Fundamentals of Grammar

Structure of the Verb Phrase

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review
forms and meanings of verbs

- Some squid were taking the bait.
- The orca will bite the seal.
- The whale has eaten the krill.
- The whale will have eaten 3 tons of krill by the end of the day.
- The whale had eaten enough and left the scene.
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  - future perfect
- The whale *had eaten* enough and left the scene.
  - past perfect
tense and aspect

Note: not all verbs are inflected for tense or aspect. A verb can appear in its base form (also called the bare infinitive).

- The driver has crashed the car.
- The driver is crashing the car.
- The driver might crash the car.
- *The driver might crashed/ing the car.
infinitives

Definition
An infinitive is a “non-finite” verb. One that is not inflected for tense or aspect.

- English infinitives come in two flavors: bare and to-marked
  - She will leave (= bare infinitive)
  - She wants to leave (= to-infinitive)

- Modal verbs are always finite!
  - they are always in complementary distribution with a finite verb
    Compare:
    - She will leave
    - She has left
    - *She will has left.

- they can never be to-marked as infinitival
  - *She wants to can drink soda again.
  - She wants to be able to drink soda again.
verb form summary

verb forms

finite

modals
- can
- could

present
- 3rdSing
- else

past
- -ed
- irregs

infinitives
- bare
- to-

aspect-marked
- pres part
- past part

(Cf. Table 5.5 Lobeck pg. 121)
Syntax for VP

An early attempt at a PSR for VP:

- slept
- shot an elephant
- shot [an elephant] [with a camera]
- sang [in the shower]

$$VP \rightarrow V \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{(NP)} \\ \text{(PP)} \end{array} \right\} \text{(PP)}$$
recursivity in VP

But we can modify the previous examples:

- slept
  - has slept

- shot an elephant
  - will shoot an elephant

- shot [an elephant] [with a camera]
  - had shot [an elephant] [with a camera]

- sang [in the shower]
  - was singing [in the shower]

For now, we can add a second (recursive) VP rule to the grammar:

$$VP \rightarrow V \ (VP)$$

...but we need a theory of which verbs can go through which rule.
accounting for Aux

In the previous example, the verb which went through the recursive rule was always one of the grammatical verbs. We can rewrite our S rule along these lines:

Next, some syntactic evidence for this distinction.
motivating Aux

- negation
- do-support
- not-contraction
- subject-aux inversion
- tag questions
evidence for aux negation

VP negation

The position of *not* in sentential negation is after the first auxiliary (Aux!).

Example

- the boy *has (not) kicked* the ball
- the boy *will (not) kick* the ball
- the boy *was (not) kicking* the ball
- *the boy not has kicked* the ball
What about when more than one auxiliary occurs:

- the boy will (not) have kicked the ball
- the boy has (not) been kicking the ball

we need to refer to the first auxiliary in order to account for the position of NEG.
evidence for aux
negation

The position for NEG ...

S

NP

Aux

has

not

kicked the ball

...between Aux and the VP.
How do we negate sentences without an overt auxiliary?

- the boy kicked the ball
  - the boy did not kick the ball
  - *the boy not kicked the ball
  - *the boy kicked not the ball

We must insert a ‘dummy’ or pleonastic auxiliary (do/does/did).
Pleonastic *do* takes the tense of the main verb.

- The boy kicks the ball. (*pres*)
  - The boy does not kick the ball.
- The girl *went* to school. (*past*)
  - The girl did not go to school.
Observe that sometimes not can be contracted to n’t

- We can not leave yet → We can’t leave yet.
- We are not leaving yet → We aren’t leaving yet.
- We have not left yet → We haven’t left yet.

but not contraction only occurs after the first aux!

- We could have [not left early]
- *We could haven’t left early.
What about sentences without an overt auxiliary?

- we left early
- *we leftn’t early
- *wen’t left early

The solution: apply do-insertion, then contract.

- we did not leave $\rightarrow$ we didn’t leave
evidence for aux
subject-aux inversion

We form yes-no questions by moving the AUX around the subject NP.

- we should leave tomorrow
  - should we leave tomorrow?
- we are leaving at 6:00.
  - are we leaving at 6:00?
- Elvis has left the building.
  - has Elvis left the building?
If there is more than one auxiliary, we only move the first one (the one in Aux!).

- I could have been a contender.
- could I have been a contender?
- *could have been I a contender?
evidence for aux
subject-aux inversion

If there is no Aux:
- We ate lunch.
- *ate we lunch?

Solution: apply do-insertion, then do SAI
- We ate lunch.
- we did eat lunch.
- did we ____ eat lunch?
evidence for aux
subject-aux inversion

Aside: SAI also provides evidence for NPs:

\[
S \rightarrow NP \rightarrow Aux \rightarrow VP
\]

all the king’s horses and all the king’s men

should

leave
Aside: SAI also provides evidence for NPs:

\[ S \]

\[ \text{Aux} \]

\[ \text{should} \]

\[ \text{NP} \]

\[ \text{all the king’s horses and all the king’s men} \]

\[ \text{VP} \]

\[ \text{leave} \]
evidence for phrases
tag question formation

Tag questions are often used at the end of statements to ask for confirmation.

▶ It is getting cold out here, isn’t it?
▶ You are going too, aren’t you?
Procedure to generate tag questions:

1. copy AUX and pronominalized subject to end of sentence
2. invert polarity

If there is more than one Aux ...

▶ She has been studying, hasn’t she?
...only copy the first one (the one in the Aux position)
If there is no Aux:

- You study linguistics, don’t you?

...invoke do-support
phrase structure for aux

S → NP (Aux) VP (where Aux= tensed auxiliary or modal)
VP → V NP

We are eating mushroom pizza
phrase structure for aux

\[ S \rightarrow NP \ (Aux) \ VP \] (where Aux= tensed auxiliary or modal)

\[ VP \rightarrow V \ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} VP \\ NP \end{array} \right\} \]
summary of evidence for auxiliary

- Aux position is between Subject NP and VP
- in negation
  - not is inserted after the first (tensed) Aux
  - not can only be contracted with first (tensed) Aux
- to form yes/no questions, move (tensed) Aux before Subject NP
- in tag questions, copy first (tensed) Aux to the end of the sentence

In each of these operations, when no over auxiliary is there, insert do