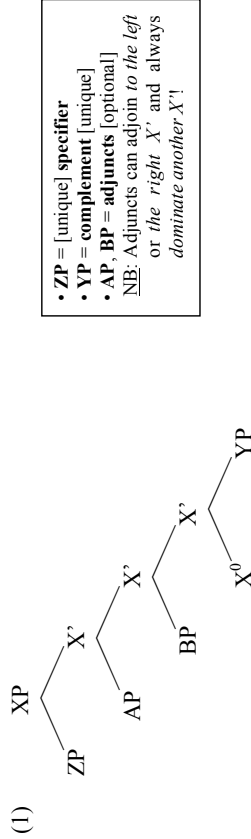


## CLASS 4: Phrase Structure of English

### 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).



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  $X^0$  — 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) [<sub>VP</sub> 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.
- (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. ✎ Do *any three sentences* of **Exercise VI** in Radford: p. 80 in *great detail*.

**Additional readings on this week's topics** [reading material can be found in *Handapparat*]

- 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]