

# An Agree-Based Analysis of the Relationship between Conjunctions, Focus, and NPIs

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## 1. Introduction

This paper provides an analysis of the feature specification of the conjunctions *if* and *when* and discusses how it explains the differences in behavior between *if* and *when* with regard to negative polarity item (NPI) licensing and the relation with a focus particle (FP) like *only*.

## 2. Facts

First, it is observed from the contrast in (1) that NPIs are licensed in an *if*-clause, but not in a *when*-clause.

- (1) a. **If** John hits *anyone*, he is a dangerous guy.  
b. \***When** John hits *anyone*, he is a dangerous guy.

Second, FP *only* can focalize an *if*-clause irrespective of whether it is adjacent to the *if*-clause, whereas *only* can focalize a *when*-clause only when it is adjacent to the *when*-clause, as shown in (2) and (3) (where the focalized portions are underlined; note that other interpretations, in which the VP, the object DP or the adjunct PP in the matrix clause is focalized, are also available for (2b)).

- (2) a. The committee can make its decision by Friday of next week *only* if it receives a copy of the latest report.  
b. The committee can *only* make its decision by Friday of next week if it receives a copy of the latest report.

(*American Heritage Dictionary of English Language*, 1992)

- (3) a. She picked up the receiver *only* when he entered, not before.  
b. She *only* picked up the receiver **when** he entered; she didn't dial the number.

(*ibid.*)

## 3. A Feature-Based Analysis of *if* and *when*

As for the licensing of English NPIs, I follow Song (2010) and assume that an affective element like *not* bears a [*u-Foc*] feature and an [*i-Aff*] feature, whilst an NPI bears an [*i-Foc*] feature and a [*u-Aff*] feature. In the system of Chomsky (2000), the two items enter into an Agree relation and the [*u-Foc*] and [*u-Aff*] features are deleted, with the result that the NPI is licensed. Extending this analysis to NPI licensing in conditionals, it is reasonable to hold that *if* has a [*u-Foc*] feature and an [*i-Aff*] feature, while *when* has no formal features, as shown in (4) and (5), giving rise to the contrast in (1).

- (4) [<sub>CP</sub> **If**<sub>[*u-Foc*][*i-Aff*]] [<sub>TP</sub> Mary saw anyone<sub>[*i-Foc*][*u-Aff*]]], she will let us know.</sub></sub>

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Agree

- (5) \* [<sub>CP</sub> **When** [<sub>TP</sub> Mary saw anyone<sub>[*i-Foc*][*u-Aff*]]], she will let us know.</sub>

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Do Not Agree

Based on the arguments above, the derivation of (2b) could be analyzed as in (6) (where the elements which have formal features and enter into an Agree relation are **dark-tinted**, the

elements which are spelt out are indicated by fence line, and the elements which receive a null spell-out are indicated by ~~strikethrough~~. In (6a), *if*, which is generated in C<sup>o</sup>, Agrees with TP; the latter then raises to Spec-C. According to the Phase Impenetrability Condition in Chomsky (2000), when the CP phase is completed, the domain of CP is transferred to LF and PF, and becomes inaccessible to an external probe. Along the lines of recent work on focalization based on Agree (Watanabe (2004)), I suggest that FP *only* with a [*u-Foc*] feature and an [*i-Aff*] feature probes its domain and Agrees with TP at the edge of CP as in (6b), resulting in the focalization of TP. Finally, applying Hornstein's (2009) proposal that lower copies may be pronounced under some circumstances, the higher copy of TP in Spec-C is deleted.

- (6) a. [CP [TP it receives a copy of the latest report]<sub>[i-Foc][u-Aff]</sub> [C' ~~if~~<sub>[u-Foc][i-Aff]</sub> [TP it receives a copy of the latest report]<sub>[i-Foc][u-Aff]</sub>]]  
 b. The committee can *only*<sub>[u-Foc][i-Aff]</sub> make its decision by Friday of next week  
 [CP [TP ~~it receives a copy of the latest report~~<sub>[i-Foc][u-Aff]</sub> [C' ~~if~~<sub>[u-Foc][i-Aff]</sub> [TP it receives a copy of the latest report]<sub>[i-Foc][u-Aff]</sub>]]

In the case of (2a), I suggest that *only*, *if* and TP enter into a multiple Agree relation within the CP phase headed by *if*, as illustrated in (7) (assuming that *only* occupies some position within CP, say Spec-C).

- (7) The committee can make its decision by Friday of next week  
 [CP *only*<sub>[u-Foc][i-Aff]</sub> *if*<sub>[u-Foc][i-Aff]</sub> [TP it receives a copy of the latest report]<sub>[i-Foc][u-Aff]</sub>].  
 Multiple Agree

As for the derivation of (3), since *when* has no formal features, its TP complement cannot be raised to Spec-C. Therefore, if it is to be focalized by *only*, it must be inside the same phase as *only*, thus accounting for the fact that *only* cannot focalize the *when*-clause in (3b). On the other hand, *only* can focalize the element immediately after it, because the two are within the same phase and hence can enter into an Agree relation, as shown in (8).

- (8) a. She picked up the receiver [CP *only*<sub>[u-Foc][i-Aff]</sub> *when* [TP he entered]<sub>[i-Foc][u-Aff]</sub>].  
 Agree  
 b. She [<sub>VP</sub> *only*<sub>[u-Foc][i-Aff]</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> picked up the receiver]<sub>[i-Foc][u-Aff]</sub>] *when* he entered.  
 Agree

## References

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