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### Deconstructing a Grammar: Locality, Minimality, and the Subjective

Hector A. Torres  
*University of New Mexico*

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H. A. Torres,  
Associate Professor  
English Department  
University of New Mexico  
MLA 01, New Orleans  
Language Theory

**Deconstructing a Grammar:  
Locality, Minimality, and the Subjunctive**

**0.0 A Sophism**

I want to begin by acknowledging the sophistical argument this essay makes from the start. Through the mouth of Socrates Plato has let us know what little regard he had for the sophisms of the Sophists. It is clear that what he despised most in the Sophists was their disregard for Dialectic, the human faculty composed of the logical operations of Collection and Division. Together, these two operations composed the method of Dialectic, or dialectical reasoning. I am afraid I'll be remiss with respect to dialectic in this essay since my collections will not coalesce into a synthetic unity nor will my divisions descend from one. Indeed, I am forced to wonder if, when all is said and done, my essay will be guided by anything hardly rational.

In this essay I wish to establish a theoretical and empirical ligature between generative grammar and deconstruction. How and why these two branches of knowledge should have such liaisons are of course question of tremendous historical scope. My aim is not so much to present new data but bring a certain perspective to already existing data and theory in the fields of syntax and semantics. The perspective I want to bring aligns Chomsky's Principle of Full Interpretation with Derridean difference. I take Chomsky's Principle of Full Interpretation to be a version of the principle of identity and its twin, noncontradiction. In fact, the Principle of Full Interpretation might be one of the strongest instantiations of identity and noncontradiction in the intellectual market place today. A derivation, or a native speaker's computation of grammaticality for some arbitrary string of syntactic phrases, converges because each lexical item satisfies the

head, specifier, or complement features of some other lexical item. Everything is in its place on both the phonetic and semantic sides of the linguistic sign. As I will argue, Derridean difference disturbs the Principle of Full Interpretation not by threatening identity as if from the 'outside' but on the contrary, but by posing from the 'inside' the possibility that Full Interpretation and Derridean difference might actually be the same thing. This reduction to and by difference would make of the former a kind of null hypothesis. In my exposition, I first give empirical characterization of both locality and minimality in order to show how these phenomena began to disintegrate in front of the grammatical category and function language theory and practice calls the subjunctive mood. As I said, my conclusion will be hardly rational, if even pronounceable.

### 1.1 Some Data for Locality: Argument Structure

The history of generative grammar has been a movement towards the theoretical concepts of locality and minimality. Working in tandem, locality and minimality keep grammatical theorization close to the data. Locality requires that the principles of grammar first and foremost take account of adjacent or nearly adjacent categories, positions, or relations. For instance, in the expression of argument structure, that is, the relationship of a verb to its strictly selected complements, the locality condition requires a statement that such strictly selected complements are always realized in the vicinity of the selecting verb. Minimality exploits this observation by stipulating that no rule of grammar interrelate two grammatical elements if some third element intervenes. The locality observation is by no means trivial and it is the subject of major theory construction in generative grammar, as in the work of Manzini (1992). In the current Minimalist framework, locality is pervasive throughout the principles and parameters of grammar in and through the work of the Minimal Link Condition (Chomsky 1995 311). In all cases, locality quickly captures the direction of the assignment of thematic roles to nouns by a verb, as in the contrast between *fear* and *frighten*:

- (1) a. The boy scouts fear the thunder  
b. The thunder frightens the boy scouts.

In more subtle cases, locality acquires a high degree of descriptive adequacy. In the following data, locality effectively differentiates between 2-place predicates and 3-place predicates when the feature [ $\pm$ TENSE] is manipulated.

- (2) a. I promised Mary TO buy her chocolate.  
b. I promised Mary THAT I WOULD buy her chocolate.
- (3) a. I persuaded Mary TO buy Harry chocolate.  
b. I persuaded Mary THAT she SHOULD buy Harry chocolate.
- (4) a. I expected Mary TO buy Harry chocolate .  
b. I expected THAT Mary WOULD buy Harry chocolate.
- (5) a. Thelma believes Louise TO have abandoned her husband.  
b. Thelma believes THAT Louise HAS abandoned her husband.

The verbs *promise* and *persuade* are both 3-place predicates as each selects three arguments to express their propositional content. *Promise*, for instance:(i) the *Agent* thematic role in the subject position, (ii) the *Beneficiary* thematic role in indirect object position, and (iii) the *Theme* role, i.e., the content of what is promised or the constituent in a direct object position. The manipulation of the feature [ $\pm$ TENSE] establishes an underlying contrasts between *promise* and *persuade* on the one hand and *expect* and *believe* on the other. The [ $-$ TENSE] versions make it difficult to know whether the Noun Phrase *Mary* is closer to the embedded clause or the matrix verb. Only when one manipulates the feature [TENSE] in the embedded sentences do we see that *promise* and *persuade* require the NP to stay outside the domain of the tensed clause. *Expect* and *believe* are both 2-place predicate verbs. *Expect* selects two roles, the *Agent-as-Experiencer* and the state of affairs the verb projects, a part of the conceptual-intentional interface level. These two thematic roles divide into a syntactic subject and a syntactic object. This description further implies that *promise* and *persuade* involve a relation of control between a Noun Phrase in the matrix and the subject of the infinitive. *Promise* and *persuade*, for instance, have contrastive control relations. The subject of *promise* controls the reference of the subject of the infinitive, while it is the object of *persuade* that performs the control. More fully spelled out, (2a) and (3a) demonstrate these relations of control with indices and the nonphonetic pronominal PRO:

- (6) a. I<sub>i</sub> promised Mary [PRO<sub>i</sub> TO buy her chocolate]  
 (7) a. I persuaded Mary<sub>i</sub> [PRO<sub>i</sub> TO buy me chocolate]

Thus, the verbs *promise* and *persuade* contrast in their selectional properties with those of *expect* and *believe* and locality attains descriptive adequacy by sketching the relative difference the Noun Phrase *Mary* plays in the verbs *promise* and *persuade* as against *expect* and *believe*. The distinct grouping of arguments in a *promise* or *persuade* projection versus a *persuade* and *believe* projection is a sign that locality is at work inasmuch as the claim of the distinct groupings is that both *promise* and *persuade* are thematically marked in the matrix clause rather than in the embedded clause, despite surface similarities to the infinitive counterparts. Locality will also mark the lower clause as a site with its own internally motivated thematic structure. Shifting the value from a minus to a plus also shows that *expect* is a 2-place predicate, a fact that also holds for *believe*. Schematically, locality gives us the following description:

- (A). NP + {*promise, persuade*} + NP + {CLAUSE}  
 X..... Y.....Z

The descriptive formula in (A) is meant to accord with Manzini's definition of locality, phrased in terms of the axiomatic notion of dependency: "If  $\alpha$  is a dependent element, there is antecedent  $\beta$  for  $\alpha$ , and a sequence ( $\beta, \dots, \alpha$ ) that satisfies government." (142) To satisfy government means exactly to be in a local relation either by way of indexing or by adjacency. On the one hand co-indexation establishes a link via coreference and on the other adjacency makes a head out of one of two dependent elements. Though government is a notion and syntactic configuration the Minimalist Program would like to dispense with, it tends to survive in the theory (at least) as thematic marking by head on a complement. It seems that a basic intent of the Minimalist Program is to make thematic marking a phenomenon that happens only once—need happen only once—and thus an attempt to keep all derivations to a single step. The verbs *promise* and *persuade* govern X, Y, and Z, but none of the contents (inside) of argument Z. If an element inside the Z-argument is moved out of its clausal domain and intervenes between the verb, and, say Y and Z, the locality constraint would predict an ungrammatical structure.

- (8) a. \*I<sub>j</sub> promised Mary chocolate PRO<sub>j</sub> TO buy her <sub>-i</sub>  
 b. \*I promised Mary chocolate<sub>i</sub> THAT I WOULD buy her <sub>-i</sub>  
 c. \*I persuaded Mary chocolate<sub>i</sub> PRO<sub>j</sub> TO buy her <sub>-i</sub>  
 d. \*I persuaded Mary<sub>j</sub> chocolate<sub>i</sub> THAT she<sub>j</sub> SHOULD buy Harry <sub>-i</sub>

All the structures in (8) show that an errant argument has dissatisfied locality, but how? First of all, the direct object argument of *buy* cannot be made part of the valency of either *promise* or *persuade*. The errant argument *chocolate* has disturbed a local relation between the selecting verb the selected clausal argument. It is at this juncture that minimality comes to supplement locality by barring any kind of grammatical element from disrupting any link between two grammatical elements that satisfies locality, in whatever version. In the classification of declarative interrogative mood clauses locality also plays a crucial role.

## 1.2 Declaratives, interrogatives, and locality

- (9) (a). I hope THAT Thelma WILL dance after lunch  
 (b). I hope FOR Thelma TO dance after lunch  
 (c). I wonder WHETHER Thelma WILL dance after lunch.  
 (d). I wonder WHETHER TO dance after lunch.  
 (e). I wonder IF Thelma WILL dance after lunch.

These data exemplify the local dependencies the main verb of each clause enters into with the COMPLEMENTIZER (the subordinating conjunction), and the COMPLEMENTIZER with the grammatical feature [ $\pm$ FINITE] of the embedded clauses. These local dependencies then come to furnish the empirical criteria for classifying clauses in terms of declarative and interrogative moods. The verb *hope* always selects an indicative clause, the selection expressed through the COMPLEMENTIZERS *THAT* and *FOR*. The former depends locally on the feature [+FINITE TENSE] and the latter depends on the feature [-FINITE TENSE]. The verb *wonder* interacts with the COMPLEMENTIZER *WHETHER*, and *WHETHER* interacts with the plus or minus values of the feature [FINITE]. Notice that *IF* groups with *WHETHER* to signify interrogative mood, but groups with *THAT* in relation to the feature [+FINITE], that is,

there is no untensed version of *IF*. More loosely, the main verb depends on the subordinating conjunction and the subordinating conjunction depends on the type of inflection in the embedded verb. The following set of formulas serves to describe these local dependencies:

- (B) (i).  $V[\pm WH][\pm TENSE]$
- (B) (ii).  $[+WH] = \{WHETHER, IF\}$
- (B) (iii).  $[-WH] = \{THAT, FOR\}$

These formulas are descriptively adequate for the classification of clauses into either indicative or interrogative moods. Simply to repeat, *hope* is the kind of verb that selects only *THAT* and *FOR* and hence it is able to determine only declarative grammatical mood. *Wonder* selects a  $[+WH]$  for its COMPLEMENTIZER and thus it is a verb that selects interrogative clausal complements.

It is not a far step to take to see locality and minimality in this simple two-way structural taxonomy. Expressed over the nodes and branches of an X-bar syntactic tree, locality requires that relations between grammatical formatives be as close as possible. Minimality is used to define just how close two grammatical elements may be, doing so with the negative condition that no grammatical element may intervene or disrupt the local or potentially local relation between two other elements.

### 1.3 Minimality: Its Global Impact

Minimality is the inheritor of a structural formula that in the history of generative grammar was meant to account for certain grammaticality effects that the feature  $[+TENSE]$  has in embedded clauses. These effects were referred to as the Tensed Sentence Condition (TSC) and the Specified Subject Condition (SSC). The formula took this shape:

- (C).  $\dots X \dots [\alpha \dots Y \dots]$ , where  $\alpha$  contains TENSE or a Specified Subject Z.

The precise effects that this formula was to account for deserve an elaboration that I will defer for the present. For now I will simply say that it was the desire to eliminate the disjunctive nature of the formula that led to the more unified account called minimality. This desire led to the formulation of the minimality condition such that not just the effects of the TSC and SSC could be accounted for but a global array of grammatical data. Minimality is defined over the following syntactic configuration:

$$(D). \quad |_{XP} |_{X'} \mathbf{X} \mathbf{Y} \mathbf{P} |_{X'} |_{Y'} \mathbf{Y} \mathbf{Z} \mathbf{P} |_{Y'} |_{XP}$$

Luigi Rizzi (1990) defines minimality in terms of the structural relation of constituent command, an axiom developed to treat syntax in hierarchical terms and not just linear terms. The axiom of constituent command uses the node and branches of an X-bar tree to define explicitly how constituents come into contact with other constituents. In the strongest definition, a node X constituent commands a node Y IFF the first branching node dominating X dominates Y. This version not only keeps a phrasal domain local but small as well, making for a phrase that is quite 'flat'. This is in effect the government relation by a lexical head on a complement as the one puts its thematic mark on the second. Building on the work of Chomsky (1986), Rizzi formulates minimality with the intention of covering the effects of the Empty Category Principle, which states that all traces must be properly governed. The Empty Category Principle is perhaps the most under-determined piece of linguistic theory but it seems to find its validity not so much in requiring that a trace be properly governed but in requiring it to have a proper identity in language. That is, before the technical definition of proper government comes into play, ECP already seems to imply that if a trace exists, its existence should stem from some category of language. The product of movement, traces reproduce copies of themselves as silent constituents left behind when a category vacates one slot to fill another. These must be properly governed in the double sense of thematic marking or co-indexation. Proper government thus crucially involves the definition of minimality. In a relation of proper government, states Rizzi, X governs Y, "... only if there is no Z such that (i) Z is a typical  $\alpha$ -governor for Y, (ii) Z c-commands Y and does not c-command X" (1990 7). The term ' $\alpha$ -governor' stands for the double senses of government. The employment of



minimality in the definition of proper government makes it impossible for the variables X and Y ever to establish any kind of local link so long as Z intervenes, that is, so long as Z and Y are already in a local relation such as government by a head. Given syntactic configuration (D), the typical governor of ZP is Y and that of YP is X. The first branching node that dominates Y dominates ZP and forms a local domain, as in the case of lexical government. So long as this process is respected, no closer governor can exist for ZP other than Y and any attempt on the part of X to govern ZP will be interpreted as a violation of locality and minimality. Therefore no link can be established between X and ZP because Y c-commands ZP, i.e., as the closer potential governor, it automatically excludes the potential government of X.

For generative grammar, the structural configuration (D) is a universal as much as locality and minimality. No matter what type of grammatical dependency is being dealt with, this configuration will disallow the establishment of any of link between X and ZP so long as Y is in the way. However, the elegance of the formula is owed not so much to the tree geometry over which minimality and locality are defined as much as to the tautology inscribed in the clause that stipulates a typical governor. Minimality is a tautology *vis-à-vis* locality insofar as it requires the head-complement relation to be a case of local government but defines local government in terms of a negative condition prohibiting the disturbance of local relations in the first place. Because the clause concerning the typical governor is a form of distributional regularity, the definition immediately guarantees the local relation between a constituent-commanding governor and its complement(s). The constituent command relation codifies what is already a local relation, or in other words, expresses a redundancy that is much more a part of the theory of grammar than the data. Thus, this redundancy is not so much essential as theory-internal. Locality and minimality run up against this tautology because the distinction between them can be neutralized, if the negative condition attaching to the definition of minimality is subtracted.

#### **1.4 Locality and Minimality: The Reduction to Difference**

The neutralization of locality and minimality implies they are inter-substitutable in the sense that to deal with locality is to deal with minimality and *vice versa*. We can get a glimpse of this inter-substitutability in the data posed by the declarative and interrogative moods. In declaratives, *WH*-movement appears unbounded, that is, a *WH*-phrase can move past an indefinite number of complementizer positions so long as the grammatical element *THAT* or [*-WH*] is the head of CP, leaving the [SPEC, CP] position as a possible landing site for the *WH*-phrase in transit. The *WH* phrase lands in every available [SPEC, CP] position just to satisfy locality and in sum makes the entire domain of the clause a kind of local space. Whether performed step-wise, one local link at a time, or in one fell swoop from its extraction site to the question mark position, [SPEC, CP], the movement of the *WH* phrase produces grammatical results as in (10). The unbounded movement of *WH* elements within the domain of declaratives is so smooth that one begins to wonder if minimality ever existed.

- (10) (b). John said THAT Mary thought THAT Harry would buy tickets to the rodeo for all of us.  
 (b'). What<sub>i</sub> did John say THAT Mary thought THAT Harry would buy τ<sub>i</sub> to the rodeo for all of us?  
 (b''). For whom<sub>i</sub> did John say THAT Mary thought THAT Harry would buy tickets to the rodeo τ<sub>i</sub>?

Movement of a *WH*-phrase across CP nodes filled with other *WH* elements is more problematic and their manipulation brings ungrammaticality to the surface:

- (11) (a). John said THAT Mary wondered WHETHER Harry would buy tickets to the rodeo for all of us.  
 (a'). ?\*What<sub>i</sub> did John say THAT Mary wondered WHETHER Harry would buy τ<sub>i</sub> for all us?  
 (a''). ?\*For whom<sub>i</sub> did John say THAT Mary wondered WHETHER Harry would buy tickets to the rodeo τ<sub>i</sub>?

The contrastive sets (10) and (11) show the interrogative sentences (a') and (a'') to be at the borderline of grammaticality. The tokens (a') and (a'') are ungrammatical because the moved *WH* element does not and cannot land in the [SPEC, CP] of the lowest clause, which is already filled with a pre-established *WH* element. In these cases, the *WH*

element fails to transit in the way required by locality, step-wise, one hop at a time, from its base position to the first available [SPEC, CP] and every other one thereafter. Since the moved element does not land there, a violation of locality ensues. When the moved *WH* element arrives at its final [SPEC, CP] it will already have traversed the node that insures its impending ungrammatical status. It may be impossible to delineate locality and minimality as self-standing conditions of grammar because, operating over exactly the same structural domain, minimality can make sense only in relation to locality and *vice versa*. Does the locality condition identify a local syntactic space because no grammatical element clefts it, or does minimality cleft a local syntactic space precisely so as to identify what sort of geometrical space can count as local on an X-bar tree? Here no doubt a weak disjunction ‘or’ begs the question. In (E), if *Z* is a trace-anaphor and *X* a *WH*-antecedent, then *Y* intersects the link between *X* and *Z* by virtue of constituent commanding *Z* but not *X*. The link between a moved *WH* and its extraction site, the position where it is assigned a thematic role, is rendered illicit by the fact that the *WH* element does not deposit a trace in the CP of the lower clause. In a sense, it is just this violation that allows the grammatical notion of locality to emerge in a non-trivial sense. That is, presumably it would be a problem at the Articulatory-Perceptual and Conceptual-Intentional levels to receive inputs from grammatical competence dealing only with declaratives structures, even if they are considered unmarked. Given minimality, the grammarian knows straightaway what can count as a local geometrical space and what cannot. Thus, formula (E) expresses this grammatical knowledge, or equally as well, this knowledge of ungrammaticality.

(E).    \* $[WH_i \dots [WHETHER \dots [V \tau_i ]]]$   
           X.....Y.....Z

But knowledge of ungrammaticality also unsettles any neat division between locality and minimality. That is, I interpret the borderline of grammaticality of (a') and (a'') as a reassertion of locality to gain the lost space back. As the force of the variable *Y* weakens, it erases its intervention on the local space created in the link between *WH* and a trace, as (E) expresses. The erasure of the intervening node could account for the

borderline grammatical status of these two tokens. Or, perhaps its better to say that the difference that both binds and repel the locality and minimality is deconstructable one. The claim to deconstructability would follow immediately by subtracting the negation necessary for the definition the of minimality. The subtraction is as arbitrary as the borderline grammaticality of tokens (a') and ( a'') is real. Some of this arbitrariness is assuaged by the data. Recall that WH movement is unbounded in declarative domains because every CP has a specifier position for WH element to land in. CPs with a [+WH] do not avail this position, except when [+WH] = IF, a problematic situation for locality and minimality.

Here it would be necessary to stipulate that IF projects a CP with a [+WH] head and thus has the form of an interrogative. The property of projecting as a head of CP groups IF with declarative THAT. Like the element *THAT*, *IF* depends on the feature [+TENSE] of the embedded clause as per the formulas of (B). Like *THAT*, *IF* also leaves the [SPEC, CP] position open for a WH-phrase to land. Unfortunately, this is not a desired result. By leaving open [SPEC, CP] as a landing site, a derivation with *IF* should not yield the even borderline grammaticality of the following token:

- (12) (a). ?\*John asked for whom<sub>i</sub> Mary wondered IF Jerry would buy tickets for the rodeo  $\tau_i$

Instead, it should yield a fully grammatical token as (13b) precisely because both tokens obey the locality constraint:

- (13) (b). For whom<sub>i</sub> did John say THAT Mary thought THAT Jerry would buy tickets for the rodeo  $\tau_i$

To get beyond this discrepancy, the grammar needs the additional stipulation that every projection of IF projects a [+WH] element that occupies the [SPEC, CP] position, sealing it off as an available landing site. The stipulation thereafter makes the movement of the WH-phrase a violation of minimality in order to get an explanation for the borderline grammatical status of (12a). Regardless, whether a [SPEC, CP] position is available or not in a CP headed by IF, (12a) will retain its borderline status.

The fact that WH movement in this case is indifferent to the availability of a position it should not otherwise ignore speaks to the neutralization that can take place between the locality and minimality conditions. IF acts as a hinge between the declarative and interrogative moods, and just as critically, between minimality and locality. Why should IF have such a place in the taxonomy between declaratives and interrogatives? The unbounded movement of WH elements in declarative domains is *prima facie* evidence for the unmarked status of declaratives. It would not be surprising then for a feature of the grammar to tend towards the unmarked end of a certain kind of grammatical link, relation, or function. But interrogative IF also shows a close proximity to the subjunctive, and not just in semantic form or illocutionary force. As with IF, the subjunctive is evidence of the work of minimality in the grammar precisely because it violates locality.

## 2.1 Percolation as Data: The Subjunctive

The neutralization that differentiates and binds locality and minimality together is evident in the difficult time they have accounting for the subjunctive mood. As with the case of interrogatives and declaratives, the selection of the subjunctive mood in an embedded clause is in a complex dependent relation with the matrix verb. The difference is that formulas of the (B) type do not display the dependence obtaining between matrix and embedded verbs.

- (13). (a). Je veux QUE tu y ailles/\*vas  
(b). (Yo) quiero QUE tu vayas allí/\*vas allí  
(c). I demand THAT he go there/%goes there.

Minimality intervenes in the local space occupied by the link the matrix and embedded verbs create when the subjunctive is a possibility. The matrix verb and QUE/THAT are in a legitimate dependence relation as are QUE/THAT and the embedded verb inflecting for the subjunctive. The subjunctive relation of the embedded verb and the matrix however is left illegitimate or unexpressed, in full violation of Chomsky's Principle of Full Interpretation. This principle of grammar of course has its counterpart in philosophy

as the principles of identity, noncontradiction, and the excluded middle. Full Interpretation is a strong version of these, requiring every element in a derivation to be strictly licensed by the data. Chomsky puts it rather more technically: “We now say that the representation  $\lambda$  satisfies FI at LF if it consists entirely of legitimate objects; a derivation forming  $\lambda$  converges at LF if  $\lambda$  satisfies FI, and otherwise crashes” (MP, 194). It is thus imperative that a legitimate relation like the one expressed in the subjunctive be expressed in the grammar in a descriptive notation adequate to the task. To do this the grammar will also have to mark in some way that QUE has two interpretations, declarative and subjunctive readings. There is thus a lack of resolution in formula (B.iii) in which  $[-WH] = \text{QUE or FOR}$ . This formula implicitly grants the declarative unmarked status. QUE here contains radically different semantic roots; QUE is ambiguous, at times a declarative THAT and at other times a subjunctive THAT.

To deal with this ambiguity, the grammar neutralizes the locality/minimality distinction again, this time through the use of the concept of percolation. Percolation is a way to allow the relation between matrix and embedded verbs to remain local despite the minimality violation. Percolation allows the subjunctivity of the embedded verb to attain a position adjacent to QUE, thus associating it with the subjunctive and legitimizing an interpretation that diverges from declarativity. Percolation has not survived the theoretical razors of the Minimalist Program but I mention it here to emphasize how such a device as simple percolation can turn the illegitimate into the legitimate, minimality into locality. Percolation is thus one more sign in the grammar that locality and minimality fold into the same geometrical space. The negative condition that differentiates minimality from locality is just that fold. A simple fold in a page turns a violation of minimality into locality. While a tighter theoretical bond between these two principles of grammar is hard to find, notice that it is also arbitrary. What counts as a legitimate local geometrical space is always already conditioned by the negative in the same way that identity, non-contradiction, and the excluded middle condition each other. Just as identity cannot arise without negation, so minimality makes sense of locality. The nature of the difference between minimality and locality is therefore not at all a bipolar one, in the sense that one carries a plus value and the other a minus, even if minimality carries the negation. Rather the difference is of the type in which the negation is a

condition for both principles of grammar. In this type of difference both locality and minimality share the negative value that neither is comprehensible without the other. Therefore, whatever constitutes their difference cannot be neutralized *in toto*, but must be conserved in the neutralization. Deconstruction does not have a right to call this a sublation or synthesis, though it does reserve a certain spelling for that difference. This type of difference in a sense brings things to a standstill because of the necessity to express both difference and its neutralization.

It is this type of difference that also aligns with the Principle of Full Interpretation. Chomsky is quite clear about the import of this principle and it is not in the first instance to hand a native speaker a faculty for intelligibility or mutual comprehension between speaking subjects in complex ritual interaction: “A convergent derivation may produce utter gibberish, exactly as at P[honetic] F[orm]. Linguistic expression may be ‘deviant’ along all sorts of incommensurable dimensions, and we have no notion of ‘well-formed sentence’. Expressions have the interpretation assigned to them by the performance systems in which the language is embedded: period” (MP, 194). It follows Full Interpretation represents a cap on legitimate objects in syntax, a kind of lower and upper limit in the grammar. These empirical boundary conditions are not limits on linguistic expression, since a derivation can be ‘gibberish’ and still not crash. Instead, Full Interpretation, as the convergence of derivations, is there to insure that all derivations respect all principles of grammar. When universal grammar is respected thus, the performance systems have nothing to worry about. All of (or most of all) the grammatical digits have been computed *a priori* and unconsciously. In a sense, when Full Interpretation takes place, everything in the native speaker’s mind is at a standstill with respect to questions of grammaticality. There is nothing to do but talk, concern ourselves with the performance. On this interpretation,, the more support generative grammar finds support for Full Interpretation, the more the variations of particular languages will be neutralized higher, more abstract, and ultimately invariant principles of universal grammar. The more generative grammar discovers the invariant principles of universal grammar—the ‘free’ knowledge we have by virtue of inheriting a human culture—the less the variations of particular languages will be significant, except as

variations on a theme. One can count the ergative-absolutive and nominative-accusative distinction as part of this trend.

It is curious that universal grammar attains explanatory adequacy by neutralizing particular language difference into formal and highly abstract principles. If language is part of nature and nothing more, a unique faculty of human beings adequate to the interpretations of the performance systems, then it is in the 'nature' of universal grammar to reduce linguistic data to an invariable calculus. It shares this 'nature' with deconstruction inasmuch as the latter relies on the special sense of difference in which neutralizations conserve the neutralized differences. Both attain to their own kind of explanatory adequacy on the back of this curious kind of difference. For generative grammar this implies a constant tension between theory and data, something akin to making sure that there are no counter-examples. For deconstruction, explanatory adequacy implies that the deconstructor successfully subtracts the metaphysics of presence inhabiting language at all levels. In their ideal states, the projects of both generative grammar and deconstruction will leave nothing to be explained. If the Minimalist Program can be instantiated, the principles of grammatical computations will be shown to be transparent, the self-evident principles constituting the essence of language; and the Principle of Full will receive full support. Similarly, if deconstruction were to be exhaustively instantiated, Full Interpretations would be defeasable and the special sense of difference would be responsible. This difference would reduce universal grammar along with itself to a null hypothesis. Fortunately, no one is claiming that there is nothing to explain as there is plenty to explain.

## **2.2 Beyond the Null Hypothesis: Universal Grammar = Differ\_nce**

The hypothesis that both universal grammar and deconstruction strive after the null hypothesis, as the empirical completion of their respective projects implies, is at the same time a hypothesis about the subjunctive. The subjunctive hypothesis tries to make sense of why the interrogative mood, declarative-like IF, and subjunctive inflection affect locality so much. In its specificity, it goes against the grain of the unmarked status normally granted to the declarative. It reverses the relation of markedness among clause



types. The hypothesis treats the subjunctive as more than a chain of geometrical values in a syntactic configuration. In its specificity, the hypothesis turns to the feature [IRREALIS] in order to reverse clause markedness relations and endow X-bar configurations with this added value.

F. R. Palmer gives a thorough empirical description of the range of functions the subjunctive can take and I turn to it to give cross-linguistic balance to the hypothesis that the subjunctive . In particular, I wish to take from his cross-linguistic description of the subjunctive in the world's languages the language specific category or grammatical marker known as the irrealis. The irrealis is mood marked in languages like Jacaltec and Ngiyambaa, the one a language of Mexico and the other of N.S. Wales, Australia. In these languages the feature irrealis grammatically marks a relation between an event and its relative lack of grounding, i.e., whether or not the reported event has taken place. For instance, in Jacaltec the irrealis inflection marks both of these events:

- (14) (a). chur-oj ab scul nama tu  
 get angry-IRR EXH stomach people that  
 'let them get angry!'
- (b). x<sup>?</sup>-'oc heb ix say-a hun-uj munlabal  
 ASP-start PL woman look for FUT IRR pot  
 'the women will/may look for a pot'

The (14a) example is an exhortation in which the reported event, or better yet, the declaration of the wish that the event be grounded to some degree, projects the presupposition: *they may already be angry*. Secondly, the event is expressed with an ironic function, an indirect illocutionary force. The (14b) example shows that the inflection on the verb is for both future tense and the mood marker IRREALIS. In this case, the prediction is that the ungrounded event will take place. As a feature [IRREALIS] encodes a degree of commitment on the part of the speaker to the groundedness of the event. The speaker assumes a position relative to the degree of groundedness in the event, a value in the feature [ $\delta$ -IRREALIS]. X-bar phrase structure encodes the projection [ $\delta$ -IRREALIS] from the morphosyntax of a language whether or not that language has explicit morpheme for this relation between speaker and reported

event, that is, it projects universally and cross-linguistically. If this is so, the feature [ $\delta$ -IRREALIS] is part of linguistic competence, knowledge of the imaginary status of the reported event. Performance systems interpret the imaginary status of an event, which is as much inside the syntax as outside of it. While X-bar phrase structure is ill-equipped to encode this part of linguistic knowledge, Full Interpretation demands that no principle of grammar slight any aspect of linguistic competence. In that spirit, I reduce all the (B) formulas to (B'), a weak approximation to the Full Interpretation requirement.

(B').  $V [\Theta]$ , where  $\Theta$  = a phrasal domain affected by [ $\delta$ -IRREALIS]

This formula retreats into the collapsibility of minimality and locality. When a speaker utters a subjunctive, the syntax expresses a minimal link between an imaginary event and its [ $\delta$ -IRREALIS] whose potential value is computed by linguistic competence. The gap grammaticizes the subjunctive, demands it, so to speak.

Formula (B') presupposes that any and all domains in which an event is reported will be affected by some degree of IRREALIS, even those that are strongly declarative. The current usage with 'like' in the function of COMPLEMENTIZER may be an expression of this sort of projection. What the subjunctive data suggest is the possibility that the subjunctive mood may be more basic than the declarative mood. In certain sense, this would be like claiming that knowledge of an event's groundedness is more basic than knowledge of deep structure. On that interpretation, the subjunctive would be the unmarked mood. I leave the question of the imperative mood suspended.

(F). THE SUBJUNCTIVE HYPOTHESIS: Subjunctive ( $\geq$  Declarative  $\geq$  Interrogative)

In the unmarked position, the subjunctive mood has in effect 'percolated' past the CP where its amalgamation with QUE should have kept it put. Now notice what happens when 'percolation' is interpreted in satisfaction of Full Interpretation.

Suppose that the verb *to leave* has absolutely no post-verbal thematic role to assign. This thought experiment neutralizes the semantic differences between and among the various thematic markings represented in the following descriptive paradigm.

- (15). (a). Mary left  
 (b). Mary left {early, late, at noon...}  
 (c). Mary left {home, the park...}  
 (d). Mary left home in a hurry  
 (e). Mary left a book  
 (f). Mary left a book behind  
 (g). Mary left a book on the table  
 (h). Mary left me a book  
 (i). Mary left a book for me  
 (j). Mary left Harry  
 (k). Mary left Harry behind  
 (l). Mary left Harry for another  
 (m). Mary left Harry in the park  
 (n). Mary left Harry in a lurch (idiom chunk)  
 (o). Mary left in a boat/car

These thematic markings have to do with the semantic notions of PERSON, THING, PLACE, TIME, etc. Under such a condition of neutralization, the various thematic markings are subtracted from *leave* to yield something that goes beyond even the minimal member of the paradigm (15a), which seems to retain an implicit argument. Subtract that implicit argument and we end up with a structural representation like the following:

- (16) (a').  $\mu$  Mary left  $-\Theta$

Let  $\mu$  be the moment of utterance. Whether (16a') converges or crashes depends on whether  $-\Theta$  is a legitimate object, interpretable by Full Interpretation. If it crashes, a perfectly pronounceable and interpretable string is erased from the tables of grammaticality. If it converges, we have to find a reading for this 'gibberish'. At utterance time  $\mu$ , here and now, I interpret and pronounce (16a') as the specification of an event in which the subject Noun Phrase *Mary* disperses in every direction at once. To leave in this special sense is not to engage in an action or process but to participate in a state that moves from the integrity of the subject's body and mind to bloodless disintegration in the blink of an eye. Because this special sense of *leave* remains unattested, the verb refers event that has a high coefficient of [ $\delta$ -IRREALIS].

What would happen to the grammar as a whole if the subjunctive is allowed to project as in formula (B') and the subjunctive hypothesis is respected? Taken as an unmarked relative to the other clausal moods, the subjunctive would project 'wildly' as in the (16a') hypothetical. The subject would go along with projection of the predicate, treating Full Interpretation as a performative contradiction. It is Full Interpretation that allows (16a') to converge. At the same time, grammar as the unique property of a single human being would cease to exist and become language or *langue*, the unique property of human beings embedded in social culture. No longer a linguistic competence that resides inside a single individual, grammar would in the unattested sense of *leave* leave the empirical boundaries of the body to reside in human society far from any beyond. There, what we are accustomed to calling grammar will always already have been subject to and subject of all kinds of selectional pressures, historical contingencies, economic vicissitudes, and every relation of power imaginable.