

Today

L2 Syntax Lecture 8: The theta criterion and the case filter

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- Recap of Monday's lecture
- Two constraints on DPs
 - **Theta criterion**: each DP has a θ -role
 - **Case filter**: each DP has case
- DPs move to satisfy the Case filter
 - **Subject movement**
 - Next two lectures: **passive** & **raising**

Today's reading

- Santorini & Kroch, ch.8 ("Case licensing" up to, but not including, "The dative-accusative distinction")
- <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~beatrice/syntax-textbook/ch8.html#case-lic>
- Links from WebCT and from the course website.

Case marking on English pronouns

Nominative	Accusative	Genitive
I	me	my
you	you	your
he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its
we	us	our
you	you	your
they	them	their

Case and thematic roles

Cases sometimes look like thematic roles

e.g., subjects tend to be agents,
objects tend to be themes

She thumped him
 NOM. ACC.
 AGENT THEME

Case and thematic roles

Cases sometimes look like thematic roles

Goal θ -role: place to which the Theme moves
Dative case: often assigned to noun phrases bearing the Goal θ -role

Location θ -role: place where action is situated
Locative case: assigned to noun phrases bearing the Location θ -role

But they aren't identical

The difference between case and thematic role

He melted the ice
 NOM. ACC.
 AGENT THEME

The ice melted
 NOM.
 THEME

The ice was melted by him
 NOM. ACC.
 THEME AGENT

The difference between case and thematic role

It seems he melted the ice
 NOM. NOM. ACC.
 ? AGENT THEME

He seemed to melt the ice
 NOM. ACC.
 AGENT(??) THEME

Case and Grammatical Function

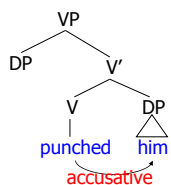
- Case marks grammatical function
 - Subject takes **Nominative** case
 - Subject of DP takes **Genitive** case
 - Object and everything else takes **Accusative** case
- Structures like passives disrupt the relationship between θ -role and grammatical function

Case assignment

- This suggests that the distribution of Nominative, Accusative, and Genitive is based on syntactic structure (**structural case**)
- Other cases (Locative, Ablative, etc.) are closely tied to θ -role (**inherent case**)

Assigning Accusative case in English

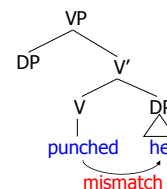
Verbs in English assign Accusative case to their complements



Object must appear in Accusative form

Assigning Accusative case in English

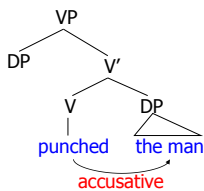
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Object must appear in Accusative form

Assigning Accusative case in English

Verbs in English assign Accusative case to their complements



Accusative case assigned in Head-Comp configuration

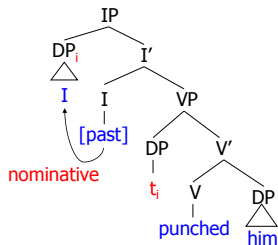
P also assigns Accusative case

- I walked [_{PP} towards him]
- *I walked [_{PP} towards he]
- I am proud [_{PP} of him]
- *I am proud [_{PP} of he]

Accusative case also assigned in Head-Comp configuration.

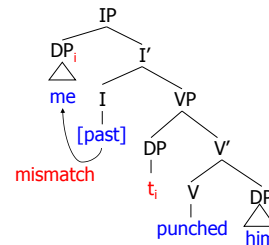
Nominative case assignment

I assigns Nominative case



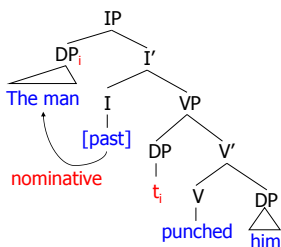
Nominative case assignment

I assigns Nominative case



Nominative case assignment

Nominative assigned in Head-Specifier configuration



Case: a summary

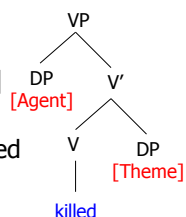
- Case is a way to mark grammatical function
 - subject, direct object, subject of DP, ...
- Accusative Case is assigned by V and P to their complements
- Nominative Case is assigned by I to its specifier
- Case and thematic role are related
 - but passives disrupt the relationship between θ -role and grammatical function
 - Inherent cases are closer to θ -role than structural cases (Nom, Acc, Gen)

Thematic roles: a reminder

Elementary tree for *killed*

- *killer* in [spec, VP]
- *killed* in [comp, VP]

Thematic roles determined by V



Predicates and arguments

The butler killed the maid

- Predicate *killed* describes a relationship between two entities
- Arguments of *killed* are the killer (**Agent**) and the killed (**Theme**)
- *killed* assigns thematic roles to its arguments

Thematic roles

The butler killed the maid

- *the butler* is **Agent**
 - the individual who initiates the action expressed by the predicate
- *the maid* is **Theme**
 - the thing undergoing the action expressed by the predicate

The theta criterion

- Every DP must be assigned exactly one thematic role, and every thematic role must be assigned

The butler killed the maid

- *killed* assigns **Agent** role to *the butler*
- *killed* assigns **Theme** role to *the maid*

The theta criterion

- Every DP must be assigned exactly one thematic role, and every thematic role must be assigned

**The butler killed the maid the pantry*

- *killed* assigns **Agent** role to *the butler*
- *killed* assigns **Theme** role to *the maid*
- *the pantry* isn't assigned a θ -role

The theta criterion

- Every DP must be assigned exactly one thematic role, and every thematic role must be assigned

The butler killed the maid in the pantry

- *killed* assigns **Agent** role to *the butler*
- *killed* assigns **Theme** role to *the maid*
- *in* assigns **Location** role to *the pantry*

The theta criterion

- Every DP must be assigned exactly one thematic role, and every thematic role must be assigned

The woman devoured the cake

- *devoured* assigns Agent role to *the woman*
- *devoured* assigns Theme role to *the cake*

The theta criterion

- Every DP must be assigned exactly one thematic role, and every thematic role must be assigned

**The woman devoured*

- *devoured* assigns Agent role to *the woman*
- *devoured* doesn't assign Theme role to anything, in violation of the theta criterion

The theta criterion

- Every DP must be assigned exactly one thematic role, and every thematic role must be assigned

John bit himself

- *bit* assigns Agent role to *John*
- *bit* assigns Theme role to *himself*

The theta criterion

- Every DP must be assigned exactly one thematic role, and every thematic role must be assigned

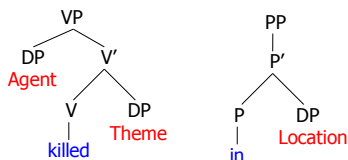
**John_i bit t_i*

- *bit* assigns Theme role to *John*
- *John* moves to [Spec,VP]
- *bit* assigns Agent role to *John*
- *John* receives 2 thematic roles, in violation of the theta criterion

Lexical information

Lexical entries specify

- elementary tree
- theta role assignment



Consequences of the θ -criterion

- "Every DP is assigned exactly one θ -role, and every θ -role is assigned" means:
- Every DP passes through exactly one DP substitution node with a θ -role assigned to it
- In practice, that substitution node is always the position the DP initially substitutes into (**base position**)

Thematic roles: summary

- lexical heads (V,P,Adj,N – not functional heads) assign θ -roles
- Theta-criterion:
Every DP must be assigned exactly one thematic role, and every thematic role must be assigned

The case filter

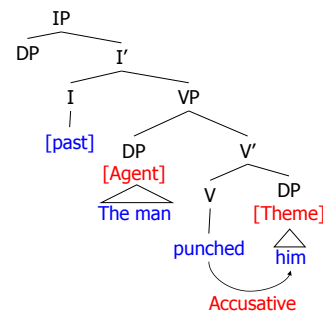
All DPs must bear case

- Case, unlike θ -role, can be assigned after movement
- Subjects move to get case

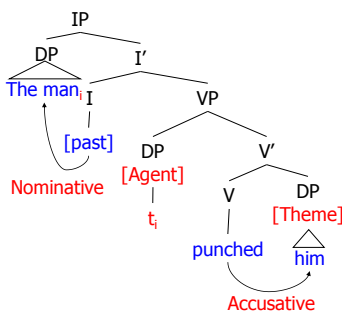
The case filter and θ -criterion

- Two constraints on the distribution of DPs
 - θ -criterion restricts initial DP substitution positions (base positions)
 - Case filter restricts positions after some movements
- There must be as many case positions as θ -positions
- Needn't be the same positions.
- Some movements occur to satisfy both constraints.

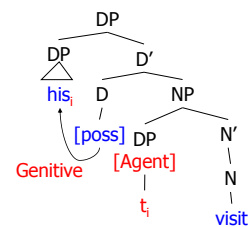
Putting it together



Putting it together



Putting it together



More movement for case: Passives

- Passives are related to actives

ACTIVE

The prince denied the rumours

PASSIVE

The rumours were denied (by the prince)

What are passives?

The prince denied the rumours
AGENT **THEME**

The rumours were denied (by the prince)
THEME **AGENT**

- DPs receive the same thematic roles

What are passives?

The prince denied the rumours
The rumours were denied (by the prince)

- The active subject:
 - Becomes optional in the passive (an adjunct)
 - Introduced with *by*
- The active object:
 - Becomes the subject of the passive

What are passives?

The prince denied the rumours
NOMINATIVE **OBJECTIVE**

The rumours were denied (by the prince)
NOMINATIVE **OBJECTIVE**

- DPs receive the same thematic roles
- But their case, grammatical functions, etc., change

Passive Verbs

ACTIVE

The prince denied the rumours

PASSIVE

The rumours were denied

- Be + Passive Participle

Passive Participles

The passive participle is not exactly like its active counterpart.

- Although it sometimes looks like a transitive verb, it is missing a complement:
 - *It was denied the rumour (meaning=the rumour was denied)

Passive Participles

The **passive participle** is not exactly like its active counterpart.

- Although it sometimes looks like a transitive verb, it doesn't assign objective case:
 - They saw **us**
 - *We were seen **them**
 - *It_{expl} was seen **us**

Passive Participles

- Even when the active and passive forms look the same, they don't behave the same:
 - The man **kissed** her
 - She was **kissed** (*her)

Passive Participle Analysis

- Adjectives also don't bear tense inflection:
 - *He proud**ed** (He **was proud**)
 - *He proud**s** (He **is proud**)
 - *He **will** proud (He **will be proud**)
- Adjectives also don't assign objective case:
 - *He is proud his son
 - He is proud **of** his son

Passive Participles

The **passive participle** is not exactly like its active counterpart.

- Although it sometimes looks like a transitive verb, it doesn't bear tense inflection:

I sang the song	The song was sung
I sing the song	The song is sung
I will sing the song	The song will be sung

Passive Participles

- Maybe the passive participles aren't verbs.
- What else could they be?
 - She was **kissed, amused, shocked**
 - She was **proud, euphoric, ruthless**
- Maybe passive participles are **adjectives**

Are passive participles adjectives?

- Participles can become full-fledged adjectives:
 - **Comparatives:**
More enlightened, interested, satisfied...
 - **Superlatives:**
The most educated, committed people...
 - **Negation using un-**
unhurried, uncombed, uninterested...

Are passive participles adjectives?

- Verbs can't really do any of this
 - *John **more** built (buil**ter**) the house
 - *John (**the**) **most** built (buil**test**) the house
 - John **un**built the house [means "John dismantled the house", if anything, not "John did not build the house"]
- Passive participles are at least **more adjectival** than regular verbs

Are passive participles adjectives?

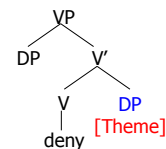
- Passives aren't always exactly like adjectives.
 - Some passives describe events (accomplishments): The house **is being** built
 - Adjectives typically describe states: *The house **is being** red
- Regular adjectives can't take *by*-phrases:
 - *I am happy *by* Sarah
- See next reading for discussion.

Passives: the story so far

- Agent** realized as adjunct (*by*-PP)
- Theme** realized as subject
- Passive participles**:
 - combine with *be* to make passive
 - do not have objects (cannot assign Accusative case)
 - are more adjectival than verbs are
 - we will treat them as of category Adj

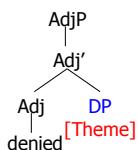
Elementary trees for passives

- Premise: The theme argument originates in same place for active and passive
- Why?
 - Because it gets its thematic role from its relationship to the verb or adjective
- Regularities across lexical items: Themes are complements, Agents are specifiers

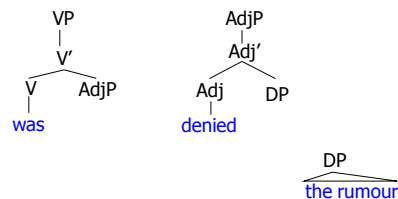


Elementary trees for passives

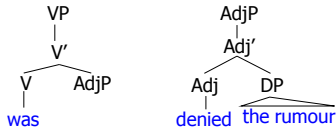
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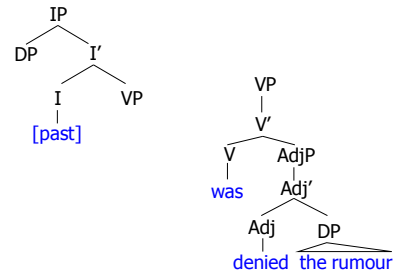
Piecing together a passive



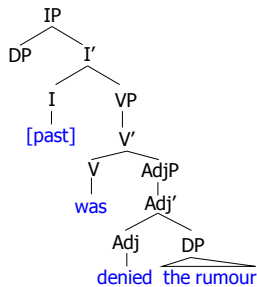
Piecing together a passive



Piecing together a passive

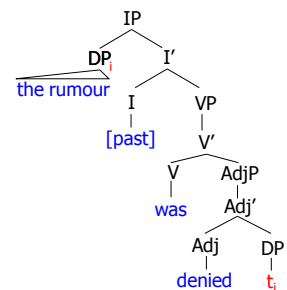


Piecing together a passive



Piecing together a passive

- Correct **word order**
- θ -role given by original position
- **Grammatical function** given by final position
- **Case assignment** as before



Summary I

- **Theta Criterion**
 - Every DP must be assigned exactly one thematic role, and every thematic role must be assigned
- **Case Filter**
 - All DPs must bear case

Summary II

- **Theta Criterion and Case Filter**
 - Every DP has one θ -role and one case, not necessarily assigned in same position
- **Movement**
 - Some types of movement occur to relate θ -positions and case positions

Summary III

- Subject movement: DP moves from a θ -position in [Spec,VP] to a Case position in [Spec,IP]
- Passive:
 - Passive participle is of category Adj:
no subject, cannot assign Case
 - DP moves from a θ -position in [Comp,VP] to a Case position in [Spec,IP]

Next time:

- More on passives
- Idiom chunks
- Raising, and more on case