Lecture 08: TP and Modals.

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LIN 311: Syntax

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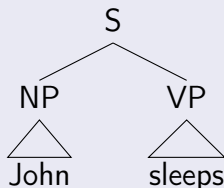
Outline

Sentence Structure

Problems So Far

- What is wrong with S? It doesn't follow X-Bar structure!
  - What is a head?
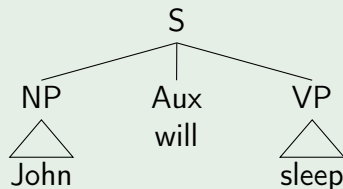 - Where are the complements and adjuncts?

$$
\begin{array}{c}
\text{S} \\
\diagup\quad\diagdown \\
\text{NP}\qquad\text{VP} \\
\triangle\qquad\triangle \\
\text{John}\quad\text{sleeps}
\end{array}
$$

- Let us look at what else can a sentence have...

What is missing from the rule for S?

- **Auxiliaries**: am/are/is/been, have/has/had, etc.
- **Modals**: can, must, might, may, will, shall, should, would, etc.

(1)   a.   John is sleeping.
       b.   John has slept.
       c.   John can sleep.
       d.   John will sleep.
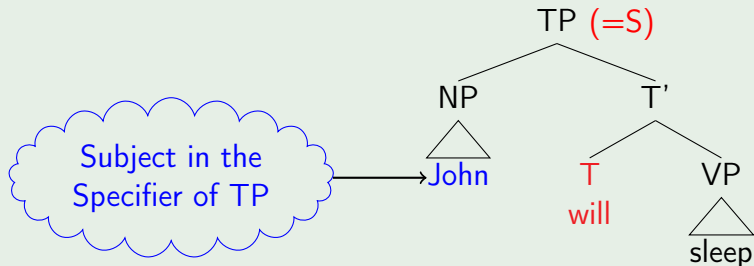
Can we have another node under S?

Introducing TP

Tense Phrase (TP)

- Every sentence has Tense.
- **Proposal**: Tense is the head of the sentence.
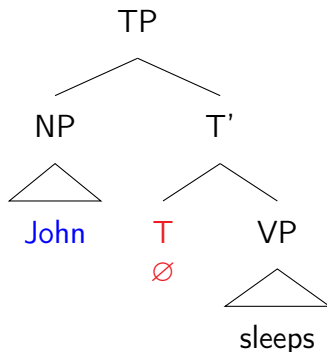- Instead of S, we will have TP.

S = TP

Subject in the Specifier of TP

TP (=S)
NP — T'
John
T — VP
will   sleep

Introducing TP

Tense Phrase (TP)

- If no Auxiliary/Modal, assume that the T-head is empty.
- And: finally, a Specifier!
  - We will denote the specifier of TP as Spec,TP.
  - In general, the specifier of XP is denoted as Spec,XP.
- Some literature refers to TP as IP (Inflectional Phrase) or AgrP (Agreement Phrase)

Modal Verbs

Properties of English Modal Verbs

Modal verbs: can, must, might, should, would, will, shall, . . .

Can't stand alone

- Must co-occur with the main verb; cannot stand by themselves.

   (2)   a.   John must write a paper.
              b.   Mary should quit smoking.
              c.   Sally can dance.
   (3)   a. *John must.
              b. *Mary should.
              c. *Sally can.

Note: (3) can be good if the VP is implied.

   (4)   a.   Can Sally dance?
              b.   Sally can.

Properties of English Modal Verbs

Modal verbs: can, must, might, should, would, will, shall, . . .

Modals don't agree with subjects

- They never agree with subjects.

(5) a. *John musts.
     b. *Mary shoulds.
     c. *Sally cans.

Properties of English Modal Verbs

Modal verbs: can, must, might, should, would, will, shall, . . .

Verbs don't agree with subjects

- Verbs in the VP after modals also never agree with subjects.

(6)   a.   *John must writes a paper.
       b.   *Mary should quits smoking.
       c.   *Sally can dances.

Properties of English Modal Verbs

Modal verbs: can, must, might, should, would, will, shall, ...

Maximum one modal

- There can be a maximum of one modal.

  (7)   a. *John must will write a paper.
            b. *Mary may should quit smoking.
            c. *Sally can might dance.

Note: Some dialects of English allow might could. Could be a compound.

  (8)   Bill might could win the elections.

Properties of English Modal Verbs

Modal verbs: can, must, might, should, would, will, shall, . . .

Followed by a VP

- They must be followed by a VP.

(9)	a.	*John must beer.	NP
	b.	*Mary should in the garden.	PP
	c.	*Sally can beautiful.	AP

Properties of English Modal Verbs

Modal verbs: can, must, might, should, would, will, shall, . . .

Precede negation

- They come before the negation (unlike other verbs in English (11)).

(10)   a.   John **must** not drink beer.
         b.   Mary **should** not quit smoking.
         c.   Sally **can** not dance.

(11)   John does not **drink** beer.

Properties of English Modal Verbs

Modal verbs: can, must, might, should, would, will, shall, . . .

Cannot co-occur with infinitive *to*

- They never co-occur with the infinitive particle *to*.

(12)   a.   *John must to drink beer.
         b.   *Mary should to quit smoking.
         c.   *Sally can to dance.

Properties of English Modal Verbs

Modal verbs: can, must, might, should, would, will, shall, . . .

Cannot co-occur with infinitive *to*

- They do not have infinitival forms (*to can*, *to must*, etc.).

(13)   a.   *I expected her to may leave soon.
        b.   *I wanted her to can do this.
        c.   *Sally needed to can dance.

(14)   a.   I expected her to leave soon.
        b.   I wanted her to do this.
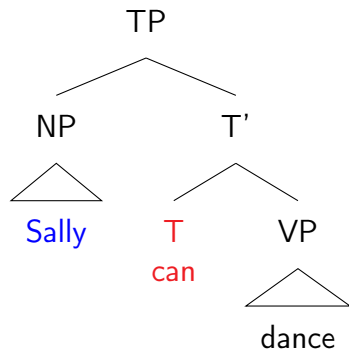   c.   Sally needed to dance.

Properties of modals: summary

Properties of modals

Must co-occur with the main verb
Followed by a VP (or another verbal category, Aux)
There is a maximum of one modal per clause
Do not co-occur with infinitival *to*
Precede negation
Don't change according to tense
Verbs following modals don't agree with subjects

Structurally:

- All modals and infinitival *to* compete for the same position.
- This position must be located above VP.

Modals in the structure

TP
├── NP
│   └── Sally
└── T'
    ├── T
    │   └── can
    └── VP
        └── dance

- Modal verbs are located in T position.
- Infinitival *to* is in T as well.

This assumption will explain that:
- modals can't stand alone;
- there's maximum one modal;
- modals are followed by a VP;
- modals cannot co-occur with infinitival *to*.