

Week 1

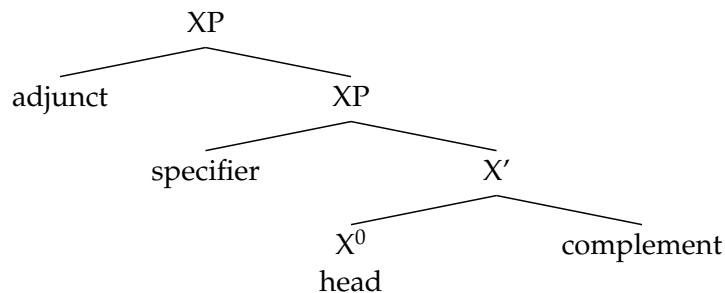
Basics of syntax and morphology

April 20, 2009

1 The theory of clause structure

We will assume the X-bar theory of clause structure, which defines four structural relations.

(1) *The X-bar schema*



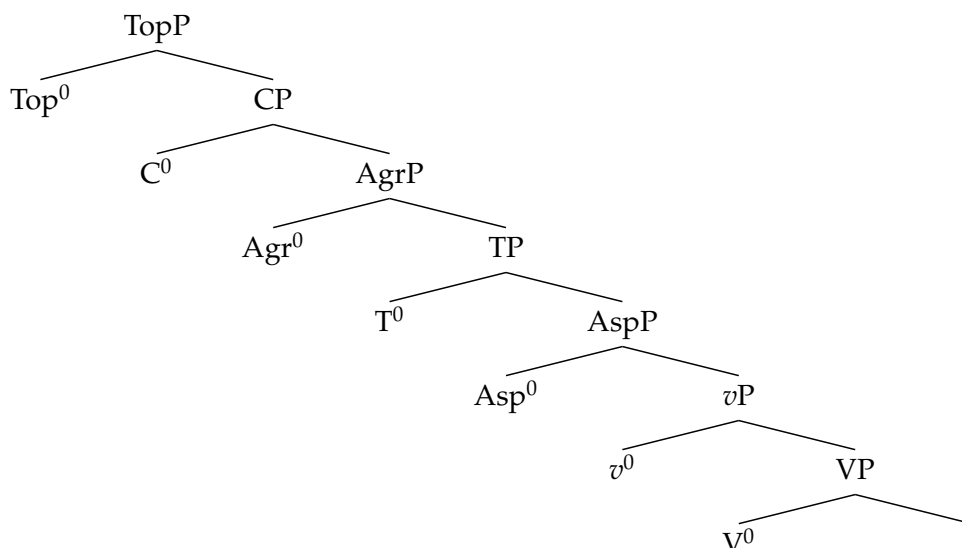
Some Spanish-specific notes on this structure.

- Complements always appear to the right of the head (unlike German, which is a mixed language in this respect).
- Specifiers always appear to the left of the [head-complement] combination (this seems to be a universal property of specifiers).
- Adjuncts can appear on either side of the [specifier[head-complement]] complex (again, this also seems to be a universal property).
- Each XP has exactly one head, one complement, and one specifier, though it might have any number of adjuncts.

2 Basic clausal skeleton

Modern syntactic theory assumes a very large number of projections, on the range of 50 in some models. For the purposes of this course, however, we can manage with a much more modest structure (specifier positions not shown to save space).

(2) *A clause structure for Spanish*



What do we need these projections for? — from bottom to top:

- VP — here is where we introduce the lexical verb.
- vP — here is where we determine transitivity (and introduce the subject of transitive and unergative verbs) and voice (passive vs. active).
- AspP — Aspect (technically, outer aspect), which determines whether the event defined by the clause is perfective (finished), imperfective (unfinished), progressive (happening right now)...
- TP — Tense, defines the time (present, past, future) of the event.
- CP — Complementizer. The head C^0 hosts subordinating particles like *que* (declarative) or *si* (interrogative/conditional). The specifier is the place for *wh*- words and focalized phrases.
- TopP — Topics. As there can be multiple topics in a sentence, there can also be multiple TopPs stacked on top of each other.

3 Basic syntactic operations

3.1 XP (phrase) movement

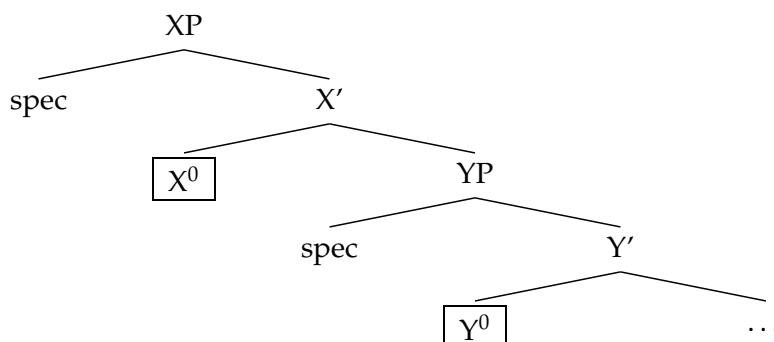
- XP movement always targets a full XP and moves it to a specifier position.

- The landing site must c-command the source position of movement, where α c-commands β if the mother (first node up) of α dominates β .
- There are two major subtypes of XP movement, namely:
 1. A movement, whose features are:
 - Only targets arguments of a verb (subjects, objects, indirect objects).
 - The landing site is always a subject or object position, and it is usually related to case and agreement.
 - It cannot cross finite clause boundaries (actually, this depends on the language), but it can cross non-finite clause boundaries (raising).
 2. A-bar movement, whose features are:
 - It can target any XP, regardless of its (non-)argumental status.
 - The landing site is a non-subject, non-object position, and it is associated to discourse factors (topic, focus), clause type (interrogatives, exclamatives), or interpretation (quantifier raising).
 - It is unbounded (the distance between the base position and the landing site is not limited in principle), though it's cyclic (there are intermediate landing sites at specified projections) and it is sensitive to island boundaries.

3.2 X^0 (head) movement

- Head movement moves a head into another head, forming a complex head.
- The landing site does not c-command the base position (unless under the standard “first-node-up” definition of c-command, though there are tricks one can resort to).
- Head movement obeys the Mirror Principle: the moving head always appears on the left side of the host head.
- Head movement is extremely local: a head can only move to the next head up, without skipping any intermediate heads (the Head Movement Constraint, or HMC).
- Head movement is used to form complex morphological items.

(3) *Input to head movement*



(4) *Output of head movement*

