

**Eötvös Loránd University • Department of English Linguistics • Syntax Seminar (BBN-ANG-252)**

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*Description* The aim of this seminar course is to introduce, discuss, and put into practice fundamental syntactic notions, with particular emphasis on (i) the constitution and constituency of syntactic phrases, (ii) the matrix of syntactic categories (lexical as well as functional), and (iii) the projection of argument structure into syntax.

*Midterm exam* The midterm exam will be administered after completion of the discussion of topic 7. Participation in the midterm exam is obligatory, but this exam will only serve to give you and me an indication of where you are standing at that point in the course, and will not count towards your grade (although the results may be used for rounding purposes at the end of the semester).

*Final exam* The end-of-term written exam, administered in the last week of the teaching semester, will be the sole determinant of your grade for the seminar.  
[for sample questions, see the relevant page on the ELTE/SEAS course material site: [http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/denDikkenMarcel/syntax\\_seminar\\_exam\\_sample.pdf](http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/denDikkenMarcel/syntax_seminar_exam_sample.pdf)]

*Textbook*

Newson, M. *et al.* (2006). *Basic English Syntax with Exercises*. Budapest: ELTE Bölcsész Konzorcium, available on-line, free of charge, at <http://mek.oszk.hu/05400/05476/>; henceforth abbreviated as **BESE**

*On-line animated slide shows*

Dikken, M. den 2018, *Syntax: A First Encounter*, downloadable from the ELTE/SEAS course material site at <http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/denDikkenMarcel/index.html>; henceforth abbreviated as **SAFE**

*How to approach the course material*

You are expected to read **all chapters** of *BESE*, **in full**, and to watch the *SAFE* slide shows on a week-by-week basis. The combination of *BESE* and *SAFE* will present you with a complete narrative that will serve as the foundation for the seminar. We will not strictly follow the order of presentation in *BESE*, but will stay close to *SAFE*. Specific readings from *BESE* are assigned for each session. It is **not** advisable to **only** read the assigned sections. Rather, the **optimal strategy** is to start reading *BESE* from p. 1 right away, to make your way through the textbook linearly, and to **review** the specific assigned readings in preparation for the individual lectures. The mid-term and final exams will be based on the material covered in class, but familiarity with *BESE* and *SAFE* will be presupposed.

*Weekly meetings*

The seminar will feature weekly meetings. These will be held in person, in room R442, for as long as ELTE can pay its energy bills; they may be turned into on-line meetings at short notice. For best results, you are recommended to come to the weekly meetings fully prepared, having read the assigned readings, watched the appropriate slideshow, and attempted the exercises.

*Other useful resources [optional reading]*

Carnie, A. (2002). *Syntax: A Generative Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Haegeman, L. (2006). *Thinking Syntactically: A Guide to Argumentation and Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tallerman, M. (2020). *Understanding Syntax* (5<sup>th</sup> edition). London: Routledge.

Tortora, C. (2018). *Understanding Sentence Structure*. Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell.

## Topic 1 – Syntax: What is it? [reading: BESE Chapter 1, §1.1; Chapter 2]

- syntax: the structure of **sentences** and the **constituents** that they are made of
- what is a syntactic constituent? → there are a variety of constituency tests:
  - (i) displacement: syntactic constituents can usually be put in a position other than their neutral position, for instance via topicalisation (which places a particular constituent at the left edge of the sentence, regardless of its syntactic function)
  - (ii) replacement: syntactic constituents can usually be replaced with a proform (which ‘stands in for’ the constituent)
  - (iii) omission: syntactic constituents can be omitted under certain circumstances, if their content is recoverable from the context
- the structure of the sentence is not ‘flat’: there is a **hierarchical** organisation to the structure of the sentence, with constituents being added one at a time

- (1) John said that he talked to Mary in the garden at noon, but as a matter of fact...
- a. he didn’t \_\_\_ → *talk to Mary in the garden at noon*
  - b. he did \_\_\_ at midnight → *talk to Mary in the garden*
  - c. he did \_\_\_ in his room at midnight → *talk to Mary*
  - d. \*he did \_\_\_ Sue in his room at midnight → *\*talk to*

- the hierarchical organisation of the sentence can be fruitfully exploited to determine whether a secondary predicate can associate with the subject, the object, or either:

- (2) John drove Mary home drunk  
(3) John drove Mary home drunk perfectly sober

→ (2) is ambiguous: *drunk* can associate either with *Mary* (the object) or *John* (the subject) — despite the fact that the linear distance between *John* and *drunk* is clearly greater than the linear distance between *Mary* and *drunk*, association of *drunk* with either noun phrase is grammatical because the hierarchical distance between *drunk* and *John* is no greater than the hierarchical distance between *drunk* and *Mary*

→ (3) is NOT ambiguous: *drunk* here can only associate with *Mary*, and *sober* can only be linked to *John* — even though *sober* and *John* are as far apart as can be in the linear string, *sober* is hierarchically closer to *John* than it is to the linearly less distant object (*Mary*)

→ this tells us that syntactic dependencies (such as those between a secondary predicate and its associate) are computed over hierarchical structures, NOT linear strings

- constituency and hierarchy inside the **noun phrase**

- (4) a. the students from Hungary are smarter than the *ones* from America  
b. \*the students of linguistics are smarter than the *ones* of physics
- (5) a. a red American car  
b. une voiture américaine rouge [French]  
a car American red

## EXERCISES

- 1** For each of the following, construct an example that shows whether or not it is a syntactic constituent:
- (a) the subject
  - (b) the object
  - (c) the combination of the verb and the object
  - (d) the combination of the subject and the verb
- 2** In the sentence *John gave Mary a book*, use the constituency tests at your disposal to determine for each of the following whether or not it is a syntactic constituent:
- (a) the combination of the verb and the indirect object
  - (b) the substring formed the two objects (*Mary* and *a book*)
- 3** Determine the hierarchical organisation of the *adjective phrase* (in italics) in (6a), basing yourself on the data provided in (6b,c), where so is a proform for an adjective phrase.
- (6)
- a. John is *prouder of Mary than Bill* is
  - b. ... but less so than Bob is
  - c. \*... but less so of Sue
- 4** For the sentence in (1), above, the continuation in (7a) can be understood in such a way that John talked to Mary at midnight, but in a place that is different from the one that he himself had specified (i.e., not in the garden but in his room). Is this surprising, based on the hierarchical structure for the complex verb phrase of (1) that was arrived at on the basis of (1a–d)? Consider this question against the background of the fact that, when the location (*in his room*) is given special emphasis, it is possible to place it to the right of the time modifier (*at midnight*), as in (7b).
- (7)
- a. he did \_\_\_ in his room → *talk to Mary at midnight*
  - b. he talked to Mary at midnight in his room

**Topic 2 – Categories** [reading: *BESE* Chapter 1, §§2, 3.1 and 3.5]

- LEXICAL *categories*

	[+N]	[-N]
[+V]		V
[-V]	N	

- [+V] forms the NATURAL CLASS of *pure predicates* — *categories that can only serve as predicates, never as arguments*; [-V] categories are more flexibly used
- (1) a. they are [Hungarian poets]  
b. she admires [Hungarian poets]
  - (2) a. this date is [in the future]  
b. she believes [in the future]
  - (3) a. they are [boastful]  
b. \*she admires/believes in [boastful]
  - (4) a. they [write poetry]  
b. \*she admires [write poetry]

- adjectives are [+V] (like verbs)
- prepositions are [-V] (like nouns)

[-F]	[+N]	[-N]
[+V]	A	V
[-V]	N	P

- [-N] forms the NATURAL CLASS of *categories that can take a noun phrase as their immediate dependent*
- (5) a. she admires poetry  
b. she is into poetry  
c. she is fond \*(of) poetry  
d. her fondness \*(of) poetry

- for the FUNCTIONAL categories ([+F]), there is a matrix parallel to the one drawn up previously for the LEXICAL ones ([-F])

[+F]	[+N]	[-N]
[+V]	Deg	T
[-V]	D	Prt

- examples of functional categories:



- (12) a. it is difficult to *do* your homework every week  
b. the difficult exercises are often left *undone*  
c. this is much *ado* about nothing  
d. she has a peculiar *hairdo*

2 The elements *out* and *off* sometimes combine directly with a noun phrase, as in the a-examples in (13) and (14), and sometimes use the ‘dummy’ element *of* as an intermediary between themselves and the noun phrase, as in the b-examples. We have seen that the [-N] lexical categories are characterised, as a natural class, by their ability to combine directly with a nominal complement, whereas the [+N] lexical lack this ability. Would you conclude on this basis that the elements *out* and *off* seen in (13) belong to a different lexical category than the ones seen in (14)? Consider this question against the background of the examples in (15) and (16).

- (13) a. he kicked the woodworm out the door  
b. he snatched the antenna off the car
- (14) a. he kicked the woodworm out of the door  
b. he snatched the antenna off of the car
- (15) a. he was contemplating suicide  
b. he likes to praise his children’s achievements
- (16) a. he was thinking of suicide  
b. he likes to boast of his children’s achievements

### Topic 3 – Subcategorisation [reading: BESE Chapter 1, §3.2]

- *subcategorisation*

→ there are four LEXICAL categories; but not all elements that belong to the same lexical category have exactly the same distributional profile: there are different *subcategories* of the four lexical categories; each has a different **subcategorisation frame**

(i) some verbs take no object, others take one, yet others take two

	SUBCAT FRAME
– intransitive verbs (e.g., <i>to sneeze</i> )	<i>sneeze</i> : V, [____]
– (mono)transitive verbs (e.g., <i>to devour</i> )	<i>devour</i> : V, [____ NP]
– ditransitive verbs (e.g., <i>to give</i> ; see (1))	<i>give</i> : V, [____ NP PP] V, [____ NP NP]

(ii) some nouns take no object, others take one (CP or PP); some can even take two, but then the pattern is more restricted than in the case of verbs with two objects: it is impossible for both objects to be nominal (whether marked with *of* or not)

- (1) a. they give candy to children  
b. they give children candy
- (2) a. their gift of candy to children  
b. \*their gift of children (of) candy

(iii) some adjectives take an object (PP or CP), others don't; there may be some that take two objects, but they must always both be a PP

- (3) a. generous with money to others  
b. \*generous of others (of) money

(iv) prepositions never take more than one object, but they usually do take one; some can forgo an object — however, there is always an *understood* object when it seems that the preposition is being used intransitively

- (4) a. let's go inside/outside (the house)  
b. he's got no clothes on (his body); he put a hat on (his head)

- the argument(s) in the subcategorisation frame of a head is/are called its **complement(s)**

- *optional* complements

→ the verb *devour* requires a complement; its near-synonym *eat* can be used without one  
→ the preposition *at* requires a complement, its near-synonym *in* can be used without one

- (5) a. he is devouring \*(his supper)      a'. he is eating (his supper)  
b. he is at \*(the/his office)      b'. he is in (the/his office)

→ as a convenient shorthand, we will use the convention of placing the complement of optionally transitive heads in *parentheses* in their subcategorisation frames

- (6) a. *devour*: V, [\_\_\_\_ NP]      a'. *eat*: V, [\_\_\_\_ (NP)]  
b. *at*: P, [\_\_\_\_ NP]      b'. *in*: P, [\_\_\_\_ (NP)]

NB: (6a',b') make a *syntactic* claim, not a semantic one: an object is always understood *eat* and *in*

- FUNCTIONAL categories always require a complement: without a LEXICAL category below them, they cannot survive
- as in the case of the LEXICAL categories, we see different subcategories among the FUNCTIONAL ones with respect to their complementation possibilities
- (i) C: the complementiser *that* combines with a *finite* clause; the complementiser *for* combines with an *infinitival* one

- (8) a. she would prefer *that* he will win  
b. she would prefer *for* him to win

- (ii) D: the indefinite article *a* combines only with nouns that denote something that can be counted (so-called 'count nouns'), not with nouns that denote an uncountable mass (so-called 'mass nouns'); but the definite article combines with both

- (9) a. I bought a bucket of sand                      a'. I bought the bucket of sand  
b. \*I bought a sand                                      b'. I bought the sand

- (iii) Deg: degree words such as *very* combine with gradable adjectives but not with non-gradable ones

- (10) a. a (very) intelligent physicist  
b. a (\*very) nuclear physicist, (\*very) grammatical theory

- a **complement** is an argument of the predicate head that occurs **internal** to the subcategorisation frame of the head
- hence it is called the **internal argument**

- subcategorisation frames provide information for the internal argument(s) about its/their
- (a) number (0, 1, 2)
- (b) category
- (c) obligatoriness/optionality
- (d) linear placement relative to the head

## EXERCISES

- 1** Compare the English and Dutch examples in (11) and (12), which are translation equivalents. For English verbs, it is easy to make a blanket statement about the linear placement of their internal arguments relative to them. For Dutch, no categorical statement is possible. Try to formulate the subcategorisation frames for the two verbs in the examples in (11) and (12).

- (11) I think that you deserve a medal  
(12) ik denk dat jij een medaille verdient  
I think that you a medal deserve



**2** In the sentence in (13), which (if any) of the prepositional phrases should we place in the subcategorisation frame of the verb? What are the arguments for or against treating these PPs as complements of the verb? Do all the same arguments apply in the same way in the case of (14) as well?

(13) John put the book on the top shelf in the library on Monday

(14) John assigned the exercise to the students after class on Tuesday

**3** For the sentences in (15a,b), analyse the string *down into the water* structurally, assigning labels to the heads and phrasal nodes that you are identifying in your structure. (You can ignore the rest of these sentences; only the string *down into the water* is at issue.)

(15) a. the acorn dropped down into the water

b. down into the water dropped the acorn

**4** The English word *if* can be used as a complementiser to introduce subordinate questions, as in (16a). But *if* can introduce questions only if these are finite: the infinitival question in (16b) is ungrammatical. (Instead of *if*, we have to use *whether* in (16b).)

(16) a. I wonder if I should do this

b. \*I wonder if to do this

a. Present a way in which this restriction on the distribution of *if* can be formally stated in its lexical entry.

b. While (16b) is ungrammatical, (17) is perfectly well-formed. Does (17) present a counter-example to the statement that *if* cannot introduce infinitival questions? Discuss this against the background of a broad sketch of the structure of the embedded clause in (17). (Triangles will be sufficient; labels are not essential.)

(17) I wonder if to do this would be smart

#### Topic 4 — The external argument, thematic roles [reading: BESE Chapter 1, §3.4]

- in addition to one (or more) internal argument(s), a predicate head can select one (and only one) **external argument** – **NOT listed in the subcategorisation frame**
- there are several important reasons why the external argument is not included in the head's subcategorisation frame – the most salient of which are the following:
  - (i) while certain lexical categories (the 'ditransitive' ones) can have two internal arguments, no category every has more than one external argument
- (1) a. the car collided with the lorry            the boy met (up) with the girl  
b. the car and the lorry collided            the boy and the girl met (up)  
c. \*the car the lorry collided            \*the boy the girl met (up)
- (ii) the external argument is generally nominal: there is no *categorial selection* for the external argument
- (iii) while the object can sometimes be dropped (recall (5) from Topic 3), the subject must always be present in English, even if its content is perfectly recoverable
- (2) \*is devouring/eating his supper
- (iv) the external argument generally *precedes* the predicate, whereas there is variation, across the world's languages, in the linear placement of the internal argument relative to the head
  - SVO languages (such as English, French)
  - SOV languages (such as Turkish, Korean)
  - though VSO and VOS languages exist, placement of the verb or the V+O complex before the subject can be shown to be the result of a syntactic operation performed on an underlying structure in which S precedes V+O
- recall that subcategorisation frames provide information about number, category, obligatoriness/optionality, and linear placement relative to the head
- such information is highly relevant for internal arguments but does NOT play a role for external arguments, which hence are NOT represented in subcategorisation frames
- **internal** arguments are **internal** to subcategorisation frames
- **external** arguments are **external** to subcategorisation frames
- both **internal arguments** and **external arguments** have **thematic roles**
- thematic roles are the roles assigned to the arguments of a predicate
- (3) a. Agent            *doer*  
b. Patient            *undergoer*  
c. Theme            *argument of which a state/location or change thereof is predicated*  
d. Location  
e. Experiencer  
f. Beneficiary  
g. Goal  
h. Instrument

- the thematic roles of a predicate head are listed in the **theta-grid** ( $\theta$ -grid) of the head

(4)

	THETA-GRID
a. intransitive verbs (e.g., <i>to sneeze</i> )	<i>sneeze</i> : V, $\langle \theta_{Ag} \rangle$
b. (mono)transitive verbs (e.g., <i>to devour</i> )	<i>devour</i> : V, $\langle \theta_{Ag}, \theta_{Th} \rangle$
c. ditransitive verbs (e.g., <i>to put</i> )	<i>put</i> : V, $\langle \theta_{Ag}, \theta_{Th}, \theta_{Loc} \rangle$

- syntax must structurally represent ('project') all the thematic roles listed in the theta-grid
- the **Projection Principle** demands that all lexical information must be syntactically represented
- syntax cares about thematic role *labels* only insofar as a **configurational definition** of thematic relations is possible — **Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis** (UTAH)
- once we have evidence that a particular theta-role is assigned to a particular syntactic position, it must *always* be assigned to that position
- we will discover that the Agent and Theme  $\theta$ -roles have privileged relationships with a particular syntactic position – every time there is an Agent or Theme in the structure, it is always generated in one particular position in the structure

## EXERCISES

- 1 If it is true that the external argument (S) always starts out before the verb phrase (containing the verb and the object, in principle in either order), how could the word order of VOS languages be accounted for? Think in this connection of the fact that in English, placing the verb and the object, as a unit, to the left of the subject is possible under certain circumstances (as in *John said that he would fix the sink, and indeed, fix the sink he did!*).
  - 2 For each of the underlined constituents of the sentences in (5), determine whether they are included in the subcategorisation frame of the verb, and, if they serve as arguments of the verb, what their  $\theta$ -role is.
- (5)
- a. she gave him a kiss this morning
  - b. she dug it out of her bag in the lunch break
  - c. her phone fell into the pool

**Topic 5 – Structure building and adjunction** [reading: *BESE* Chapter 3, §§1.1–1.5, 2.2.1]

- the **Projection Principle** requires that **all** lexical information (for category, subcategorisation, and  $\theta$ -role assignment) must be syntactically represented — i.e., *projected* into the syntactic structure
- we are not allowed to omit any lexical information: our syntactic representations cannot *underrepresent* the lexical properties of the heads involved in them
- **X-bar theory** gives us the technical format with which to obey the Projection Principle
  - when a head X combines with its first argument (in conformity with the head’s subcategorisation frame), we derive X’ (pronounced ‘X-bar’)
  - to X’ can be added a second argument of the head X, thus deriving XP (pronounced ‘X-phrase’)

[X]  
 [<sub>X'</sub> X [YP]]  
 [<sub>XP</sub> ZP [<sub>X'</sub> X [YP]]]

- syntactic structures can feature material that is not listed in the lexical information listed for any of the heads present in them
- such material **modifies** some portion of the structure derived by combining the heads with their arguments
- modification relations are structurally modelled in terms of **adjunction**
- to X’ and XP we can attach any number (i.e., 0, 1, 2, ... *n*) of **adjuncts**, either to the left or to the right of X’ or XP
- [the side on which an adjunct is attached is free in principle; the categorial status of the adjunct can limit this freedom, however: thus, in English, while AP-adjuncts are usually attachable on either side, PP-adjuncts and NP-adjuncts strongly prefer right-adjunction — *he <carefully/\*with care/\*yesterday> read the book <carefully/with care/yesterday>*)
- adjuncts are never structurally required, and adding them does not fundamentally change the structure — in contrast to what is the case when we add arguments (which always raise the bar level up one notch), adjunction does not raise the bar level of the projection

[<sub>X'</sub> X [YP]]  
 [<sub>X'</sub> (Adjunct) [<sub>X'</sub> X [YP]] (Adjunct)]  
 [<sub>XP</sub> (Adjunct) [<sub>XP</sub> ZP [<sub>X'</sub> X [YP]]] (Adjunct)]

**EXERCISES**

- 1** Consider the lexical information for the verb *beat* given in (1), and produce a grammatical X-bar structure that satisfies this lexical information in conformity with the Projection Principle and the  $\theta$ -Criterion. (You can ignore the external  $\theta$ -role for now. We will need to develop the syntactic structure further before we can accommodate the external argument.)

(1) *beat*: V, [ \_\_\_ NP]  
 < $\theta_{Agent}$ ,  $\theta_{Patient}$ >

- 2** Consider the lexical information for the verb *devour* given in (2), and produce a grammatical X-bar structure that satisfies this lexical information in conformity with the Projection Principle and the  $\theta$ -Criterion. (You can ignore the external  $\theta$ -role for now. We will need to develop the syntactic structure further before we can accommodate the external argument.)

(2)  $devour: V, \quad [ \_\_\_ NP ]$   
 $\langle \theta_{Agent}, \theta_{Themet} \rangle$

- 3** Consider the lexical information for the verb *put* given in (3), and produce a grammatical X-bar structure that satisfies this lexical information in conformity with the Projection Principle and the  $\theta$ -Criterion. (You can ignore the external  $\theta$ -role for now. We will need to develop the syntactic structure further before we can accommodate the external argument.)

(3)  $put: \quad V, \quad [ \_\_\_ NP PP ]$   
 $\langle \theta_{Agent}, \theta_{Theme}, \theta_{Location} \rangle$

- 4** Develop the structure of the verb phrase of (4) in such a way that it accommodates both *savagely* and *in the alley*, alongside the verb's complement.

(4)  $they \text{ savagely beat the dog in the alley}$

**Topic 6 – The specifier position, ‘little *v*’** [reading: *BESE* Chapter 5, §2; Chapter 3, §§2.2.2]

- syntax makes a structural distinction between **complements**, **adjuncts** and **specifiers**
  - complements are structurally defined as: sister of X, daughter of X'
  - adjuncts are structurally defined as: sister of X', daughter of X'
  - specifiers are structurally defined as: sister of X', daughter of XP

$[_{XP} \text{Specifier } [_{X'} X [\text{Complement}]]]$

$[_{XP} \text{Specifier } [_{X'} (\text{Adjunct}) [_{X'} X [\text{Complement}]] (\text{Adjunct})]$

- the **specifier position of VP** is used exclusively for one particular argument of the verb: the **Theme**

(1) the acorn dropped in the water

- *the acorn* in (1) is the Theme argument of the verb *drop* – the acorn undergoes a change of location in the course of the dropping-into-the-water event (it was not in the water prior to the beginning of the event, and it ends up in the water at the completion of the event); arguments of which a state or location, or change thereof, is predicated are Themes
- both the Theme (*the acorn*) and the Location (*in the water*) argument belong in the **subcategorisation frame** of the verb *drop*
- everything that is represented in a verb's subcat frame must be projected within the maximal projection of V
- the Location argument is straightforwardly projected in the **complement** position of V; for the Theme argument, we are led to exploit the **specifier** position of VP

(2)  $[_{VP} [_{DP} \text{the acorn}] [_{V'} \text{drop } [_{PP} \text{in the water}]]]$

- we can now translate ‘internal argument’ or ‘argument represented in the subcategorisation frame’ as ‘argument projected inside the maximal lexical projection of the head’
- with the Theme projected in SpecVP, we obtain a possible *structural definition* of the Theme, if we can tie the SpecVP position one-to-one to the Theme role (**UTAH**)
- for the **transitive** version of *the acorn dropped in the water*, given in (3), we will now want to feature the same ‘core’ VP, and add the Agent argument *he* outside VP

(3) he dropped the acorn in the water

- this leads us to the postulation of a verbal head outside VP that can introduce the Agent argument: a ‘light verb’ called ‘little *v*’

(4)  $[_{vP} \text{he } [_{v'} v [_{VP} [_{DP} \text{the acorn}] [_{V'} \text{drop } [_{PP} \text{in the water}]]]]]$

- *v* takes the lexical VP (containing the Theme and the Location arguments) as its complement, and projects the external argument as its specifier
- within the ‘big VP’, there is space for at most two arguments, occupying the complement and specifier positions of V

- the addition, outside VP, of ‘little *v*’ makes room for a third argument — called the **external** argument because it is projected outside (i.e., external to) the ‘big VP’
- since VP can accommodate at most two internal arguments and *v* introduces exactly one external argument, it is predicted that no single verb should ever be able to take more than three arguments — and indeed, though intransitive, monotransitive and ditransitive verbs are robustly in evidence, there are no tritransitive verbs (i.e., verbs that have three objects)  
[for apparently tritransitive verbs such as *bet* in *I bet you a dollar that you’ll lose*, featuring four phrasal dependents (viz., *I*, *you*, *a dollar*, and the *that*-clause), it can be argued that one of them (here *a dollar*) is not an **argument** of the verb]

## EXERCISES

- 1 Go over exercises 1–3 for Topic 5 once again, and further develop your tree structures in such a way that they now include the external argument and deliver the desired linear order (in particular, the linear placement of the verb relative to the direct object).

**Topic 7 – Case** [reading: *BESE* Chapter 5, §2; Chapter 3, §§2.2.2, 2.2.3]

- no V is capable of introducing the Agent or Causer external argument within its maximal lexical projection
- also, no V is capable of assigning structural accusative **Case** to its specifier
- so to get from (1) to (2), we need to introduce something outside VP which can (a) introduce the external argument (i.e., assign the external  $\theta$ -role) and (b) assign structural accusative Case to the object of the transitive clause, so that this object can satisfy the Case Filter

- (1)            the acorn dropped in the water  
(2)            he dropped the acorn in the water

- ‘little *v*’ helps us out in **three** different ways:
  - (a) *v* assigns the external  $\theta$ -role
  - (b) *v* assigns structural accusative Case
  - (c) *v* gives us an opportunity to get the verb (V) in front of the Theme argument, by movement of V up to *v* and the formation of a [*v*+V] adjunction complex
- we expect that the ability to assign structural accusative Case will always go hand in hand with the assignment of an external  $\theta$ -role: ‘**Burzio’s Generalisation**’
- note that Burzio’s Generalisation (updated in *v*-terms) does **not** say that whenever *v* is present in the structure (i.e., whenever an external  $\theta$ -role is assigned), accusative Case *must* be assigned

- (3)            he laughed (at me)

- there is an external argument here (an Agent), but there is nothing to assign accusative Case to
- that is quite okay, as the **Case Filter** is a one-way street: every DP must be assigned Case; but there is no requirement that every potential Case assigner always assign Case
- we do expect, however, that it should be possible to find sentences featuring unergative verbs such as *laugh* in which accusative Case *is* assigned
- *himself* (called a ‘fake reflexive’) in (4) and *the speaker* in (5) receive accusative Case, and do so from *v*

- (4)            he laughed himself silly  
(5)            he laughed the speaker off the stage

- **unaccusative verbs** should never be expected to combine with an accusative noun phrase — which is correct:

- (6)            \*he arrived himself silly  
(7)            \*he arrived the speaker off the stage

- no accusative Case can ever be assigned in unaccusative constructions — because they contain no ‘little *v*’



- note that ‘little *v*’ also does not assign Case to its specifier (i.e., the external argument): we do not say *\*him dropped the acorn in the water*
- apparently, the ability to assign Case is **structurally restricted**, to material contained within the assigner’s complement position
- this structural restriction is called **government** — a *downward-looking* relation between a head (the governor) and a phrase (the governee)

## EXERCISES

**1** The hypothesis that syntactic structures allow at most two daughters for any given node imposes severe restrictions on the range of grammatical trees.

- a. By what name is the hypothesis known?
- b. For an example such as (8), give a structure for the VP that is compatible with the hypothesis.

(8)           the train departs from the station at noon

**2** Give a fully explicit structure for the *v*P of the example in (9).

(9)           he donated his paintings to the local museum

**3** Unaccusative verbs are verbs which project all their arguments inside the maximal lexical VP. This means that they do not need the ‘help’ of ‘little *v*’ in the assignment of their  $\theta$ -grids: ‘little *v*’ is absent from the syntactic structure of unaccusative constructions. A subset of the unaccusative verbs is formed by the ergative verbs. Ergative verbs differ from other unaccusative verbs in their ability to alternate with a transitive counterpart.

- a. Based on what you know about the things that ‘little *v*’ is responsible for, provide a short explanation for why verbal structures that lack ‘little *v*’ are called ‘unaccusative’.
- b. How can we express the difference between ergative verbs and other unaccusative verbs in terms of the syntactic distribution of ‘little *v*’?

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**The midterm exam will be administered in the week following the discussion of Topic 7.**

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**Topic 8 – Building the sentence; NP-movement and chains; the trigger for movement; structural Case assignment** [reading: *BESE* Chapter 3, §2.3, Chapter 6, §§1–3]

- (1) the acorn dropped in the water  
 (2) he dropped the acorn in the water

Q can the subject (*the acorn* in (1), *he* in (2)) get nominative Case inside *vP/VP*?  
 – nominative Case is not assigned under government (i.e., ‘downward’)  
 → if we allowed nominative Case to be assigned by I under government, we not be able to make sense of an important difference between nominative and accusative Case: (in)sensitivity to *adjacency*

- (3) a. they will all read (\*probably) it  
 b. they will probably all read it  
 c. they probably will all read it

→ from the grammaticality of the second and third examples, we learn that nominative Case is not assigned by I under government  
 → conclusion: nominative Case is NOT assigned under government  
 → we can deal with nominative Case assignment with the aid of the same mechanism that ensures that the subject *agrees* with the finite verb: **Spec–Head agreement**

- (4) a. [the mother of the children] is/\*are Hungarian  
 b. [the children of the woman] are/\*is Romanian

- the subject does not originate in SpecIP, which is not a  $\theta$ -position
- the subject must **move** to SpecIP
- we have now encountered **two** instances of movement in syntax
  - (a) movement of V to *v* (left-adjoining to *v*)
  - (b) movement of the subject to SpecIP
- for (a), it is immediately clear that movement cannot radically remove the moved element from the base structure: if V were removed from VP altogether, the verbal phrase would lose its head and collapse
- for (b), too, movement does not radically remove the subject from the verbal phrase
  - the verb is lexically specified as selecting the subject as one of its arguments
  - the Projection Principle demands that all lexical information be syntactically represented throughout the derivation
  - the argument that is moved to SpecIP must be able to link up to the  $\theta$ -role that it gets from the verb
  - this  $\theta$ -role is assigned to a dedicated position in the verbal phrase (the complement-of-V position, SpecVP, or Spec*v*P, depending on the  $\theta$ -role)
  - the argument that is moved to SpecIP must continue to be represented, in some way, in the position in which it receives its  $\theta$ -role
- the way in which the moved verb or subject is structurally represented in its place of birth is in the form of a **trace**, coindexed with the moved element

## EXERCISES

**1** Consider the sentence in (5).

(5) the students hopefully can put the tree together correctly

- a. Present a fully detailed tree structure for the sentence in (5), including all the movements and empty categories involved in the derivation of this sentence.
- b. Which element in the tree is responsible for assigning nominative Case to the subject, and in which structural configuration does it assign nominative Case to this DP?
- c. Which element in the tree is responsible for assigning accusative Case to the object, and in which structural configuration does it assign accusative Case to this DP?
- d. What is the problem with the variant of (5) in which *correctly* is placed between *put* and *the tree*?
- e. How come placement of *hopefully* between *the students* and I=*can* does not cause any trouble for Case assignment to the subject?

**2** Consider the sentence in (6).

(6) the students will probably arrive at the correct answer without much difficulty

- a. Present a fully detailed tree structure for the sentence in (6), including all the movements and empty categories involved in the derivation of this sentence.
- b. Against the background of the trees you drew for the sentences in (5) and (6), determine whether the *foot* of the chain of movement of the subject is uniformly located in the same structural position.
- c. In light of the sentences in (5) and (6), consider whether it would be accurate to say that the DP that is moved to SpecIP is always an Agent.

**3** Nominative and accusative Case are sometimes called ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ Case, respectively. Evaluate these alternative labels on the basis of the sentence in (7) (for which you do not need to draw a tree). Is there a one-to-one relationship between nominative Case and ‘subjecthood’, and between accusative Case and ‘objecthood’?

(7) he considers them to be smart

**4** Are the following statements *true* (T) or *false* (F)?

- a. Whenever a syntactic structure contains an I-node, this node assigns nominative Case to its specifier under Spec–Head agreement.
- b. Every instance of V assigns accusative Case under government.
- c. Accusative Case is uniquely assignable by elements with the categorial feature specification [–N,+V].
- d. The government relationship can never target a specifier.
- e. In English, the specifier of a finite IP must agree in  $\phi$ -features with the I-node.

## Topic 9 – Complementisers and complementiser phrases [reading: BESE Chapter 7, §§1–4]

- **finite** versus **infinitival** complementisers
  - (1) *[that he has done this]* is unfortunate
  - (2) *[for him to have done this]* is unfortunate
  - in (2), accusative Case is not being assigned to an object — the term ‘objective Case’ would be a misnomer
  - it is clear from (2) that there is no one-to-one relationship between subjecthood and nominative Case: here we are dealing with subjects that receive accusative Case — the term ‘subjective Case’ would also be a misnomer
- in (3), *whether* but not *if* is a phrase because it can be coordinated with *not* (as in *whether or not*), with *not* being a phrase (cf. *certainly not*)
  - coordination can only involve likes, phrase-structurally
  - since *whether* is a phrase, it cannot occupy the C-position (a head)
  - *whether* is in SpecCP; the C-position in *whether*-questions is (obligatorily) **silent**
- (3) it is hard to predict [*{if/whether}* he will do this]
- when the SpecCP position is occupied by *whether*, this element is inserted directly into SpecCP; put differently, SpecCP is the base-generation site of *whether*
  - *whether* belongs to a family of words, called *wh*-words (because in English they almost all begin with the letter combination *wh*; the only member of the family of *wh*-words that does not begin with *wh* is *how*), which are used to introduce **questions**
  - in questions introduced by a *wh*-word other than *whether*, the *wh*-constituent is base-generated lower in the structure, and moves into SpecCP — a case of ***wh*-movement**
- (4)
  - a. it is hard to predict *whether* he will do this
  - b. it is hard to predict *what* he will do *t*
  - c. it is hard to predict *how* he will do this *t*
  - d. it is hard to predict *when* he will do this *t*
  - e. it is hard to predict *who* he will do this with *t*
- though the *wh*-word *whether* occurs only in non-root questions (thus, you cannot ask \**Whether he will do this?*), all other *wh*-words occur in root as well as non-root questions
  - when they introduce a root question, the *wh*-constituent must be immediately followed by a finite auxiliary
  - ordinarily (i.e., outside the realm of root questions), finite auxiliaries in English always follow the subject; but in a root non-subject question, the finite auxiliary shows up to the left of the subject
  - this is the result of **I-to-C movement**: adjunction of I to the bound morpheme [Q] in C
- in root yes/no-questions, we also get I-to-C movement: *Will he do this?*
  - here SpecCP is seemingly empty — but plausibly, SpecCP is in fact occupied, by a **silent** counterpart to the *wh*-word *whether* which introduces non-root yes/no-questions
  - for non-root yes/no-questions with *if* (= C), we can postulate this silent element as well

## EXERCISES

**1** Provide a fully detailed syntactic representation for the complex sentence in (5).

(5) he said that she hit him

**2** Provide a fully detailed syntactic representation for the complex sentence in (6).

(6) for him to say this would raise eyebrows

**3** Provide a fully detailed syntactic representation for the complex sentence in (7).

(7) I wonder whether you can draw the tree

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**This is the final instalment of new material – the following sessions will be spent on revision and practice sessions**

**In the last week of classes, the final exam will be administered.**

