



Rethinking Locative Inversion and Pseudo-locative Inversion: EPP Satisfaction as the Key to Polarity Focus and VP Ellipsis

Suyoung Bae (Cheongju University) · Myung-Kwan Park (Dongguk University)



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Bae, Suyoung (First author)
Assistant Professor, Department
of English Language & Literature
Cheonju University
Email: sybae@cju.ac.kr

Myung-Kwan Park (Co-author)
Professor, Department of English
Dongguk university.
Email: parkmk@dongguk.edu

ABSTRACT

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This paper investigates a fundamental asymmetry between Locative Inversion (LI) and Pseudo-locative Inversion (PI) constructions in English: only PI constructions are compatible with VP ellipsis, despite their structural similarities. Previous accounts have struggled to explain why PI allows polarity focus and VP ellipsis, whereas LI does not. This study offers a novel explanation by demonstrating that the key distinction lies in how the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) is satisfied, which shapes both the syntactic structure and information structure of these constructions. Specifically, it argues that while PI constructions fulfill the EPP through the insertion of the expletive *there* in Spec-TP, allowing TP to function as a complete predicative domain and enabling polarity focus, LI constructions rely on Edge Feature (EF)-driven movement. In LI, the locative phrase temporarily occupies Spec-TP before moving to the left periphery, leaving the predicative domain incomplete and blocking polarity focus. Empirical evidence from various inversion constructions, including Negative Inversion, *So*-Inversion, and Comparative Inversion, supports this analysis by demonstrating that filling Spec-TP is essential for establishing a subject-predicate relation, enabling polarity focus, and licensing VP ellipsis. The findings contribute to the broader theoretical understanding of how syntactic derivations influence information structure, challenging discourse-driven explanations. This research underscores the syntactic basis of polarity focus licensing and offers a unified account of LI and PI constructions within the Minimalist framework.

KEYWORDS

locative inversion, pseudo-locative inversion, extended projection pinciple, polarity focus, VP ellipsis

1. Introduction

There has been a long-standing debate regarding how much discourse-pragmatic information should be encoded in syntax. Rizzi (1997, 2004, among many others) introduces pragmatic feature into syntax to account for non-canonical word order constructions. However, there is a competing view that aims to minimize the role of discourse-specific features in syntactic derivations, positing that syntactic operations are primarily driven by formal features rather than discourse-pragmatic considerations. This paper contributes to this ongoing debate by examining the interaction between syntactic derivation and information structure through Locative Inversion (LI) and Pseudo-locative Inversion (PI) constructions in English. The central focus of this paper is the structural distinction between LI and PI constructions and how this distinction affects their compatibility with polarity focus. We argue that the difference between the two constructions can be explained through the subject-predication relation established in syntax. This relation is reflected in the information structure of each construction, specifically in determining the locus of focus. In this light, we argue that syntactic derivations produce information structure, rather than discourse particular features directly deriving syntactic movement.

Locative Inversion (LI henceforth) is a phenomenon where the word order between locative phrase and the subject is non-canonical. That is, the locative phrase is located in the sentential initial (pre-verbal) position whereas the subject follows the verb, as shown in (1).

- (1) a. From this observation will emerge a new understanding of natural language. (Bruening 2010)
b. On this building used to fly the Confederate flag. (Adapted from Choi and Park 2021)

Previously, it has been observed that LI is incompatible with Sub-Aux inversion, negation, sentential emphasis, and VP ellipsis (Bruening 2010 and Griffiths and den Dikken 2020), as shown in (2).

- (2) a. *Will from this observation emerge a new understanding of natural language?
b. *From this observation has not emerged a new understanding of natural language.
c. *From this observation DID emerge a new understanding of natural language!
d. *From this observation will emerge a new understanding of natural language, and from that one will too. (Adapted from Bruening 2010)

A common feature of the ungrammatical examples in (2) is the presence of (sentential) polarity focus. Prior research (Höhle 1992, Krifka 2008 among others) has identified polarity focus through distinct markers: 1) accented auxiliary/modal verbs, 2) a prosodic pattern on finite verbs, and 3) a prescribed word order, as respectively shown in (3a), (3b-c), and (3d-e).

- (3) a. He WILL be on time. (Gussenhoven 1983, 2007, Ladd 2008)
b. He READ it yesterday. (Wilder 2013)
c. She did open the door. (Samko 2015, 2016)
d. He went there to learn, and learn he did. (Lai 2012, Romero and Han 2004)
e. John plays guitar and so do I. (Sailor 2015)

According to Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal (2009), polarity/verum focus constitutes a form of narrow focus that targets the polarity of a sentence, emphasizing the truth value of a proposition. The emphasis observed in (3) stems from this focus on sentence polarity. Given the data in (2) and (3), the LI constructions seem to be incompatible

with polarity emphasis. However, as noted by Bruening (2010), the Pseudo-locative Inversion (hereinafter, PI), structurally identical to LI except for the existence of an expletive *there* in the subject position, remains acceptable in contexts that require polarity focus. The illustrative examples are as follows.

- (4) a. Will from this observation there emerge a new understanding of natural language?
 b. From this observation there has not emerged a new understanding of natural language.
 c. From this observation there DID emerge a new understanding of natural language!
 d. From this observation will there emerge a new understanding of natural language, and from that one will too. (Adapted from Bruening 2010)

These data highlight a crucial distinction between LI and PI constructions regarding their syntactic configuration and interaction with polarity focus. Despite structural similarities, only PI constructions allow for polarity focus, suggesting that the key difference lies in how the EPP feature on T is satisfied.

Based upon the data from (2) to (4), we begin with a comprehensive review of Bruening (2010) and Choi and Park (2021)'s analyses of LI and PI constructions. We argue that neither adequately explains the distinction between LI and PI, particularly concerning their compatibility with polarity focus. Then, we propose that the difference between LI and PI arises from the interplay between the syntax and information structure. In particular, we argue that fronting in both constructions is not driven by discourse-related features but by purely syntactic mechanisms. This movement results in the absence of a binary informational partition (e.g., topic/comment or focus/background; Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal 2009). Furthermore, we propose that the divergence between LI and PI stems from different syntactic mechanisms used to satisfy the EPP feature on T. Our analysis supports the view that syntactic derivations feed the final representation of information structure, operating independently of pragmatic features.

2. Previous Analyses

Several attempts have been made to explain the incompatibility of LI constructions with polarity focus. Before proceeding, it is necessary to review the accounts proposed by Bruening (2010) and Choi and Park (2021) to highlight their respective shortcomings.

2.1 Bruening (2010)

Building on Lawler (1977) and Postal (1977, 2004), Bruening (2010) maintains that the restrictions on locative inversion derive from constraints governing the licensing of a null expletive. According to him, LI constructions are not permitted in environments where a null expletive cannot be licensed. To explain this, he postulates a language particular feature, Special Purpose [SP] feature in TP, which blocks the occurrence of the null expletive, as defined in (5).

- (5) Licensing conditions on null expletives (final version):
 a. An expletive in Spec-TP can only be null when it is associated with a fronted phrase (adjoined to TP or moved to Spec-CP).
 b. The feature [SP] on TP blocks association between an expletive in Spec-TP and a fronted phrase. (Bruening 2010)

He further argues that PI (referred to as presentational *there* in his term) constructions share structural similarities with LI constructions. He supports his claim by noting that both constructions exhibit similar syntactic restrictions, including incompatibility with adjectival predicates and adjectival passives (6,7), an inability to take complement clauses (8), and the acceptance of *be*-passives while disallowing *get*-passives (9):

- (6) a. That sort of heroin addict is prone to accidents on the highways.
 b. *On the highways (there) is prone to accidents that sort of heroin addict. (Postal 2004, p.42, ex. 95a,b)
- (7) a. At that time (there) were built an unbelievable number of warships.
 b. *At that time (there) remained unbuilt an unbelievable number of warships.
- (8) a. On the roof was written the warning that enemies were coming.
 b. *On the roof was written that enemies were coming. (Bresnan 1995, p.40, ex. 48b)
 c. *On the roof there was written that enemies were coming. (Postal 2004, p.43, ex. 103b)
- (9) a. In that field were/*got executed dozens of partisans.
 b. *In that field there were/*got executed dozens of partisans. (Postal 2004, p.46, ex.125a)

Given the parallels between PI and LI constructions, Bruening argues that the post-verbal subject in LI is inside VP, similar to PI constructions. He supports this claim with evidence from VP ellipsis constructions. As shown in (10), the post-verbal subject in PI is involved in the ellipsis site, suggesting that it remains within VP.

- (10) He said that across the room there will appear a large purple dragon, and across the room there certainly will.

Despite its empirical foundation, Bruening's analysis presents several unresolved issues. First, it fails to explain how and why the licensing of a null expletive is connected to the presence of a fronted phrase. More critically, under the Minimalist framework (Chomsky 1995, 2000), the assumption that a null expletive can satisfy the EPP feature is theoretically problematic, as EPP requires an overt element in Spec-TP to satisfy structural requirements through Merge. Additionally, Bruening's reliance on the Special Purpose (SP) feature appears arbitrary and lacks independent theoretical motivation, making the explanation ad hoc. More troubling is the failure of his analysis to account for the observed definiteness effect distinction between LI and PI. As demonstrated in (11), LI constructions allow definite post-verbal subjects, whereas PI constructions do not. If LI and PI constructions are structurally identical except for the overtness of the expletive, such a semantic distinction remains unexplained.

- (11) a. Into the room (*there) ran Mother.
 b. Out of it (*there) steps Archie Campbell. (Bresnan 1994, p.99, ex.76)

Lastly, his conclusion that the fronted PP cannot function as the subject is not fully justified. While his data show that the PP does not end in the subject position, they do not preclude the possibility that the PP temporarily occupies Spec-TP during the derivation. This transient occupation could fulfill structural requirements without the PP behaving as a canonical subject.¹

¹ Since Bruening (2010) adopts the null expletive analysis originally developed by Postal (1977, 2004), the theoretical and empirical problems apply not only to Bruening's implementation but also to the foundational assumptions of that framework.

2.2 Choi and Park (2021)

Now, let us consider Choi & Park (2021)'s analysis about the different behavior of LI and PI constructions with respect to the compatibility with VP ellipsis. They argue that only PI can bear the sentential polarity focus, which is necessary for licensing VP ellipsis (López 1995 and Potsdam 1998). In contrast, they argue that LI constructions lack polarity focus; instead, a markedly post-posed subject DP bears focus (Culicover and Winkler 2008, Birner and Ward 1998). This follows from the given-before-new principle according to which DPs with newer information or focus appear in postverbal position. They also argue that the focus on a markedly postposed subject DP in LIs is prioritized over sentential polarity focus. Thus, the occurrence of the former suppresses the occurrence of the latter.

Furthermore, they argue that the relatively new information or focus represented by a markedly postposed subject DP in LI constructions cannot be part of VP ellipsis. This is because focused elements (or elements with new information) must not be included the ellipsis site (Merchant 2001, 2005 among many others). In other words, the VP-internal focus on the post-posed subject (i.e. *the Confederate flag*) suppresses sentential polarity focus, preventing VP ellipsis. Thus, the infelicity of (2d), repeated here in (12) can be accounted for under their analysis.

- (12) *From this observation will emerge a new understanding of natural language, and from that one will too.
(= 2d)

Despite offering a promising discourse-based explanation, Choi and Park's analysis faces significant challenges. If focus on a post-verbal subject in LI suppresses polarity focus and blocks VP ellipsis, the same logic should apply to PI constructions, where post-verbal subjects also appear. However, as shown in (13), PI constructions allow VP ellipsis, undermining their prediction.

- (13) From this observation will there emerge a new understanding of natural language, and from that one will too.
(= 4d)

Moreover, their analysis leaves unanswered why the post-verbal subject in LI prevents polarity focus, whereas in PI constructions, the same syntactic configuration does not have this effect.

Given these unresolved issues, the following section presents a comprehensive analysis of the syntactic differences between LI and PI constructions. First, it introduces the core theoretical framework, focusing on how the EPP requirement and the subject-predicate relation interact. Next, the derivational processes of LI and PI constructions are examined in detail, highlighting how distinct syntactic movements shape their information structure and influence polarity focus. Finally, Bruening's (2010) argument against the PP serving as a subject in LI constructions is reevaluated.

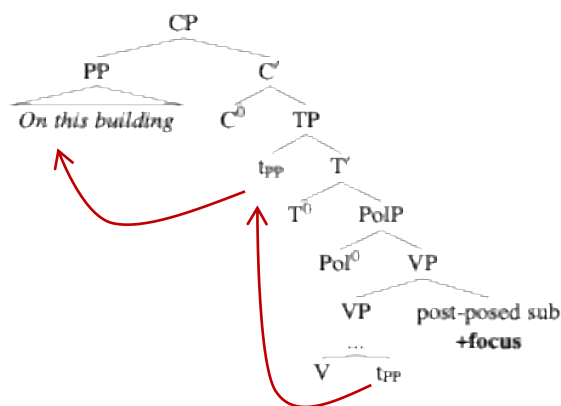
3. Analysis

Up to this point, we have shown that the previous analyses fail to provide the unified analysis about the difference between LI and PI constructions. Our proposal builds on Choi and Park's argument that syntactic operations shape the information structure especially considering the location of focus. While we build on Choi and Park's (2021) argument that syntactic operations shape information structure—particularly with respect to the location of focus—we depart from their analysis in two significant ways. First, we argue that the contrast

between LI and PI is fundamentally determined by how the EPP requirement of TP is satisfied. Second, we argue that the fronting of the locative phrase in LI is not triggered by discourse features such as topic or focus but instead by the Edge Feature (EF) of a phase head (i.e. *v* or *C*) (Chomsky 2005), which enables movement without an information-structural motivation.

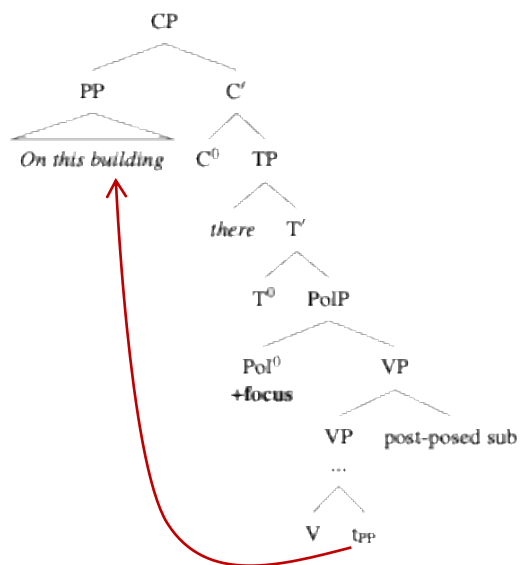
In particular, we argue that movement in LI is optionally triggered by the EF, rather than by the EPP itself. As the locative PP undergoes EF-driven movement to the left periphery, it temporarily passes through Spec TP, thereby satisfying the EPP derivationally, as shown in (14). However, since the PP does not remain in Spec TP, TP is left structurally incomplete as a predicative domain, which in turn blocks polarity focus.

- (14) a. [_{CP/TP} PP [_{TP} t_{PP} [_{VP}[_{VP} t_{NP} t_{PP}] NP]. LI constructions
b.



On the other hand, in PI constructions, the expletive *there* occupies Spec-TP, ensuring that TP remains a full predicative structure, which in turn allows polarity focus to be licensed, as shown in (15).

- (15) a. [_{CP/TP} PP [_{TP} *there* [_{VP}[_{VP} NP t_{PP}]] PI constructions
b.



At the heart of our analysis is the idea that locative fronting in LI is a form of ‘altruistic fronting’ (cf. Erteschik-Shir 2007), not driven by focus or topic requirements but instead by a purely syntactic mechanism. This means that the fronting of the locative PP does not induce a split information structure—no single overt constituent is assigned focal prominence. As a result, LI disrupts the usual subject-predicate configuration at TP, whereas PI preserves it. This structural asymmetry explains why LI constructions block polarity focus, while PI constructions allow it. Ultimately, we argue that the information structure of LI and PI diverges because of different syntactic strategies for satisfying the EPP, rather than being derived from independent discourse considerations. This structural asymmetry accounts for the contrasting compatibility of LI and PI with polarity focus and provides a more unified and syntactically grounded explanation for their differing behaviors.

As already noticed by Bresnan (1994), the fronted(inverted) locative phrase indeed cannot be focused. As shown in (16a), in non-inverted constructions, the locative can be a focus of contrast. On the other hand, in LI constructions where the locative phrase is focused, the constructions become less acceptable. Thus, this suggests that fronting of the locative phrase cannot be focus-driven.

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| (16) a. Canvasses hung on the wall, but not on the easels. | non-inverted constructions |
| b. ??On the wall hung canvasses, but not on the easels. | LI constructions |
| | (Bresnan 1994) |

Having established that the movement of the locative PP in LI is driven by the Edge Feature (EF) rather than by discourse-related triggers, we now turn to its implications for information structure. Specifically, we argue that whether TP functions as a true predicative domain depends on whether TP Spec remains occupied at the final stage of the derivation, which in turn affects the focus structure of LI and PI constructions. While both LI and PI satisfy the EPP requirement, they do so in structurally distinct ways, leading to different interpretive outcomes.

(17) EPP Satisfaction and Predicative Domain Formation

- a. In PI, the expletive *there* occupies Spec of TP, ensuring that TP remains a fully projected predicative domain.
- b. In LI, the locative PP vacates Spec of TP, leaving TP incomplete as a predicative structure.

The key consequence of this difference is that only PI maintains a fully functional predicative domain at TP. In PI, where TP Spec remains occupied, TP has the necessary syntactic components to establish a subject-predicate relation, providing structural conditions for polarity focus to be realized when discourse conditions permit. Since TP is the syntactic domain where the predicate structurally combines with the subject, enabling a truth-conditional interpretation at LF, the presence of an overt subject in Spec-TP ensures that TP is a structurally complete predicative domain. This structural completeness allows for the possibility of polarity focus, contributing to the emphatic nature of PI constructions.

However, in LI, the movement of the locative PP above Spec TP disrupts the structural configuration of TP, preventing it from functioning as a true predicative domain.² Since LI lacks an overt element that ensures TP functions as a predicative domain, predication is re-established lower in the structure, primarily inside vP. The

² By ‘true predicative domain’, we mean a syntactic structure where a subject-predicate relation is fully realized and available for interpretation. In standard declarative clauses, TP functions as the predicative domain because its projection is determined by the presence of a subject in Spec-TP. However, if Spec-TP remains unfilled, TP may lack the structural conditions necessary for predication. In such cases, predication is instead re-established at a lower level, inside vP.

consequence of this structural deficiency is that LI is inherently incompatible with polarity focus. Instead, narrow focus is assigned to the markedly post-posed subject, as Spec of TP remains empty at the final stage of the derivation.

(18) Locus of Focus – Subject-Predication and True Predicative Domain

- a. Polarity focus arises iff TP functions as a true predicative domain, which requires Spec of TP to be syntactically complete at the final stage.
- b. If Spec of TP remains empty, TP lacks the necessary syntactic configuration for a subject-predicate relation, preventing polarity focus and shifting focus to the post-verbal subject.

This structural asymmetry follows from different syntactic strategies for satisfying the EPP. In PI, the presence of *there* allows TP to function as a structurally complete predicative domain, providing the necessary conditions for polarity focus. By contrast, in LI, the fronted locative PP temporarily satisfies the EPP but ultimately vacates TP, leaving the structure incomplete. As a result, polarity focus cannot be realized, and the post-verbal subject becomes the locus of focus. Thus, the divergence in information structure between LI and PI is not discourse-driven but rather a syntactic consequence of whether TP is structurally complete as a predicative domain.

3.1 Derivations

Given the discussion so far, let us elaborate the derivation of LI and PI constructions in turn. First, in PI constructions, *there* is inserted in Spec of TP, fully satisfying the EPP requirement, as shown in (19a). Then, the locative phrase undergoes fronting, resulting in a structure where no single constituent is assigned focal or topical prominence. Furthermore, since VP-internal subjects in English generally do not serve as topics, the post-verbal subject in PI does not receive a topic interpretation. As a result, the absence of a topic-focus distinction in (19b) reinforces the availability of polarity focus. As shown in (19c), the subject-predicate relation holds because Spec-TP remains occupied, making TP a structurally complete predicative domain. As a consequence, the polarity of the proposition expressed at the TP level becomes successfully focused, reinforcing the emphatic nature of PI constructions.

(19) derivation of PI.

a. Insertion of *there*

[_{TP} *there* [_{VP} [_{VP} predicate subject] locative PP]]

⇒ Insertion of *there* for EPP requirement of TP.

b. Locative fronting

[_{TP} locative PP [_{TP} *there* [_{VP} [_{VP} predicate subject] _{t_{PP}}]]]

⇒ Locative fronting creates the non-split information structure.

c. subject-predication relation

[_{TP} locative PP [_{TP} *there* [_{PolP} [_{VP} [_{VP} predicate subject] _{t_{PP}}]]]]
+Foc

⇒ a subject-predication relation holds.

The crucial point here is that focus is restricted to the polarity of the sentence, with the remainder of the sentence interpreted as background information. In other words, the propositional content—information conveyed by any

overt constituent of the sentence—is presupposed rather than new. This predicts that any phrase in the sentence should be available for ellipsis, a prediction that is indeed confirmed by the data. As shown in (13), repeated here in (20), VP ellipsis is allowed in PI constructions.

- (20) From this observation will there emerge a new understanding of natural language, and from that one will too. (=13)

Now, let us consider the derivation of LI constructions. At the initial stage, the locative phrase is displaced due to an EF on the phase head, triggering movement to the left periphery. A crucial point to note is that, unlike in standard cases within Minimalist syntax—where movement is typically motivated by feature-checking requirements or the need to escape a phase (Chomsky 2005)—the movement of the locative phrase in LI constructions is not driven by such factors. The locative PP does not carry any unchecked features that necessitate movement, nor is it in danger of being trapped within the phase due to the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC). Instead, the activation of EF in LI allows for optional syntactic movement that is unrelated to discourse features such as topic or focus. This purely structural movement occurs without any information-structural motivation. During the derivation, the locative phrase temporarily stops at Spec-TP, where it derivationally satisfies the EPP requirement, as shown in (21a). However, since EF is the true driving force behind the movement, the locative PP does not remain in Spec-TP but continues to move to the left periphery, as shown in (21b). This transient satisfaction of the EPP leaves Spec-TP unfilled at the final stage, preventing TP from functioning as a true predicative domain. Consequently, as TP fails to establish a complete subject-predicate relation, polarity focus becomes unavailable, as shown in (21c). The focus instead shifts to the markedly post-posed subject within the VP. This highlights a crucial aspect of LI constructions: although the locative phrase temporarily occupies Spec-TP, this movement is purely syntactic and does not contribute to focus or topic assignment, reinforcing the non-discourse-driven nature of this construction. Consequently, as shown in (12), repeated here as (22), VP ellipsis is blocked in LI constructions because the post-posed subject, which remains within the ellipsis site, serves as the focal element and thus must be overtly realized.

(21) derivation of LI.

- a. PP undergoes movement to TP spec

[_{TP} locative PP [_{VP} [_{VP} predicate subject] t_{PP}]]

⇒ fronting PP for EPP requirement of TP.

- b. Locative fronting

[_{TP} locative PP [_{TP} t_{locative PP} [_{VP} [_{VP} predicate subject] t_{PP}]]]

⇒ locative phrase fronting creates the non-split information structure.

- c. subject-predication relation

[_{TP} locative PP [_{TP} t_{locative PP} [_{PolP} [_{VP} [_{VP} predicate subject] t_{PP}]]]]

⇒ subject-predicate relation does not hold.

- (22) *From this observation will emerge a new understanding of natural language, and from that one will too. (= 12)

This section has shown that the distinct derivations of LI and PI to explain their different behaviors regarding polarity focus and VP ellipsis. Building on this foundation, the next subsection reevaluates Bruening's (2010)

argument against the locative PP serving as a subject in LI constructions.

3.2 Reevaluating Bruening's Argument Against PP as a Subject in LI

Bruening (2010) argues that a PP cannot function as the subject in LI constructions. However, in this subsection, we demonstrate that his data merely indicates that the fronted PP does not remain in the subject position at the end of the derivation, which is fully compatible with the current analysis. Thus, it does not necessarily constitute counterevidence against the claim that the PP temporarily stops in Spec-TP before moving to its final position in the left periphery. Moreover, the inability of the locative phrase in LI to participate in agreement further supports the claim that a true predicative domain requires a subject in Spec-TP. This reinforces the view that the presence of a subject in TP is crucial for maintaining a full predicative structure.

Based on data showing that the PP does not participate in finite verb agreement in LI constructions, as shown in (24), Bruening argues that this supports the claim that the PP cannot serve as the subject in Spec-TP.

- (23) From that great conflict and from our incompatible viewpoints there has/*have emerged a new, exciting idea for progress. (Bruening 2010)

However, this does not necessarily contradict the current analysis, which argues that the locative phrase moves through Spec-TP on its way to the left periphery. One might argue that if the locative phrase stops in Spec-TP, it should be able to participate in subject-verb agreement. However, as shown in Bruening (2010), the PP does not control agreement, meaning it does not behave like a canonical subject. This might initially seem like counterevidence against the current analysis, since if the locative phrase truly occupies Spec TP at some point in the derivation, it should interact with T° in the same way a subject does. However, this apparent contradiction disappears when we consider the derivational timing of agreement. Even though LI constructions leave Spec TP unfilled at the final stage, T still establishes agreement with the post-posed subject before the locative phrase moves to the left periphery. Additionally, tense remains intact at T, since tense assignment is independent of predication. However, because TP is not a full predicative domain in LI, focus shifts to the post-posed subject, polarity focus is blocked, and VP ellipsis is unavailable.

Crucially, the movement of the locative phrase in LI is not EPP-driven but purely EF-driven. The PP does not remain in Spec TP but only passes through it as an intermediate position due to the Edge Feature (EF) on a phase head (e.g., v° or C°), which forces movement to the left periphery. Because this movement is not triggered by a subject requirement, the locative phrase never interacts with T° as a true subject would, nor does it contribute to agreement.

A further question arises regarding the inability of the locative phrase to strand floating quantifiers in Spec TP, as Bruening argues based upon the data in (24). If the locative phrase truly occupied Spec-TP, we would expect floating quantifiers to be licensed there. However, this expectation is not borne out. This still can be explained under the assumption that Spec TP in LI functions as a subject island, blocking further syntactic operations such as quantifier float.

- (24) To those women was (*all/*both/*each) proposed a distinct alternative. (Postal 2004, p.23, ex. 19c)

This follows from the general Subject Condition (Ross 1967) according to extraction from subjects is not allowed. This is evidenced from in (25). This indicates that Spec-TP in LI behaves as an island. While the locative

phrase itself is not a subject, Spec TP occupies a structural position for subjects. As a result, it inherits subject island effects, preventing quantifier float. This does not rule out the possibility that the locative phrase makes an intermediate stop in Spec TP. In fact, the inability of the locative phrase to strand floating quantifiers provides further evidence that it does pass through the subject position, as it is subject to the subject island condition.

(25) Who do you think [a picture of ___] was on the wall? (Ross 1967)

The argument is further strengthened by empirical evidence from Culicover & Levine (2001). Example (26) illustrates the *that*-trace effect, typically associated with subject extraction. The occurrence of this effect suggests that the locative PP must pass through the embedded Spec TP during its movement. If the locative phrase did not occupy this position at any point, such effects would not be expected. Thus, the presence of the *that*-trace effect provides additional support for the claim that the locative PP temporarily occupies the subject position before ultimately moving to its final position in the left periphery.

(26) Into the room Terry claims (*that) t walked a bunch of gorillas.
(Culicover and Levine 2001, p.285, ex. 3a)

Bruening also presents evidence suggesting that the fronted PP in LI does not occupy the subject position (Spec TP) because it cannot bind an anaphor, as shown in (27). However, this merely indicates that the final landing site of the PP is not an A-position capable of establishing anaphor binding. Rather, this further supports the current analysis that the locative phrase passes through Spec-TP during the derivation, even if it does not remain there as its final destination.

(27) *To Sally and Louise were described Mike and themselves.

Therefore, the empirical evidence discussed in this section does not undermine the current analysis but rather reinforces it. The inability of the locative PP to control agreement, strand floating quantifiers, or bind anaphors does not suggest that the PP never occupies Spec-TP; instead, it reflects the transient nature of its passage through this position. The locative phrase moves through Spec-TP derivationally, satisfying structural requirements without functioning as a canonical subject. Its movement, driven by the EF, is purely syntactic and not related to agreement or subject-related operations.

4. Empirical Predictions and Theoretical Implications

4.1 Empirical Predictions

This section demonstrates how the current analysis can be empirically implemented, capturing several key facts regarding focus and syntactic structure. Building on the discussion so far, the central claim is that the presence of a subject in Spec-TP is crucial for establishing a valid subject-predicate relation. This relation holds only when Spec-TP is filled at the final stage of the derivation. A direct prediction of this analysis is that if Spec TP remains unfilled, polarity focus will be impossible. This prediction is confirmed by data from various inversion constructions.

Let us first consider Negative Inversion constructions. As illustrated in (28), these constructions involve a fronted PP containing a negative expression such as *no* and a post-posed subject. In (28a) and (28b), the spec of TP is occupied (e.g. *a portrait of Chomsky* in (28a), *there* in (28b), respectively), thereby establishing the subject-predication relation. As predicted, (28a) and (28b) are compatible with sentential emphasis, a type of polarity focus. However, in (28c), where Spec TP is unfilled, the subject-predication fails to hold, and the polarity focus becomes unavailable. This contrast supports the proposed claim that filling Spec TP is necessary for polarity focus.

(28) Negative Inversion

- a. On no wall DID a portrait of Chomsky hang. (neg-inversion, *no*-locative inversion)
- b. On no wall DID there hang a portrait of Chomsky. (presentational *there*)
- c. *On no wall DID hang a portrait of Chomsky. (Bruening 2010)

In addition, according to our analysis, we predict that VP ellipsis is permitted only when Spec-TP is filled, establishing a valid subject-predicate relation. This structural relationship is crucial for licensing polarity focus. Without a subject-predicate relation, polarity focus cannot be realized, and consequently, VP ellipsis becomes unavailable. This prediction is borne out in NI constructions. As shown in (29a), when Spec-TP remains unfilled, the subject-predicate relation fails to hold. As a result, polarity focus is blocked, making VP ellipsis incompatible. In contrast, in (29b), the presence of *there* in Spec-TP ensures that the subject-predicate relation is established, allowing polarity focus and consequently licensing VP ellipsis

- (29)a. *On no wall did hang a portrait of Chomsky, and on no ceiling did too.
- b. On no wall did there hang a portrait of Chomsky, and on no ceiling did there too.

The same pattern extends to *so*-inversion constructions. In (30), the subject occupied Spec TP (e.g. *we* in (30a), *I* in (30b), respectively), thereby establishing the subject-predication relation. Consistent with our prediction, this structural configuration licenses polarity focus. Moreover, this analysis correctly accounts for the fact that VP ellipsis is permitted in *so*-inversion constructions, as illustrated in (31).

(30) *So*-inversion

- a. As we uncover the mysteries of the body, so too must we unravel the harmonies of the soul.
- b. John plays guitar and so do I play the guitar. (Wood 2008)

(31) John loves linguistics, and so does Mary.

Finally, in comparative inversion constructions, the presence of a subject in Spec TP (e.g., *Kim* in (32a) and *her father* in (32b), respectively) allows for the subject-predicate relation to hold, enabling polarity focus. This structural configuration, in turn, licenses VP ellipsis, which depends on the availability of polarity focus.³

- (32) a. Sandy will run faster than will Kim ~~run~~. (Merchant 2003)
- b. Abby can play more instruments than can her father ~~play~~.

³ The obligatoriness of VP ellipsis in (32) is beyond the scope of the current paper. See Merchant (2003) for relevant discussion.

These patterns provide strong support for the current analysis: how to satisfy EPP is essential for establishing a subject-predicate relation, enabling polarity focus, and hence licensing VP ellipsis. These findings carry broader theoretical implications for the interaction between syntactic structure and information structure. Specifically, they reinforce the view that polarity focus is rooted in syntactic configurations. The licensing of polarity focus—and by extension, VP ellipsis—is determined by whether the derivation satisfies the structural conditions necessary for predication at the TP level. These findings also support the claim that structural configurations feed information structure rather than being shaped by discourse-driven features. Thus, this analysis not only accounts for the empirical contrasts between LI and PI but also strengthens the theoretical claim that syntactic derivation plays a central role in determining information structure and focus licensing.

4.2 Theoretical Implications for the Syntax-Information Structure Interface

The findings of this study offer significant theoretical insights into the interaction between syntactic structure and information structure, particularly in relation to the licensing of polarity focus. Contrary to previous analyses that attribute syntactic movement to discourse features such as topic or focus (Rizzi 1997), this paper demonstrates that purely syntactic mechanisms—specifically, how the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) is satisfied—can independently account for the structural differences between Locative Inversion (LI) and Pseudo-locative Inversion (PI) constructions.

The crucial implication of this analysis is that the availability of polarity focus hinges on the structural fulfillment of the TP domain rather than on discourse-driven motivations. The necessity of a filled Spec-TP position for licensing polarity focus and enabling VP ellipsis reveals that structural completeness at TP plays a pivotal role. This finding challenges interface-based theories that posit a direct mapping between information structure and syntactic movement.

Moreover, the analysis supports a more autonomous view of syntax, where information-structural effects emerge as a byproduct of formal syntactic operations. The contrast between LI and PI demonstrates that satisfying the EPP through the insertion of an expletive in PI constructions allows for a fully projected predicative domain, facilitating polarity focus. In contrast, the absence of an overt Spec-TP occupant in LI blocks this possibility, underscoring that structural configuration alone can determine focus phenomena.

This perspective advances the understanding of how syntactic derivations inherently shape information structure, offering a unified explanation for focus licensing without relying on discourse-specific triggers. It opens new avenues for exploring how syntactic principles, rather than pragmatic considerations, govern the interface between syntax and information structure across different languages and non-canonical word order constructions.

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the structural differences between Locative Inversion (LI) and Pseudo-locative Inversion (PI) constructions, focusing on how their syntactic configurations interact with information structure. Building on and extending previous analyses, we have demonstrated that the contrast between LI and PI is fundamentally determined by how the EPP requirement of TP is satisfied, rather than being directly influenced by discourse-related features such as topic or focus.

Our analysis argues that the fronting of the locative phrase in LI is not driven by information-structural motivations but rather by the activation of an Edge Feature (EF) on a phase head. This syntactic mechanism forces

movement, leading the locative phrase to pass through Spec-TP without remaining there. As a result, TP in LI fails to establish a complete subject-predicate relation, preventing the formation of a true predicative domain and subsequently blocking polarity focus. Conversely, in PI constructions, the insertion of the expletive there into Spec-TP ensures that TP functions as a fully projected predicative domain, allowing for polarity focus and licensing VP ellipsis.

The empirical data examined, ranging from polarity focus phenomena, weak crossover effects, and subject island constraints to the that-trace effect, consistently support this analysis. In particular, the inability of the locative PP in LI to bind anaphors or strand floating quantifiers, along with the presence of the that-trace effect, reinforces the claim that the locative phrase temporarily occupies Spec TP during derivation. Furthermore, various inversion constructions, including Negative Inversion, So-Inversion, and Comparative Inversion, provides robust evidence that the presence of a subject in Spec-TP is crucial for establishing a valid subject-predicate relation, enabling polarity focus, and licensing VP ellipsis.

In conclusion, this paper demonstrates that the structural divergence between LI and PI constructions is rooted in syntactic, rather than discourse-pragmatic, mechanisms. The analysis presented here highlights the importance of syntactic derivations in shaping information structure, showing that the satisfaction of the EPP and the structural integrity of TP are essential for determining focus phenomena. This study not only offers a unified explanation for the contrasting behaviors of LI and PI but also contributes to a broader understanding of how syntactic operations interface with information structure within the Minimalist framework.

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Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English