

Exfoliation: towards a derivational theory of clause size

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We too easily become used to facts about language that should strike us as strange. One of these is the menagerie of clause-types and clause-sizes in the world's languages categorized with ill-understood labels such as finite, non-finite, full, reduced, defective, and worse. For almost a half-century, the standard approach to these distinctions has treated them as a consequence of lexical choice — a legacy of arguments by Kiparsky & Kiparsky (1970) and Bresnan (1972), who showed (1) that verbs that select a clausal complement select for the complementizer and finiteness of that complement, and (2) that finiteness and complementizer choice have semantic implications. In an early-1970s model of grammar in which selection and semantic interpretation were properties of Deep Structure, these discoveries directly entailed the lexicalist view of clause type that is still the standard view today.

So compelling was this argument at the time, that its 1960s predecessor (Rosenbaum 1967) was all but forgotten — the idea that distinctions are *derivationally derived* as the by-product of derivational processes such as Raising. As a consequence, it has gone unnoticed that in a modern model of grammar, where structure is built by Merge (and both selection and semantic interpretation are interspersed with syntactic operations), the arguments against the derivational theory no longer go through.

In this talk, I present a series of arguments for a modernized return to a derivational theory. I argue that a reduced clause is the response to specific situation: a clause-external probe that has located a goal such as the subject in the upper phase of its CP-complement, when that goal does not occupy the edge of its CP. Since anti-locality prevents that goal from moving to the clausal edge (Erlewine 2015 and predecessors), a last-resort operation called **Exfoliation** deletes outer layers of the clause until the goal occupies the edge without ever having moved there. Evidence comes from an array of English, Romance and Icelandic puzzles usually taken to bear on case and licensing, which in this theory bear instead on whether or not Exfoliation happened legally, as well as from complementizer-trace effects, the typology of anti-Agreement (Baier 2016), and Zulu hyper-Raising (Halpert 2015).