



Predicate decomposition and layered derivations: against the independent nature of little v

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In this talk, I focus on the syntactic nature of predicates. Are they atomic elements or can they be syntactically decomposed (into either a v - V structure, or a root and one or more functional (event structure) heads)?

Building on the layered derivations framework of Zwart (2009), I argue that while predicates can be syntactically decomposed, this decomposed structure exists only at a preclausal level (Talsma 2025). As a result, its internal structure is unavailable at the clausal level and predicates should be seen as atomic elements in the derivation of the clause.

This holds important consequences for analyses which take certain languages to spell out v separately from its complement. We look at several such cases and discuss the tenability of these analyses.

References

Talsma, Marjolein Wietske. 2025. Argument structure as a function of Merge: From UTAH to IDAHO. PhD thesis, University of Groningen.

Zwart, Jan-Wouter. 2009. Prospects for top-down derivation. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics* 8:161–187.