

## Syntactic obligatorification stems from universal communicative requirements

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In this talk, we discuss syntactic “obligatorification”. In our use of the term, “obligatorification” refers to the phenomenon where, in the course of grammaticalisation, an element develops the requirement for an overt dependent. For example, the Modern English article *the* requires a following noun, while its predecessor form, a demonstrative, did not. Similar obligatorification processes accompany the development of other grammatical parts of speech. The dynamics underlying obligatorification, however, have seldom been explored in detail. If mentioned at all, it is presented as syntactic reanalysis or rebracketing (Lehmann 1982/2002, Harris & Campbell 1995).

Reinöhl (2016), in studying the rise of Indo-Aryan postpositions, discovered that metaphorical uses of relational terms require dependents to be overtly expressed. Here, *metaphorical* means any usage where the relational term is combined with a semantically incompatible argument, i.e., incompatible under a literal interpretation of the relation. We explore this phenomenon with respect to other parts of speech and other languages. For example, the English relational term *middle* when used in a literal (usually spatial) sense does not require an explicit argument, as in *There is a backyard with a clothesline in the middle*. In contrast, metaphorical uses require an overt argument, as in *If there is trouble, then Jones is in the middle of it*. An examination of the 902 cases of *middle* without an overt argument in the British National Corpus included no clear cases of metaphorical use.

The requirement for overt dependents in metaphorical environments is hypothesised to stem from the cognitive needs of sentence understanding (Glucksberg 2003). In order to probe this claim, we manipulate literal vs metaphorical senses in communication experiments, and see the same requirement for dependents arising. We have constructed a computational model of sentence understanding which explains both anaphora resolution in the case of unexpressed referents and the requirement for an explicit argument in metaphorical uses.

In sum, we argue that obligatorification is not due to syntactic reanalysis or rebracketing, but is rooted in obligatoriness restrictions that are ever-present, universal communicative requirements of explicitness. In this view, obligatoriness is a response to the need for disambiguating constructions where the intended interpretation implies a significant level of cognitive dissonance. We also touch on how this cognitive requirement for a dependent can develop into a hard syntactic constraint. This talk presents a well-evidenced cognitive explanation for a pattern of obligatory dependencies seen diachronically and synchronically.

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613\(02\)00040-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613(02)00040-2)
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