



Are agreement markers in Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS) really AUX?

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Main claims

- ◆ ÖGS agreement markers (AgrM)
 - ◆ Do not show AUX-like behavior
 - ◆ Can occur with inflected agreeing verbs
 - ◆ Are always optional
 - ◆ Appear in many syntactic positions
- ◆ Our proposal
 - ◆ AgrM as head (optional), functional projection AgrMP
 - ◆ Located between VP and TP

Outline

- ◆ Overview: Sign Language agreement markers (AgrMs) – what is their syntactic status?
- ◆ ÖGS AgrMs
 - ◆ Arguments against AUX
- ◆ Alternate syntactic analysis
 - ◆ AgrM head functional projection AgrMP
 - ◆ Located between VP and TP

Sign Language agreement markers

- ◆ Function: indicate argument structure
- ◆ Form: path movement/facing
- ◆ Language specific differences:
 - ◆ Phonological form
 - ◆ Syntactic/semantic properties
 - ◆ Lexical source

- ◆ Are they “Auxiliaries“?

Auxiliaries?

“AUX is defined as a category that is distinct in its syntactic behavior from the behavior of other syntactic categories - labeling a constituent that includes elements expressing the notional categories of Tense and/or Modality“. (Akmajian et al. 1979:2)

- ◆ Sign Language AgrMs primarily mark agreement
- ◆ Not Tense or Modality

Arguments re AUX status

Against:

- ◆ Different developmental sources (DET, Noun)
- ◆ Restricted to animate arguments (S-selection)

In Favor:

- ◆ Devoid of lexical meaning
- ◆ Cannot stand on their own
- ◆ Obligatorily co-occur with main verb (except Gapping)
- ◆ Verb-like behavior

ÖGS agreement markers



AgrM-BC

AgrM-MF

- ◆ Pre- and post-verbal position
- ◆ Sentence second position after Subject

The data

- ◆ Corpus data various sources (1999-2017)
- ◆ Individual interviews (2015)
- ◆ Group interview (2015)

Findings against AUX status

- ◆ Semantically constrained (only animate object)
- ◆ Verb-like behavior (similar in form and function)
- ◆ Optionality (Unlike some other SLs which require when verb doesn't show agreement)
- ◆ Redundancy (Unlike other SLs, may occur with completely inflected agreeing verb)
- ◆ Variability (HS choice across signers, contexts)

Positional similarities between AgrMs & Modals (= AUX)

- ◆ Both in post-verbal and sentence-second position (after Subject).
- ◆ Both in main and embedded clauses, questions, declaratives, and wh-clefts.

Differences between AgrMs & Modals (= AUX)

- ◆ AgrMs:
 - ◆ Only in transitive contexts
 - ◆ Only animate objects
 - ◆ No incorporation of negation
 - ◆ Can occur in pre-verbal position
 - ◆ No doubling
 - ◆ Allow both Subject and Object drop
 - ◆ M only Subject

Previous analyses

- ◆ Pfau and Steinbach (2013) DGS:
 - ◆ Agreement auxiliary PAM
 - ◆ PAM inserted in AgrO; Verb in situ
 - ◆ No Double agreement marking
- ◆ Rejected for ÖGS:
 - ◆ ÖGS allows Double agreement marking

Previous analyses

- ◆ Rathmann (2003) DGS:
 - ◆ Auxiliary-like morphemes
 - ◆ AgrM cliticizes to Object
- ◆ Rejected for ÖGS:
 - ◆ AgrMs in positions non-adjacent to Object
 - ◆ IX can intervene between AgrM and Object
 - ◆ Object can topicalize without AgrM (separate nodes)
 - ◆ Covert arguments allowed (Object drop removes “host”)
 - ◆ No phonological assimilation (no evidence of cliticization)
 - ◆ AgrM in post-Verbal position (not next to Object)

Previous analyses

- ◆ Meir (2003) and Börstell (2017) ISL/
Scandinavian SLs:
 - ◆ AgrMs = Object pronouns
- ◆ Rejected for ÖGS:
 - ◆ AgrM cannot be used instead of Object referent NP

Meir, I. (2003). Grammaticalization and modality: the emergence of a case-marked pronoun in Israeli Sign Language. *Journal of Linguistics*, 39, 109-140.

Börstell, C. (2017). Object marking in the signed modality: Verbal and nominal strategies in Swedish Sign Language and other sign languages (Doctoral dissertation, Stockholm University).

Previous analyses

- ◆ Lourenço (2014) Libras:
 - ◆ AgrMs = Topic markers
- ◆ Rejected for ÖGS:
 - ◆ AgrMs in basic, pragmatically unmarked sentences
 - ◆ No specific non-manuals co-occur with AgrMs
 - ◆ Word orders more varied than Libras

Previous analyses

- ◆ Pavlič (2016) SZJ:
 - ◆ Applicative morpheme
 - ◆ AgrMs used in transitive contexts involving agent and beneficial
- ◆ Rejected for ÖGS:
 - ◆ AgrMs occur with non-benefactives

Previous analyses

- ◆ Steinbach and Pfau (2007) DGS:
 - ◆ Emphasis or focus marker
 - ◆ Double agreement marks emphasis/focus
- ◆ Rejected for ÖGS:
 - ◆ Double agreement marking in non-emphatic contexts

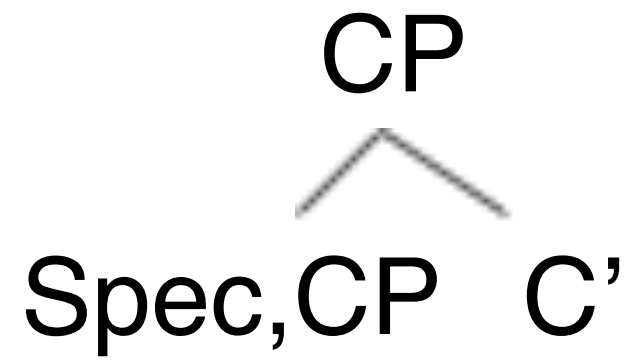
Previous analyses

- ◆ Pfau and Steinbach (2008) DGS:
 - ◆ “Tun-insertion”
 - ◆ Uninflected agreeing verb in VP; PAM inserted in AgrO
- ◆ Rejected for ÖGS:
 - ◆ AgrMs restricted to animate objects
 - ◆ Double agreement marking permitted

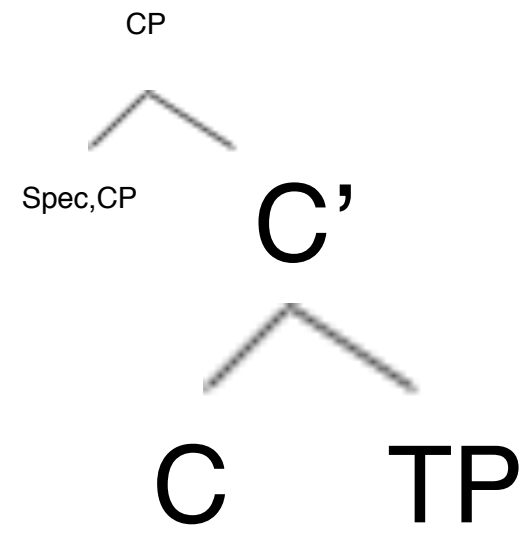
Proposed analysis

- ◆ AgrM projects functional phrase AgrMP
 - ◆ below TP and above AgrSP and AgrOP
- ◆ Head can be filled by AgrM
- ◆ AgrM features are path, facing, handshape
- ◆ Location (and facing) features provided by co-indexing with spatial agreement features in AgrS/AgrO

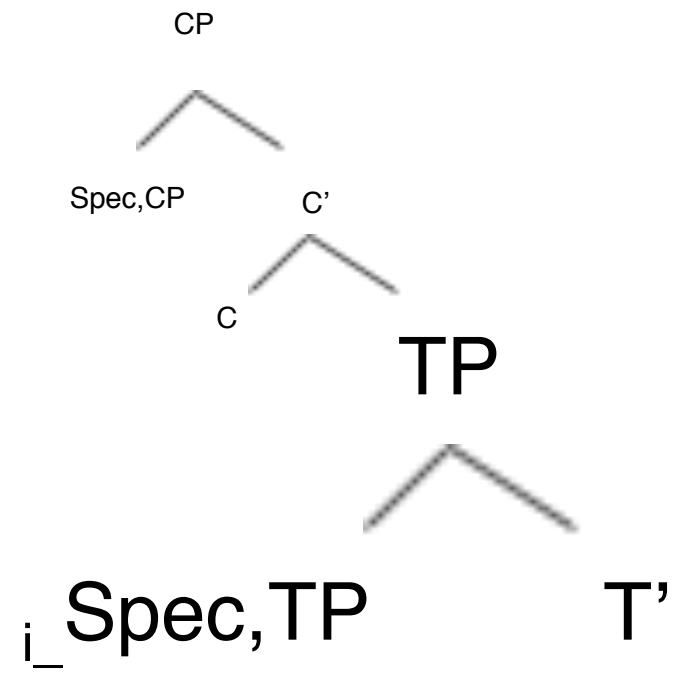
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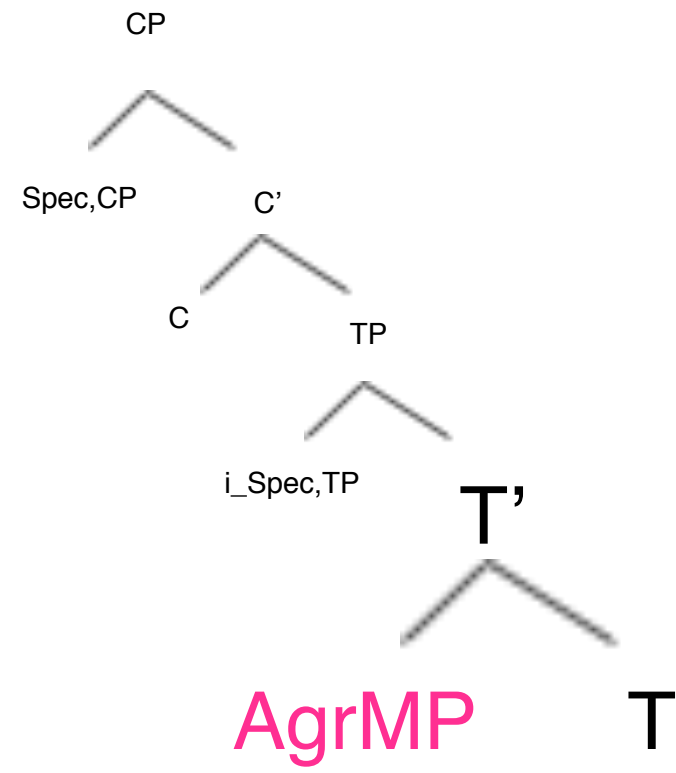
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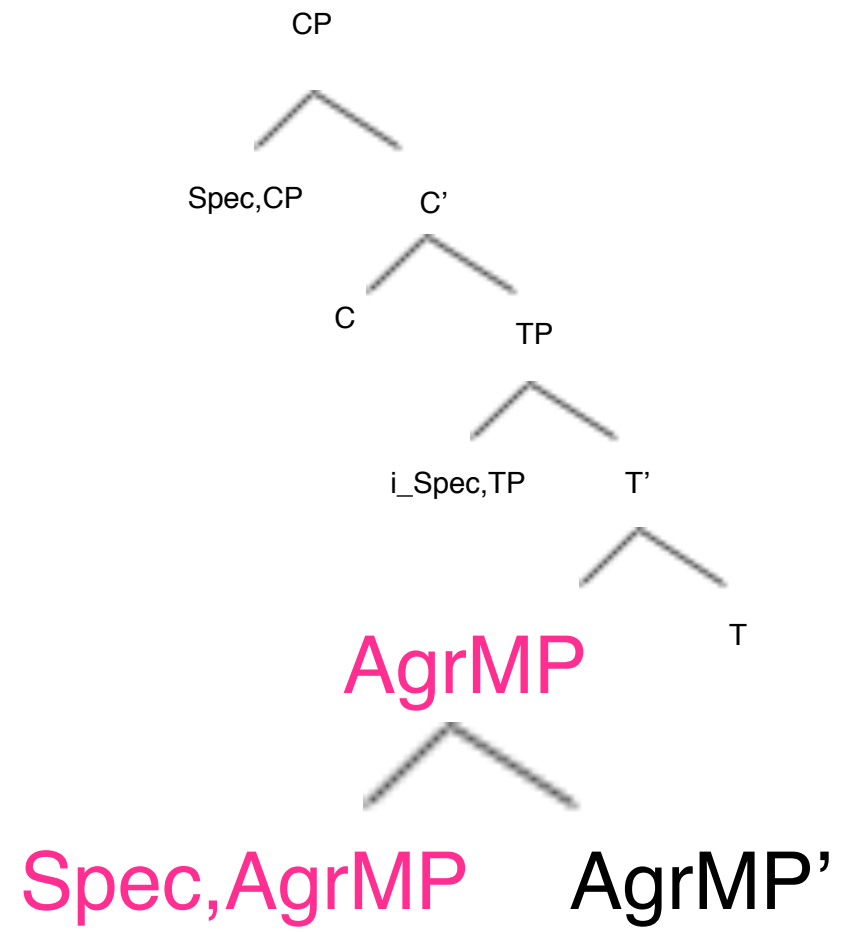
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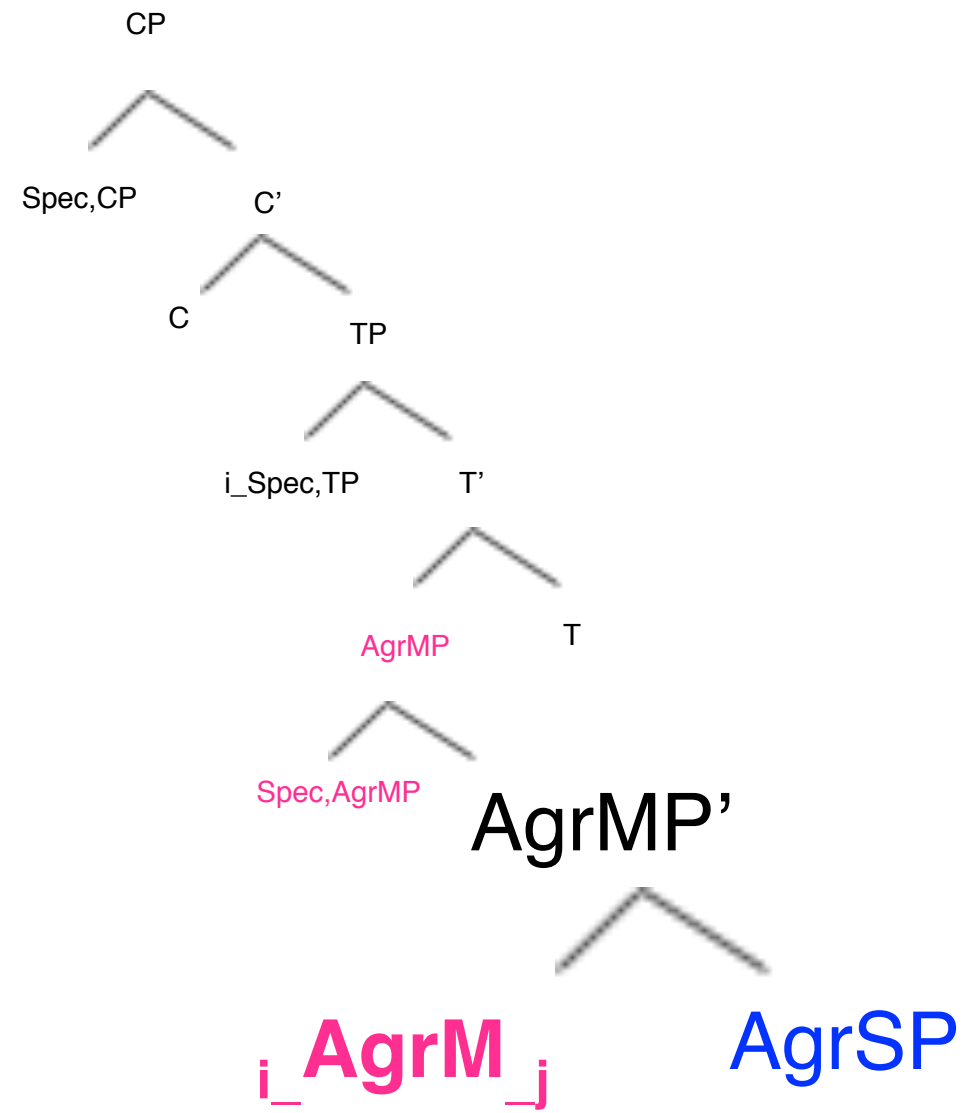
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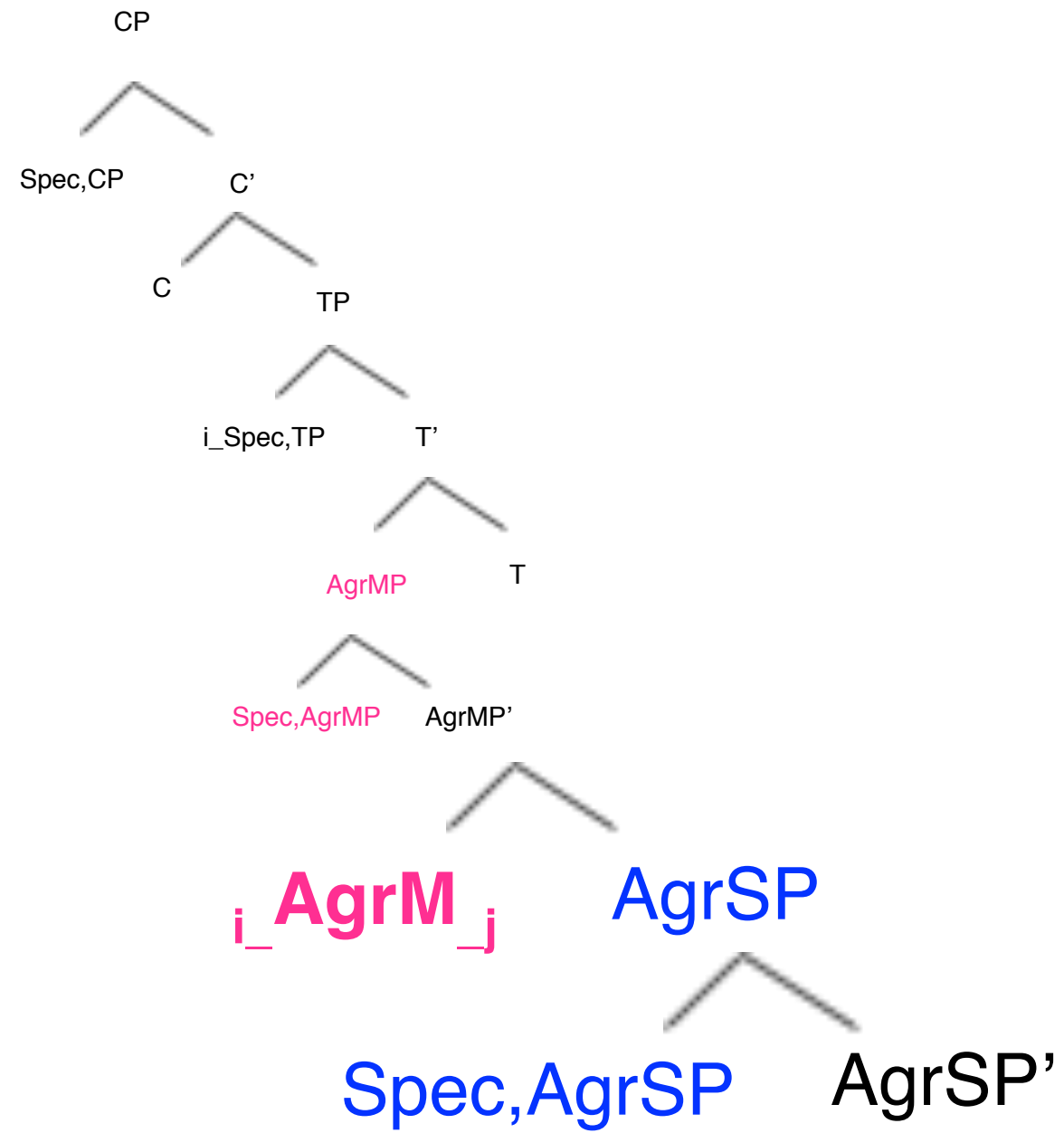
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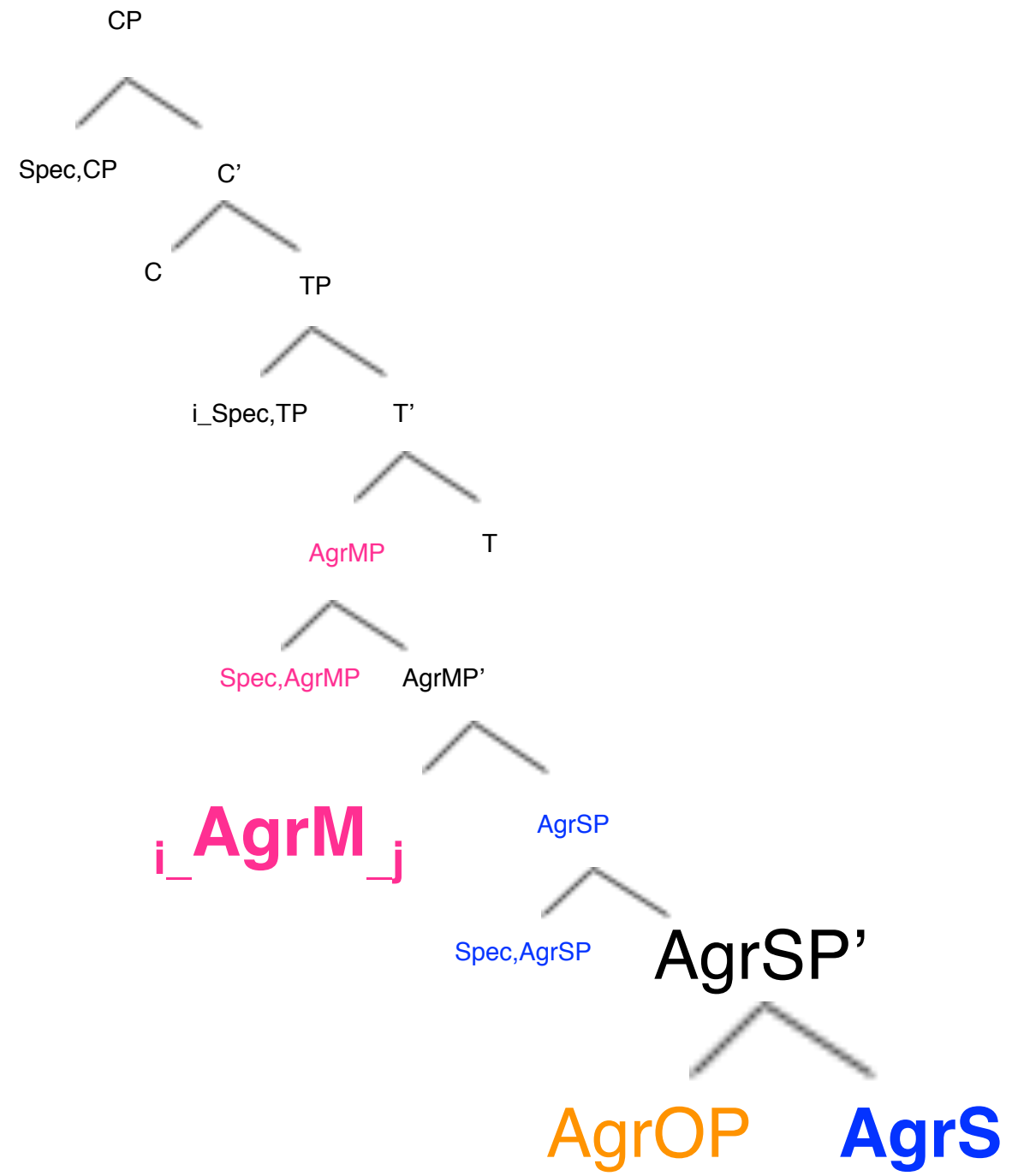
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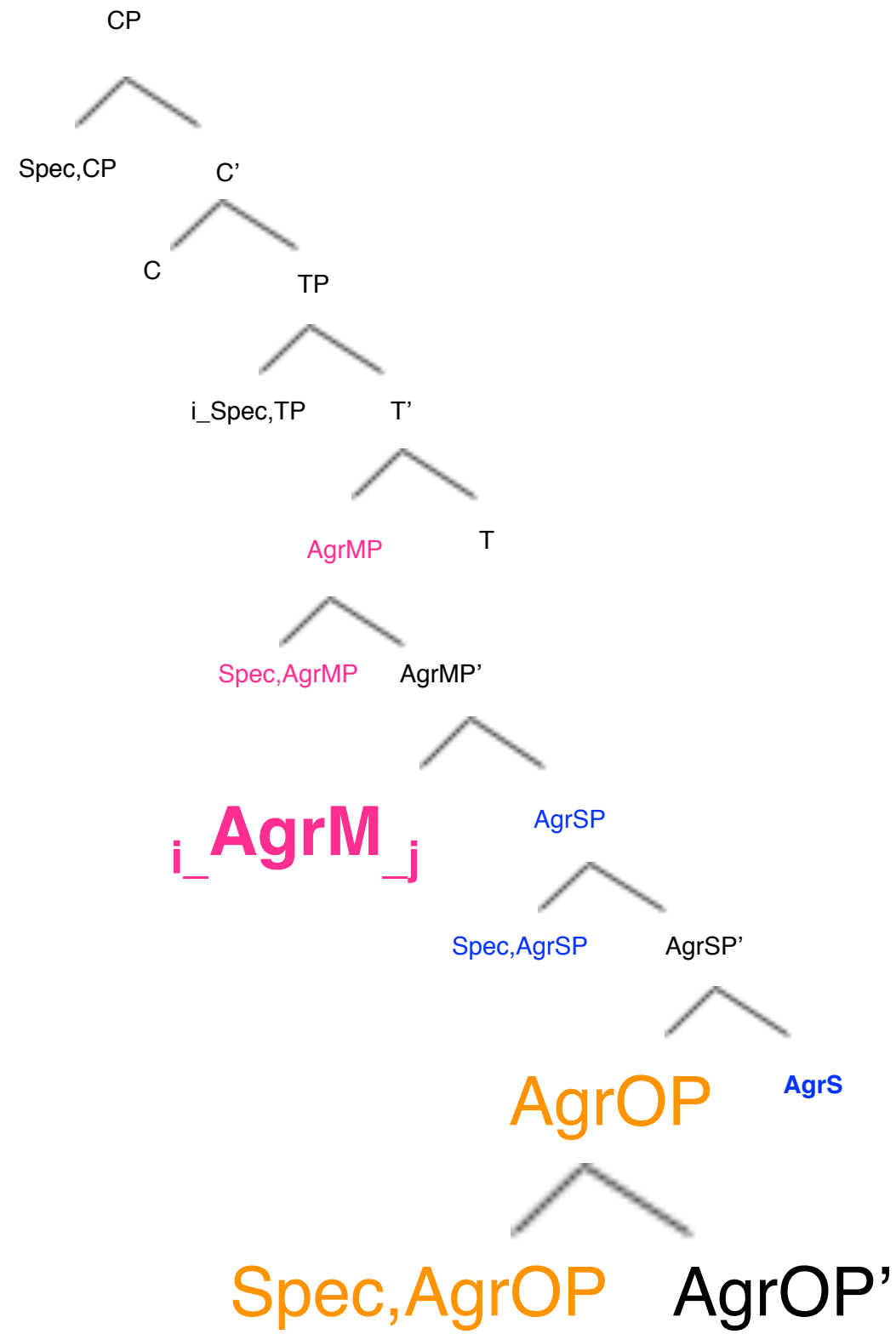
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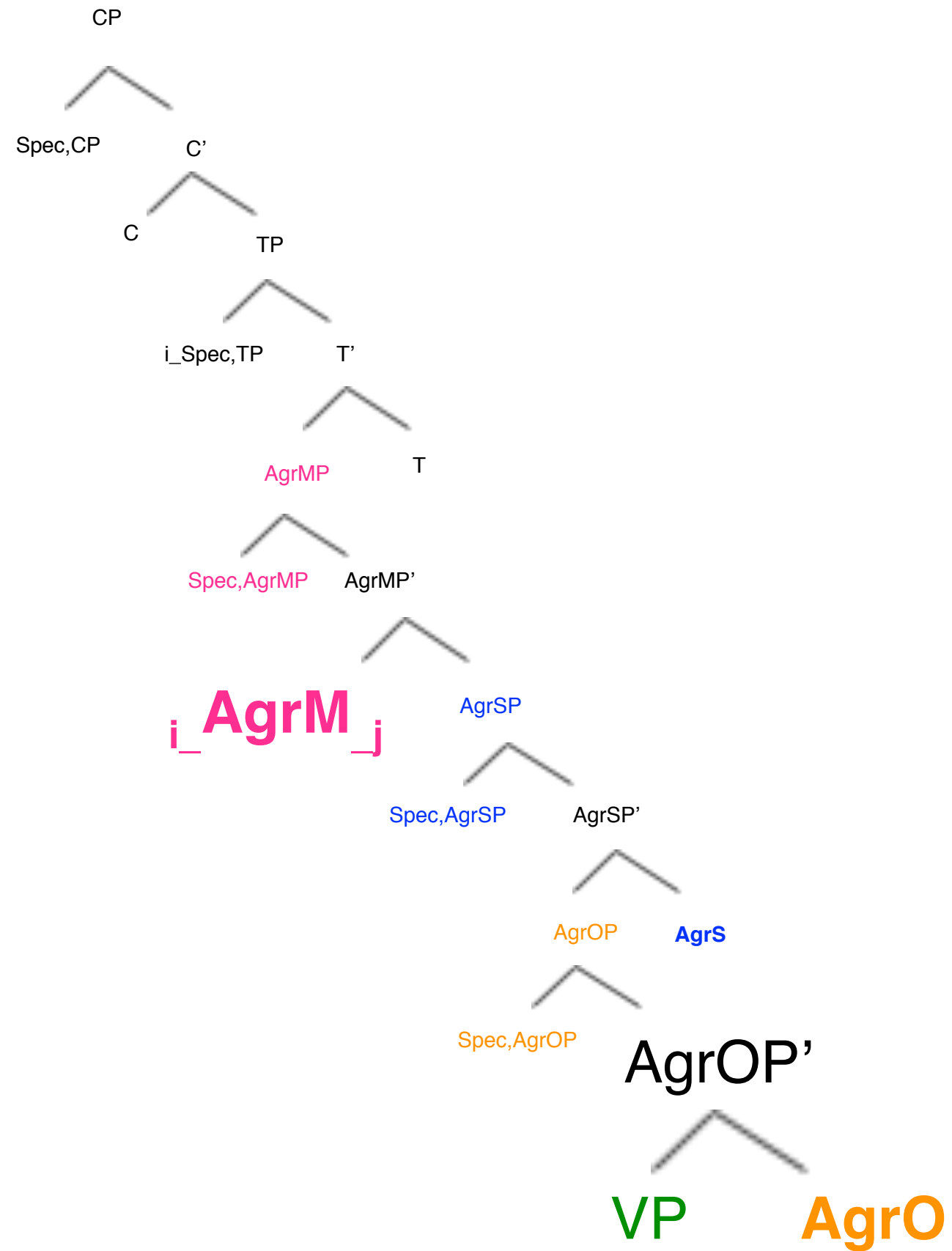
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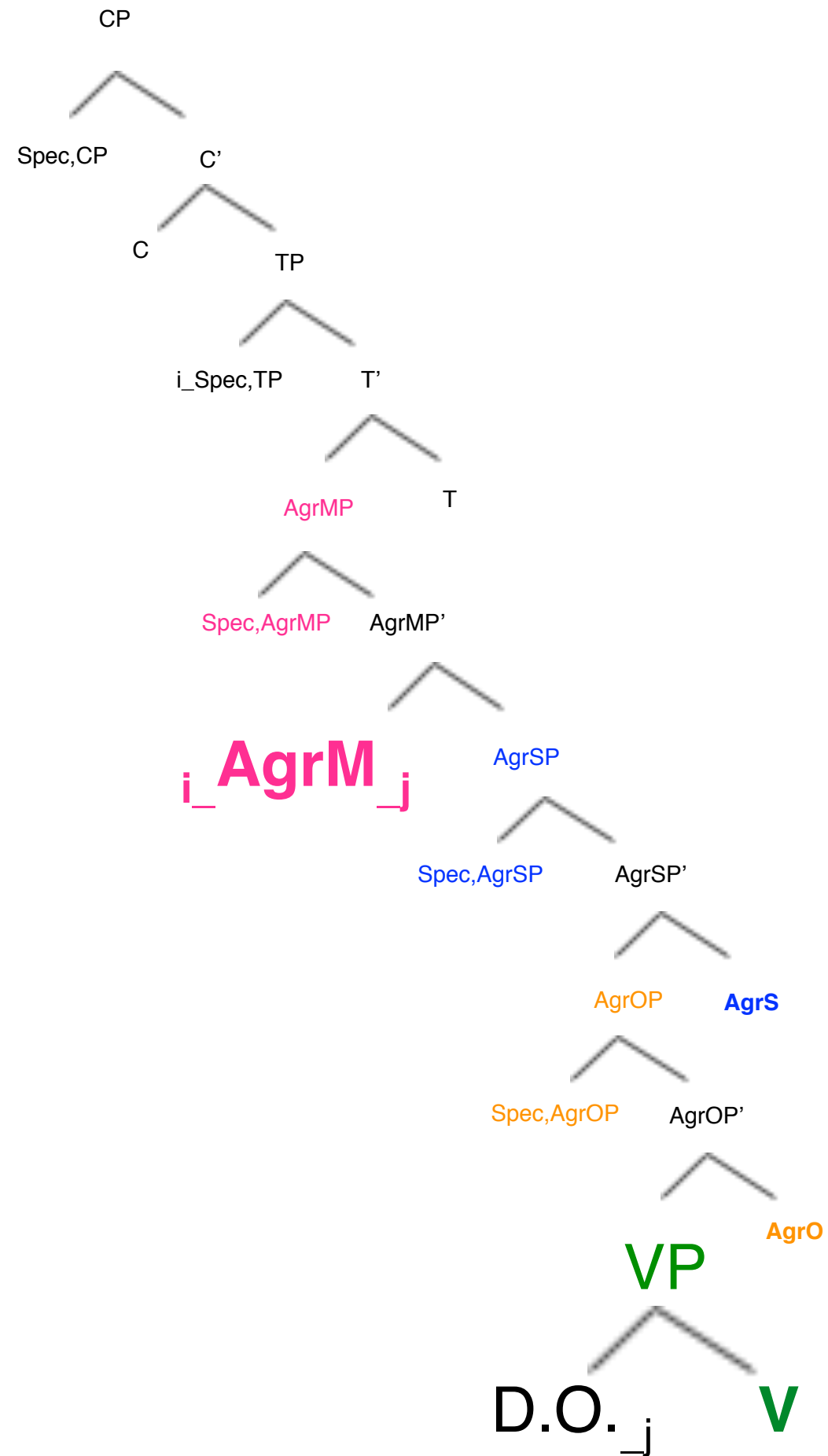
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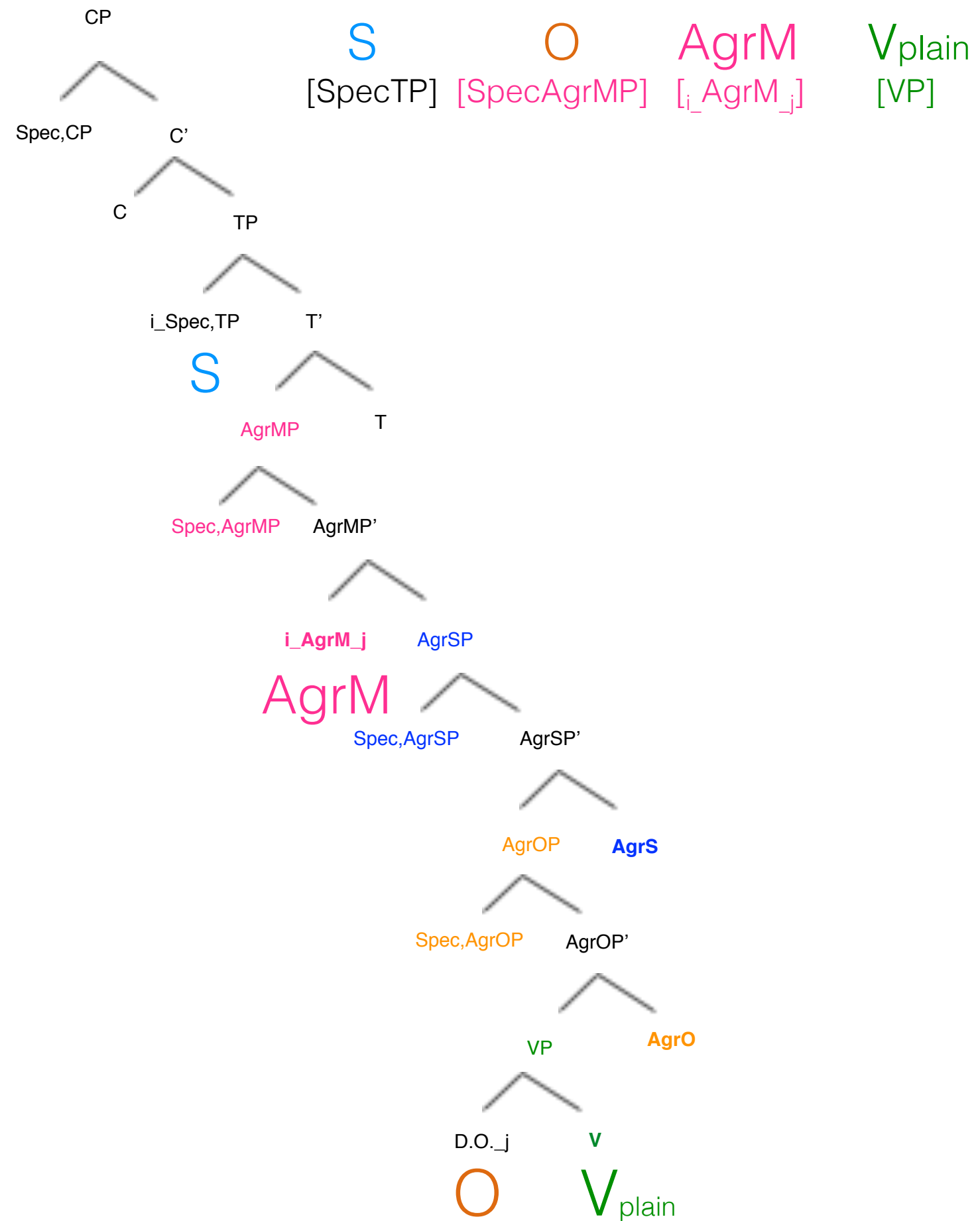
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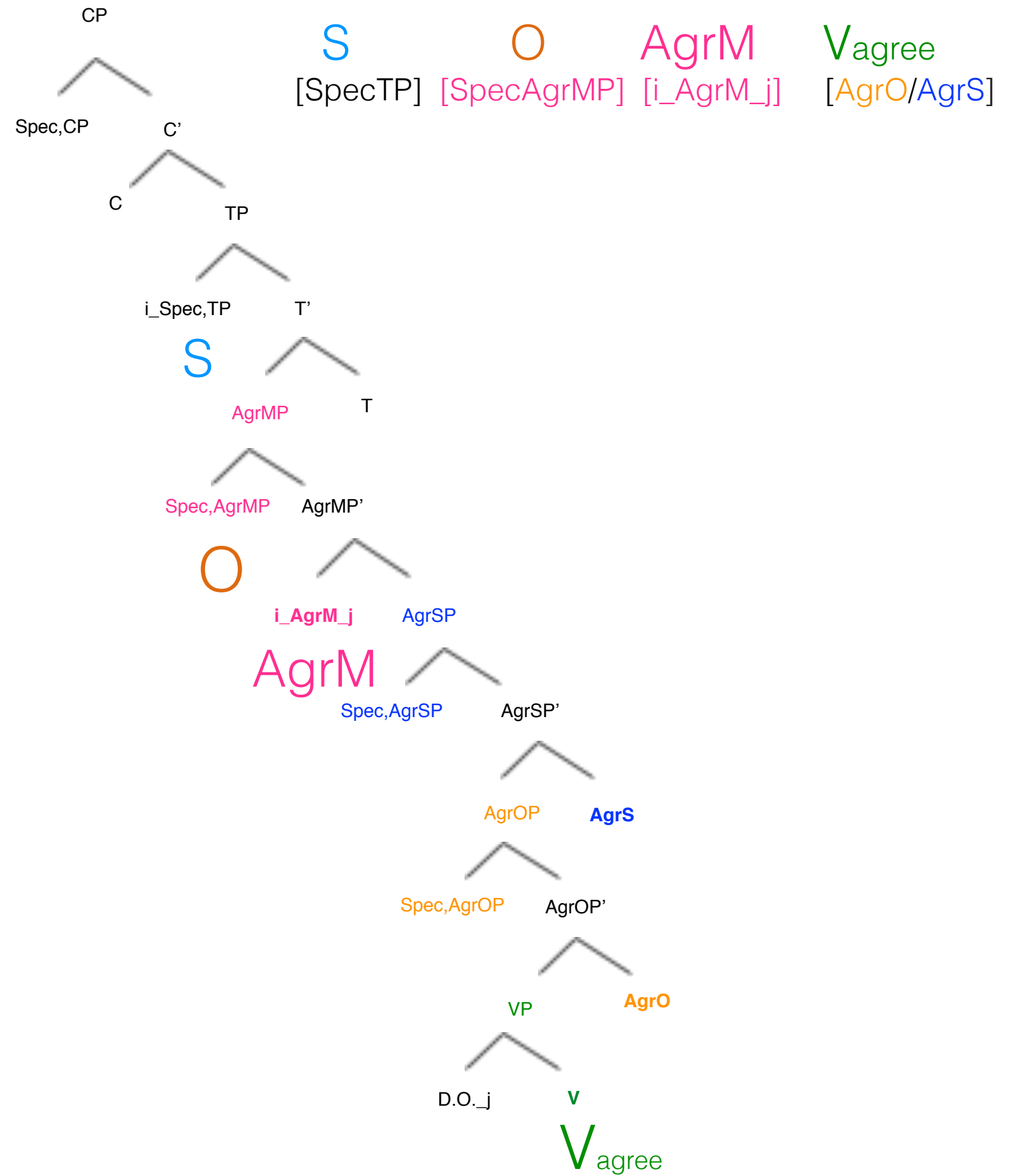


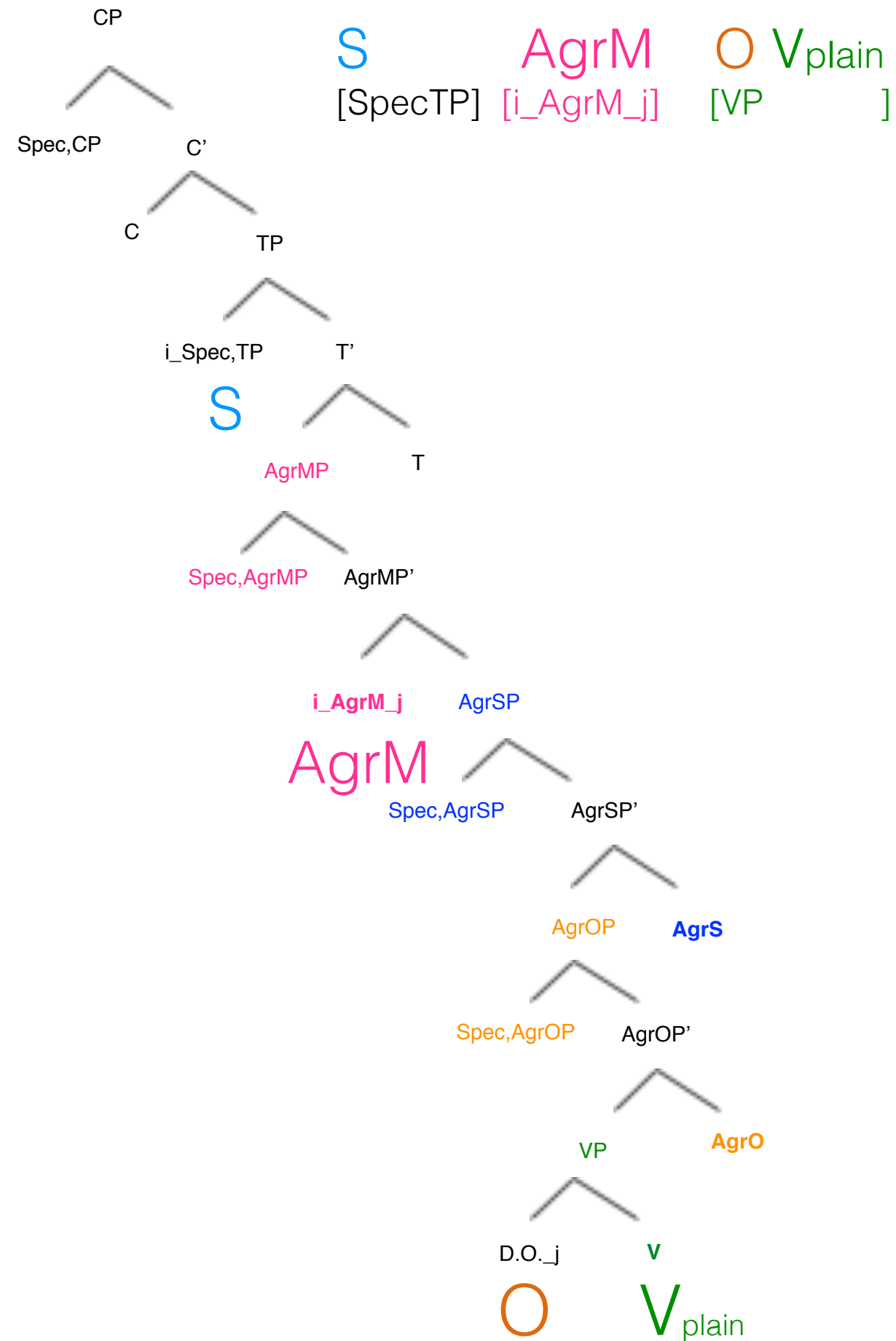
Possible orders

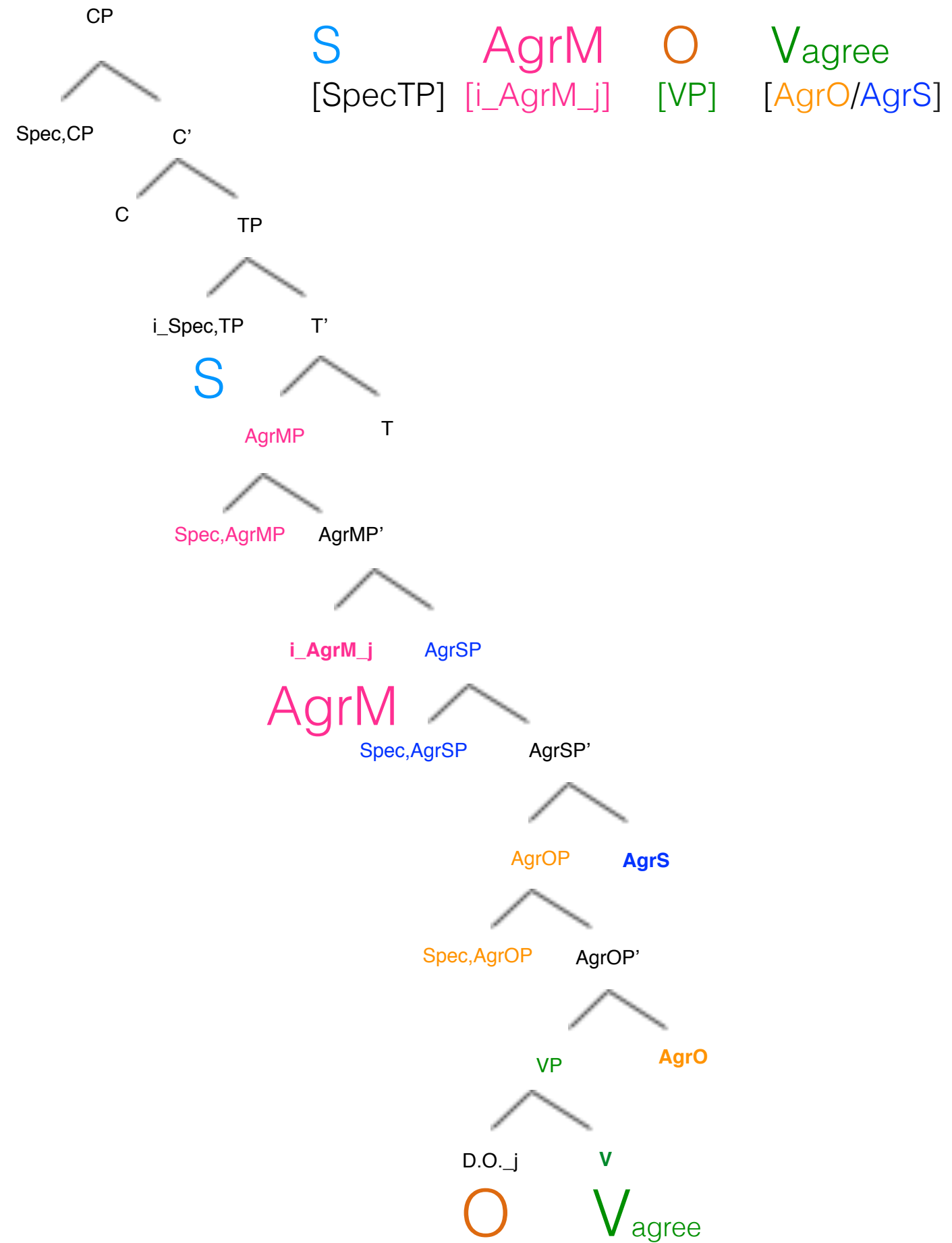
- ☆ S-O-AgrM-V
- ☆ S-AgrM-O-V
- ☆ S-O-V-AgrM

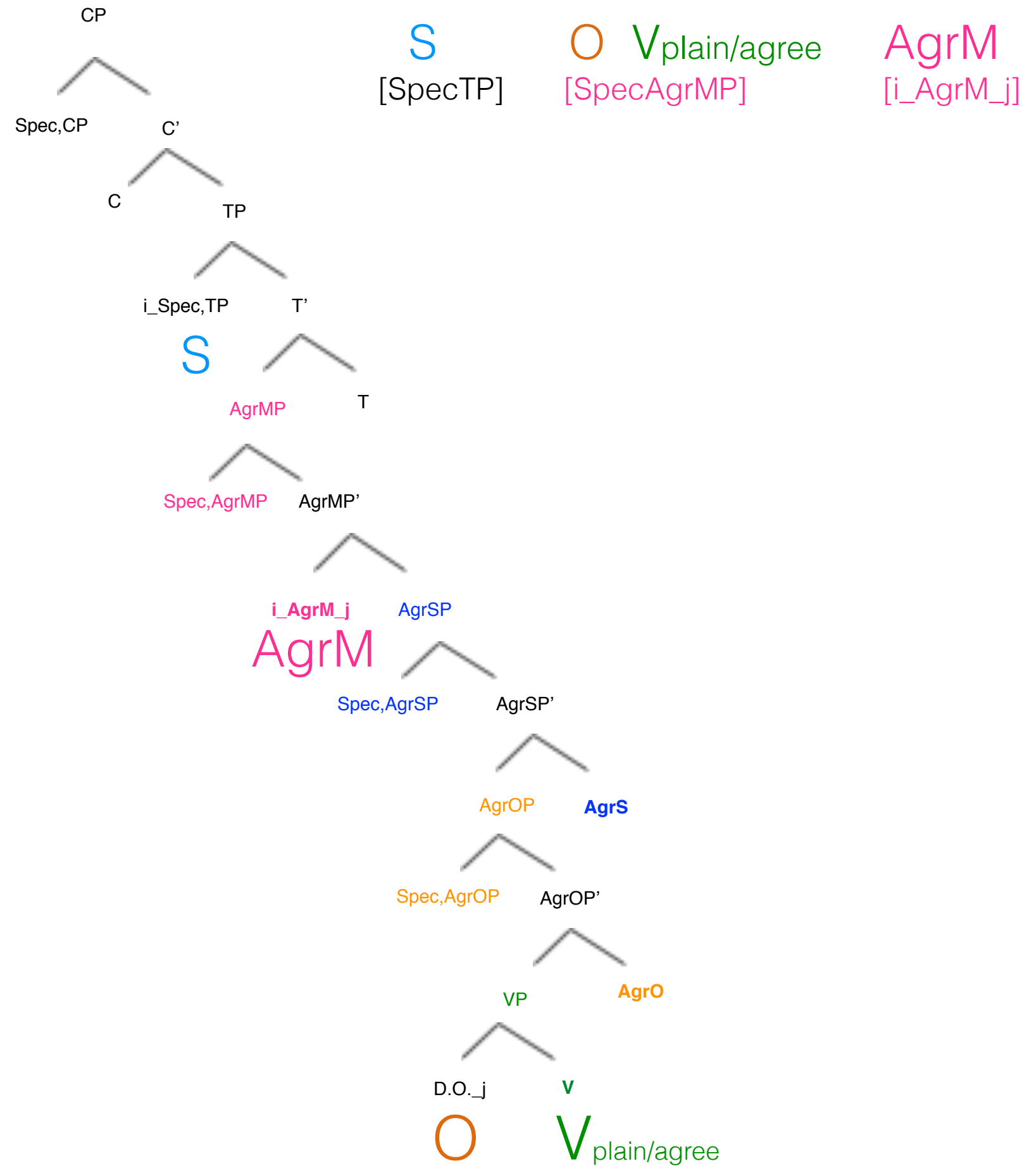
- ☆ S-M-O-V-AgrM
- ☆ S-O-M-V-AgrM
- ☆ S-O-V-AgrM-M
- ☆ S-O-V-M-AgrM
- ☆ S-M-O-AgrM-V
- ☆ S-M-AgrM-O-V
- ☆ S-O-M-AgrM-V
- ☆ S-AgrM-O-M-V
- ☆ S-AgrM-O-V-M











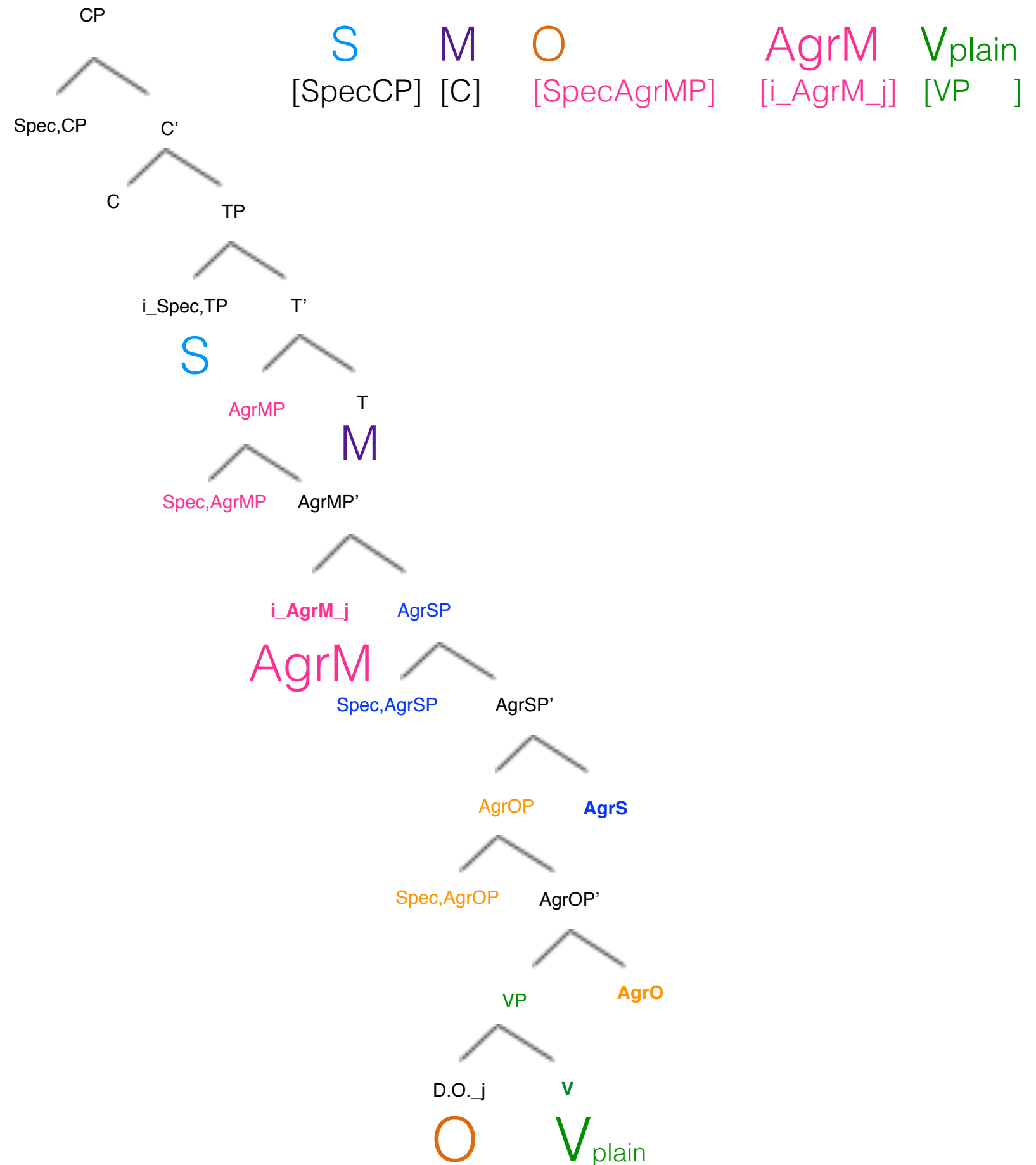
ÖGS Modals

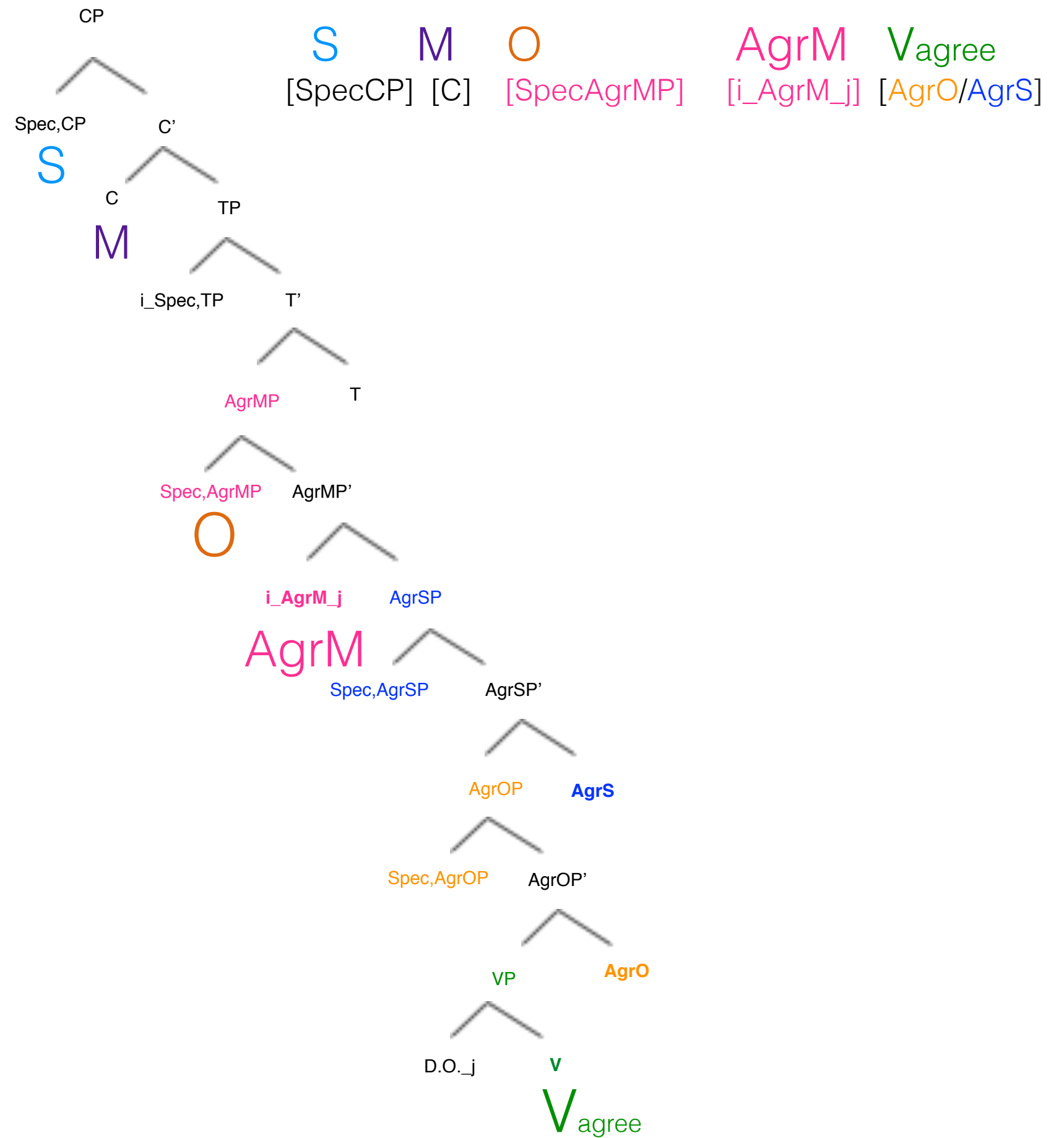
- ◆ Prefer sentence second position (after Subject)
 - ◆ T -> C movement
- ◆ May also appear
 - ◆ Sentence-final
 - ◆ Sentence-initial, if Subject dropped
 - ◆ May double to final position
- ◆ Will present a few examples of AgrM and M(odal)

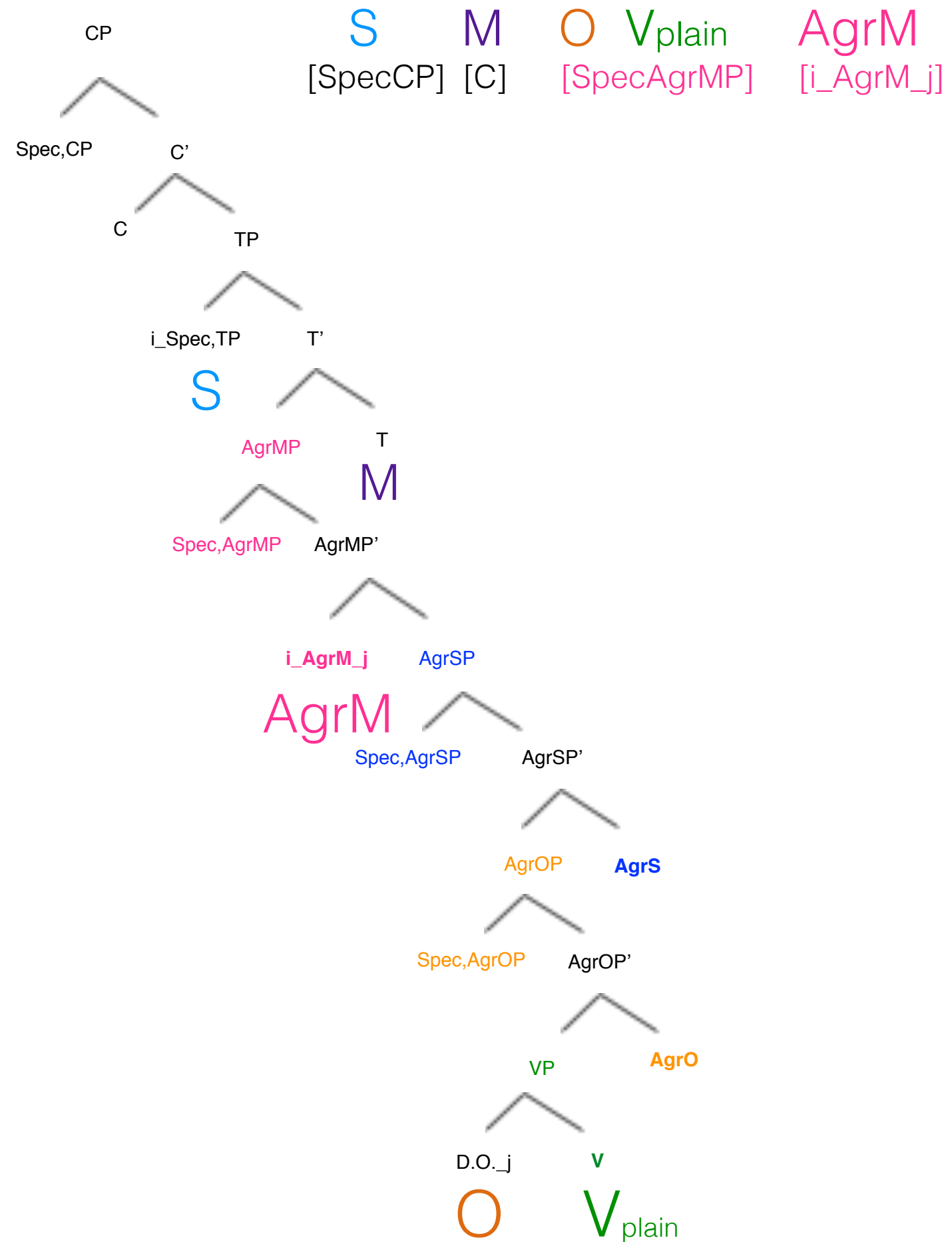
Wilbur, R. B. (2002). Phrase structure in ASL and ÖGS. In Rolf Schulmeister & Heimo Reinitzer (eds.), *Progress in sign language research. In honor of Siegmund Prillwitz*, 235 - 247. Hamburg: Signum.

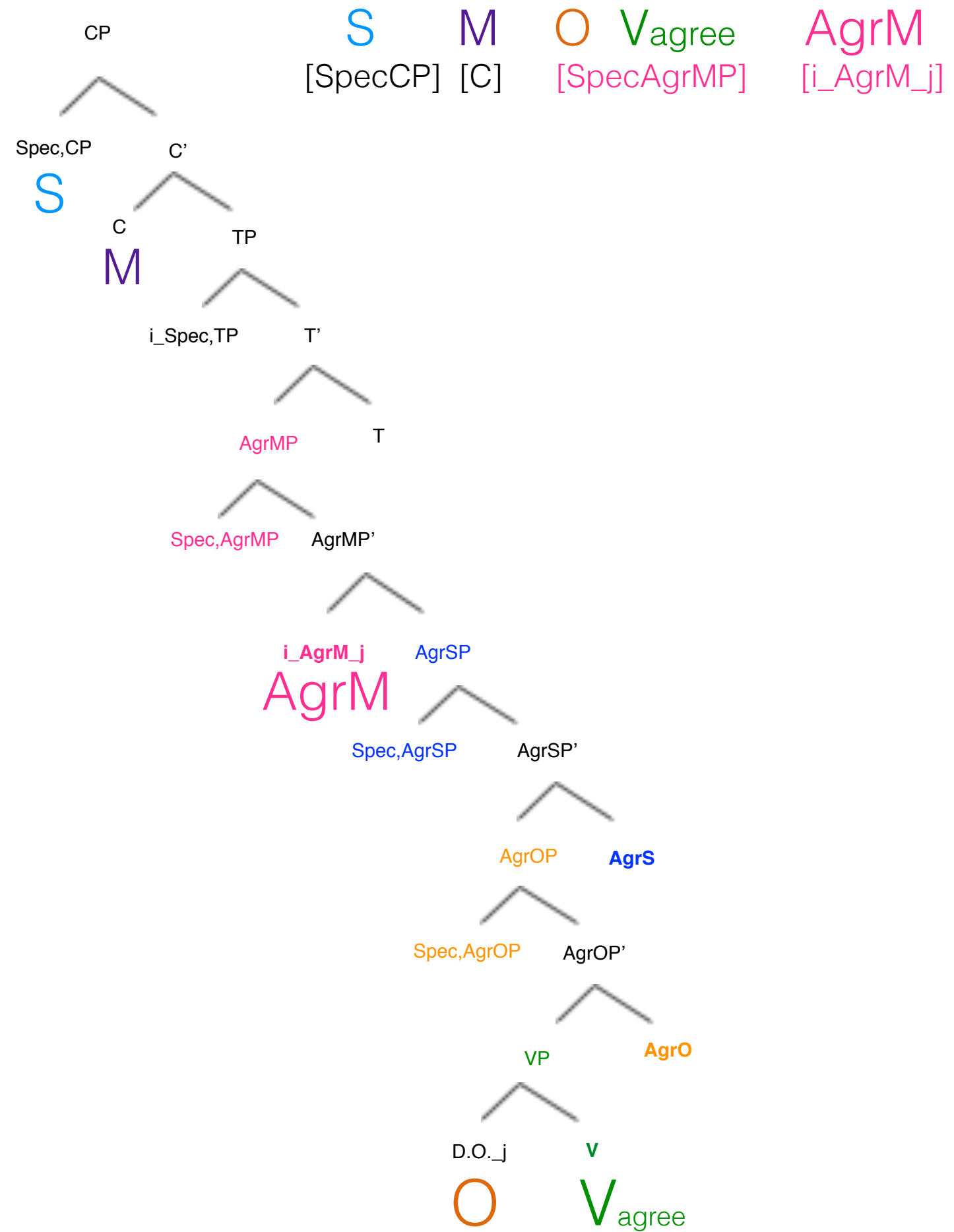
Wilbur, R. B. (2005). Evidence from ASL and ÖGS for asymmetries in UG. In Anna M. DiScuillo (ed.), *UG and External Systems: Language, Brain and Computation*, 193-210. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

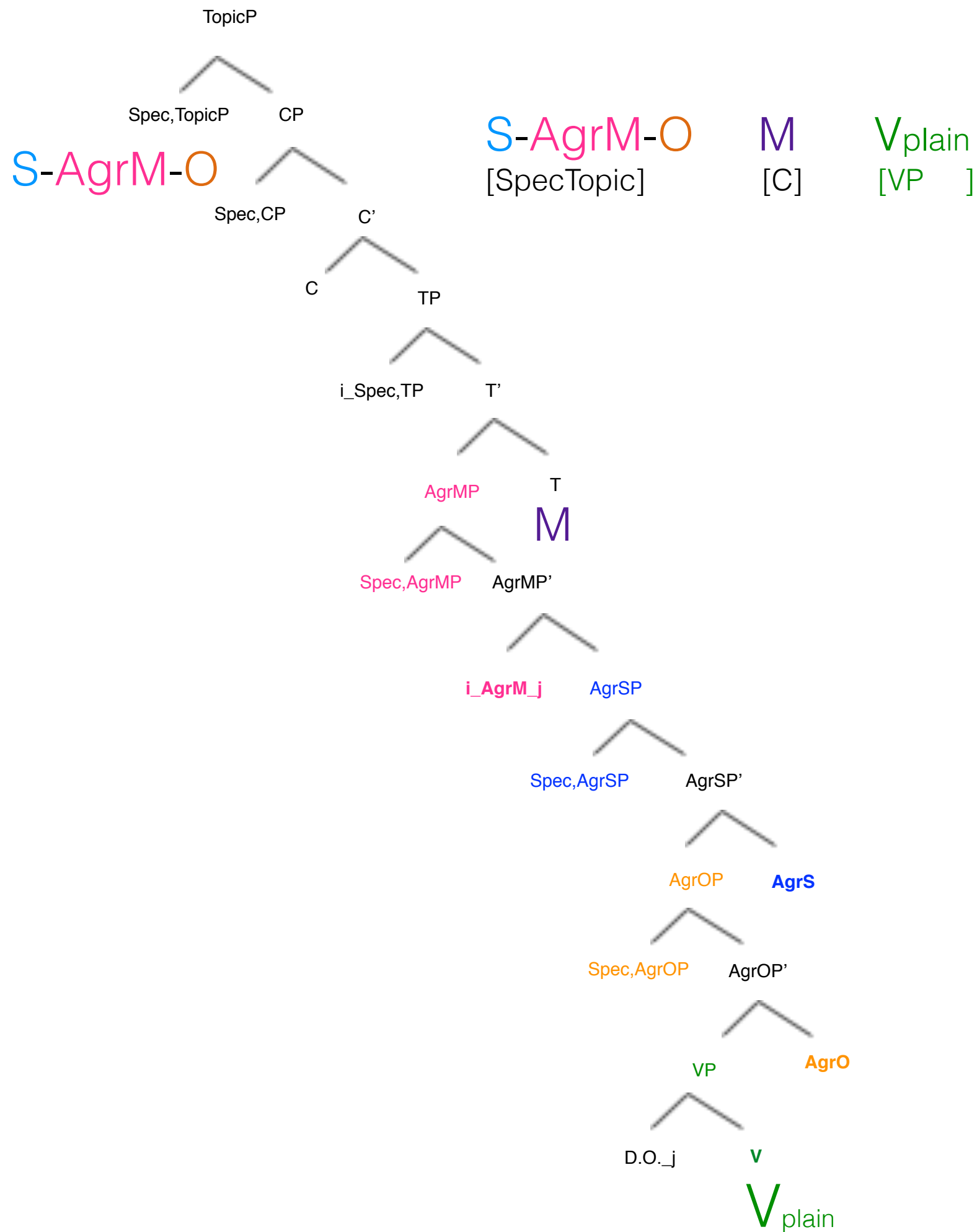
ÖGS AgrM with Modals

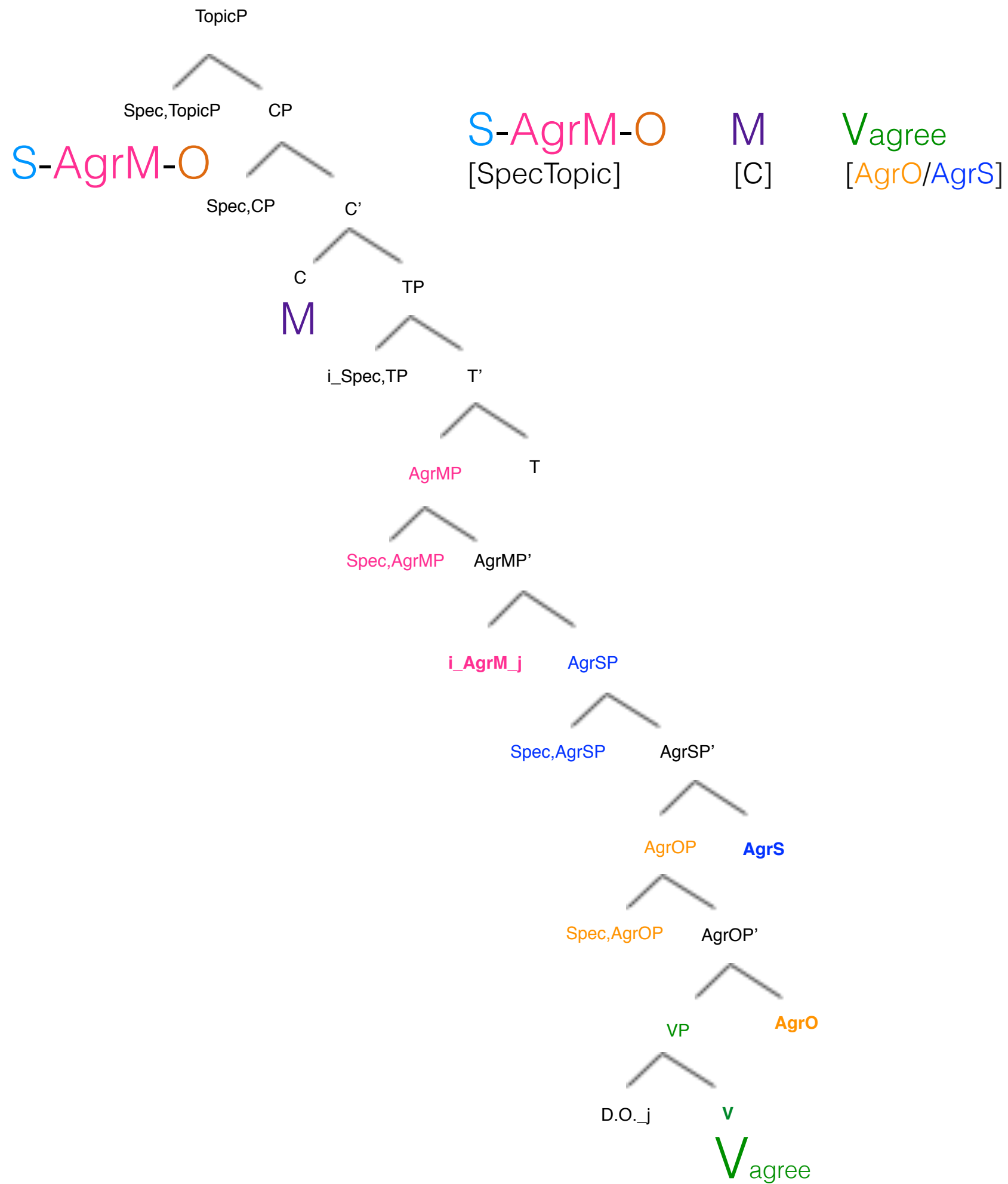












Conclusion

- ◆ ÖGS AgrM not category AUX
- ◆ Proposed approach
 - ◆ AgrM has its own projection
 - ◆ Accounts for optionality, redundancy and variability of ÖGS AgrMs
- ◆ AgrMs indicate who is doing what to whom
- ◆ Need to start developing a SL typology of AgrM

Many thanks to

- ★ the Deaf participants/informants
- ★ Katharina Schalber, Barbara Hunger, Andrea Lackner and Christian Stalzer for providing the video material

