Second International Conference on Discourse Pragmatics
Zhejiang International Studies University (ZISU)
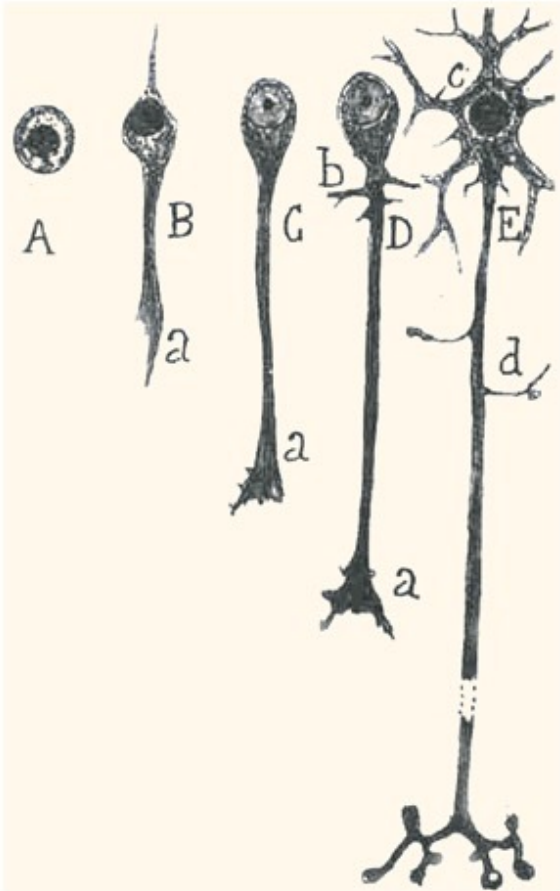
Panel: Unravelling the complexity of speech acts:
        Insights from the syntax-pragmatic interface
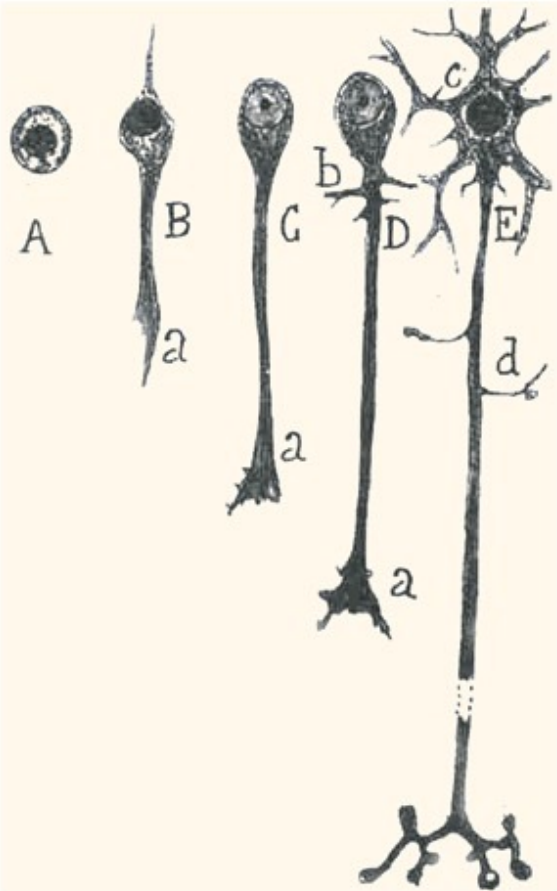   October 20th 2023

Unfolding trees
Evidence from the syntax of early interactional language

Martina Wiltschko
ICREA,
Universitat Pompeu Farba

&

Johannes Heim
University of Aberdeen

Universitat Pompeu Fabra Barcelona   ICREA

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
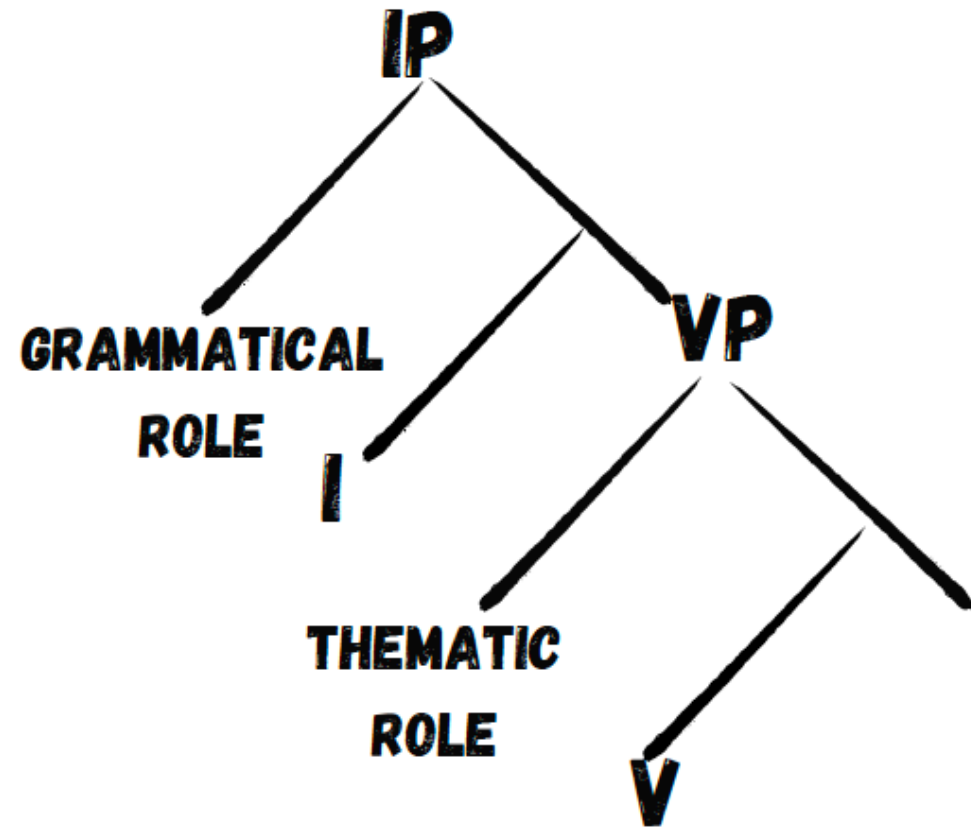
1

Overview

Theoretical considerations
- from classic trees to (elaborate) roots
- theoretical roots of interaction
- the interactional spine hypothesis

Insights from language acquisition
- upward growing classic trees
- roots of interaction in children
- the tree unfolds at both ends
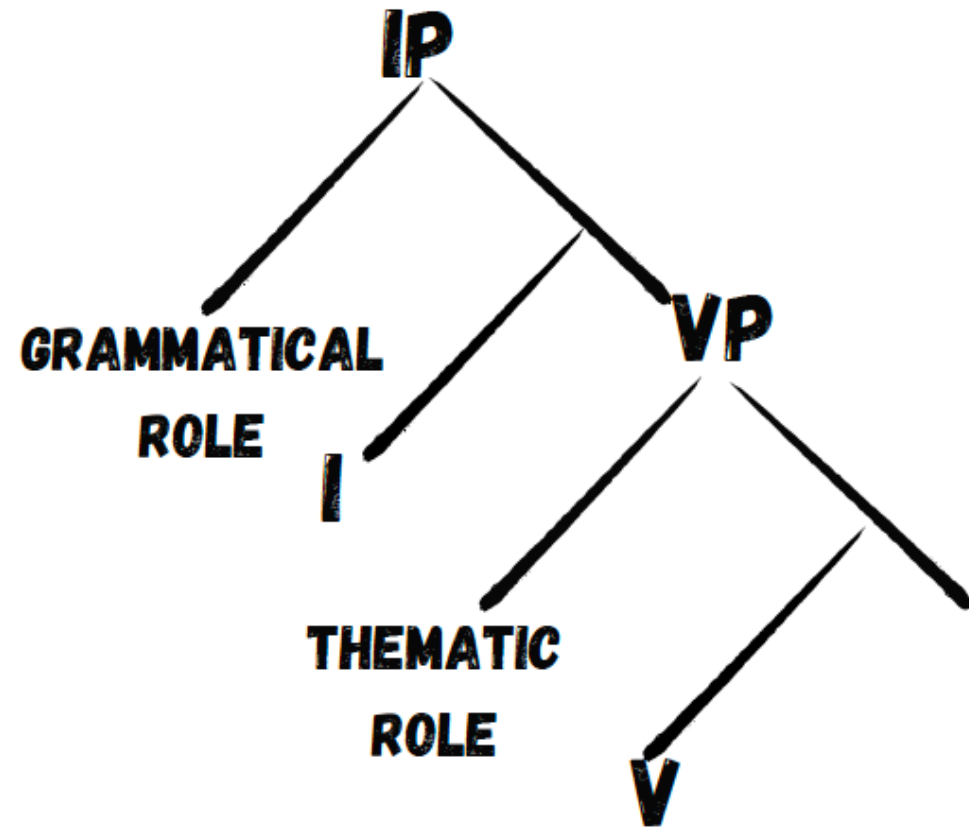- a case-study of *huh*
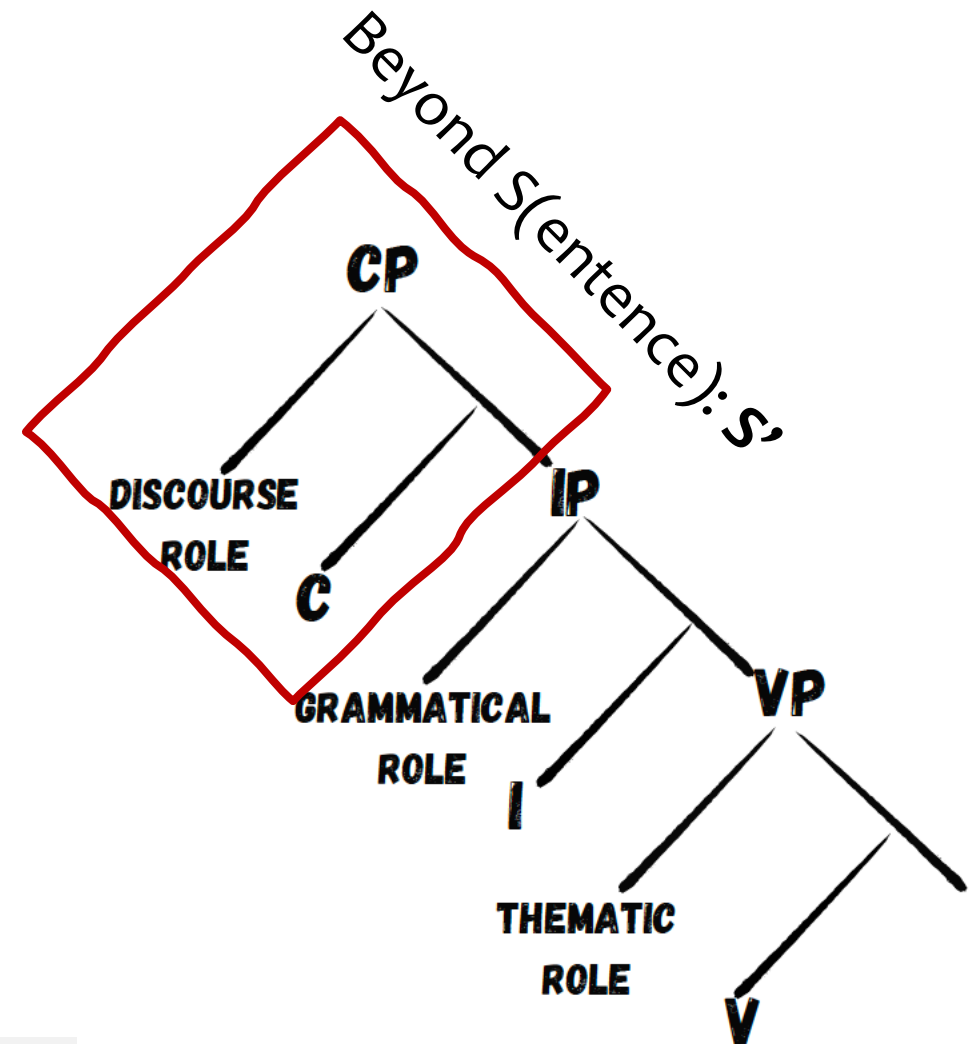
Conclusions

Classic trees

Classic trees

IP

GRAMMATICAL ROLE

I

THEMATIC ROLE

VP

V

Classic trees

Beyond S(entence): S'

CP

DISCOURSE
ROLE
C

IP

GRAMMATICAL
ROLE
I

VP

THEMATIC
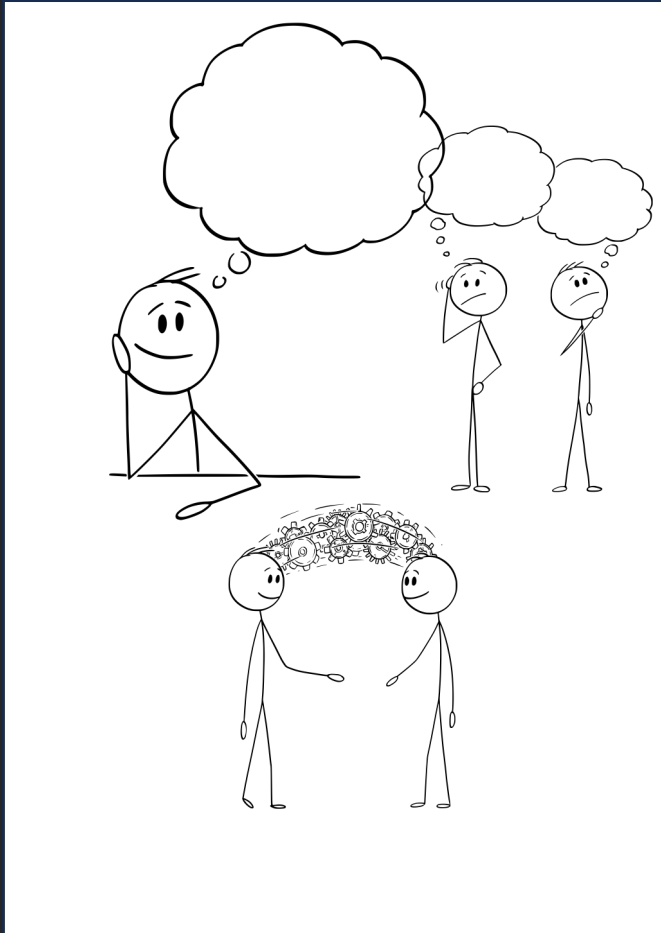ROLE
V

Classic trees

Classic assumptions of linguistics:
- phonology
- morphology
- **syntax**
- semantics
- Pragmatics
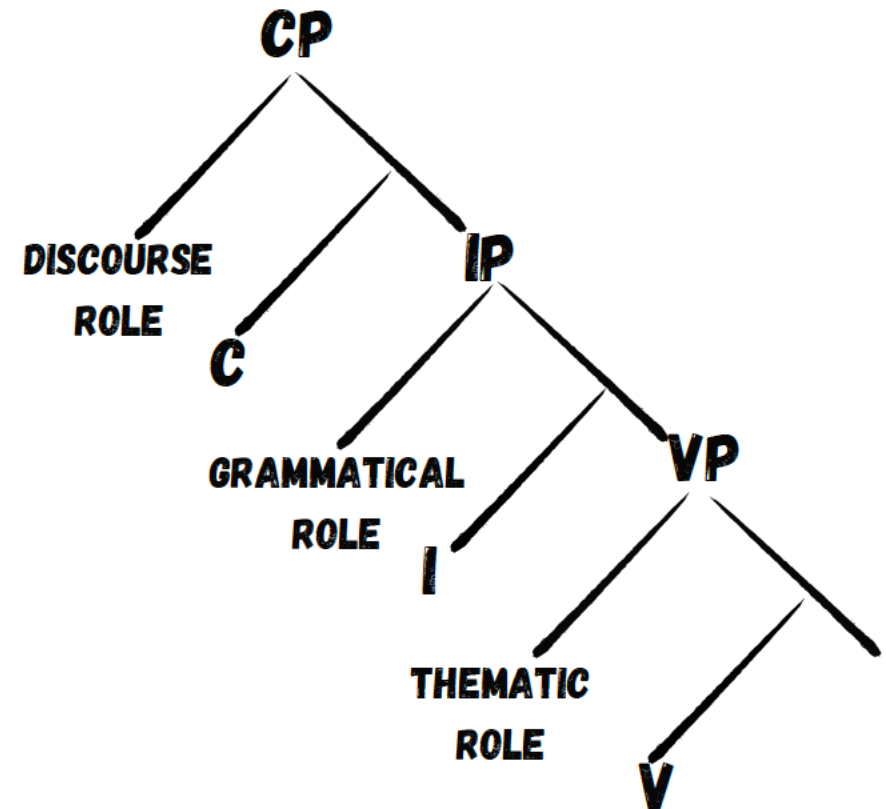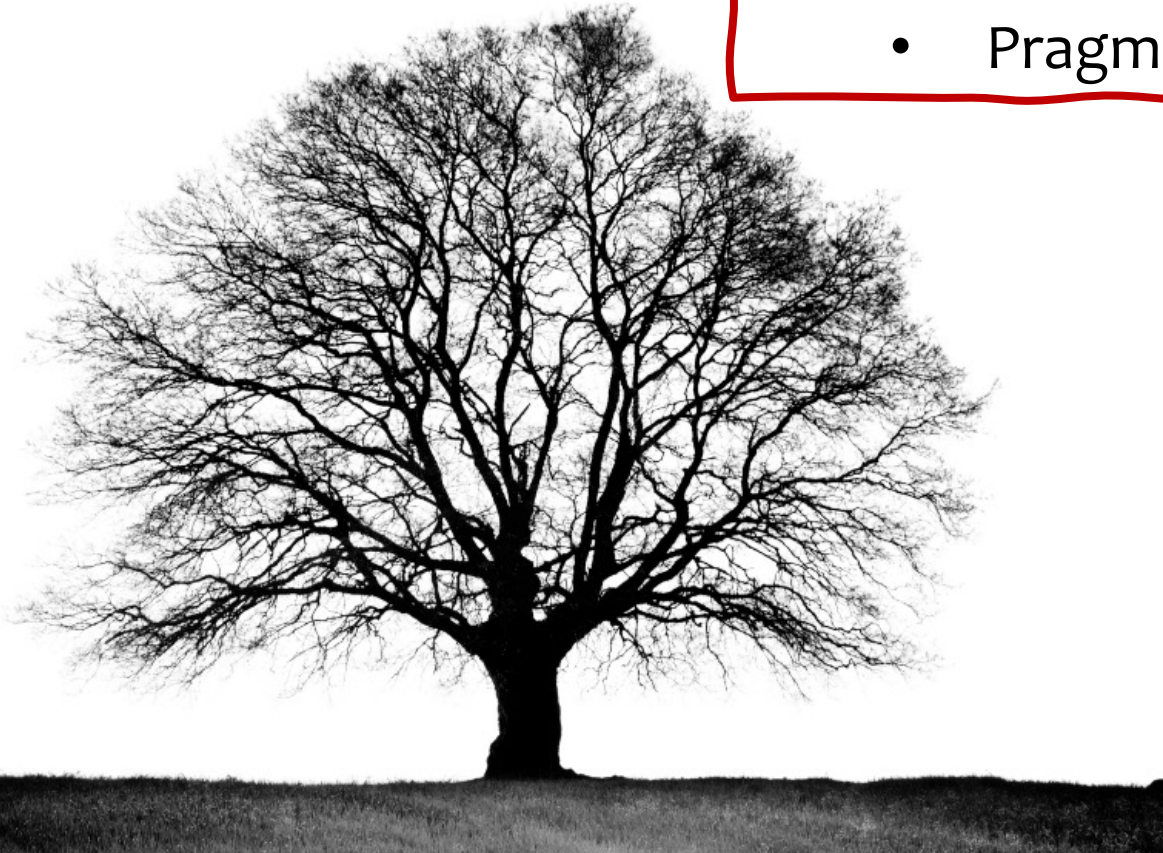
Classic trees

Classic assumptions of linguistics:
- phonology
- morphology
- **syntax**
- semantics
- **pragmatics**

Classic generative assumptions
- Knowledge is competence
- Use is performance

Language is …

… primarily for **thought**

…(secondarily) **used** for communication

Exploring roots

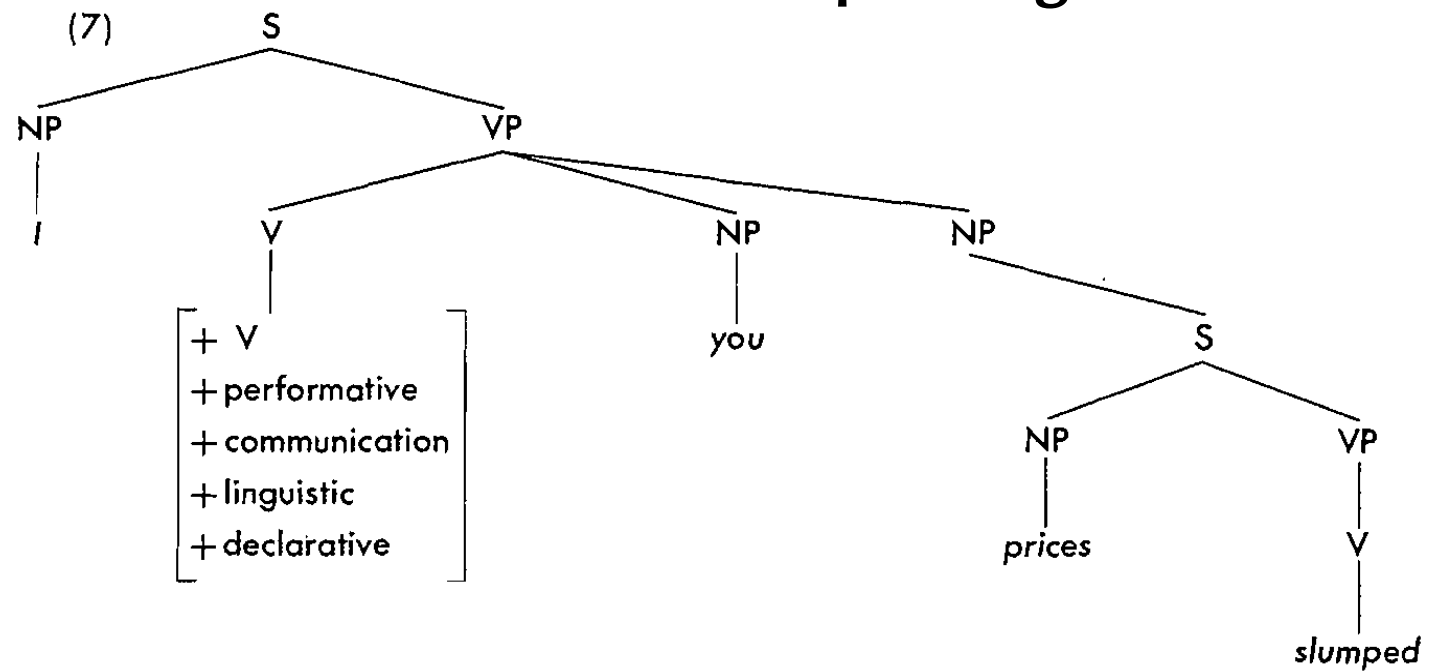Beyond Sentences

Beyond thoughts

Beyond syntax vs. pragmatics

Exploring roots

Performative Hypothesis

Complex roots:
- encode **speech acts**
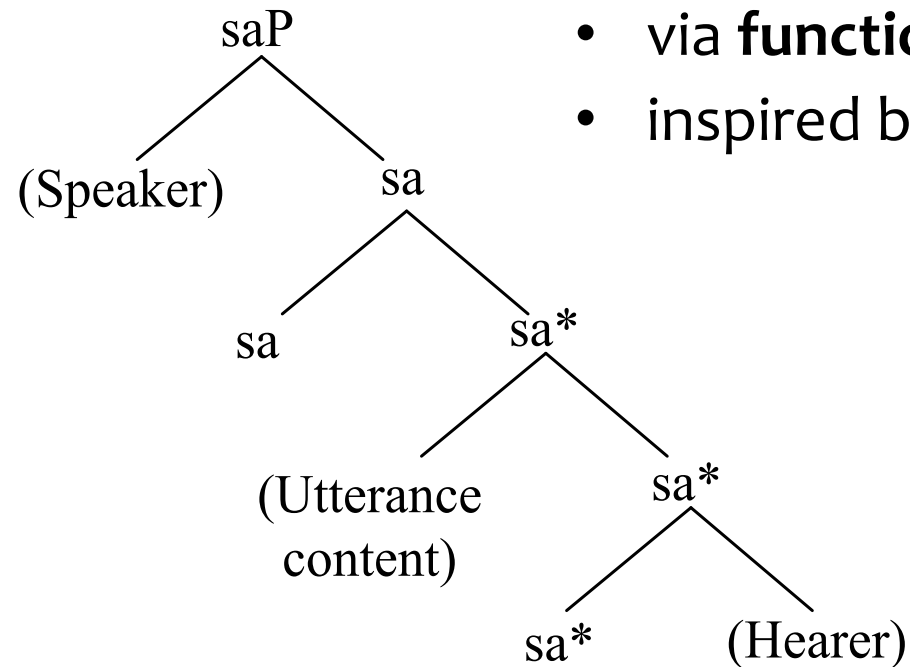- via **pred-arg structure**

Ross 1970

Exploring roots

(Neo)-Performative Hypothesis

Complex roots:
- encode **speech acts**
- via **functional categories**
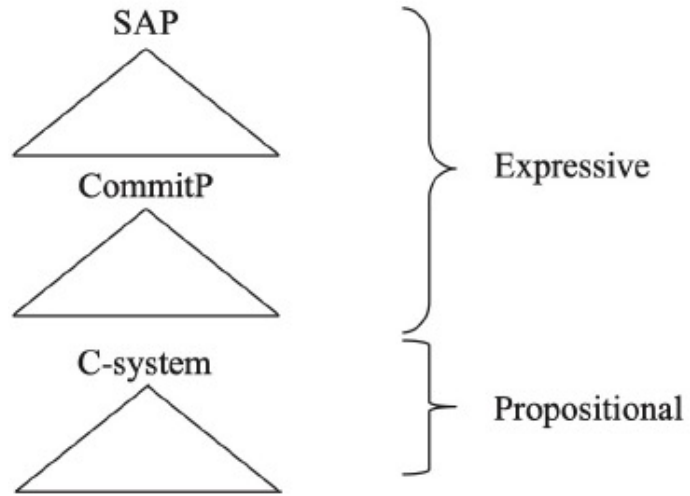- inspired by **Speech Act theory**
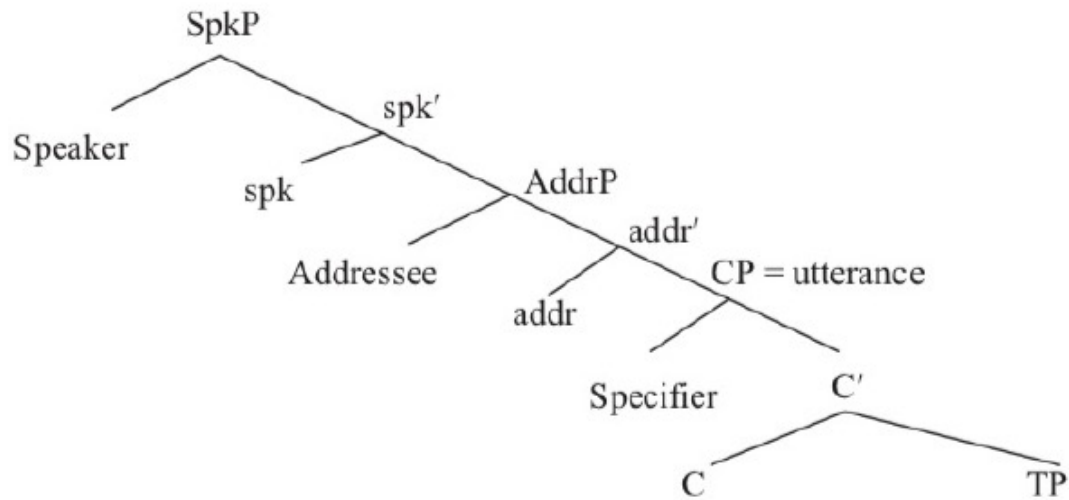

Speas & Tenny 2003: 320

Exploring roots

(Neo)-Performative Hypothesis

Syntax at the top:
- encodes **speech acts and commitments**
- via **functional categories**
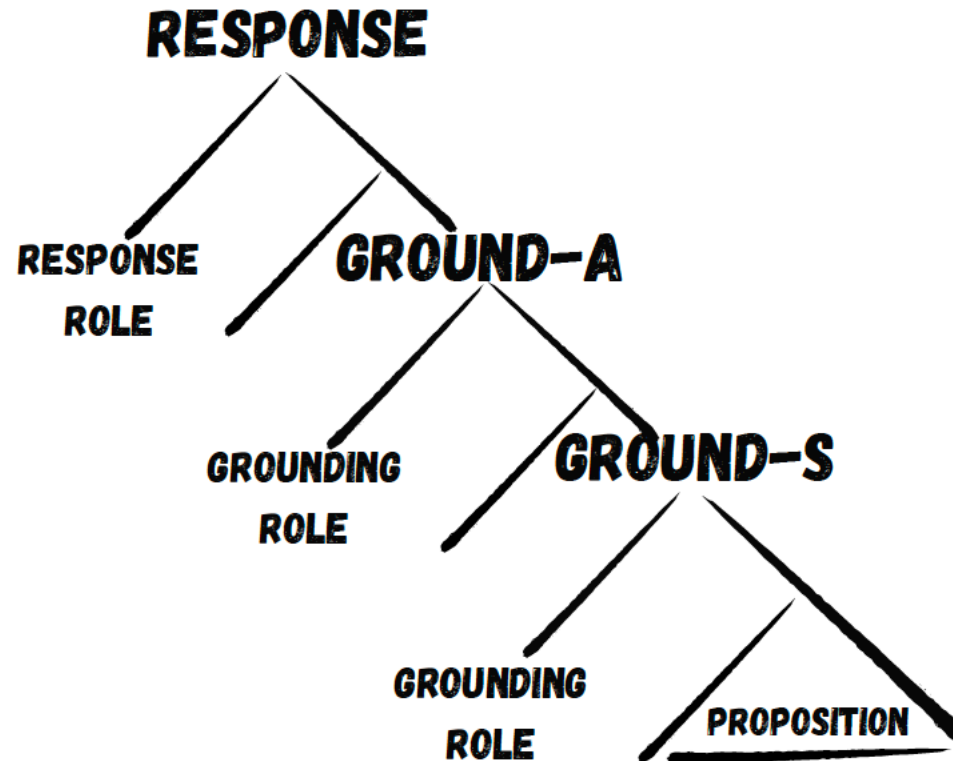- inspired by **Speech Act theory** and **commitment-space semantics**

Krifka 2015, …
Miyagawa 2022

Roots of interaction

Beyond thoughts

Beyond speech acts

Beyond generative grammar

Interactional language

(1) a.   The dog is in front of the fan

b.   **Wow**, the dog is in front of the fan

c.   **Oh,** the dog is in front of the fan

d.   The dog is in front of the fan, **eh**?

e.   The dog is in front of the fan, **huh**?

f.   **But Charlie**, the dog is in front of the fan

g.   The dog is in front of the fan, **Charlie**.

Language changes in interaction

Roots of interaction

Unit of analysis: **utterance**

Incorporates insights from other frameworks:
- conversation analysis
- interactional linguistics
- functional linguistics

Communicative competence

"the **ability** to function
in a truly communicative setting"

Savignon 1972; Campbell and Wales 1970;
Hymes 1972, Keenan (Ochs) 1974

The Grammar of
Interactional Language
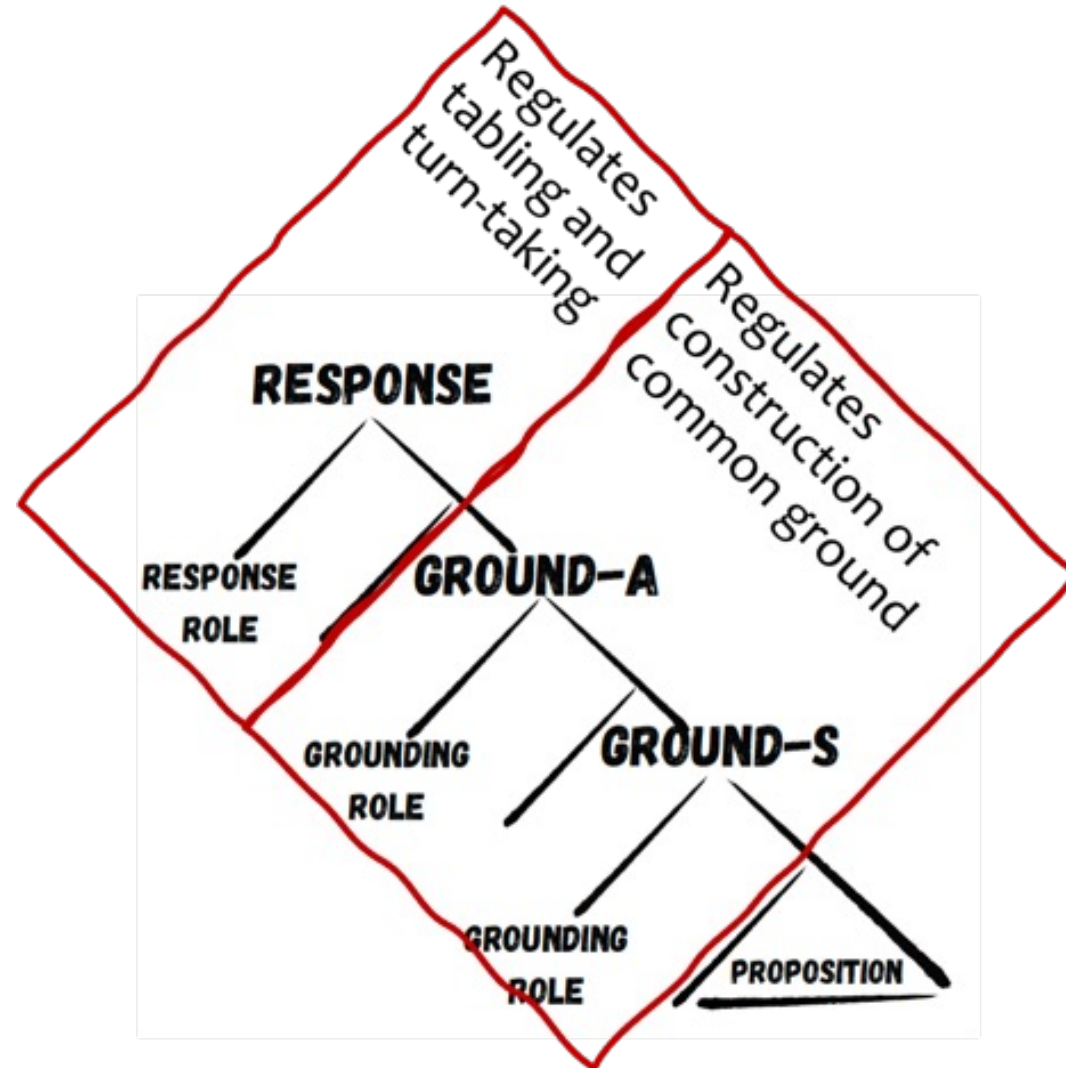Martina Wiltschko
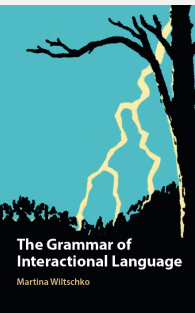
Roots of interaction

The interactional spine hypothesis
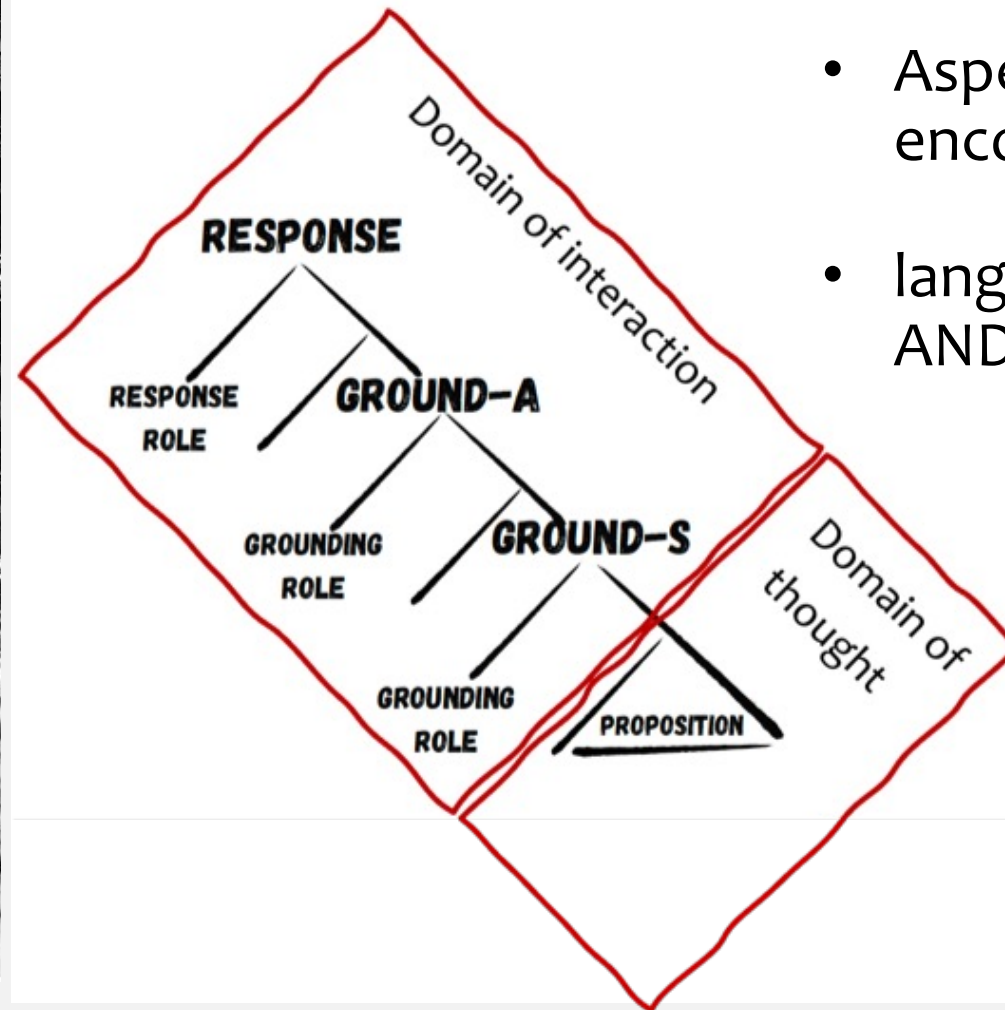
- Aspects of interaction are encoded in the spine

- language is for thought AND for communication

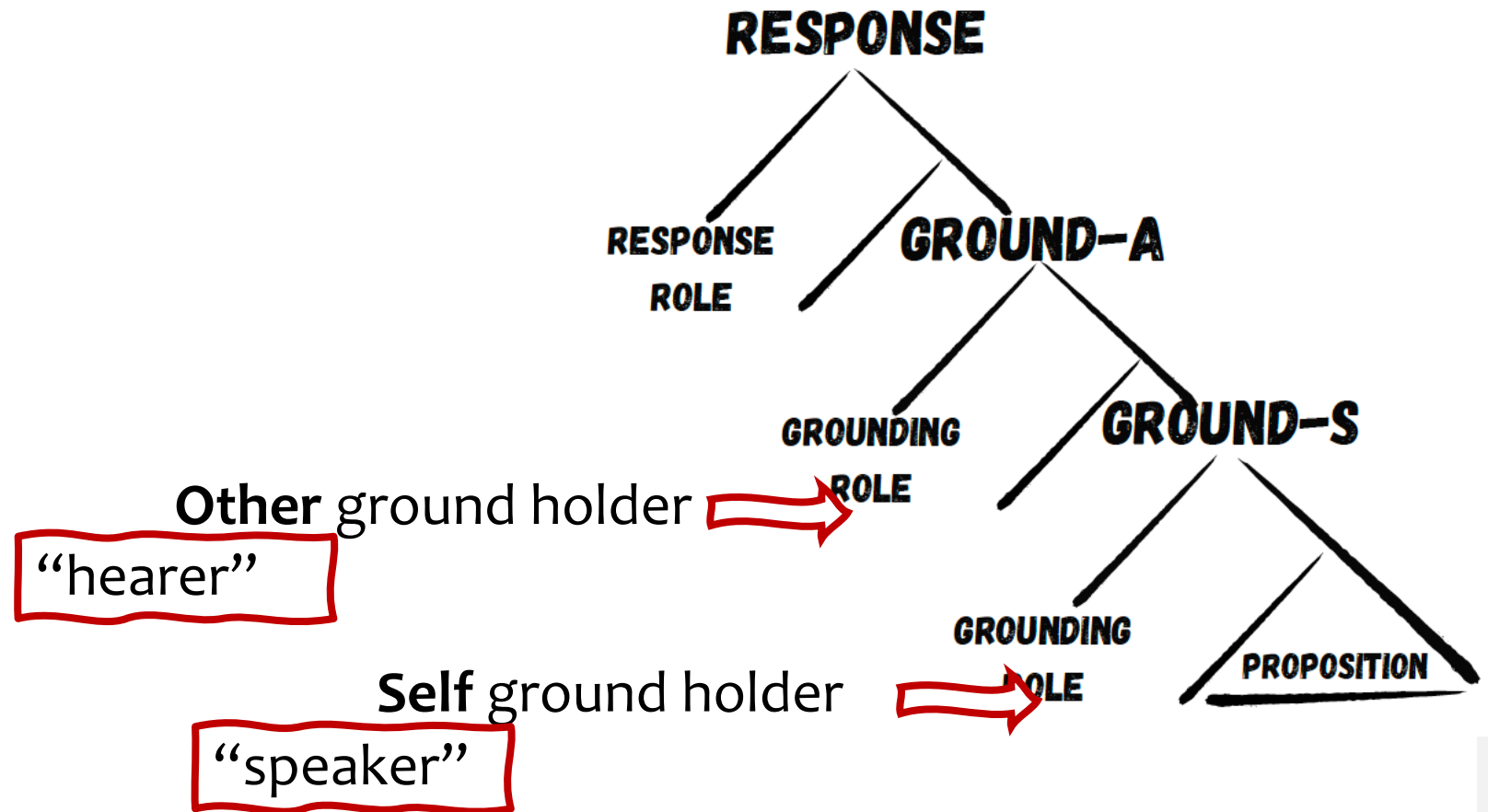# Roots of interaction

RESPONSE

RESPONSE ROLE

GROUND-A

GROUNDING ROLE

GROUND-S

GROUNDING ROLE

PROPOSITION

Regulates tabling and turn-taking

Regulates construction of common ground

The Grammar of Interactional Language
Martina Wiltschko

Roots of interaction

speaker/hearer are defined via interaction

RESPONSE

RESPONSE ROLE

GROUND-A

GROUNDING ROLE

GROUND-S

GROUNDING ROLE

PROPOSITION

Other ground holder →

"hearer"

Self ground holder →

"speaker"

Roots of interaction

speaker/hearer are defined via interaction
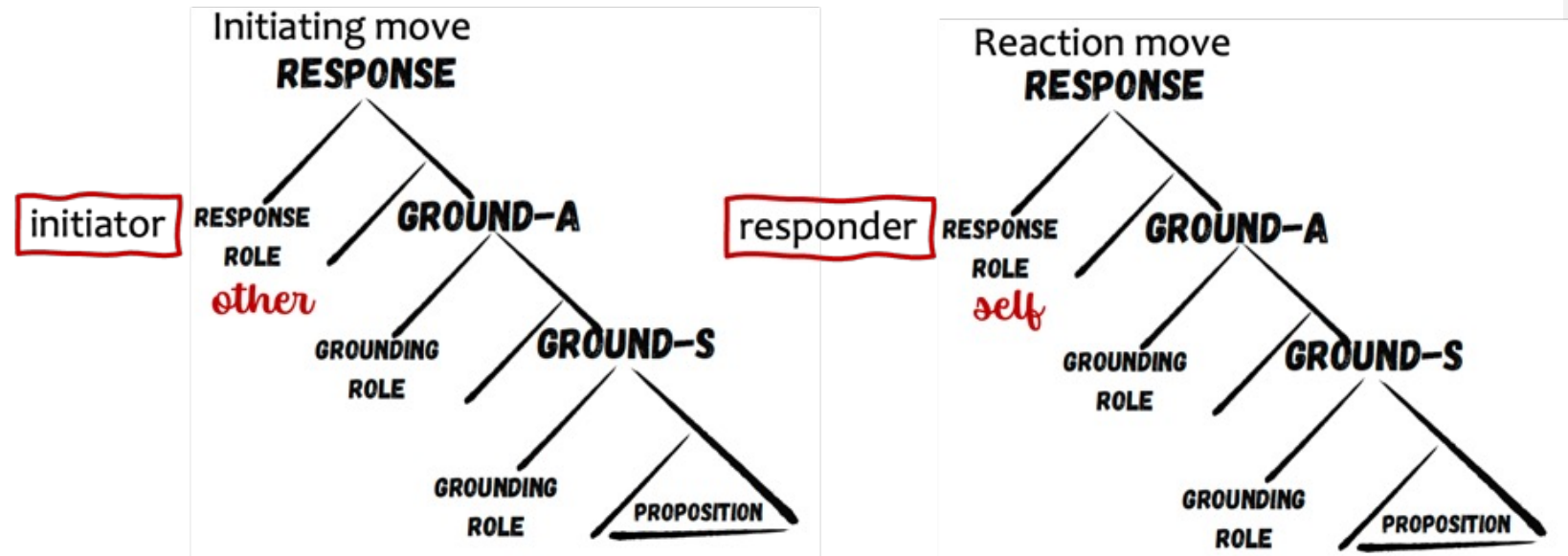
Roots of interaction

3 types of vocatives

Call Vocative:

   Hey **Charlie**! The chameleon chased the butterfly.

Address Vocative:
   Charlie, the chameleon chased the butterfly.
      The chameleon chased the butterfly, **Charlie**

Inverse Vocative:

(The elder brother addresses his little female sibling)

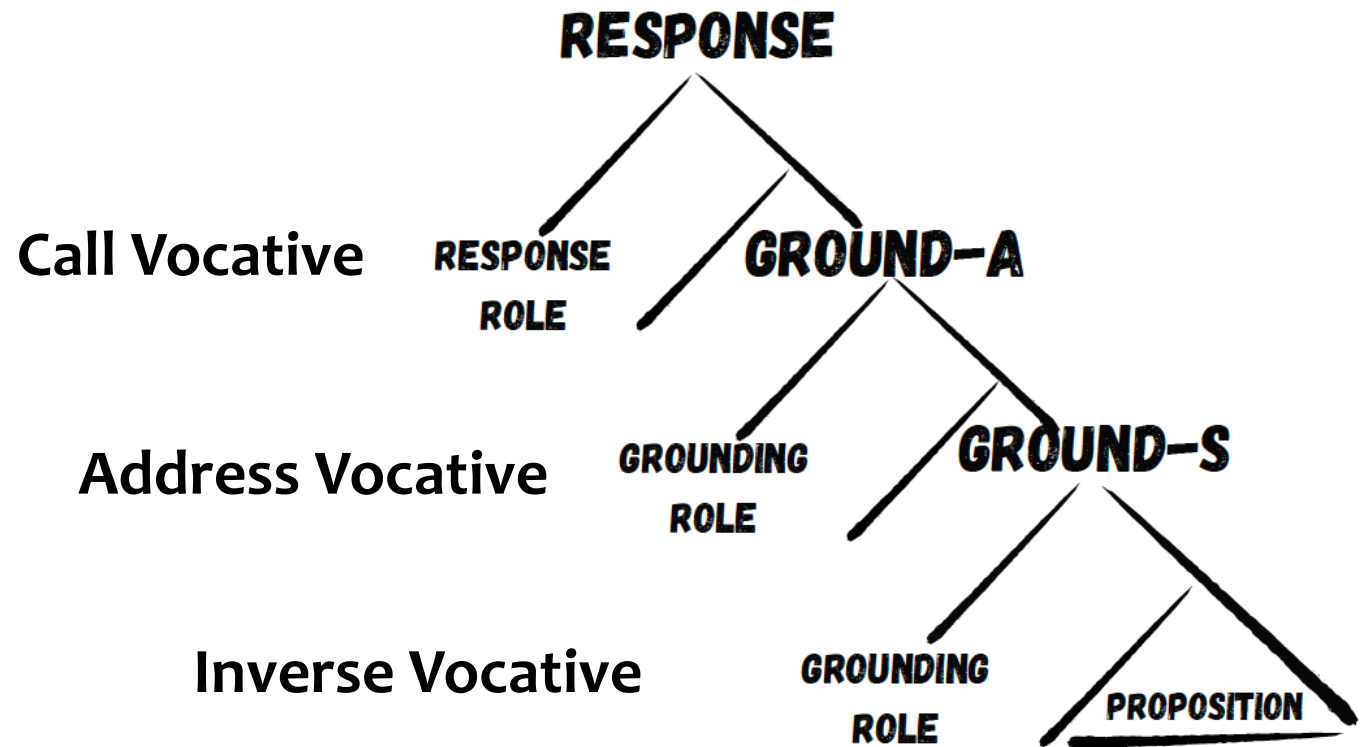Abi-**si**,   ayakkablar-ım-ı getir-ir-mi-sin?

brother-3SG shoes-1SG-ACC fetch-AOR-Q-2SG

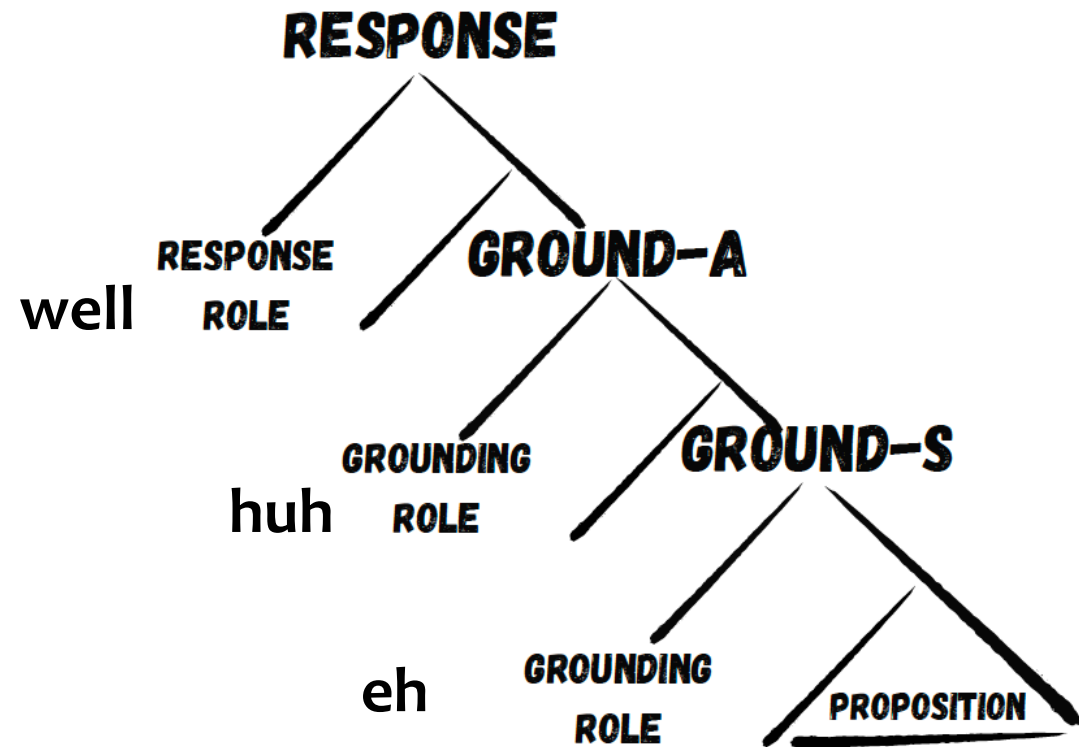'[Her] brother, can you fetch my shoes? (from *İntihar*, a novel)

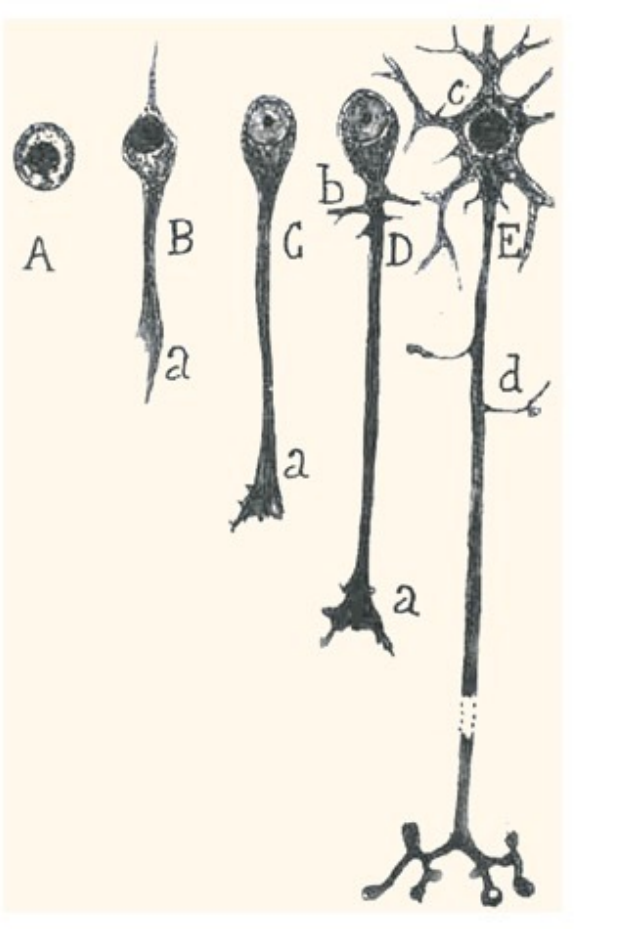# Roots of interaction

3 types of vocatives

Call Vocative

Address Vocative

Inverse Vocative

Roots of interaction

speaker/hearer-oriented units of i-language

Overview

Classic trees
(grow upwards)

Maturation hypothesis
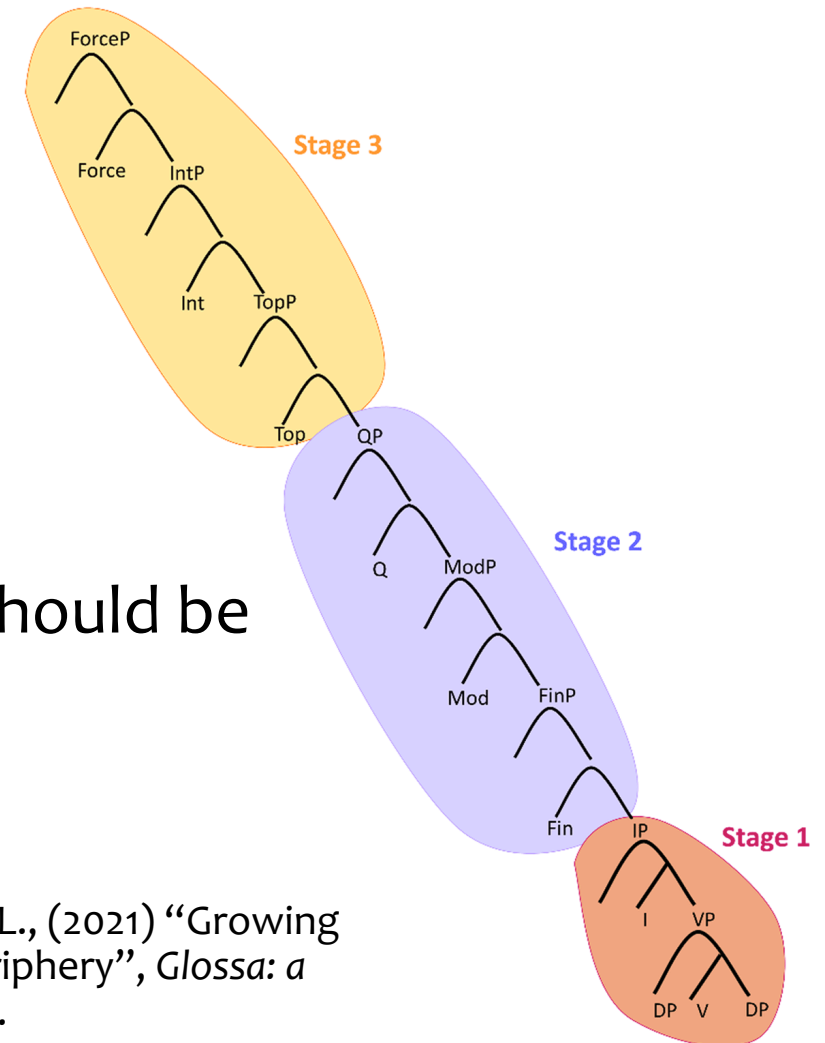

- the top of the tree should be acquired last

Friedmann, N. & Belletti, A. & Rizzi, L., (2021) "Growing trees: The acquisition of the left periphery", *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 6(1): 131.
doi: https://doi.org/10.16995/glossa.5877

Roots of interaction in children

- Interactional roles are acquired early!

- Infants participate in **turn-taking**

  (Bateson 1975; Oller, 2000; Jaffe et al., 2001; Gratier et al., 2015)

Roots of interaction in children
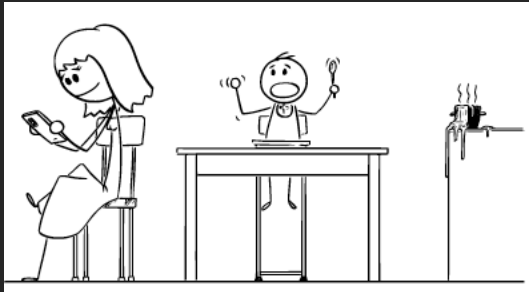

- Interactional roles are acquired early!

- Infants participate in **turn-taking**

  (Bateson 1975; Oller, 2000; Jaffe et al., 2001; Gratier et al., 2015)

- Interactional language is acquired early

Vocatives

(1)   Naima: Mommy? (1;01 – Providence Corpus)
        Mother: Yes.
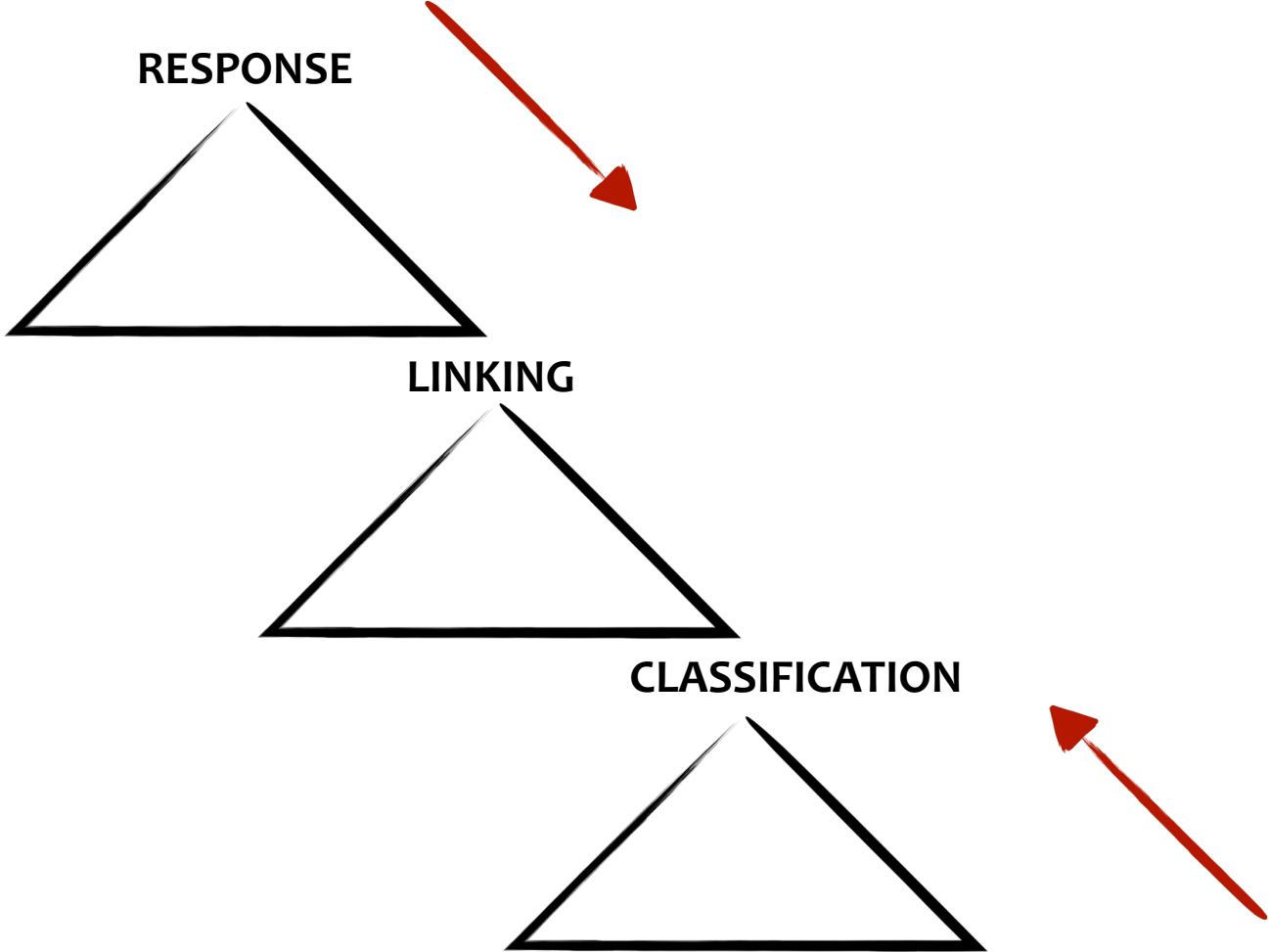
Sentence-final particles

(2)   Chuck: Out ball, huh? (1;08 – Bates Corpus)
        Mother: Ball out!

The tree unfolds at both ends

The inward growing spine hypothesis

RESPONSE

LINKING

CLASSIFICATION

The tree unfolds at both ends

The inward growing spine hypothesis

RESPONDING

GROUNDING

LINKING

ANCHORING

CLASSIFICATION

The tree unfolds at both ends

The inward growing spine hypothesis

RESPONDING

Ground Adr

Ground Sp

LINKING

ANCHORING

PoV
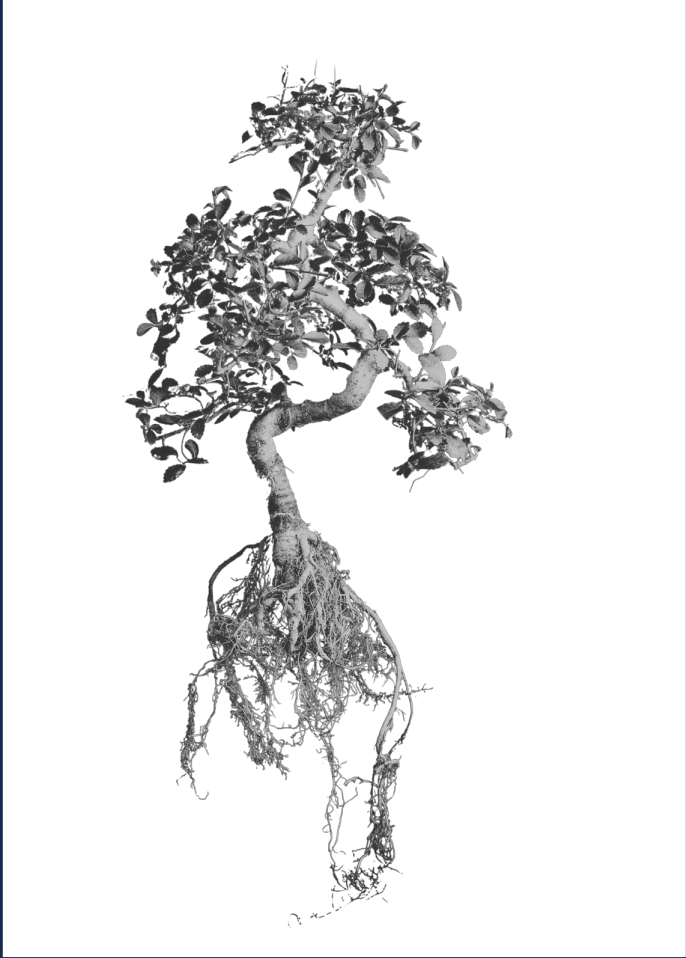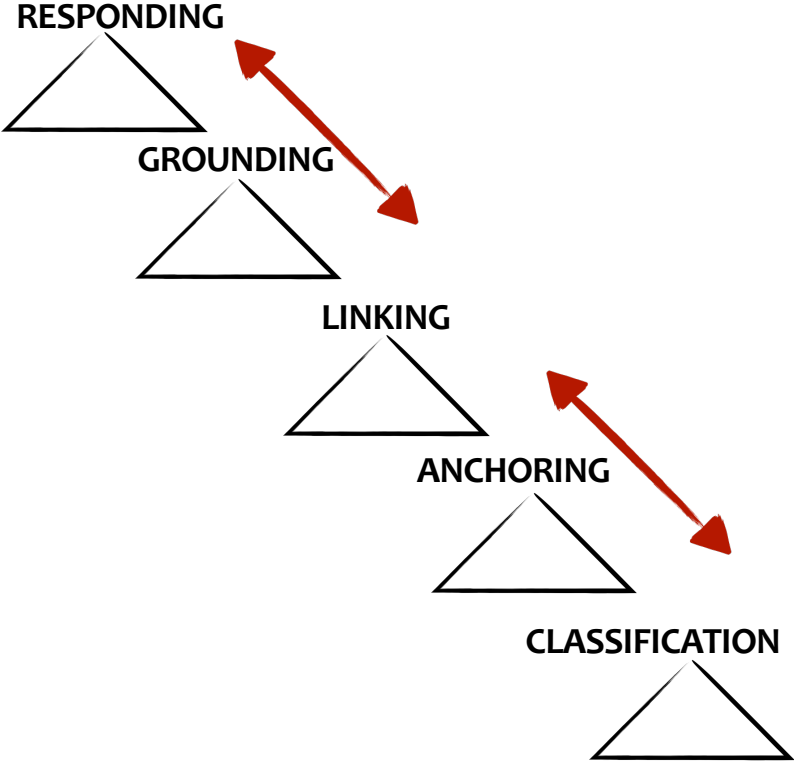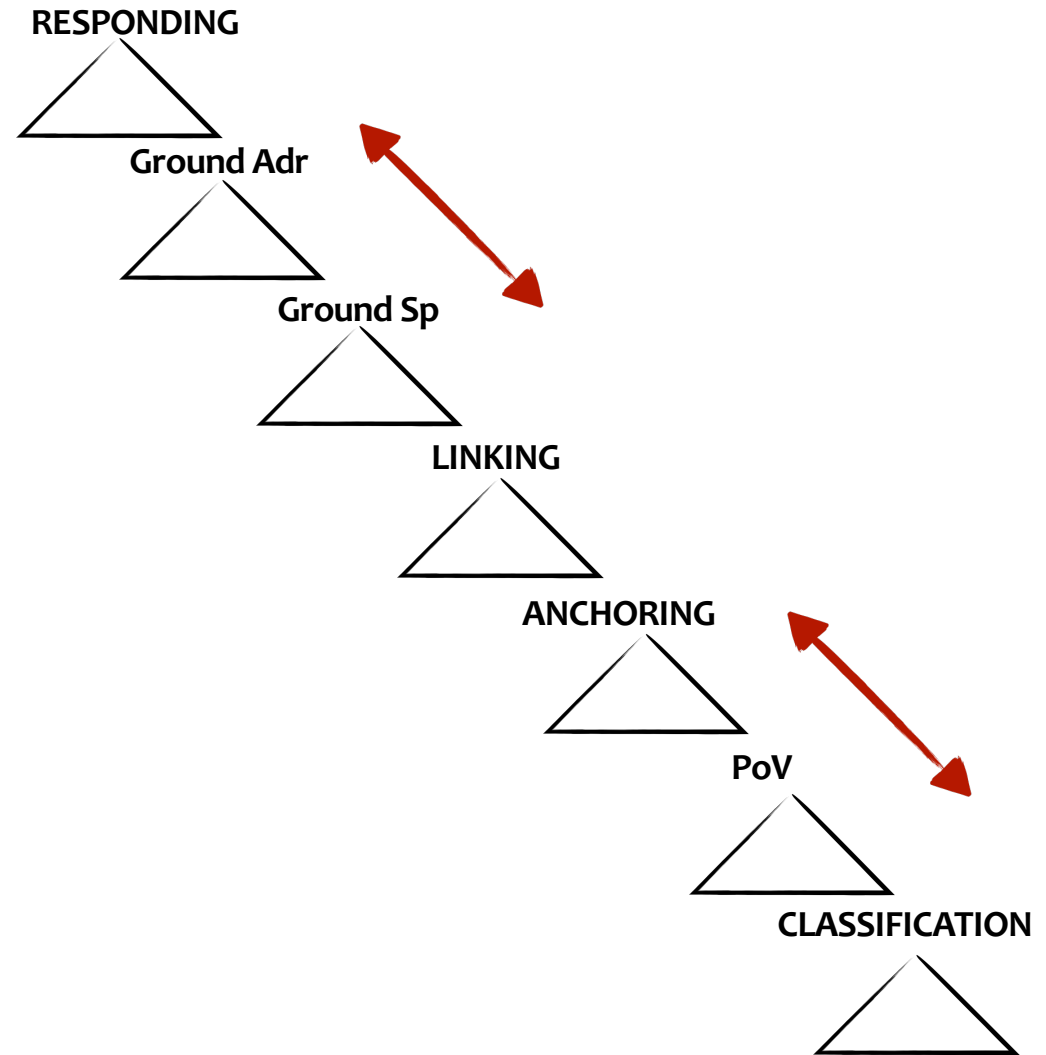
CLASSIFICATION

The tree unfolds at both ends

The bridge model

RESPONDING

Social interaction

Ground Adr

Ground Sp

LINKING

ANCHORING

PoV

The spine (grammar)
bridges two pre-linguistic
cognitive capacities
Hinzen & Wiltschko 2022

Perceptual Categorization
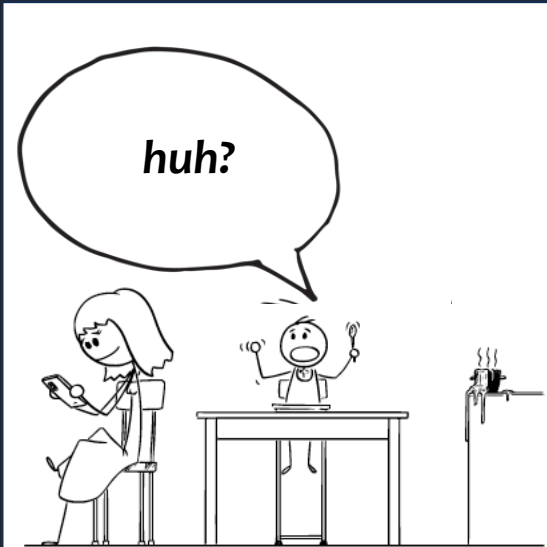
CLASSIFICATION

A case study of *huh*

The acquisition of *huh*
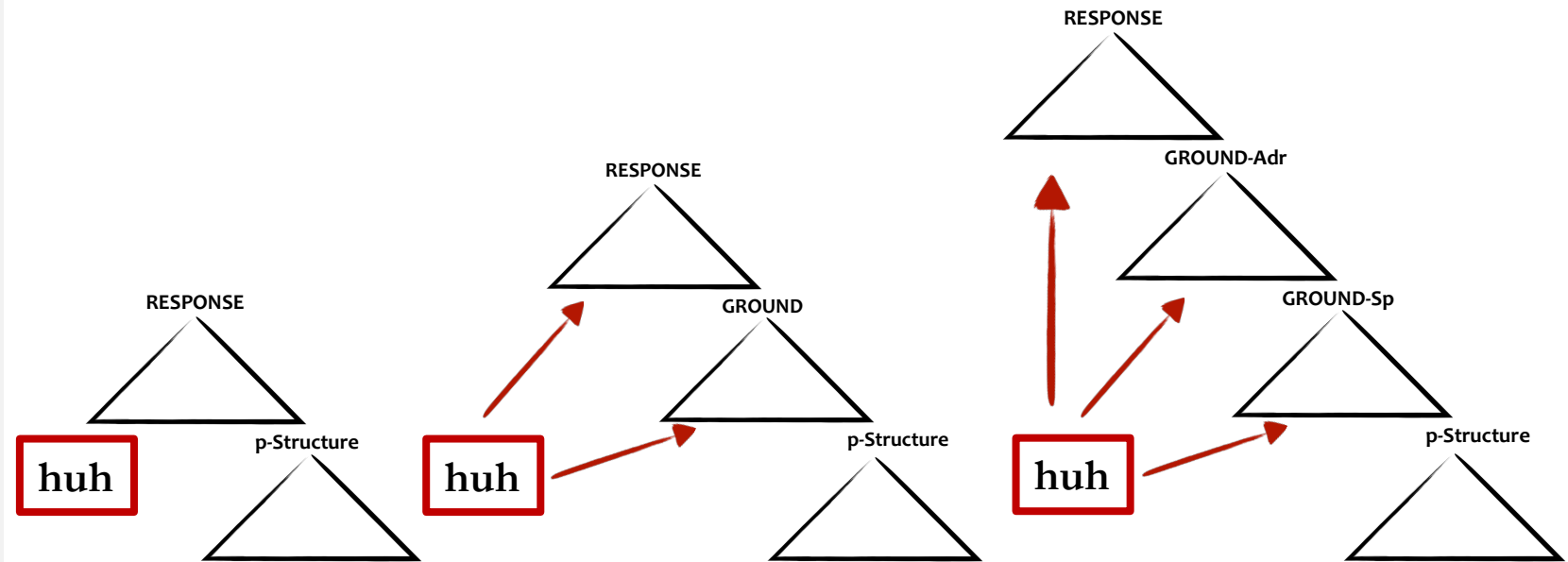
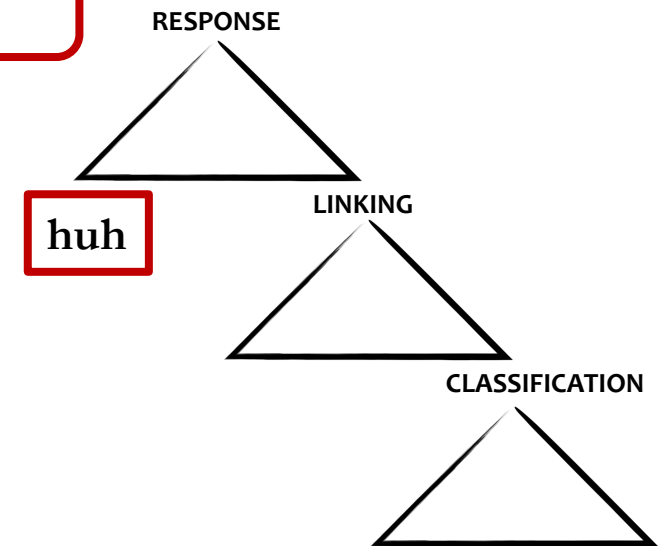The child has to "incorporate" adult grammar into the spine they have available!

A case study of *huh*

Stage 1: *huh* as a response marker

- Majority of host utterances contain wh-words

huh	2;0-5	2:6-11	3;0-5	3;6-11
wh-Q	-	21_{Adam}	50_{Adam} 1_{Sarah}	29_{Adam}
PQ	-	1_{Adam}	1_{Adam}	1_{Adam} 2_{Sarah}
Other	-	8_{Sarah}	2_{Adam} 2_{Sarah}	2_{Adam}
Dec	6_{Adam}	3_{Adam} 13_{Sarah}	2_{Adam} 4_{Sarah}	3_{Adam} 8_{Sarah}
Total	6_{Adam}	25_{Adam} 21_{Sarah}	55_{Adam} 7_{Sarah}	35_{Adam} 10_{Sarah}

RESPONSE

huh

LINKING

CLASSIFICATION

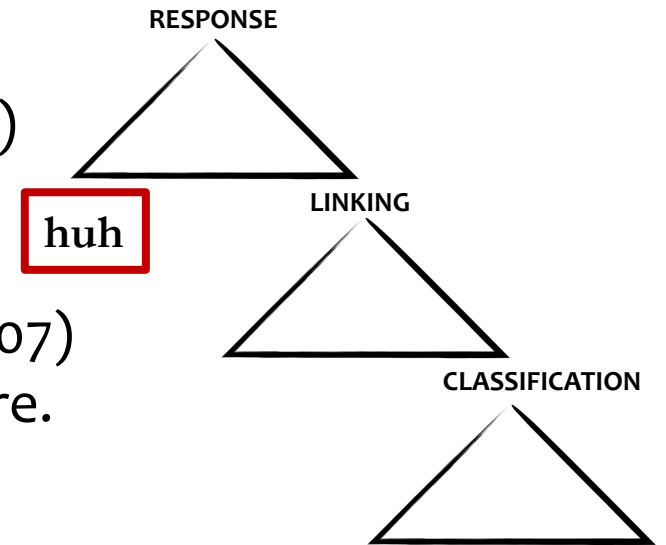# A case study of *huh*

huh?
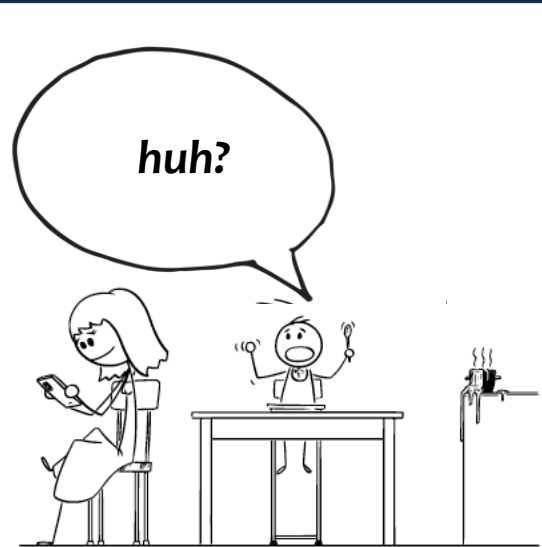
Stage 1: *huh* as a response marker

- Majority of host utterances contain wh-words

- Early SFPS ignore clause type restrictions

(3) Adam: Where go, huh? (2;07)
    Mother: I don't know.

(4) Adam: Where zip it, huh? (2;07)
    Adam: There. Zip it right there.

RESPONSE

huh

LINKING

CLASSIFICATION

A case study of *huh*

Stage 2: *huh* as a generlized grounding marker

- Rapid increase in non-interrogative hosts at 4yo
- Clear cases of declaratives + *huh*

huh	2;0-5	2:6-11	3;0-5	3;6-11	4;0-5	4;6-11
wh-Q	-	21 Adam	50 Adam / 1 Sarah	29 Adam	9 Adam	1 Adam
PQ	-	1 Adam	1 Adam	1 Adam / 2 Sarah	3 Adam / 3 Sarah	2 Adam / 3 Sarah
Other	-	8 Sarah	2 Adam / 2 Sarah	2 Adam	5 Adam / 21 Sarah	3 Adam / 6 Sarah
Dec	6 Adam	3 Adam / 13 Sarah	2 Adam / 4 Sarah	3 Adam / 8 Sarah	38 Adam / 102 Sarah	14 Adam / 31 Sarah
Total	6 Adam	25 Adam / 21 Sarah	55 Adam / 7 Sarah	35 Adam / 10 Sarah	55 Adam / 126 Sarah	20 Adam / 40 Sarah

A case study of *huh*
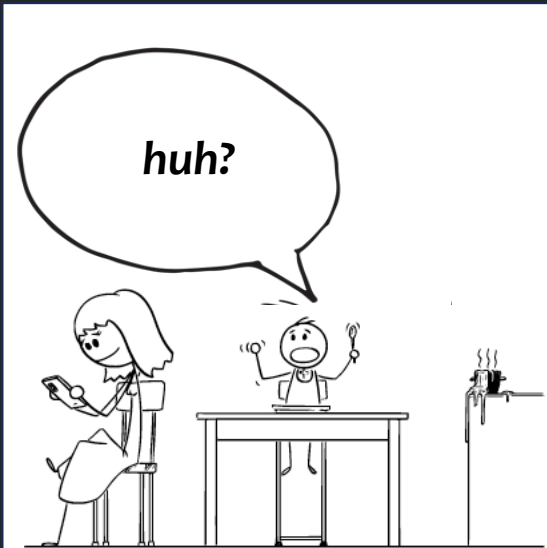

huh?
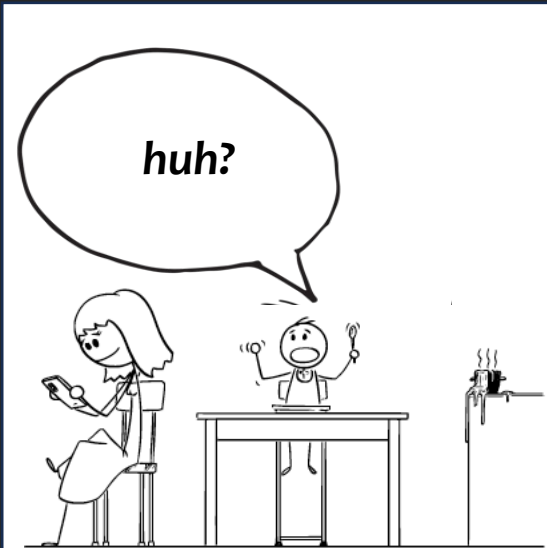
Stage 2: *huh* as a generlized grounding marker

Marks that *p* is now in the ground (different from adult lg.)

RESPONDING

huh

GROUNDING

huh

LINKING

ANCHORING

CLASSIFICATION
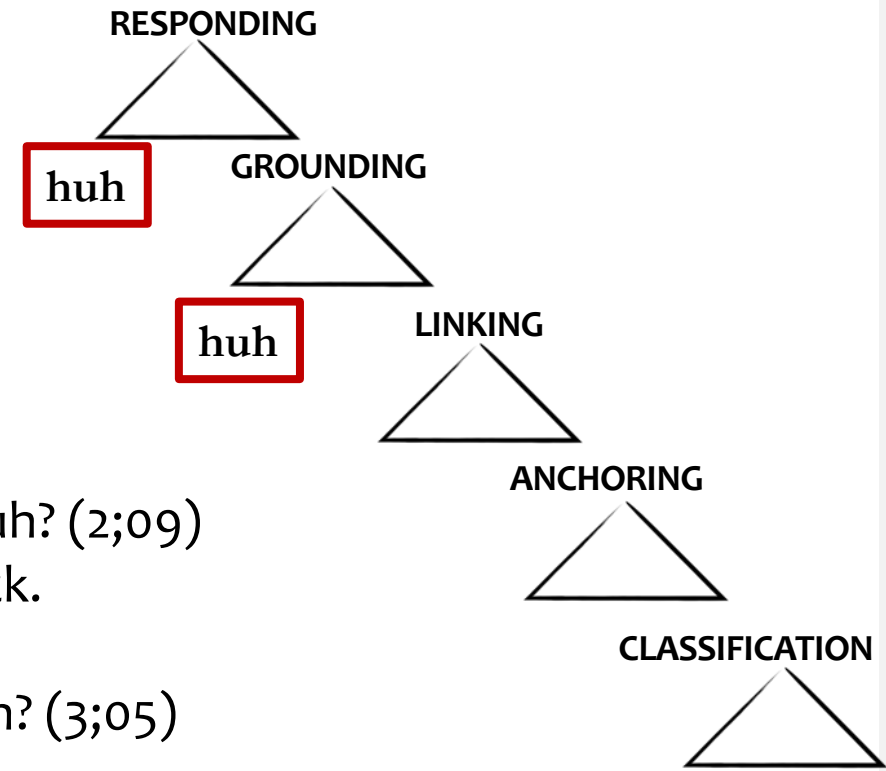
(5) Sarah: You come back, huh? (2;09)
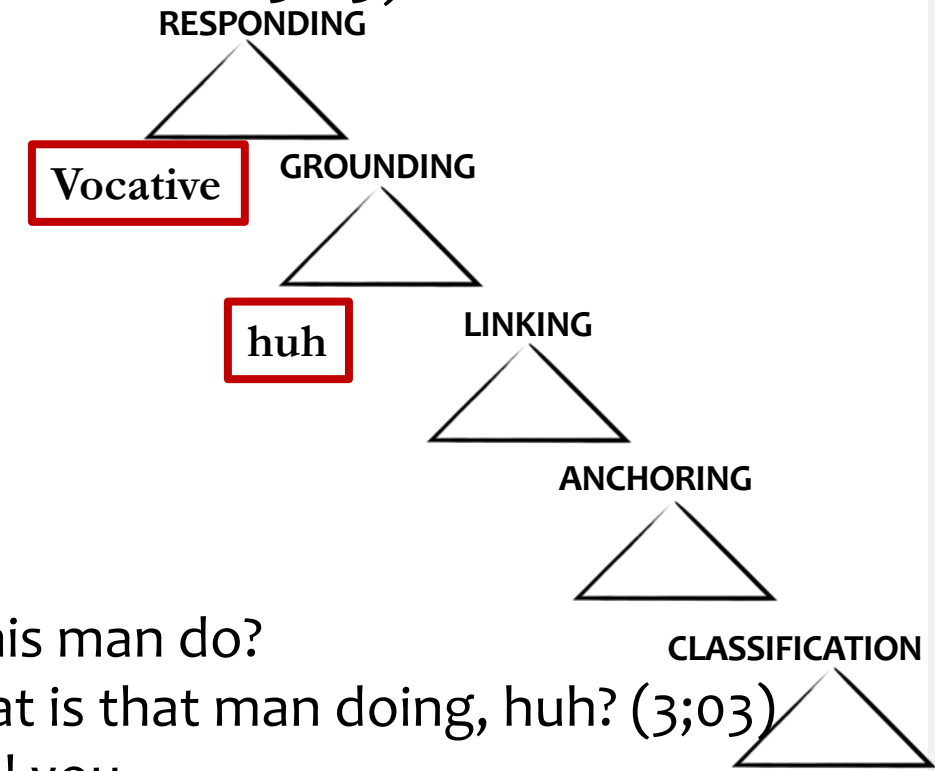   Mother: Yeah, I'll come back.

(6) Sarah: That look nice, huh? (3;05)
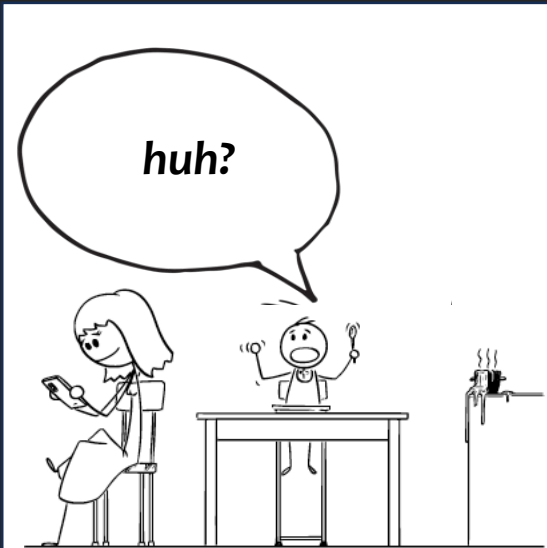   Ken: Very nice.

A case study of *huh*

Stage 2: *huh* as a generrlized grounding marker

Co-occurrence with vocatives
(start at 2:10, more frequent after 3:03)

RESPONDING

Vocative   GROUNDING

huh   LINKING

ANCHORING
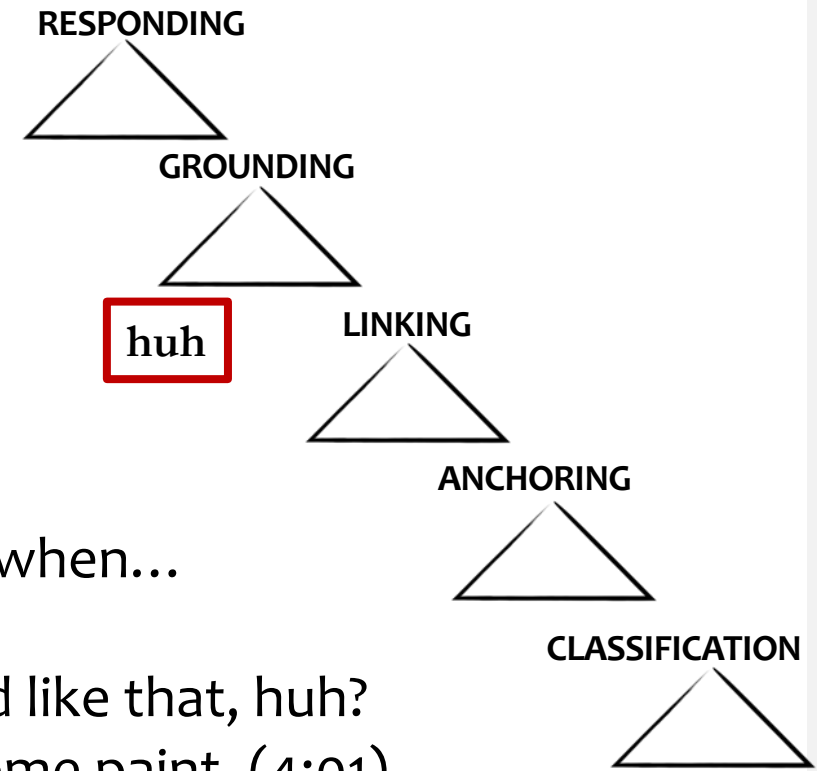
CLASSIFICATION

(7) Ursula: What does this man do?
     Adam: Mommy, what is that man doing, huh? (3;03)
     Mum: Oh, I can't tell you.

A case study of *huh*

Stage 2: *huh* as a generlized grounding marker

Doesn't always expect answer

RESPONDING

GROUNDING

huh

LINKING

ANCHORING

CLASSIFICATION

(8) Adam: You remember when...
You turn.
You turn around like that, huh?
Then you get some paint. (4;01)

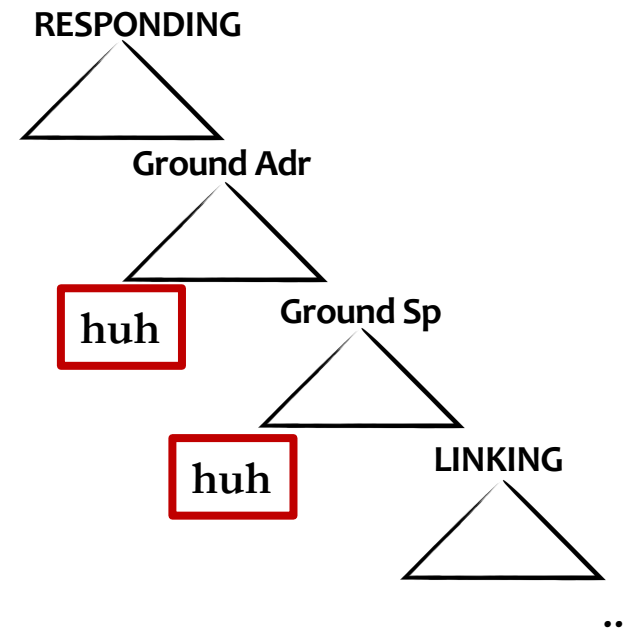# A case study of *huh*
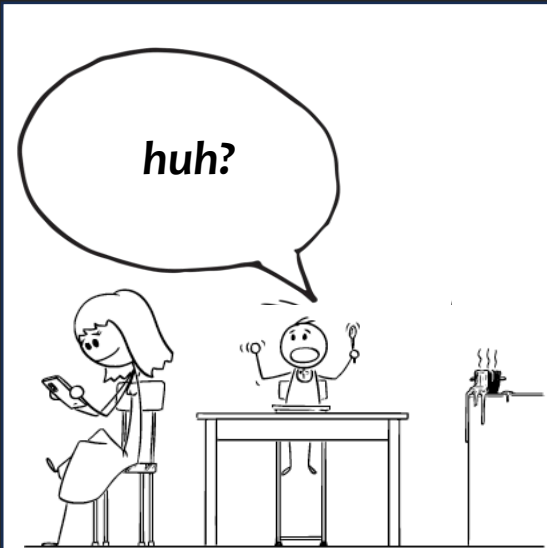

Stage 3: *differentiates A and S ground*

Starting at 4;09 there are clear cases of
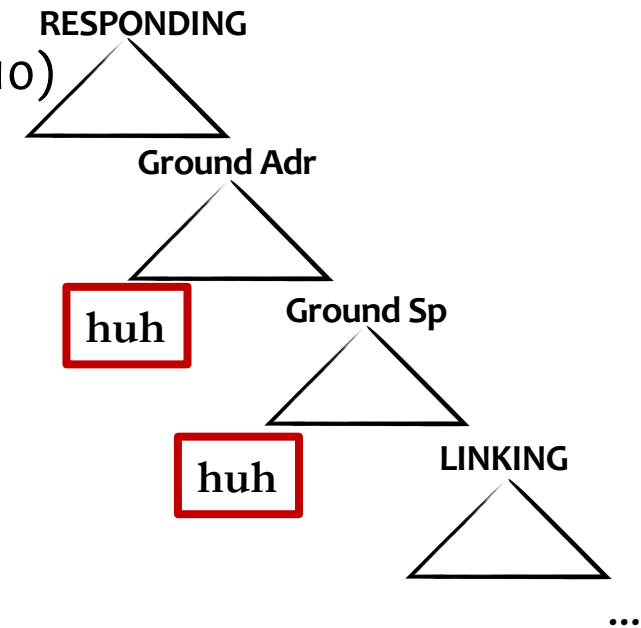- confirming Adr belief
- confirming S belief

A case study of *huh*

Stage 3: *differentiates A and S ground*

S knows, wants to confirm that A knows

(9) Sarah: We got Grampy socks, huh? (4:10)
     Mother: You bought Grampy socks?
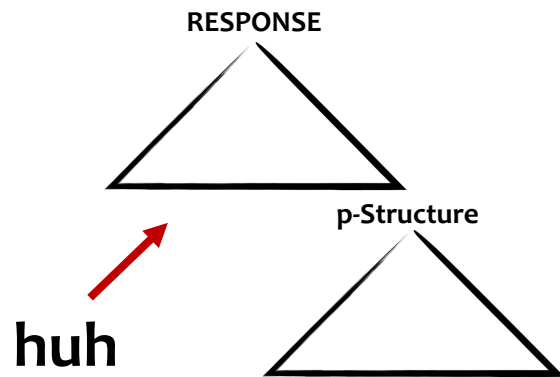   Sarah: Yeah.

S believes and believes that A knows

(10) Mother: We left him down there.
      Sarah: We forgot him, huh? (4; 11)
      Mother: No, we didn't forget him, but…
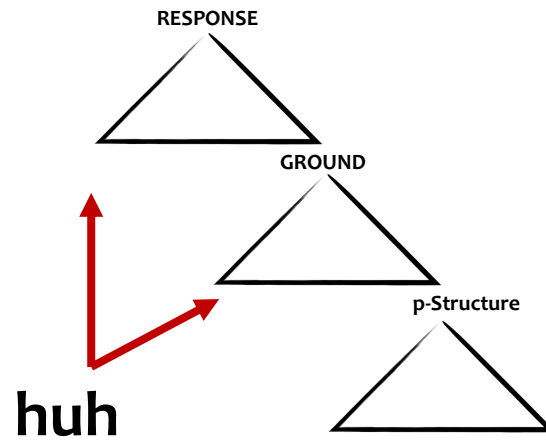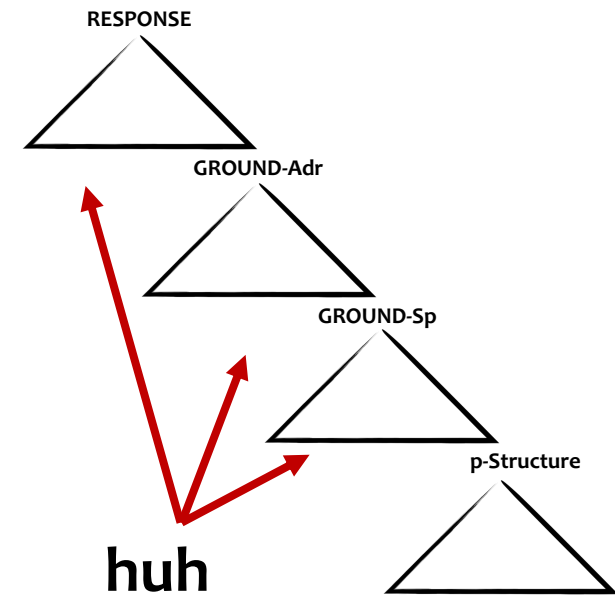
Summary

Stage 1 (till 3;05)

Request for response

Stage 2 (till 4;05)

Request for response
Marks p as grounded

Stage 3 (till ??)

Request for response
Confirm your ground
Confirm my ground

Independent evidence from (in)definites

Adult English: distinguished on the basis of the **common ground**

St'at'imcets (Lillooet Salish): relies on the **speaker's beliefs**

Child English: determiners in FLA go through a St'at'imcets phase

|	St'at'imcets		English	
Speaker Beliefs	ti…a	Context A	the	Common Ground
		Context B	a	
Not shared by speaker beliefs	ku	Context C		Not shared by CG

Schaeffer & Mathewson (2005)

English Children resemble St'at'imcets speakers in overproducing the definite article in in Context B while differentiating article use in A and C.

→ Evidence for **Stage 2:** Undifferentiated grounding

From child to adult
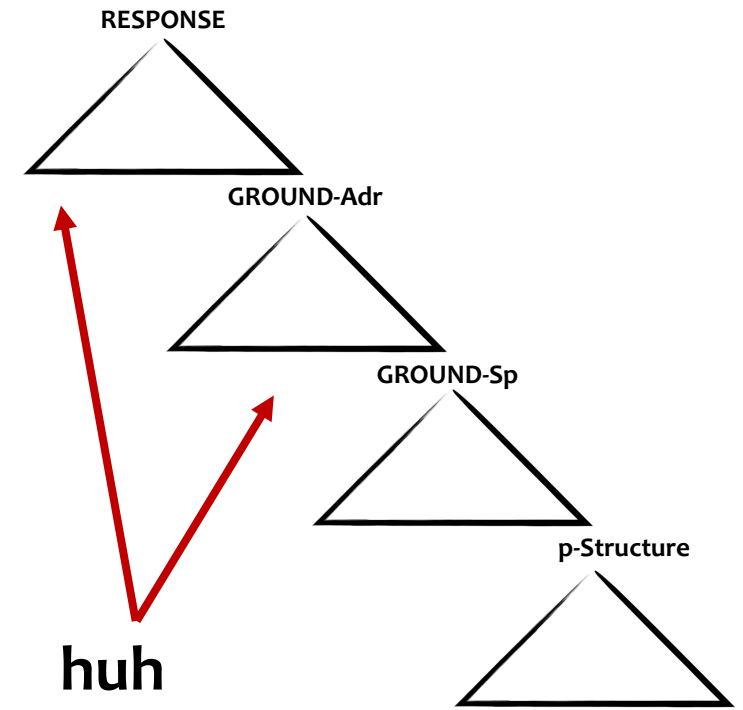

Child

RESPONSE

GROUND-Adr

GROUND-Sp

p-Structure

huh
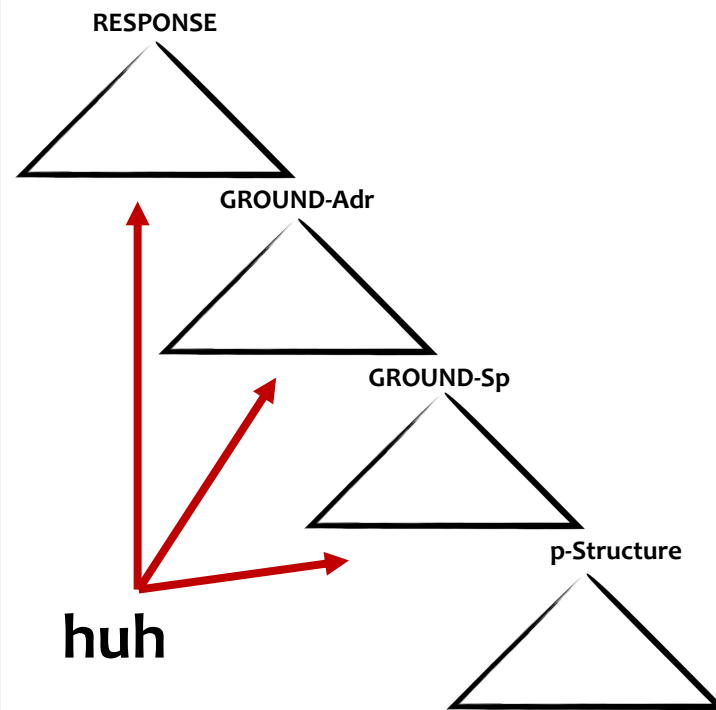
- Request for response
- Confirm your ground
- Confirm my ground

Adult

RESPONSE

GROUND-Adr

GROUND-Sp

p-Structure

huh

- Request for response
- Confirm your ground

Independent evidence from complementizers

Bosch (2023): overgeneralisation of interactional *che*

(11)   a. Che   ride!   (Martina; 1;11.02,MLU 1.99)
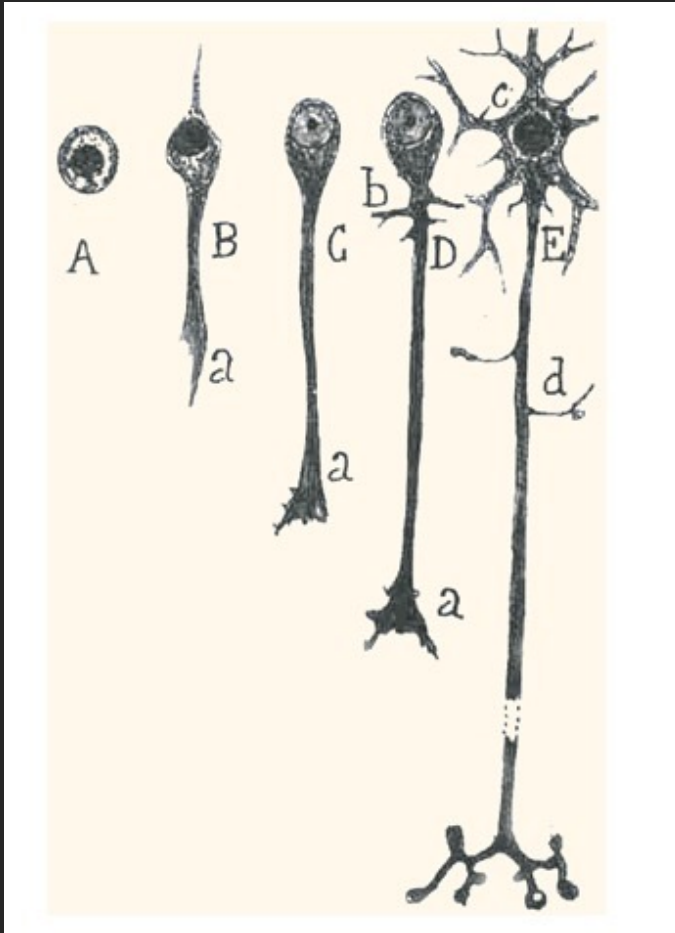   that.excl   laugh.3sg
              'He/she is laughing!'

          b. Che   piove
              that.conj   rain.3sg
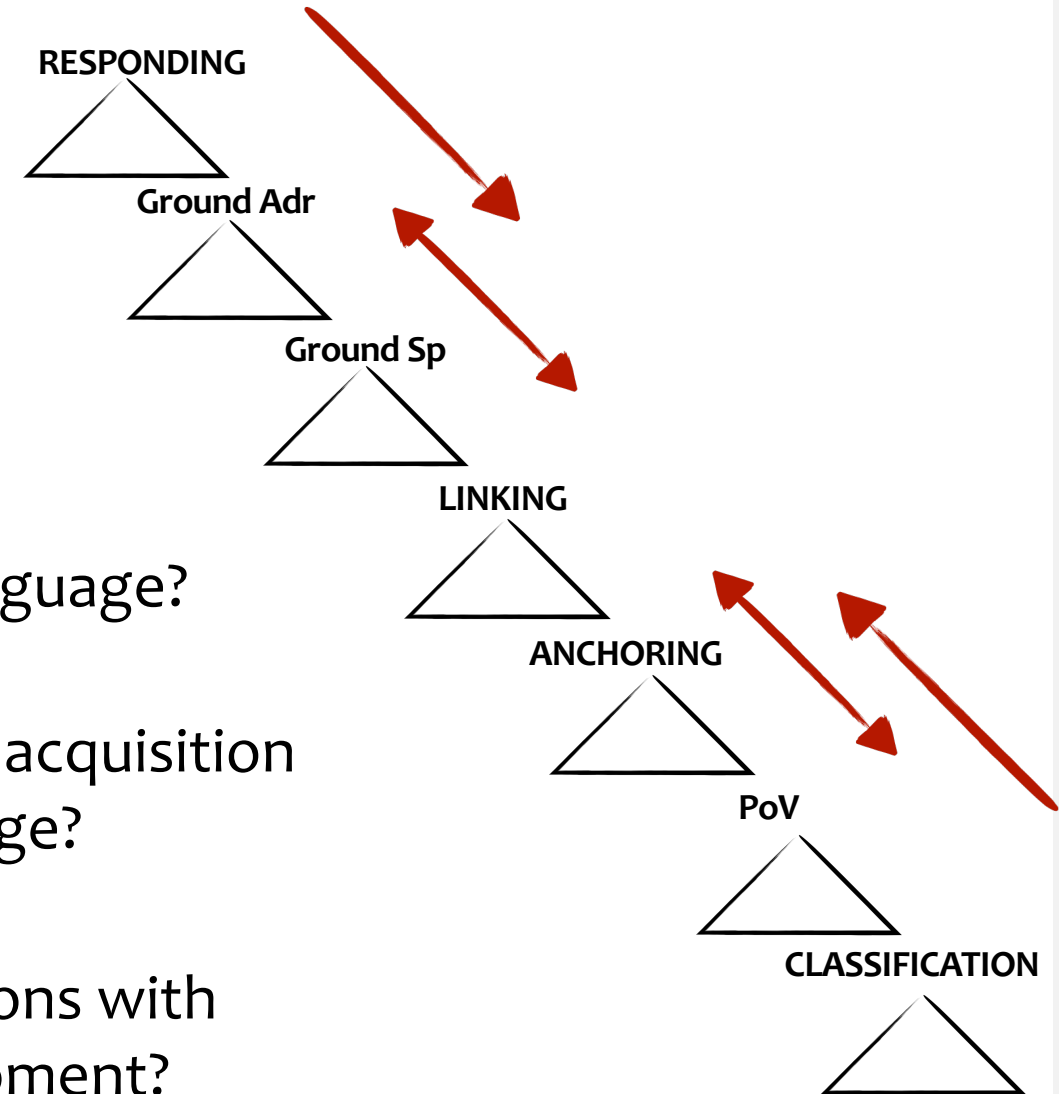   'It's raining' (in response to l'ombrello?, 'the umbrella?')

Examples in (11) pre-date the emergence of embedding che and show extension in to later stages (12)

(12)   *Oh,*   *che*   *c'ha*   *un*   *lunghi*   (Diana; 2;06.00,MLU 5.53)
           oh   *that.excl* *cl.loc=have.3sg*   *a*   *long.pl*
           (lit.) 'Oh, there's a long hairy!'

A research agenda

The inward growing spine hypothesis

- acquisiton of i-language?

- relative timing of acquisition of i- and p-language?

- possible correlations with cognitive development?