CAS LX 422 / GRS LX 722 Intermediate Syntax

Genitive case, prepositional case
(ch. 6-7 or so)

11

Possessors

Consider the genitive (possessive) 's in English:

1) John's hat
2) The student's sandwich
3) The man from Australia's book
4) The man on the hill by the tree's binoculars

The possessor can be a full DP (inside another DP).

The 's attaches to the whole possessor *phrase*—it's the man's book and binoculars, not Australia's or the tree's, after all.

This is not a noun suffix. It seems more like a *little word* that signals possession, standing between the possessor and the possessee. (it's a *clitic*).

Possessors

It seems to be impossible to have both a 's and a determiner.

- *The building's the roof
- The roof of the building
- *The hurricane's the eye

Determiners like *the* and the possession marker 's seem to be in complementary distribution—if one appears, the other cannot.

- Compare:
  1) The big fluffy pink rabbit
  2) *The that rabbit
  3) *The my rabbit
  4) *Every my rabbit

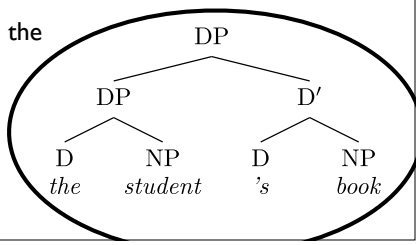
Possessors?

This suggests a structure like this for possession phrases:

The possessor DP is in the specifier of DP. And of course, this can be as complex a DP as we like, e.g., *the very hungry student of linguistics by the tree with the purple flowers over there... ...'s book*

- The possessed NP is the complement of D.

Not actually this, wait for the next slide



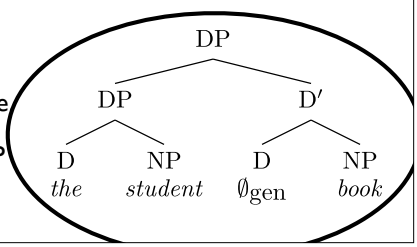
Possessors and the null D

But what then to do about DPs like *his book*? Or *their book*?

Here the possessor DP is the genitive case pronoun, and there's no 's.

1) *Their's book
2) *Them's book
3) *They's book

Accordingly, we will instead suppose that there is a **null D**, $\emptyset_{\textbf{gen}}$, that checks genitive case. The genitive case form of a non-pronominal DP *is* audible in English, as *DP*'s.



The king's every whim

1) A whim
2) The king's whim
3) The king's every whim

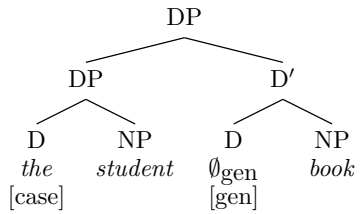
To the extent that *every* is a D, this indicates two things:

The king is to the left of the D; really, the specifier of DP is the only place it could be.

The genitive case 's isn't *always* incompatible with an overt D (hence, better to think of 's not as a D but rather as a case marker on the possessor DP). We take this (marked) use of *every* to be an exceptional overt determiner that can still check [gen].

Checking genitive case

The checking of genitive case in the DP works exactly like the checking on nominative case in the TP does.



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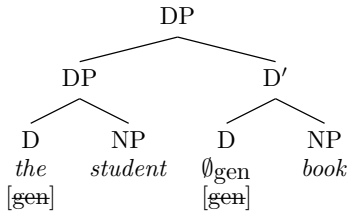


I don't mean to preclude the possibility that the possessor actually moves from somewhere into SpecDP—we'll explore that next week, but that need not happen for this to work.

A couple of null Ds

So we have at this point a couple of different null determiners. They are as different as *the* is from *a* or from *that*, they just happen to be pronounced the same way (like this:" ").

One is $\emptyset_{\textbf{gen}}$, which has a [gen] feature and in whose specifier we find possessors.

Another is $\emptyset_{\textbf{indef}}$, which is a nonsingular indefinite article, in whose complement we find plurals and mass nouns.

[$\emptyset_{\textbf{indef}}$ Milk] spilled. [$\emptyset_{\textbf{indef}}$ People] cried.

Mass vs. count: Some nouns indicate countable things (*chairs*) others indicate stuff (*milk*). Singular/plural distinctions don't apply with mass nouns.

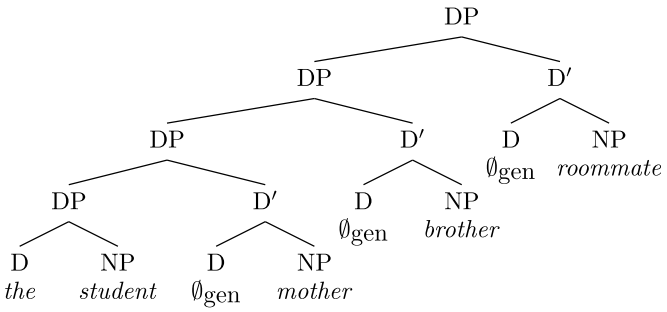
Recursion

Another noteworthy aspect of the possessor phrase is its *recursive* property.

The possessor is a DP in the specifier of DP. That means that the DP possessor could have a possessor too…

1) *The student's father's book*
2) *The student's mother's brother's roommate*

Recursion



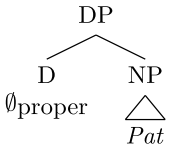
Proper names

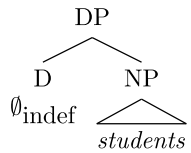
As for proper names like *Pat*, we will assume that they have a structure something like *students*.

1) The Pat we respect came to the party.
2) O Giorgos ephuge
   the George left
   'George left.'

$\emptyset_{\textbf{proper}}$ (names are not indefinite; this is probably mostly the same as *the*, but silent).

Implementation:
$\emptyset_{\textbf{proper}}$ has a [uproper] feature, *Pat* has a [proper] feature.





Number agreement on D

What is wrong with *[$_{DP}$ *A students*] and *[$_{DP}$ *student*]? It's a lack of agreement in number. It's like **Students eats lunch*.

We can encode this in the same way: The indefinite determiner has a [*u*ϕ:] feature, and the N has ϕ-features as always (including a num feature).

The [*u*ϕ:] feature is valued and checked by the ϕ-features of the N.

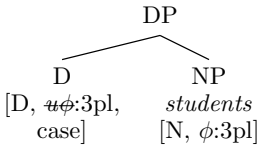
Number agreement

This means *a* and Ø$_{indef}$ are in fact pronunciations of the same D (Like *me* and *I* are).

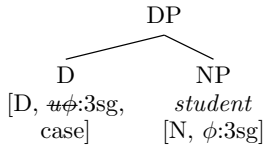
A(n) is the pronunciation when it has a [~~*u*ϕ~~:sg] feature

Ø is the pronunciation otherwise

[$_{DP}$ Ø$_{indef}$ students]



[$_{DP}$ a student]



The case of prepositional objects

Consider the case of the object of a preposition:

- Computers break near me.

Now that we've incorporated case into our system, we're stuck with it. Noun phrases come with case. *Computers* has case (nominative) and *me* has case (accusative).

The question is: How is the case of *me* checked?

Computers break near me

Computers break is unaccusative; there's no agent, and *computers* is the Theme/Patient, it is the affected object.

Thus, we have in our numeration:

break [V, *u*D*]

$v_{unaccusative}$[*v*, *u*Infl:, *u*V*]

computers [N, ϕ:3pl]

Ø$_{indef}$ [D, *u*ϕ: , case]

T [T, *u*ϕ:, pres, nom, *u*D*]

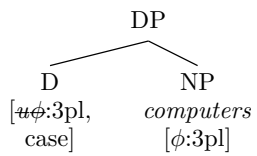
break is unaccusative, no [acc].

As well as *near* and *me*, which we'll get to in a moment.

Computers break

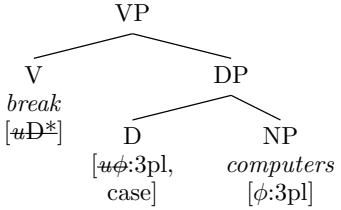
First, let's just do *computers break*.

We start by putting together *computers*.



Computers break

Then, merging *break* and *computers*.

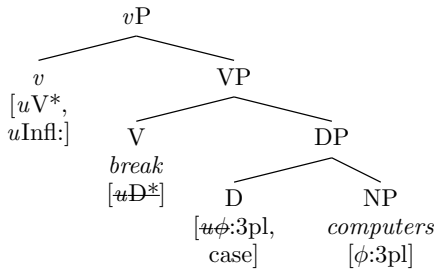


Computers break

v [*v*, *u*Infl:, *u*V*]

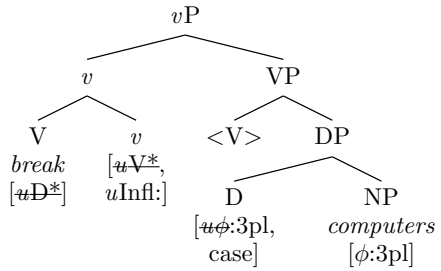
break is unaccusative, no [acc].

We Merge *v* with VP (HoP).



Computers break

The V moves up to adjoin to *v* to check the [*u*V*] feature of *v*.

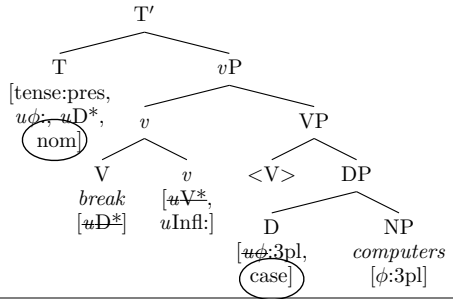


Computers break

The T is Merged with *v*P (HoP).

T has the features: [T, pres, *u*ϕ:, *u*D*, nom].

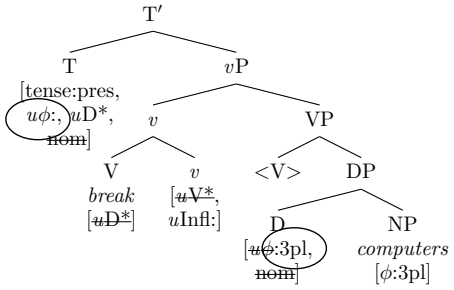
The [nom] feature of T can now match the [case] feature of *computers*.



Computers break

The [nom] feature of T matches, values, and checks the [case] feature of *computers*, checking itself in the process.

The [*u*ϕ:] feature of T can also match the [ϕ:3pl] feature of *computers*.

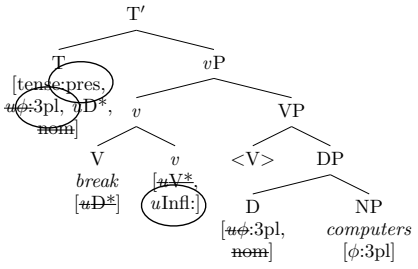


Computers break

The [ϕ:3pl] feature of *computers* matches, values, and checks the [*u*ϕ:] feature of T.

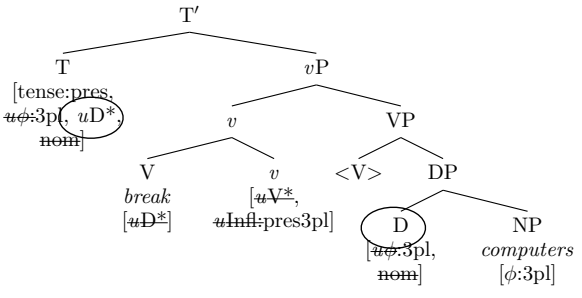
The [tense:pres] feature of T matches the [*u*Infl:] feature of *v*, which will be valued by both the tense and ϕ-features of T.

- It's [tense:pres] that matches the [*u*Infl:] feature, but the ϕ-features "come along" when the [*u*Infl:] feature is valued.



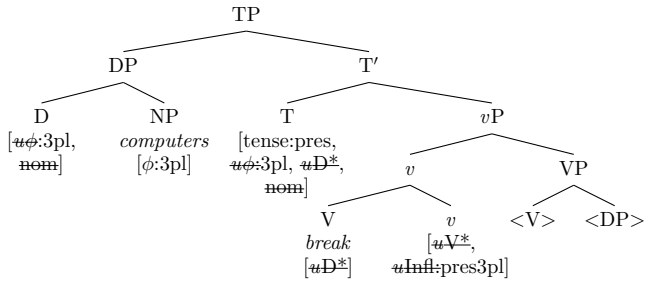
Computers break

The [*u*D*] feature of T matches the [D] feature of *computers*. This is not sufficient to check the [*u*D*] feature because they are not local, so *computers* is moved up to SpecTP.



Computers break

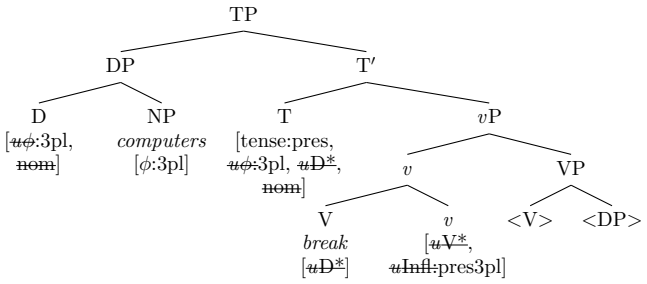
Once the [D] feature of computers is a sister to the T′ that has the [*u*D*] feature (the feature projects from T to T′—it's the same feature), the [*u*D*] feature is checked.



Computers break near me

Now, let's consider *Computers break near me*.

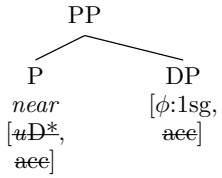
Me is clearly accusative. There's nothing here that can value a case feature as accusative. That's why I chose *break*. All we're adding to this is *me* (which has accusative case) and the P *near*.



Computers break near me

Conclusion: It must be *near* that is responsible for the accusative case on *me*.

Merge *near* and *me* (1sg pronoun). The [D] feature of *me* checks the [*u*D*] feature of *near*. The [acc] feature of *near* values and checks the [case] feature of *me* (checking itself in the process).

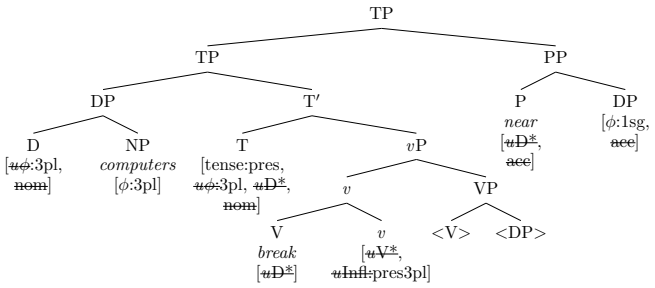


Near me computers break

The last step: Adjoin the PP to the TP.

To the TP? *Near me* can appear on either side of TP, not *v*P.

Computers near me break



P checks accusative

So, *in general*: A preposition P...

- Has a [P] category feature
- Has a [*u*D*] feature, motivating a Merge with its object.
- Has an [acc] feature, valuing and checking the [case] feature of its object.

T has [T], [uD*] (EPP), [*u*ϕ:], [nom]

v has [*v*], [*u*Infl:], [*u*V*], and, if *v* assigns a θ-role, it has [*u*D*] and [acc].

Double-object constructions

We've by now covered the sentence

1) Pat gave books to Chris.

Pat, books, and *Chris* are all noun phrases, they all need case.

Pat gets (nom) case from T.

books gets (acc) case from *v*.

Chris gets (acc) case from P (*to*).

What about *Pat gave Chris books*?

The "have" kind of "give" must have an [acc] feature.