Grammar & Syntax
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What is GRAMMAR?

GRAMMAR: a complex system of rules that governs how speakers organize sounds into words and words into sentences. (Denham & Lobeck, 2010, p. 7)

• Phonetics
• Phonology
• Morphology
• Syntax
• Semantics
Different approaches

- **Prescriptive Grammar**: set of grammatical rules prescribed by a language authority
  
  (Denham & Lobeck, 2010)

- Rules are phrased as prohibitions:
  - DO NOT split an infinitive (*to reluctantly leave*)
  - DO NOT end a sentence with a preposition (*Who did she go with?*)
  - DO NOT use “hopefully” as a sentence adverb (*Hopefully this book will be fascinating.*)

Different approaches

- **Descriptive Grammar**: set of grammatical rules based on what we say, not on what we should say according to some language authority
  
  (Denham & Lobeck, 2010)

- Black English
  - *BE*-less sentences (*Tim over there; She late; My father a fireman.*)
  - Invariant BE sentences (*Shanna be late; He be working; I be in bed.*)
  - Multiple negation (I don’t know nothing about none of those.)
Different approaches

• **Universal Grammar (UG):** set of linguistic rules common to all languages; hypothesized to be part of human cognition
  (Denham & Lobeck, 2010)

• All languages appear to share these universal principles:
  • They all have subjects and predicates.
  • They all have nouns and verbs.
  • They all have a subset of sounds.
  • They all have similar ways of categorizing meaning distinctions.

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Different approaches

• **Generative Grammar:** set of grammatical rules that allow speakers to create possible sentences in a language
  (Denham & Lobeck, 2010)
What is grammar?
(Another sense of grammar)

• **Grammar**: rules of forming grammatical phrases and sentences → **syntax**

• **Syntax**: the system of rules and categories that govern the combination of words into phrases and sentences

**Grammaticality**

• Sentences that conforms the rules of syntax are **well-formed** or **grammatical**.
  
  Ex: The boy quickly found the ball in the house.

• Sentences that violates the rules of syntax are **ill-formed** or **ungrammatical**.
  
  Ex: *The boy quickly in the house find the ball.

• Grammaticality judgments depend on “your” linguistic intuitions or syntactic knowledge.
Exercise 1: Place an asterisk next to any of the sentences that are ungrammatical for you. What makes these sentences ungrammatical?

1. The instructor told the students to study.
2. The instructor suggested the students to study.
3. The customer asked for a cold beer.
4. The customer requested for a cold beer.
5. He gave the Red Cross some money.
6. He donated the Red Cross some money.
7. The pilot landed the jet.
8. The jet landed.
9. A journalist wrote the article.
10. The article wrote.
11. Jerome is fed up of his job.
12. Jerome is tired of his job.

Productivity/ Creativity

• Speakers of a human language can produce and understand an infinite number of sentences.
• Exercise:

  Expand the following sentences
  1. She is a beautiful and tall girl.
  2. Mary looked at the book and wrote something.
  3. The cat chased the mouse that ate the cheese.
Agreement

- **Number**: singular/ plural
- **Person**: first person (the speaker)/ second person (the hearer)/ third person (any others)
- **Tense**: present/ past
- **Voice**: active/ passive
- **Gender**: natural gender (sexes: male/ female), grammatical gender (masculine/ feminine)

Syntactic categories/ Parts of speech

- **Open-class words – Content words:**
  - Noun
  - Verb
  - Adjective
  - Adverb
- **Closed-class words – Function words:**
  - Determiner / article / demonstrative: the/ a/ an/ this/ that
  - Auxiliary: will/ can/ do
  - Conjunction: and/ or
  - Preposition: in/ on/ at
  - Complementizer: if/ whether/ that

*Further information can be found on page 82 of the textbook.*
Exercise 2: Indicate the category of each word in the following sentences.

1. That glass suddenly broke.
2. A jogger ran toward the end of the lane.
3. These dead trees are blocking the road.
4. The detective hurriedly looked through the records.
5. The peaches never appear quite ripe.
6. Jeremy will play the trumpet and the drums in the orchestra.

Home assignments

• **Group 7:** Study Questions on page 92
• **All groups:** Study Questions on page 92 and Tasks A, C, D and E on pages 92 and 93.
Syntactic constituency

• Natural groupings of a sentence (Fromkin et al., 2003, p. 124)
• Constituents: Phrase types
  • Noun phrase (NP): a beautiful girl
  • Verb phrase (VP): rides a motorbike
  • Adjective phrase (AP): physically active
  • Adverb phrase (AdvP): so dangerously
  • Prepositional phrase (PP): in the corner

Constituency tests

• Constituents can stand alone.
  Ex: We walked up the hill.
  → Up the hill, we walked.
  → *Up the, we walked.
• Constituents can usually be substituted by a pronoun or a similar syntactic category.
  • The girl stood on the table and she danced.
  • The girl stood on the table and the boy did so.
• Constituents can be moved as a unit.
Exercise 3: Apply the substitution test to determine which of the bracketed sequences in the following sentences form constituents. Support your answer by rewriting each sentence with the substitution.

1. [The tragedy] upset the entire family.
2. They hid [in the cave].
3. The [computer was very] expensive.
4. [The town square and the civic building] will be rebuilt.
5. Jane has [left town].

Exercise 4: Apply the movement test to determine which of the bracketed sequences in the following sentences form constituents. Support your answer by rewriting each sentence with the bracketed sequence moved.

1. We ate our lunch [near the river bank].
2. Steve looked [up the number] in the book.
3. The [island has been] flooded.
4. I love [peanut butter and bacon sandwiches].
5. The environmental [movement is gaining momentum].
Exercise 5: What are the possible groupings in the following phrases?

1. ten page book report
2. wealthy men and women
3. saw a person with a telescope
4. no smoking section
5. big squares and circles

Deep and surface structure

• Deep structure: an abstract level of structural organization in which all the elements determining structural interpretation are represented.

• Surface structure: different syntactic forms of a single underlying abstract structure

⇒ The grammar must be capable of showing how a single underlying abstract representation can become different surface structures.

Deep structure: Charlie + broke + the window

Surface structure:
Charlie broke the window.
The window was broken by Charlie.
It was Charlie who broke the window.
Was the window broken by Charlie?
Structural ambiguity
Same surface structure, different deep structures
Exercise 6: Disambiguate the following sentences
1. This story shows what evil man can do.
2. They only sell rotten fruits and vegetables.
3. She returned early that evening.
4. More interesting meals would have been appreciated.
5. We need an agreement between workers on overtime.
6. Bill asked the man who he had seen.
7. She was at the window, the street atlas in her hand, looking up the street.

Phrase structure rules

• Phrase structure rules are those which enable us to generate a very large number of sentences with what look like a very small number of rules.

• Phrase structure rules state that the structure of a phrase of a specific type will consist of one or more constituents in a particular order.
Phrase structure rule

Decide the phrase structure rule of NPs:

- Sam
- he
- a book
- the big house
- her quite curly hair
- the concept of generosity
- books of poems
- their mother’s bag of fruits

Phrase structure rule

- Decide the phrase structure rule of VPs:
  - The child is crying.
  - The man usually reads novels.
  - He gave me a pen.
  - He bought a bunch of flowers for her.
  - The house is quite expensive in this area.
  - We played cards until midnight.
Phrase structure rule

- Decide the phrase structure rule of APs:
  - angry
  - so talented
  - afraid of spiders

Phrase structure rule

- Decide the phrase structure rule of PPs:
  - for a long time
  - on the table
  - in the morning
Phrase structure rule

S → NP VP

NP → Art/ Det (AP) N (PP)
NP → Pro
NP → PN

VP → V NP (PP) (AdvP)

AP → (AdvP) A (PP)

PP → Prep NP

Exercise 7: Draw the tree diagrams for the following phrases
1. into the house
2. fixed the telephone
3. full of mistakes
4. more toward the window
5. a film about pollution
6. always study this material
7. perhaps earn the money
8. that argument with Owen
9. the success of the program
Exercise 8: Draw the tree diagrams for the following phrases
1. Those guests should leave.
2. Marta never ate a brownie.
3. That shelf will fall.
4. The glass broke.
5. The student lost the debate.
6. The manager may offer a raise.
7. The judge often jails shoplifters.
8. The teacher often organized a discussion.
9. A psychic will speak to this group.
10. Marianne could become quite fond of Larry.

Complementizer Phrase (CP)

• CP → C S
  I think that he drives a Ford.
  I guess that he will pass the test.
  I wonder whether we should give up.
  I hope to know what he thinks.
  The reporter said that an accident injured a woman.
  The fishermen think that the company polluted the bay.
  Bill reported that a student asked whether the eclipse would occur.
Draw the tree diagrams for the following sentences

- He is a kind handsome young man.
- I like the house on the corner of the street in the neighborhood near the courthouse.
- Bill realizes that John thinks that Mary is smart.

→ Embedding and recursion

Yes/ No questions

NP Aux VP → Aux NP VP

- Deep structure: he will look for another job
- Surface structure: will he look for another job → Auxiliary movement
Exercise 10: The derivations of the following sentences involve the inversion transformation. Give the deep structure and the surface structure for each sentence.
1. Will the boss hire Hillary?
2. Can the dog fetch the ball?
3. Should the student report the incident?
4. Must the musicians play that sonata?
5. Might that player leave the team?

Wh-questions

Exercise 10: The following sentences involve the rules of Wh-movement and Inversion. Draw the trees to show the deep structure and the surface structure for each of these sentences.
• Who should the director call?
• Who should call the director?
• What can Joanne eat?
• Who will the visitors stay with?
• What might Terry bake for the party?
• What could Anne bring the gathering?
→ Auxiliary movement
→ Wh-movement
References


Home assignments

- **Group 8**: Study Questions on page 107.
- **All groups**: Study Questions on page 107 and Tasks A, B, C and D on pages 107 and 108.