The grammatical status of nonsententials — utterances smaller than a sentence — has long intrigued grammarians. Historical and descriptive grammarians have mostly assumed that nonsententials are simply sentence fragments, remnants of full sentences somehow reduced by straightforward deletion (Sweet, 1900; Follet, 1966; Quirk et al., 1972). Generative grammarians have sometimes assumed this analysis (Morgan, 1973), but more recent work has investigated the complexity of the structure of nonsententials as well as the implications of the analysis of nonsententials for theories of grammar, discourse, and pragmatics (Haegemann, 1987; Morgan, 1989; Barton, 1990, 1991, 1998).

In this introduction, we review the competing theories of deletion and derivation for nonsententials (§0.1). In the rest of the chapter, we first update the grammatical analysis of nonsententials, describing their derivation within the Minimalist program (§1.0); we then consider NP nonsententials (§1.1) and VP nonsententials (§1.2) in detail. We propose a unified analysis of NP and VP nonsententials that centers upon the variability of nonsententials with respect to feature-checking as a defining characteristic; specifically, we propose a Case Feature Corollary which states that nonsententials are not required to check Case features. We use this analysis to provide a unified analysis for a number of previously puzzling cases within the derivation of nonsententials, including missing subjects (§2.1), auxiliaries (§2.2), determiners (§2.3), prepositions (§2.4), and complementizers (§2.5). In the Conclusion (§3), we consider the implications of this analysis of nonsententials for the Minimalist program.

0.1. Deletion and Derivation Accounts of Nonsententials

Two competing theories of the derivation of nonsententials have focused either on deletion from full sentence structures (Morgan, 1973, 1989) or derivation straight from major categories as initial nodes (Barton, 1990, 1991, 1998). Recently, both Morgan (1989) and Barton (1998) have agreed that the full story of nonsententials seems to require both deletion and derivation analyses. Morgan (1989) argues that most nonsententials derive from complete sentence representations, but he acknowledges a very restricted set of base-generated nonsententials, just those that can be interpreted pragmatically without recourse to any linguistic context (e.g., Fire! or One ticket), following Yanofsky (1978). Barton (1998) argues for a larger set of base-generated nonsententials, specifically all those major categories that show no overt evidence of sentential derivation (e.g., utterances in telegraphese like Sudden flu attack or At Newbury, Vermont border). Barton argues for a deletion analysis only of nonsententials
that show overt evidence of sentential derivation (e.g., *am ill* or *car broken down* in telegraphese).

To account for base-generated nonsententials, Barton (1991) proposed the $X^{\text{max}}$ Generalization in (1):

\[
\text{(1) \quad X^{\text{max}} \text{ Generalization}}
\]

The initial node of a generative grammar is $X^{\text{max}}$.

The $X^{\text{max}}$ Generalization, which generalizes the principles of X-bar theory to eliminate the stipulation that the initial node of a grammar is $S$, accounts for nonsentential NPs, VPs, AdjPs, AdvPs, and PPs. Barton (1998) showed that the $X^{\text{max}}$ Generalization accounts straightforwardly for independent major category utterances like the following examples from a corpus of telegraphese:

(2a) Sudden car problem
(2b) My regrets
(2c) In trouble
(2d) Still at JFK
(2e) At Newbury, Vermont border
(2f) Urgent
(2g) Maybe tomorrow
(2h) Immediately

The independent NPs in (2a)–(2b), PPs in (2c)–(2e), the AdjP in (2f), and the AdvPs in (2g)–(2h) are base-generated under their phrasal categories as initial nodes.

To account for nonsententials with overt evidence of sentential properties in the corpus of telegraphese, Barton (1998) proposed the two deletion rules in (3) to account for nonsententials that showed evidence of sentential origins and derivations:

\[
\text{(3a) \quad (Generalized) Deletion Rule 1} \\
\text{Optionally delete subjects up to recoverability.}
\]

\[
\text{(3b) \quad Deletion Rule 2} \\
\text{Optionally delete functional categories up to recoverability.}
\]

The deletion rule in (3a) accounts for nonsententials with evidence of deleted subjects, particularly the first-person singular I, as in the examples in (4):

(4a) Am ill
(4b) Am at border in Newbury, Vermont

The generalization of the rule accounts for nonsententials with tensed forms and modals, like those in (5):

(5a) Was to present a paper
(5b) Have been detained
(5c) Had wanted to participate in conference and defend paper
(5d) Can’t make conference
(5e) Will arrive one day late