

Basics of Language Science
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Lecture 22
Specifier and Complement

We will look at X-bar theory where we are looking at structure of a phrase. We started with phrase structure rules and then we moved on to the structure with apparent advantages that we have discussed so far.

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Questions

- What is a phrase?
- What is the structure of a phrase?



Phrase structure Rules

- Students of physics likes pizza in the evening.
- S = NP VP
- NP = N PP
- VP = V NP PP
- NP = N
- PP = P NP



In order to answer these questions, we have looked at this sentence and when we see this phrase structure, in this structure, I have fixed your questions. Because now we can see things more clearly so, tell me again, for everybody, this is making sense, right? There are two just two simple points out of these rules that I want you to understand.

The algorithm is not so difficult or these names are not so difficult for you to understand like NP, VP and all those things. The two main points here are the following, a, these rules describe the sentence before. In order for us to understand the relationship among all the words in that sentence and how those words form a group and with whom and then how each group of words, that is a phrase, is related to one another, that is one.

Second is, these rules independently can generate an infinite number of sentences with a little bit modification or even when we do not modify, these rules can generate a lot of sentences. Of course, there are limitations of these rules but these are the two points that we wanted through these rules.

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Phrase Structure Rule

[S/IP/TP/AgrP [NP Students [PP of physics]]

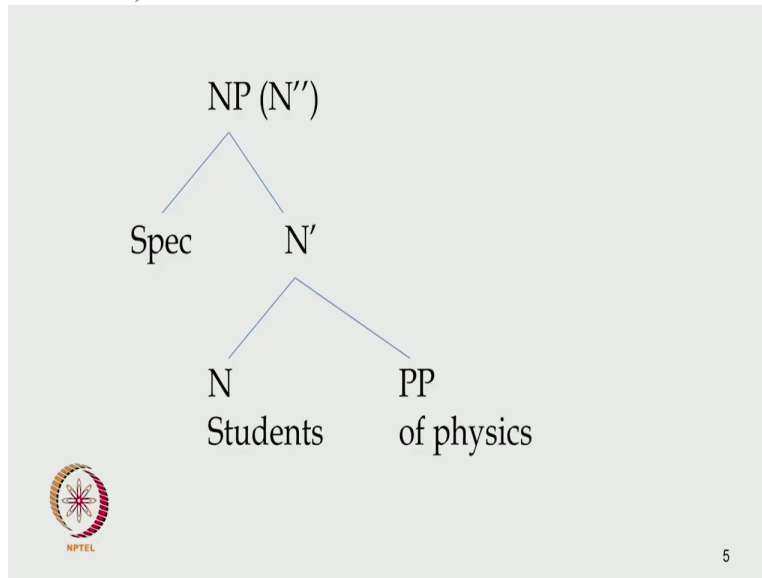
[VP likes [NP pizza] [PP in [NP the evening]]]]

S = IP = TP = AgrP



Then this one shows us a little bit clearly about these groupings of words. We have seen these things thus far and we talked about why a sentence is also called an inflection phrase or a tense phrase or an agreement phrase. And we will look at it more when we reach that part.

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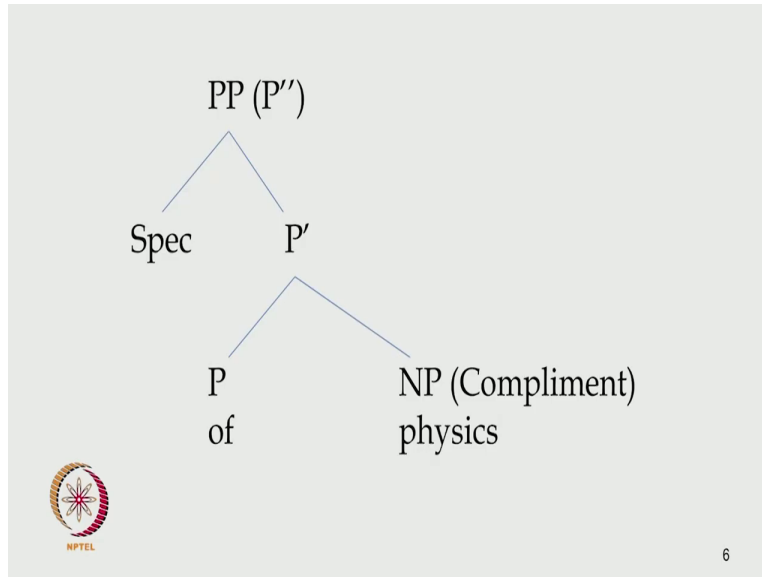
Then we started looking at the structure of the phrase in terms of their binary branching, that is, the structure that we see now are all binary in terms of their branching. I do not have multiple branching structure on the screen, but I have shown you the multiple branching structure on the board which will remind you that multiple branching structure was able to tell us grouping, but not much beyond that in the sense that multiple branching have their own limitations that they do not show any sort of hierarchical configuration.

In order to capture conceptual hierarchy among phrases and units of a phrase, that is, within the phrase, the reason why this was called X-bar is because there was an intermediate node created for us to understand this whole thing. So, we get 3 layers of representation of a particular phrase, that is, head then intermediate category, head will be N, intermediate category that is intermediate level N bar and then phrase status of the whole phrase that is NP or N two bars, all right?

And this is the blueprint of structure of all the phrases and then a lot of other things come into play which we are going to see how they become recursive and how they get connected with one another. So clear so far? This whole set of nodes tell us about the notion of specifier and compliments as well with respect to head, that is, specifier by virtue of being higher than the head has a scope over both head and its complement and

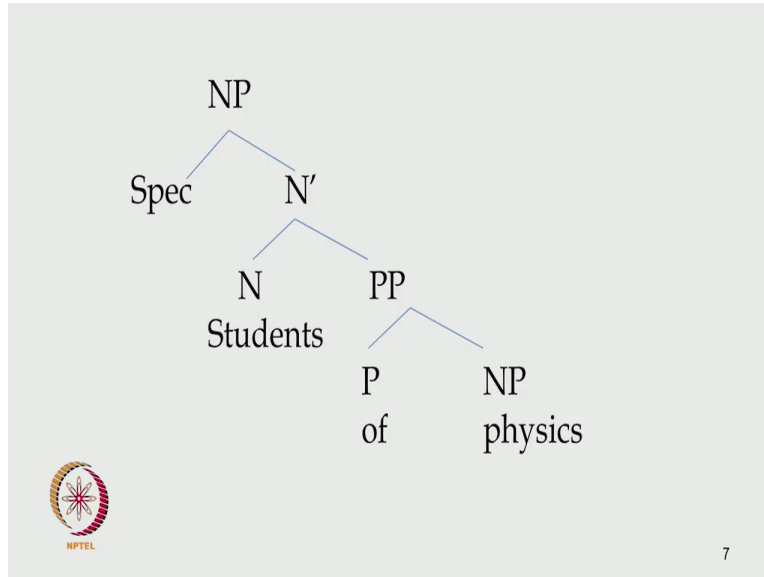
complements are only going to be in close proximity with their heads. This is also categorically clear from these structures.

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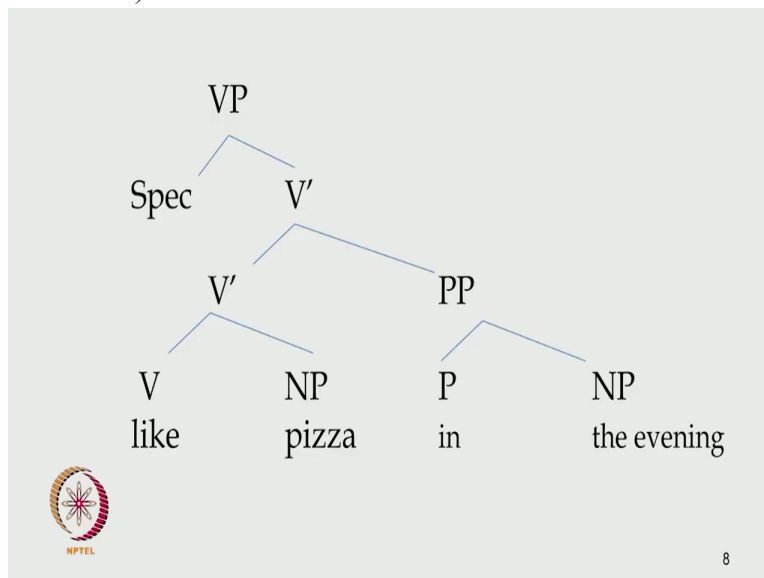
Then we saw that sometimes we may not have a complement or we may have a complement. We may not have a specifier; we may have a specifier. Irrespective of their physical presence, we are going to have, we have these spaces for them. However, we do not have a phrase if the head is not present, that is, without the head we cannot conceptualize probably the phrase.

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So again, the head is not significant just for its name, the whole existence of the phrase depends on the head. When we start looking at larger phrases, then we see how they are connected so in this NP we see the head of this phrase is a noun and then PP is its complement and then again that PP is headed by a P within NP complement. And then we can again break them into its actual shape where the last NP that you see, physics, is not going to have its specifier and complement, therefore I have just put them as NP, clear?

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If we start looking at the verb phrase of the sentence that you have seen that students of physics like pizza in the evening, the whole phrase part of this sentence looks like this, on the screen, clear, where in the verb phrase, the head of the verb is, like, and then, pizza, is the complement of the verb that is because verb is transitive in nature and then we see that the PP, in the evening, is not really a complement.

It has, you can see, you can look at the configuration and see, this is not the question of chicken and the egg. Again, two things are prominently clear and visibly clear if you see this thing. The structure tells you that the noun, pizza, is in close proximity with the verb, that is the noun phrase which is being subcategorized, required by the verb as its complement.

And, in the evening, there are two things about the phrase, in the evening, a, it is not related to pizza. If at all it has to say anything, it has to say something about the entire, this part, entire thing, that is, like pizza. If this thing has to say anything, that is, in the evening is talking about, like pizza. Therefore, it is higher and since it is not a subcategorized or a required element, this kind of thing where you see an intermediate category, an intermediate category being expanded, that is, another of this is adjoined.

This type of requirement or this type of manipulation is called, I do not mean manipulation in a negative sense, this kind of manipulation of the structure is called adjunction where we have just another V bar adjoined which serves the purpose, captures the way phrases are conceptually available in the structure, in the deep structure of the phrase, and also captures the distinction between a complement and the adjunct. Making sense?

This much very briefly in the last class we had seen, in the last few minutes as well. We have looked at things so far and I have again slowly gone over these things for us to understand how these things work.

Student: Sir, here the noun phrase, the evening, can it be further split into specifier?

Professor: Yes.

Student: So, the, would be the specifier.

Professor: The, will be the specifier.

Student: No complement and evening.

Professor: Exactly.

Student: And just above the preposition phrase, should not that also be split into a specifier first and the P dash?

Professor: Absolutely.

Student: And then the.

Student2: Because it is blank.

Professor: Yes.

Student: Even if it is blank, should not be mentioned here?

Professor: Yes, you are right, you are right. It should be, but the reason why I have not put them there is that there are two reasons, a, there was not much space on the screen. That is one, b, I do not mean to underestimate your imaginations. Once you understand the structure of a phrase but that could be the third reason.

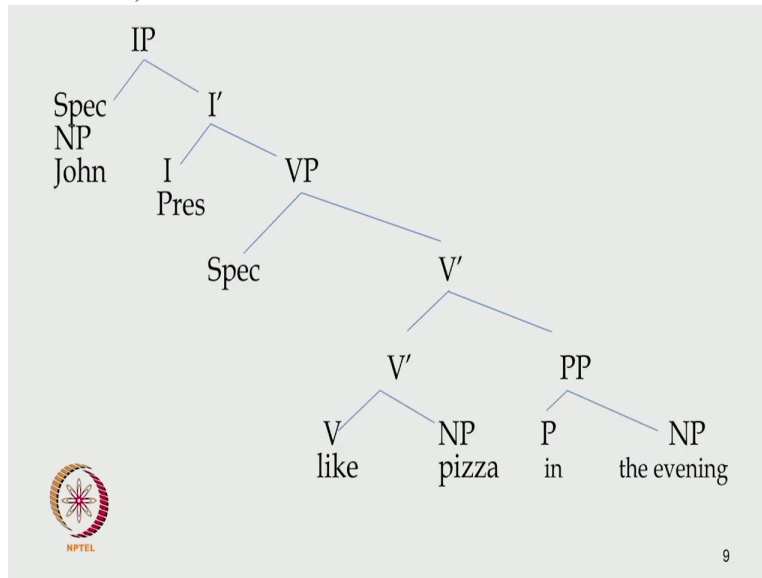
First is there was no space here and the second is a general practice in the, when we look at the structure, see we look at this structure, right now we are looking at this structure because I am taking you through these things one by one for the first time. But when people look at, people draw a structure of a tree in their understanding and investigation, the standard practice, by people I mean linguists investigating a sentence.

The standard practice in the field is not to draw things that are not available knowing very well that those things exist. So, your question is absolutely right and I agree with you that probably when these things are presented for the first time they should be expanded.

They will be nice but, like I have done with the VP and also, I took a little bit of liberty with this thing because I have done the PP here.

Because we have a specifier, head and complement, we know nothing comes in the specifier of the PP, therefore in this PP we have just dropped that but we understand it. Do you understand the question and the answer both? So true.

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Let us go and look at the whole sentence. Bear with me for a moment again for the purpose of the space I have reduced the subject and I am going to show you the subject separately. Just look at how it is, this whole sentence projects itself and what is combined with what. You have seen all the way to VP, right?

Now, look at the whole sentence. We are calling the whole sentence an IP. You can call it anything. Even if we call S, it does not matter much. The practices are even when you put S in the top, the branching people go with I bar and I. The idea is not to put S bar an S because S represents the sentence and not a phrase.

So, when we call IP what we are saying is we are considering the whole sentence as a phrase. And just like in a smaller phrase like NP or a VP, the head of the phrase is a noun or a verb. When we say the entire sentence is IP, the head of the sentence is an, I, which means inflection. And in the place of inflection, here you see, what do you see in the place of inflection in this sentence?

Student: Pres.

Professor: Pres which means present tense, okay? So, I have put only tense here. I have put only tense here so there could be several questions. Then why don't you call it T or

TP? Again, we can call that but the point will be the same. We can call it TP and then T bar, and T and then everything else. It does not change anything.

We can call it AgrP, Agr bar, then in the place of I, we say Agr and then put something there. I want you to understand conceptually a very simple thing that whatever names, whatever the name we give is not really important. What is important is the sentence is a phrase by itself and this notion of representing or drawing a sentence captures the fact that in the head place of a sentence whatever comes is the most important part of the sentence.

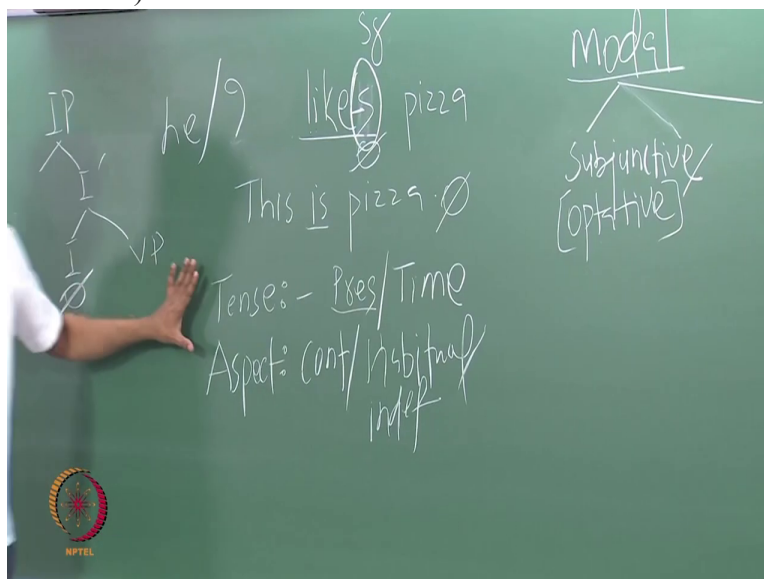
Saying the same thing in other words, the advantage of this structure is, it clearly shows you what is the head of a sentence. What is the most important part of a sentence? Do you see the thing putting both ways? The advantage of this structure is it captures the important part of a sentence and it enables us to see the most significant part in a sentence.

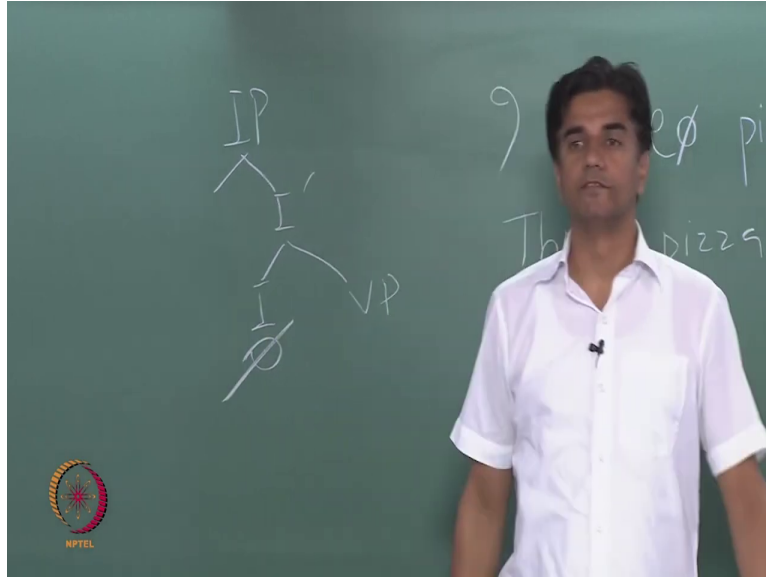
Student: Sentence itself is tense-less?

Professor: Sentence itself is tense-less, not all the time.

Student: But in this example.

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Professor: Very true. What I have told you when we discussed tense, when we said things like, when we say, like pizza, remember? What I said is there is no tense marker present. That does not mean tense is absent. Tense marker is not visible in a sentence like this. And the tense marker is visible in a sentence like, so this becomes a tense marker. At that time what we were discussing was a very simple thing. The tense is a slippery category.

In a language like English, the whole notion of gender is completely 0 all the time unlike our languages where we see gender appearing at the surface structure. Are you with me? Are you following me? In our languages we see gender appearing at the surface structure, on the surface. Can you give me an example of this thing? When I say, in our language, we see gender appearing on the surface.

Student: Sir, appearing on the surface, you mean there is a marker?

Professor: Marker clearly visible, exactly and the reason why I am taking you again slowly is because I want to clarify this point in a very clear way. Anybody?

Student: Mai padh raha hoon.

Professor: So, padh raha hoon, what kind of tense is visible on the verb? Some sort of masculine marker? Right, which tells you that the subject of the sentence is masculine. In a language like English, it is always going to be dormant. It is never going to be visible. I

am reading. He is reading. She is reading. It is always going to be dormant. Now, the point is it is not that there is no tense in English. It is just dormant for the purpose of grammar. It does not participate in grammatical processes, therefore never surfaces.

In a language like Hindi, because it participates in grammatical processes, it sometimes surfaces. Similarly, in a language like English, tense is a very slippery category. Sometimes it has no manifestation and sometimes it has manifestations. Even here, and this is the story only in present tense.

The reason why I am calling, do you understand why I am calling it a slippery category? Are you following it or not? No. So you need to ask what do you mean by slippery. Only then I will know that it is not clear to you. I can figure out somethings by looking at your faces but not everything.

Slippery means it is hard to put your finger on it. It is hard to catch in the sense that you see any marker of tense here? No. Any marker of tense here? Yes. So, if the story is about, but we know that there is a present tense here. This sentence is present tense. When I say, I like pizza, the sentence is present tense. So, there is no marker of present tense, but this is present. So, 0 marker. This is clearly a present tense marker. So, in the story of present tense, sometimes it appears, sometimes it does not.

In the past tense, it is always going to appear. In the future tense, it is always going to appear. So, when it appears sometimes and when it does not appear sometimes, that is hard to put your finger on. Sometimes it is zero, sometimes it surfaces. Nonetheless, it is never conceptually absent. This is an important thing for you to understand. This distinction is very crucial. When we say, no tense marker, we do not mean to say, no tense. We are only saying, no physical marker of tense.

And this kind of a structure also helps us see that that tense is available. It also helps us, there are several other things which I am going to show you a little later once we have developed the whole structure of a sentence. Then we will move on to see what else this kind of a structure helps us understand because if it only helps us understand a

nice-looking picture, that is not enough. That is too heavy a load on the human mind. Are you still with me? Any other questions so far?

Student: Sir, when we said imperative sentences.

Professor: Right.

Student: We said they have no tense, by saying that it has no tense marker. There are truly no ((??)) (23:42) in that case.

Professor: In that case there is no tense also. Here we are saying, no tense marker. When we say tense-less sentences, we literally mean no tense. And in that kind of structure, just tell me how will the structure work? In that structure what do you see here in place of I, present tense. In that case you will see 0.

Student: Sir, this particular sentence, John, first of all it should be, likes pizza in the evening.

Professor: Very nice, go ahead.

Student: So, this is showing a habit or something which is continuing so does this still have a tense, I mean I thought that when you say something like, I live in Chennai, or you say, he lives in Chennai, is it present tense or is it an imperative sentence?

Professor: How many of you understand his question? Do you understand? Many people, you understand? Very nice question and very significant question and these are the things which I sincerely request you to understand with clarity. There is absolutely no rush. We can spend time on these things and trust me once you understand these distinctions and the underlying facts of this kind of question, these things are going to make more sense to you. Understand this?

So, give me a couple of minutes to clarify this, clarify his question, you are right. What is the first thing that you were saying is that this should be, John likes pizza. Very nice. When we say, how about, I like pizza. Then it would have been? What this is trying to show you is this S on the verb is something else. By something else you mean something

external. It tells us about something. So, this verb, likes, and please stop me if it stops making sense to you. As long as it is making sense, listen to me and if it stops making sense, please stop me.

We are saying there are two things here. One is the verb and then something else. So, when we are representing the structure in the threadbare part, the verb is only responsible for the verb. It is not responsible for anything else. Therefore, it is not carrying any S. And I want, this is not a typo or anything and I wanted you to see clearly that the verb is only responsible for the verb. Whatever this information is, has to be represented or manifested somewhere else in this structure.

On the surface level when we speak the sentence, this information shows up on the verb, true, but in the conceptual representation, this information has to go somewhere else because this information belongs to somewhere else. The verb as a category can only contain verb. So, that disjoint is what you see here. Now, what is this information, what kind of information does this give us? Tell me what kind of information this give us.

Student: Singular.

Professor: Singular? Everybody? Because if it is plural, then you do not see this coming. Now, the story of I is a little bit different. I do not want to mix everything. The story of I is different. We say, I like pizza, and he likes pizza. He is singular, therefore likes, but how about, I like. Is I plural? Now, this story is something else. This is a different story of English which has something English-specific for us to understand and if you remember, I will tell you that story later because let us understand this thing right now.

What you said is right. This is a singular marker. If we put here a plural pronoun like, they, we get like. If we put a singular one, he, then we get likes. So, this is a singular marker. Now, singular marker is part of agreement. It is not the marker of tense. See this thing? Singular marker is part of agreement, not part of tense.

Tense is present, meaning it is present tense, but physically it is absent. See this thing? There is no physical marker of present tense in this sentence. So, this is an agreement

marker. The tense marker is 0 and you said something else, something else which is very interesting.

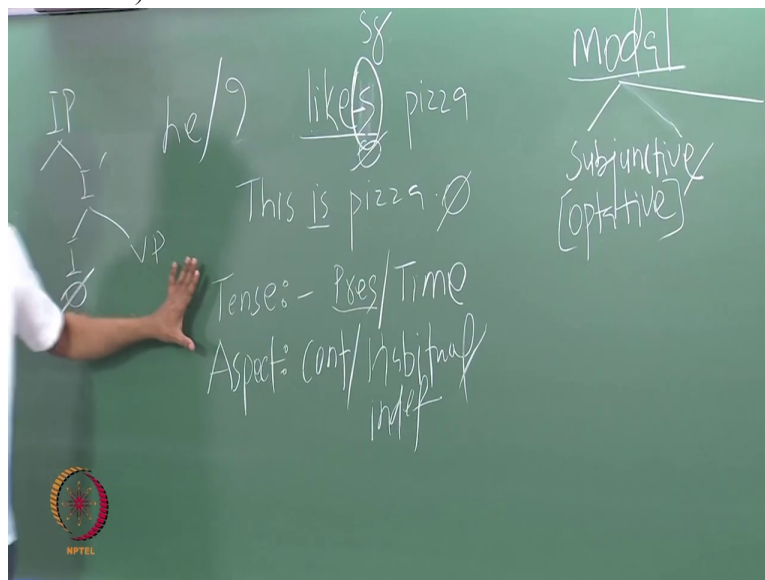
Student: Why is this not an imperative sentence?

Professor: No, no.

Student: I thought that there is no tense in the whole sentence.

Professor: That was not true to begin with. Imperative sentences are tense-less sentences.

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So, when we say there is no tense, there are only two types of sentences which take no tense. In fact, the whole story is one. See modal verbs do not take tense. There are two types of this, one is subjunctive. In English the same thing is called optative. You may have heard sentences like, may you live long. Those are the sentences of optative types. They are tense-less. When someone says, may you live long. What is the tense here? And to understand whether tense is present or not we need to know what it is that tense tells us.

Tense only talks about time. If a sentence does not show any relation with time that is in the present, past or future, then we say such sentences are tense-less. If a sentence shows timing, then that sentence is, in terms of present, past and future, then that is a sentence

with tense. No big mastery here. So, this sentence, I like pizza, is this present, forget about the markers right now. Is it talking about present time, past time or future time?

It talks about time. It does not talk about the future. Why it seems like no time is something else that I am going to show you. It is not the future, it is not the past, it is the present. Now, hold on, so this is one which will be tense-less, may you live long. The other is imperatives, things like, go home. These are the kinds of sentences in natural languages which are called tense-less sentences. Others are going to be sentences with tense.

So, this has present tense. The other thing is called aspect. I think we have discussed that with respect to when we were discussing tense and other agreement and functional categories. There were several things that we discussed. Does anyone remember what are the things that we discussed here, with aspect?

Student: Continuous.

Professor: Continuous was one. What did continuous say? Now, continuous is, so aspect is different from tense because we can take any tense and any aspect and make a sentence. So, I can take a present tense and continuous aspect. I can say, I am eating pizza. Is this continuous, eating? And present continuous? I can take a past tense and still make a continuous sentence. What would be the sentence?

Student: I have been.

Professor: No, have been, is something else. Past and continuous.

Student: I was eating pizza.

Professor: I was eating pizza, past tense and continuous. Why is it continuous and still past, because it is talking about something which was in progress at some moment of time in the past. That some moment of time is shared between speaker and the listener but it is talking about continuation of something in some moment of time in the past.

Therefore, I am eating pizza is present and, I was eating pizza, is past. So one is that this distinction is about present and past which is timing, tense. Aspect is different from tense. So, aspect talks about the way things were happening which is that it was continuous, ing represents continuous, and what is this, what is the aspect here in this sentence? The aspect here is habitual or the same thing is called indefinite because there is some sort of regularity in it. There is some sort of indefiniteness in it so we call it habitual also.

I just want you to understand the terms. We use different terms with the same meaning. So, the reason why this sentence gives you the feeling that it is definitely not the future. It is definitely not past and it gives you a sense of not present because of its indefinite nature.

Student: Sir how do we differentiate between these.

Professor: How do we differentiate between?

Student: Habitual and imperative.

Professor: Habitual and imperative. That is because when you say, I like pizza, you were talking about something which is indefinite in the sense of a particular habit formation. When you are talking about imperative sentences like, go home, it is not habitual. It is a one-time instruction, go home.

There is a categorical difference between the two. When someone says, go to Chennai next week. If I tell to you go to Mumbai next week and if someone says, I live in Mumbai, do you not see a difference between the two types of sentences? One is talking about the indefinite nature of a stay in the city of Mumbai.

When someone says, I live in Mumbai, it means you do not know when I started living, you do not know when I am going to move to the next city. At this moment in time, it is a, there is some sort of regularity in my stay in Mumbai. It is not, when I say, I am living in Mumbai, I do not mean I am a visitor in Mumbai. See the point? That is called indefinite status coming from the verb which comes through aspect, which is indefinite.

So, for this sentence, I like pizza, or, he likes pizza, the things are this present tense, indefinite aspect, singular agreement marker, all these kinds of information are associated with verbs, okay? All such things are associated with verbs but they have to be manifested somewhere else. In the structure they have to be manifested somewhere else. Get my point?

Now, can we move beyond the verb phrase? So, let me get a consensus here first. Are we clear about sentences with tense? No, not just this example. Take the examples of other sentences that I have given you, I am eating a pizza, and, I was eating pizza. With the help of all such sentences, do you understand the distinction between a sentence with tense and sentence without tense? That is number one where I want your clarity.

Number two, when we have sentences with tense, tense alone is not enough. What other information we get from the verb, besides its timing, also things like continuous, habitual or perfective. Somebody said, I have been eating pizza. Is this present tense or past tense?

Student: Present tense.

Professor: Present tense and what aspect?

Student: Present perfect.

Professor: It is way too complicated. It is present, tense is present. Perfect is also something that we see because it gives us a sense that something is about in the recent past and then it gives continuity also, I have been eating. It is present perfect continuous.

I do not want to complicate it to that far but again like I have told you, I have promised you in the beginning, I will only point out things later when we are looking at more complicated stuff. It is not that I have been eating pizza is the sentence that you have heard for the first time. You may have written this sentence several times. You may have spoken these kinds of sentences several times and you know this sentence.

If I ask you to describe this sentence in terms of its tense and aspect and where you come up with the term, present, perfect and continuous, you will be lost with how something can be continuous and perfect both at the same time. So, we are only talking about 4 or 5.

Some languages like Sanskrit have 12 different aspects. In some languages certain aspects are not present and in some languages many aspects are captured, again a number of aspects in a sentence, visible and not so visible, is language-dependent. It is a language-specific thing which is part of the parameter.

The fact that we know these distinctions categorically clearly, here, there is a reason why someone will say, I am eating, I have eaten and I have been eating. There is a difference between all these sentences. And those differences are not just subtle. Those differences are categorical. You just listen to, this is a very simple sentence, I am eating, I have eaten, and I have been eating, are not the distinction categorical? This is not a subtle difference.

I am eating is present continuous. I have eaten is present perfect. I have been eating, you gave this sentence. I did not want to give you this thing. Therefore, I am only trying to stay with the simpler sentences because the important part is for us to understand the concepts, not the sentences. Like I have been telling you we are not dealing with English. We are dealing with these aspects. So, coming back to that, do you see the difference between these three sentences? I am eating, I am repeating this again, I am eating, I have eaten, and I have been eating.

I have eaten is an example of present perfect, which is very different from what I had eaten. If you say I had eaten and I have, what is the difference between I had eaten and I have eaten?

Student: Completed just now.

Professor: Completed just now which means present perfect and past perfect both gives us a sense of perfection. By perfection we mean completion of an action but the two give us the reading of recent past that is just now and the remote past. Again, the human mind makes no mistake in figuring out or applying the notion of relativity in terms of time.

The recent past and remote past are relative terms. As you can understand in human history, 50 years may be a recent time, but when we are talking about eating pizza, 2 hours ago maybe recent time, 4 hours ago maybe remote past, 4 hours ago maybe remote past with reference to 2 hours as recent past. The point is that the human mind makes no

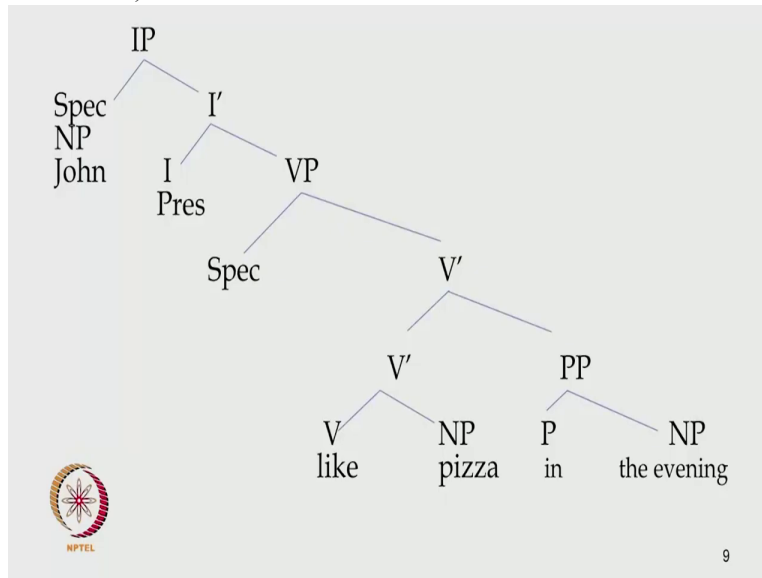
mistake with these things. It does its calculation perfectly nicely without us knowing about these things, which again goes back to the point of knowledge of language that I have discussed with you. Get the point?

Second, so tense alone is not enough for these things, that is, aspect. Then there is a notion of agreement, that is, singular thing has to agree with singular and plural thing has to agree with plural. These are the categories in language. If you have to give a metaphor, you know when we make nice chicken or vegetables, when you have served that thing on a plate, what you see is a nice chicken dish. What you do not see is the specific ingredients it might contain. Functional elements are like them in that we do not see them with bare eyes. For us to see that we need to know what such things are.

Similarly, these elements are functional elements in language. These are functional elements involved in making a sentence. I wanted to make one more point and then go to the structure which is, and functional aspects of language have to be different from lexical aspects. Lexical markers, that is, lexical elements like, like, pizza, I, are only visible things and they are going to carry functional elements.

Sometimes and here is the point that I want you to understand very carefully. Sometimes functional things like agreement markers, tense markers, aspect markers are going to be visible when they appear in their real phrases, real forms, they are going to be visible. Sometimes they are not visible. That does not mean they are not there. Even in the tense-less sentence when we say there is no tense, we only mean that tense is zero. No tense is not really tense, but it leaves the possibility that there are sentences that are going to have tenses. Now having said that, can I ask you a final time, tense, aspect make sense to you now, tense and aspect?

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Let us come here now. What you see beyond VP that we have added in this slide is IP. IP and like I have been telling you, this sentence is called an inflection phrase. It is called an inflection phrase not because it is a nice term. All the functional elements that you have seen, tense, aspect, agreement, they are all inflections. Tense, aspect, agreement, that you have seen here, they are all part of inflection.

Student: Are they inflecting the verb?

Professor: They are going to be.

Student: They inflect the verb that is why they are called.

Professor: That is right. They inflect the verb.

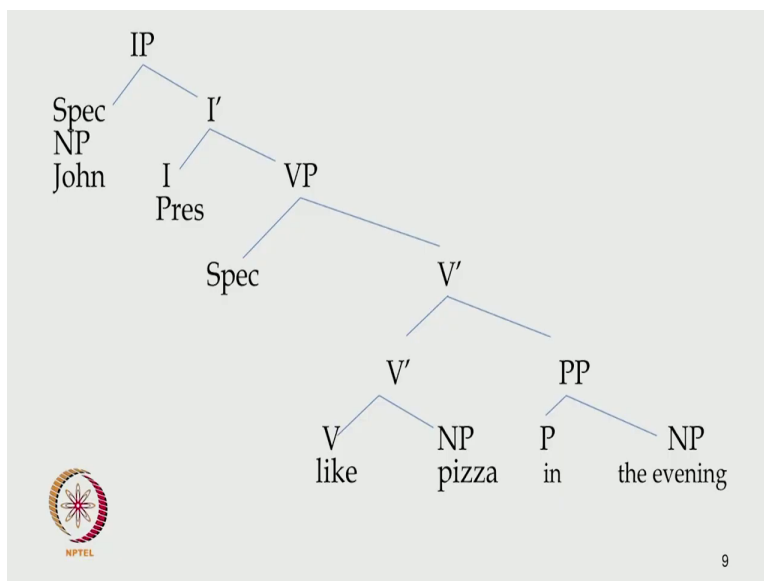
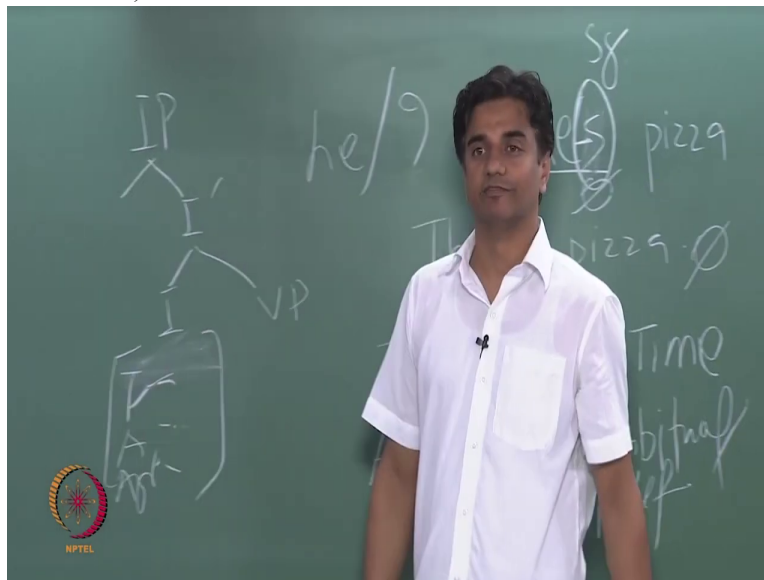
Student: Yes, most verbs.

Professor: Absolutely right. They are, in simpler terms we say they show up on the verb but technically you can definitely say they inflect the verb, true. We see them only when verbs are inflected. When verbs are not inflected, we call that infinitive, to go, to like. When verbs are inflected then they do not remain infinitive. You understand this now? They are not infinitive verbs. So, verbs get inflected and then we see all of them are part

of the inflectional category. They are all inflectional categories therefore they are going to stay with inflection.

And there has always been a discussion about which one is more important, tense, aspect or agreement? With reasons people have argued for tense, with reasons people have argued for agreement, and with reasons people have argued for inflection, inflection being more important because inflection contains both, tense, aspect, agreement, everything together. Therefore, we call it an inflectional phrase.

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And in this inflectional phrase, I have put, this is where we were stuck, and we want to come back to this thing again. I have put only the present. So, it seems like inflection only means tense but one can always put in place of inflection, inflection I, the whole bunch of features, tense, aspect, and agreement.

All of them are part of inflection and this was the reason, let me close this thing by saying that this was the reason why people said, no, no, no, we need to separate the things out, otherwise it is going to be, it is not making much sense. So, tense is more important, aspect is more important or agreement is more important.

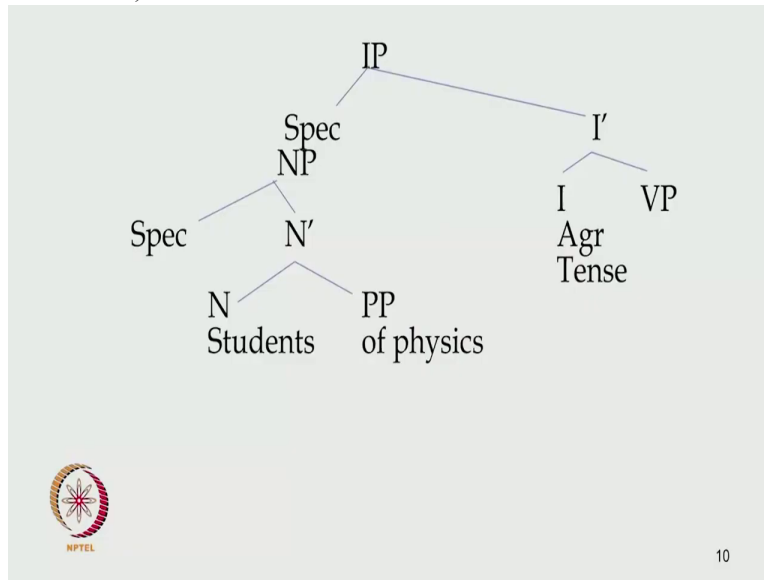
Now, the more important discussion is not what is important and what is not important, the important point was they should manifest clearly. They should be represented clearly. I will show you one more structure which is going to be very nice and I invite you to see this thing in the book.

It starts with inflection and if you can understand and if you are still with me with this structure, listen to me, it starts with inflection and then it goes to I and then it goes to TP, then it again goes to aspect phrase and then it goes to agreement phrase, manifesting everything, and then comes VP. See the point? So, there are two ways of doing it, either you project everything else or you just project, I, and then VP. In both the cases, I know we need to stop, in both the cases where do you see VP coming in? VP is what in the sentence?

Student: Complement of.

Professor: Complement of, I. VP is the complement of, I, and this should show you what we have been discussing in terms of subject and predicate. We will continue our discussion more. Where do you see the subject? Subject, you do not see it so far and I have tried to put it there. Subject is actually the specifier of the sentence. Remember when we discussed subject and predicate, we said subject is outside the predicate. It becomes and it is higher up, it becomes the specifier of the sentence.

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We will continue from this slide tomorrow and we will discuss more where I will show you, this thing, that how a bigger subject is represented.