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VERB PHRASE COMPLEXITY
IN
CONRAD'S *LORD JIM*:
AMINIMALIST APPROACH

An M.A Thesis
in linguistics

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Abstract

For more than fifty years now, linguists have been involved in establishing the necessity of a specific component of our biological endowment to account for the (tacit) knowledge and ability we display when we produce and understand language. This inborn component has received various names. Among the most popular ones are the faculty of language (FL), the language organ and the language instinct. It is also called the "I-language"(Radford, Sntax ٣). Chomsky describes it as "some array of cognitive traits and capacities, a particular component of the human mind/brain"(Chomsky,*The Minimalist Program* ١٤).

Given this endowment, a child will categorize parts of the confusion around her as "linguistic" and develop capacities to enter into these modes of human thought and action (Roger , Michaels and Uriagereka ٩٠). FL is a "language organ" commonly described as "the visual system, the immune system and the circulatory system".

It is a complex structure that we hope to understand. However, understanding FL can only be done tacitly.

FL has an "initial state" which is uniform for all species. However, it can undergo state changes under influences of the environment. To depict its main features or characteristics there appeared the theory of Universal Grammar (UG). This theory has been developed to describe the complex structure of FL: a cognitive system that stores information about sound, meaning and structural organization. Chomsky calls this information "competence" while systems accessing it and putting it into use "performance" L provides information to the performance systems in the form of "levels of representation," called "interface levels."

Performance systems are of two kinds: "sensorimotor systems" connected with sound and systems of thought connected with meaning (99). L is a device that provides instructions (i.e. information about sound) for sensorimotor systems to work and instructions for systems of thought (i.e. information about meaning). Such instructions are conventionally termed as "features'.

Such features, or properties of language, enter into Phonetic Form (PF) connected with sound and logical form (LF) connected with meaning. The system responsible for generating them is called "the computational system." Since the status of the set of expressions generated by initial language is like "plans to describe limb motion," it is not easy to describe it explicitly.

The theory of Universal Grammar (UG) attempts to characterize the languages (states) attained and the shared initial state. To do this, the theory of UG must have descriptive adequacy and explanatory adequacy. Tension arose between both and this has been the starting point for driving the research inquiry of generative grammar from its inception. The Principles and Parameters approach (P&P) suggests a way of forming a genuine theory. However, it is not a final step of research. On the contrary, it helps generate new questions about FL.

In particular, "how well is FL designed?"(٩٢). To answer this question is the main goal of the MP. It seeks

to discover the right theory. More specifically, it attempts to discover "to what extent minimal conditions of adequacy suffice to determine the nature of the right theory." In a nutshell, it seeks "to understand how much of the P&P architecture follows from general properties of optimal, computationally efficient system"(Boeckx ^).

List of Abbreviations and Symbols

A Movement: Argument Movement

A: Adjective

A-bar Movement: Non-argument Movement

A-Bar-position: Non-argument Position

Acc: Accusative

ADV: Adverb

ADVP : Adverb Phrase

AGR: Agreement

AgrO : Object Agreement

AgrOP : Object Agreement Phrase

AgrS : Subject Agreement

AgrSP : Subject Agreement Phrase

A-Position: Argument Position

AUX: Auxiliary

BT: Binding Theory

C : Complementizer

CP : Complementizer Phrase

D: Determiner

DP: Determiner Phrase

D-structure: Deep Structure

ECM: Exceptional Case Marking

EME: Early Modern English

GBT : Government and Binding Theory

HMC: Head Movement Constraint

I: Inflection

INFL: Inflection

IP: Inflectional Phrase

L J: Lord Jim

LF: Logical Form

MP: Minimalist Program

MSE: Modern Standard English

N: Noun

Nom: Nominative

NP: Noun Phrase

Ø: Null

O Movement: Operator Movement

P: Preposition/ Prepositional Particle

PF: Phonetic Form

Spec-: Specifier

S-structure: Surface Structure

T : Tense

Θ: Theta

TP : Tense Phrase

UG: Universal Grammar

UGT: Universal Grammar Theory

UTAH: Uniform Theta-Assignment Hypothesis

V: Verb

VP: Verb Phrase

VP: Verb Phrase