

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

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<i>Description</i>	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.
<i>Assessment</i>	end-of-term written exam [for sample questions, see the relevant page on the ELTE–SEAS course materials site: <a href="http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/denDikkenMarcel/syntax_seminar_exam_sample.pdf">http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/denDikkenMarcel/syntax_seminar_exam_sample.pdf</a> ]  NB: there will be a mid-term written exam as well, but this exam will only serve to give you and me an indication of where you are standing at that point in the course (although the results may be used for rounding purposes at the end of the semester); the date of the mid-term exam will be announced in class, and sitting the mid-term exam is obligatory

*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**. It will be highly advisable for you to also 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 final exam will be based on the material covered in class, but familiarity with *BESE* and *SAFE* will be presupposed.

*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. (1998). *Understanding Syntax*. London: Arnold.

**Syntax: What is it?** [reading: BESE Chapter 1, §1.1; Chapter 2, §§1.1–1.3]

- *syntax: the structure of sentences and the phrases that they are made of*
- *what is a phrase?*

John ate bangers  
a remarkably tall Dutch guy ate very big pork sausages

who ate bangers? – John / a remarkably tall Dutch guy  
what did he eat? – bangers / very big pork sausages  
what did he do? – eat bangers / very big pork sausages  
what did he do with the sausages? – eat \*(them)

- *subject and predicate*

(i) *active/passive pairs*

John ate bangers	bangers were eaten by John
John ate very big pork sausages	very big pork sausages were eaten by John
a remarkably tall Dutch guy ate bangers	bangers were eaten by a remarkably tall Dutch guy

(ii) *assertion/question pairs*

John ate bangers	did John eat bangers?
John ate very big pork sausages	did John eat very big pork sausages?
a remarkably tall Dutch guy ate bangers	did a remarkably tall Dutch guy eat bangers?

<u>bangers</u> were eaten by <u>John</u>	were <u>bangers</u> eaten by <u>John</u> ?
↓	*were by <u>John</u> eaten <u>bangers</u> ?
<u>grammatical</u> subject <u>notional</u> subject	*were <u>John</u> eaten <u>bangers</u> by?
	* <u>bangers</u> eaten <were> by <were> <u>John</u> ?

(iii) *agreement with the finite verb*

some guy is/*are eating bangers	bangers are/*is being eaten by some guy
some guys are/*is eating a banger	a banger is/*are being eaten by some guys

→ *the grammatical subject is the constituent controlling agreement with the finite verb, and inverting with the finite verb in questions*

- *constituency: unity, impermeability, replacement, displacement, omission*

very big pork sausages were eaten by John  
\*big pork sausages were eaten very by John  
\*pork sausages were eaten very big by John  
\*sausages were eaten very big pork by John

the tall Dutch guy ate bangers	the tall Dutch guy <u>didn't</u> eat bangers
	*the tall Dutch <u>didn't</u> guy eat bangers
	*the tall <u>didn't</u> Dutch guy eat bangers
	*the <u>didn't</u> tall Dutch guy eat bangers

Bill could see John  
Bill could see John kiss(ed)/kissing Mary  
Bill could see that John kissed Mary

Q1 is *see John* a constituent?

Bill could see John, and *so* could Bob  
Bill could see John kissed Mary, and *so* could Bob (\*kissed Sue)

Bill said he could see John, but [see John], he actually couldn't  
Bill said he could see John kissed Mary, but [see John], he actually couldn't (\*kissed Mary)

Bill said he could see John kiss Mary, but [see John], he actually couldn't (\*kiss Mary)  
Bill said he could see John kissing Mary, but [see John], he actually couldn't (!kissing Mary)

you claim you could see John kissed Mary; but *could* you (really) \_\_\_ (\*kissed Mary)?  
you claim you could see John kiss Mary; but *could* you (really) \_\_\_ (\*kiss Mary)?  
you claim you could see John kissing Mary; but *could* you (really) \_\_\_ (!kissing Mary)?

Q2 is *that John kissed Mary* a constituent?

Bill could see that John kissed Mary, and Bob could see *it*, too

[that John kissed Mary], Bill couldn't see

Q3 is *John kissed Mary* a constituent?

Bill could see John kissed Mary, and Bob could see *it*, too  
Bill could see that John kissed Mary, and Bob could see *it*, too  
\*Bill could see (that) John kissed Mary, and Bob could see that *it*, too

\*[John kissed Mary], Bill couldn't see (that)

→ *different constituency tests (unity, impermeability, replacement, displacement, omission) do not always deliver the same result – we need to be wary of the possibility that some outputs fail for independent reasons; hence it is always safer to try more than one test*

• *recursion*

John kissed Mary  
Bill saw that John kissed Mary  
Bob said that Bill saw that John kissed Mary

John kissed Mary  
John kissed Mary and Sue  
John kissed Mary, Sue, and Sally

this is the cat that killed the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built  
the rat that the cat that the dog bit chased escaped

## Hierarchy [reading: BESE Chapter 2]

John talked to Mary in the garden at noon

John said that he talked to Mary in the garden at noon, but

- (a) he actually didn't \_\_\_\_ → *talk to Mary in the garden at noon*
- (b) he actually did \_\_\_\_ at midnight → *talk to Mary in the garden*
- (c) he actually did \_\_\_\_ in her bedroom at midnight → *talk to Mary*

John said that he talked to Mary in the garden at noon, but

- (d) ... talk to Mary in the garden at noon, he actually didn't
- (e) ... talk to Mary in the garden, he actually did at midnight
- (f) ... talk to Mary, he actually did in her bedroom at midnight

- *hierarchy and scope*

John knocked on the door intentionally twice [twice > intentionally]

?John twice intentionally knocked on the door [twice > intentionally]

John knocked on the door twice intentionally [intentionally > twice]

??John intentionally twice knocked on the door [intentionally > twice]

John intentionally knocked on the door twice [intentionally >/< twice]

John twice knocked on the door intentionally [twice >/< intentionally]

- *depictives*

John drove Mary home drunk

John drove Mary home drunk perfectly sober

- *hierarchy inside the noun phrase*

the students of linguistics from Hungary

??the students from Hungary of linguistics

\*the students of linguistics are smarter than the *ones* of physics

\*these students of linguistics are smarter than those \_\_\_\_ of physics

the students of linguistics from Hungary are smarter than the *ones* from America

these students of linguistics from Hungary are smarter than those \_\_\_\_ from America

a red American car [red > American]

une voiture américaine rouge [*French*] [red > American]

a car American red

→ *cross-categorical parallelism*

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

- LEXICAL *categories*

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

Q1 *where to put the adjectives and prepositions?*

Q2 *what is the meaning of these feature specifications?*

- [+V] = *pure predicate* — categories that can only serve as predicates

she admires [Hungarian poets]

they are [Hungarian poets]

she believes [in the future]

this date is [in the future]

\*she admires/believes in [boastful]

they are [boastful]

\*she admires [write poetry]

they [write poetry]

vs she admires [writing poetry]

\*they [writing poetry]

- *adjectives are [+V] (like verbs)*

- *prepositions are [-V] (like nouns)*

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

Q3 *does [-N] stand for something, too?*

- [-N] = *potential structural Case assigner*

she admires (\*of) poetry

she is into (\*of) poetry

she is fond \*(of) poetry

her fondness \*(of) poetry

NB: *note that there are also some verbs that require of, as a lexically selected preposition:*

I was thinking of you

he likes to boast of his wealth

cf. the very thought of you

he is boastful of his wealth

→ *so we are not claiming that the distribution of the preposition of is tied one-on-one to the [+N] lexical categories*

- *there are many words which occur both as nouns and as verbs*

move  
ride  
step  
talk  
walk

if you're going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk

→ *this has led some people to believe that category specification is not a property of lexical roots*

- *there are revealing restrictions on categorial flexibility*

to make the screen clear ~ to clear the screen ~ \*to screen clear  
[cf.: to screen a film]

to project a film on a screen ~ to screen a film ~ \*to film on a screen  
[cf.: to film a scene]

→ GENERALISATION: *a Theme cannot be converted into a verb*

→ *this prompts us to think about the **syntax of thematic relations** — next class*

- LEXICAL *versus* FUNCTIONAL categories

N	D (determiners: <i>a, the</i> )
A	Deg (degree words: <i>very, too</i> ; comparative, superlative)
V	T (tense: <i>-ed</i> ) Asp (aspect: <i>be+ing</i> 'progressive'; <i>have+en</i> 'perfect')
	C (complementisers: <i>that, if</i> )
P	Prt (particles: <i>up on the roof, down under the table</i> )

- *there are precisely **four** lexical categories: these are the only ones definable by the two binary features [ $\pm N, \pm V$ ]*

→ *there can be no lexical category of **adverbs***

- very, too and quite – FUNCTIONAL elements (recall above)*
- ly – INFLECTIONAL morphology (like -s on verbs)*

independent(ly) of the government

they like(\*s) him  
she like\*(s) him

we are fond(\*ly) of him  
we think fond\*(ly) of him

- a lot, with passion – an NP or PP used adverbially*

**Subcategorisation and thematic roles** [reading: *BESE* Chapter 1, §§3.2, 3.4]

- *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)

*Q* *is the complement of an optionally transitive verb or preposition structurally represented, and if so, how?*

→ there appears to be no simple answer to these questions

→ 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

- the **complement** is the argument of the predicate head that occurs **internal** to the subcategorisation frame of the head

→ hence it is called the **internal argument**

- in addition to one (or more) internal argument(s), a predicate head can also 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

- (11) 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) while the object can sometimes be dropped (recall (5)), the subject must always be present in English, even if its content is perfectly recoverable

- (12) \*is devouring/eating his supper



(iii) the external argument is (almost) always **nominal**: there is no *categorial selection* for the external argument  
 [at a deeper level of analysis, (13c,d) can be made compatible with a maximally broad generalisation to the effect that external arguments are *always* nominal]

- (13) a. his statement surprised/frightened us  
 b. what he said surprised/frightened us  
 c. that he said this surprised/frightened us  
 d. for him to say this would surprise/frighten us

• both **internal arguments** and **external arguments** have **thematic roles**

→ *thematic roles are the roles assigned to the arguments of a predicate*

- Agent            *doer*
- Patient        *undergoer*
- Theme         *argument of which a state/location or change thereof is predicated*
- Experiencer
- Beneficiary
- Goal
- Location
- Instrument
- ...

• the thematic roles of a predicate head are listed in the **theta-grid** of the head

	THETA-GRID
– intransitive verbs (e.g., <i>to sneeze</i> )	<i>sneeze</i> : V, < $\theta_{Ag}$ >
– (mono)transitive verbs (e.g., <i>to devour</i> )	<i>devour</i> : V, < $\theta_{Ag}$ , $\theta_{Th}$ >
– ditransitive verbs (e.g., <i>to give</i> ; see (1))	<i>give</i> : V, < $\theta_{Ag}$ , $\theta_{Th}$ , $\theta_{Ben}$ >

• 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 [we will return to this]

• 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 Theme  $\theta$ -role ( $\theta_{Th}$ ) has a privileged relationship with a particular syntactic position – every time there is a Theme in the structure, it is always generated in that position

## Assignment 1

1 The sentence in (1) is several ways ambiguous, supporting (at least) the readings in (2).

(1) John heard Bill slaughtering the pigs

- (2)
- a. John heard Bill slaughter the pigs
  - b. John heard Bill as he(=Bill) was slaughtering the pigs
  - c. John heard Bill as he(=John) was slaughtering the pigs

a. Give a hierarchical structure (using triangles; you do not need to label them) for (1) on the reading in which it is paraphrasable as in (2a), and discuss the fact that with this structure, the sentence does not state or entail that John must have heard Bill himself.

b. On the readings of (1) paraphrased in (2b) and (2c), John does have to have heard Bill in order for the sentence to be true. Discuss this against the background of a hierarchical structure (again, just using triangles; labels are not necessary) for the sentences in (2b,c).

2 The two statements in (3) are accurate for English:

- (3)
- a. only the [-N] categories can license a nominal object by assigning it Case
  - b. only the category [+N,<sub>i</sub>-V] licenses a genitive

In light of these statements, what would you say about the categorial status of the gerunds (-ing forms) in (4a-c)?

- (4)
- a. I watched the cat chasing a rat
  - b. I watched the cat's chasing a rat
  - c. I watched the cat's chasing of a rat

3 For the sentences in (5a,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.)

- (5)
- 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 (6a). But *if* can introduce questions only if these are finite: the infinitival question in (6b) is ungrammatical. (Instead of *if*, we have to use *whether* in (6b).)

- (6)
- 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 (6b) is ungrammatical, (7) is perfectly well-formed. Does (7) present a counter-example to the statement that *if* cannot introduce infinitival questions? Discuss this against the background of a sketch of the structure of the embedded clause in (7). (Triangles will be sufficient; labels are not essential.)

- (7) I wonder if to do this would be smart

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

centres of excellence and centres/\*ones of influence  
standards of excellence and standards/\*ones of accountability

- *of excellence/influence/accountability* is attached below NP; it is the complement of N
- the fact that *\*ones of influence/accountability* is impossible is due to the fact that *one*, qua instantiation of N, is a pronoun – pronouns do not take complements:

the male student of linguistics and the female student of physics  
\*he of linguistics and she of physics

- cf. also *so*, a proform for predicates:

Dutchmen are proud of their country, and so are Hungarians  
Dutchmen are proud of their kingdom, and so (\*of their republic) are Hungarians

John was talking to Mary, and so (\*to Sue) was Bill

John was eating a grapefruit, and so (\*a pomegranate) was Bill

NB: while pronouns (proforms, more generally) do not take complements, they *can* combine with modifiers

moral standards and professional ones

Hungarians are proud of their country – passionately so

- modifiers should not be introduced into the structure in the same way as complements
- modifiers are **adjuncts**, attached outside the minimal structural unit created by combining a head with its complement – thus, for any X = a head:

[X [Complement]]  
[(Adjunct) [X [Complement]] (Adjunct)]

- **X-bar theory**

- when a head X combines with its complement (in conformity with the head's subcategorisation frame), we derive X'
- to X' we can attach any number of adjuncts, either to the left or to the right of X'
- the output of any adjunction operation has the same bar-level as its input: X'

[<sub>X'</sub> X [Complement]]  
[<sub>X'</sub> (Adjunct) [<sub>X'</sub> X [Complement]] (Adjunct)]

to improve the lot of small businesses  
to improve a lot of small businesses  
to improve small businesses a lot

the lot of small businesses is under investigation  
a lot of small businesses are under investigation

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

- so far we have only built the X-bar projection of the head X up to X', possibly adorned with adjuncts (which do not, however, raise the projection level)

*Q* does projection ever go beyond X'?

- 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

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

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

- on the use of the *specifier position of VP*

the acorn dropped in the water

he dropped the acorn in the water

- *the acorn* is an argument of the verb *drop* in both cases – more specifically, its Theme: the argument that undergoes a change of location
- from the second example, we know that the Theme can be an **internal** argument, alongside the Location argument *in the water*
- both the Theme and the Location 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

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

- we can now translate ‘internal argument’ or ‘argument represented in the subcat 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*, viz., *he dropped the acorn in the water*, we will now want to feature the same ‘core’ VP, and add the external argument *he* outside VP
- this leads us to the postulation of a head outside VP that can introduce the external argument: *v*

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

- *v* takes the lexical VP (containing the Theme and the Location arguments) as its complement, and projects the external argument as its specifier  
[**ergative** verbs are the subtype of **unaccusative** verbs that have a **transitive** variant]

## Theta-roles and 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

- this ‘something’ is called ‘little  $v$ ’: it does two things concurrently:
  - (a)    assigns the external  $\theta$ -role, and
  - (b)    assigns structural accusative Case

- 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

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

- here *himself* (called a ‘fake reflexive’) and *the speaker* receive accusative Case, and do so from  $v$
- 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 don’t 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**, which we will not say much about – it will be sufficient to think of government as a *downward-looking* relation between a head (the governor) and a phrase (the governee)

## Assignment 2

- 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 (1), give a structure for the VP that is compatible with the hypothesis. (Make your tree as detailed as possible, including full structures for the noun phrases included in it.)

(1) the trains for Vienna depart from the Eastern railway station

  - c. Can you think of one or more other ways in which the VP for (1) can be made to obey the hypothesis? (You do not need to develop these alternatives in detail; sketches of structure will be sufficient.)
- 2 Give a fully explicit structure for the  $v$ P of the example in (2).

(2) he donated his late wife's many valuable oil 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  $v$ '?
- 4 In the approach to the structure of transitive clauses that exploits 'little  $v$ ', the passive can be thought of as an operation on this element.
  - a. Considering an active/passive pair such as (3a,b), what are the two things that the operation performed on 'little  $v$ ' brings about to deliver the passive sentence in (3b)? (You do not need to provide tree structures for these sentences.)

(3) a. they teach a lot of interesting classes here  
b. a lot of interesting classes are taught here

  - b. What can we do, structurally speaking, with the *by*-phrase in (4)?

(4) a lot of interesting classes are taught here by many different instructors

  - c. Why can't (5a) be passivised to yield (5b)?

(5) a. this flight arrives the following day  
b. \*the following day is arrived by this flight

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

the acorn dropped in the water  
he dropped the acorn in the water

- *the acorn* in the first sentence and *he* in the second cannot get Case in the position in which they are base-generated

- Q* can the subject 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*

they will all read (\*probably) it  
they will probably all read it  
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 (either to Spec*vP/VP* or to SpecIP)
- 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**

[the mother of the children] is/\*are Hungarian  
[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
- **movement, traces and chains**
- the need to postulate a trace:  $\theta$ -Criterion and Projection Principle
  - the verb must be able to discharge its lexical information throughout the syntactic derivation
  - the argument must be able to link up to the  $\theta$ -role that it gets throughout the syntactic derivation
  - a  $\theta$ -role is not a ‘present’ that you can physically hold but more like a sum of money in a bank account – the link between the argument and the bank account must be preserved forever
  - if the argument moved away and kept no presence in its birthplace, the link to the  $\theta$ -role (‘the money in the bank account’) would be forfeited, and the argument would ‘go bankrupt’
  - leaving a trace behind in the original  $\theta$ -position is the way to avoid bankruptcy

NB: the need to postulate a trace holds equally strongly for cases of movement of V to *v*: if V left no trace behind, the  $\theta$ -role(s) assigned by V strictly within VP would no longer be assignable after movement of V



- **chains** to which a  $\theta$ -role is assigned are always chains whose *foot* gets the  $\theta$ -role and whose *head* is a position to which no  $\theta$ -role is assigned
  - if we started out in a  $\theta$ -position and moved to another  $\theta$ -position, we would end up with a chain with two  $\theta$ -roles, in violation of the ‘one and only one’ requirement imposed by the  $\theta$ -Criterion
  - if we did not start out in a  $\theta$ -position, we would be dealing with a non-argument (because by definition, anything that is projected in a non- $\theta$ -position is a non-argument); movement of a non-argument into a  $\theta$ -position would also violate the  $\theta$ -Criterion — in particular, the clause that says that a  $\theta$ -role is assigned to one and only one argument, from which it follows that  $\theta$ -roles can only be assigned to arguments: argument  $\leftrightarrow$   $\theta$ -role

### Assignment 3

1 Consider the sentence in (1).

(1) the students hopefully can put the tree on a piece of paper correctly

- a. Present a fully detailed tree structure for the sentence in (1), 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 (1) 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 (2).

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

- a. Present a fully detailed tree structure for the sentence in (2), 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 (1) and (2), 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 (1) and (2), 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 (3) (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’?

(3) 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.

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

- **finite** versus **infinitival** complementisers

[*that* he has done this] is unfortunate

[*for* him to have done this] is unfortunate

- in the second example, accusative Case is not being assigned to an object — the term ‘objective Case’ would be a misnomer
- it is clear from the second example 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

- **silent C**

it is hard to predict [ {if/whether} he will be successful ]

- *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

- **I-to-C movement**: adjunction of I to the bound morpheme [Q] in C

- **silent element in SpecCP**: in root yes/no-questions SpecCP is seemingly empty — but plausibly, SpecCP is in fact occupied, by a silent operator: the silent counterpart to *whether*

- 
- POSTLUDE on the syntax of the clause

- the structure of **coordination**

- recall that *whether* but not *if* is a phrase because it can be **coordinated** with *not*

*Q* *how does coordination work?*

- X-bar theory leaves us with just two options

[<sub>XP1</sub> [<sub>XP1</sub> ... X1 ...] [<sub>CoP</sub> *and/or* [<sub>XP2</sub> ... X2 ... ]]] → adjunction of CoP to XP1

[<sub>CoP</sub> [<sub>XP1</sub> ... X1 ...] [<sub>CoP</sub> *and/or* [<sub>XP2</sub> ... X2 ... ]]] → XP1 as the specifier of CoP

- there are data that suggest that the latter structure is correct:

[every man and his wife] came to the party

[his wife and every man] came to the party

→ in the first example, *his* supports a so-called ‘bound variable’ reading: there is a different wife for every man; but in the second example, we can only get a referential reading for *his* (e.g., *Bill’s*)

→ this patterns with what we find in transitive clauses:

every man kissed his wife

his wife kissed every man

- again, only in the first example can we obtain a bound variable reading for *his*
- from the structure of transitive clauses, we know that there is a **structural asymmetry** between the subject and the object, such that the subject is hierarchically higher than the object
- for coordinate structures, we would like to adopt a parallel structural asymmetry, with the first conjunct hierarchically higher than the second
- the second structure allows us to accomplish this; the first does not

## The noun phrase [reading: BESE Chapter 7, §4; Chapter 4]

- relative clauses and empty operator movement (recall the empty question operator from the discussion of root yes/no-questions in the previous session)

the books which the library stocks	[ <i>which</i> in SpecCP]
the books that the library stocks	[ <i>that</i> ≠ in SpecCP]
the books the library stocks	[ <i>Op</i> in SpecCP]

- Q (e.g., *many*)
- D (e.g., *the*)

the many books which/that/∅ the library stocks

NB1 by itself, *the many books* is not very good: the grammaticality of *the many books* depends on the presence of the restrictive relative clause — but the grammaticality of *many books* does not depend on anything: it is well-formed by itself  
→ some have taken this to indicate that the relative clause is selected by D

NB2 while addition of a **restrictive** relative clause makes the noun phrase *the many books* grammatical, addition of a **non-restrictive** relative clause has no beneficial effect  
→ this indicates that a structural distinction should be made between restrictive and non-restrictive relatives

- possessive DPs
- 's as D → complementary distribution with *the*
- parallels between the clause and DP

Donald -s dislike her

Donald 's dislike of her

a könyvtár sok könyvet vett-*e*

a könyvtár sok könyv-*e*

**Referential dependencies** [reading: *BESE* Chapter 8, §2.2 (esp. pp. 300–2), and pp. 91, 207–8]

- referential dependencies and **nominal types**
  - anaphors (reflexives and reciprocals)
  - pronouns
  - names (incl. proper and common noun phrases)

John photographed himself  
John photographed him  
John photographed John

John's photograph of himself  
John's photograph of him  
John's photograph of John

- antecedence, and (anti-)locality restrictions on anaphors and pronouns
  - an anaphor must have a sentence-internal antecedent; the antecedent must be local to the anaphor
  - a pronoun does not require a sentence-internal antecedent; when it has a sentence-internal antecedent, the two must not be in a local relationship
- **binding**: coindexation with a linguistic antecedent in a higher subject position
  - this 'subject position' can be the subject position of the clause (SpecIP) or the subject position of a DP (where the genitive is)
- binding is not mere coreference: in *his mother thinks that John is smart* or *when he walked into the room, John looked sad*, when *John* and the pronoun are coreferential we are not dealing with binding: though the pronouns in these examples are coindexed with a subject, this subject is not higher up the tree
- **locality**: the local domain for binding is the minimal constituent containing the bindee and a higher subject

John photographed himself/\*him  
John thinks that Mary photographed him/\*himself

NB1 as we defined 'binding', there is no straightforward explanation for the ungrammaticality of the version of the example below containing *himself*

John thinks that he/\*himself is an excellent photographer

- we may, for present purposes, set this aside and blame it on the apparent fact that *himself* is not nominative, hence not a suitable subject for a finite clause
- this seems supported by the fact that when *himself* is a subject with **accusative** Case, it can be bound by the subject of the next clause up

John considers himself to be an excellent photographer

NB2 as formulated, the binding principles governing anaphors and pronouns lead us to expect that these types of nominals will always be in *complementary distribution*

- but it is actually possible to find environments in which the two can be used interchangeably

John thinks that [pictures of himself/him] are valuable

John saw a snake [near himself/him]

→ whatever is the best analysis of these kinds of sentences (something on which there is no consensus in the literature), it is clear that these are the exceptions that prove the rule: in the overwhelming majority of cases, anaphors and pronouns are indeed in complementary distribution

- **weak crossover**

every boy loves his mother

→ distributive reading available

his mother loves every boy

→ distributive reading unavailable

→ a *distributive* interpretation is possible only if the quantifier phrase can *bind* the pronoun