

Week 11: Making Noun Clauses, Gerunds, and Infinitives

1. Noun clauses fill in NP slots.

That-clauses can appear in almost any position that an NP can appear: a subject or an object:

- (1) That Homer loves donuts is known to all
- (2) Everyone knows that Homer loves donuts

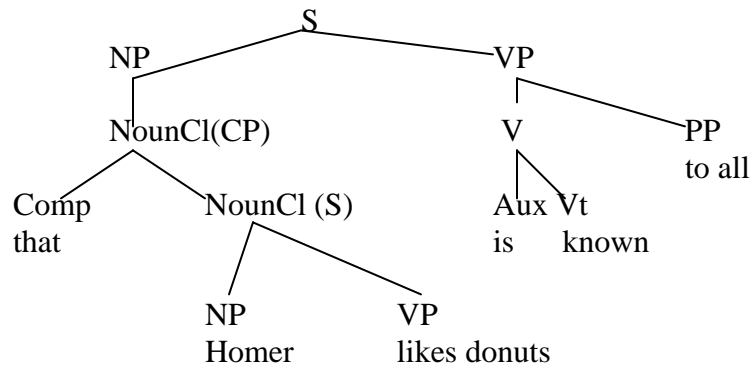
The complementizer ‘that’ introduces a Noun Clause, which we can refer to as a CP = Complementizer Phrase

The complementizer ‘that’ is often referred to as a subordinator – a subordinate conjunction.

However, we may refer to it as ‘Comp’ to make things easier and retain some continuity from previous material.

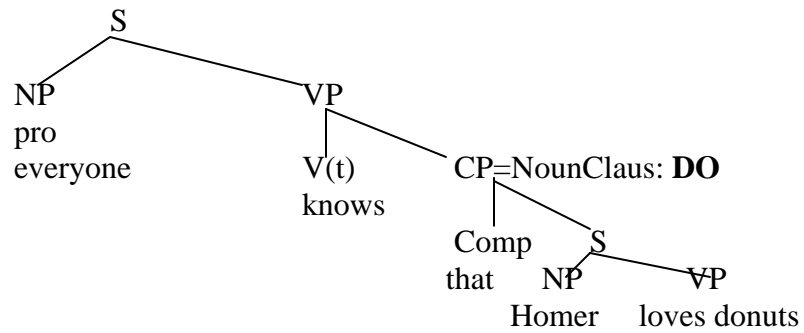
Here is the structure for (1)

(3)



Here is the structure for (2)

(4)



That-clauses can also function as predicate nouns:

(5) The problem is that many people cut class

(6) TREE for (5) – in class!

→ Remember!! There is an important difference between a noun clause such as that-clause in (4) and a relative clause. A relative clause is inside of the NP, it does NOT fill the NP slot!

(7) The man *that arrived late* said **that Homer loves donuts**

Structure for (8) in Class:

(9) –

2. Extraposition

(10) That Homer loves donuts is known to us

(11) It is known to us that Homer loves donuts

The CP = NounClause is moved to the right and its position is filled by ‘it’

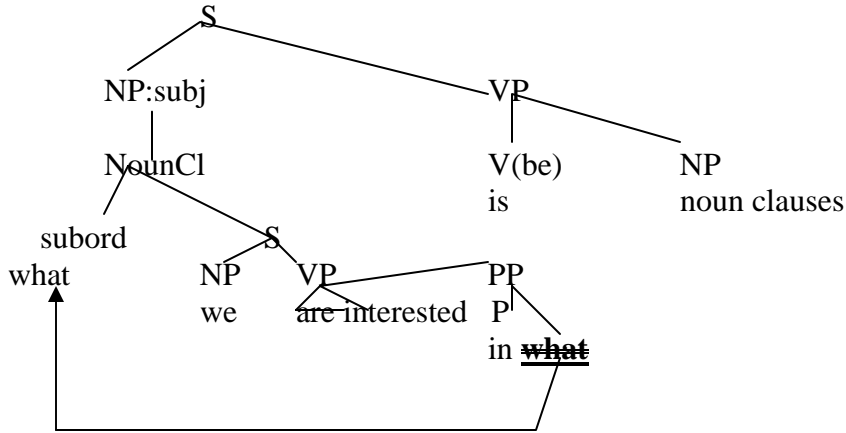
Some CPs must extrapose: *That Homer eats donuts is rare vs. It is rare that H. eats donuts

3. Wh-subordination

(12) What we are interested in is noun clauses and gerunds

→ The “wh” word here is actually a regular question word. The above sentence has the following derivation:

(13) We are interested in ~~WHAT~~



→ wh-clauses are thus related to questions

4. Other complementizers.

In addition to the comp. "That" we saw in (1) and (2), there are also interrogative complementizers such as "if" and "whether".

(14) The instructor asked whether the material was clear

(15) We are wondering if you have finished your homework

TREES for (14) and (15) in class!

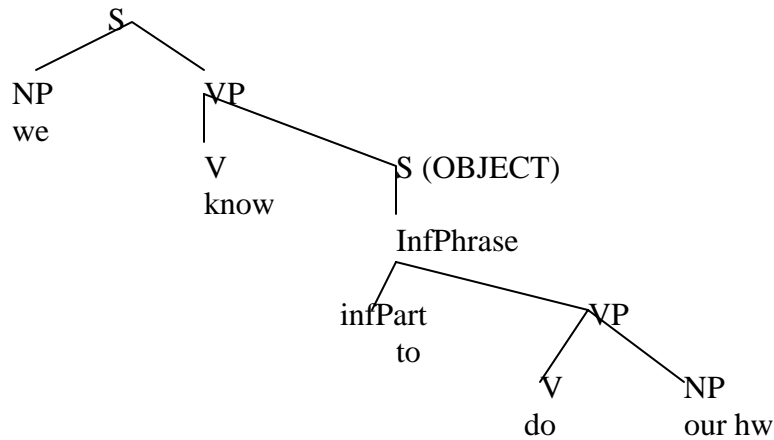
5. Reducing noun clauses to infinitival clauses

(16) We know that we should do our hw on time

(17) We know to do our hw on time

→ the infinitival "to" is the same infinitival particle you saw before. Now, it appears in a clause that fills the NP slot:

(18)_



→ infinitival clauses without “to” are bare VPs:

(19) The teacher will let you use your notes on the test

TREE for (19)

6. For-to infinitives

→ The relationship between ‘for-to’ infinitives and infinitival clauses is very close: a for-to infinitive is an infinitival clause + a complementizer ‘for’ [here I depart from the book, but I think this way of explaining things is easier! Feel free to follow the book, though]

→ So, we know we have a complementizer ‘that’, we also have the interrogative comps ‘whether’ and ‘if’. Now, we add another comp to their midst: the complementizer ‘for’. It exists in those infinitival clauses that have an overt subject. Compare:

(20) To submit the hw on time would be important

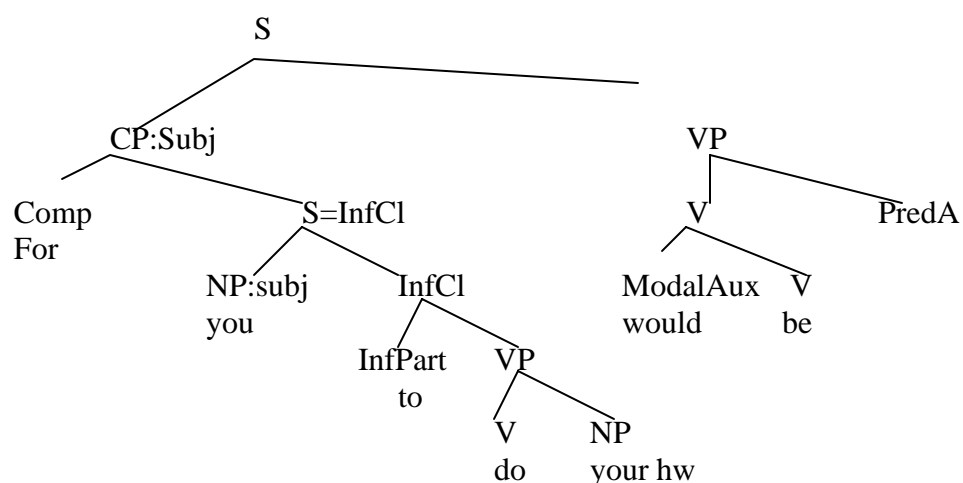
Here the underlined phrase is an infinitival clause, but ‘to submit’ does not have a subject. Now, look at (21)

(21) For you to submit the hw on time would be important

Notice, you cannot use the subject in an infinitival clause unless you also have the ‘for’

(22) * You to submit the hw on time would be important

Here is how we diagram (21)



It is minimally different from (20). In (20), the ‘for’ would be missing and ‘you’ would also have to be absent.

7. Infinitives as adverbial modifiers

→ Some infinitival phrases function as adverbs, not as subjects or objects.

(23) You must attend class in order to learn all of the material

(24) You must attend class to learn all of the material

“in order” can be omitted resulting in an InfPhrase that modifies the VP “attend class”. It is an adverb of reason here

→ The text book parses “in order to” as a unit –a subordinator - but another option is to treat ‘in order’ as a subordinator and ‘to’ as an infinitival particle, the same one we see in all other InfPhrases.

8. Gerunds

Gerunds are intransigent little beasts. They are nouns that have many characteristics of verbs, making them quite elusive for a grammarian to capture properly

Here are some examples:

(25) Talking in class annoys me

(26) We resisted writing another quiz so soon

All of these Verb+ING forms function as NOUNS!!! They occupy the regular NP positions: subject, object, object of preposition:

(27) You are not going to talk me into doing your assignment for you!

The internal structure of a gerund involves a verb; it could be a VL, Vt, Vi, Vg, or V[be]

(28) Being an idiot is Homer’s main job

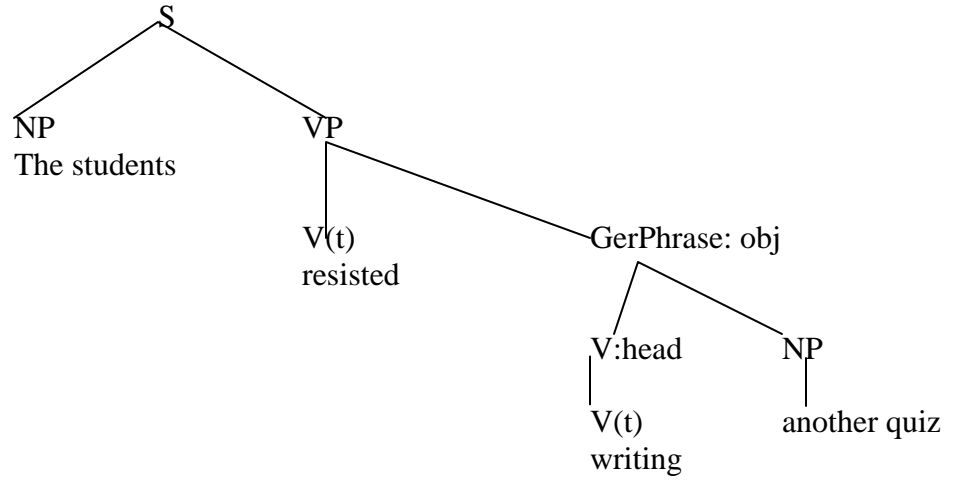
→ Sometimes, the verb involved in the gerund even has a subject! This subject must have genitive or accusative case. There is a very subtle difference between the two :

(29) John’s/ your constant talking in class is very aggravating!

(30) John talking in class is what I hate the most!

Here is a structure for a gerund phrase

(31)



The GerPhrase in the above structure is a direct object, but it also contains a verb! It is headed by a verb. (I am simplifying the structure in the book)