

# Chapter 13

## Auxiliary Verbs

### 13.1 Lecture notes

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##### I. Classification of Auxiliaries

? We classify auxiliary verbs as subject raising verbs. What empirical claims does that classification embody?

- They are interpreted as one-place predicates, whose argument is the proposition formed out of the rest of the sentence.
- They allow non-referential subjects, so long as their complements are of the sort that go with the subjects in question. [Slides:1]
- Passivization of the main verb (their complement) doesn't change truth conditions. [Slides:2]
- These predictions are generally correct, but there are some problem cases: [Slides:3]

(1) Bibi won't address Yassar  $\neq$   
Yassar won't be addressed by Bibi

Thus it's possible that there are two *wills*, one of which is a control verb.

? Why are they classified as verbs?

- For *have* and *do*, there are homophonous main verbs with the same (irregular) morphology. [Slides:4]
- We have been treating *be* as a verb all along, without questioning it, because in some sentences, it's clear that there's nothing else that's a verb, and we've set up our grammar so that sentences require verbs. [Slides:5]
- For modals, the case is harder to make: no inflections, and no non-auxiliary uses. Historically, they did have inflections (*canst*), but that doesn't count for much synchronically because words do change category. But since the other auxiliaries are verbs, it simplifies the analysis if we can say all of them are.
- Also, in sentences with modals, no finite verbs can appear. So classifying modals as something other than verbs would again require changing the generalization that sentences are headed by finite verbs. [Slides:6]
- Finally, there are adverbials that modify a following finite VP:[Slides:7]
  - (2) They [*frequently* [talk to their parents]].  
And these also can modify phrases headed by modals:
  - (3) They [*frequently* [will talk to their parents]].

## II. Special Properties of Auxiliaries

? What properties distinguish auxiliaries from other raising verbs?

- Their complements aren't headed by *to*. Each auxiliary has its own requirements regarding the FORM of its complement.
- The modals and *do* have "defective paradigms", that is, they don't have the expected range of forms (FORM values).<sup>1</sup>
- There are restrictions on the ordering and iteration of auxiliaries. (These are partially explainable by complement specifications and defective paradigms).

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<sup>1</sup>Though there are British dialects where auxiliary *do* has more inflected forms:

- (i) £They may have done \_.
- (ii) £They will do \_.

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- The NICE properties.
  - If it's not assigned, go over Problem 1 (p. 296): Why can't modals appear in imperatives?
  - Negation [**Slides:8**]
    - ? Are there any questions about the difference between sentence negation and constituent negation? We're only doing the former.
    - This lexical rule makes the word *not* the first complement of finite auxiliaries, while giving it the semantics of sentence negation. (That is, the index of the auxiliary, and therefore of the sentence it heads, is the argument of the not relation.)
    - Note that this is the first time we have seen an argument that is a word, not a phrase. (Or at least the first time since we introduced DetP).
    - The feature NEG is what is sometimes called a 'diacritic' feature: basically, it is used to keep us from having double sentence negation and it doesn't have any other meaning or function. Note in particular that NEG is not a semantic feature, although it does systematically correlate with sentential negation.
  - Inversion [**Slides:9**]
    - This is a somewhat tricky analysis: we make the subject a complement instead of a specifier by stipulating that the specifier is empty. The ARP makes all arguments complements, and the Head-Complement Rule puts the subject right after the finite verb.
    - Notice that this analysis leads to a tripartite structure for inverted sentences [**Slides:10**].
    - A binary branching analysis [**Slides:11**] might also be possible (giving the auxiliary an empty SPR list and a COMPS list that is an S with the proper FORM value), but that would make it much harder to handle the subject-verb agreement. [**Slides:12**]
    - Semantically, all the rule does is change the MODE.

- The INV feature does more work than the NEG feature. There are environments that require an inverted clause, such as after an initial (non-subject) wh-phrase: [Slides:13]
- Contraction [Slides:14]
  - This one basically a morphological operation.
  - It does nothing to the syntax but add the diacritic feature NEG.
  - It does the same thing to the semantics as the negation rule.
- Ellipsis [Slides:15]
  - Only a very partial analysis is provided, since it's a discourse phenomenon, and we're really only dealing with things at the sentence level.
  - But unlike some kinds of ellipsis, VP ellipsis is possible only in the presence of a linguistic antecedent (Hankamer & Sag 1976). [Slides:16–17]
  - Unlike other NICE phenomena, this is not limited to finite auxiliaries. But it is limited to auxiliary verbs plus the complementizer *to*. This leads us to say *to* is [AUX +].