Introduction to linguistics
Syntax

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Introduction: grammar and syntax

syntax and linguistic creativity

If you speak a language fluently, you are usually able to express any thought that you may have, despite the fact that the number of words that you know is finite. If you encounter something you have never encountered before, you will be able to come up with an expression for it by combining existing morphemes into new words, existing words into new phrases and existing phrases into new sentences, and you will usually be understood by other speakers of the language. Syntax is the study of how speakers/writers combine smaller linguistic units into larger ones and how hearers/readers are able to interpret novel complex linguistic expressions.

syntax vs. grammar

Linguists distinguish syntax from morphology, morphology being the study of the internal structure of words and syntax the study of the internal structure of phrases, clauses and sentences. Because there are parallels between the two, it is sometimes useful to subsume both under the cover-term of *morpho-syntax*. Non-linguists call the rules of a language *grammar*. They usually think of inflectional forms and of sentence structure, so *grammar* is often used synonympusly with *morpho-syntax*. However, when non-linguists speak of *grammar*, what they often have in mind is prescriptive rules about how language *ought* to be used, whereas linguists think of *syntax* as the set of rules, in the sense of *regularities* or *constructions*, that best describes speakers' *actual use* of language.

no language use w/o grammar

Each complex linguistic expression has a syntax, even if it consists of only two smaller units, e.g. article + noun, as in *the book*, or morpheme + morpheme, as in *grammar book* or *bookish*. As soon as you combine two linguistic signs, you are employing syntactic rules or constructions,[1] and others will be able to interpret your complex linguistic sign if they know the meanings of the signs you have combined and the meaning of the syntactic construction. You may not know exactly what the word *nutri-gloss crystal* on your shampoo bottle refers to, but you do understand that it's supposed to be some sort of crystal, not some sort of gloss, because in English it is always the first element of a compound that modifies the second. You will also intuitively understand that *John* in *She smiled John her thanks* is the RECIPIENT or ADDRESSEE, not the AGENT (the SPEAKER) or the MESSAGE, because you know – without being aware of it, probably – that when there are two noun phrases following the verb in a clause, the first of them is the one that refers to RECIPIENTS and related semantic roles and the second one refers to messages and other things being moved or affected. If you did not have this kind of implicit syntactic knowledge, it would not be possible for you to produce or to understand novel sentences.

Figure 1: https://www.edudip.com/w/105182

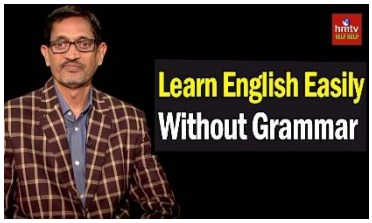

Figure 2: http://hmtvselfhelp.com/video/learn-fluent-english-easily-without-grammar-bk-reddy/

You cannot use language without employing syntax. It is impossible to learn to speak a language first and then worry about the grammar later, or to learn a language entirely "without grammar". As soon as you put two words together, you are using grammar, you are creating a syntactic structure. Without some knowledge of syntactic structure, it is not possible to create new words or sentences, or to understand them. (But you can, of course, teach a language's grammar without using linguistic terminology. The more you know about morpho-syntax, the easier that will be.)

[1] You may feel that creating a phrase like *the book* does not require much syntactic competence, but this only seems so to speakers of languages like English or German or French, who are so used to letting articles precede their head nouns that they instinctively assume this to be the only natural order. There are languages in which articles follow their head nouns, however, Swedish and Norwegian for instance, so even the article-noun construction is not as trivial as it may seem.

Phrase structure

Introduction: What is a phrase?

intuitive identification of phrases

If you read a sentence like the one in (1), you will intuitively group the words into larger units.

(1) *The cat on the wall outside showed no sign of sleepiness*.

You know intuitively that *The cat on the wall* and *no sign of sleepiness* are units, not *cat on* or *wall showed no*. This is because you know which kinds of phrases occur in the English language, and you know which kinds of words to expect in them. You know, for instance, that words like *the* or *no* occur before words like *cat* (or *sign*, or *problem*) and that combinations like *on the wall* (or *under the table* or *of sleepiness*) sometimes follow. You are familiar, that is, with the structure of the English noun phrase – even though you may not be familiar with the term *noun phrase*.

How can we back up such intuitions scientifically?

constituency tests

One thing to do is to think about which words stay together when we change the order of a clause's elements, for instance by moving certain constituents into first position in order to put special emphasis on them. This is called the **movement test**. Groups of words that form a unit in this way are called **phrases**.

(2) *[Of sleepiness] [the cat on the wall outside showed no sign].*
(On the contrary, it seemed wide awake.)

This way of testing for phrase status considers the **syntagmatic** dimension of linguistic structure.[2] We look at the clause horizontally, that is. English does not allow very many different constituent orders (we cannot move the verb before the subject, usually, or the object before the verb), but the test works somewhat better where adjuncts (i.e. adverbials of manner, place or time) are involved:

(3) *[A blast of steam] [issued] [suddenly] [from the spout of the kettle].*
[Suddenly], [a blast of steam] [issued] [from the spout of the kettle].
[From the spout of the kettle] [a blast of steam] [suddenly] [issued].

Another thing to do is to think about which words or groups of words can be replaced as a unit (**substitution test**) or can be left out entirely (**deletion test**). The substitution test considers the **paradigmatic** dimension of linguistic structure, i.e. it works vertically, as it were.[3] Instead of *the cat*, for instance, we can say *it* or *the dog* or *our mysterious cat*, instead of *on the wall* we can say *under the table* or *behind the tree* (or nothing at all) and instead of *showed* we can say *was showing* or *is going to show* or *had shown*.

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[2] A *syntagma* is an elementary constituent of a linguistic expression, a phoneme, a morpheme, a word, a phrase, a clause or a sentence. Syntagmatic structure is the combination of syntagmas into larger units. In our context, the syntagmatic dimension is the different clause constituents viewed in linear order.

[3] In linguistics, the term *paradigm* usually refers to the set of inflectional forms of a given lexeme, e.g. verb conjugations and noun or pronoun declensions. Different conjugational forms of a verb (but not different declension forms of a noun) can be exchanged in a clause without the syntax being affected: We can replace *showed* with *was showing*, *will show*, *had shown*, and so on. We can also, however, replace *showed* with *was betraying* or *tried to hide*, and this is what *paradigmatic* means in the present context.

(4)

The cat	*showed*	*no sign of sleepiness.*	↕ paradigmatic dimension
Out mysterious cat	*was displaying*	*a sense of humous.*	
It	*will have shown*		

We can also identify clause constiuents by asking *wh*-questions (**constituent questions**):

(5) ***Who*** *showed no sign of sleepiness?* → *The cat (on the wall outside).*

(6) ***What*** *issued from the spout of the kettle?* → *A blast of steam*.

As you will have noticed, different constituency tests can pick out phrases on different levels. The substitution test shows us that *no sign of sleepiness* is a phrase (we can replace it with *a sense of humour*), but we can also dislocate or replace only the prepositional phrase (*of sleepiness the cat showed no sign*), so it is a (lower-level) phrase as well.

exercise

Divide the clause in (7) into phrases and test your intuition by means of different constituency tests.

(7) *The snake suddenly opened its beady eyes.*

phrase types

When we compare the different phrases that can occur in the same position in a clause, it soon becomes apparent that phrases fall into categories. The phrase *no sign of sleepiness* in (4) can be replaced by *a sense of humour*, *its irritation*, *itself*, and so on, but not, for instance, by *on the wall outside* or by *afterwards*.

What all the possible phrases that exchange for *the cat* in (4) have in common is that they contain a noun or pronoun. Such phrases are called ***noun phrases*** **(NPs)**. in addition to the noun (the ***head*** of the phrase: *cat*), a noun phrase can contain adjectives (*mysterious*) and determiners (*the*, *our*). Alternatively, a noun phrase can consist of a pronoun (*it*). Or we can expand the phrase some more and speak of *the incredibly mysterious cat*, or *the highly suspicious cat*, which shows that the (optional) adjective in the English NP is, in fact, an ***adjective phrase*** **(AdvP)**: it can contain a modifying adverb (*incredibly*, *highly*) besides the head adjective (*mysterious*, *suspicious*). Our example also shows that NPs can contain not only AdjPs but also ***prepositional phrases*** (**PPs**: *on the wall*). Phrases, that is, can contain other phrases. This is called **nesting**.

nested structures

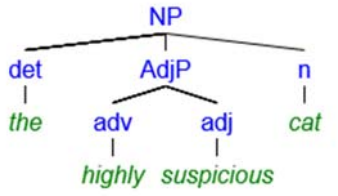
We can visualize **nested structures** either by circling the groups of words that belong more closely together than others or by bracketing them, or by means of a tree diagram (a ***dendrogram***):

(8) *the highly suspicious cat*

(9) *[the [highly suspicious] cat]*

(10) $[the_{det}\ [highly_{adv}\ suspicious_{adj}]_{AdjP}\ cat_{n}]_{NP}$

(11)

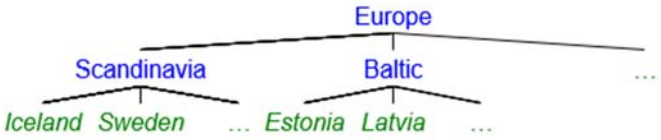


The information conveyed by the bracket notation in (10) and the tree notation in (11) is exactly the same. If you feed a computer the correct bracket structure, it can convert it into a dendrogram automatically with no further information necessary. The dendrogram in (13) was generated by Miles Shang's Syntax Tree Generator (http://mshang.ca/syntree/); the input was

(12) *[NP [det The] [AdjP [adv highly] [adj suspicious]] [n cat]]*

The tree diagram is drawn by bundling those items that belong most closely together into **nodes** and then bundling those nodes that belong most closely together into higher-level nodes, until the whole phrase, clause or sentence is taken care of. It is simply another way of representing nesting. We can feed the computer something entirely unrelated to linguistics, places in Europe, for instance, and the algorithm will work the same way:

(13) [Europe [Scandinavia [Iceland] [Sweden] […]] [Baltic [Estonia] [Latvia] […]] […]]



Lexical categories and how to define them

lexical categories

Proficient speakers of a language, we said above, know which kinds of words to expect to occur together in a phrase. Words like *the* or *our*, for instance, occur before words like *cat* or *map* or *problem* and words like *suspicious* or *small* sometimes intervene. Grammarians have invented terms for such categories of words. Words like *the* or *our* are called ***determiners***, words like *cat* or *map* or *problem* are called ***nouns*** and words like *suspicious* or *small* ***adjectives***. Determiner, noun and adjective are ***word classes*** or ***parts of speech*** or ***lexical categories***. Linguists have come up with different categories and categorization schemes (see Herbst 2010: 169 for a neat overview on three influential ones), but most agree that besides determiners, nouns and adjectives there are also ***pronouns*** (words like *I, his, some* or *most*), **verbs** (words like *went*, *loved*, *has* or *looks up*), ***adverbs*** (words like *very* and *absolutely*, but also words like *now* or *probably*), ***prepositions*** (words like *in*, *over*, *at*), ***conjunctions*** and ***complementizers*** (words like *and*, *but*, *although* and words like *if*, *how* and *that*) and ***particles*** (words like *not*).

semantic criteria

How can we identify the word class that a particular word belongs to? The most intuitive way to go about this is to adduce semantic criteria. Nouns, we might assume, prototypically refer to things, i.e. to physical objects, adjectives to properties or characteristics, verbs to actions. But it immediately becomes apparent that this assumption does not bear up to the facts. There are many nouns that do not refer to things, for instance *silence*, *juxtaposition*, *sadness*, *thunder* and *obligation*. There are also many verbs that do not express actions, for instance *need*, *know*, *have* and *will*. Semantics, then, are of limited value when it comes to classifying words for the purposes of syntactic analysis.

morphological criteria

Morphology is a better indicator. *Juxtaposition* and *sadness* may not refer to things, but they contain the suffixes *-tion* and *-ness*, which tells us that they are nouns. Unfortunately, most words do not contain any such suffix. *Apple* and *rain* are nouns, but do not end in *-tion* or *-ness* or any other noun-forming suffix, e.g. *-th* or *-ity*. Even where a suffix is present, it does not reliably predict a word's

lexical category, because English is especially good at conversion. *Condition* and *silence* can be verbs, their derivational suffixes notwithstanding. Inflectional suffixes work a bit better. If you can add a plural *-s* to a word, it is (or becomes) a noun. If you can add *-ed* to a word, it must be a verb (but may become an adjective in the process). If you can add *-er* or *-est* to a word and form a comparative or superlative form, you must be dealing with an adjective. Even this method is not fool-proof, however, since word classes are prototype categories. They have fuzzy boundaries and prototypical as well as less prototypicaltypical members. Adjectives typically have a comparative and a superlative form, verbs and nouns can typically be inflected, but there are adjectives that are normally not gradable (*only*, *wooden*, *empty*), there are verbs that cannot be combined with *-s* or *-ed* (e.g. *can*) and there are nouns that are not usually used in the plural (*sadness*). To prepositions, conjunctions, complementizers and particles, the method is not applicable at all, since they are non-inflecting.

syntactic-distributional criteria

The only reliable way of identifying a word's lexical category is to look at where it can occur in a phrase, i.e. to consider its **distribution** and **syntactic functions**. If we know that *on the wall*, *under the carpet* and *before lunch* are prepositional phrases, we can deduce that *since last Sunday* is also a prepositional phrase, and that *since* is, consequently, a preposition. In the same way, we can identify complex prepositions like *because of* and *in accordance with*.

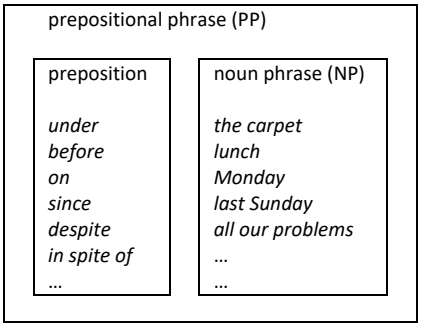


Figure 3: Prepositional phrase (with examples)

If *the* and *a* are determiners, to take another example, because they occur in noun phrases before nouns (or before noun+adjective), possessives like *our* must also be determiners, and so must quantifiers like *all* or *some*.

The word class that a particular lexeme belongs to, then, is determined by the phrase construction that it occurs in, and we usually know which lexical category a word belongs to even if we do not know the word. You don't have to have read *Harry Potter* to understand that *Apparate* and *Disapparate* in (14) are verbs.

(14) *You can't **Apparate** or **Disapparate** inside this castle!*

By being used in a specific phrase, in fact, a word can be *converted* to a different word class:

(15) *They* ***kick****ed* / ***complement****ed* / ***magick****ed* *him out of the room.*

(16) Marge *was **holiday**ing on the Isle of Wight.*

(17) *This book is an awesome* *experience.* / *read*.

This shows that the phrase as a construction exists independently of the head word, and it is not circular to say that a word is a noun if it is used as the head of a noun phrase. An awesome read is a noun phrase, even though read is not usually a noun. The noun slot in an NP imposes noun-status on anything we insert:

(18) *Please let me have **one more go!***
*She gave it **one last push.***

(19) *Don't be **a silly!***
*He called her **an insufferable know-it-all**.*

If the result of this process is lexicalised, we speak of *conversion*. Conversion is a word-formation process that creates new lexemes. If a construction imposes a new function on an item for the first time, this is called c*oercion*. The OED lists *read* as a verb and as a noun, so this is conversion, but it doesn't list *holiday* as a verb, so *holidaying* seems to be a spontaneous coercion.

The most important phrase types of English are described in the following.

Phrase types and how to formalize them

Adjective phrase

AdjP → adv **adj** PP

Adjective phrases can be part of a noun phrase, as in (21), or can stand alone as a predicative complement, as in (20). (Predicative complements are discussed below.) If an AdjP is part of a noun phrase, we speak of ***attributive** use*, because the AdjP acts as an *attribute* (i.e. a modifier) to the noun. If an AdjP functions as a predicative complement, we speak of ***predicative** use*.

An adjective phrase minimally consists of an adjective. We call the adjective the ***head*** of the phrase. The adjective can (but need not) be modified by an adverb. The adverb is then called a ***pre-modifier***, because it occurs before the head, i.e. to the left if we consider the phrase's written form.

(20) *It was* ***strong.***
very strong.
incredibly stupid.
absolutely correct.

(21) *This is a* ***good*** *question.*
very good
completely legitimate

An adjective can also be modified by a PP.[4] Such a PP is then a ***post-modifier***, since it occurs after (i.e. to the right of) the head:

(22) *This was* ***important to me.***
dangerous for the children.

[4] In English, this is possible only with adjectives used predicatively, i.e. as a subject or object complement. In German, adjectives used attributively (i.e. within an NP) can be modified by dative-case NPs and by PPs (but these must then be pre-modifiers):

This is important to me.	**an important to me point.*
Das ist mir wichtig.	*ein mir wichtiger Punkt.*
Ich finde das wichtig für Johanna.	*ein für Johanna wichtiger Punkt.*
	**ein wichtiger für Johanna Punkt.*

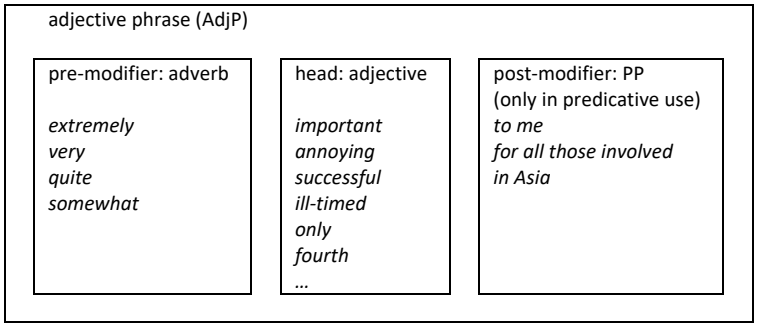


Figure 4: Adjective phrase (with examples)

formalization

An adjective phrase, then, consists of an adjective (the head) and, optionally, adverbs functioning as pre-modifiers and PPs functioning as post-modifiers. We can formalize this as a **phrase structure rule**, as a tree diagram or as a construction box:

AdjP → adv **adj** PP

Figure 5: Adjective phrase (phrase structure rule)

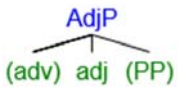


Figure 6: Adjective phrase (dendrogram)

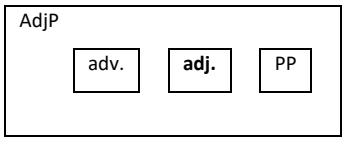


Figure 7: Adjective phrase (construction box)

exercise

Before you read on, think of different ways in which the clause in (23) could be continued. You will be creating **noun phrases**. Try to come up with as many different structures as possible and formulate a general rule/tree/construction for the English NP.

(23) *She liked ___.*

Noun phrase

NP → DetP AdjP **n** PP S

Noun phrases can fill the subject or the object slot of a clause. They can also function as predicative complements or as adjunct adverbials (to be discussed below).

A noun phrase minimally consists of a noun or a pronoun. The **substitution test** shows us that phrases headed by nouns can also contain adjectives, adverbs and determiners:

(24) *She likes* ***coffee.***
it.
the coffee.
that very strong coffee.

Since the adjective can be modified by an adverb (as in *that* very *strong coffee*), we must assume that noun phrases can contain adjective phrases as pre-modifiers. Further substitution shows that the determiner slot can also host entire phrases, and that the noun can additionally be post-modified by prepositional phrases and/or clauses:

(25) *She likes* ***that*** ***incredibly strong coffee.***
her father's

(26) *She likes* ***the strong coffee*** ***from the moka pot.***
brewed on the stove.
that her father makes.

If the noun is derived from a verb, it can be post-modified by a *to*-infinitive:

(27) *I made every* ***attempt*** ***to prevent their meeting.***

We can again formalize the different options in various ways:

noun phrase (NP)

pre-modifier: determiner (phrase)	pre-modifier: AdjP[5]	head: noun	post-modifier: PP/S
the *an* *most* *my friend's*	*strong* *incredibly small* *potted* *somewhat ill-timed*	*coffee* *girl* *plants* *attempt*	*from the pot* *involved* *at the store* *to help*

Figure 8: Noun phrase (with examples)

*NP → DetP AdjP **n** PP S*
NP → pron.

Figure 9: Noun phrase (phrase structure rules)

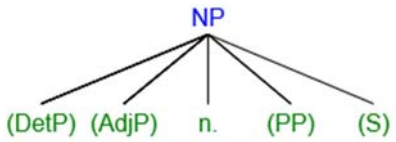


Figure 10: Noun phrase (dendrogram)

[5] The AdjP in an NP can be headed by a participial adjective (*potted*, *ill-timed*), but note that – unlike in German – structures like **the above described examples* or **the already mentioned problems*, where a participle is modified by an adverb of time or place, are *not* grammatical. These participles are not adjectives (**the described example*, **the mentioned problems*; *this example is very *described/*mentioned*).

Prepositional phrase

PP → **prep. NP**

Prepositional phrases function as prepositional objects or as adverbials, or as modifiers to a noun or adjective. They always consist of a preposition following a noun phrase:

(29) *They met* ***on the veranda.***
after lunch.
in spite of all attempts to prevent their meeting.

(30) *He put the book* ***on the shelf.***
into a box.

(31) *It was a severe blow* ***to him.***
I was rather sharp ***on him.***

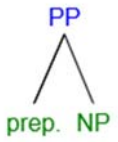


Figure 11: Prepositional phrase (dendrogram)

Besides prepositions, English still has some postpositions, which represent older linguistic structure. We will subsume postpositions under prepositions (the term *adposition* can be used if both options are to be stressed) and stick to the common term *prepositional phrase* even where the preposition is a postposition.

(32) *He lived* ***a thousand years ago.***

Adverb phrase

AdvP → adv **adv**

Where a word that looks like a preposition is used without NP, it is an adverb and functions as an adverbial phrase, as we can show by means of the substitution test:

(33) *Let's talk* ***after lunch.*** (PP)
before dinner.
over coffee.

(34) *Let's talk* ***before.*** (AdvP)
afterwards.
now.
later.

An adverb phrase is a phrase headed by an adverb and optionally modified by another adverb, as in (35) and in (36):

(35) *He came down* ***slightly late.***

(36) *Percy's been acting* ***very oddly*** *this summer…*

Adverb phrases function as adjuncts, either as part of the predicate, as in (35) and (36), or as sentence-level adverbials, as in (37):

(37) ***Clearly**,I was wrong.*

a note on terminology

The term *adverb* refers to a class of words characterized by their ability to modify verbs (minimal verb phrases, actually), as in *he's been **acting oddly*** or *he **arrived early***. Adverbs have a range of other functions, however; they also modify adjectives or noun phrases (*pretty unusual*, *quite a few*) or entire clauses, as in (37) above. An *adverb phrase* is simply a phrase headed by an adverb. The term *adverbial phrase* is somewhat misleading, since it refers to a semantic function (*adverbial of time*, *adverbial of place*, *adverbial of manner*) and is used even where the constituent in question is not, in fact, an adverb phrase at all (because it does not contain an adverb), as in (38) and (39):

(38) *I'll do it **in a minute.*** adverbial of time: PP

(39) *I did it **last night.*** adverbial of time: NP

(40) *I did it **quite recently.*** adverbial of time: AdvP

exercise

Consider the phrases in bold face. Identify their form (phrase type) and their semantic function. Label each word in the phrase for its word class.

(41) *Harry blundered **after Ron**.*

(42) ***After that**, he had no choice but to turn right around and head back.*

(43) *After half an hour of lying there with his insides churning, he got up, dressed, and went down to breakfast **early**.*

(44) *It's never **too early** to think about the future.*

(45) *Harry woke early on Saturday morning.*

(46) *Crabbe and Goyle were sniggering **stupidly**.*

(47) *Fred grunted, swinging his bat **with all his might**.*

Verb phrase

v → AUX MD **V-LEX**

The head of a verb phrase is a verb form. A verb form consists of one lexical verb (the main verb) and, optionally, **auxiliaries** (*be*, *have*, *will*[6], *do*) and/or **modals** (*must*, *can*, etc.). In English, the lexical verb is always the last word in the phrase. The first word in the phrase is the finite verb, i.e. that part of the verb form that is inflected for person, number and tense (present/past). In the simple tenses, i.e. the simple present and the simple past, the verb form is ***simple***, i.e. consists of only one word (which will be finite). All other finite verb forms in English are ***complex***, i.e. they consist of the main verb in non-finite form (**infinitive/base form**, **past participle** or **gerund**) and one or more auxiliaries, the first of which will be finite:

6 *Will* originated as a modal (OE *willan* 'want', 'intend') and, like other modals, occurs with the infinitive or base form of the main verb. We count it among the auxiliaries because it is used in tense-formation and no longer expresses modality, but only simple futurity, except in very specific constructions such as *X would't (=didn't want to) do Y*.

(48) *I* **wrote** *the term paper in August.*
I ***am*** **writing** *the term paper by night.*
I ***have*** **written** *an email to her already..*
I ***must*** **write** *another two term papers.*
She ***must have been*** **writing** *in a hurry, judging by all those typos.*
He ***will want to*** **write** *on the weekend.*

Verb forms can be discontinuous, that is, other elements can intervene between the finite verb and the other parts of the verb form, which suggests that the non-finite verb forms constitue a phrase of their own.

(49) *I* ***have*** *never* **written** *a term paper before.*
Had *he really* **done** *it?*
He ***has*** *probably* **forgotten** *all about it.*
She ***must*** *obviously* ***have been wanting to*** **write** *that paper very badly.*

Verb phrases exist on different levels in syntactic structure, because various constituents fall within the narrower or the wider scope of the verb. The structure of verb phrases will be the topic of the next chapter.

exercises

1. Are the following words adjectives or determiners? Why?

(a) *the*
(b) *some*
(c) *most*
(d) *all*
(e) *a*
(f) *each*
(g) *those*
(h) *any*

2. Consider the clause in (50).

(a) What is the word class of *about*?
(b) What kind of phrase is *being left behind*? Why?
(c) What is the word class of *any*?
(d) What is the word clas of *behind*?

(50) *Nothing anyone said made him feel any better about being left behind.*

3. Draw tree diagrams for the phrases in bold face (include word classes):

(a) *"You've just ruined the punch line of my Japanese golfer joke. . . .* ***One more sound*** *and you'll wish you'd never been born, boy!"* [NP]
(b) *The orchestra, however, stopped playing* ***at that very moment****.* [PP]
(c) *And* ***from the middle of the misty, domed web****, a spider the size of a small elephant emerged,* ***very slowly****.* [PP, AdvP]
(d) *Even you* ***must have noticed****.* [VP]
(e) *"Bin wonderin' when you'd come ter see me — come in, come in — thought you* ***mighta bin*** *Professor Lockhart back again —"*

Clause structure

Introduction: What is a clause?

What is a clause?

Consider the sentence in (51).

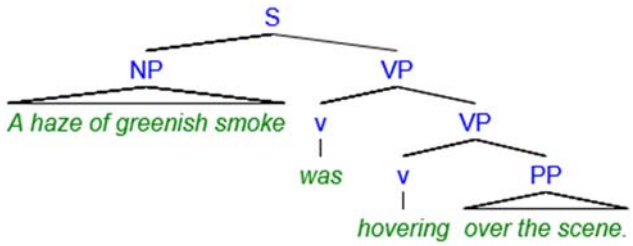
(51) *Harry didn't recognize the third owl, a handsome tawny one, but he knew at once where it had come from.*

If you were asked to separate it into two parts, you would probably draw the line between *tawny one* and *but*. This would leave you with two main clauses, the second of which additionally contains a subordinate clause. A **clause** is a unit of speech that consists of **one main verb plus all of its dependents** –complements and adjuncts. A sentence therefore contains as many clauses as it contains verb-subject combinations. The sentence in (51) contains three clauses: one headed by *didn't recognize*, with the subject *Harry*, one headed by *knew*, with the subject *he*, and one headed by *had come*, with the subject *it*.

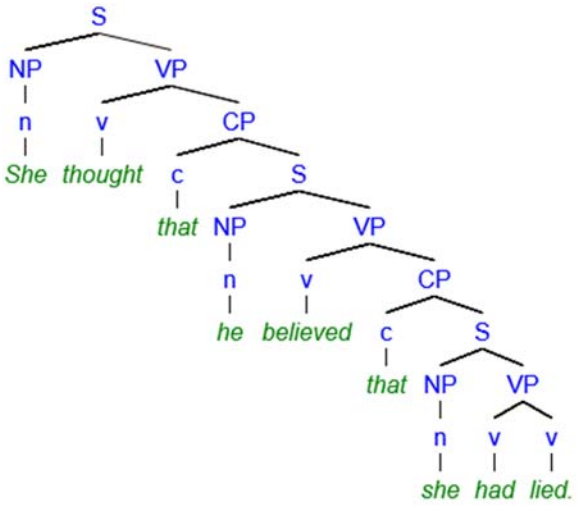
simple and complex sentences

A sentence that contains only one clause is called a **simple sentence**, a sentence that contains more than one clause is called **complex**. Note that complexity is not the same as length: a simple sentence can be very long and a complex sentence can be comparatively short. The sentence in (52) is a simple sentence because it contains only one clause, headed by *was hovering*; the sentence in (53) is complex because it contains three clauses: one headed by *thought*, one by *believed* and one by *lied*, each with their own subject (*she*, *he*, *she*). The simple sentence in (52) has one word more than the complex sentence in (53), but it can be represented by a dendrogram with fewer nodes (i.e. by ignoring the inner structure of the constituents, which is indicated by triangles):

(52) *A haze of greenish smoke was hovering over the scene.*



(53) *She thought that he believed that she had lied.*



Typical clause structure

subject-verb agreement

In English, a typical clause contains a VP headed by the main verb and an NP functioning as the verb's **subject**. *Subject* is a **grammatical relation**. *Grammatical relation* means that we are talking about the **syntactic function** that a specific NP has in a specific clause, in relation to the verb. The subject is the NP that agrees with the verb in person and number. In English, this means that the verb is inflected for 3rd person singular (i.e. with an *-s* suffix) if the subject is a third-person-singular pronoun (*he*, *she*, *it*, *someone*, *nobody*, …) or a noun phrase in the singular and if the verb is in present tense. In our example in (51), the subject of the verb *didn't recognize* is *Harry*, a proper name in the singular.

In English, the subject generally precedes the main verb. In more heavily inflecting languages, the subject can also occur elsewhere in the clause, and the verb can be inflected for 1st and 2nd as well as for 3rd person singular (and in other tenses than the present), for example in German and in Russian.

(54) ***Everybody*** *likes ice cream.*
John
My sister
She

(55)	***Du***	*mag**st***	*kein*	*Eis?*
	2SG.NOM	like.2SG.PRESENT	NO.ACC	ice-cream:ACC

'You don't like ice-cream?'

(56)	**Я**	не	люб**лю**	мороженое
	Ya	ne	lyub**lyu**	morozhenoye
	1SG.NOM	NEG	like:1SG.PRESENT	ice-cream:ACC

'I don't like ice-cream.'

(57)	**Ты**	не	люб**ишь**	мороженое
	Ty	ne	lyub**ish'**	morozhenoye
	2SG.NOM	NEG	like:2SG.PRESENT	ice-cream:ACC

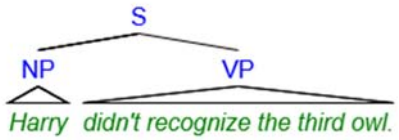
'You don't like ice-cream.'

subject-predicate structure

If you were asked to divide *Harry didn't recognize the third owl* in two natural parts, you are likely to draw the line between *Harry* and the rest of the clause. *Harry* is the subject and the rest of the clause is called the ***predicate***. That the predicate is indeed a constituent, i.e. that the verb and its ***internal arguments*** belong more closely together than the verb and its ***external argument,*** the subject, can be made plausible by drawing attention to the fact that multiple predicates can be complemented by the same subject, as in (58):

(58) *Harry [forced a laugh], [went to give Ron the rat tonic], then [shut himself in his room] and [lay down on his bed.]*

In dendrograms, the predicate is represented by a VP. We can thus begin diagramming *Harry didn't recognize the third owl* as a clause (labelled S[7]) whose **immediate** (i.e. highest-level) **constituents** are subject (NP) and predicate (VP):



The triangles underneath the NP and the VP indicate that the internal structure of these phrases is not analyzed.

Subject-predicate structure is fundamental to English clause structure; the typical clause, whatever its exact structure, will be representable on the highest levels by S → NP VP.

objects and other complements

Syntacticians distinguish different kinds of internal arguments in English, based on their phrase type. An internal argument in the form of an NP is called ***object***. When there are two objects in a clause, the first one in linear order is called *object* and the second one *second object*. An internal argument in the form of a PP or AdvP is called ***adverbial complement***.

(59) *Sally gave* ***the girl*** ***a coin****.*
O O2

(60) *Sally gave* ***a coin*** ***to the girl****.*
O AdvC

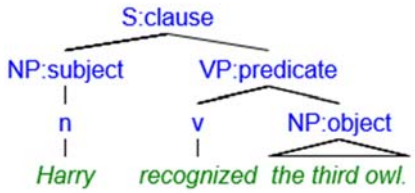
Object and second object are not distinguishable by their shape in modern English. All we have to go by is the linear order of the constituents. **In Old English** (that is English as it was spoken about 1000 years ago) the first NP in such a construction would have been marked for dative-case, the second for accusative:

(61) *Sally geaf ðam mægden mynet*
give.3SG.PST the.DAT girl.DAT coin.ACC
'Sally gave the girl a coin.'
(made-up Old English)

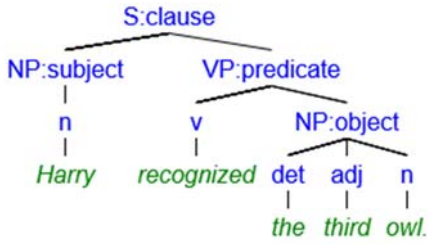
(62) *Elena, Ætiubena cwen, sealde þam munucum corn…*
give.3SG.PST the.DAT monks.DAT corn.ACC
'Helen, queen of Adiabena, gave the monks corn…'
(actual Old English, Orosius, coorosiu,Or_6:4.137.2.2881)

[7] In German, we speak of *Gesamt**satz*** (a sentence) and *Teil**satz*** (a clause), hence the S, maybe.

Now we can analyze the internal structure of the predicate in our example clause. Since complex verb forms make the diagrams more difficult to read, as you can see in (52) above, we'll simplify our sentence somewhat and do away with the negation and the auxiliary for the time being: *Harry recognized the third owl.* The general clause structure remains the same.

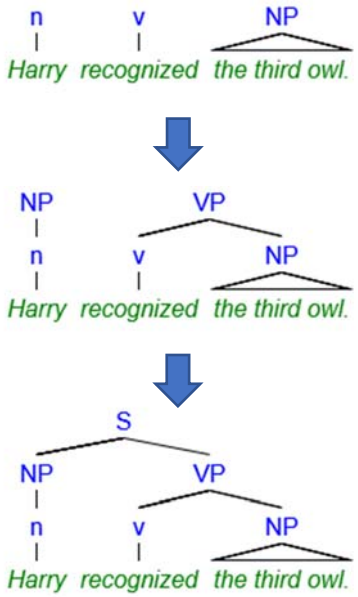


We can also further analyze the object NP: it consists of the noun *owl* (the head), modified by the adjective *third* and the determiner *the*:



direction of analysis

We have analyzed this clause **top-down**: First we divided it into two parts, subject and predicate, the clause's immediate constituents, then we subdivided the parts into smaller units, until we reached the word level. (We could also analyze the internal structure of the individual words, but that would take us into the realm of morphology.) We can also take the opposite direction, **bottom-up**, and start at the word level, first grouping words into phrases, then drawing together phrases into larger phrases, and finally into the whole clause:



complements

Subjects and objects are called the ***complements*** or ***arguments***[8] of a verb. They complement the verb semantically, in the sense that without subject and objects, we would not know who does something to whom. When complements are absent, we often perceive a clause as incomplete and ungrammatical, as in (63) and (64), although it must be said that this is highly context-dependent, as (65) shows, which suggests that it is semantics that is the driving force behind the expectedness of complements, not syntax.

(63) **Sally gives the girl.*

(64) **Harry didn't recognize.*

(65) *Parents know what their children are longing for and will give them what they want, even if every piggy bank in the house has to be broken open.* ***Love gives.*** (I believe, BNC 6548947)

semantic roles

For each verb, speakers know which **semantic role** is associated with each complement. With *give*, for example, the subject refers to the giver, the first object in linear order to the person receiving something and the second object to the thing given. The subject, that is, encodes the AGENT, the first object the RECIPIENT and the second object the PATIENT (a THEME, in this case). With *like*, to give a different example, the subject refers to an EXPERIENCER, i.e. a person experiencing an emotion, thought or sensation, and the object to the STIMULUS of the experience (*I like ice-cream*). And with the verb *please*, the subject encodes the STIMULUS and the object the EXPERIENCER (*ice-cream pleases me*).

Linguists have come up with a wealth of different sets of semantic roles, but the ones recognized by most are AGENT, PATIENT, THEME, INSTRUMENT, RECIPIENT/ BENEFICIARY, EXPERIENCER, MANNER, PLACE and TIME.

levels of analysis

We have now mentioned three different levels of description and analysis. For each phrase in a clause, we can state the **syntactic form** (i.e. the phrase type, NP, VP, PP, etc.), the **syntactic function** (i.e. the grammatical relation that a complement bears to the verb, subject, object, oblique object, etc.) and the **semantic role** (AGENT, PATIENT, EXPERIENCER, etc.) It is important to keep these three levels apart.

Sally	*gave*	*the girl*	*a coin.*	
NP	VP	NP	NP	**form (phrase type)**
subject	verb	object	object	**syntactic function**
AGENT		RECIPIENT	THEME	**semantic function (role)**

Sally	*gave*	*a coin*	*to the girl.*	
NP	VP	NP	PP	**form (phrase type)**
subject	verb	object	adv. cpl.	**syntactic function**
AGENT		THEME	RECIPIENT	**semantic function (role)**

exercise

Identify the form (phrase type), the syntactic function and the semantic role of each constituent in the following clause:

[8] The term *(verbal)* ***argument*** is from formal logic and mathematics. In logic, a *predicate* is an expression that requires the insertion of *arguments* (i.e. independent variables) in order to create a statement that can be true or false. If the verb is viewed as a logical formula, the complements are the arguments that must be inserted into the formula to create a clause.

Hermione	*had bought*	*him*	*a luxury eagle-feather quill.*	
				form (phrase type)
				syntactic function
				semantic function (role)

syntactic relations

Syntactic relations, we have said above, are functions of clause constituents relative to the verb. Subjects, objects and adverbial complements have already been introduced. But there are other kinds of clause constituents as well, and these will be discussed in the following.

predicative complements

A ***predicative*** *complement* (*predicative* for short) is either a *subject complement* or an *object complement*. A subject complement is the object of a copular verb (i.e. a verb meaning 'be', 'become', 'seem to be', etc.), which is **co-referential** with the subject, i.e. that refers to the same person or thing that the subject refers to. In *My dad's a milkman*, *My dad* is the subject and *a milkman* is the subject complement, i.e. the predicative.

(66)

My dad	's	*a milkman.*
S	copula	**SCpl**

(67)

He	*wants to be*	*Minister of Magic*
S	copula	**SCpl**

subject vs. subject complement

In English, it is easy to determine which is the subject, *My dad* or *a milkman*, because the subject always precedes the verb. In languages with more flexible constituent order, this can be less obvious. Both the subject and the subject complement will be case-marked for nominative, but the subject will always be the constituent that agrees with the verb in number. This is illustrated for German in (68) and (69):

(68)

Die *gewaltigen Schuldenberge der Staaten*	*sind*	*ein Problem.*
S	copula	**SCpl**
(nominative plural)	(plural)	(nominative sg.)

(69)

Ein Problem	*sind*	*die gewaltigen Schuldenberge der Staaten.*
SCpl (nominative sg.)	copula (plural)	S (nominative plural)

object complement

An object complement is a constituent co-referential with the object. In *Phil considers this a problem*, *this* is the direct object and *a problem* the object complement (predicative). The direct object refers to the person or thing talked or thought about, the predicative complement to the predication/statement made *about* that person or thing.

(70)

Phil	*considers*	*this a problem.*	
S	verb	O	**OCpl**

(71)

They	*had elected*	*her*	*team captain.*
S	verb	O	**OCpl**

exercise

Diagram the last clause in (72):

(72) *He'd forgotten all about the people in cloaks until he passed a group of them next to the baker's. He eyed them angrily as he passed. He didn't know why, but* ***they made him uneasy.***

adjuncts

Besides verbs and complements, clauses also contain adjuncts. Whereas complements complete the verb by specifying the **participants** of an event, adjuncts express its **circumstances**, for example, MANNER, PLACE and TIME. Tesnière (1959) thought of complements as referring to the actors in a play and adjucnts to the props and backdrop. Adjuncts can usually be omitted without leaving the clause incomplete – but again it must be said that omissibility is heavily context-dependent and seems to be more of a semantic property than a syntactic one.

(73)

Last night,	*George*	*slept*	***in the bath tub****.*
ADT	S	verb	ADT

Adjuncts (also called *adjunct adverbials* or simply *adverbials* – not to be confused with *adverbs*)[9] are often classified according to their semantic function into adverbials of time, adverbials of place and adverbials of manner, but this is conflating the different levels of analysis. MANNER, PLACE and TIME are semantic roles. Syntactically, both *last night* and *in the bath tub* in (73) are adjuncts. Adjuncts come in various forms, they can be NPs (*last night*, *next Monday*, *all the time*), PPs (*in the bath tub*, *on Monday*, *with an evil grin*, *in an impertinent way*) or AdvPs (*then*, *never*, *very slowly*).

exercises

Identify the **form** (phrase type) and the **syntactic function** of each constituent in the following clauses.

Small explosions from Fred and George's bedroom	*were considered*	*perfectly normal.*	
			syn form
			syn fct.

Eugene	*finds*	*Hebrew*	*difficult.*	
				syn form
				syn fct.

Identify the **form** (phrase type), the **syntactic function** and the **semantic function** of each constituent in the following clauses.

He	*lay awake*	*for hours*	*that night.*	
				syn form
				syn fct.
				sem

[9] Some authors call adjuncts *modifiers*, because they perform similar functions on the clause level as modifiers perform on the phrase level, giving extra information and being less essential to the constituent than the head. We will stick to the term *adjunct (adverbial)*. Note that the term *adverbial* is short for *adverbial phrase*, whereas an *adverb* is a word.

In the basement	*some-body*	*was playing*	*the guitar*	*at an ear-splitting volume.*	
					syn form
					syn fct.
					sem

Segment the following clauses into constituents. For each constituent, give, (a) the phrase type, (b) the syntactic function and (c) the semantic function.

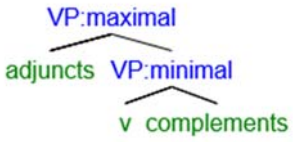
(74) *Every one of them had called Hermione a know-it-all at least once.*

(75) *He said it slowly, with an air of importance.*

Complements versus adjuncts

minimal and maximal phrases

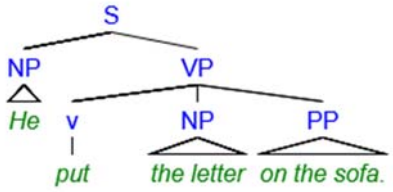
We represent the fact that complements are more closely connected to the verb than adjuncts by considering a verb plus all of ist complements as a *minimal VP* and a *minimal VP* plus any adjuncts that there are as a *maximal VP* (Kim & Sells 2008: 54). The maximal VP encompasses all of the clause's predicate, including adjuncts; the minimal VP contains only the verb (which may be complex) and its complements.



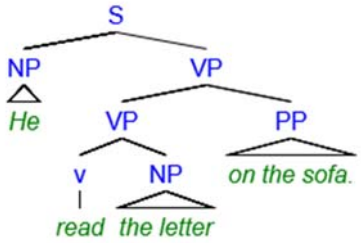
complements vs. adjuncts

The syntactic form of a phrase does not enable to us to predict whether it is a complement or an adjunct. With different verbs, different types of constituents are obligatory. With *put*, a phrase expressing GOAL or LOCATION is needed, but not with *need*. Thephrase *on the sofa* is a complement in (76), but an adjunct in (77):

(76) *He put the letter **on the sofa**.*
**He put the letter.*



(77) *He read the letter **on the sofa**.*
He read the letter.



The line between complements and adjuncts is not clear-cut, however. Especially with motion verbs, it can be difficult to decide whether a prepositional or adverbial phrase constitutes a complement or an adjunct, and the standard reference grammars do not always agree on the best analysis. Quirk et al. in their *Grammar of Contemporary English* propose the category of *obligatory adjuncts*, which specify direction (1985: e.g. 55, 737); Huddleston, on the other hand, speaks of "[p]lace, direction and time complements", though "place and time expressions can also function as adjuncts" (*Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, 1988: 60f.). Huddleston's analysis is adopted by Primus (2012: 4) for German and by Hasselgård (2010: 117) for English. Verbs of motion and location receive a substantially different meaning when used without phrases giving GOAL or DIRECTION, so these do seem to complement the verb more than adjunct adverbials.

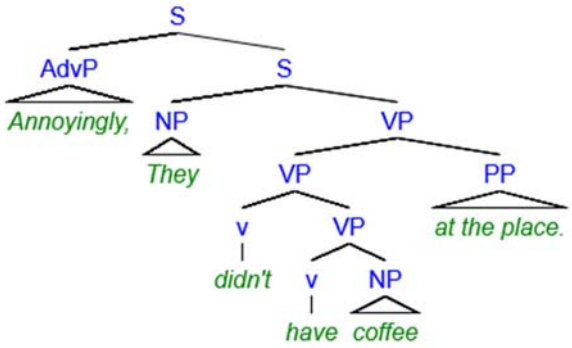
(78) *Greg lives in Swansea.*
Greg lives.

(79) *Don't move to Salisbury.*
Don't move.

(80) *Sie wohnt in Frankfurt.*
**Sie wohnt.*
?Wohnst du noch?

sentence adverbials

When you read the clause *Annoyingly, they didn't have any coffee at the place*, you will, perhaps, intuitively say that *at the place* is somehow closer to the core of the clause than *annoyingly*, although both are adjunct adverbials. Adverbials such as *annoyingly* are called ***sentence-level adverbials***; they refer not to the circumstances of an event but to the attitude of the speaker/writer/text towards that event. Sentence-level adverbials are modelled as external to the clause, which leaves us with a minimal S and a maximal S:



exercise

Diagram the following sentences:

(81) *Most unfortunately, the decision does not rest with me.*

(82) *They didn't find much there, luckily.*

valency as a property of verbs

Verb are called **valency carriers**. In *they didn't have coffee*, the NP *coffee* is said to be the object of the verb *have* and *they* the subject, because the verb *have* is a ***transitive verb***, i.e. a verb that "takes" a subject and an object. *Give*, on the other hand, is a **ditransitive** verb, because it takes two objects, and *sleep* is an **intransitive** verb because it takes no objects at all. The verb specifies which of the semantic roles that it entails will be expressed by which complement. This property of verbs is called **valency**. The verb *have*, for instance, entails that there is a participant that possesses something (in the widest possible sense of possession), the *possessor*, and a participant that is being possessed, the *possessum*. With the verb *have* the possessor will be the subject and the possessum the object. With the verb *belong*, by contrast, the possessor will be an adverbial complement (a PP with the preposition *to*) and the possessum the subject.

other valency carriers

There are other valency carriers than verbs. In inflecting languages, prepositions dictate the case of the NP that they contain. In German, for instance, the preposition *für* 'for' requires an accusative (*für de<u>n</u> Freund* 'for the friend') and the preposition *mit* 'with' requires a dative (*mit de<u>m</u> Freund* 'with the friend').

Nouns and adjectives can also be valency carriers. The adjectives *similar* and *different*, for instance, can be modified by prepositional phrases with *to* and *from*, respectively. We have already encountered the noun *attempt* being complemented by a prepositional phrase with *at* (*I made every attempt <u>at</u> preventing their meeting*), and the noun *discussion* can be complemented by a PP with *about* or *on*.

exercise

Look up the verbs *give* and *dance* and the noun *attempt* in a dictionary of English. What information about valency does the dictionary offer?

Query these three verbs in a corpus of contemporary English, such as COCA or the BNC. Do you find clauses conforming to the dictionary information? Do you find clauses not anticipated by the dictionary?

valency as phrasal/cxnal

Most verbs are used in more than one **complementation pattern**. The verb *give* is considered to be a ditransitive verb, and many clauses with *give* as the main verb do indeed contain two objects, but, as we have already seen, other options remain possible, for instance *Love gives* in (65) above. The verb *dance* can be used in a number of different ways:

(83) (a) *They danced.*
(b) *They danced a waltz.*
(c) *They danced the judge a waltz.*
(d) *They danced across the room.*
(e) *They danced themselves tired.*
(d) *They danced their way to stardom*

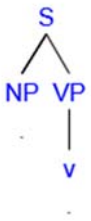
Linguists have noted that many verbs that, out of context, we would assume to be always intransitive, such as *sneeze*, can in fact used transitively or even ditransitively.

(84) *She sneezed the foam off the cappuccino*. (Goldberg 2006)

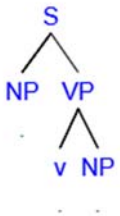
basic clause types/cxns

You could easily say something like *She ellbowed/complemented/insulted* her out of the way or *I'll draw/print/find you a map* without there being anything ungrammatical about the clauses and without anyone having any problems understanding you, although verbs like *complement* and *find* are not typical instances of ditransitive verbs. For this reason, some linguists assume that transitivity is not a lexical property of individual verbs but a property of clauses. Rather than classifying verbs into categories like "transitive", "ditransitive" and "intransitive", we can speak of transitive, ditransitive and intransitive clause constructions. Bieswanger & Becker (2010: 120) identiy seven basic clause types of English, based on the number and form of the complements. The following classification differes from theirs in that it distinguishes prepositional objects from prepositional-phrase adverbials, but makes no difference between NP and AdjP predicative complements.

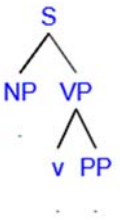
1. intransitive clauses (S only)



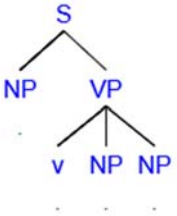
2. (mono-)transitive clauses (S+O)



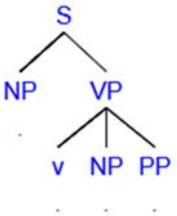
3. (mono-)transitive clauses (S+AdvC)



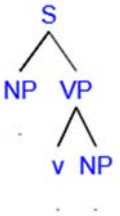
4. ditransitive clauses (S+O+O)



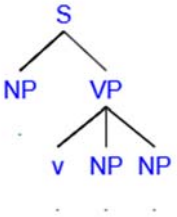
5. ditransitive clauses (S+O+AdvC)



6. clauses with subject complements (S+SCpl)



7. clauses with object complements (S+OCpl.)



There are certainly verbs that are much more likely to occur in one of these constructions than in others, but it is not necessary to claim, as e.g. Kim & Sells do (2008), that a verb is always either transitive or intransitive or ditransitive. The same goes for adjectives and nouns. A noun like *attempt* can certainly be modified by an *at*-phrase, but it does not have to be, and there are other options (e.g. *to*-infinitives).

Sentence structure

Introduction: Simple and complex sentences

What is a sentence?

It is difficult to define the concept of the sentence. In writing, a sentence is everything between two full stops, but this diagnostic is obviously not available for spoken language. Where there are multiple main clauses in a row, they can be put into writing as one complex sentence, as in (51) above, here repeated as (85), or as separate sentences, as in (86):

(85) *Harry didn't recognize the third owl, a handsome tawny one, but he knew at once where it had come from.*

(86) *Harry didn't recognize the third owl, a handsome tawny one. But he knew at once where it had come from.*

We might say that (85) has a longer span of attention; there is only a half-closure at *tawny one*; the main proposition is in the second clause. In (86), there is a closure (a *full stop*) after *tawny one* and the content of the second clause is new information, with a focus of its own, more strongly connected to what follows, perhaps, than to the first clause. The stress pattern is also going to be slightly different. Such considerations take us into the border regions of syntax, however.

main clauses vs. subordinate clauses

We do know how clauses can be combined into sentences, however. Clauses that can stand alone and form a complete sentence are called ***independent clauses*** or ***main clauses***. Clauses that depend on other clauses are called ***dependent***, ***embedded*** or ***subordinate clauses***. Sentences can consist of several independent clauses conjoined by *and*, *or* or *but*, this is called *coordination*. Sentences can also consist of one or more main clauses that contain embedded subordinate clauses. This is called *subordination*. Embedded clauses can be complements, predicatives or adjuncts. We will examine the different options in the following.

Coordination

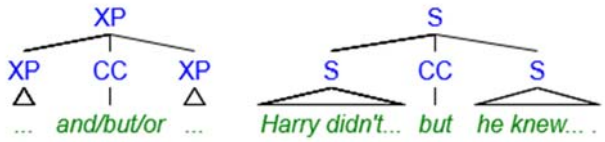
and phrases

In coordination, two constituents of the same type are connected by a coordinating conjunction, a word like *and* or *but*. Neither constituent depends on the other, each could also stand alone. This can be done with individual words, phrases and entire clauses, as shown in (87):

(87)
(a) *apples or pears*
(b) *slowly but surely*
(c) *keep calm and have a biscuit*
(d) *Harry didn't recognize the owl, but he knew where it had come from.*

We model coordination by duplicating the node onto a higher level (some call this an *and* phrase, &P): two conjoined noun phrases form a (more complex) noun phrase again, two conjoined simple sentences form a complex sentence, and so on. This is sketched in (88), where XP stands for any phrase and CC stands for *coordinating conjunction*:

(88)

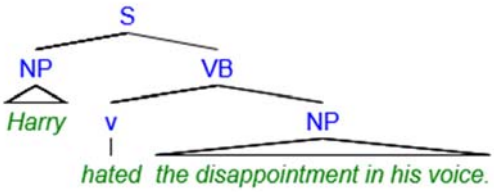


Subordination

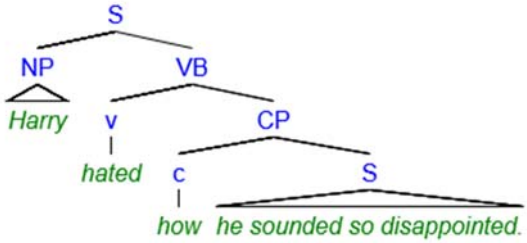
CPs

In subordination, there is a higher-level clause, the so-called *matrix clause* (or simply main clause), on which a subordinate clause depends. This happens, for instance, if the object slot in a transitive construction is filled not by a noun phrase but by an entire clause. Compare (89), (90) and (91):

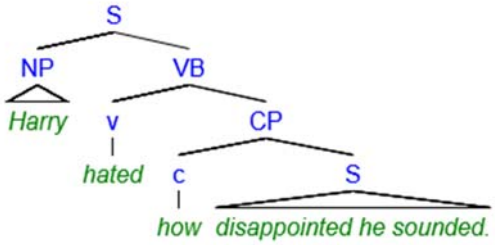
(89) *Harry hated the disappointment in his voice.*



(90) *Harry hated how he sounded so disappointed.*



(91) *Harry hated how disappointed he sounded.*



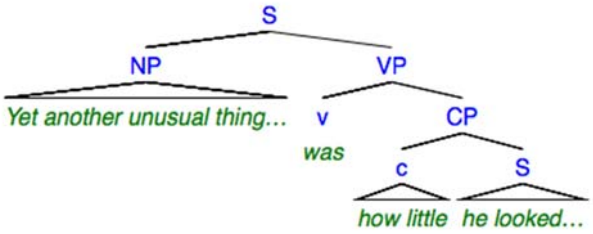
CP → c S

In (90) and (91), the object of the verb *hated* is not an NP but what we call a CP, a complementizer phrase. Words like *how* or *that* are called complementizers and constituents like *how disappointed he sounded* are called ***complementizer phrases*** because they function as complements to the main clause's verb. In school grammar, complementizers are called *(subordinating) conjunctions*. In (90), the clause introduced by the complementizer *how* is a regular SVX[10] clause. In (91), the verb is at the end of the clause. This is only possible in subordinate clauses in English.

[10] SVX used to be called SVO, subject-verb-object, but since what follows after the verb in an English clause doesn't have to be an object, we are now using the label SVX, subject-verb-anything else.

CPs can also be predicative complements:

(92) *Yet another unusual thing about Harry was how little he looked forward to his birthdays.*

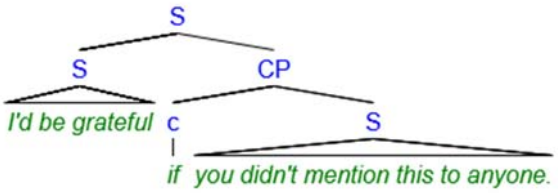


S → S CP

English also has subordinate clauses that are not complements to a verb.These are also called CPs, despite the fact that they are not the complement of any verb. We can connect a subordinate clause to a main clause by means of a subordinating conjunction (a word like *although*, *if* or *when*). The subordinating conjunction is still abbreviated c, even though it is not a complementizer in this structure. Since the internal structure of the CP is the same whether it functions as a complement or a sentence-level subordinating clause, it would inflate the phrase inventory unnecessarily to use different labels.

Since most subordinate clauses in English have SVX structure like main clauses, the best way to tell that we are dealing with subordination is to check whether the clause in question can stand alone.

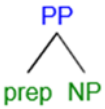
(93) *I'd be grateful if you didn't mention this to anyone.*
**If you didn't mention this to anyone.*



exercise

Sort the following words into two categories, prepositions and conjunctions, based on their distribution in phrases. (Remember you can identify a clause by its subject-predicate structure.)

about, like, including, concerning, among, despite, minus, since, although, because, unless, considering, when

Modality and clause types; direct and indirect speech acts

declarative, interrogative, imperative

There are three different types of clauses in English as far as **modality** is concerned: declarative, interrogative and imperative clauses. **Declarative sentences** have the form of SVX (subject-verb-anything else) and typically express declarations, i.e. statements about the world, our thoughts, etc., as in (94):

(94) *They* *met* *at the Yule Ball.*
S v ADT

Interrogative clauses typically express questions, i.e. requests for information. Yes/no questions take the shape of VSX, the finite verb is placed before the subject, as in (95). WH-questions involve an interrogative pronoun in first position, followed by the finite verb (plus negative particle where present) and the subject (WVSX), as in (96). Interrogative pronouns are also called *wh*-pronouns because most of them begin with *wh*-,[11] hence the term *WH-question*.

(95) *Do* *they* *know* *you're here?*
v.fin S v.inf X

(96) *Why* *didn't* *you* *tell us?*
WH v.fin+neg S X

Imperative clauses typically express commands or suggestions; they take the shape of VX, as in (97):

(97) (a) *Give* *me my letter!*
v.fin X

(b) *Don't* *be so ridiculous, Fred!'*
v.fin+neg X

direct vs. indirect speech acts

Althouth declarative, interrogative and imperative clauses are *typically* associated with declarations, questions and commands, respectively, they are often used quite differently. Declarative clauses can function as questions (*I would like to know…*), interrogative clauses can be used to make a request or command (*Can you tell me…?* or *Will you shut up now!)* and imperative clauses can be used to express emotion or attitude (*Get real!*). Such untypical (but not really uncommon) uses are called **indirect speech acts**. This is where we leave syntax and enter the realm of pragmatics.

[11] The term *wh*-pronoun is useful because words like *where* and *when* can also be used as complementizers, not interrogatives, as in *I wonder where it is*.

exercise

For each of the clauses in bold face, determine the clause type (SVX=declarative, VSX/WVSX=interrogative, VX=imperative) and the pragmatic function and say whether the speech act is direct or indirect. (There may be more than one correct answer as far as pragmatic function is concerned.)

(98) (a) We're going to London next Wednesday to buy my new books. **Why don't we meet in Diagon Alley?**

(b) "**She's bored**," he said. "She's used to flying around outside. **If I could just let her out at night** —"
"**Do I look stupid?**" snarled Uncle Vernon, a bit of fried egg dangling from his bushy mustache. "I know what'll happen if that owl's let out."

(c) "**Let's see**," he said. "I think that's everything."

(d) Harry looked bemusedly at the photograph Colin was brandishing under his nose. […]
"**Will you sign it?**" said Colin eagerly.
"No," said Harry flatly.

(e) *Percy looked outraged. "**You want to show a bit more respect to a school prefect!**" he said. "I don't like your attitude!"*

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