A LEXICAL LICENSING ANALYSIS OF THE ADJECTIVAL NOUN CONSTRUCTION

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Expressions like *an angel of a girl* show syntax-semantics mismatches; the first noun heads the phrase syntactically but not semantically. It also exhibits adjectival properties. Such properties of this type of expression are accounted for without problems pertaining to syntactic and lexical analyses, if the expression is treated as a constructional idiom, called here the adjectival noun construction, and if lexical licensing, instead of lexical insertion, is adopted. This is only possible under a correspondence view such as the one adopted in the tripartite parallel architecture model of grammar, which admits the autonomy of semantics as well as that of syntax.*

Keywords: *tripartite parallel architecture, lexical licensing, adjectival noun construction, syntax-semantics mismatch, constructional idiom*

1. Introduction

This article proposes an analysis of such expressions as those in (1), which have the form of N-*of-a(n)*-N, in line with the lexical licensing approach under the model of grammar called tripartite parallel architecture in Jackendoff (1997):

- (1) a. an angel of a girl (Quirk et al. (1985: 1285))
b. the fool of a policeman (ibid.:1285)

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- c. this jewel of an island (ibid.: 1285)
- d. Philip has a real beast of a father. (LAAD: 104)
- e. It was a dog of a movie. (ibid.: 414)
- f. He had the ghost of a smile on his lips. (ibid.: 608)
- g. I just think you've done a hell of a job in some messy cases (Parker (1999: 321))

This type of expression represents a case of mismatches between syntax and semantics.¹ In terms of syntax, the structure of these phrases would be the same in relevant respects as that of those in (2), where the first noun is the syntactic head, while in terms of meaning, the relevant phrases in (1) are interpreted as if the second noun is the head, unlike those in (2):

- (2) a review of the book, an article of the accident, the picture of that boy

Moreover, the first noun of each of the relevant phrases in (1) is construed as a kind of adjective. This point can be illustrated more explicitly in comparison with the phrases in (3), which contain adjectives related to some of the first nouns in the examples in (1):

- (3) an angelic girl, the foolish policeman, this jewel-like island

In what follows, we will argue that such expressions are instances of a kind of "constructional idiom" in the sense of Jackendoff (1990), hereafter called the adjectival noun construction (AN construction).²

This article is organized as follows: in section 2, we will review the basic properties of the AN construction. In section 3, the possibility of syntactic and lexical analyses of the construction will be examined critically. In section 4, an analysis of the AN construction based on lexical licensing will be proposed. In section 5, an account of the properties of the AN construction as a constructional idiom will be

¹ We will review an extensive discussion on this type of expression in Ike-uchi (1986, 1996, 1998) below. For other cases of syntax-semantics mismatches, see Kajita (1977), Jackendoff (1990, 1997), Fukuchi (1995), Culicover and Jackendoff (1997, 1999), Culicover (1999), McCawley (1998), among others.

² We call the construction the AN construction in consideration of the adjectival properties of N1, though Ike-uchi (1986, 1996, 1998) calls the construction the NA construction for nouns with appositional *of* complements in Jespersen (1927, 1949).

For a discussion on nouns that behave like adjectives, see Ross (1972, 1973) and McCawley (1998).

given in comparison with the *way*-construction. Section 6 will take up the AN construction in the English of earlier times and Italian. Section 7 will extend the analysis based on lexical licensing to the pseudo-partitive construction, which is considered to be another instance of constructional idioms. Section 8 is the conclusion.

2. The Adjectival Noun Construction

In this section, we will first review the basic properties of the AN construction, following Ike-uchi (1986, 1996, 1998), who extensively discusses the properties of the AN construction (see also Fukuchi (1995: 4.4.) for a discussion).

2.1. Head-Nonhead Conflict

We noted above that in the AN construction the syntactic head and the semantic head do not coincide. This is a case of what Kajita (1977) calls head-nonhead conflict. First, let us see the discrepancy a little more closely. Given the syntactic category selection and Case properties of the constituents involved, the syntax of the relevant phrases in (1) is considered just like that of ordinary noun phrases. Accordingly, the expression *an angel of a girl*, for example, has a structure which would be something like the one in (4) at some level of syntax:

- (4) [DP₁ an [NP₁ angel [PP of [DP₂ a [NP₂ girl]]]]]

If the syntax-semantics relation is expected to be transparent, this structure implies that the first noun (hereafter N1) *angel*, which is the syntactic head, is also the semantic head. However, in expressions like (1), N1 does not serve as a head in a referential relation, as shown in the following example:

- (5) I met an angel of a girl yesterday and fell in love with
 { her/?*the angel/the girl } at first sight.

(Ike-uchi (1986: 114))

Since the phrase *an angel of a girl* as a whole corresponds to *a girl*, not *an angel*, the second noun (hereafter N2) should be regarded as the semantic head of the phrase, though it does not head the phrase syntactically.

2.2. Adjectival Properties of N1

The syntactic head N1 of the AN construction is semantically a non-

³ The grammaticality of (13a) might be problematic for Subjacency, as argued in

- ⁴ But see note 19 for cases where deletion is allowed.

as they are in the singular form, can be changed. Still, N1 is constrained semantically and there are nouns which cannot be used as N1 in the AN construction. Citing the following examples, Ike-uchi (1986) observes that in general N1 is restricted to a kind of (metaphorical) degree noun:⁵

- (19) a. that shyster of a lawyer/*that lawyer of a son of yours
 b. that baby of a brother of yours/*that lad of a brother of yours
 (Bolinger (1972: 74, n. 14))

In this regard, let us consider the following examples:

- (20) a. ??a cupid of a girl
 b. ??a cat of a girl
 (21) a. a naughty cupid of a girl
 b. a slender/flirting cat of a girl

What is of interest here is that even those nouns which cannot occur in the AN construction without inducing a kind of awkwardness can be rendered consistent with the construction. Note that, though the added adjective before N1 appears to accompany N1 in (21), it is interpreted to modify N2, as we saw in the case of (9). Since N1 is restricted to degree nouns, the awkwardness may be attributed to indeterminacy or vagueness of the relevant degree property of the nouns in the position of N1 in cases like (19) and (20). Addition of an appropriate adjective may highlight or pick up the degree-related property required of N1, if possible, and this helps some nouns to be regarded as a kind of degree nouns. As shown below, the ungrammatical examples in (19) can also be saved by adding some appropriate adjectives:

- (22) a. that dishonest lawyer of a son of yours
 b. that nice lad of a brother of yours

⁵ Related to this point, Narita (1974) argues that the use of a class of nouns, which he calls nominal qualifiers and which include metaphorical nouns, is constrained by a semantic condition, which he calls descriptive condition, to the effect that the noun phrase dominating the nominal qualifier is "capable of describing some essential character of an object or of specifying a value in some measure field represented by the [nominal modifier]" (ibid.: 221, n. 18). The degree noun requirement which Ike-uchi mentions may be regarded as a prerequisite for the describing or specifying function of N1.

In this section, we will examine the possibility of syntactic and lexical analyses of the AN construction. In so doing, we will show that none of the analyses to be discussed can account simultaneously for the syntactic properties and semantic interpretation of the AN construction without problems.

In 2.2., we saw that the nouns eligible for N1, out of the construction, cannot be modified by *very*, *more* or *most*. The relevant examples in (6) and (7) are repeated here as (23) and (24), respectively:

- Thus, the adjective-like properties of N1 are associated with the construction in question as a whole. Based on these observations, Ikeuchi (1986, 1998) argues that the original structure of the word string of N1-*of-a(n)* in (4), repeated here as (25), is syntactically restructured as an adjective, as in (26), where irrelevant details are omitted:

- Since (26) contains an adjective derived via restructuring, the semantic similarity between *an angel of a girl* and *an angelic girl*, for example, is attributed to the presence of the adjective in both phrases. The existence of the derived adjective also accounts for the fact that N1 (or the N1-*of-a(n)* string) behaves like an adjective. Ike-uchi argues that the derived adjective made up of N1-*of-a(n)*, not merely N1, corresponds to A in the normal English noun phrase structure of the form Det-Adj-N, citing the following example:

- Ike-uchi (1986) proposes, within the framework of a dynamic theory of syntax in Kajita (1977), that the syntactic restructuring deriving the

structure in (26) from the one in (25) is based on a model structure like (28) with a similar meaning (see Ike-uchi (1986) for details):

(28) an [_{Adj} angelic] girl

Moreover, Ike-uchi (1996) suggests that the restructuring process applies at the level of LF', assumed in Hornstein (1986, 1987)'s modified T-model. In this analysis, syntactic requirements like the category selection and Case properties are satisfied in the structure in (25) before syntactic restructuring, just as for ordinary noun phrases where N1 is the head. On the other hand, the interpretation (as well as some syntactic properties such as those related to PP Extraposition) is captured in the derived structure (26).

However, under a restrictive theory of phrase structure, like X'-theory or its analogues with the relevant effects, radical structural change induced by restructuring is not an option to take. Though the point depends upon the view which one adopts as a theory of phrase structure, if we resort to this kind of syntactic operation, it inevitably leads to complications of theory of syntax. Thus, such a syntactic approach deals with "marginal" phenomena like this with some special syntactic device. Moreover, if the process of restructuring is influenced by semantic factors, as in the case at issue, which is incompatible with the autonomy thesis of syntax, it is unavoidable to assume different mechanisms for "core" and "periphery" based on the dichotomy of the two.

As we will see later in section 4, once the autonomy of semantics as well as that of syntax is granted, as in the tripartite parallel architecture model, we do not have to assume this kind of qualitative difference between "core" and "periphery." We will also show that the lexical licensing approach to the AN construction can keep syntactic structure restrictive enough for it to be in accordance with X'-theoretic terms.

3.2. Dual Structure Analysis

A variant of restructuring analysis would be the dual structure analysis, adopted in Ike-uchi (1986) for a construction different from the AN construction, which permits a construction to have two different syntactic structures conjunctively.

However, the dual structure approach is not free from the problems pertaining to restructuring, if the two structures are related via restructuring. Moreover, in such an approach it is not clear how it is motivated to divide the application of the principles of grammar to the two

different syntactic structures before and after restructuring. Thus, we do not consider this alternative viable.

3.3. Incorporation Analysis

The problems in syntax of the restructuring analysis can be avoided if restructuring is reinterpreted in terms of the incorporation analysis of structure-changing operations proposed in Baker (1988). According to the incorporation analysis, syntactic restructuring is not a radical structure-changing process, but a subcase of head-to-head movement, which is in accord with the X' -theoretic view of phrase structure. Under the incorporation analysis, the "restructured" syntactic structure is not the one in (26), but would be represented as follows:

- (29) [_{DP1} an [_{NP1} angel+of+a [_{PP} t [_{DP2} t [_{NP2} girl]]]]]

This analysis makes it possible to obtain a syntactic constituent corresponding to the derived adjective in (26) without radical structural change. In this analysis, the problem related to division of application of the principles does not arise.

However, it still faces a problem related to how to obtain the adjectival interpretation of the derived constituent. Unlike the restructuring analysis, nothing ensures the presence of an adjective in the resulting structure. Thus, even if a syntactic constituent made up of the relevant word string marked with brackets in (30) is made available, we still need to account for the interpretation of the syntactic constituent similar to that of the adjectives in (3), repeated here as (31), which is not obtained compositionally from the parts of the relevant constituent:

- (30) an [angel of a] girl, the [fool of a] policeman, this [jewel of an] island

- (31) an angelic girl, the foolish policeman, this jewel-like island

Note that these syntactic analyses just reviewed, or any generative analysis in line with the interpretive semantics approach, are based on the assumption that there is some underlying syntactic structure which mirrors semantics. In this view, some kind of structural remedy with the effects of restructuring is indispensable, if the string of $N1\text{-of-}a(n)$ is interpreted as a kind of adjectival expression. Yet, even if a syntactic constituent corresponding to an adjective is obtained, the idiosyncratic semantics of that syntactic constituent or the AN construction as a whole seems to be implemented independently of syntax.

3.4. Lexical Analysis

Still another alternative would be to analyze the N1-*of-a(n)* string as a lexically fixed phrasal adjective. This accounts for the noncompositional interpretation of the relevant constituent without inducing the problems of the syntactic analyses discussed above. Moreover, since part of a lexical item cannot be affected syntactically, the fact that neither N1 or N2 allows the plural form, as shown in the example (17), repeated here as (32), is explicable:

(32)?*those fools of policemen

There are reasons, however, not to regard the relevant word string as lexicalized. First, this type of lexical approach does not account for the productivity of the AN construction. Second, such a lexical analysis does not account for the fact that N1 allows modification, unlike part of a lexically fixed expression. For example, as part of a lexically fixed expression, the first N of an N-N compound resists modification, as shown in the example (33), whereas N1 can be modified by an adjective, as we already saw above in the examples in (11), repeated here as (34):

(33) *a good shoemaker (intended as a maker of good shoes)

(34) a. a mere wisp of an old man

b. a dreadful ragbag of a British musical

Thus, we may not regard N1 as part of a lexically fixed expression.

Furthermore, note also that the examples in (34) show that N1 can be modified by an adjective, unlike adjectives but like nouns. This indicates that N1 cannot be treated as a full adjective, whether it is lexical or not.

4. Lexical Licensing of the Adjectival Noun Construction

Departing from the derivational view of the syntax-semantics relation, Jackendoff (1983, 1990, 1997) proposes an alternative view of the relation based on correspondence rules. In what follows, we will propose an analysis of the AN construction based on the correspondence view. Specifically, we will argue that the AN construction is a kind of “constructional idiom” in the sense of Jackendoff (1990).

4.1. Lexical Licensing

Jackendoff (1997) proposes a model of grammar, what he calls tripartite parallel architecture, in which “phonology and semantics are

treated as generative completely on a par with syntax" (ibid.:39). The layout of such a grammar is given below:

In this model, a full grammatical derivation is regarded "as three independent and parallel derivations, one in each component, with the derivations imposing mutual constraints through the interfaces. The grammatical structure of a sentence can be regarded as a triple, $\langle PS, SS, CS \rangle$ " (ibid.: 38). Parallel derivations are made possible by the hypothesis of Representational Modularity, which allows the mutual independence of levels of representation, of which communication is mediated via correspondence rules. Since a lexical item is by its nature a "mixed" representation, a $\langle PS, SS, CS \rangle$ triple, it cannot be inserted at any stage of a syntactic derivation without producing an offending mixed representation which is impossible according to the Representational Modularity hypothesis. Instead of lexical insertion in syntactic derivation, Jackendoff adopts a lexical licensing approach in which lexical items are to be regarded as correspondence rules and "license the correspondence of certain (near-)terminal symbols of syntactic structure with phonological and conceptual structures" (ibid.: 89). In this view, then, "the lexicon as a whole is to be regarded as part of the PS-SS and SS-CS interface modules" (ibid.: 89).

Since under the lexical licensing approach, a lexical item is regarded as a triple of phonological, syntactic, and conceptual structures, the word *cat*, for example, is represented as something like (36):

- (36) $\langle \quad PS \quad SS \quad CS \quad \rangle$
 Word_b N_b [Thing TYPE: CAT]_b
 kæt

These three structures are explicitly linked by subscripted indices and only part of the lexical item, its syntactic features, appears in syntactic structures.

Jackendoff further argues that “idioms with ... complex structure strongly suggest that lexically listed units can be larger than X^0 ” (ibid.: 110). Though idioms are usually taken to be marginal part in the lexicon, in this view they are dealt with in the same way as “ordinary” lexical items such as *cat*. For example, *kick the bucket*, is lexically represented as follows:

Here, just as in the “ordinary” case of *cat*, the correspondence among the three structures is guaranteed by the subscripted indices, the only difference reduced to the degree of transparency of the correspondence among the three levels of representation, and the dichotomy between “core” and “periphery” is not necessary.

Jackendoff notes that what makes a lexical entry idiomatic is “that not all the syntactic constituents correspond to conceptual constituents” (ibid.: 162). The indirect or less transparent correspondence, then, is the very nature of idiomatic expressions.

In this respect, what Jackendoff calls a constructional idiom, “a specialized syntactic form with an idiomatic meaning” (Jackendoff (1990: 221)), is of great interest. The “*way*-construction,” which Jackendoff regards as an instance of constructional idioms, is assumed to have the following lexical entry (Jackendoff (1997: 172)):⁶

One of the characteristics which make a constructional idiom different from ordinary idioms like *kick the bucket* is the underspecification in

⁶ See also Goldberg (1995) for a similar proposal and an elaboration of meaning. She defines a construction C as “a form-meaning pair $\langle F_i, S_i \rangle$ such that some aspect of F_i or some aspect of S_i is not strictly predictable from C’s component parts or from other previously established constructions” (Goldberg (1995: 4)).

the lexical entry. In the case of the *way*-construction, the noun *way* is the only phonological reflex of the construction and open places in the syntactic structure and conceptual structure make the construction productive, unlike ordinary idioms with fixed terminal elements like *kick the bucket*. Note also that in the *way*-construction the correspondence between syntactic structure and conceptual structure is more transparent than in the case of *kick the bucket*. Thus, here we have an “in-between” case of “core” and “periphery.”

Based on these arguments, Jackendoff maintains that “it is necessary to admit idioms as phrasal lexical items, that is, as lexical items larger than X^0 ” (ibid.: 153), suggesting that “lexical licensing by unification is the proper way to get idioms into sentences” (ibid.: 154).⁷

4.2. Proposal

The present proposal is that the AN construction is a constructional idiom, just like the *way*-construction. Suppose that the lexical entry of the AN construction is as follows:⁸

This analysis overcomes the problems of the syntactic and lexical analyses that we pointed out in the previous section. First, since the syntactic structure is in accord with X' -theoretic terms, the theory of syntax can be kept away from complications. Moreover, the adjectival interpretation of N1 which is peculiar to the AN construction is expressed through modification by the conceptual constituent *Property*, which includes the conceptual constituent corresponding to N1. Thus, the

⁷ See Jackendoff (1997: 7.3) for problems pertaining to lexical insertion of idioms.

⁸ On the schematization of restrictive modification, see Jackendoff (1990: 56).

semantic similarity between *an angel of a girl* and *an angelic girl*, for example, is captured at the level of conceptual structure where both phrases contain the modificational element represented by the conceptual constituent Property related to *angel*. Under the lexical licensing approach, some aspects of meaning may totally lack syntactic reflection and only be represented at the level of conceptual structure, as the conceptual information DIE in the case of *kick the bucket*. Since an adjectival element is not required syntactically, we do not have to assume that the string of N1-*of-a(n)* is a kind of syntactically adjectival expression. The adjectival interpretation aspect of the AN construction is, then, stated only at the level of conceptual structure, which Jackendoff assumes to be the relevant semantic representation in the tripartite parallel architecture model.

Furthermore, the open places in the syntactic structure and conceptual structure account for the productivity of the AN construction, which is problematic for the lexical analysis. Since N1, unlike in the lexical analysis, retains its syntactic independence in the construction, its modification does not pose a problem, either.

4.3. Account of the Syntactic Status of N1

One peculiarity of N1 in the AN construction is that it syntactically allows not only modification by an adverb as shown in (6), repeated here as (40) but also modification by an adjective as shown in (11), repeated here again as (41):

- (40) a. Mary is the most angel of a girl that I have ever met.
 b. ??Mary is a more angel of a girl than Jane.
 c. ??She is a very angel of a girl.
- (41) a. a mere wisp of an old man
 b. a dreadful ragbag of a British musical

This indicates that in terms of syntax N1 is partly like a noun and partly like an adjective. The proposed analysis accommodates this property of N1 as follows. In the lexical entry for the AN construction, the syntactic slot for N1 is specified only as [+N], not a full N (= [+N, -V]) (see Chomsky (1970)).⁹ This indicates that N1 is syntactically not

⁹ The single feature specification of lexical items is not new. See Van Riemsdijk (1983), for example, where it is argued that German adjectives have the single feature [+V]. Note that the AN construction is regarded as a lexical item here.

a full noun, but has some intermediate status between N ($=[+N, -V]$) and A ($=[+N, +V]$). Thus, with this single feature specification, we can capture the peculiar “in-between” character of N1.

Let us suppose that lexical licensing is based on the compatibility of the features specified in the lexical entry of the construction and those specified in the lexical entry of the lexical items appearing in the construction. This allows nouns to appear in the position of N1. Suppose further that the features relevant to syntactic structure are those specified for the construction. Then, though the lexical item *angel*, for example, is specified as $[+N, -V]$ in the lexicon, only the $[+N]$ feature, which is compatible with the specified feature of the AN construction, is syntactically active when it appears in the construction in question. As a result, modification of N1 by *very*, *more*, and *most* is more tolerable than that of a normal N.¹⁰

One might argue that adjectives, which are $[+N, +V]$, are wrongly allowed to appear in the position of N1, if only the $[+N]$ feature is specified and that the following examples would be expected to be possible, contrary to the fact, since adjectives are compatible with the syntactic feature specification $[+N]$ of the construction in question:

- (42) *an angelic of a girl, *the foolish of a policeman,
 *this jewel-like of an island

This type of wrong lexical licensing, however, is prevented by the conceptual category specification in the conceptual structure. Since the conceptual category corresponding to N1, marked with the index *y* in (39), is specified as a Thing conceptual constituent, this specification serves as a kind of selectional restriction.¹¹ Since adjectives correspond to Property, not Thing at the level of conceptual structure, they do not satisfy the feature compatibility requirement at that level. Note

¹⁰ The awkwardness found with the comparative form or the intensification by *very* might also be attributed to the semantic incompatibility of these types of modification and the sense of inherent extremity in the construction (see Ike-uchi (1998)).

¹¹ See Jackendoff (1990: 53) for the treatment of selectional restriction making use of the level of conceptual structure. He regards selectional restriction as an operation of fusion or merger of the reading of an element with the semantic information already present in the conceptual constituent. See also Goldberg (1995) for a discussion on fusing semantically compatible elements.

5. Parallels between the *Way*-Construction and the Adjectival Noun Construction

5.1. Discrepancy between Syntax and Semantics

(43) a. Bill belched his way out of the restaurant.
(Jackendoff (1990: 211))
b. Pfeiffer worked as a shipping clerk to pay his way
through college. (LAAD: 1063)
c. How did Cindy talk her way out of getting a speeding
ticket? (ibid.: 1484)
d. It took us three hours to work our way back to the
parking lot. (ibid.: 1663)
e. "... he's bullshitting his way to success," Becker said.
(Parker (2000: 229))

(44) Bill went out of the restaurant belching.
(Jackendoff (1990: 213))

Thus, the *way*-construction exhibits a discrepancy between syntax and semantics. Jackendoff (1990: 214) argues that in the *way*-construction, the meaning of the main verb is associated with a subordinate accompaniment or means modifier due to the unexpressed superordinate conceptual function GO, as shown in (45):

- (45) $\left[\begin{array}{l} \text{GO ([BILL], [TO [EXTERIOR-OF [RESTAURANT]]])} \\ \text{[WITH [BELCH ([BILL])]} \end{array} \right]$

As we saw in 2.1., the same kind of demotion is found with the AN construction. For example, in *an angel of a girl*, the meaning of *angel* is felt to be demoted to a modifying adjective, as in its paraphrase *an angelic girl*. Under the present analysis, part of the conceptual structure for *an angel of a girl* would be something like the one given in (46):

- (46) $\left[\begin{array}{l} \text{_____} \\ \text{Thing [Property CHARACTERISTIC OF [ANGEL]]} \end{array} \right]$

In (46), the meaning of the syntactic head *angel* is associated with the modifier expressing Property. Thus, both constructional idioms show a discrepancy between syntax and semantics attributed to the demotion of the meaning of a syntactically prominent element.

5.2. Syntactic Constituency

Next, let us turn to the syntactic constituency. For the *way*-construction, Jackendoff (1990) establishes its surface syntax by contrasting the construction with a superficially similar construction with a measure phrase. Consider the following pair of examples. Here (43a) is repeated as (47a):

- (47) a. Bill belched his way out of the restaurant.
 b. Bill belched all the way/the whole way out of the restaurant. (Jackendoff (1990: 211))

While the *way*-construction resists preposing of the material after the verb, the measure phrase construction does not:

- (48) a. *His way out of the restaurant, Bill belched. (ibid.: 212)
 b. All the way/The whole way out of the restaurant, Bill belched. (ibid.: 212)

An adverb may be inserted after *way*, but not after the verb in the *way*-construction. On the other hand, in the case of the measure phrase construction the reversed pattern is observed:

- (49) a. Bill belched his way noisily out of the restaurant. (ibid.: 212)

- b. *Bill belched noisily his way out of the restaurant.

(ibid.: 212)

- (50) a. *Bill belched all the way noisily out of the restaurant.

(ibid.: 212)

- b. Bill belched noisily all the way out of the restaurant.

(ibid.: 212)

Based on these observations, Jackendoff (1990: 212) suggests that in (47a) *his way* occupies the direct object position and *out of the restaurant* is a separate PP, as shown in the constituent structure (51a), unlike in (47b), which is given the structure in (51b):

- (51) a. Bill [_{VP} belched [_{NP} his way] [_{PP} out of the restaurant]]

- b. Bill [_{VP} belched [_{PP} all the way out of the restaurant]]

With the constituent structure (51a), it appears odd that the construction is incompatible with the passive:

- (52) *His way was belched out of the restaurant by Bill.

(Jackendoff (1990: 216))

Under the lexical licensing analysis, it is possible to account for the impossibility of the passive with the constituent structure intact. As we saw in (38) in 4.1., the syntactic structure stipulates a VP constituent in the lexical entry for the *way*-construction. When the construction undergoes passive, the syntactic structure is not licensed as stipulated. Since lexical licensing is not possible when the required conditions stated at the three levels of representation are not met, the impossibility of passive movement is attributed to the failure of lexical licensing. Note that syntactic immobility is a typical property of fixed expressions like idioms. Consider the case of *kick the bucket*, for example:

- (53) a. John kicked the bucket.

- b. #The bucket was kicked by John. (impossible in the idiomatic reading)

In this case also, the NP has to be linked to the V within the syntactically stipulated VP for the idiomatic interpretation, as indicated in (37). This condition is not met in (53).

Now let us turn to the AN construction, which also resists movement. The relevant examples in (12) and (13) are repeated below as (54) and (55):

- (54) a. *[Of whom/what] did he marry an angel?

- b. *[Who/what] did he marry an angel of?

- c. *[Of a wife] I consider Mary a flower.

- cf. Of whom did you see a picture?

- (55) a. [A hell of a report] came out [on the secret activities of the CIA].
 b. *[A hell] came out [of a report on the secret activities of the CIA].

The present analysis accounts for the impossibility of movement in the AN construction on a par with the cases we just saw above. Since the syntactic structure stipulates an NP constituent in the lexical entry for the AN construction, movement of part of the stipulated NP leads to the impossibility of lexical licensing.

The same is true of the cases involving deletion. Consider the examples in (14) and (15), repeated here as (56) and (57):

(56) *John sent a hell of a guy to jail and a devil to prison.

(57) a. *John writes a more hell of a report than he does of an essay.

b. *John had a devil of a life as well as of a job.

Since part of the NP stipulated in the lexical entry is deleted, lexical licensing is also rendered impossible here.

It should be noted here that not all idioms resist structure-changing operations. Thus, some idioms are resistant to movement, as in the case of *kick the bucket*, whereas there are idioms which can tolerate movement. Consider the examples below involving the passive:

(58) The hatchet seems not to have been buried yet by those skaters. (Jackendoff (1997: 168))

While the passive with *kick the bucket* fails to be interpreted idiomatically as we just saw, the one with *bury the hatchet* can be so interpreted. Jackendoff (1997: 7.6) accounts for the difference between the two types of idioms as follows. In the case of *bury the hatchet*, unlike in the case of *kick the bucket*, the syntactic structure does not stipulate a VP constituent and the V and the NP are not syntactically connected, as indicated in (59), so the NP can be moved freely as long as other requirements are met:

(59) a bury b the c hatchet
 a V_x NP_y

 b Det c N
 [RECONCILE ([]_A, [DISAGREEMENT]_y)]_x

Thus, syntactic mobility here is determined by whether there is a stipulated connection among constituents in syntactic structure in the lexical entry, which in turn depends on the possibility of lexical phrases.

¹² Further refinement of the meaning is necessary to include the emotive force or

of N1 does not count as a degree noun, it is incompatible with the specification, though this may be saved by adding some appropriate modificational element, as we saw above.

5.4. Constants

Both constructional idioms have some constants which are characteristic of the constructions as well.¹⁴ In the case of the *way*-construction, for example, the word *way* cannot be replaced by other semantically similar words:

(62) *Bill belched his path/road/route into the room.

Moreover, *way* must be preceded by a bound pronoun. Thus, the examples in (63), which lack a pronoun bound to the subject, are ruled out:

(63) a. *Bill belched Harry's way into the room.

(Jackendoff (1990: 215))

b. *The children laughed the clown's way out of the room.

(Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995: 198))

In the case of the AN construction, the preposition *of* and the indefinite article are the lexically fixed elements, so they cannot be replaced by other elements. Relevant examples (16) and (18) are repeated below as (64) and (65), respectively:¹⁵

the extremity sense implied in the AN construction (see Ike-uchi (1986, 1998)). Here the emphasis is placed on the treatment of the semantic condition as a selectional restriction.

¹³ In the following examples, N1 does not literally mean 'devilish,' 'hellish,' or 'demonic,' but just expresses some kind of strong feeling:

(i) a devil of a man, a hell of a report, a demon of a player

Teruo Asakawa suggests that this type is different from the *angel* type, in which N1 contributes more in meaning. If the extremity sense is an inherent semantic characteristic of the AN construction, as mentioned in notes 10 and 12, the two types can be unified at least in this respect.

¹⁴ Some constructional idioms may have no phonological structure, as in the case of the resultative. See Jackendoff (1997: 7.7).

¹⁵ Teruo Asakawa and a reviewer have pointed out the relevance of such examples as those in (i) to the AN construction:

(i) too good a man, so good a car

This type of phrases must also be with the indefinite article:

(ii) *too good the man, *too good (those) men

Moreover, as Bresnan (1973: 298) notes, they are sometimes accompanied by *of*, as shown below:

(64) {a/the/this/that} fool of {a/*the/* ϕ } policeman

(65) *an angel at/in/on/with a girl

6. Variation of the Adjectival Noun Construction

In this section, we will take a look at two variants of the AN construction, one diachronic and the other synchronic, considering their implications for the treatment of linguistic variation suggested in Culicover (1999).

6.1. Diachronic Change: English of Earlier Times

Ike-uchi (1986) mentions that in the English of earlier times there are instances of the AN construction like the following which do not conform to the N1(singular)-*of*-a(n)-N2 pattern:

(66) a. three fine lumps of daughters (1897) (Onoe (1975: 111))

b. those Chinese chopsticks of knitting-needles (1849–50)

(Jespersen (1949: 341))

They are different from the present-day English examples that we have discussed so far in two respects. First, N1 (and N2) can be pluralized. Second, related to the pluralizability of N1, the indefinite article is not required. In view of this, let us suppose that the lexical entry of the AN construction in the English of earlier times is as follows:

(67) _aof

$\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{---}^z \\ \text{Thing} [\text{Property} \text{ CHARACTERISTIC OF } [\text{Thing DEGREE}]_y] \end{array} \right]_x$

In this lexical entry, N1 is syntactically fully specified as N (= [+N, -V]), not merely as [+N]. Thus, unlike its present-day counterpart, N1

(iii) too good of a man

(iv) How good of a player is he?

I leave the exploration of their relation for future research.

in the English of earlier times is specified as a full-fledged noun, which accounts for the availability of the plural form of N1. Since the indefinite article *a(n)* is not required, the preposition *of* is stipulated as the only phonological reflex here.

If the requirement concerning the indefinite article is dependent upon the syntactic status of N1, the difference between the two types of the AN construction may be reduced to the syntactic specification regarding the status of N1 alone.¹⁶

6.2. Crosslinguistic Variation: Italian

Napoli (1989) and Ike-uchi (1996, 1998) point out the existence of the Italian counterpart of the AN construction in English (see Ike-uchi (1996, 1998) for a comparative survey and an analysis based on the modified T-model assuming LF'): ^{17, 18}

- (68) questo straccio di gonna, una peste di bambino
 'this rag of a skirt' 'a wretch of a boy'

(Napoli (1989: 169))

Expressions like these resist left- or rightward movement and deletion of part of the phrase, as expected if they are instances of the AN construction:¹⁹

- (69) a. *Di chi vorresti sposare un fiore? (Napoli (1989: 194))
 'Of whom would you like to marry a flower'

¹⁶ I leave an account of this diachronic change for future investigation (see Onoe (1975, 1977) for a discussion from a historical perspective).

¹⁷ Italian examples were brought to my attention by Teruo Asakawa.

¹⁸ Ike-uchi (1996: 529–530) observes that there are corresponding Japanese expressions in (i):

- (i) shinju-no-namida, bara-no-kuchibiru
 'a pearl of a tear' 'a rose of a lip'

Unlike the English cases, however, these Japanese examples seem to be relatively fixed and not productive, so it is possible that Japanese cases are lexically fixed.

¹⁹ Ike-uchi (1996) reports that the following examples are acceptable, attributing them to Napoli:

- (i) a. She is an angel of a wife and of a mother.
 b. È un angelo e/sia di moglie e/sia di madre.

He notes that in these examples, the relevant parts are in the predicate position, unlike the ones in the text, suggesting that the argument/predicate distinction is crucial.

- b. *Di moglie considero Maria un fiore. (ibid.: 208)
'Of a wife I consider Mary a flower'
- cf. Di Giovanni ho visto una foto. (Ike-uchi (1996: 533))
'Of Giovanni I saw a photo.'
- (70) *[Qualche gioiello] è apparso [di recensione] (ibid.: 533)
'Some jewel has appeared of a review.'
- (71) *Gianni ha un angelo sia di moglie sia di figlia. (ibid.: 538)
'Gianni has an angel both of a wife and of a daughter.'

Furthermore, there are reasons to believe that in the AN construction in Italian, N1 has a noun status like its counterpart in the English of earlier times. First, as the following example shows, N1 can be in the plural form in Italian:

- (72) delle pesti di bambini (Ike-uchi (1996: 530))
'some wretches of boys'

Second, the modification of N1 by a superlative, a comparative, or an intensifier corresponding to *very* is impossible, which is also explicable if N1 is a full-fledged noun:

- (73) a. *il più fiore di ragazza (ibid.: 535)
'the most flower of a girl'
- b. *un più fiore di ragazza (ibid.: 535)
'a more flower of a girl'
- c. **... un molto fiore di ragazza (ibid.: 536)
'... a very flower of a girl'
- d. **... un assai angelo di bambino (ibid.: 536)
'... a very angel of a boy'

Then, as in the case of the English of earlier times, what distinguishes the present-day English from Italian may again be reduced to the syntactic specification of N1 in the construction of each language.

6.3. Implications for Parametric Variation

The brief comparison of the three types of the AN construction points to a possibility that the variation among them is attributed to how a conceptual structure is realized syntactically. This accords with a view suggested in Culicover (1999) that parametric variation may be thought of "as consisting in part, at least, of variation among different ways of expressing aspects of conceptual structure" (Culicover (1999: 13)). We need more comprehensive research in this area (see Culicover (1999: Ch. 1) for more details).

7. The Pseudo-Partitive Construction

The proposed analysis can be readily extended to the pseudo-partitive construction, exemplified in (74) (see Akmajian and Lehrer (1976), Jackendoff (1977), Selkirk (1977), Guéron (1979), Ike-uchi (1986) among others for a discussion on the pseudo-partitive construction):

- (74) a. Susan had gone to a drug store and bought a bunch of vitamins (Parker (1997: 230))
- b. I made sure my coat was unbuttoned and made a couple of practice draws. (ibid.: 280))
- c. I poured a little container of cream into a paper cup full of coffee (Parker (2000: 72))

Like the cases of constructional idioms which we saw above, the pseudo-partitive construction behaves differently from an apparently similar construction. Thus, while the construction with the ordinary noun complement relation allows the complement PP to be extraposed, the pseudo-partitive construction does not permit the extraposition of the corresponding PP:²⁰

- (75) a. A review of certain answers to your argument was given. (Selkirk (1977: 309))
- b. A review was given of certain answers to your argument. (ibid.: 309)
- (76) a. He gave a rather large number of books by famous authors to Mary. (ibid.: 304)
- b. *He gave a rather large number to Mary of books by famous authors. (ibid.: 304)

If the pseudo-partitive construction is regarded as another instance of constructional idioms, in this case having *a number of* as a lexically stipulated syntactic phrase, then the impossibility of (76b) is accommodated exactly in the same way as in (13b), repeated here as (77):

- (77) *[A hell] came out [of a report on the secret activities of the CIA].

²⁰ See note 3 for the grammaticality of (i):

(i) A number of stories soon appeared about Watergate.

(Akmajian and Lehrer (1976: 397))

cf. *A review of a book came out yesterday about French cooking.

(ibid.: 395)

Just as in this case of the AN construction, the stipulated phrase is broken in (76b) and the impossibility of the PP Extraposition is also reduced to the failure of lexical licensing here.

Note that some nouns can be interpreted either idiomatically as a measure noun or literally as a head noun. Thus, in the following pair of examples where the selectional restrictions imposed by the two verbs differ, the first noun *cup* can be construed either as a measure element, as in (78a), or as the head, as in (78b):

(78) a. A cup of sugar was strewn on the floor. (ibid.: 310)

b. A cup of sugar smashed on the floor. (ibid.: 310)

The two interpretations are not allowed simultaneously, however:

(79) The cup of sugar this recipe requires {*crashed to the floor/was strewn on the floor}. (ibid.: 310)

The ambiguity of interpretation is also reflected in the number agreement on the verb. Consider the following example:

(80) An assortment of responses to those questions of yours {were/was} considered. (Selkirk (1977: 309))

An interesting behavior of the pseudo-partitive construction is that when the first noun is construed literally as the head, the construction exhibits the same pattern as the noun complement construction in terms of movement. Consider the following example of PP Extraposition:

(81) An assortment {*were/was} considered of responses to those questions of yours. (ibid.: 310)

The lexical licensing approach deals with this ambiguity of interpretation and the correlation between movement and interpretation in a rather straightforward way. Since lexical licensing of the idiomatic reading is just not required when a literal interpretation of the word string is available, the observed ambiguity is allowed. For example, a typical example of idiom (53), repeated here as (82), is ambiguous and can be interpreted literally as well as idiomatically:

(82) a. John kicked the bucket.

b. #The bucket was kicked by John. (impossible in the idiomatic reading)

Since in the literal reading the licensing of stipulated VP is not necessary, the passive is possible. The same is true of (81). If the relevant phrase is interpreted literally with the first noun *assortment* as the head, it is not licensed as a constructional idiom, but as an ordinary noun complement construction. This accounts for the possibility of the PP

Extraposition in (81).

Note also that this lexical licensing analysis makes it possible to account for the relevant interpretive ambiguity without assuming different syntactic structures for the two different interpretations. If this is on the right track, the purely syntactic treatment of agreement is untenable.

8. Conclusion

We have proposed an analysis of the AN construction in terms of the lexical licensing approach under the model of grammar called tripartite parallel architecture in Jackendoff (1997). We have argued that if the AN construction is regarded as a kind of constructional idiom, its idiosyncratic properties are accounted for without introducing complexities in syntax.

This analysis is possible only under such a view of the relation between syntax and semantics based on correspondence as suggested in Jackendoff (1983, 1990, 1997), which challenges the premise tacitly assumed in generative grammar that there is some underlying syntactic level which mirrors semantic structure. Moreover, in the proposed analysis of a “marginal” phenomenon, the dichotomy between “core” and “periphery” in grammar can be dispensed with. Accordingly, to the extent that it is successful, the present analysis constitutes a piece of evidence for the correspondence view.

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