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ARTICLE

Reunifying Feature Inheritance and Speech Act Projections: Testing the Model on Peripheral Constructions from Arabic

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to bridge a gap between Feature Inheritance (FI) and Speech Act Projections (SAPs), addressing the significant challenge SAPs pose to FI and its underlying mechanism, AGREE. Previous studies highlight the need for reallocating features within the syntax to reconcile FI with cartographic structures, suggesting that moving the C head above Foc and ToP heads is necessary. However, this reallocation is problematic as it fails to account for SAPs, creating a mismatch between syntax and pragmatics, where C must be c-commanded by SAPs rather than simply articulated by them. To address this issue, the study redefines the locus of features in syntactic derivations, proposing that syntactic operations target clausal structures while pragmatic constructions target utterances. Given that every clause is an utterance, but not every utterance is a clause, the study argues that features originate in a head higher than C, identified as U(tterance). This redefinition unifies the use of upward and downward AGREE in the pragmatic-syntactic interface and simplifies grammar by eliminating arbitrary processes like feature sharing. The study tests this new model using data from Arabic, demonstrating that C patterns with other phasal heads such as T and v, inheriting its features from the U head. The findings suggest that this approach provides a more coherent account of the interaction between syntax and pragmatics, with recommendations for further exploration of the model across different languages to validate its applicability and potential to simplify syntactic theory.

Keywords: Feature Inheritance; Agree; Speech Act Projections

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1. Introduction

The syntax of the left periphery has been the focus of cartographic studies[1, 2]. Rizzi's (2014) cartographic approach has been attested on the syntax of left periphery in a number of languages such as Italian[1, 2], Chinese[3], Hebrew[4], Arabic[5, 6] and others. While the cartographic analysis of the left periphery has provided a reliable account for the interaction between syntax, discourse, and pragmatics, it has created a problem for analyzing structures under Feature Inheritance (FI)[7]. The need was addressed, and a reconciliation between the two approaches was established by reallocating features within the syntax proper[8]. His reconciliation looks at the functional heads of the left periphery as features that can be inherited from C (see **Figure 1** below). Accordingly, C does not only transfers phi features to T, but it also transfers features that define topics and elements in focus. Heads get their identity by inheriting such features (1). The reconciliation, however, fails to capture Speech Act Projections (SAPs)[9–11] and their corresponding projections, such as Grounding Projections[12, 13].

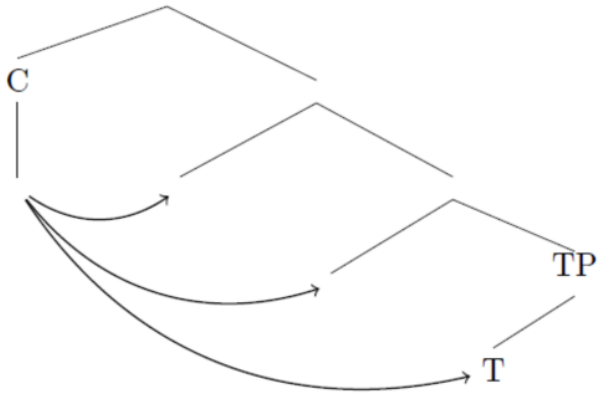

Figure 1. Features inherited from C.

The failure to integrate SAPs demanded using two types of AGREE for accounting for the behavior of expressivity[14], imperatives[15] and allocutive agreement[16]. Upward Agree operates to link pragmatically motivated features only. However, a downward agree is preferable to target other features such as phi [φ]. Data is presented showing the need to deploy the two types of AGREE to account for allocutive agreement[16]. The proposal widens the gap that calls for inheriting pragmatic features from C.[8, 16]. If heads get their categorical identity by getting their features from C, it becomes impossible for C to determine which pragmatic features are moving downward and which are going upward (see **Figure 2** below).

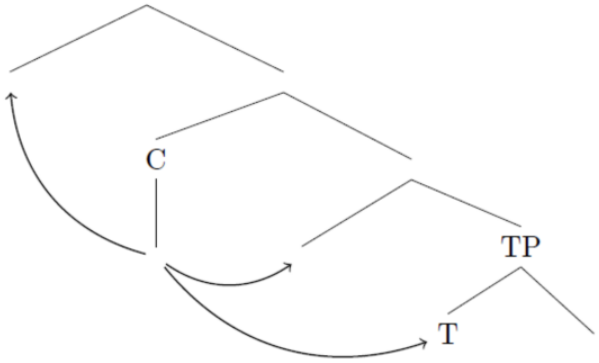

Figure 2. Features moving upward and downward.

[Focus] and [Topic] are the only pragmatic features that move downward[8]. The [allocutive] feature may move upward[16]. The mismatch shows a random application of AGREE at the pragmatic-syntactic interface. This research focuses on answering the following question: How does the Language Faculty (LF) determine the choice between upward and downward AGREE?

We propose that the recent development in SAPs demand to set a new locus head for FI. Abstract features originate in a U(tterance) head (see **Figure 3** below). The U head contains features such as [Force], [Voc], [Ground], [Expressivity], and other features, such as phi, that are associated with lower phases. It is assumed that through FI, the abstract features target not only discourse heads but also pragmatic heads. Thus, the U head has not only agreement and tense features, but it also contains abstract features such as [Force], [Voc], [Ground], [Express], and others. Under this view, FI and SAPs can be covered under one umbrella – FI.

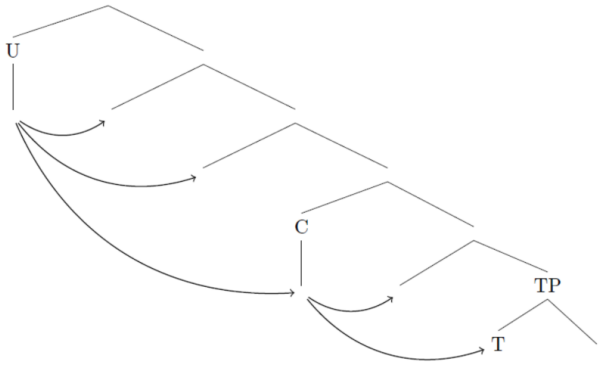

Figure 3. The locus head U.

The proposed model contributes to our understanding of the LF. First, it unifies FI and SAPs. All features are transferred downwardly. FI, in turn, simplifies the AGREE mechanism[16, 17]. In addition, the model provides counterevidence against confining [φ] to C and T. We show that [φ] originates in U - not only C but also other speech act heads can inherit and transfer [φ]. We draw evidence from allocutive markers in Arabic. Third, the model clarifies when a speech act head may function as a host for vocatives, particles, grounding markers, addressee markers or exclamations. *Grounding* and *speech acts* are different entities. As a consequence, we draw evidence that Grounding Projections (GPs) and SAPs should not be treated analogously[9, 10, 13]. The model highlights the distinction between them syntactically. FI provides SAPs with different flavors. It argues that *grounding* is a feature that can be transferred from U. Fifth, the model settles the debate related to the variability in projecting speech acts – should the HEARER projection c-command the SPEAKER one? or is it the other way around?[9, 13]; Finally, the model unfolds the impact of higher phases on grammaticalization.

The paper is organized as follows. The second part presents a background to establish a foundation for the current model; it describes the mismatch between syntax and pragmatics. The third part presents the cogwheels of the current model, namely, FI and MFI. The fourth part introduces the model and tests its applicability on vocatives, confirmationals, addressee markers, and others. The fifth part compares the model with current models and bridges their gaps. The final part concludes the study.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Feature Inheritance: The Weak Version

A model was proposed, highlighting the role of the functional head C in transferring features to other functional heads[18]. Since C c-commands lower functional heads it is assumed to be the locus head for feature inheritance. Based on this model, T is not specified for [φ] features. Instead, T gets its specification for such features from C. All types of subject verb agreement and other patterns that are part of T are viewed through the mechanism of feature inheritance. T, hence, does not include uninterpretable features unless it inherits these features from C. If C selects T, T may become active for later syntactic processes. The model has enabled understanding several patterns. It also established a neat basis for looking at syntactic derivations as phases[19].

However, in its basic insight, the model lacked the power to capture precisely how C transfers its features[18]. Based on data on agreement and antiagreement from Berber, it was observed that functional heads may not always choose to transfer their features; this notion is referred to as *keep*[17]. Functional heads may transfer only a copy of features while keeping the original copy, a behavior called as *share*. In addition, the original model was confirmed which is called *donate*[18].

(1) iswa ali aman.
3s.drink.perf Ali water
'Ali drank water.'

(2) ma ag swan aman.
who COMP drink.PERF.PART water
'Who drank water?'

(3) ma ay thenna Fatima iswa aman.
who COMP 3SF.say.perf Fatima 3SM.drink.PERF water
'Who did Fatima say drank water?'

The analysis is based on algorithmic process of *if not, try again*; C attempts to find a probe that matches with a goal by donating all its features[17]. If the machinery works, agree takes place. If not, the process rewinds back. It starts again by keeping the features and establishing agree without transferring them. If the process works, agreement is established; if not, C reestablishes the process and uses *share* as a last resort. Some problems related to *donate* have been highlighted[20]. It was postulated that if all features are transferred to T, then a feature marking a question should be found

in T[17]. The basic assumption was clarified[21] and answers a concern[20] by pointing to how the mechanism works

> *The basic argument for inheritance – due to Richards – is that if valued uninterpretable features remain at the phase head position, the derivation will crash at the next phase. That is not a problem here, because Q is interpretable. For φ-features it may mean that they are deleted or given a phonetic form (as in West Flemish), hence invisible at the next phase.*

However, feature valuation should not be restricted to uninterpretable features, even interpretable features can be valued[22]. What we propose is that if feature inheritance is cognitively motivated, then it should be economic, blind to the features themselves, and uniform.

2.2. Previous Reconciliations

Feature inheritance has failed to account for peripheral constructions. Reconciliation for feature inheritance and criterial features was proposed[8]. To save the basic mechanism of feature inheritance – features originate in C and target and define lower functional heads, C should move to a position higher that focus and topic positions. C may target unlabelled goals by transferring features such as [TOPIC] and [FOCUS]. The process operates in a multiple fashion. C may transfer features at one interval to target T, in addition to the unlabelled heads (see **Figure 4** below). He refers to such a mechanism as multiple feature inheritance (MFI).

(4)

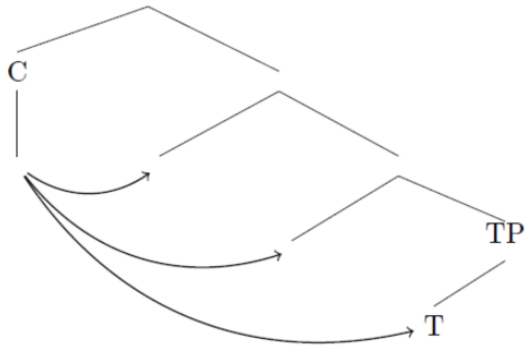

Figure 4. The locus head C.

The reconciliation has proved useful not only to unify feature inheritance and criterial features but also it provided a basis for supporting *donate.* Unifying mechanisms[17] by MFI was proposed[23]. The argument is that if C can target unlabelled functional heads[8], based on the fact that unlabelled heads are not defined for discourse prior of inheriting their features from C, C would be blind to the specifications of such heads. Thus, in addition to the discoursal heads, C may target an unlabelled head, δ-C, that patterns with C itself. The head is defined only when it inherits its features from the c-commanding C. The result is a unification of the three processes: *share, donate* and *keep*.

(5)

DONATE C > T	T	AGREE	Spec-vP
DONATE C> δ-C	δ-C	AGREE	Spec-vP
DONATE C> T	T	AGREE	Spec-vP
C> δ-C	δ-C	AGREE	Spec-CP

(Abdelhady, 2017)

Recent defence of DONATE was supported and a need for such a unification in labelling theory was shown[23, 24].

2.3. Pragmatics: The Collusion of Conciliations

Recent development in the syntactic-pragmatic interface has challenged those approaches that attempted to create a reconciliation between FI and peripheral constructions[8]. While C may move higher to label discoursal heads, it would fail to move higher than SAPs. A clause is not a static definition[13]; it varies based on the highest functional projection. VPs represent the smallest clause level. IPs are intermediate stage where clauses grow larger by the inflectional head. They grow even larger once they are associated with C, forming CPs. Grounding heads expand a clause to its maximum level. They argue clauses could be defined at that level as Grounding phrases. The first aspect that challenges previous conciliation is the ability of C to move higher than grounding heads or SAPs (see **Figure 5** below).

(6)

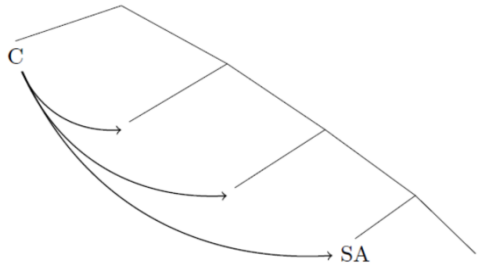

Figure 5. Moving C higher than grounding heads.

The derivation in (6) is problematic. C does not c-command SAPs. It is not legitimate to assume that a complementizer is in a higher position than vocatives [9, 11, 16], nor is it possible to assume that verb-based discourse particles in west Flemish, for instance, are c-commanded by C. A supportive example from Arabic complementizers was provided [25–27], in which a complementizer shows agreement with higher SAPs.

(7) Arabic complementizers
a. 'an after 'want', 'command, 'request', etc.
b. 'anna elsewhere
c. 'inna after 'aquulu' '(I) say'

(8) 'aquulu 'inna lwalada qad taraka lbayta
say that the-boy (acc) PST leave the-house (acc)
'I say that the boy left the house'

(9) 'inna lwalada qad taraka l-bayta
that the-boy(ACC) PST leave the-house
'(I say) that the boy left the house' (Speas & Tenny, 2003)

We cannot, therefore, expand the reconciliation proposed in the literature to account for pragmatic peripheral data. Even though the problem is evident still there is a necessity to assume that features percolates and find their position in lower heads; vocative structures should be predefined for a second-person feature that is part of the vocative head [10], in addition, to other pragmatic features that mark the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. However, the source of such features is mysterious.

2.4. Where SAPs Are Gridlocked

SAPs are complex projections. According to The Peripheral Speaker-Hearer Hypothesis (PSHH), speech acts may be found at each phase [28]. The hypothesis is based on looking at phases from the speaker-hearer perspectives. The hypothesis is based on the following observation and it goes as follows.

> *Outermost phase edges are domains specifically reserved for the integration of elements marking speaker-/hearer-related perspective. These elements thus serve as a key acquisition cue as to the location of phase edges and are expected to constitute the "grammaticalisation target" for pragmaticalisation-oriented processes.*
>
> (Biberauer, 2018)

The advancement provides a more challenging view of how speech acts are generated in the syntax proper. The problem of such a hypothesis appears remarkably with how different points of view are going to hold for the same speaker if different perspectives are associated with each phase. The second issue that adds to the complexity of speech acts is related to their function. Biberauer's view centers around particles and does not account for why vocatives [28], for example, do not undergo grammaticalization, albeit being at peripheral positions. This leads immediately to the question of what a speech act layer can represent.

Several patterns present in which the speaker or hear perspectives: vocatives, particles, allocutive markers, expressivity, imperatives, modality, grounding markers such as confirmationals, exclamations, and others [9, 10, 14–16, 29]. Speech acts projections are supposed to capture all these patterns by a single association. The problem becomes clear; SAPs are not of one kind; they represent several functional

projections. Now I turn to answer the following questions: When does an SAP projection become valid to function for grounding but not for vocatives? Why is the second-person feature only present for vocatives but not for grounding markers? And how does an SAP determine if AGREE is going to look for expressivity or imperative?

2.5. Feature Inheritance: The Strong Version

We propose that speech act projections enter as unlabelled heads; we use the Greek letter psi Ψ to represent the unlabelled heads. The Ψ heads receive their value from U which represents the edge of an utterance (see **Figure 6** below). U transfer speech act related features such as [VOCATIVE], [EXPRESSIVE] [EXCLAMATION] [ATTITUDINAL], [GROUNDING] and others. Once Ψs get their value from U, they become hosts for their labelled entities. They can be expressives, vocatives, attitudinal and other projections.

(10)

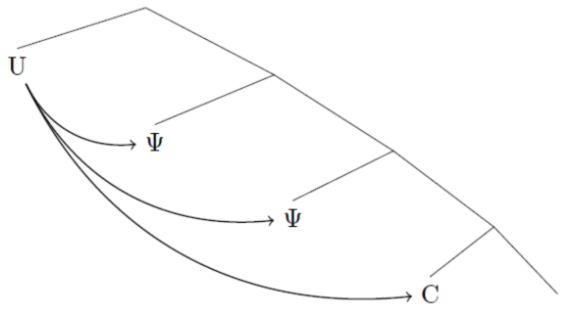

Figure 6. U transfers features.

The new proposal also predicts that all features exist in U: discourse related features such as [FOCUS] and [TOPIC], φ and other phasal features. A fully operational view is illustrated in the derivation below in **Figure 7**.

(11)

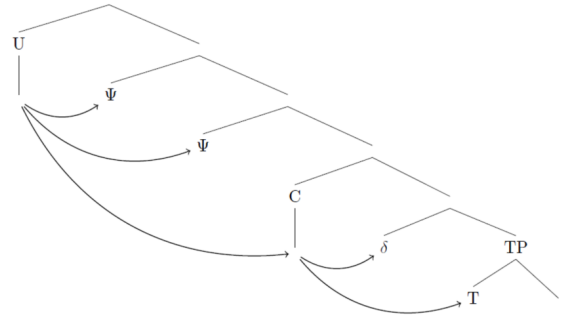

Figure 7. Multiple feature inheritance extended.

Through the mechanism of the multiple feature inheritance, U targets Ψ and C. U defines Ψ for pragmatic functions and it endows C with discourse related features besides φ. C targets δ and specifies its discoursal function, [FOCUS] or [TOPIC]. The proposed mechanism no longer views C as the locus head of features. In addition, SAPs are viewed without labels. The outcome of this mechanism is that all types of pragmatic related functions are subject to FI. Since U is the locus head of φ, it explains the second person-feature on vocative heads. U may target a vocative head with φ in a similar way as T inherits φ. The only difference is that φ of a speech act projection has to be more related to speech act participants. The account creates a new domain to view how allocutive agreement takes place and other types of speaker related features (see **Figure 8** below).

(12)

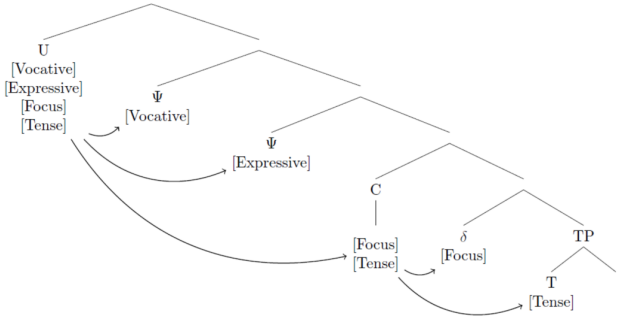

Figure 8. U transfers all features.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative analysis of syntactic structures within the framework of Feature Inheritance (FI) and Speech Act Projections (SAPs). The primary data sample is drawn from Classical Arabic, specifically adapted from classical Arabic grammar books [30]. This selection allows for a comprehensive examination of how features are inherited and projected within the syntax of a language with a rich morphological and syntactic tradition.

The data includes various peripheral constructions, such as vocatives, expressive verbs, and allocutive markers, which are particularly pertinent to testing the proposed model of FI and Saps. The methodological approach involves a detailed syntactic analysis, supported by comparisons with existing models of FI and SAPs in the literature. This comparison helps to identify the strengths and limitations of the

proposed model, particularly in simplifying the pragmatic-syntactic interface and eliminating the need for arbitrary processes like feature sharing. The results are then tested to determine whether the proposed model can effectively unify FI and SAPs across different languages and language varieties.

3.1. Testing the Model and Its Implications[1]

The unification of Feature Inheritance (FI) and Speech Act Projections (SAPs) has significant implications for our understanding of syntactic constructions. Drawing on data from Classical Arabic, we demonstrate how expressivity in verbs can be derived within this model. Furthermore, we explore how these expressive verbs can be used in conjunction with vocatives.

Expressive language, which reflects the speaker's attitude toward a given proposition, has traditionally been studied from semantic or pragmatic perspectives [14, 31, 32]. Recent advancements in the study of speech act projections [9, 11, 16]; a more integrated approach to analyzing expressive language alongside speech-act participants have been facilitated [14]. Despite this, the syntax of expressivity remains underexplored in the literature. Expressive language is typically associated with adjectives, intensifiers, vocatives, pronouns, modal particles, and interjections [14]. However, in this study, we provide evidence that expressivity can also be mapped onto verbs.

While expressivity was discussed [14], the effect on expressive lexical items was not addressed. Our research provides evidence from Arabic showing that when the expressivity feature is applied to verbs, it can lead to two distinct outcomes: aggrandizement and deprecation. Aggrandizement is observed in verbs that undergo pluralization, where plurale tantum verbs exhibit a departure from the usual noun-related association of this feature [22]. Deprecation, on the other hand, is clearly seen in diminutive verbs (13). Although diminutives are generally linked to nominal forms [33], in Arabic, speakers can express disdain for actions (as seen in the comparison between (13) and (14)) using the same mechanism.

(13) sāmī ha-**l-maʒdūb** nise l-mawʕad.
Sami 3-the-idiot.sm forgot.3sm the-appointment Sami
'Sami, this idiot, forgot the appointment.'

(14) a. mā **ʔumayliha-**hu!
par behave.good.DIM-3m.sg
'How good he is!'
b. mā **ʔuħaysina-**hu!
par behave.good.DIM-3m.sg
'How good he is!'

(15) ʔalha-ka haða **ʔal-ʕuwajlim.**
distract-you this def-scientist.DIM
'This trivial scientist distracted you."

(16) **hayhaata** ʔan-ndʒāh-u bi-la ʕamal.
is.impossible.PL.1sg DEF-success-NOM with-out work
'Success is so impossible without work.'

The syntactic basis for expressive verbs is clear in that these verbs can only occur within expressive constructions that convey the speaker's perspective, such as exclamations and expressive epithets (12). Unlike Complementizer Phrases, expressive verbs are resistant to syntactic transformations, including negation and interrogation, and they do not allow for adverbial modification. Despite these differences, they can still take on accusative clitic pronouns (e.g., -hu) and may have agentive specifiers, such as ʔanndʒāhu ('the success' (15)). A notable feature of expressive constructions is their evident interaction with vocatives [34].

[1]This section is elaborated in the author's PhD dissertation [35].

(17) a. ja Osama mā **ʔumayliha**-hu!
VOC osama PAR behave.good.DIM-3M.SG
'Osama, how good he is!' [just a little]
b. ja Osama mā **ʔuhaysina-**hu!
VOC osama PAR behave.good.DIM-3M.SG
'Osama, how good he is!' [just a little]

We propose that these verbs originate as category neutral roots. They get their verbal identity by merging with verbal functional heads. Undergoing a cyclic movement operation, the verbal roots move to expressive functional heads that are specified by speech act roles. We argue that the specifier position of a speaker externally merges with either *pro* that stands for a speaker or by a particle expressing aggrandizement/deprecation such as *mā* in expressive verbs and *ha* in expressive epithets. We show that the speaker position in a speech act projection is the source of expressivity valuation. The model proposed provide a neat account for the data. First, the verb would normally be generated in the VP but once a Ψ head inherits its expressivity feature [expressive], the verb moves to the expressivity head. The verb does not have to pass by C and T since they are still inactive. The outcome is an expressive verb that does not interact with tense or with mode. The expressive head is internally mergers with *ma* that originates in the speaker position (see **Figure 9** below).

(18)

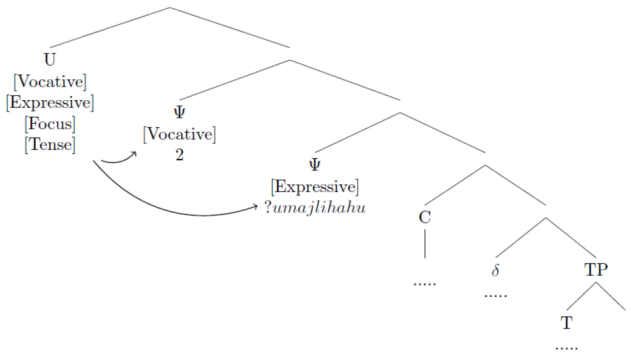

Figure 9. The proposed model in operation.

If U keeps some of its features that can target C and T then a verb would not be specified for tense but rather for expressivity function. Thus, it moves from V to the specified Ψ for expressivity. The U head also targets the highest Ψ for the vocative function. U can transfer a copy of φ features, the second person, to the same head. Since the head is now specified, the vocative function emerges. We demonstrated how unifying FI and SAPs may simplify the variability in speech act layers. The model can capture basically the most critical aspects of SAPs through the direct application of FI. We leave its applicability to a wide array of data at different pragmatic levels for future investigations.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, we draw a path between feature inheritance and speech act projections. The line of reasoning is that FI can account for SAPs if we depart from the idea that C is the locus head of features. We proposed that C, with all its impact of clausal structure, is similar to other phasal heads, T and v. It can be a target of features from c-commanding heads such as U. We established U as the locus head of features and proposed looking at derivations through labeling theory. The unification of FI and SAPs creates sharper conclusions about the nature of AGREE. We demonstrated that all agreement relations can be unified and viewed as downward processes. What remains is to decompose pragmatic features and look for their hierarchical order within U. Potentially, nanosyntax [35], could provide tools for their decomposition.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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