

Finiteness and Case

Partly based on Koenenman & Zeiljstra (2017)

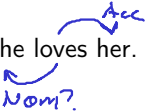
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COGS 532: Theoretical Linguistics
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Case assignment: Nominative

- Do verbs also assign the nominative case?

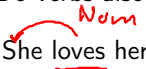
(1) She loves her.



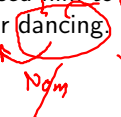
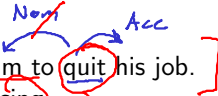
Case assignment: Nominative

- Do verbs also assign the nominative case?

(1) She loves her.



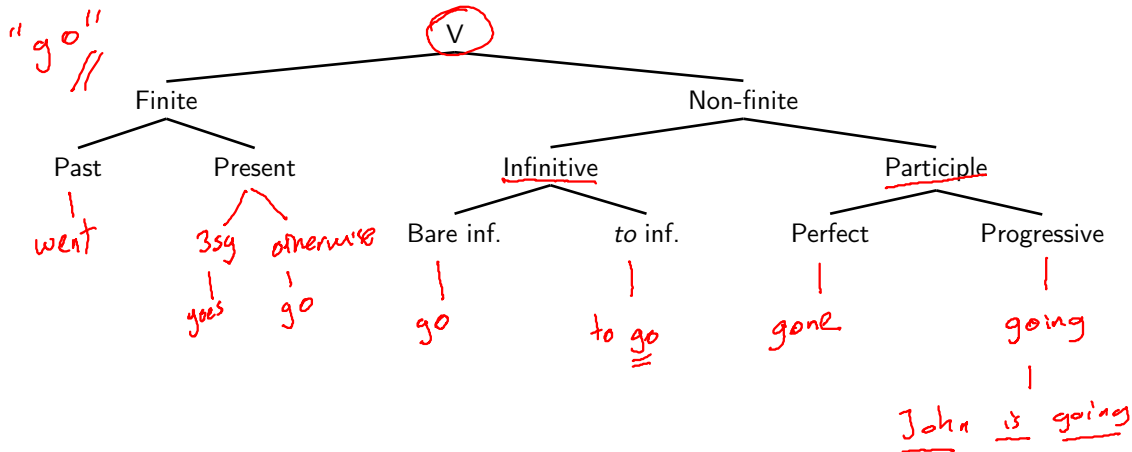
(2) a. She caused him to quit his job.
b. I saw her dancing.



< Fin
non finite → cannot assign Nom.

Finiteness

- ▶ Verbal items that carry tense and/or agreement features are **finite**.
- ▶ Nominative case assignment is closely associated with finiteness.



Auxiliaries

- (3) a. He may leave soon. ^{Nom}
b. She can face the consequences. ^{Acc}
c. She must accept the consequences.

^{Acc}
↳ bare infinitives

- Modal auxiliaries are finite.

possibility

necessity

ability

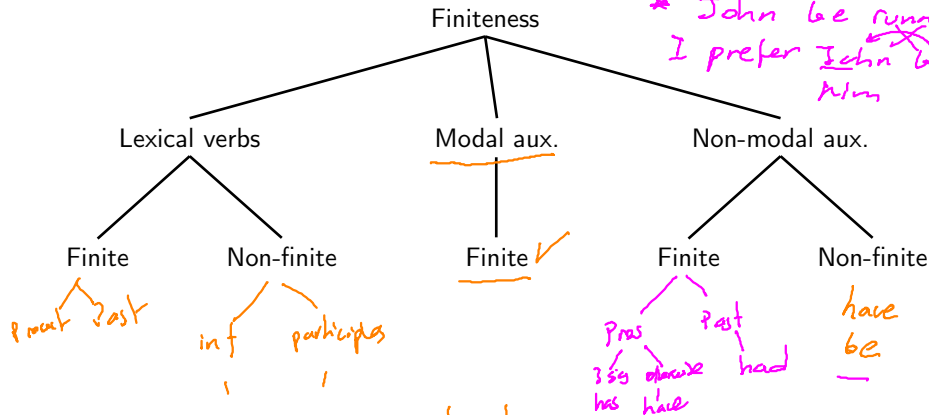
⋮

for Acc assignment

↳ be an V or P

↳ be adjacent to your argument.

Finiteness specification



John is running.

* John be running.
I prefer John be running.

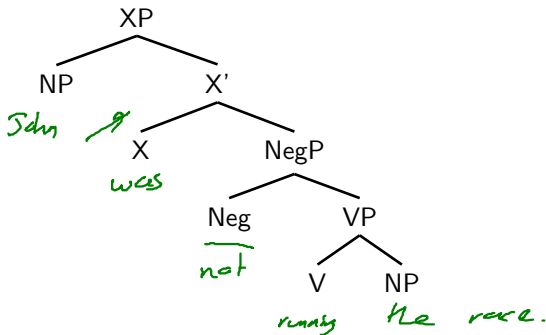
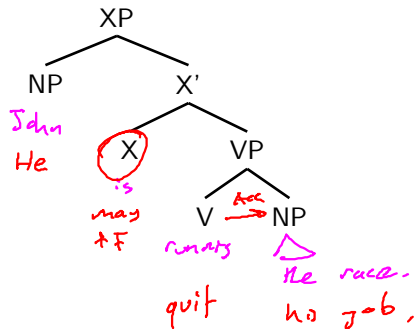
Finite ✓

Pres
3sg have
has have
Past
had

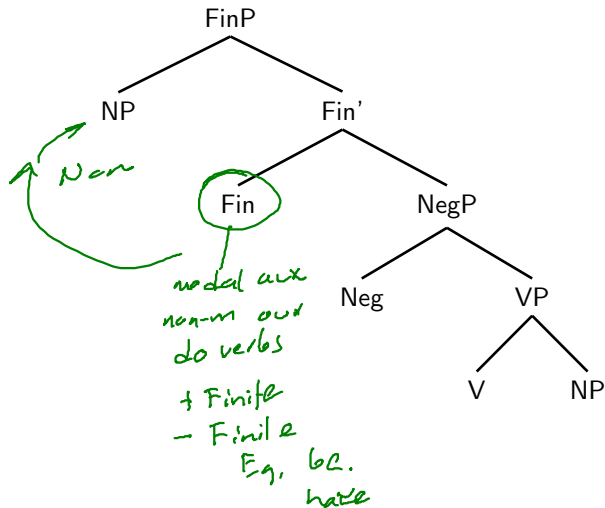
have
be
—

> * He may can must } Pres
leave yesterday.
finito
* I want him to must leave.
Base infinitives

Which head assigns the Nominative?

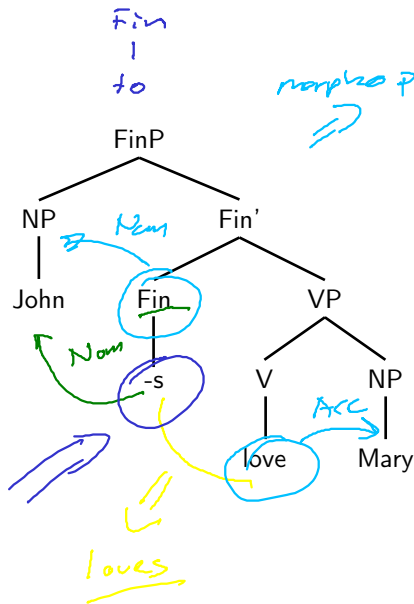
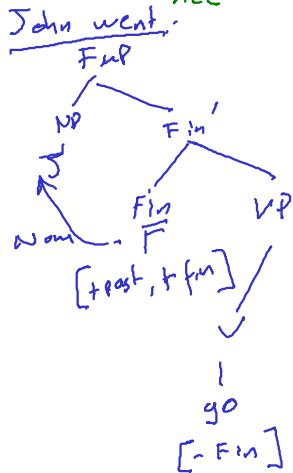


FinP



FinP and lexical verbs

(4) John loves Mary.

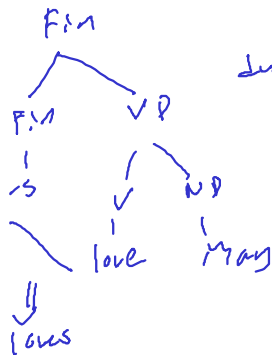
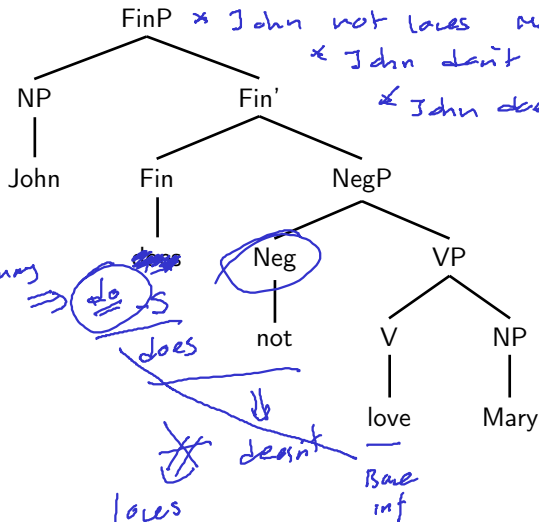


morpho phonological interface
⇒

FinP and lexical verbs

John loves Mary.
 * John loves not Mary.
 * John not loves Mary

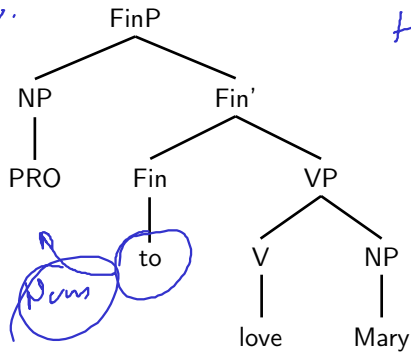
* John don't loves Mary.
 * John doesn't loves Mary -



to as non-finite Fin

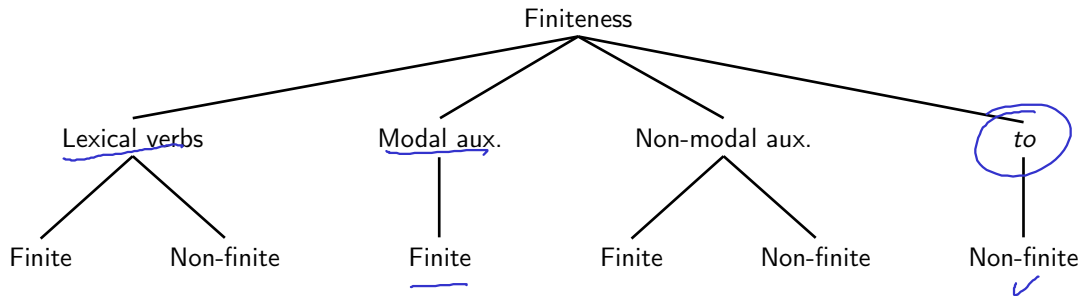
modal-verb : always [+Fin]
to : always [-Fin]

Now I want him to go.
Nom Acc
I want him [PRO to go]



Impossible.

Finiteness specification



The Case Filter

Every nominal argument must be assigned either nominative or accusative case.

- ↳ Acc is assigned by V and P to their objects
- ↳ Nom is assigned by a [$+Fin$] item sitting at _{Fin} slot, to the subject.

