

# Labeling and determinacy

## Third factors and language variation/change

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Generative Grammar has undergone a paradigm-shift from its early emphasis on Universal Grammar, e.g. Chomsky (1965), to a focus on factors not specific to the Faculty of Language, e.g. Chomsky (2007; 2015). The latter factors are known as third factor principles and “have the flavor of the constraints that enter into all facets of growth and evolution... Among these are principles of efficient computation” (Chomsky 2007: 3). Third factor principles include Minimal Search, Determinacy, and Economy and can be seen at work in specific syntactic structures and restrictions on them, e.g. labeling.

In this talk, I argue that third factors can also be detected in how language changes and in variation. Because labeling XP, YP through Minimal Search is impossible, X, YP emerges instead, and the need for determinate derivations eliminates superfluous movement. Language change involves a cyclical dynamic between economy and elaboration or, as Von der Gabelentz (1901: 256) put it, language history moves between comfort and clarity. Innate, third factor principles bias the acquisition of a specific grammar in economical ways but external factors, such as pragmatic strengthening, can complicate the grammar of a language. I mainly examine the comfort side of the linguistic cycle by considering the role of third factor principles in language change, in particular determinacy and labeling.

This talk offers a theoretical and empirical update to earlier work, where structural Economy Principles, such as the Head Preference Principle, Late Merge, and Featural Economy, are seen as influencing language change (Roberts & Roussou 2003; van Gelderen 2004; 2011). Although third factor in nature, Structural and Featural Economy still depend on linguistic information and, if less emphasis is placed on these, they should be reformulated as non-linguistic, i.e. genuine third factor principles. The main emphasis is on the changes due to economy, but renewal of the ‘eroded’ elements will be discussed where relevant. This renewal reintroduces uneconomical structures and keeps cyclical change going.