Lexical Categories
Lecture 1: Introduction

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Anything else?

How do we know that *Moon* is a noun, *devour* is a verb and *under* is a preposition?

Diagnostics: semantics

- Nouns tend to denote denote things, entities, whether physical or abstract

  There are apparently no languages where [lexical equivalents of] *Moon* and *devour* belong to one lexical category, and *Sun* and *chuckle* to another

- Verbs – processes, events, eventualities
- Adjectives – properties

Note that the distinction between activities and properties is very subtle!

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Sometimes words do not have tangible semantics but still pattern clearly with nouns, verbs, prepositions etc.

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What might be some other diagnostics?

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Are there instances of argument marking on nouns?

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Is there any morphology characteristic for prepositions?

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(2) a. NOUN [a] walk – VERB walk [a dog]

b. Mandarin Chinese NOUN chǎn 'a shovel(s)' – VERB chǎn 'to shovel/shoveled/will shovel ...'

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- Many morphological generalizations can be reformulated in syntactic terms (more on that later)

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(6) *a slowly motion

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- A verb is something that can take a noun as a complement

(7) *devour/*consumption* a cake

- A verb is something that can be modified by an adverb

(8) quickly *devour/*consumption*

- A verb is something that cannot be taken by a noun as a complement (at least without additional operations)

(9) devour *a cake/*bake*

- A verb is something that cannot be modified an adjective

(10) *quick devour

Diagnostics: syntax

Important observation 1 Syntactic properties of words (individual morphosyntactic units) are often identical to phrases that they head

(11) devour *a cake/a big cake/the cake that my friends baked yesterday*

To that effect, almost any syntactic structure can be substituted with a larger structure with identical syntactic properties. (Let's only talk about phrases, for now.)

What will be of most concern to us in this course are *syntactic categories*

(12) **Syntactic categories**

a. NP

b. VP

c. AdjP

d. PP ...

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Important observation 2 Certain morphological generalization can be formulated in terms of syntax

We have seen that certain morphology is associated with particular lexical categories: *tense* is associated with verbs, *number marking* is associated with nouns etc.

We can reformulate such generalizations in syntactic terms.

Diagnostics: syntax

What is the structure of this fragment?

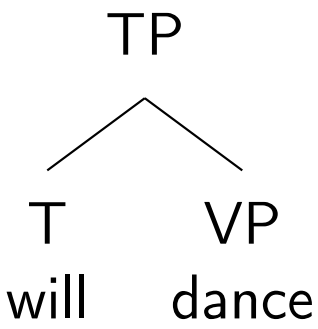
(13) *danced*

What if we change the tense to future?

(14) *will dance*

It is obvious that the tense auxiliary is syntactically active and projects in the structure

(15)



Extended projections

In syntactic terms what we saw that (at least some) morphemes that are characteristic for certain lexical categories project syntactically

(16) **Some functional projections characteristic for nouns (NPs)**

a. Number

b. Definiteness

c. Gender?

(17) **Some functional projections characteristic for verbs (VPs)**

a. Voice

b. Aspect

c. Tense

d. Mood ...

What are lexical categories

Some instances of inflectional morphology that may not (or may not always) project syntactically

(18) **Nominal**

a. Case

b. Gender

(19) **Verbal**

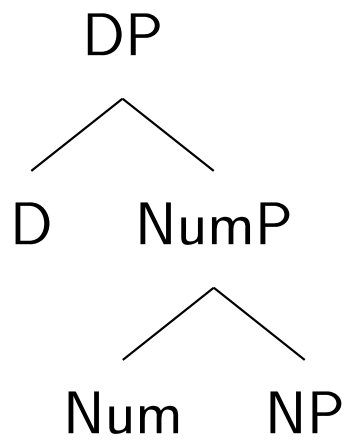
a. Agreement markers

b. Perhaps, certain instances of (in)transitive morphology

Extended projections

A lexical head + all its functional heads above it that it may license are usually called *extended projections* of that head

(20) A typical structure of a Nominal Extended Projection (Nominal Spine)



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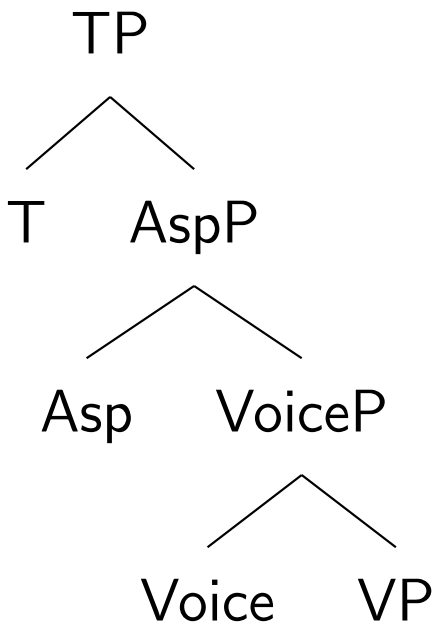

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- Properties of an extended projection

Extended projections

The idea of an *extended projection* revolves around two intuitions:

1. Functional morphemes may alter the syntactic identity of a phrase
2. At the same time, all phrases of the same extended projection share certain common characteristics

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Only NPs can be modified by a Saxon Genitive

(23) a. John's books

b. *John's the books

Adjectives, prepositions and adverbs

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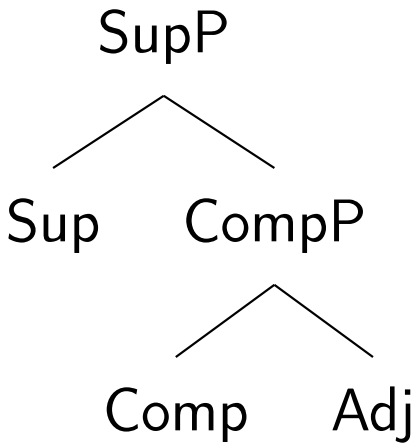

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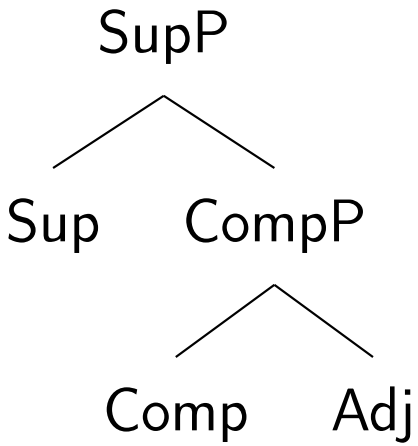

The question whether prepositions can have extended projections is more complicated. In any case, of all categories, nouns and verbs possess the richest and most elaborate extended projections compared to other categories.

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b. a [task [*for* John's sister]$_{\text{PP}}$]$_{\text{NP}}$

c. to [run [relatively *quickly*]$_{\text{AdvP}}$]$_{\text{VP}}$

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What is a *modifier*? Roughly, a phrase that does not alter the identity of a phrase that it merges with.

Taking stock

Lexical categories, as well as phrases they project, can be defined by their syntactic properties

Most prominent of such properties are:

- Patterns of argument-taking
- Patterns of modification
- Properties of extended projections

Nouns, verbs (as well as other categories) may start extended projections with largely similar syntactic properties

Only nouns and verbs are characterized by elaborate extended projections