

Introduction to Syntax

Functional heads Part 1

Adam Szczegielniak

Goals

- Establish Null LI's
- Examine the skeleton of phrase structure
- Explore C-selection of:
 - C
 - D
 - V
 - P
 - T

Possessives

- Determiners are unlikely modifiers. If we use tests for modifiers and arguments we quickly notice that determiners cannot be iterated and their position is fixed.

*1. The a cat

*2. The small cat

*3. Small the cat

- So it would seem that placing a Determiner Phrase in Spec-NP is a good idea. Remember, a phrase can have just one Lexical Item - the head; a determiner phrase would be such an example, where there is only one element, a determiner. In fact, for quite a while, this was the assumed structure. However, a few facts are problematic. These facts involve possessive constructions, as in the examples below:

*4. the her crown

5. her crown

6. Elizabeth's crown

7. The Queen of England's crown

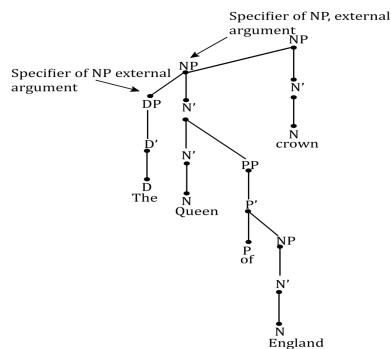
?8. The Queen's of England crown

Possible attempt

- The above diagram will account for the fact that the Noun 'crown' cannot have a determiner:

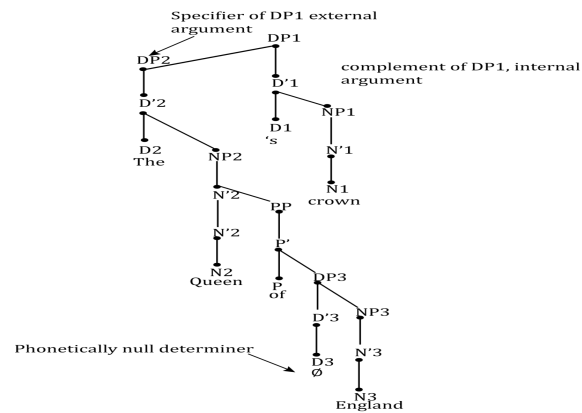
*The Queen of England's the crown

- But the mystery of where to attach ['s] remains. It is tied to another mystery, namely why is D the external argument of N?



DP internal hypothesis

- What the diagram says is that possessive ['s] is a Determiner that takes two arguments:
 - The external one - DP2 that has the Theta Role of possessor (the numeral is just a diacritic for bookkeeping) ,
 - and an internal argument NP1 [crown] which is the possessee.



Consequences

- Does NP1 get a theta role?
- Can we have a phonetically null determiner? Should not NP3 just not have a DP? In essence, what is the status of the zero determiner in D3?
 - Let's answer those questions. No, NP1 does not get a theta role. If it did get one from the possessive, then it would end up with two theta roles as in:

John photographed the Queen of England's crown

Theta criterion modified

- 13. Theta role criterion
-
- A. D, P and V must assign theta roles to their nominal arguments if they have one to assign.
- B. Every DP has to have one and only one theta role.
-
- D1 assigns a theta role to DP2 - possession, P assigns a theta role to DP3 - possession, and DP1 gets a theta role from the verb it becomes an argument of. Note, that such an approach requires that we assume that the NP [England] is a complement of a Determiner.

DP's everywhere

- This would seem to be easily disproven since we cannot use determiners with NP's like England:
- * The/a England is my country
- However there is evidence that there is a DP in expression like 'I like England'. For one they can be replaced by Pronouns:
- I know England - I like it.
- A pronoun cannot take a determiner:
- *I like the it
- but 'it' can be anaphor to a DP:
- I like [John's coffee], I really like it!
- The most obvious way to analyze pronouns is that they are anaphors for determiner phrases. But if that is the case then 'England' has to be a determiner phrase. Note, we cannot say that pronouns can replace a NP or DP since then we should be able to say:
- * I like John's coffee but not Susan's it.
- But we can't. Thus there is evidence that every Noun Phrase is really a complement of a determiner.

Null LI's

- In other languages we see determiners surface even in proper names. For example in Italian determiners occur with proper names
 -
- Il Gianni mi ha telefonato
The Gianni me has telephoned
'Gianni telephoned me'
- The syntax of Italian DP's is more complex than we can discuss here. The above example aims to show that we can pursue a theory where D is a universal category that is present in many languages even when there is no overt phonological material associated with it.
 - In essence, we can have Lexical Items with no overt phonology

null complementizers

- Consider the clauses:
 - John said that Mary sneezed
 - John said Mary sneezed
 - John said [that Mary sneezed] and [Roger slipped]
 - John said [Roger slipped] and [Mary sneezed].
- Could it be that the strings above without 'that' have a null complementizer? This would mean that verbs like 'say' c-select for CP.

CP pro-forms

- English has an anaphor that can replace a CP:
 - I heard that John hates cats.
 - but I couldn't believe it!
- In the above 'it' refers to [that John hates cats] because we cannot say:

but I couldn't believe that it
- Although 'believe' is fine with a complementizer:

I believe that John hates cats.
- This means that 'it' needs to replace a CP and not something smaller than a CP like [John hates cats] in 'I believe that John hates cats'. If so, then what about:

I heard John hates cats.
but I couldn't believe it!
- In the above there is no 'that' in the antecedent sentence. However, 'it' is possible. If we assume that there is a null complementizer in [John hates cats] as part of 'I heard John hates cats' then we can account for the distribution of 'it'. The Lexical Item 'it' replaces a CP.

Null Tense

- What about tense/modal and various auxiliaries? Here, we also have evidence that there are phonetically null LI's. Consider the following examples.

A John hated cats
B John will hate cats
C John [hated cats] and [will hate dogs]
- We see that in the examples A and B above we have a verb in the past with no overt Tense LI and a verb in the future with an overt Tense LI= 'will'. Interestingly, we can coordinate the two clauses as shown in C. We can coordinate a string with Tense with a string that has no overt Tense.
- The most obvious solution is to assume that there is a phonetically null Tense LI

Null LI's

- Identifying phonologically null LI's
 - alternation, in some controlled environments there is an overt LI, in others there is not.
 - there is a common dimension between the null LI and its overt counterparts.
- For example:
 - null determiners share with the overt counterparts the fact that they specify definiteness,
 - null complementizers share with their overt counterparts that they indicate indicative clauses or, as we will see later, relative clauses.
 - null Tense shares with its overt counterpart that it indicates tense.
- The idea is simple, null LI's have the same types of semantic and syntactic features as their overt counterparts, they just lack phonology.

Light verbs – perfective and progressive

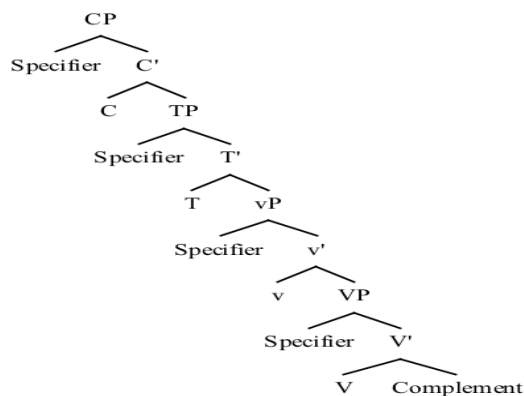
- It is not clear if they have null counterparts, since lack of 'have' or 'be' appears to have the effect of not marking the structure as perfective or progressive.
1. a. John **had** photographed cats
b. John photographed cats
 2. a. John **is** photographing cats
b. John photographed cats
- There does not appear to be any reason to suggest that in (1b) and (2b) there is a phonologically null perfective v or progressive v.

Passive/Active

- The situation is different in the case of passive/active
- John photographed cats
 - Cats are photographed by John
- The contrast between active in (1a) and passive in (1b) seems to suggest that in (1a) there is a null *v* that has the feature [+active], whereas in (1b) the overt light verb has the feature [+passive] = [-active].
 - The picture that we are getting from the above data is that Lexical Items that carry passive/active features alternate between a zero form for the active and an overt phonological one for the passive (identical to the verb 'be')

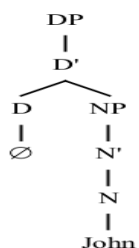
The syntactic spine

- If we assume that null LI's exist, the advantage is we can assume that syntactic structure is more fixed than what one could deduce from overt LI's
- The *vP* phrases can be iterated, provided we need Progressive and Perfective. The order appears to be:
- Perfective - Progressive - Passive/Active

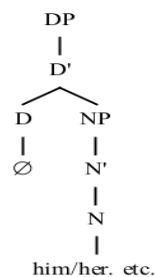


Phrases headed by null LI's

- Null DP

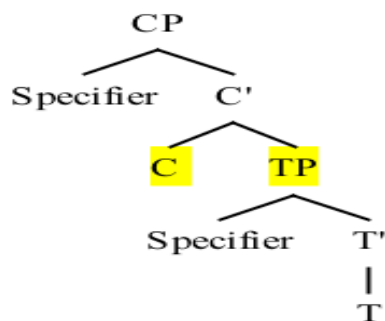


- Pronouns



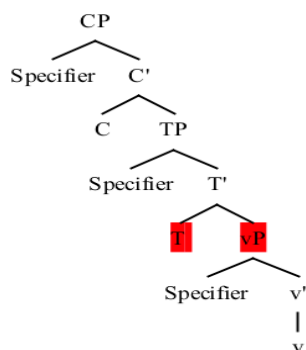
C-selection, C

- Complementizers C-select TP (specifiers just for show)



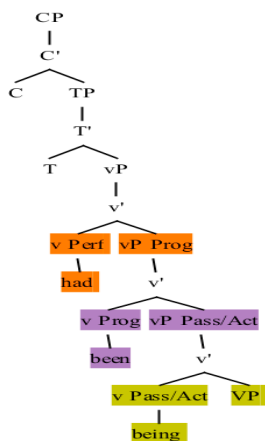
C-selection, T

- T will select little \underline{v} P.
- No matter what \underline{v} , be it Perfective, Progressive, or Passive/Active



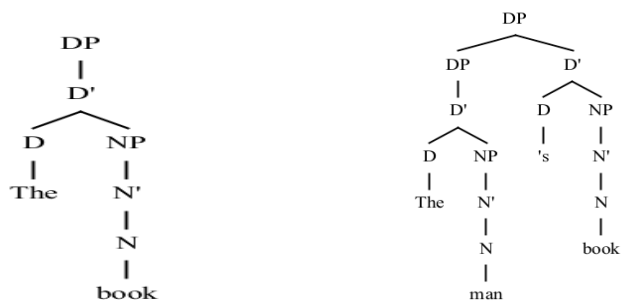
C-selection, \underline{v}

- Little \underline{v} that is Perfective will select \underline{v} that is Progressive, or \underline{v} Passive/Active, depending what is present.
- Little \underline{v} that is Progressive will take Passive/Active
- Passive/Active v will C-select VP



C-selection D

- Determiners select NP,
- if possessive they select CP is Spec.



C-selection Prepositions

- P selects DP

