CAS LX 321 / MET LX 521 / GRS LX 621 *Syntax: Introduction to Sentential Structure*
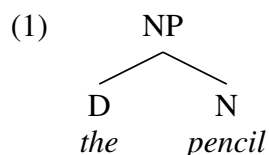
February 23, 2024

1 Interlude about noun phrases

I've said some things that are forcing us to something potentially unexpected.

- Subcategorization frames can only refer to siblings in a constituent.

- Features of the "head" of a phrase (that shares the category label) "percolate" up to be the features of the phrase.

- This allows, e.g., a ditransitive verb like *give* to require that its PP be headead by a P of the [+to] type.

- Complements are the things that are mentioned in a subcategorization frame.

- Adjuncts are siblings to XP.

- The __ is placed at the left of a subcategorization frame because English is "head-initial" (verb precedes the object).

We had NPs that looked like this:

(1)
```
        NP
       /  \
      D    N
     the  pencil
```

Surely *the pencil* is a constituent, and its multiple words, so "NP" seems reasonable. Except *sharp* is an adjunct (it's an adjective), and yet we don't adjoin it to NP.

(2)   * sharp the pencil

(3)   * the pencil sharp

(4)   the sharp pencil

Also (as you explore in the homework), it makes a lot more sense to say that the Det exerts control over what N can go with it, rather than the other way around. So, that would mean putting a subcategorization frame on D, which would start with a __, because the D comes first.
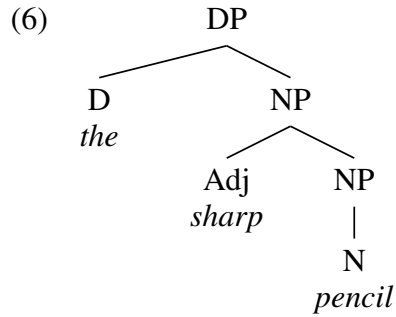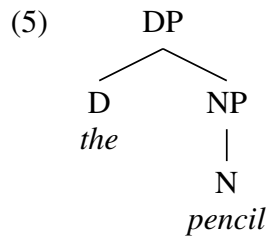
But why did the __ come first elsewhere? For V it was because the V is first, because English is consistently head-initial. For P it was because the P comes first, because English is consistently head-initial.

And in "NP", the __ comes first. But is this phrase head-initial? Well, not if the N is the head, since that comes after the D.

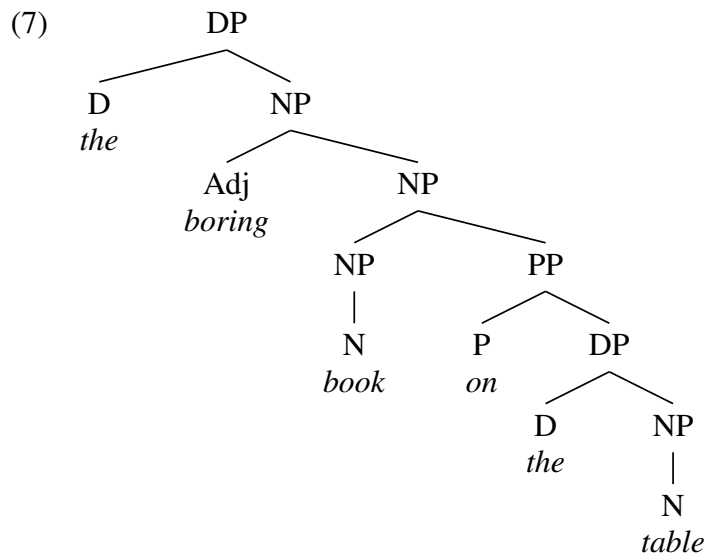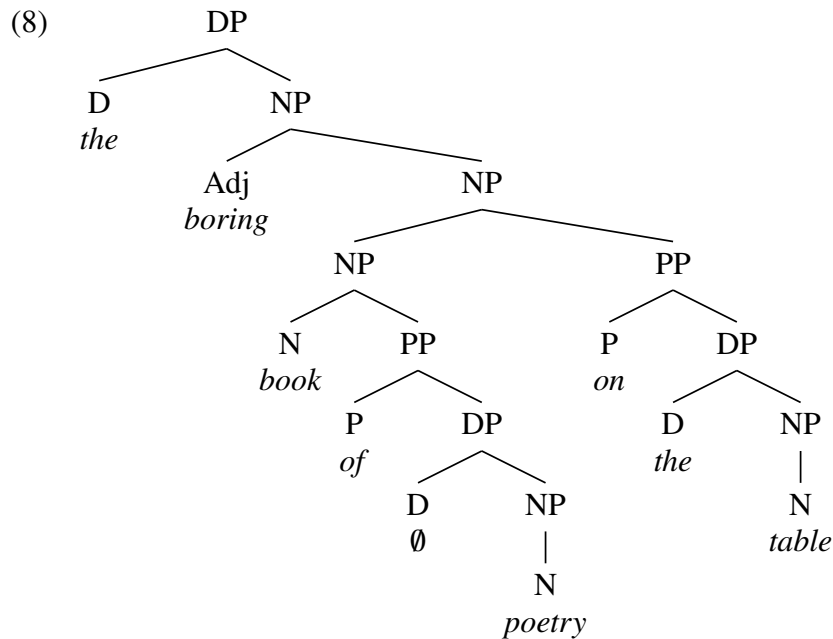And what to do about *the sharp pencil*? Where is *sharp*?

There's evidence (again, explored a bit in the homework) that there is *always* a D. Sometimes it is silent (*books* or *Bart*) but there's always one there.

So what if we said that the "NP" really has a structure kind of like a PP does? Where the D is actually the head, and the noun is its complement? That kind of solves everything at once.

(5)

```
          DP
         /  \
        D    NP
       the    |
              N
            pencil
```

(6)

```
            DP
           /  \
          D    NP
         the  /  \
            Adj   NP
           sharp   |
                   N
                 pencil
```

Now we understand why the D exerts control over the NP and is first (English is head-initial, now more consistently too), we have a place to put the adjectives that is still attaching to an XP level. We can specify that *a(n)* needs to have a [–pl] NP as its sibling, and that is itself [–pl] which makes the DP [–pl] because the feature percolates up.

(7)

```
              DP
             /  \
            D    NP
           the  /  \
             Adj    NP
           boring  /  \
                 NP    PP
                  |   /  \
                  N  P    DP
                book on  /  \
                        D    NP
                       the    |
                              N
                            table
```

2

(8)

```
                          DP
                 ┌────────┴────────┐
                 D                 NP
                the        ┌────────┴────────┐
                          Adj               NP
                         boring     ┌────────┴────────┐
                                   NP                 PP
                             ┌──────┴──────┐     ┌─────┴─────┐
                             N            PP     P           DP
                            book     ┌────┴────┐ on    ┌─────┴─────┐
                                     P         DP      D           NP
                                     of   ┌────┴────┐ the          │
                                          D         NP             N
                                          ∅         │            table
                                                    N
                                                 poetry
```

But: We've now built a DP. And there's no place to put a DP in our trees. Our trees have NP subjects, NP objects. Yet of course *the boring book of poetry on the table* can be an object, or a subject.

We could allow for subjects and objects to be *either* NPs or DPs, except almost anything we can think of that would count as an NP and *not* a DP is one that we'd have said has a silent D anyway. A possible exception is pronouns. (*They left.*)

What if we just say, ok, it's not S → NP VP, but rather it is S → DP VP? If we just adjust our rules so that wherever we had NP before we now have DP, everything from before is preserved. It's just that what we used to call "NPs" were actually "DPs."

That means *they* is a DP. Is it a D with a silent NP? It could be (cf. *the poor*). It does looks like they go where D can go, so probably *they* is a D. (*We linguists should stick together, they're always picking on us linguists.*)