2.3. Markedness and Core Grammar

Intimately connected with the search for universals is the attempt to develop a *Theory of Markedness*, within which we distinguish between *marked* and *unmarked* phenomena. An *unmarked* phenomenon is one which accords with universal principles in language; a *marked* phenomenon is one which goes against some relative universal; i.e. it is exceptional in some way. For example, it might be said that the order [Modifier + Head] is the *unmarked* word order in English, as shown by (18):

18.
(i) good food
(ii) very interesting

But in (19) ,we have the marked word order in English ,which is [Head +Modifier].

19.
(i) court martial
(ii) attorney general
(iii) time immemorial

Related to the Theory of Markedness is the *Theory of Core Grammar* which Chomsky seeks to develop. This represents the attempt to establish a common, universal "core" of linguistic principles which characterize the full range of unmarked linguistic phenomena found in natural language. It follows that the grammar of any language will contain a *core* of unmarked rules and structures ,together with a *periphery* of marked rules and structures. Since the middle of the 1970's,Chomsky has increasingly focused attention on the attempt to develop (i) a particular core grammar for