

MODULE 4 SYNTACTIC PROCESSES

Unit 1	DP Movements: Passivisation and Ergativity
Unit 2	Determiner Phrase
Unit 3	Pronominalisation and Reflexivisation
Unit 4	Major CP Derivations
Unit 5	Topicalisation in English
Unit 6	Clefts and Pseudo-clefts in English

In this module, we shall discuss some important syntactic processes. These are passivisation, pronominalisation, reflexivisation and topicalisation, all of which are well-known processes in Syntax. The approach you will be exposed with in this unit will intimate you with some novel ways of analysing them.

Hm! I can hear you sigh. Do not mind my grand terms. They will not do you any harm. They are just the special ways of naming some simple concepts in language. If you turn to the topic of this unit, those two words look big. If you look them up in a common dictionary, you will not find them there. However, you just need to know that they are simple things. Do you ask me why we have to use grand terms for them? I think you also know the answer. Medical practitioners have their professional terms for common ailments, so do we, language experts, for these common linguistic processes.

A trip down memory lane may bring you to the classroom events of a teacher asking you to give an example of a passive sentence. This still remains how to test our knowledge of grammar today.

Grammar is a very interesting aspect of language study and I want to assure you that you will never regret taking with us the next step to the store house of syntax as we consider some transformational processes.

UNIT 1 DP MOVEMENTS: PASSIVISATION AND ERGATIVITY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Now, let's start our ride as we consider passivisation and ergativity. 'Look before you leap', says a popular adage. You need to know that we are going to use a different plate to serve our usual meal. In the past you had treated these processes with the traditional grammar model. Perhaps you have once used standard theory model of the Transformational Generative Grammar. Today, we are still going to tread the same syntactic processes path but with a new tool which is called the Minimalist Program. You should not mind the term if it sounds unfamiliar. It only looks like a simple tools box having a Greek label. Mind you, this is not even as complex as *shokolokobangoshay!*

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to do the following:

- identify the syntactic (structural) operations that bring about each of the two processes (passivisation and ergativity); and
- relate each of the processes to your colleague using the appropriate terms used in the unit.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Passive Sentences in Traditional Grammar

In simple terms, passivisation is the process of forming a passive construction. However in minimalist terms, as it affects English, we can say passivisation is a syntactic process that involves an auxiliary and a transitive verb which lacks external argument (the subject), so it has to

raise its logical object to the empty subject position. The construction may still accommodate a logical subject through the use of the preposition 'by'. This results in what may be called 'by phrase' in passive sentences.

Let us begin with what we all know of passive sentences. Based on traditional grammar, we assume that passive sentences are derived from their active counterparts. This is also the view held in Standard Theory (ST).

- (1) John broke the ruler
- (2) The ruler was broken by John

Going back to our definition of passivisation above, will take note of the verbal system of (2) above. While the active sentence has only one verbal item: the main verb 'break', the passive one has two verbal items: the auxiliary verb *be* (which becomes *was*) and the main verb *break* which now takes the past participle form (*broken*).

Going by our definition, we say the verb that will be used in passive construction must be transitive. By this we mean the verb must have a logical object; hence, it must have something to be moved to the subject position.

Another thing to note in that definition is the expression: 'empty subject position'. What do we mean by this? We know that the passive sentence does not have any logical subject so the subject position is syntactically empty, which makes it possible for the object to be moved in there.

3.2 Passive Transformation in the Chomskian Standard Theory (ST)

Standard Theory (ST) assumes that passive sentences are derived from their active counterparts. Hence, a set of transformational rules are brought together to explain passive transformation.

- a. the active sentence is taken as the kernel sentence. Let this be: John breaks the ladder.
- b. subject post-posing: The rule moves the subject to the end of the clause (i.e. pres. break the ladder John).
- c. object preposing: this rule moves the logical object to the subject position (the ladder pres. break John).
- d. be passive insertion: this rule inserts the passive auxiliary marker 'been' (i.e. the ladder pres. been break John)
- e. by-insertion rule: this insert the preposition 'by' before the post posed logical subject (i.e. the ladder pres. been break by John)

- f. affix hopping rule: this takes care of agreement, tense and participle – formation of the main verb (The ladder was broken by John).

Contrary to the belief that transformation must be meaning preserving, it is discovered that some active sentences largely differ in meaning from their passive counterparts. Hence the passive structure is not just a shift of emphasis from the actor to the action as it ordinarily implies.

3.3 Passive Derivation in the Minimalist Program (MP)

In this section, we shall explain how passive sentences are formed in the minimalist framework.

One, syntactic operations in the MP culminate in derivations. When they are grammatical, we say the derivations converge. When they have an ungrammatical outcome, we say the derivations crash. So, the formation of a passive sentence is a derivation. Operations used in MP derivations are: select, merge, copy and delete.

Two, a derivation fuses a number of operations, starting from the lexicon (word dictionary in the mind) and continues until the logical form (LF or the meaning aspect) and the phonological form (PF or the speech form of the utterance) are formed. The point at which these two components (PF and LF) are formed is called spell-out. At that point, changes in pronunciation no longer occur after the meaning of the derivation. It is assumed that a passive sentence also goes through these stages in its derivation.

Each lexical item has some formal or morphosyntactic features, some of which are interpretable while others are not. These morphosyntactic features have a way of regulating the kind of operations the word can permit. Two words are merged when an un-interpretable feature of one becomes interpretable in the other. For instance, the number feature is not interpreted in 'sheep'. We can only determine the number when we merge this word with some determiners. See this illustrated in (3) below.

- (3) (a) a sheep
 (b) some sheep
 (c) these sheep

So we can say that each of the words in our passive sentence has these formal features.

Passivisation begins when we select (through Operation Select) the following array from our mind.


(4) (John, break, passive-be, ruler, the)

We assume this does not come to mind the way they eventually appear in the sentence, but may be outlined in the order most relevant to the context of discourse.

The next operation is Operation Merge; we assume that a systematic merging of items continues until we have the structure in (5) below.

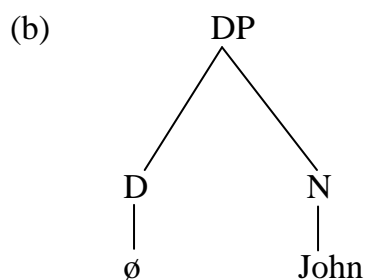
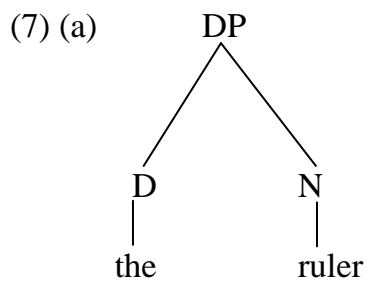
(5) \emptyset be break the ruler by John.

And thereafter Operations Copy, Operation Move and Operation Merge apply to the object in order to derive (6) below.

(6) the ruler be break \bar{t} by John


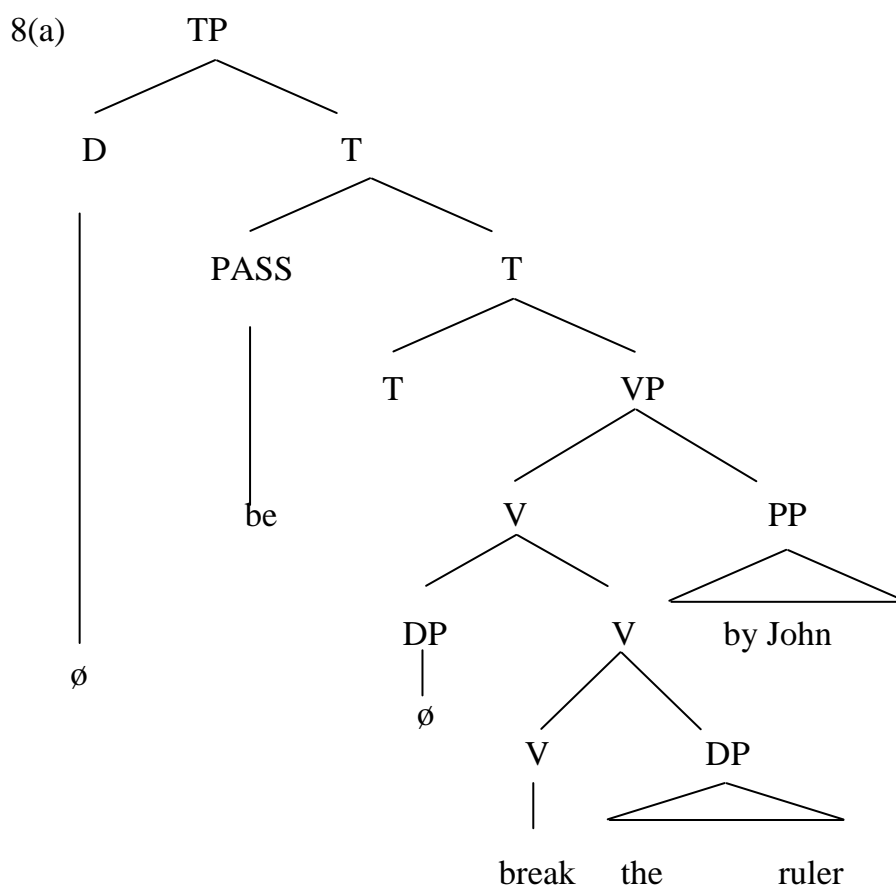
At this point, Operation Agree occurs. There are some morphophonemic realisations of agreement and conjugations. The main verb takes passive marking and becomes a past participle while the passive auxiliary *be* assumes past tense form and at the same time agrees with the structural subject ‘the ruler’ and thereby becomes ‘was’.

As we progress, another thing we need to know is that the term determiner as used in the Minimalist Program (MP) goes beyond the traditional determiners such as articles, demonstratives and possessive adjectives, it includes pronouns. In fact, the determiner is considered the head of the nominal group. Noun Phrase (NP) is therefore a constituent of the Determiner Phrase (DP). We shall therefore henceforth refer to *the ruler* as a DP, *John* also is a DP. You can see this below.

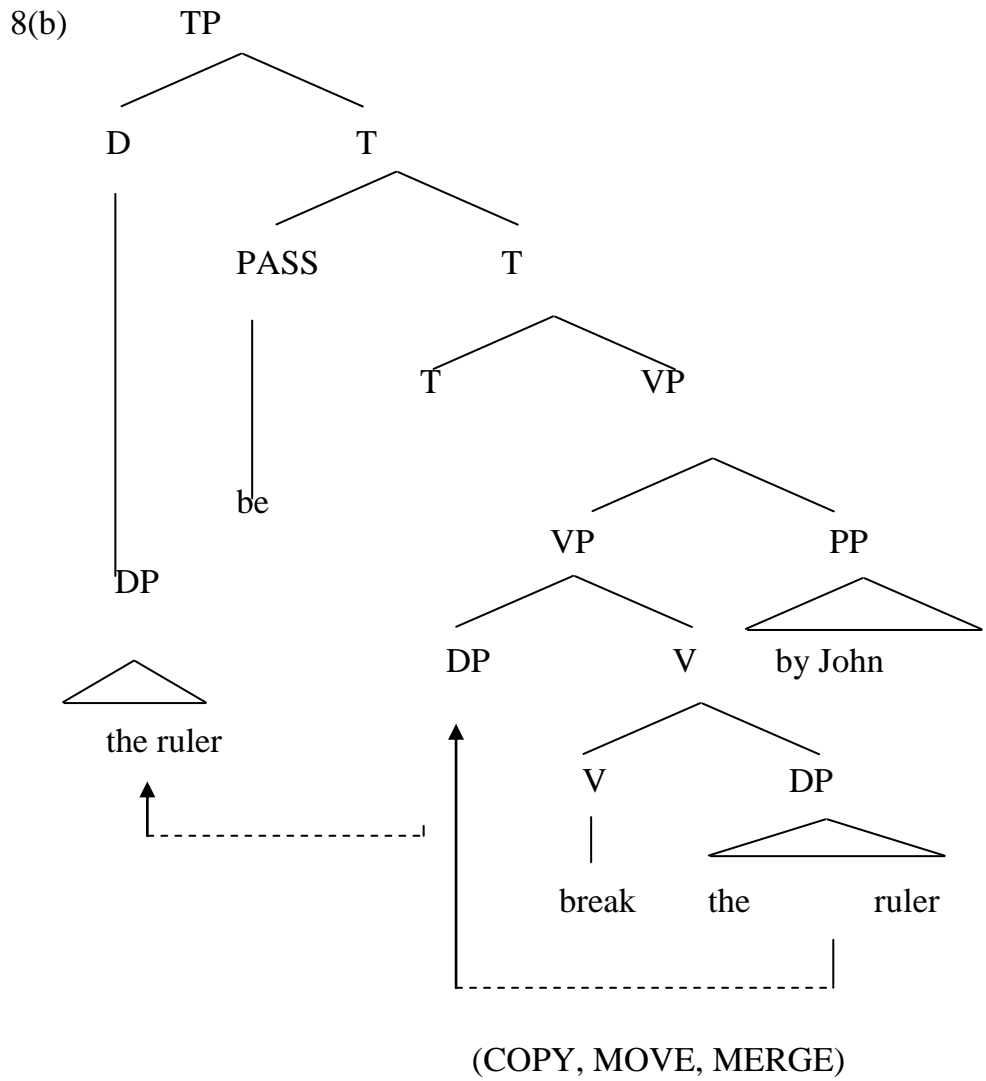


Secondly, we should know that the MP does not label a sentence as S but in a different way. In advanced work, you are likely going to see different labels for what we know as a sentence. But we can take a central position here, where we will take a sentence as a Tense Phrase (TP), and we shall take the subordinate clause as a Complementiser Phrase (CP). These terms are very common in the latter version of Government Binding (GB) Theory of Transformational Generative Grammar.

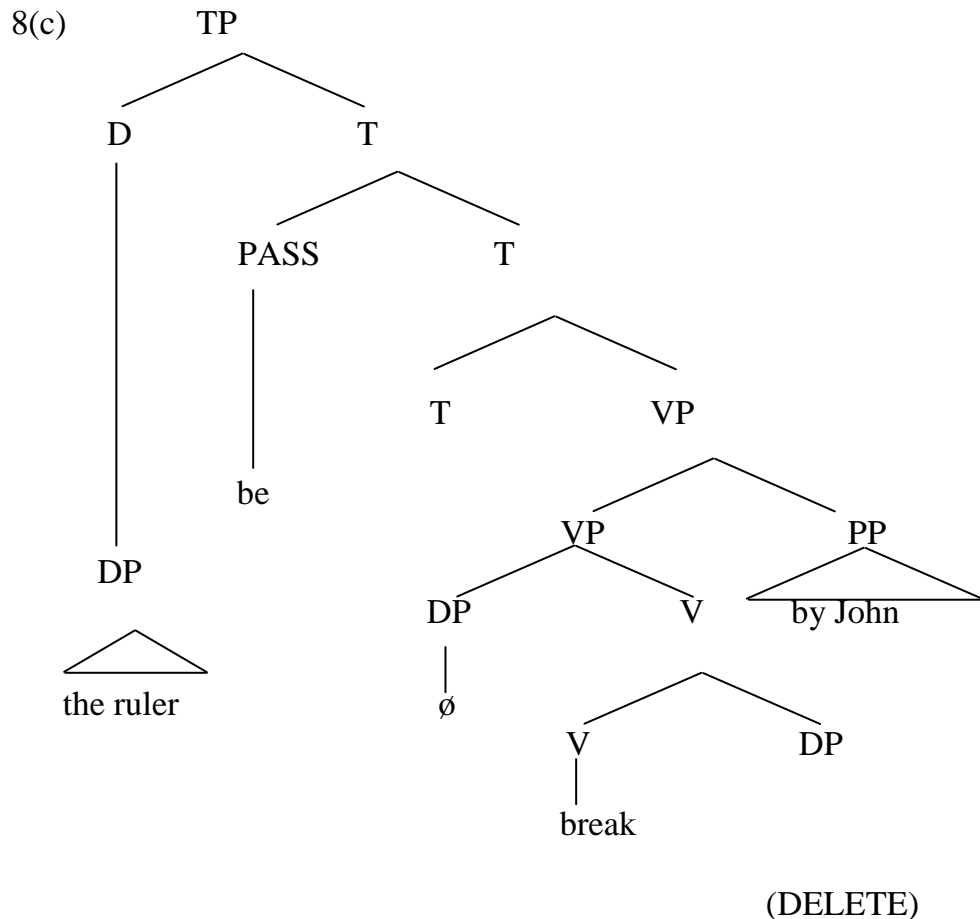
With these terms, we can provide the tree diagram of our data in (5) above as (8) below.



In 8(a) above, D [the] and N [ladder] merged into a DP. This DP merges with the V [break] to form a VP. The VP merges with PASSIVE [be] to form a larger verbal unit. This later merges with T [past tense] to form a TP [tense Phrase]. This TP has no subject so the subject position is represented with a null element \emptyset . This diagram shows how operation merge arranges the item which Operation Select has collected from the lexicon of an English speaker.



In 8(b) above, the formal features of a passive verb cannot help to interpret the un-interpretable case feature of its object. Hence, this object must be copied and moved to merge with T (tense) which can provide it with the nominative case.



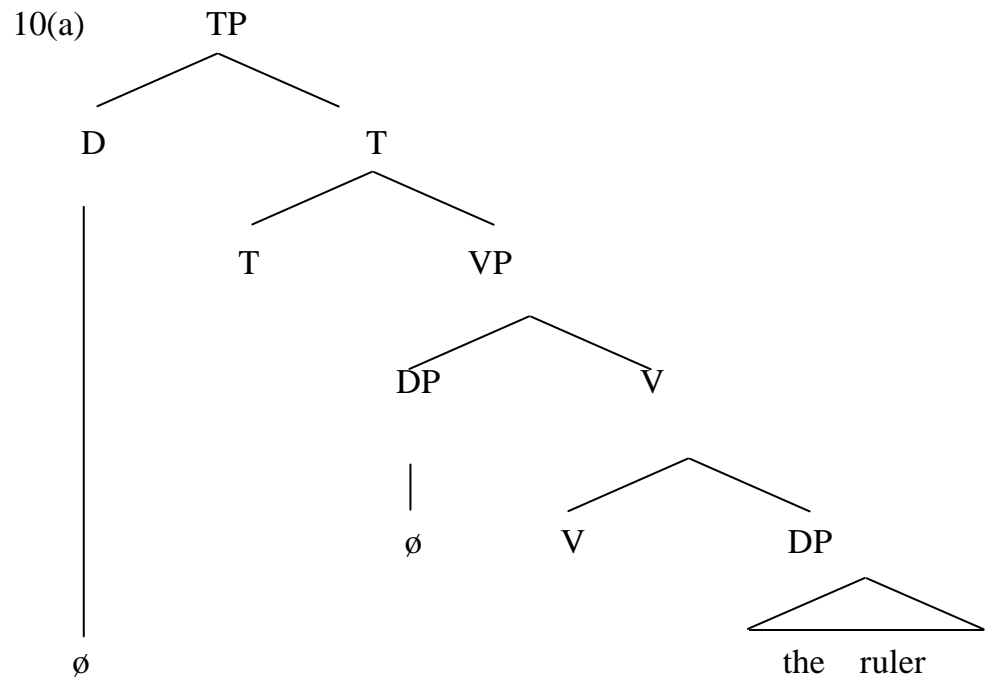
In 8(c), the original copy of the object DP is deleted from the pronunciation. And the spell-out stage is reached. At this stage, phonological processes like contraction and deletion will not affect the meaning. In the other way round, semantic shift will not affect the pronunciation. After the spell-out, the transformations that apply in the PF will not affect the LF derivation, and the post spell-out transformations that affect LF derivation will no longer apply to the PF derivation.

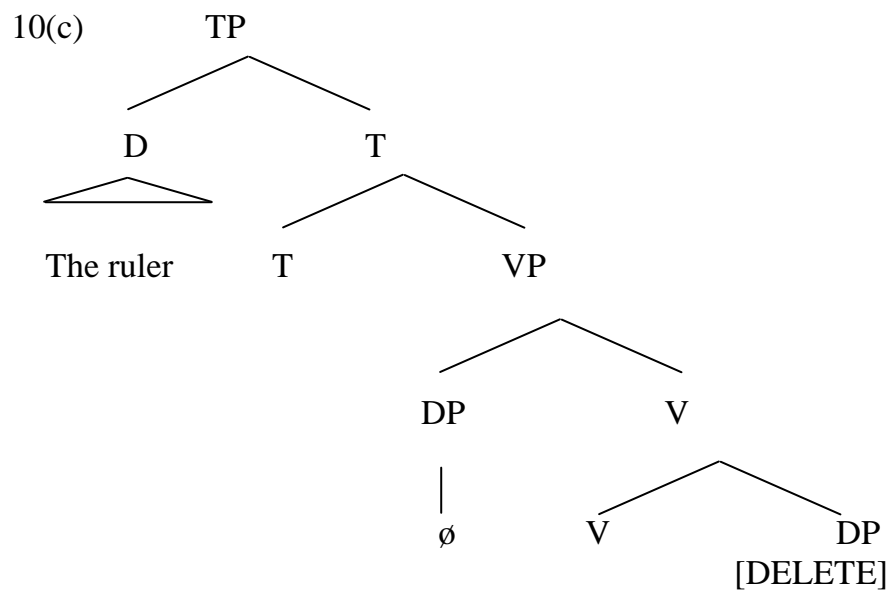
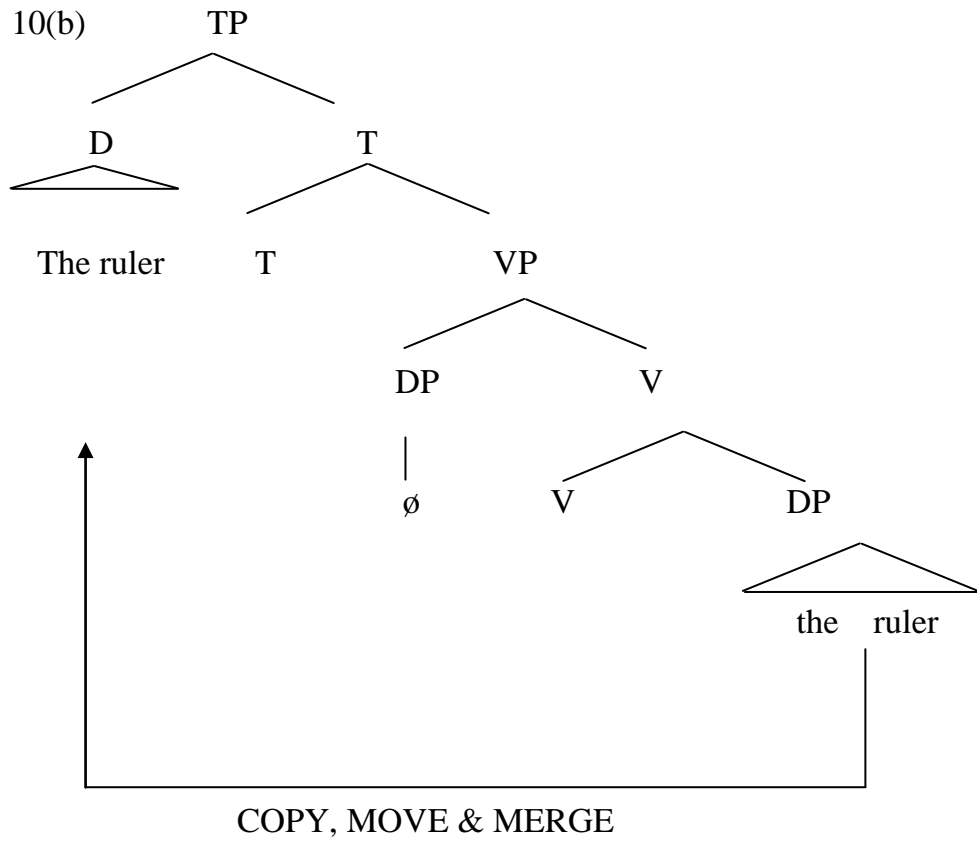
3.4 Ergative Derivation in the Minimalist Program (MP)

Ergativity is similar to passivisation. However, it differs in some respects. First, it does not require any auxiliary. So its main verb does not change its form to the past participle. Second, the logical object that is raised to the empty subject position must be an experience of the action. So that after it has assumed the structural subject position it will become an affected subject (semantically speaking). Third, there is no room for introducing any agentive logical subject. The so-called 'by-phrase' which can be used in passive construction is not permitted in ergative construction.

Despite these differences noted above, the ergative sentence has an empty subject position just like its passive counterpart. It also has to raise its logical object to the vacant structural subject position. See this in (9) below

- (9) _____ break the ruler
- (b) the ruler break
- (c) the ruler broke





SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Discuss with a colleague the differences and the similarities between passive and ergative sentences.
- ii. Tabulate the following sentences into passive and ergative constructions.
 - (a) He can be seen- Passive
 - (b) We are told- Passive
 - (c) The stone rolled down- Ergative

- (e) The door can open- Passive
- (f) The file were torn- Passive
- (g) The file burns- Ergative

4.0 CONCLUSION

The unit reveals the fact that passivisation is similar in structure to ergative construction on the fact that they both involve DP movement into the subject position. However, ergative construction is not as complex as passive construction due to the passive auxiliary and the by phrase PP that occur in passivisation.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have surveyed three different views on passive construction: the traditional view, the early Chomskian's view and the Minimalist view. We have also discovered that ergative construction and passive construction are closely related.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Study the sentences below, and answer the questions that follow:

- (a) The window opens
 - (b) The window is opened
1. Name the major transformation process involved in each of the sentences above.
 2. In minimalist terms, describe their derivations stating the syntactic operations involved right from the lexicon to the spell-out stage.
 3. Using tree diagrams, describe the major stages in their derivations.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Chomsky, Noam (1995). *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Lasnik, Howard (1999). *Minimalist Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Radford, Andrew (1997). *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English: A Minimalist Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

UNIT 2 DETERMINER PHRASE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Determiner Phrase (DP)
 - 3.2 The DP structure of Bare Nouns
 - 3.3 Complex DPs
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss the DP in a greater detail and show how it affects our previous knowledge of pronominalisation and reflexivisation. You will be expecting us to talk on pronominalisation or reflexivisation. We are going to discuss them now. But you should not be surprised if we tell you that they are not treated in the same way with passivisation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- state reasons for not classifying pronominalisation and reflexivisation as syntactic processes of transformation; and
- analyse nominals in DP phrase structure.

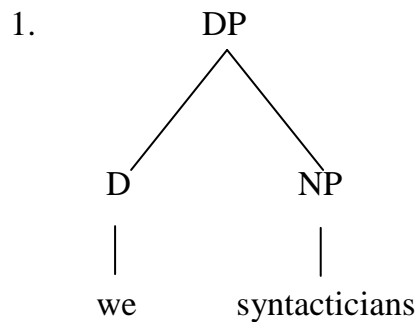
HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
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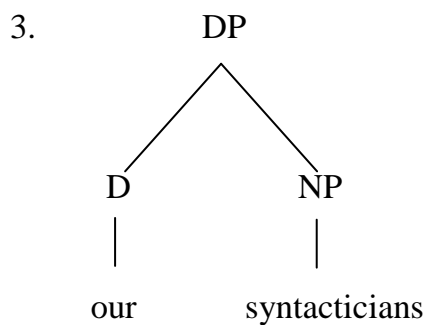
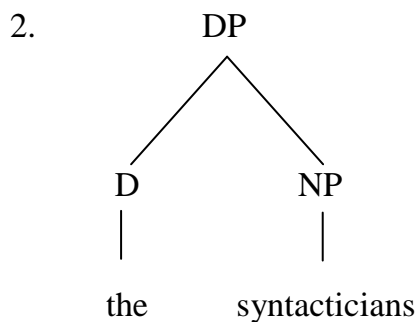
3.0 MAIN CONTENT

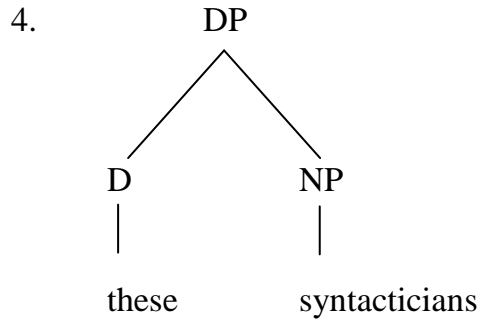
3.1 Determiner Phrase (DP)

This is the functional phrase to which all nominals belong. The noun phrase (NP) itself is taken as a complement of a determiner head. A very important thing to note here is that pronouns are not considered as an NP element but rather a determiner. Hence a pronoun can serve as a head which can take a noun phrase (NP) as its complement.

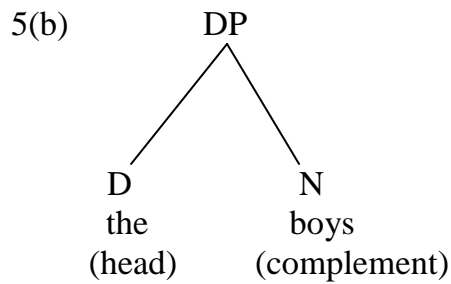
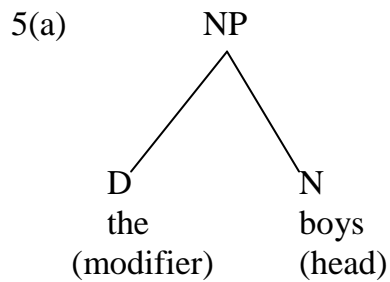


Apart from the inclusion of the pronoun in the determiner group, the rest of the determiners are those traditionally labelled as determiners (i.e. a, the, that, those, this, these, my, our and your). These are the traditional articles, demonstrative adjective, and possessive adjectives.



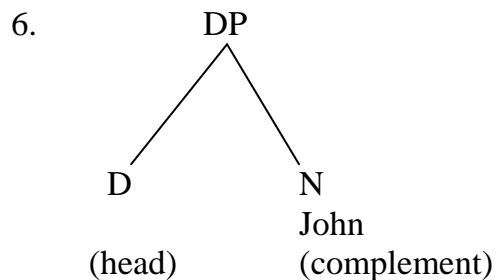


In a DP, the determiner is the head of the phrase. Hence, the DP phrase marker will replace (a) with (b) below.

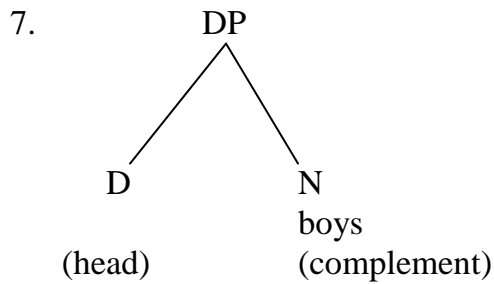


3.2 The DP Structure of Bare Nouns

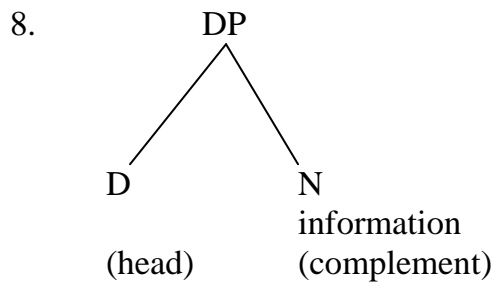
A bare noun occurs without an article. This is the case of proper nouns such as John, Aminu, Simbi, Margaret, Akin, Emeka and Akpabio. The head of this is an empty D.



A plural noun can also have bare representation as seen in (7) below.

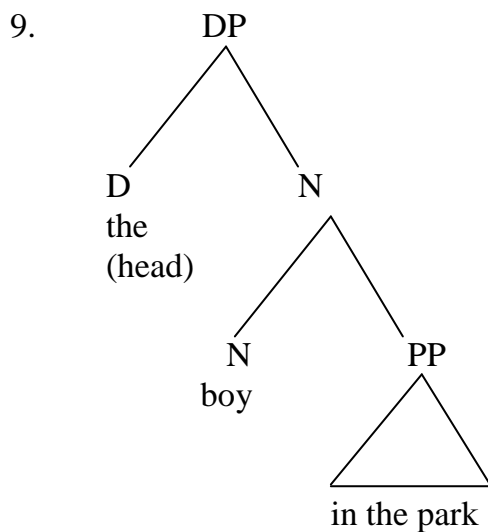


Non-count nouns usually take this DP structure when used without any article or quantifier. See this in (8) below.



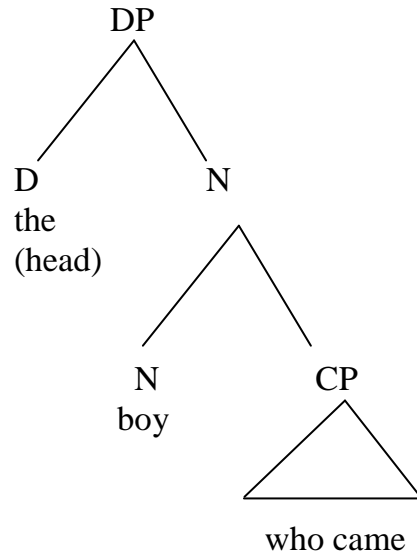
3.3 Complex DPs

A DP may be structurally complex. The DP may embed a PP as shown in (9) below.



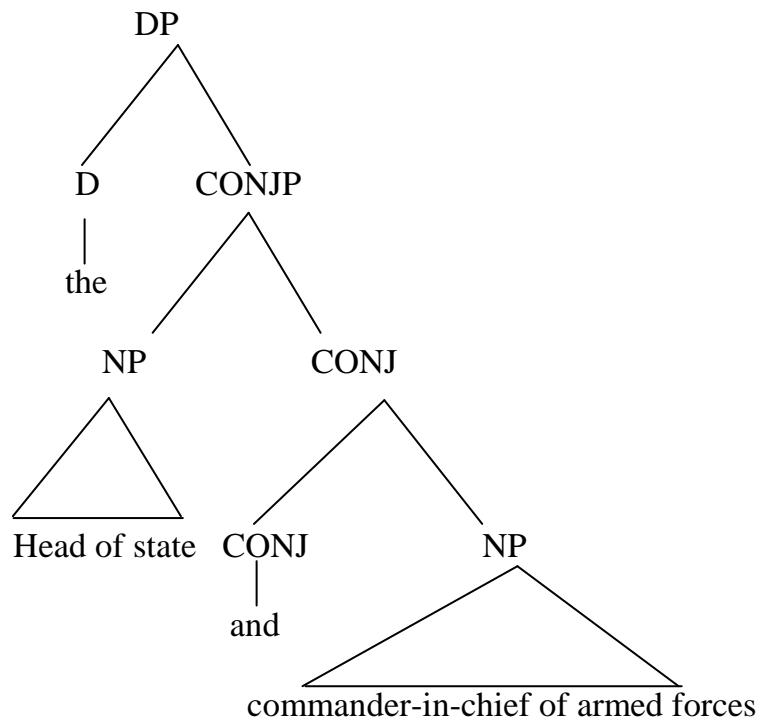
The DP may also embed a clause. Hence, we can have a DP having a CP complement.

10.

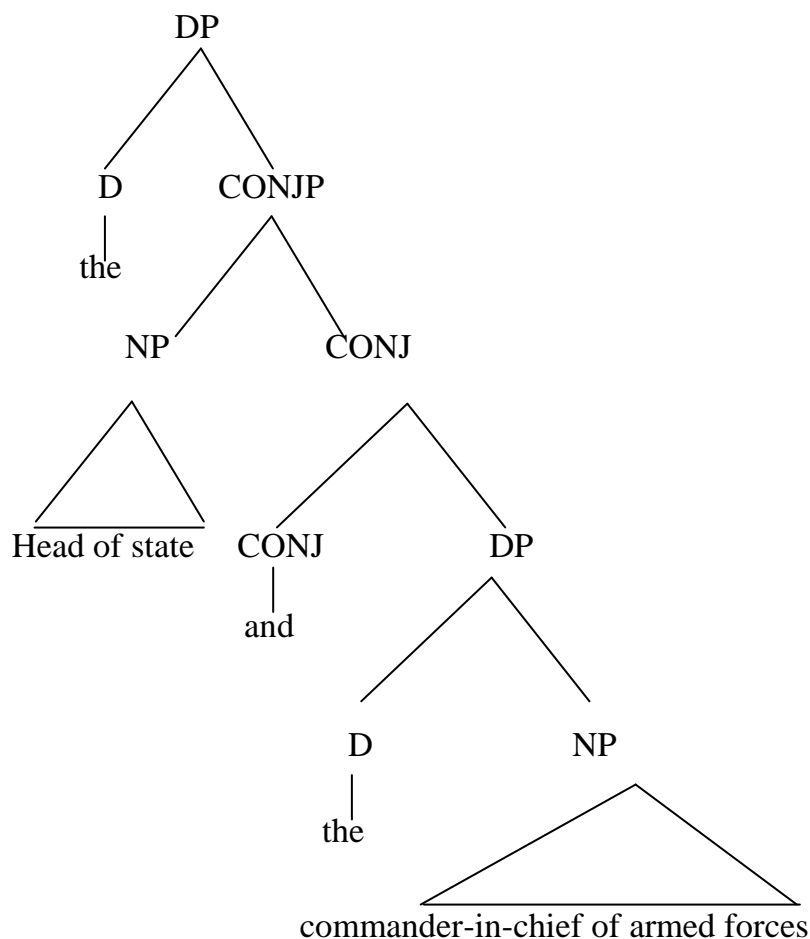


The complexity may involve co-ordination of two NPs or DPs.

11.



12.



SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Reproduce the argument stated in favour of DP analysis of nominal in this unit

4.0 CONCLUSION

The DP structure is crucial to the Minimalist analysis of nominals in English. Abney (1987) the first major research work that proposed the hypothesis was carried out in English. Although this unit cannot go into the hot argument that trail the concept thereafter (especially on whether DP analysis is actually better than the earlier NP analysis), it has introduced the student to some basic facts on the DP structure.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have seen the following:

- the pronoun is a determiner;
- the pronoun is not an np element; and
- the pronoun is a head which selects the np as a complement.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSESSMENT

Analyse the following using DP phrase markers (tree diagrams).

1. the people
2. my study
3. the man of the people
4. these sheep

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Abney, S. (1987). *The English Noun Phrase in its Sentential Aspect*. PhD dissertation, MIT.

Bhatt, C. Löbel, E & Schmidt, C. (Eds.). (1989). *Syntactic Phrase Structure Phenomena*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Radford, Andrew (1997). *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English: A Minimalist Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

UNIT 3 PRONOMINALISATION AND REFLEXIVISATION

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 - 3.2 Reflexivisation
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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss the DP in a greater detail and show how it affects our previous knowledge of pronominalisation and reflexivisation. You will be expecting us to talk on pronominalisation or reflexivisation. We are going to discuss them now. But you should not be surprised if we tell you that they are treated in the same way with passivisation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- state reasons for not classifying pronominalisation and reflexivisation as syntactic processes of transformation; and
- account for the use of pronouns to replace nominals.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Pronoun and its Antecedent

The idea that a pronoun should have an antecedent is a universal concept that is conceivable without an elaborate theoretical framework like this. The Government and Binding theory has a lot to say about this. The Binding theory has three major principles that show the distribution of the pronoun. These are Principle A, Principle B and Principle C of the Binding Theory in the GB framework. In the Minimalist Program, the pronoun is a determiner. It occurs in the lexicon the way other determiners do. It is not a mere sub-unit of the noun as could be conceived in some other syntactic theory.

First, the noun cannot be used with the first person grammatical properties, but the pronoun can. Second, the noun is not usually used with the second person grammatical reference, but the pronoun is.

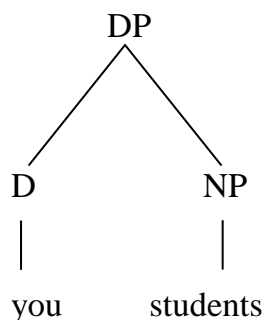
3.2 Pronominalisation

From our knowledge of earlier models of TGG, it is assumed that pronouns are further transformations of nouns. So we can have the following.

Aliyu saw Aminat → he saw her

Aminat helped Aliyu → she helped him

The transformational process in the expressions above is called pronominalisation. The Determiner Phrase (DP) has eventually replaced our earlier concept of Noun Phrase (NP). The pronoun has also become a determiner which can function as the head of a Determiner Phrase (DP). The noun phrase (NP) is now a complement of the determiner. Going by this analysis, the noun will serve as a complement to the article or to the pronoun. This implies that the pronoun is no longer considered as a constituent of the noun phrase.



Although a pronoun needs an antecedent in the discourse, it should be noted that the same pronoun is already present in the lexicon. This model has it that the pronoun does not evolve from a transformation that applies to the noun serving as its antecedent. Rather it is the feature (characteristic) of a pronoun to have an antecedent. The grammar only helps to relate the pronoun to its proper antecedent instead of claiming that a noun transforms itself into that pronoun. So *Aminat* is not transformed to ‘*her*’ neither is *Aliyu* transformed to ‘*he*’ as shown above. The tenable claim here is that those pronouns have corresponding semantic reference with *Aliyu* and *Aminat* in the lexicon during this particular discourse.

3.3 Reflexivisation

The following transformation is also very common.

- 1 Aliyu saw Aliyu → Aliyu saw himself
2
 Aminat helped Aminat → Aminat helped herself

In the expression above, the process that derives *himself* from *Aliyu* is called reflexivisation. This transformational process has also been revised in the minimalist approach.

The reflexive pronouns above are also present in the lexicon. They are not really transformed from the nouns in question. These pronouns are different phonological materials which, in this discourse, have semantic correspondence with the concerned nouns in their LF representations. It is true that the pronouns replace the nouns, but that is not done as a process of movement or transformation. A reflexive replaces a noun the way a common noun, say *boy*, will replace *John*. When we replace *John* with *boy* in a sentence, we do not claim that *John* transforms into *boy*. We all know that the proper noun *John* and the common noun *boy* have different representations in the lexicon. However, we are also aware that, in that particular context, *John* and *boy* have common semantic reference.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

In what way can you use the association between *John* and *a boy* having the same reference to prove that nouns are not really structurally transformed to pronouns?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have come to discover that pronominalisation and reflexivisation are not part of the generalised transformation in the minimalist framework.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have seen the following:

- Pronouns are selected from the lexicon like other items; they are not products of movement transformations.
- Pronominalisation and reflexivisation are products of Operation Select. They are not structural processes.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain why pronominalisation and reflexivisation are not taken as syntactic processes the way we take passivisation.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Abney, S. (1987). *The English Noun Phrase in its Sentential Aspect*. PhD Dissertation, MIT.

Bhatt, C. Löbel, E. & Schmidt, C. (Eds.). (1989). *Syntactic Phrase Structure Phenomena*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

UNIT 4 MAJOR CP DERIVATIONS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Standard Theory model of TGG has these transformational processes: relativisation, inversion and complementation. In this unit we shall see how CP (Complementiser Phrase) derivation can account for these processes.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- provide systematic steps on how to account for relativisation, complementation, and inversion in minimalist program; and
- draw and label tree diagrams of constructions representing these processes.

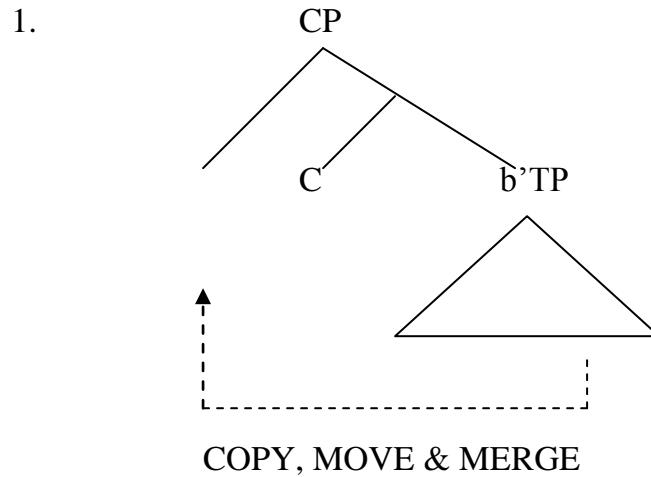
HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

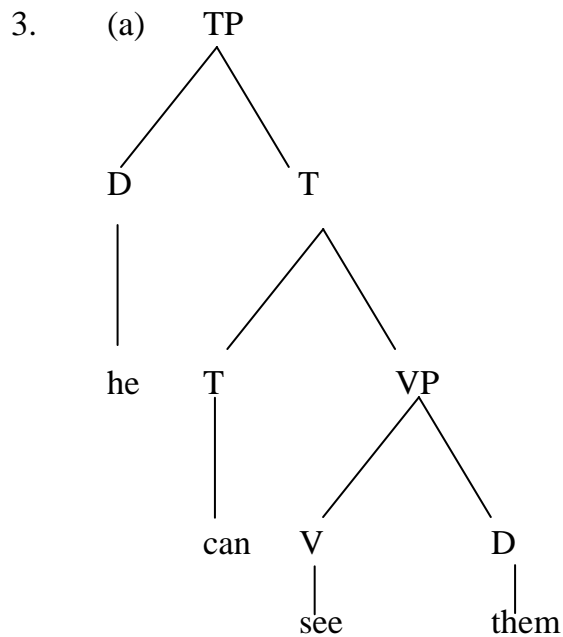
3.1 Wh-Movement

This is a syntactic process that involves copying an item out of the TP and moving and merging it to a slot of another tree headed by a functional category element called complementiser. See this in (1) below.

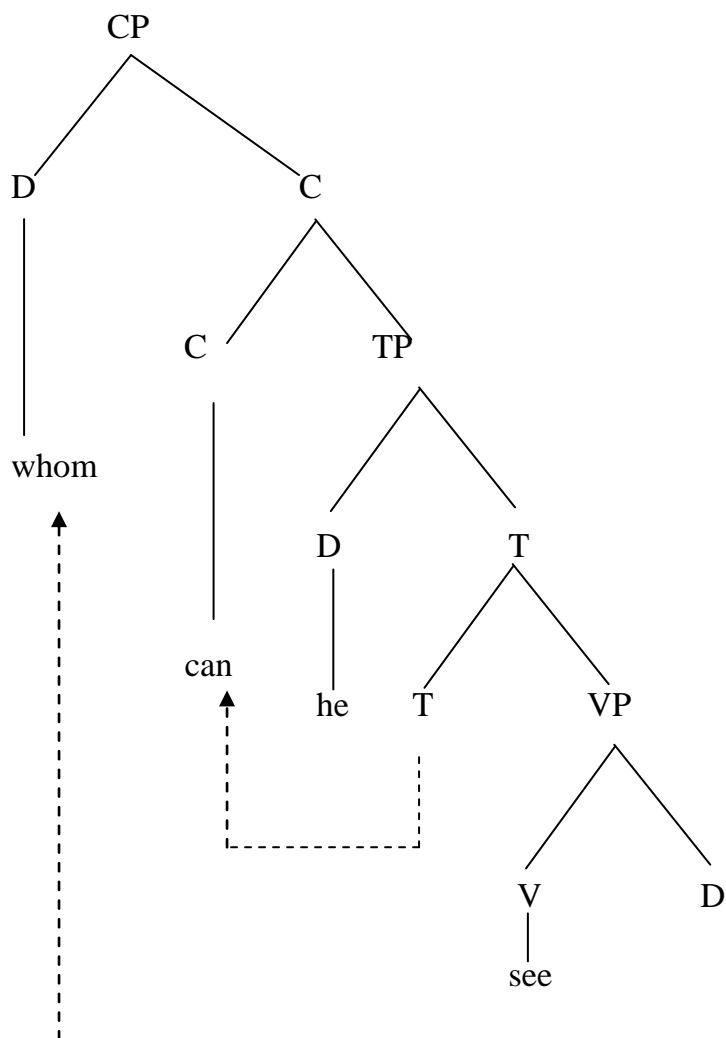


The phrase derived by this movement is usually called Complementiser Phrase (CP). A typical wh-movement is exemplified below.

- 2. (a) He can see them
- (b) Whom can he see?



4.



The movement of ‘can’ from T to C is popularly known in TGG as head to head movement because each node is a head position. T is the head of TP, and C is the head of the CP. The wh-movement on the other hand, usually moves items into the wh-position where we place ‘whom’ in the diagram above.

Wh-movement is usually used in the formation of wh-questions such as shown below.

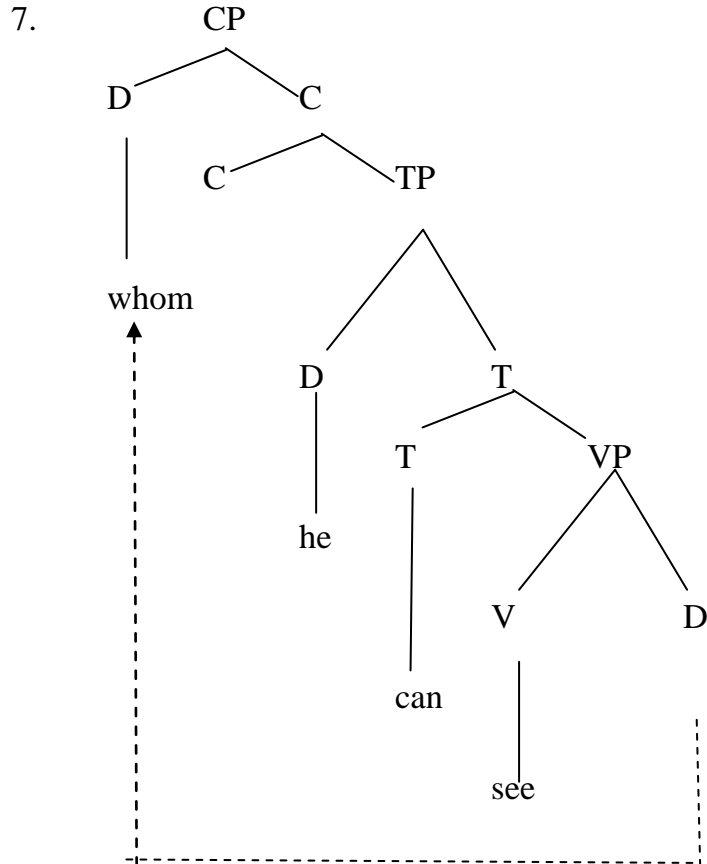
- 5
- (a) what can you see?
 - (b) what do you see?
 - (c) who are you?
 - (d) why did you sing?

3.2 Relativisation

This is a wh-movement that produces a relative clause. The process differs from that of wh-questions in the following ways: First, the CP (complementiser phrase) is further used in the syntax as a clausal adjective to modify a noun.

Second, the CP does not involve head to head movement.

- 6 (a) He can see them
- (b) the people [whom he can see]



If you compare this CP in (7) with that of wh-question in (4) above, you will discover that while ‘can’ was copied from T to C in a wh-question, it is left in T in a relative construction.

3.3 Complementation

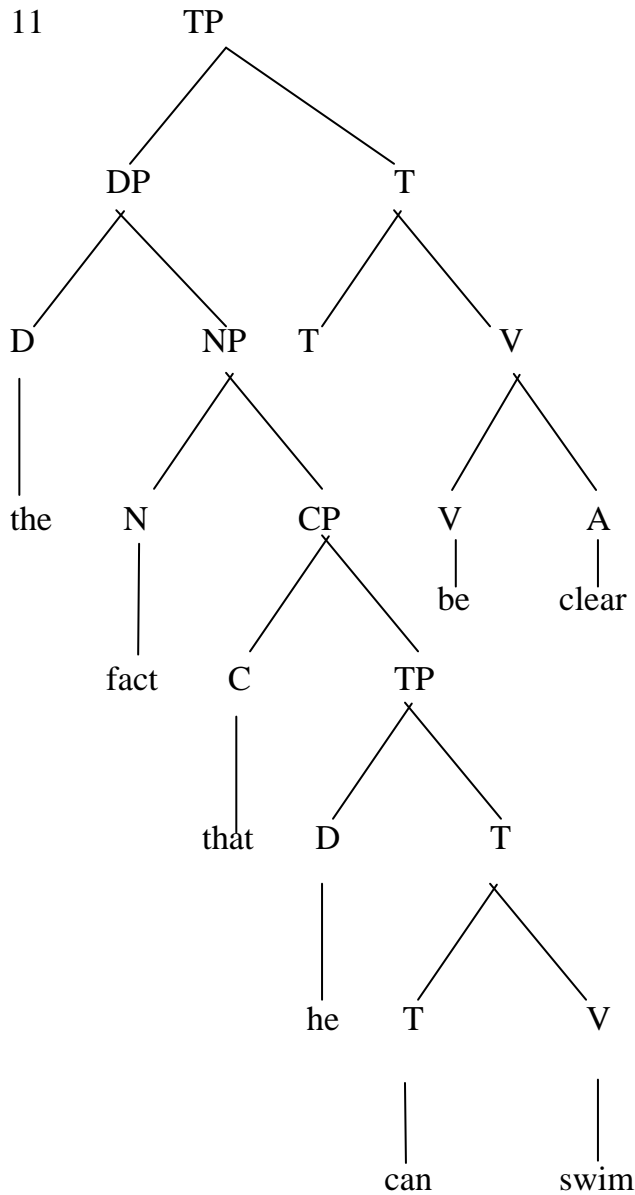
This process is the merging of a CP with a noun. In this case, the CP is serving as a complement clause to the noun.

- 8. The fact that he can swim is clear

The underlined clause above is a complement clause because it is in apposition to the subject ‘the fact’. Note that we can have any of the following as the subject in the sentence in (8) above.

- 9. The fact is clear
- 10. That he can swim is clear.

Since the clause: *'that he can swim'* actually complements *'fact'*, we can conclude that this clause is merged directly with *'fact'* to form a complex noun phrase (NP). Complementation differs from wh-questions construction and relativisation in one respect. The complement clause is not derived by any movement rule. It does not involve any wh-movement.

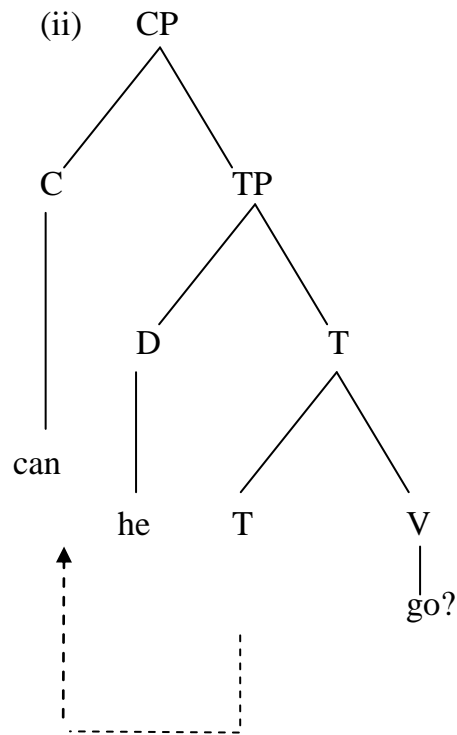
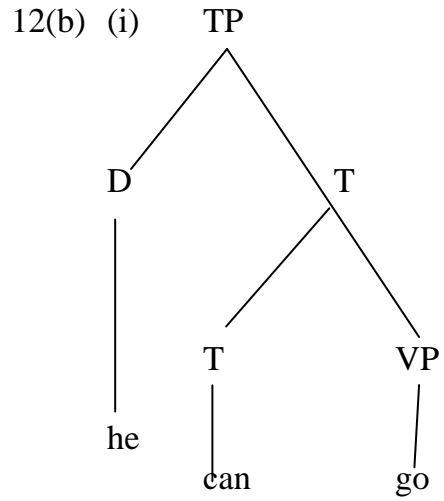


3.4 Auxiliary Inversion in the CP

This inversion moves the auxiliary out of the TP and merged it with the C head to derive a CP. This has been discussed above as head to head movement.

12(a) (i) He can go

(ii) can he go?



SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Tell a colleague why you may support the claim that wh-movement and relativisation are better considered CP derivations.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have seen that wh-movement, relativisation, complementation and inversion are processes that involve CP derivations.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have mentioned these CP derivations:

- wh-movement
- relativisation
- complementation
- inversion

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSESSMENT

1. Illustrate the following with data from English
 - (a) wh-movement
 - (b) relativisation
 - (c) complementation
 - (d) inversion
2. Provide tree diagrams for your data

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Marantz, Alec (1995). "The Minimalist Program." In: Webelhuth, Gert (Ed.). *Government and Binding Theory and the Minimalist Program: Principles and Parameters in Syntactic Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 349-382.

Nunes, Jairo (1995). "The Copy Theory of Movement and the Linearisation of Chains in the Minimalist Program." University of Maryland, at College Park, PhD dissertation.

Radford, Andrew (1997). *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English: A Minimalist Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

UNIT 5 TOPICALISATION IN ENGLISH

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Topicalisation
 - 3.2 Deriving the TopP
 - 3.3 Distinguishing Topicalisation from WH-Movement
 - 3.4 Distinguishing Topicalisation from Adjunct Raising
 - 3.5 Distinguishing Topicalisation from Ergativity
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Topicalisation basically means the emphasis that is placed on the topic of a sentence by positioning it at the beginning of the sentence. In this unit, you will be intimidated with the formal account of topicalisation in the current syntactic theory. Each instance of topicalisation is headed by a functional head called Topic (TOP).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- provide systematic steps on how to account for topicalisation in the Minimalist Program;
- distinguish between topicalisation and similar syntactic operations; and
- draw and label tree diagrams on topicalisation.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Topicalisation

This is a process where an item is placed in the topic position which usually comes before the subject position.

For instance, see (1) below

- (1) (a) I know Nigerians.
- (b) Nigerians, I know them.

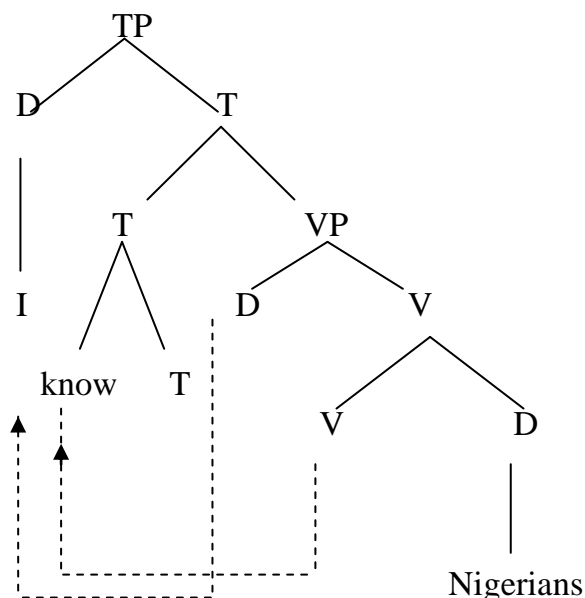
In the (1b) above, *Nigerians* and *them* have common reference. However, while *them* is the object of *know*, its antecedent is occupying a position before the subject of the TP. This position is usually labelled Topic and abbreviated as Top. Hence the structure formed is called Topic Phrase (TopP).

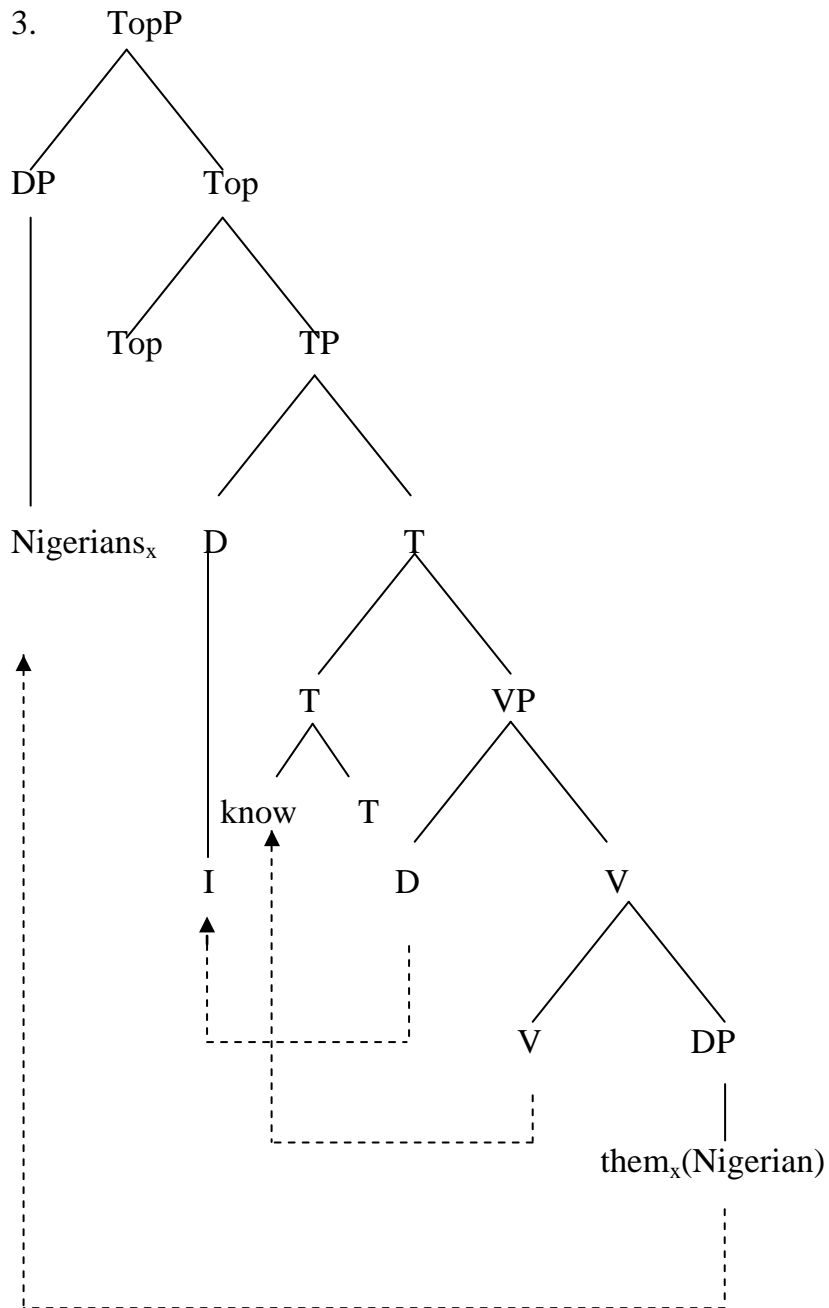
3.2 Deriving the TopP

There are stages in the derivation of the TopP. The first question to ask is: what is the morphosyntactic motivation for this derivation? The derivation of Topic Phrase is actually discourse-driven. This means it is a discourse phenomenon which requires that an item is made prominent in the discourse. However, our concern here is more on the syntactic effect that it has on the structure of English. The instance given in (1) above reveals a syntactic movement of the topicalised item.

Going by our earlier view that pronouns exist in the lexicon, we would be contradicting that position here if we are still claiming that *Nigerians* is transformed to *them*. Rather, we know that the pronoun (*them*) being a grammatical item can be selected from the lexicon along with other items in the derivation since this pronoun has identical semantic feature with the noun (*Nigerians*) which it represents.

2.





N.B. the same subscript (_x) placed on *Nigerian* and *them* shows that the two words are co-indexed (They have the same semantic reference).

3.3 Distinguishing Topicalisation from WH-Movement

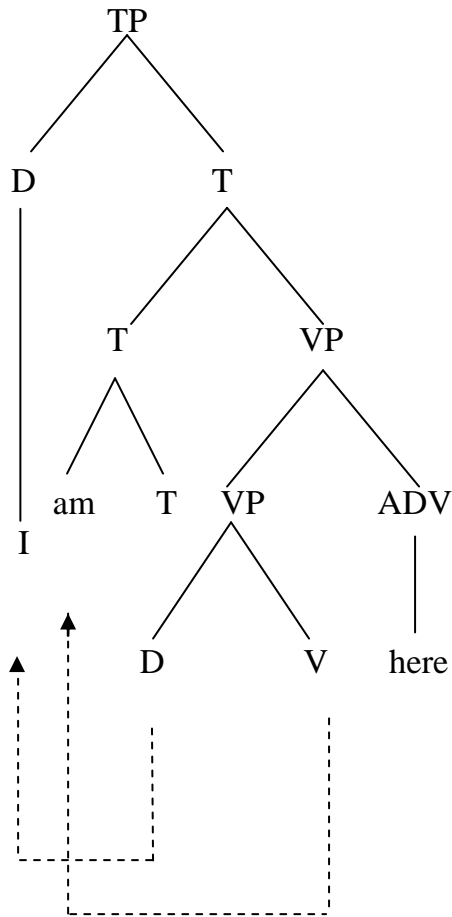
Topicalisation differs from typical wh-movement in some respects. The moved item does not become a wh-word. This item will still be represented as it was before the movement occurred. Another thing is that the initial position of the moved item must be deleted in the PF. This implies that while the topicalised item will appear in the topic position as well as in its initial position (although usually being replaced with a pronoun), the item moved with wh-movement can only appear in the *wh* position. It must not be pronounced again in its initial position.

You can compare diagram 3 in this unit with diagram 4 in unit 4 (in this module).

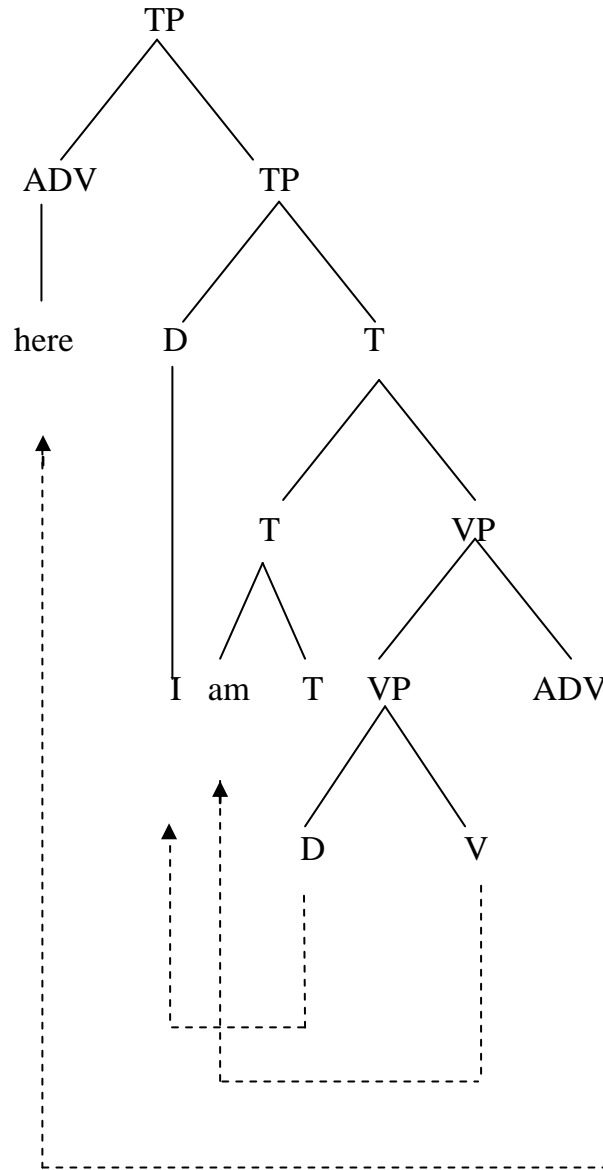
3.4 Distinguishing Topicalisation from Adjunct Raising

It is different from free adverb inversion

- 4. I am here
- 5. Here I am
- 6.



7.



8. Here I am

9. There you are

Note that this is fixed expression that should not necessarily be derived from *you are there*.

3.5 Distinguishing Topicalisation from Ergativity

It is also possible to misconstrue ergativity as topicalisation. Both involve movement, but the moved item of ergative construction targets the subject position within the TP while topicalised item moves out of the TP into the Specifier position of the TopP.

Let us consider the following pair of sentences.

- 10. the door opened.
- 11. the stick broke.

Going by what you have studied under ergativity, you will remember that empty subject position is a feature of an ergative sentence. We can account for this as follows:

- 12. Audu opened the door.
- 13. Ngozi broke the stick.

Since we have established the fact that the subject position is actually vacant, we can propose the following structure for the derivation.

- 13. \emptyset opened the door.
- 14. \emptyset broke the stick.

We can then go ahead to conclude that *the door* and *the stick* are raised into the vacant subject positions rather than being raised into a topic position. This is what is expected in such ergative construction in English.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Topicalisation derives a Topic Phrase. It involves movement out of the TP, but it differs from the typical wh-movement because the lexicon provides an appropriate pronoun for the initial copy of the moved item.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have briefly discussed topicalisation as a derivation of Topic Phrase (TopP). We have also taken the time to distinguish topicalisation from other syntactic processes that may look like it.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

How can you reconcile the claim made under pronominalisation with way the moved item is replaced with a pronoun during topicalisation?

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Using labelled tree diagram, distinguish between topicalisation and

1. ergativity
2. wh-movement
3. adjunct raising
4. Provide tree diagrams for your data (using TopP).

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Marantz, Alec (1995). "The Minimalist Program." In: Webelhuth, Gert (Ed.). *Government and Binding Theory and the Minimalist Program: Principles and Parameters in Syntactic Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 349-382.

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UNIT 6 CLEFTS AND PSEUDO-CLEFTS IN ENGLISH

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Focus constructions
 - 3.2 Clefts
 - 3.3 Pseudo-clefts
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Clefting and pseudo-clefting as transformational processes are considered to be CPs in the earlier version of the Principles and Parameters model. In Minimalist Program, these processes are also treated as Focus Phrase (FocP) a functional phrase. In this unit, we shall see how to account for them.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- provide systematic steps on how to account for clefting and pseudo-clefting in minimalist program; and
- draw and label tree diagrams of clefting and pseudo-clefting structures.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Focus Constructions

Focus Phrase is one of the possible functional phrases in the Minimalist Program. There is a movement to a focus position. We can cite an example of such constructions from Yoruba.

Non-focused

1. Adé jẹ ẹja
Ade eat fish
Ade ate fish

We can decide to focus on the subject, the object or even the verb as follows.

Subject focus

2. Adé ni ó jẹ ẹja
Ade Foc SUB eat fish
it was Ade that ate the fish

Object focus

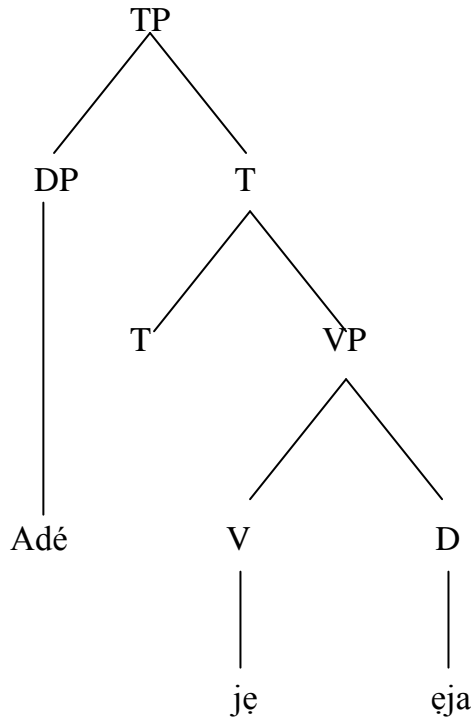
3. Eja ni Ade je
fish Foc Ade eat
It was fish that Ade ate

Verbal focus

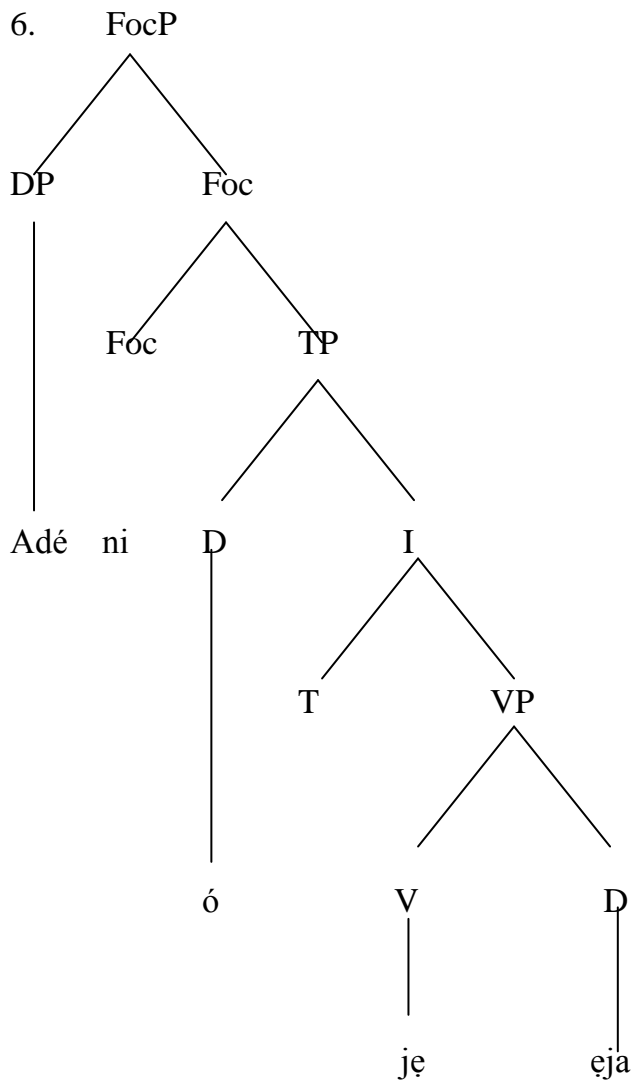
4. Jíjẹ ni Adé jẹ ẹja
eating Foc Ade eat fish
Ade actually ate the fish

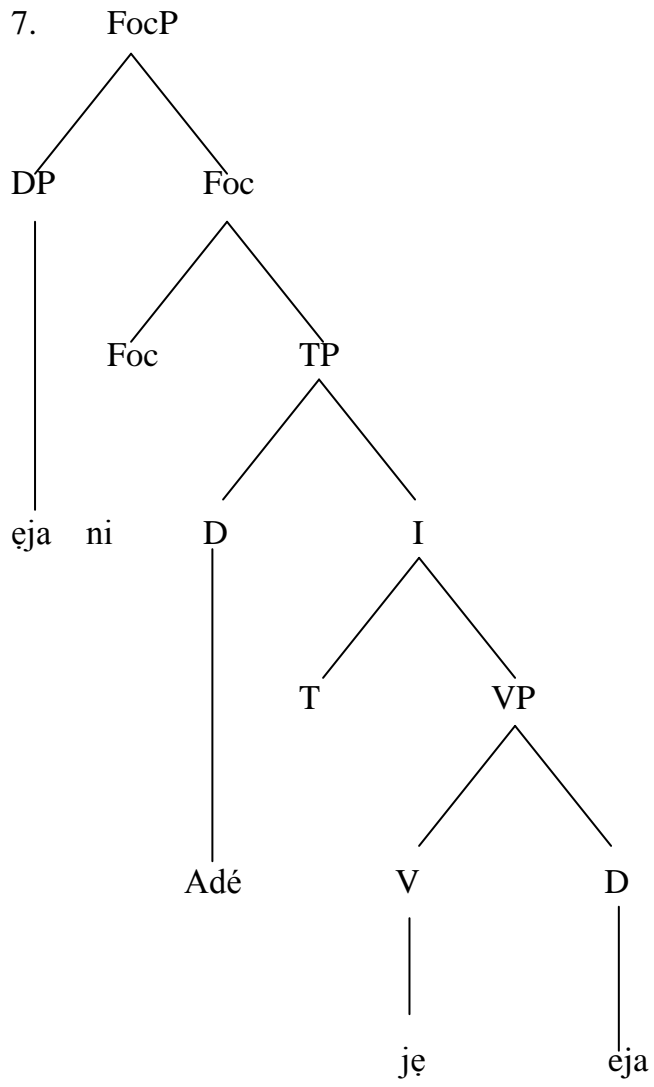
The data in (2) - (4) above shows that the focused items are moved out of the TP to merge with the TP as Specifiers of the phrase. We produce the tree diagrams below. The non-focused structure in (1) is reproduced in (5) below, while those of (2), (3) and (4) are represented in (6), (7) and (8) respectively.

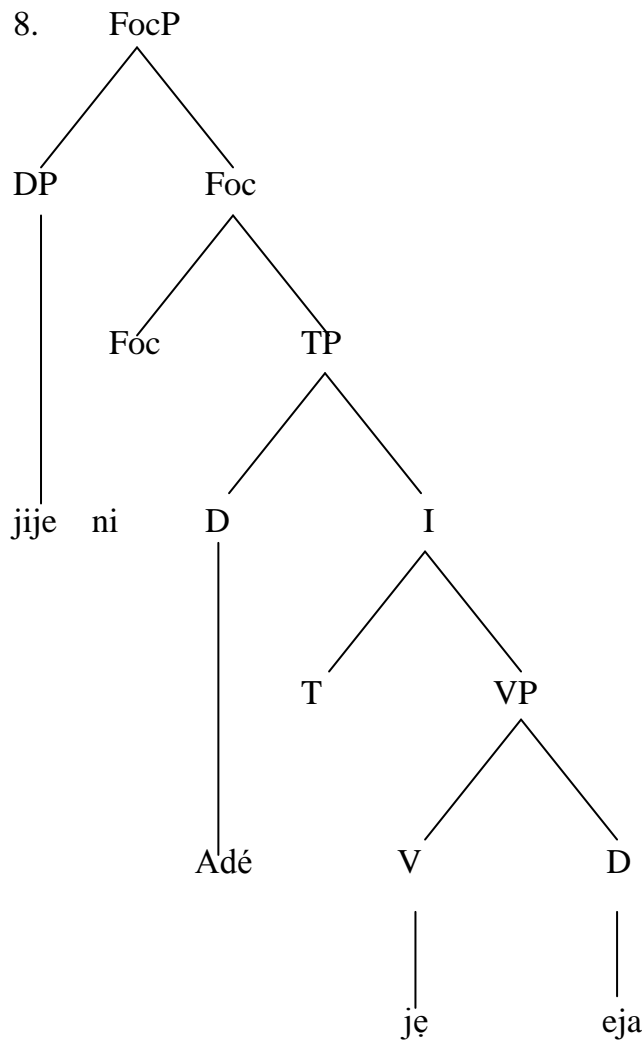
5.



6.





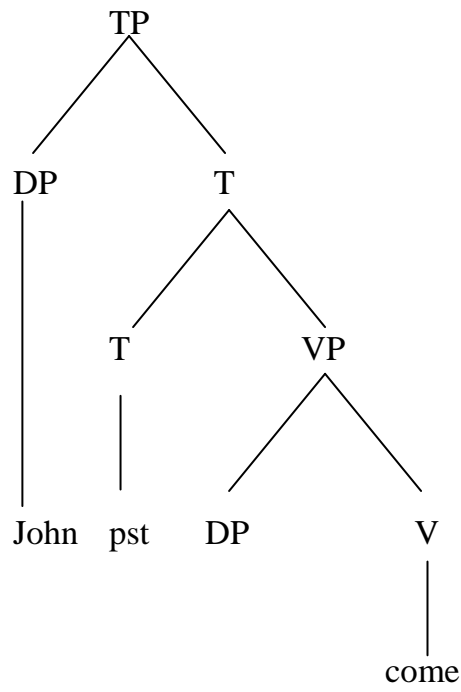


3.2 Clefts

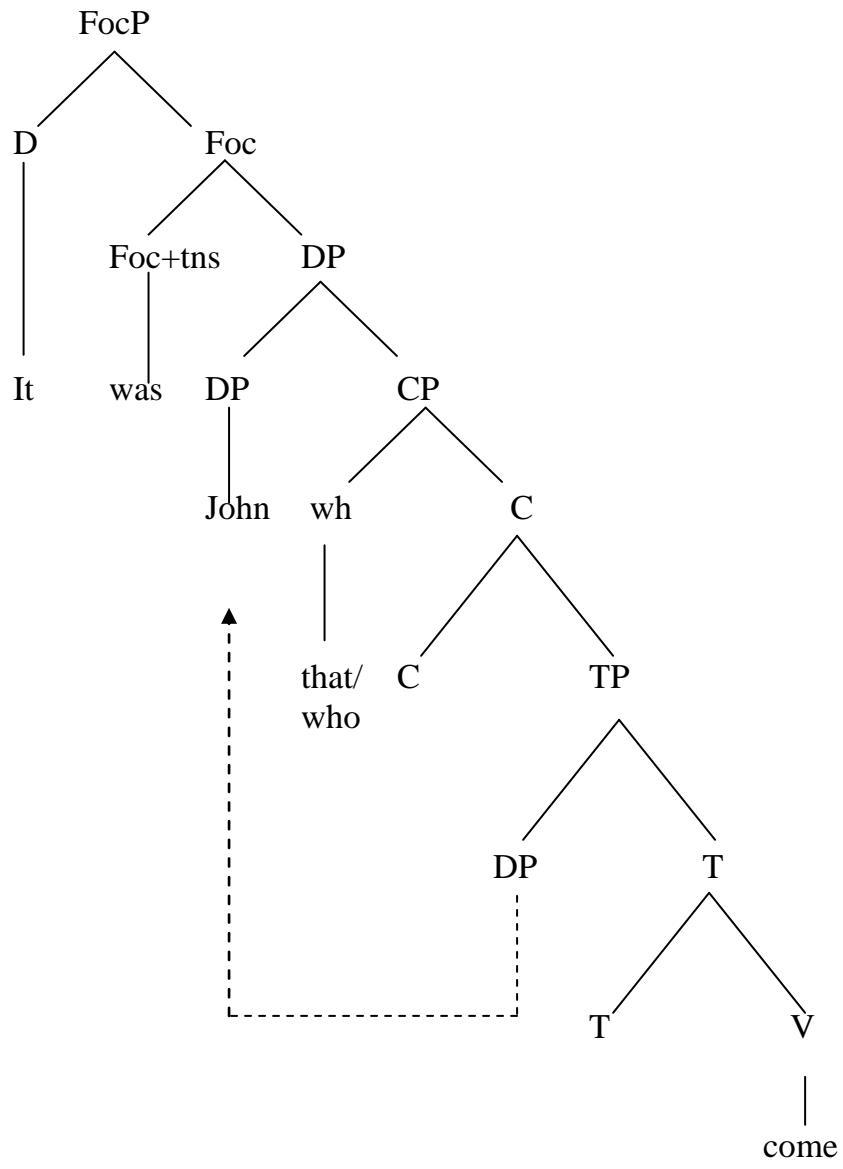
This is a focusing strategy in English, which involves the copying of an item into a focus position where that item is preceded by the focus construction ‘it is or it was’

- 9 (a) John came
 (b) It was John that came

10(a)



10(b)



N.B

What is called Focus Phrase (Foc P) here is also regarded as a sentence in English. Hence, an analysis that is not interested in the transformation may still analyse it as a TP claiming that ‘was’ is the predicator of John.

3.3 Pseudo-cleft

Have you come across a sentence like those in (5) below? They are rare, but they are possible constructions. These are what we call pseudo-clefted sentences. See (11) below:

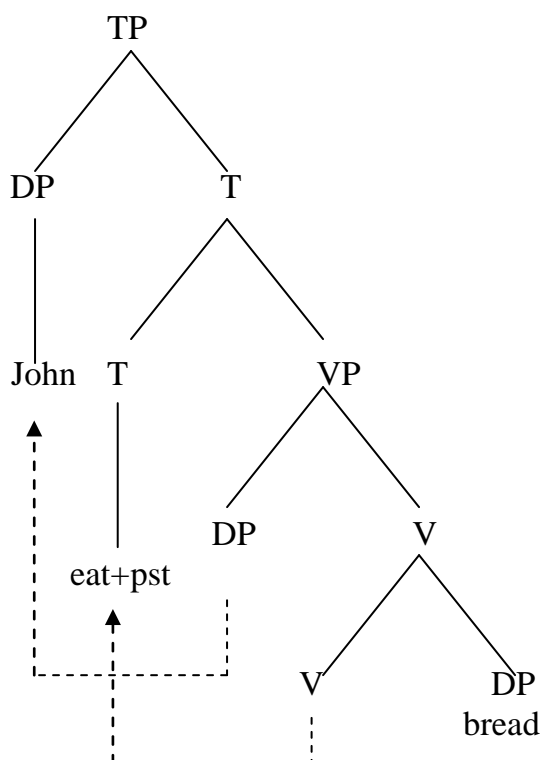
11(a) Who came here was John

Before an item is focused in pseudo-clefts, that particular item has to be queried by putting it in a clausal form. For instance, to use pseudo-clefting focus on *bread* in this sentence ‘*John ate bread*’, while simple clefting focus will simply render it as *it was bread that John ate*, pseudo-clefting will first of all query *bread* as ‘*what John ate*’ before it come up with: *what John ate was bread*.

In conformity with the derivation principle in the Minimalist Program, it is clear that a derivation that involves pseudo-clefting will also involve the selection of a CP that can query the item that undergoes pseudo-clefts focus.

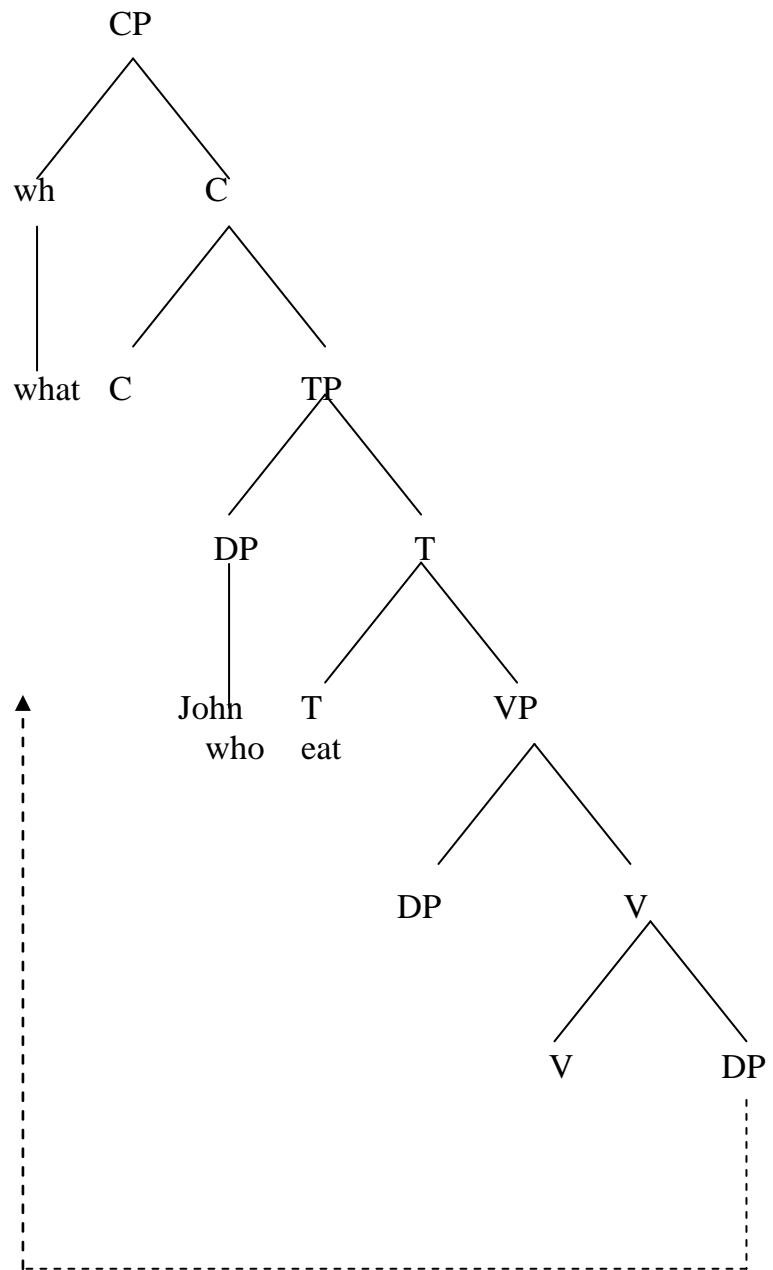
This derivation first selects a TP *John ate bread*.

11(b)



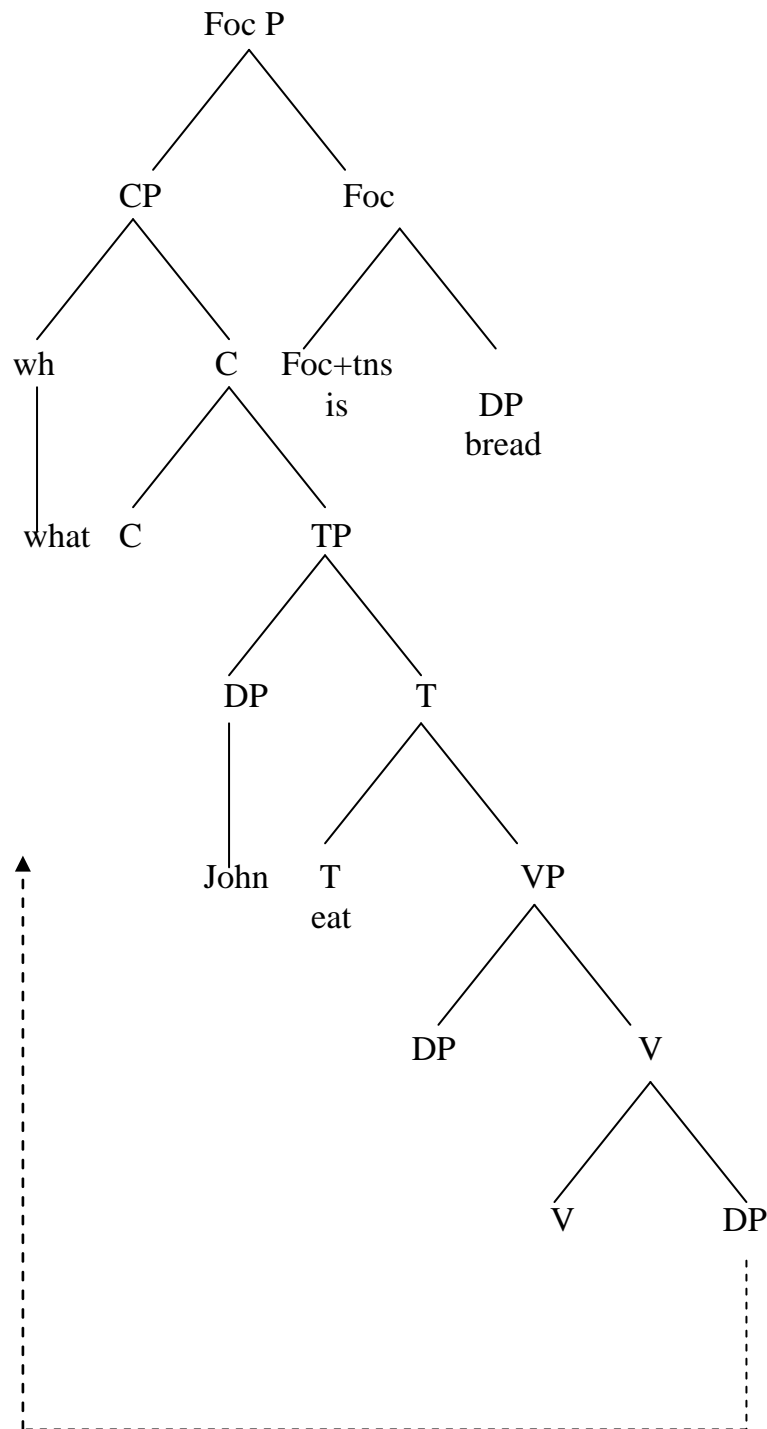
The TP *John ate bread* is later transformed into the CP *what John ate*.

12.



The CP later merges with the focus head to derive *what John eat was bread*.

13.



Take note of what is called Focus Phrase (Foc P) here. It can also be regarded as a sentence. Hence in the derivation of *what John did was to come*, the selection operation will include *come* as well as *what John did / John did what* despite the fact that the verb has common semantic reference with the clause.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

In what way do you think that focus construction in Yoruba differs from the English clefts and pseudo-cleft?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have shown that clefting and pseudo-clefting processes are focus constructions in English. FocP is therefore used for them.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have mentioned these derivations:

- The construction of the focus phrase
- The extension of the FocP analysis to clefts and pseudo-clefts

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain the following with data from English
 - (a) clefting
 - (b) pseudo-clefting
2. ii. Provide tree diagrams for your data (using FocP).

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Chomsky, Noam (1995). *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2.6.3 (154-161), 4.4.5 (272-276), 4.5.3 (286-289), 4.9 (340-348).
- Groat, Erich M. (1995). "English Expletives: A Minimalist Approach." *Linguistic Inquiry*, 26: 354–365.
- Hornstein, David & Hornstein, Norbert (Eds.). (1999). *Working Minimalism*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 27-44.
- Iwakura, Kunihiro (1999). "On the Expletive Construction in English." *English Linguistics*, 16: 1-24.
- Lasnik, Howard (1995). "Case and Expletives Revisited: On Greed and Other Human Failings." *Linguistic Inquiry*, 26: 615-634.

ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

Module 1

Unit 1

Ex. 1. Derivation and representation economy

Ex. 2. Economy of derivation, economy of representation, redundancy in representation, the simplification of x-bar theory in favour of bare phrase structure, removal of levels of representation, eliminating the notion of government, the inclusion of spell-out and derivation by phases.

Unit 2

- (i) array: an unordered list of lexical items selected from the lexicon.
- (ii) Σ : a set of
- (iii) Numeration: list of the selected items from the lexicon.
- (iv) LI: Each lexical item (LI)
- (v) SO: syntactic object

Unit 3

Ex. 1. Spell-out actually denotes a stage in the derivation of structures.

Ex. 2. Stages and Operations in the Derivation

MERGE [gəʊ]: {to move}
MERGE ['aɪ]:{1sg}
MERGE ['kæn]:{be able}
MERGE ['nɒt]:{neg}
DELETE [ɒ]:{}
MERGE [gəʊ]: {to move}
MERGE ['aɪ]:{1sg}
MERGE ['kæn]:{be able}
MERGE ['nɒt]:{neg}
DELETE [ɒ]:{}

MODULE 2

Unit 2.

Greed:

Move only to contribute to personal licensing

(Zwart, 1996:2)

An item will not move unless it has uninterpreted features that can be interpreted in the landing position where it moves to.

Procrastinate:

This is an economy principle that ensures that, during computation, any element that can wait should wait. This simply means that syntactic operations especially movement operations can be delayed only to occur later in the derivation.

Unit 3**To-insertion as a Last Resort**

We can also see the use of *to* particle as last-resort in indicating indirect object in di-transitive constructions. The ill-formed structures above are rescued with the insertion of *to* particle to derive the well-formed structures in (7) and (8) below.

1. He gave it to me
2. He gave the book to me.

Do-insertion as a Last Resort in Polar Questions

In the construction of polar questions in English, the auxiliary verb will be copied and moved out of the TP. Since the subject remains in the TP, the result will be an inversion.

Unit 4

DP construction: Possessive adjective versus possessive pronoun

Reduced clause

The Use of pro form

MODULE 3**Unit 3**

Computation that is feature based.

Unit 4: The trace theory holds that if an item is moved, it will leave behind a copy of itself. This copy is called trace. In GB, the position occupied by a trace is not vacant as a landing position for any other item moved into it.