LING 620 November 3rd

Class Note

\*The class mostly centered on Matt’s presentation (Questions 1 and 2 in page 355-356)

**Question 1**

D. (The brackets Matt made were not exactly the constituents of the whole sentence.)

The constituents of this sentence should be:

*[Marge said [who will ask [what to do]]].*

TP

NP VP

PN V CP

Marge said ? TP

who T VP

will V CP

ask ? TP

what T VP

to V

do

Matrix: *Marge said who will ask what to do*

Finite interrogative: *who will ask what to do*

Infinite interrogative : *what to do*

**Question 2**

Sentence B

*Bart asked Homer whether Lisa left.*

* *Ask* needs two complements: *Homer* and *whether Lisa left*. Those complements have to be sister to the V.
* All “wh-“ words can be either [+D] or [+Q].
* When you write verbs in trees, because tense is contained in another, separate node, write them in bare form, i.e., *wonder, leave* (not *wondered, left*).

Sentences A-F

* The lexical entries for nouns should look like these below.

Bart, N

Homer, N

Lisa, N

Marge, N

There should be no selections for [+\_\_VP], [+\_\_CP] [+ \_\_ Whatever] from nouns. Nouns don’t select arguments, they are arguments.

* Lexical entries are malleable. It’s easy to imagine the verb *explain* behaving like the verb give. For example, in the sentence, *He will explain me the issue.* This sounds like something a NS of Spanish would say. Furthermore, if you spend a lot of time with NS of Spanish this construction may start to sound right to you. Our idiolectical preferences are in flux, in some ways.
* Certain nouns DO select arguments, but these are only special nouns equipped with lexical conceptual structure. A good example is the noun *destruction*. *Destruction*, like the verb *destroy*, has in its lexical entry a role for a theme or patient. Hence, *of Rome* in the sentence, *The total destruction of Rome was Hannibal’s goal*, is a complement of *destruction*.
* In the sentence, *Bart left*. We don’t rely on subcategorization frames for *Bart* to tell us that a verb can follow it, but rather we rely on general linguistic principles, which tell us that (most) every sentence will have a subject and a predicate.
* Analogously, look at null subjects in Spanish. In the sentence *Me callo*. (*It fell to me*), the subject is unsaid. It is null.
* Look at these sentences: *It is raining. It must be my lucky day*. *It* in these sentences is working as what is called a pleonastic, or dummy, subject. Here *it* is bereft of referents; we only use it in order to fill out a syntactic requirement on verbs in English, namely, that they must have a subject.
* These last two examples provide us with some evidence that verbs choose their arguments (and therefore require subcategorization frames), not nouns.

Sentence C.

Bart asked Homer whether Marge said that Lisa left.

The tree should look like (yes, *said* is missing. Use your imagination to put it in as the V in a VP. This V is sister to CP) this. Again we see that *ask* needs two complements: *Homer* and *whether.* Because they are complements, we want them both to be sister to V.

S

DP VP

Bart V NP CP

asked N C S (actually TP)

Homer whether DP CP

Marge C S (TP)

that DP V

Lisa Left

Some rules for complementizer phrases.

CP

C S (TP)

whether

[+Q] either [+tense] or [-tense] (i.e. *whether he left* and *whether to leave*)

CP

C S (TP)

if

[+Q] only [+tense], not [-tense] (i.e. *if he left* and \**if to leave*)

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Sentence H and I

H. That Lisa left.

I. Whether Lisa left.

Why are they ungrammatical?

* In our regular tree, there is no place for them. TP 🡪 NP VP
* If we say that our regular tree is this, CP 🡪 C(that, if, whether, [O]) TP, then they are still ungrammatical, because complementizers are selected for by preceding verbs. Without a verb to select some complementizer, we have null complementizer as default. Arguably, if the temporal phrase is functioning as a noun phrase, complementizers can be selected for also.
* Now one might wonder if CP also precedes sentence initial TP. If it does, the C node will \*typically\* be null.
* Since both of these options fulfill the first of our criteria for a theory on pg 82, in that they cover the facts, we should now examine the second criterion, simplicity.
* If CP precedes every TP, what will happen is this: it will complicate every sentence, but it will simplify our structural system. In other words, the actual structure of every sentence will be more complex, but our meta-structure, the way we look at the relationship between CPs and TPs, will be much simpler and more consistent.
* In short, the second criterion doesn’t help us choose between these views. What about the third and fourth criteria, fertility and depth of understanding?

<Normal patterns>

VP

V CP

[+ CP]

C S (TP)

[+\_S]

that/whether

S CP

Lisa left or C S (TP)

Lisa left

<Some observations>

Lisa has left. S

NP VP

Lisa has left.

I wonder if Lisa has left. CP

C S (TP)

if Lisa has left

I wonder has Lisa left? CP

C S (TP)

has Lisa \_\_\_\_\_\_ left

I wonder what Lisa has bought. CP

C S (TP)

what Lisa has bought \_\_\_\_\_

🡪Question formation:

* In order to explain the movement of words in sentences for English, particularly to the front of the sentence, an empty C slot might be very helpful. Now we may begin to see some action from our third and fourth criteria in our assessment of CPs and TPs. In other words, we may well generalize that if CP precedes TP for embedded sentences and questions, why shouldn’t it do the same with all questions?

CP

C S (TP)

Has NP T VP

Lisa left

* Because we can see, crosslinguistically, languages where the sentence structure doesn’t change for questions, but rather a question complementizer is simply added, we have further reason to suspect that this CP slot is always lurking behind the TP, even though in regular declarative sentences it doesn’t give any clear sign of its presence.
* As a final point, we frequently see, with embedded [+ D] clauses, *that* being optional. Under certain circumstances, however, the complementizer must be included. Here is a further way we see verbs selecting complementizers and complements.

VP

V that / Ø

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In Response to Matt’s Q:

* Complementizers tells us about their complement. This ties in with c-command; that is, these nodes can’t look up beyond what they c-command. So to speak, they aren’t even aware of the things outside their little realm. They can only select for Because we can see, crosslinguistically, languages where the sentence structure doesn’t change for questions, but rather a question complementizer is added, we have further reason to suspect that this CP slot is always lurking behind the TP, even though in regular declarative sentences it doesn’t give any sign of its presence.

things within their domain.