Einführungsseminar Sprachwissenschaft B Schwerpunkt Syntax
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Englisches Seminar, Universität zu Köln, Winter 2002/03: TH 12.00-1.30pm

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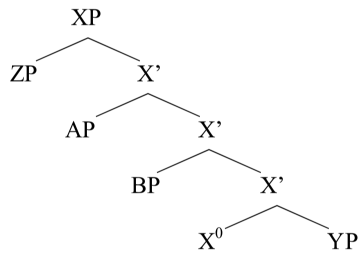
CLASS 4: Phrase Structure of English

X'-Theory

We got a pretty good idea of phrase structure last week, and now we can smoothen some edges. To start with, we'll introduce **X'-Theory**, the theory of phrase structure that explores the idea in depth that some elements project, and that all full projections are always projected from a single item — the **head**. Moreover, between the non-projected head **X^0** (the **minimal projection level**) and the fully projected **XP** (the **maximal projection level**) there are **intermediate projection levels**, the **X'**. The closest **structural relationship** exists between the head and its **complement**, and these two make up the first X'. Any additional constituents within a given XP are either the **optional adjuncts** (can be more than one) or the **unique specifier**. All this is summarized in (1).

(1)



- **ZP** = [unique] **specifier**
- **YP** = **complement** [unique]
- **AP**, **BP** = **adjuncts** [optional]

NB: Adjuncts can adjoin *to the left* or *the right X'* and always *dominate another X'*!

This X'-schema will now replace PS-rules (last week's additional readings in the *Handapparat*). The advantages are clear: this structure always gives us **binary branching** (at most two branches go off of one node) and **endocentricity** (every category XP has one or more X' and a head X) — plus, *we don't have to posit specified rules* (which often even under- or overgenerate).

What we need to do next is to see how to **derive** this schema, evaluate **why** this should be so, and establish the **derivational procedure** and **conditions** involved that make up a projection.

Bare Phrase Structure (BPS): As mentioned last week already, we take phrase structure to be the result of *iterative applications* of the operation **Merge**. In his presentation, Radford (1997) suggests an abbreviated BPS-like approach (BPS proper should not concern us here). This means that he simply puts together (*merges*) what you see — a kind of **WYSIWYG-approach**. If a verb is followed by a pronominal object, he calls this the merger of V and D (to form a VP).

This approach is not without dangers! It doesn't show the full regularity that a verb's *direct object* (its complement) is always a *nominal* ***phrase*** (NP/DP) — in fact, this goes for *all cases*:

(2) [$_{VP}$ kiss **her** / **the lady** / **the old lady from Hungary** / **this one** / **those (women)**…]

Features

The term **feature** is well-known from other areas of language. Through **phonetic features** we can describe sounds unambiguously: e.g., /b/ bears the features [consonantal, voiced, bilabial]. **Semantic features** identify the meaning of a word, or connotations it brings with it: so the set [human, male, unmarried] picks out the word *bachelor* pretty well. The type of features we'll be interested in here are **morphosyntactic features**, (largely) *morphological specifications* that (often) have *syntactic impact*. We can distinguish three types of such morphosyntactic features.

(3) a. **head-features**: these describe the *intrinsic grammatical properties* of **words**
b. **complement-features**: these describe the *kinds of complements* **words** take
c. **specifier-features**: these describe the *kinds of specifiers* **phrases** can have

This state of affairs allows for a pretty good description of the facts. Consider (4), for example.

(4) a. Miss Emma **is** eating her food.
b. *is*: [Pres] / [+ing] / [3SgNom]

The head-feature defines the word itself, the specifier-features specifies what may/must be on its left, and the complement-feature regulates **complement-selection**.

(5) a. I know **that** syntax can be easy.
b. * I know **that** *can* syntax be easy.
c. * I know **that** syntax *to* be easy.
d. * I know *when* **that** syntax can be easy.
b'. * Can syntax be easy?
c'. * I believe syntax to be easy.
d'. * When can syntax be easy?

(6) b. I **wonder** what Miss Emma eats.
c. **You** / **They** are going home.
d. I'll call **you** / **them** tonight.

Homework: Exercise 4

A. 🕮 Go thoroughly over the entire **chapter 3** of Radford (1997) and additional readings again!
B. ✎ **Exercise VI** in Radford: p. 80 and the **exercises 1-4** on the separate sheet (**left page**).

Homework: Exercise 5 (!!!)

A. ✎ **Exercises 1-4** on the separate sheet (rest, i.e. **pp. 83-85**).

Additional readings on this week's topics

Haegeman, Liliane & Jacqueline Guéron. 1999. *English Grammar. A Generative Perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell. [pp. 64-111]
Radford, Andrew. 1988. *Transformational Grammar. A First Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [this book is packed with very good and extremely detailed information on all of this!]
Roberts, Ian. 1997. *Comparative Syntax*. London: Edward Arnold. [esp. pp. 10-14, 22-24]