Language and Mind
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Module - 07
Lecture - 32
Sentence
CP in Subjects and Object Positions

Let us look at one more aspect of sentence. Now we are looking at processes operating at underlying levels of representation for us to see patterns underlying sentences. First, we have understood sentences categorically; we have tried to look at its parts and an agreement which connects the two parts to make a sentence. So, we have looked at parts of sentences, and we have looked at elements that are responsible for making a sentence. Having looked at those things, we started looking at one more aspect of sentence which is going to help us look deeper; and when we started looking deeper into sentences, we saw that the patterns that are underlying sentences and help us go further deep at one more level of depth where certain processes are operating in a sentence.

Two things that we have seen so far are: displacement and cases assignment. For both, we have seen evidence that an element from one position moves to another in the case of displacement, and in the case of cases, we have seen that heads like verbs and prepositions merely assigned accusative or objective cases to their complement NPs, which in a way guarantees grammaticality of a sentence in terms of case assignment.

Remember, there is a requirement at the level of sentence that every noun phrase in a sentence must be case assigned. This requirement takes place at one more level of representation, which is deeper level, which is sometimes also called deep structure, and then we see that heads really assign cases to their complements, which in turn gives us grammatical structures, grammatical sentences.

Then we looked at evidence of displacement where we see that one element goes to another and we need to account for that. When an element moves to another position it goes out of IP. So we brought in an idea of CP to capture such a movement; and then we could see that this operation also takes place at another level of mental representation. Not only it takes place, but we saw that it has strong compulsions, strong motivations to go through that. That is, certain elements in a sentence at very deep level of

representation of sentences in human mind, can be recognized as elements, are compelled to undergo displacement. We will look at complementizer phrase in subject and object positions. We have discussed a lot about complementizer phrases and its node, how it came into picture, we postulated this thing to describe and explain movement of NP from one place to the other. We have seen the displacement and we have looked at other descriptions and motivations for movement, but at this point we want to bring in and include a discussion on CP as the subject or the object.

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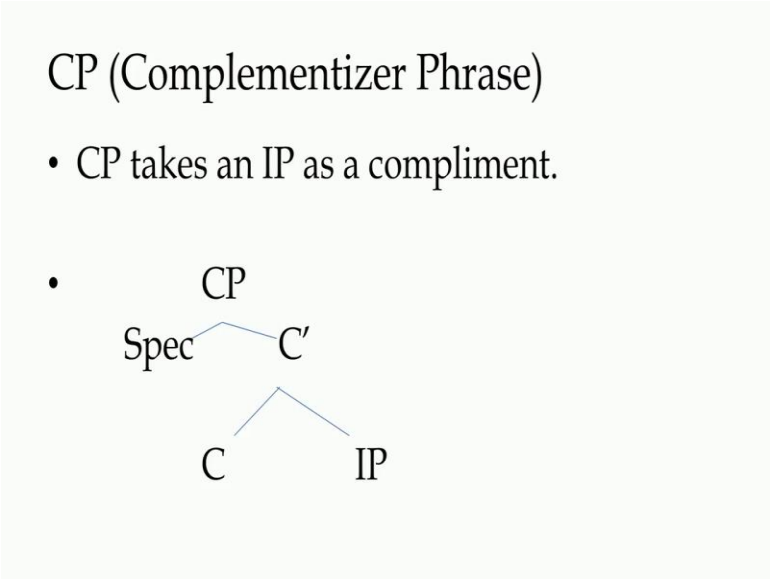

So, this was the complementizer phrase. The complementizer phrase that you see on the screen right now is the complementizer phrase where the complement takes IP as it's… complementizer takes the whole IP as its complement and this disguised displacement. Please note the two terms: complementizer and complement; these are two different things. So, complementizer is the head of the complementizer phrase CP, and the complement is a relation; that is, IP is the complement C.

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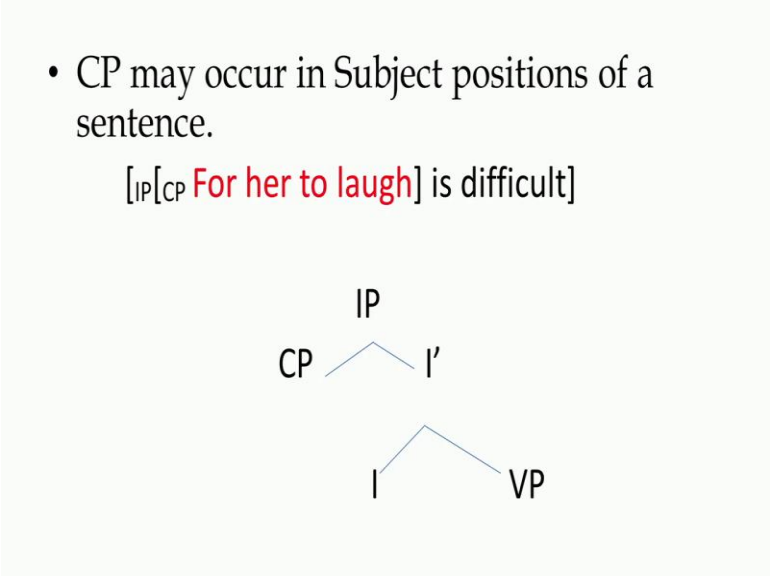

Then, we will be discussing how it comes in different positions where we have CP in the subject position and then we are going to be looking at in this screen CP, and also be part of the object; that is, CP can surface in the object position as well. So, we have seen motivations for movement where we have established that there are more reasons than one why elements must move. In this kind of a structure, we argued that the whole IP becomes the complement of C; therefore… and this, such a thing can help us account for and explain WH sentences; in other words, interrogative sentences for languages like English. It helps understand WH questions and interrogative sentences in many languages.

We now need to understand that IP can be complement of a C, but it is not necessary that that is the configuration that is always going to work. We can find CPs in the subject position; we can also find CPs in the object positions of a V. Now, how does this work? We need not… we do not need to spend too much time in this part. But I do want you to understand this part for a better understanding of the thing that we postulated as CP; and in turn, it also helps us understand couple of other issues which are related in understanding the underlying patterns.

Let us, let us see examples to see these things. How does it help us understand the underlying patterns in sentences? Look at the notion of subject. When we look at a subject, lot of times we get tempted to conclude that nouns are subjects, and like I have

mentioned before that we have not made an attempt to define a subject; rather, we have tried to underline situations wherever we need it to describe the subject. So far you have seen - not only single words are subjects; we have seen many instances where our canonical sentence that we have been looking at - John likes pizza, 'John' is the subject of the sentence. When we saw a situation where we had a phrase as the subject of the sentence; when we saw examples like - Students of physics like pizza, 'Students of physics' is an NP, is a larger NP, is a heavier NP, which is in the subject position of a sentence. And this is why also we are saying that what these things help us understand is the position of a sentence, in a sentence. So in that case, again, 'students of physics' can be captured by the notion of NP and we know that that NP gets projected in the specifier position of an IP.

Now here, I want you to see an example where you find that an NP, the spec of an IP gets a CP, because sometimes we have a subject in a sentence for which we can postulate only CP. Now, how does this work? Let us spend a moment here. Here, what is the subject of this sentence? The sentence is: 'For her to laugh is difficult' – it is a pretty simple sentence; a grammatical English sentence.

See the structure of the sentence. It is an IP where, 'for her to laugh' is the subject, appears to be in the subject position, and 'is difficult' is the predicate. It is pretty easy to describe this predicate. We do not want to spend too much time on that. But how do you describe 'for her to laugh' as a CP? For this, for us to understand this part, we need to look at this CP, where very briefly I want to argue that within the CP, we have an IP; that is, there is another sentence within this IP. That is, 'her to laugh'; 'her' is the subject of that IP, and then 'to laugh' is the predicate of that IP.

And this predicate is non finite predicate where there is no in fill; and then within that IP, the Spec of that IP is occupied by 'her', but that 'her' is getting an accusative case. Where does this get an accusative case from, and for that it needs to bring in a preposition 'for' which is going to assign it an objective case. So, we cannot simply say: 'her to laugh is difficult'; we have to say: 'for her to laugh is difficult', because we need a preposition to assign an accusative case to this NP 'her', and then it combines with a non-finite predicate 'to laugh'; and then, together it becomes a CP which gets projected in the specifier of IP position of this simple sentence – 'For her to laugh is difficult'.

Now, having understood what we have described so far as part of the structure of sentence, as part of motivation of several movements and several processes underlying the patterns… Let me repeat this again. I invite you to check this sentence on the level of the discussions in this course.

We have looked at the structure of sentence; we have looked at the structure of phrases where we have argued for a sentence as a phrase. Then we have looked at underlying structure of those phrases. Then we have argued for processes taking place at those underlying levels of mental representations as part of our understanding of patterns underlying sentences.

And now on the basis of all these things, I want you to help yourselves describe the sentence where I have given you everything, and as at the structure also, I am giving you the template that in the specifier of this IP that you see on the screen is a CP, which takes the whole sentence 'for her to go' within it; and then you have 'is difficult'. Describe this thing and then help us understand, help yourself understand how this sentence is projected. I will simply give you a small demonstration on the screen, on the board, and then we will move to the next part

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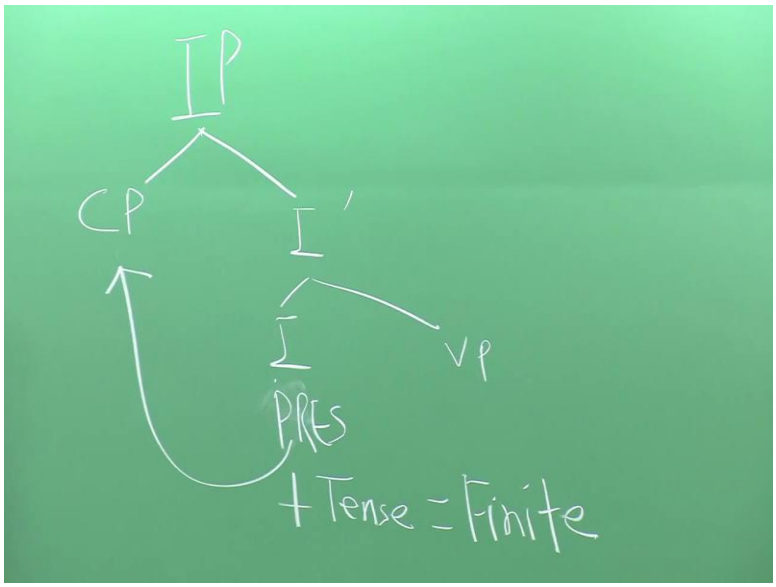

What we are saying is, here is an IP. Keep in mind a sentence; and we are saying, this has an 'I' where we have present tense 'is' and then you have got 'is difficult'. So, here

you have present tense and then in VP you have the predicate ‘is difficult’; not going to elaborate on this point.

I am interested in this part. Here is the specifier position of this subject and my argument is, at this position we have a CP, and that CP is the subject that you see in the red – ‘for her to laugh’, because this whole CP gets nominative case from this present which is finite ‘I’. Let me explain this term. Finite simply means plus tense; plus tense is finite. So, when we say non-finite, we mean no tense, that is minus tense.

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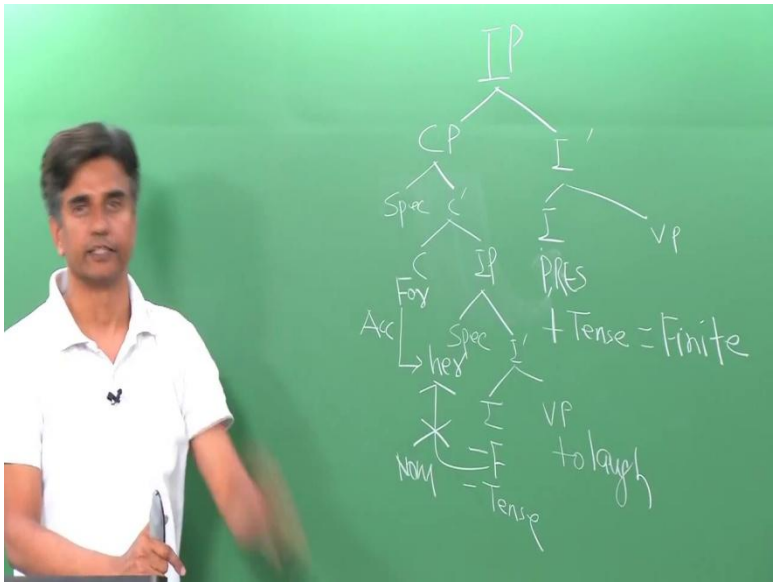

So remember this thing. We are saying, this CP is getting case from this ‘I’. Now it could potentially get a nominative case, but this ‘I’ will assign nominative case to what? In this CP here, you have… How does this happen? How does this get projected? You have spec, you have C bar, then you have C, and then you have an IP. Then this IP is…again, specifier, I bar, and then you have I, and then VP. In the specifier position here, you have ‘her’ and this IP… this VP is ‘to laugh’; and thus this is a non-finite IP, which is minus tense. Because this is minus tense, so this does not assign nominative case.

This far is fine, but this appears to be getting an accusative case. How does this happen that this one gets an accusative case? We see that, and the reason why we are saying this whole thing as a complementizer phrase, this can only be explained if we postulate a preposition in this place and allow this preposition to assign accusative case to this NP.

And thus we say – ‘For her to laugh is difficult’; and only then we can describe this sentence.

Please check every bit of the detail that I have given you here in the light of the discussions that we have had so far. It constitutes, it brings you to a point where you need to understand cases, you need to understand phrasal structure, and you need to bring in your understanding for every part of the sentence that we need to do in order to understand the IP; that is the sentence on the screen.

Now, the idea of this thing was simply for you to see that CP can also be a part of a subject. So, remember where we started? A subject can be a very small noun phrase like ‘John’; a subject can also be a noun phrase like ‘students of physics’; a subject can be as complicated as a CP, which you see how it works.

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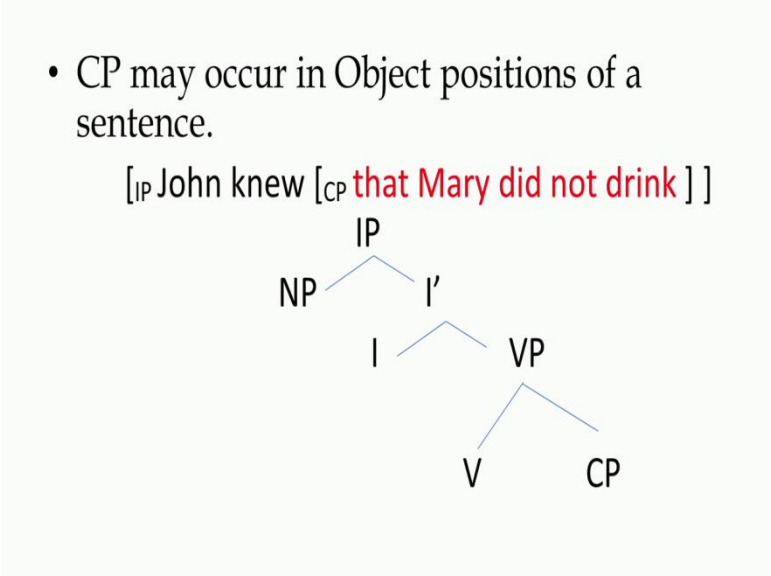

So, all kinds of phrases can be part of subject. Still, I am not giving a comprehensive description or definition of a subject. I am only pointing to you the elements that can occur in subject position. Moving on to our discussion, I want you to understand that a CP can also be in object position. We have looked that the verb ‘knew’ when we were looking at categorical selections; and we at that time, we concluded that the verb ‘know’ can get an indicative as its complement.

Here in the sentence, you know, you see a sentence. Here on the screen, you see a sentence which is – 'John knew that Mary did not drink'. Now, the verb 'know' takes the whole thing – 'that Mary did not drink' as a complement, which we said is an indicative sentence. This whole indicative sentence is a complement of the verb 'know'. This whole thing can only be described with CP, and therefore, we are saying that the complement of the V is a CP. Now, please understand that CPs can be in the subject position; CPs can also be in the object position.

I want you to do this exercise on your own by projecting the CP fully to understand the position of 'that' in this CP, and then the position 'Mary' and whole VP 'did not drink', and how each of these elements get projected in the IP. Start with the CP, which is the complement position, which is in the complement position of the V. Project everything that is there in the red; indicate where C comes in, what is filled with C. And then the whole IP 'Mary did not drink' will be the complement of C in that structure.

And 'Mary did not drink' is a finite IP; therefore, the finiteness of that IP is going to assign nominative case to the subject 'Mary' within the whole CP. Project it for yourself and see how it works.

I want you to do this exercise for yourself to understand CP in little bit more details and also, I want you to understand the notion of subject, and the idea of CP for us to see the underlying patterns of sentences and different levels of representation of these elements.

Thank you.