interface because the nonfinite verbs are not licensed by assigning proper semantic information, for instance, tense, and thus these expressions cannot be used in the performance systems.

I notice that in some contexts, copula can be missing in predicative sentences. Consider the following examples.

(30) You idiot!

(31) You Martha, me professor.

(32) Next station Jordan.

Expressions like (30) are known as '*you idiot* expressions', which are mainly used in exclamations involving a strong value judgment and an opinion (Tang 1998). The noun *idiot* should be

analyzed as a predicate nominal that is predicated of the subject *you*.

Unless being a student is associated with some bad quality and having a negative status, (33) may not sound natural. The contrast between (30) and (33) suggests that only the nominals that have an ‘evaluative meaning’ may felicitously enter the *you idiot* expressions.

(33) #You student!

(31) was recorded from a conversation in a movie (Tang 2001). What the speaker of (31) wanted to convey was to emphasize the contrast of the identity between the hearer and himself. (32) was from the broadcast in Mass Transit Railway in Hong Kong (Tang 2001). Interestingly, the copula is usually permitted to be missing in such kind of expressions broadcasted in public transportation.

Why are these copula-less sentences acceptable in English? Notice that the predicate nominals *idiot* and *professor* in (30) and (31) are ‘bare’ and do not have any determiner and article. I assume that nominals in natural languages can be classified as ‘predicative’ and ‘non-predicative’: a predicative nominal has an open place in it, which has to be closed off by a referential category whereas the open place in a non-predicative nominal is closed off (Higginbotham 1985). In terms of syntax, all NP nominals are basically predicative. If the nominals are dominated by a functional projection, for instance DP, they are non-predicative or ‘argumental’ (Szabolcsi 1987, 1992, Stowell 1991, Longobardi 1994).

Along these lines, bare NPs in (30) and (31) are predicative and they can be predicated of the subject directly. On the other hand, if there is a determiner, such as *an idiot* in (34), the judgment is deviant. *An idiot* is a non-predicative DP by virtue

of the existence of the article and thus it cannot be predicated of the subject directly.

(34) *You an idiot!

Although *Martha* in (31) and *Jordan* in (32) are proper names, they are used as indefinite common nouns. Such an indefinite usage of proper names is not impossible in natural languages. For example, plural markers can be attached to proper names, expressing an indefinite meaning (= (35)). I assume that definite proper names are in the D position (Abney 1987) while indefinite proper names are Ns (Longobardi 1994, Li 1999).

(35) I saw three **Johns** this morning.

The context in which the copula-less sentences in (30)-(32) can occur is that it involves a strong value judgment and an opinion or rich background information. For example, (30) has a strong evaluative context. Although such a strong evaluative meaning is not involved in (31), it is a contrast structure, in which clear background information is presupposed in the comparison of the two clauses. Similarly, the locative expressions *Jordan* in (32) is contrasted with some presupposed situations. The hearer is expected to be aware that *Jordan* is one of the stations along the railroad.

To account for these properties, I assume that all sentences are subject to a constraint that requires that every sentence in natural language be licensed at the interface levels, which is dubbed as 'Generalized Anchoring Principle' or 'GAP' (Tang and Lee 2000, Tang 2001, see also Zhang 2004, Tsai and Shu 2004 for the application of GAP).

(36) *Generalized Anchoring Principle (GAP)*

Every clause must be either tensed or focused at the LF interface level.

GAP, which requires that every sentence be anchored, is imposed at the LF interface and can be regarded as an 'output condition'. There are two strategies to satisfy GAP in natural languages: sentences are either tensed or focused in the sense that it highlights an item in contrast to a set of alternatives supplied by the context of utterance.

In the case of temporal anchoring, on a par with the analysis of tense by Enç (1987), an event is anchored with respect to the moment of speech or a reference event. In the case of focus anchoring, I propose that an item is anchored with respect to a reference set of items, or an event is anchored vis-à-vis a reference set of events. Anchoring by focus provides another route to temporal anchoring, satisfying GAP.

In order to be used, the acceptable copula-less sentences are licensed by focus anchoring. They all involve either a strong value judgment and an opinion or rich background information, which can be regarded as salvaging devices for the copula-less sentences.

The predicate nominals that convey a subjective judgment of the speaker are contrasted with some presupposed properties and may introduce new information in certain contexts and receive a contrastive stress or contrastive accent.

Contrast structures make it clear that we are speaking of an arrangement of participants and situations having a 'list reading'. The copula-less sentence is juxtaposed with an alternative situation. The invoking of a contrast set is a key element underlying focus structure.

(32) is similar to contrast structures that also invokes a contrast set and is juxtaposed with alternative stations in the set.

The choice of GAP is determined by syntax. Suppose that there must be a tense operator in temporal anchoring. Enç (1987) argues that tense is indexical like all other referential expressions and is conceived of as a pronominal variable, in that the truth of a tensed sentence is relative to the speech time. A tense is anchored through its complementizer C (or a tense operator embedded in CP). Thanks to the projection of CP and the tense morphology of English, temporal anchoring could be regarded as a 'default' strategy to license a sentence in English.

Focus anchoring is an alternative strategy to license a sentence in English. Given that English copula-less sentences are bare, there are no CP for the tense operator and TP for tense morphology. Temporal anchoring is never available in copula-less sentences.

The accusative Case of the subject *me* in (31) may indirectly support the present analysis that English copula-less sentences are bare. Let us assume with Schütze (1997) that the 'default' Case of the English subject is the accusative Case when it cannot get the nominative Case. If the copula-less sentences in (31) are bare, the subject cannot receive the nominative Case from a functional category, for instance, T. Hence, the subject gets the default accusative Case. Focus anchoring in copula-less predicative sentences follows the bareness of the structure in syntax.

To license the copula-less sentences, I assume that an open place in a predicative nominal is to be licensed by a focus operator in focus anchoring. If the open place has already been licensed by D, the focus operator becomes redundant and will be ruled out by economy of representation. That is why (34) is unacceptable.

Recall that (2), as repeated in (37) is ruled out by an assumption that the verb *kiss* lacks tense morphology. Given

GAP, the ungrammaticality of (37) is ruled out by the unavailability of temporal anchoring.

(37) *John kiss Mary.

Basically (37) is syntactically well-formed. Its incompleteness is mainly due to semantics, i.e. tense anchoring, not due to syntax. If the context is appropriate and rich enough to recover the incompleteness of (37), there could still be a chance for (37) to be used as an acceptable sentence. Notice that in some contexts, such as in so-called ‘Mad Magazine’ sentences (Akmajian 1984), bare verbs without tense morphology are acceptable in English.

(38) What? John kiss Mary? Never!

Such sentences normally require a strong evaluative context and special intonation in order to be felicitous. To rule in (38), we may assume that the bare verb *kiss* is licensed by focus anchoring. If (38) has a bare VP structure, there is no room for temporal anchoring: unavailability of TP for the realization of tense marking. The following examples further show that functional categories, such as T, should be missing in Mad Magazine sentences. (39) is a passive sentence that lacks the auxiliary, showing that T is omitted. Schütze (1997) points out that the subject in (40) has the accusative Case, the default Case in English, rather than the nominative Case. The fact in (40) implies that T appears to be absent.

(39) Me demoted to ensign?!

(40) Her/*she cheat on you? Never!

If our discussion is correct, incomplete structures in English can be saved if the context is appropriate. A salvaging device

for the incomplete structures is focus anchoring in English.

8. Licensing strategies and emergence of the unmarked

Assuming that grammar is parsimonious and language structure should be constructed minimally, so-called ‘incompleteness’ should be a preferred option in structure building in syntax. However, incomplete expressions provided by syntax are not necessarily ready to be used. The language faculty has to make sure that every expression is accommodated to the performance systems. Licensing of incomplete structures is a strategy imposed by the performance systems on the expressions at the interfaces to recover the missing information to ensure effective communication.

Incomplete structures in English can be classified into two types: (i) structures with null projections and (ii) those with missing projections. To license incomplete structures, there are several possible salvaging devices, namely syntactic as well as non-syntactic devices.

We can observe that in the discussion of this paper, syntactic licensing includes movement and binding. Raising *wh*-words to the specifier of CP is to avoid having a phonetically null CP domain. Prohibition of null projections is imposed on the PF interface by the sound system. To ensure that the null infinitival T in the embedded clauses, such as absolute clauses and small clauses, can receive proper temporal interpretation from the matrix clause, a binding configuration between the matrix clause and the embedded T must be there.

Regarding non-syntactic licensing, English may employ phonological strategies as well as semantic/pragmatic strategies.

In echo questions, a phonological strategy is used by inserting a suprasegmental *wh*-particle to C, deriving a special intonation. In absolute clauses and small clauses, the semantic content of the null copula is recovered by contextual information. In copula-less sentences, the predicate nominal is licensed by focus in a sense of focus anchoring. The bare verb in so-called Mad Magazine sentences can be licensed if the contextual information is rich enough.

It has been widely assumed in the literature that by virtue of its rich morphological system of functional categories, grammatical relation in English, like other Indo-European languages, can be realized and settled in syntax that fully makes use of syntactic licensing devices, for instance, subject-verb agreement, tense marking, plural marking, *wh*-movement, subject-auxiliary inversion in interrogatives, passivization, relativization, etc. Generally speaking, the expressions provided by syntax are basically complete and should be ready to be used by the performance systems in English.

Given that grammar is assumed to be parsimonious, all these syntactic licensing strategies involve certain complexity, like a rich system of functional categories, additional features to trigger syntactic movement, and would be regarded as 'costly'.

On the other hand, if a structure is constructed minimally to an extent that its incompleteness cannot be salvaged internally in syntax, non-syntactic licensing mechanism will be activated. Non-syntactic devices, such as supplying intonation, focus, and contextual information, can be regarded as 'economical' from a syntax point of view because all these non-syntactic devices are from the 'external' systems, such as prosody, discourse, etc., which have nothing to do with syntax. No formal syntactic devices are involved to make the structure complete.

Suppose that the costly syntactic devices are 'marked' while the non-syntactic/external devices are 'unmarked'. Borrowing a

terminology from the optimality theory, we may say that the use of non-syntactic licensing is the ‘emergence of the unmarked’ (McCarthy and Prince 1994). An unmarked licensing strategy is promoted and comes to predominate in the grammar of language, playing an increasingly surface-true role in licensing of incomplete structures in English.

Exactly how an unmarked licensing strategy gets promoted is, of course, the crucial question. A possible starting point to study, as what I did in this paper, is to look at colloquial speech in English. In colloquial fast speech, speakers tend to simplify their speech and opt simple and short expressions, normally resulting in incomplete structures and fragmentary utterances. The *you idiot* expressions are good examples. Given the bareness of those expressions, there is no place for the realization of tense marking, presumably a ‘marked’ syntactic licensing strategy in English, and thus focus anchoring, a more economical licensing strategy, emerges.

Another place to look for the emergence of the unmarked is in child language. Children tend to prefer simple structures. For example, root infinitives are legitimate in child English. If Radford’s (1990) analysis is correct, root infinitives in child English are bare VPs. Since functional categories are missing in the structure, focus anchoring plays a role in licensing of bare verbs. Along these lines, phenomena like Mad Magazine sentences could be the result of some aspect of child grammar surviving into adulthood.

English is said to be a ‘sentence-oriented language’ (or known as ‘syntax-oriented language’), in which a sentence is a well-structured unit syntactically. All grammatical relations are marked morphologically and sentence boundaries clearly defined. On the other hand, East Asian languages like Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, by contrast, are often regarded as ‘discourse-oriented languages’ with series of very short sentences,

which are not clearly defined syntactically, loosely connected to form a discourse and very sensitive to pragmatics.

If our discussion in this paper is on the right tract, however, some specific domain in English may also display properties of discourse-oriented languages, sensitive to pragmatics. Such properties easily emerge in incomplete structures normally uttered in colloquial fast speech. Although syntactic licensing may be subject to parametric variation, for instance, lacking *wh*-movement in Korean, non-syntactic licensing provided by the performance systems tends to be universal.

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