

Why nouns and verbs build different kinds of phrases (even in Altaic languages)

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As is well-known, the syntactic category to which a word belongs determines not only the word's own internal composition (the *features* of the word) but also facts about its dependents -- the kinds of words and phrases with which it may syntactically combine (the *external syntax* of the word). To some extent, the correlation between the features and the external syntax of the various parts of speech appears to have cross-linguistic stability. Consequently, a project of obvious importance and interest is a theory of syntax that *predicts* the external syntax of a given word-type from its feature composition. This talk offers a partial contribution to such a project, reporting and extending some joint work with Esther Torrego (UMass/Boston).

I will argue that a noun may be combined with a complement or modifier only if an agreement-like relation (actually a probe-goal connection without actual agreement) holds between features of N and corresponding features of its complement or modifier. I suggest that this generalization forms part of a more general picture that has some promise of explaining certain contrasts between the complementation and modification patterns of V and N.

I note first that the complement of N in English, must be headed by either P (*the choice of a book*), the clause-introducer *that* (*the belief that it is raining*) or its infinitival counterpart *for* (*my desire for it to rain*). P, *that* and *for* are all elements that in other contexts induce effects of the "that-trace effect" type, and have been argued by Pesetsky & Torrego (2001; 2004a,b) to be elements that bear T-features. I suggest that the reason the head of the complement of N must bear T-features is the requirement that a lexically unvalued feature of N must probe a corresponding feature on its complement. Since the φ -features of N are lexically valued, it cannot be the φ -features that do this job. It must therefore be T-features. The opposite logic explains the complementation patterns of (typical) verbs, which come from the lexicon with T-features lexically valued but with φ -features unvalued -- the opposite of nouns. It is in this way that the distinct complementation patterns of V and N can be directly predicted from their featural composition.

I next extend these observations to clausal modifiers of N, i.e. relative clauses. A puzzling observation of Chomsky (1976) is the fact that infinitival relative clauses in English may be introduced by clausal *for* (*a book for Bill to read*) (or its silent counterpart — *a book to read*), or by a pied-piped PP containing a *wh*-phrase (*a topic on which to work*) — but may not be introduced by bare *who* or *which* (**a person who to meet*; **a book which to read*). As Kayne (1977) noted, an almost identical generalization holds for finite relative clauses in French (and also hold for other Romance languages). I suggest that this "Kayne-Chomsky Effect" is simply the counterpart for modifiers of the observation already discussed for complements. The relative clause (just like a complement to N) must be headed by a bearer of T-features, i.e. by *for*, *that* or a fronted PP. Finally, and perhaps most controversially, I argue that, contrary to appearances (and contrary to standard analyses), English *finite* relative clauses also show the Kayne-Chomsky effect.

That clausal complements and modifiers of N share properties that distinguish them from complements and modifiers of V will come as no surprise to investigators of Altaic languages such as *Japanese* and *Turkish*. In these languages, clausal complements and modifiers of N have been argued to display verbal morphology and case properties (*ga/no* conversion in Japanese and genitive subjects in Turkish) that jointly distinguish them from complements and modifiers of V. If our proposals are correct, these Altaic phenomena should be understood as consequences of the same requirements discussed above.