

The Case of the Front-shifted Proper Noun

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One of the readily discernible trends today is the increasing popularity of constructions that are made up of noun phrases preceded by proper nouns without overt case markers: (Det.)+Nprop.+NP. Thus analytic expressions like *watchers of Korea* and *those who watch Korea* are giving way to their synthetic form *Korea watchers*.¹⁾ It is relatively easy to determine what sort of case governs with respect to the "front-shifted" proper noun in this case. The nature of the verb underlying the agentive noun dictates that the front-shifted proper noun be in the "patient" case as set forth in the case frame of Fillmore(1968).

In the meantime, semantic interpretations would ultimately render *Korea watchers* as *those who specialize in monitoring mainly political developments occurring in Korea*. Finally, pragmatic considerations may impose constraints on the type of country that needs or deserves to be so "watched." It is awkward if not unthinkable, for instance, to say *America watchers*, *France watchers*, or *Sweden watchers*, whereas one frequently encounters phrases like *China watchers*, *Vietnam watchers*, or *Cuba watchers*.²⁾ The pragmatic

1) See a *Time* news article (12/27/1982, p. 10) for the context in which this particular phrase is used. A 2,000-word news article in the March 7, 1983 issue of *Newsweek* contains 44 instances of this construction. Bolinger (1980a: 156) contains three front-shifted proper nouns out of a total of six proper nouns used on a single page. Elsewhere, Newman (1980) uses the construction profusely from cover to cover.

2) In the case of notorious dictatorships like Cuba and the Soviet Union the proper nouns preferred are *Castro (watchers)* and *the Kremlin (watchers)*.

criterion is that the countries so placed in the patient case be conceived as being in some way deviant or extraordinary in their political or geopolitical situation. In all these instances both the speakers and the hearers may be said to be sharing a common fund of real-world knowledge; or, to be more exact, their verbal interactions may be said to be predicated on a shared knowledge of current affairs or on "shared associations and connotations clustering around the proper noun" (Lyons 1981b: 221-222).

Were it otherwise, one would be at a loss what to make of the phrase *Seoul observers*.³⁾ It takes no linguistic acumen to be able to assign the case of "location" to the proper noun *Seoul*. Hence the phrase can be analytically scrambled as *observers based in Seoul* or *those who stay in Seoul and observe mainly political developments in and around it*. It is to be noted that the phrase *Seoul watchers* sounds no less awkward than the phrase *Korea observers*.⁴⁾ In either instance semantic and pragmatic considerations in effect block the use of the proper noun without a case marker in its pre-agentive noun position. In other words "Korea" as a political or geopolitical entity is characterized as one that deserves "watching," whereas "Seoul" as a major metropolitan center apparently has little to be "watched" even though it may be used as a convenient residential or operational locus for "observing."

The purpose of this paper is to determine what sorts of case relations are involved in the (Det.)+Nprop.+NP construction and to see what pedagogical implications it has for the TEFL profession in Korea.

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It must be made clear at the outset that neither Old English nor Modern English is completely synthetic or analytic. Even though Modern English is no longer encumbered by a complex system of inflectional endings governed by gender, number, case and so on, it nevertheless relies a great deal on a small but functionally heavy inventory of inflectional suffixes. Likewise, as

3) See *Time* (*loc. cit.*)

4) An entire country is admittedly too large a residential or operational locus for a political observer.

Traugott(1972: 110) pointed out, Old English already showed tendencies toward analytic expressions, the development of the segmentalized aspectual auxiliaries being a case in point. The tendency toward more and more extensive use of prepositions was already evident in later Old English. Thus what we find in Middle English and Old English is not necessarily "innovation toward analytic structures but rather extensive generalization of an operative system" (Traugott: *ibid.*)⁵⁾

Take the case of the possessive modifier in Modern English. It can either precede a noun as in *the city's population* (an OV characteristic) or follow it as in *the population of the city* (a VO characteristic). But there has been "a tendency to favor the second order, which has increased in frequency throughout the recorded history of English" (Pyles and Algeo 1982: 85). Such a tendency need not be interpreted as a sign of progress in the evolution of any language, however. For instance, Yana, one of the most seemingly complex polysynthetic languages, could hardly be described as being less advanced or more primitive than English, one of the most analytic offshoots from the Indo-European family.

All in all, as Lyons(1981a: 28) noted, if there has been any directionality in the evolution of language from its pre-historical origins to the present day, there is no evidence of any such directionality recoverable from the study of contemporary spoken language or those ancient languages of which we have any knowledge. It seems that we would do well to cease speculating about the evolutionary direction of languages from structural complexity to simplicity or vice versa. The point is well made especially in view of what information science tells us about the performance aspect of language. It is common knowledge that at least 50 percent of our utterances are redundant.⁶⁾ Redundancy is a built-in feature of verbal behavior essentially because the channel through which a given chunk of information can be

5) None of the recently published histories of the English language, such as Pyles and Algeo (1982), Baugh and Cable (1978), and Williams (1975), seems to set much store by the synthetic-analytic dichotomy even as they dwell extensively on the shedding of inflectional endings.

6) Traugott (1972: 15) goes so far as to declare that 70 percent of the "sounds" of an average utterance in English are redundant.

processed is restricted, *i.e.*, too narrow to permit the passage of bulky information in its original configuration. An utterance needs to be stretched thin and long to facilitate its reception and processing on the part of the hearer.

Expressions like *a Capitol Hill consensus* (*Time* 12/27/1982, p. 13), even though they smack a good deal of journalistic headlines, are highly compact and synthetically ordered. Overtly genitivizing the proper noun *Capitol Hill* would hardly alleviate the information processing burden on the part of the hearer. Doing so would even deprive the phrase of its unique case relations as revealed in its analytic version: *a consensus reached by members of the United States Congress (located on the Capitol Hill in Washington, D. C.)*. It needs no arguing that the latter version is easier to understand, at least where the general populace is concerned. All the same, however, the synthetic version *a Capitol Hill consensus* poses no problem to a majority of hearers who keep abreast of current events. It might even be the case that this expression is preferable to the long-winded and verbose construction of the analytic version for most well-informed speakers of English.

All this raises an intriguing question. Aren't the principle of linguistic economy⁷⁾ and that of redundancy at loggerheads with each other? It seems that the ambivalent nature of this issue must be squarely faced. Linguistic economy is dictated by the principle of least effort. A highly synthetic expression scores higher on the count of economy than a highly analytic one, at least where the process of utterance production is concerned. On the other hand, a highly analytic expression meets better the criterion of least effort than a highly synthetic one, at least where the processing of information is concerned. Yet such an all-too-facile approach to the question may be vacuous for all we know. For instance, it would be difficult to determine whether a highly synthetic utterance is indeed economically motivated in our cerebral functions. A boiled-down utterance seems to be intuitively more difficult to produce, other things being equal, than a long-winded one. The question is a complex one—so much so that we would do well to refrain from assigning value-judged directionality to the whole process.

7) See Zipf (1965) for elaboration.

But there is no denying that there has been an unmistakable trend toward favoring the synthetic construction in recent years. As noted earlier, the construction of noun phrases preceded by nouns including proper nouns without overt case markers, of course, is not a new one in English. In earlier Old English constructions like *Alfred cyning* were by no means rare even though they were confined to the use of rank titles. The development of the non-inflected, non-prepositioned constructions ultimately derived from genitives continued throughout the Middle English period when constructions like *the Bysshope man* were possible where personal names and titles were involved. Elsewhere in Old English a "genitive of definition" of the *Egypta folc (of-Egypt people)* type occasionally occurred also. In Modern English the synthetic construction has become "more daring and productive than ever, especially in official or professional jargon" (Foster 1968: 208-209). Thus the average man is quite used to talking or hearing about *a mystery man* or even *a Whitehall probe*, as Foster (*ibid.*) noted. Foster (*ibid.*) goes on to cite the case of *on efficiency grounds* which would traditionally have been *on the grounds of efficiency*.⁸⁾ It is worth noting, however, that thus far precious little has been said or written about this tendency in the literature-dealing with the growth and development of the English language in the past few decades. What Foster has forgotten to mention is that this construction is especially favored by the print media such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. The synthetic forms are a godsend to those who have to struggle with the problem of printing space day in and day out. But there are non-journalistic writers as well who indulge in the construction even when they write on "highbrow" topics.

Just how widespread the use of the (Det.)+Nprop.+NP construction has become and how divergent the case relations involved in them are may become clear by examining the following samples collected from publications

8) Most of the constructions have usually been categorized as "uninflected genitives" or as "string compounds" (*the Carlyle-Tennyson friendship* (Jespersen 1942: 155) or as "substantive compounds" (*the Browning family*) (Jespersen 1942: 148). Downing (1977: 828) cites *Eastern Oregon meal* as one of the novel noun+noun compounds bearing the underlying relationship of "Place."

dated no earlier than 1980:⁹⁾

A. LOCATION Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the locative case: NP is located/established/held/executed/resident/etc. in Nprop.

the Washington talks (cf. ?the America talks)
 Washington hard-liners
 a San Antonio jury
 Texas courtrooms
 the Los Angeles freeways
 the bloody Kwangju rebellion
 the Camp David accords
 a local Hamburg election
 a Manhattan food-delivery company
 a young suburban Tokyo mother
 the Lebanon conflict
 a West Side nightclub
 in her San Jose, Calif., home
 a New York audience
 the Prague summit
 the Detroit metropolitan area
 an East Texas sewage plant

9) Periodicals used for this survey are *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Dialogue*, *Fortune*, *National Review*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Baltimore Sun Book Review*, *The Wilson Quarterly*, *New Republic*, *Horizon*, and *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. The authors from whom samples have been collected are: Allan C. Carlston, Charles G. Burk, Bill Moyers, Robert Cahn, Thomas Mallon, Paul Goldberger, David J. Elazar, Edward Tenner, Saul Bellow, Anne Tyler, Tom Fulton, Peter Braestrup, Julian Simon, Walter Berns, Peter F. Stone, Robert G. O'Meally, Joan Melloan, Lewis Thomas, Karen J. Winkley, Donald Pizer, Alvin Toffler, Ira Krapp, Mark Strevens, Neal R. Peirce, Dwight Bolinger, Paul Kiparsky, Donald C. Freeman, J.P. Thorne, Stanley E. Fish, William Safire, Edwin Newman, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Geoffrey Sampson, Roger Bell, H. Douglas Brown, Robert P. Stockwell, James D. McCawley, Paul Schachter, John Lyons, James Michener. None of the writings of these authors, who range from natural scientists to stylisticians, are dated earlier than 1980.

an Arizona professor
 a San Francisco photographic studio
 an Illinois corn and soybean farmer
 a Harvard gathering
 a Broadway opening of a play
 Baltimore neighborhoods
 the Nuremberg trials
 a Cape Cod dentist
 the Auschwitz death camp
 a San Francisco track meet
 Austin's Oxford lectures
 Washington editorialists
 Ted Kennedy's Boston kickoff
 the Milwaukee syntax conference
 the Taiwan article¹⁰⁾

B. TIME Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the temporal case: NP is held/produced/executed/etc. at the time of Nprop. or while an event epitomized by Nprop. is in progress or active.

the Kennedy years
 the Vietnam era
 the Solidarity era
 a 1992 Buick
 1980 incomes of \$100,000 and above
 a 1975 paper
 his 1832 journal
 the 1864 law
 1974 technology and 1974 prices
 the December release of an opposition leader
 World War I trench warfare
 the July cut of the budget

10) In other contexts *Taiwan* may function as "goal," "agent," or "complex-implicator."

Carter's White House years
 a 1984 re-election campaign
 the 1980 question about water supply
 his 1835 grammar

C. AGENT Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the agentive case:
 Nprop. does/performs/provides/conducts/holds/produces/etc. an activity or
 event epitomized by NP.¹¹⁾

(Release him or) no Shultz visit
 the latest U.S. Government success
 a Reagan-Andropov summit
 Secret Service radio communications
 the Reagan effort (cf. *the President effort)
 Third World debts
 two more Rossi goals (in a World Cup game)
 (a target of) KGB persecution
 the Tory disarray
 one Reagan proposal
 the 1973 Supreme Court decision
 a favorite Nixon applause line
 the Brinkley show

D. PATIENT Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the patient case:
 Nprop. becomes the object or target of an activity or event epitomized by
 NP.

some overzealous Friedman followers
 Ellison readers
 a Dos Passos revival
 Sharon supporters
 Deukmajian critics

11) The agent is front-shifted because it needs no qualification or explication other than mere identification. The back-shifted agent in a passive construction, of course, serves a useful purpose as Allen (1983) has noted.

an outside Reagan adviser
 (the few days of) Kikongo learning
 the Rumasa takeover (in Spain)

E. INSTRUMENT Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the instrumental case: NP is achieved/performed/accomplished/etc. by means of Nprop.

the actual Tylenol poisonings
 the Polaroid negative
 the Nobel laureate
 a Washington Post report
 a Speech Act analysis
 a Newsweek piece
 current Foggy Bottom usage
 the Sherlock Holmes mystery
 a Rube Goldberg device
 the BBC talk (on Existentialism)
 a Rolls-Royce car-engine
 an RP accent
 an IP (item-and-process) description
 a general RG framework
 a DDG (Daughter-Dependency Grammar) model

F. SOURCE Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the originative case: NP originates from or is originated by Nprop.

a Harold Pinter play
 the Kinsey report
 the Reagan defense budget (cf. *the President defense budget)
 the Simpson-Mazzoli bill
 the Pei building
 the Cheever hero
 the Rogers and Hammerstein musical
 the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

the G. K. Hall reference guide
 the Percy dinner (cf. *the Chairman dinner)
 the IMF help
 the Faulkner and Hemingway passages
 the New Right legislation
 the Woodrow Wilson papers
 the OED definition
 the Yeats example
 the Halle-Keyser framework
 the Kiparsky system
 the Magnuson-Ryder rules
 the Chomsky-Halle stress rules
 the Chomsky tradition
 the TG derivatives
 Keenan-Faltz logical semantics
 the Katz-Fodor theory

G. GOAL Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the goal case: NP is directed toward Nprop.

the Vietnam intervention
 a Yosemite photographer
 the TG literature
 a Reagan birthday party
 a Middle East settlement
 a Trobriand fishing expedition

H. AFFILIATION Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the affiliative case: NP is affiliated/related/linked/etc. to Nprop.

a fifth Senate term
 my Edinburgh professor
 a leading Brookings economist
 the Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell
 a Wall Street lawyer (cf. ?a Times Square lawyer)

an Oxford cricketing half-blue
 his Knesset colleagues
 her unpublished Harvard dissertation
 the Hollywood royalty
 Fleet Street scamps
 Chase Manhattan executives
 a Treasury Department insider
 an adroit Senate leader
 M*A*S*H* alumni
 New Right fund raisers
 the OPEC nations¹²⁾
 Prague School structuralism and functionalism
 the Prague linguists
 a Jesus freak
 the current MIT school

I. INSTITUTION Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the case of institutional identity: NP is identified by a superordinate or governing institution epitomized by Nprop.

the Reagan administration
 the Jaruzelski regime
 the UNESCO world conference on cultural policies
 National Labor Relations Board jurisdiction
 (the emergence of) New York writers
 the MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Forces Reduction) talks
 (to consolidate) KGB power
 a Main Street, U.S.A., motif
 the London tabs
 the Iowa caucus
 SALT (or START) talks

12) Safire (1980: 230) demurs to the use of *OPEC nations*, arguing that *nations* should be replaced by *countries*, whereas Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 158) have dignified the phrase with *nations* by using it in a book on metaphor.

a Castro prison

J. POSSESSOR Phrases in which the Nprop. bears the genitive case:
NP is possessed by Nprop.

A Toyota assembly line
a Neanderthal mind
the Reagan ranch (cf. ?the President ranch)
the Carter warehouses
a Safire client
Sharon loyalists
(Governor) Brown intimate

K. COMPLEX-IMPLICATOR Phrases in which the Nprop. bears
complex-implicative relations vis-à-vis the NP.

a Fortune 500 company¹³⁾
an Exocet missile away
the Falklands factor
(What) an Aurora dawn (envisioned!)
the Watergate criminals
the Ancient Mariner problem
Updike's third Rabbit book
the Roots phenomenon
the Third Wave society
the Second Wave era
the Hiroshima bomb
the START negotiating atmosphere
SALT commitments
an IBM bias
a fresh Washington scandal
the Chappaquiddick incident¹⁴⁾

13) An analytic scrambling of the phrase would read: "one of the 500 largest corporations in the United States listed by a magazine called Fortune."

14) If it were not for the front-shifted proper noun, the three-word phrase would

the Yosemite bill
 the GATT fiasco
 Social Security bankruptcy

The complexity of case relations involved in all these phrases is such that some of them may overlap depending on the pragmatic orientation of the hearer. It might even be possible that some of the case assignments are unacceptable to those who approach them with a knowledge of current affairs different from that of mine. What matters, however, is that there are a distinct variety of cases that underly all these proper nouns in spite of their superficial absence. The fact that they can be used so flexively and extensively is ample proof that there is a commonality of real-world knowledge and, especially, a shared knowledge of current affairs.

The use of the (Det.)+Nprop.+NP construction represents a "front-shifting" in the sense the analytic process has in some way been reversed. The construction nevertheless is an asset in that it enhances the overall efficiency of communication despite the economy *vs.* redundancy debate. It is easy to predict, based on the trend noted so far, that the construction will become even more popular in the years to come. A student of English can ill afford to be insensitive to the subtle yet unmistakable evolution of this significant trend.¹⁵⁾ Indeed, as Bolinger(1980b: 383) aptly pointed out, linguists have now come back to *words* as carriers of implications as well as meanings, and are studying contexts and speaker-to-speaker interactions with the same zeal they formerly reserved for sentences.

3

An interesting feature of the (Det.)+Nprop.+NP construction is that it

have to be expanded to at least a 30-word phrase to be comprehensible: "an incident involving the U.S. Presidential aspirant Edward Kennedy who, while driving a sedan in which a secretary named Mary Jo Kopechne was riding, plunged into the Chappaquiddick river and emerged alive doing little or nothing to save the drowning woman on July 18, 1969".

15) It seems that no intelligent debate can get under way without relying on the extensive use of the front-shifted proper noun today. No proof is more convin-

is nearly identical with that used in Korean. In fact, most of the phrases cited above can be rendered in Korean in the identical word order. To be sure, a few of the phrases so rendered may sound somewhat awkward, so that postpositioning the genitive marker “-ui” may be in order. All in all, however, the two languages are very much alike in using the synthetic form not only in the journalistic media but also in all other varieties of writing or speaking.

All this has some positive implications for the TEFL profession in Korea. Students, once adequately informed, may find the construction attractive since it involves none of the inversions or prepositional phrases attendant upon the analytic construction so prevalent in English. At the same time, they can be guided or encouraged to pay more attention to the use of language items in their real-world context. It is not enough to merely grasp the culture of a target language in its static form. An adequate knowledge of real-world events or current affairs as they evolve on a short-term, if not day-to-day, basis is a prerequisite to being able to use or understand the (Det.)+Nprop.+NP construction.¹⁶⁾

Communicative competence is made up of sundry factors; not the least important is the ability to assign correct or valid current-affairs interpretations to proper nouns that are used without overt case markers followed by noun phrases. The fact that this type of construction is no stranger to a native speaker of Korean should be exploited to the benefit of all concerned.¹⁷⁾

cing than the perennial favorites like “Meet the Press” or “CBS 60 Minutes” aired over the broadcast media.

- 16) This does not in any way diminish the inherent utility of onomastics proper.
 17) Students may even take heart in being able to forgo that bogey of English grammar called “preposition” wherever feasible.

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(Abstract)

The Case of the Front-shifted Proper Noun

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The use of the (Det.)+Nprop.+NP construction (*e.g., Korea watchers, the Reagan ranch, a Harvard gathering*) is predicated on a common fund of knowledge about the real world and current affairs. Although the construction is as old as Old English, albeit on a limited scale, it was only in recent decades that it gained the marked currency and distribution it now enjoys. The phenomenon apparently represents a synthetic drift, whereas English as a whole has steadily been turning analytic over the past millenium or so.

This brings up the tricky question of linguistic economy *vs.* redundancy from the standpoint of information processing. The purpose of this paper, however, is not to delve into this problem beyond outlining its ambivalent nature, but to examine the case relations that are involved in this construction and to explore some pedagogical implications.

Based on a survey of extensive samples collected from writings dated 1980 and thereafter, the case categories of the proper nouns involved in this construction are determined to be as follows: Location, Time, Agent, Patient, Instrument, Source, Goal, Affiliation, Institution, Possessor, Complex-Implicator. Some of the case assignments no doubt are fuzzy enough to overlap, depending on the current affairs knowldge or orientation of the speaker/hearer. But there is no denying that a broad range of case relations governs the proper noun as used in this synthetic scheme of phrasal construction.

The synthetic use of the proper noun is nearly identical with that in the Korean language. Highlighting this construction in TEFL would relieve

some of the “fearsome burden” of internalizing the rules of prepositions on the part of Korean students. The use of a preposition can in fact be circumvented when a proper noun is involved so long as students cultivate knowledge about the real world and current affairs.