

Session Notes 7 (16.04.2008)

We started this “Common Room” session by discussing some remaining points from the previous session. One of those points dealt (and of course still deals) with the problematic interpretation of the light verb *v*. We saw that especially in unaccusative constructions such as *Mary fell.*, *v* is somewhat inactive. Remember that *v* was postulated partially to indicate some act of causation. In an unergative construction such as *Kim sings.*, *Kim* is interpreted as the Agent, this means as the daughter of *vP*. In *Mary fell.*, we have only a Theme called *Mary* – remember that the Theme was the NP daughter of VP. What follows is that in one construction we use the *v*, in another we do not. One question would be: *Why should we not assume v to be there all the time – in all the possible instantiations of a clausal construction?* Some semantic triggering, which would come from the matrix verb, could then be responsible for filling out the present slots. With regard to “*v*-sensitivity”, the Numeration for “fall” could look like Num: {fall: $\emptyset v$ }, for “sing” it may look like Num: {sing: *v*}. One more question could be added: *What do the (semantic) paraphrases of vPs really tell us?* Is there really any sense in telling us that in *Mary fell.*, *Mary* is subject of an act of falling that is not caused by her, and what is the offshoot of saying that in *Kim sings.*, *Kim* is the agentive causer of an act of singing? I can find a paraphrase for *Mary* including some sort of causation: *Mary is the cause of existence and with this requirement met an act of falling can take place.* And with some paraphrase including heavenly inspiration (or obsession), *Kim* could be said to be no cause at all: *The heavenly gift of being a bard caused Kim to sing.* Ergo: *Kim sings.* These problems could be faced if one assumes there to be a variety of little *vs*. Maybe one *v* could be responsible for an Agent, another for a Theme and so on. Perhaps *v* is not even a proper entry in our mental dictionary, the lexicon. Perhaps it turns out to be fruitful if we accept the possibility of two lexicons: one for the so-called content words and the other for the functional categories, with *v*, and, for example, T. Note that Adger seems not to conceive of *v* as a semi-functional category.

With the introduction of T (for grammatical Tense¹), a new structural layer is introduced into our syntactic inventory. The argument for this is rather straight forward in that it is asked how we can accommodate the positions of Auxiliaries, for example. Until now, we have only seen how a *vP* can account for different transitive constructions, but there is simply not space in the *vP* into which Auxs could be filled. The proper ditransitive construction [_{*vP*} *Kim sent the message to Steven.*], faces some problems if it wants to integrate an Aux: *Kim will send the message to Steven.* Furthermore, look at what happens if we insert an emphatic *do*: *Kim did send the message to Steven.* *vP* is not able to account for that. A T layer can account for it. Our hierarchy of projections is thus extended: T>*v*>V. **A remark on the reading:** I have always thought that this could prosaically be paraphrased as: “If you have a T, then you have to have a *v*, then you have to have a V.” But what happens if an unaccusative gets tensed – such as above: *Mary fell.* Or even more visible with an emphatic *do*: *Mary did fall.* I think it is undisputed that

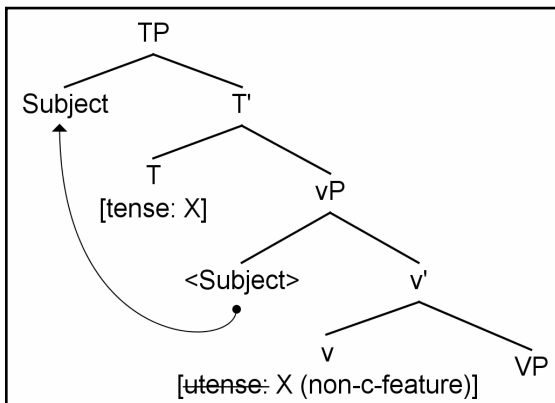
¹ Keep in mind the distinction between grammatical Tense and real-world Time. Tense refers to the time of the utterance by a speaker and aligns other utterances with regard to this relative frame. Time refers to the physical notion of a proper timeline that runs consecutively. Note the sweeping account of Tense and Time in **Pinker, Steven (2007): *The Stuff of Thought***; (188-208).

in this case, we have a tensed phrase, but if there is no v, then how does the structure look like? Would this be a “leap” in the hierarchy of projections, or is simply another way of paraphrasing it needed?

Anyway, T has to be there. T does not assign \emptyset -roles (unlike v and V) and therefore it is called a **functional category**.

“One intuitive way to think about functional categories is that they erect a syntactic skeleton above lexical categories which serves to hold together the various syntactic relations that take place in the phrase” (CoSyn: 165).

With the implementation of T, the class of features expands. Remember that we have **s-selectional features** (semantic features – not that important for now), **c-selectional features** (categorial features – very important) and now **non-c-selectional features** (non-categorial features).



s-selectional features (semantic features – not that important for now), **c-selectional features** (categorial features – very important) and now **non-c-selectional features** (non-categorial features).

C-features are checked under sisterhood, non-c-features are checked under c-command; this operation is also called **Agree**. It is important to emphasize that Adger here introduces another kind of checking: **feature valuation**. A tree may show where we are. Here, the tense feature X on T

values the uninterpretable tense feature on v in a way so that v automatically receives tense X. What this operation avoids is that v cannot, by definition receive the “wrong tense”. It will always match that valuating feature and thereby a crashing derivation would be excluded. Once valued, the feature is considered to be checked and then it can delete. Now: What comes first – checking under sisterhood or feature valuation under c-command? In the checking operations so far, checking is rather something passive – the uF is there and they simply match. Here, however, the T feature is transmitted or assigned – a somewhat active process done by T. And one more question is: What does really happen – is the past tense feature *-ed* lowered to v (an instance of affix hopping) or is little v raised to T (an instance of head movement, since v is the head of vP)? If feature valuation works any time anyway, then why should we not assume all of the checkings to be really valuations? These would be valuations of a head. Or could we not simply say that all of the valuations are really checkings via the syntactic item moving to the “checking site” first (where sisterhood check is possible) and then check and delete properly? This sounds mind-boggling.