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ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN FOCUS.
WORDS AND MORPHEMES

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FOREWORD

This is the first of four volumes that comprise the series *English Grammar in Focus*, a collection of handbooks that is aimed to familiarise university students with the essentials of English grammatical description. Although each volume can be used as a self-contained coursebook, the series as a whole is intended to serve as a comprehensive introduction to all levels of grammatical description, from the morpheme, as the smallest unit of grammar, to larger stretches of language where grammar merges with other disciplines like text and discourse analysis.

The series has three main aims: (i) to introduce students to the main categories and structures of English grammar, and help them to recognise and analyse these structures; (ii) to provide them with the descriptive tools and terminology necessary to undertake an explicit and systematic description of English grammar at all levels; (iii) to introduce them to the essentials of linguistic argumentation. The series presupposes little or no previous background in English grammatical description and will provide students with an accurate understanding of grammar that will allow them both to enhance their English language skills and to acquire a solid grounding for further linguistic study. To achieve these goals, along with an accurate description of the categories and structures under study, a wealth of other features are included in each book of the series, such as exercises, detailed glossaries and subject indexes for ease of reference, and lists of books and articles for further reading.

This initial volume, *English grammar in focus. Words and morphemes*, provides in its first part an overview of linguistics as the scientific study of language, presents grammar as one of several levels of linguistic description and introduces some of its key notions, such as grammatical units and tools for grammatical description and representation. The second part is a detailed description of the two smallest units in the grammatical hierarchy, namely the morpheme and the word. Future volumes in the series will cover the clause, the phrase, and text and discourse.

The books in this series have been authored by experienced scholars in the teaching of descriptive English grammar at university level with long trajectories in linguistic research. The texts have been tested in the classroom over a number of years in the English and German Department at the University of Granada, Spain,

and have benefited enormously from the feedback provided by both students and colleagues with whom the topics covered in the handbooks have been discussed at length, sometimes painstakingly so.

As the series editor, I want to express my gratitude, first and foremost, to the authors of this first volume, Ana Díaz-Negrillo, Marta Falces Sierra, Encarnación Hidalgo Tenorio and Salvador Valera Hernández, for accepting to share their knowledge and expertise in the teaching of English linguistics, and for dealing diligently with the many tasks involved in putting together this ambitious collection of handbooks.

Collectively, we are all indebted to our ‘forefathers’ in the English and German Department at the University of Granada, an older generation of distinguished and devoted scholars, most of them now blissfully retired, who taught us to love the many intricacies of English grammar and to approach its study with open and critical minds: Fernando Serrano Valverde, Neil McLaren, Rafael Fente Gómez, Luis Quereda Rodríguez-Navarro, José Luis Martínez-Dueñas and José Manuel Martín Morillas. To all of them, this collection is humbly dedicated.

Last but, definitely, not least, we want to thank the many cohorts of students who over more than two decades have attended our lectures and seminars as part of their degrees in English Philology and, more recently, English Studies, at the University of Granada. It is with them in mind that these pages have been written.

Juan Santana
Series Editor

CHAPTER TWO

TOOLS FOR GRAMMATICAL DESCRIPTION

ENCARNACIÓN HIDALGO TENORIO

- 2.1 Criteria of grammatical description: form, function and distribution
- 2.2 The use of constituency tests
- 2.3 The representation of constituent structure

Further reading

Exercises

Summary

So far we have provided the reader with a detailed picture of what **language** and **linguistics** are, and specified the role of **grammar** as one discipline key for the understanding of the complex phenomenon of human communication. In the present chapter, we delve into some relevant technical issues, to include the criteria of grammatical description, the notion of **constituency** and its graphic representation.

2.1 CRITERIA OF GRAMMATICAL DESCRIPTION: FORM, FUNCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Imagine that a friend of yours visited Venus some years ago and got very keen on someone from this planet. Imagine that your friend, who is world-famous for her ability to learn difficult languages, now can speak fluent Venusian; and keep on imagining that she is eager to teach you the basics of this linguistic code so that it is easier for yourself to talk with Throomm, who is about to take a rocket for the Earth, and do so without her assistance and whenever you fancy. For that purpose, your friend can make use of many different strategies; for instance, she can show

you images of very cool utensils, somewhat strange animals, stone flowers and blue trees, all of them taken in Venus, and teach you how these are named and pronounced there; she can also imitate a real conversation so that you can finally pick up the typical salutations of so much usefulness when socialising in pubs and university libraries in the whole galaxy; last but not least, recent films and videoclips starring Venusian best boy bands will be of much help too, especially if you aim for native-like proficiency. All in all, the truth is that these learning tactics will certainly not be enough to grasp the intricate functioning of this particularly unknown language; therefore, they will have to be complemented with others that can assist the learner in employing all the devices Venusian has to produce meaning.

For the sake of clarity, here you have some examples from the first lesson your friend would plan to teach you:

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|----|----------------------|------------------|----|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| (1) | a. | <i>arook</i> | = a brother | b. | <i>aroomm</i> | = the brother | c. | <i>Lito</i> | = love |
| (2) | a. | <i>arookte</i> | = with a brother | b. | <i>aroommte</i> | = with the brother | | | |
| (3) | a. | <i>laker</i> | = to give | b. | <i>allaker</i> | = gives | | | |
| (4) | | <i>arook pikak</i> | = a good brother | | | | | | |
| (5) | | <i>Arook pikak</i> | | | <i>aroomm pikamm</i> | | <i>lito</i> | | <i>allaker</i> |
| | | A good brother | | | to the good brother | | love | | gives |
| (6) | | <i>Aroomm pikamm</i> | | | <i>arook pikak</i> | | <i>lito</i> | | <i>allaker</i> |
| | | The good brother | | | to a good brother | | love | | gives |

At first sight, Venusian seems to be a language with very interesting grammatical features concerning the **form**, **function** and **distribution** of **words**. In (1a) and (1b), the reader will have noticed that the contrast between definite and indefinite reference (*the* vs. *a*) has its grammatical reflex in the presence of the endings *-mm* and *-k*, respectively. The difference between (1c) and these two examples seems to be clear; here, the contrast between countability and uncountability emerges, given that we only have a pure **stem** with no ending. (2a) and (2b) show that, first of all, this language prefers post-positions to **prepositions**; and secondly that, morphologically speaking, these are not treated as **free morphemes**, thereby opting for their attachment to the end of words. Furthermore, as we can see in (3b), if compared with (3a), the third person singular of **verbs** is formed by adding *al-* to the initial part of the infinitive. As for examples (4), (5) and (6), they illustrate how words are combined in larger structures following the same pattern. Thus, nouns always precede the **adjectives** they are modified by, like in *arook pikak*; moreover, the latter also have the same inflectional features as nouns (e.g. *pika* is used with **mass nouns**, *pikak* with indefinite reference, and *pikamm* with definite reference). **Main verbs** with the function of **Predicator** will always appear at the end of the **sentence**, as in *Aroomm pikamm arook pikak lito allaker*.

Finally, since this language does not have formal markers to indicate the syntactic role of grammatical constituents in the same fashion as Latin, Arabic or German do, word order plays a significant role in this respect, with **Subjects** appearing in initial position, followed by **Indirect Objects** (in the case any human entity happens to be a receiver of goods or services) and by **Direct Objects** (in the case any animate or inanimate participant is affected by the agent's action).

This situation, despite its improbability, is less weird than you might think; in fact, one of the tasks grammarians are responsible for is in a way similar to what this imaginary friend of yours might eventually have to do with the prospect of making Venusian accessible to you. As suggested above, the keys to an accurate and thorough description of English grammar are form, function and distribution. In chapter 5, devoted only to the study of words, we will test the extent to which each category has quite distinct formal, functional and distributional features. Before that, however, here we will discuss these terms briefly.

Traditionally, the criterion most frequently adopted by grammarians was meaning. Nouns were defined as those words which name a person, place, thing or idea; students learnt that verbs were those words which express an action; adjectives were claimed to limit nouns; and adverbs, to tell how, when, where, how often or how much an action takes place (see chapter 5 for the meaning associated with different word-classes). The examples below, however, will serve to prove that this view was subject to necessary improvement.

- (7) *There was a significant national response to the shootings.*
- (8) *Her friend was 8 years old.*
- (9) *The Economy Ministry of Germany said that factory orders fell.*
- (10) *With much happiness I am proud to announce that my new album will be released soon.*

Although we infer that, as a result of someone pulling the trigger of a gun, someone else was possibly hurt or even murdered, the word *shootings* in (7) is not a verb but a noun. Likewise, in (8), the verb *was* does not refer to something that happened in the past; in actual fact, it connects the Subject with a **Subject Complement** denoting a state of being, or an attribute of *her friend*. Meanwhile, *economy* in (9) classifies and restricts the area of responsibility of the German ministry in question; nonetheless, it is not an adjective but a noun. And, lastly, in (10), it is the prepositional phrase *with much happiness* that points at the manner in which the speaker above makes his or her statement; likewise, *next year* contributes temporal information about a particularly important prospective event, and it is not, however, an adverb phrase but a noun phrase.

The English language as we know it now lacks many of the characteristics it had when it was not English but Anglo-Saxon. Very broadly speaking, the **inflections** of nouns and adjectives, and the verbal conjugation system declined after the

Norman Conquest in 1066. Consequently, speakers needed an array of new mechanisms to signal syntactic relationships; likewise, the nature of words changed more or less dramatically. It is here where form, function and distribution come to play a key role in grammar.

The form or the shape of words, that is, the way they are constructed by adding suffixes, is an identifying characteristic especially of **lexemes**. Whilst formal variation in English prepositions is unthinkable (e.g. **intoes*, **intoed*, **intoing*), most verbs display the opposite tendency (e.g. *loves*, *loved*, *loving*); similarly, many singular nouns can change into plural (e.g. *book* > *books*, *box* > *boxes*, *child* > *children*), and **gradable adjectives** can inflect for grade as in *colder*, *warmer*, *worse* or *better*. Moreover, the derivational morpheme *-ly* is typically found in deadjectival adverbs such as *merrily*, *recently* or *luckily*; the derivational suffix *-able* changes some **transitive** verbs into adjectives, thus obtaining examples such as *drinkable*, *breakable* or *forgettable*; and if the speaker intends to refer to the stopping or removing of a condition, *dis-* is attached to verbal **bases**, which turn into verbs such as *disconnect* or *disinfect* (for more details about morphological issues, see chapter 4).

The function of lexical categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs is to head larger structures whose nature they determine; that is the reason why these are called noun phrases (e.g. *an elephant from Africa*), verb phrases (e.g. *has been working*), adjective phrases (e.g. *very good at applied physics*) and adverb phrases (e.g. *more quickly*). In *very warm indeed*, the omission of both **Dependents** (i.e. *very* and *indeed*) does not result in ungrammaticality, since its **Head**, the adjective *warm*, is the only compulsory constituent within the structure. A noun phrase such as *my Venusian teacher* is built around the Head noun *teacher*, which is the syntactic and semantic controller of the phrase; hence, *teacher* will select, for instance, the adjectives that, in normal situational contexts, can modify its referent (e.g. *good teacher* vs. **blue teacher*); furthermore, *teacher* will collocate with some **determinatives** but not with others (e.g. *this teacher* vs. **these teacher*).

Distribution has to do with the **syntagmatic axis**, that is, with which words others can combine with and, especially, in which position this linguistic material is arranged. Nouns in English are often preceded by definite **articles** and adjectives, as in *the beautiful house*. Adjectives can be preceded by adverbs such as *very*, as in *very expensive*. The verb *can*, like all **auxiliary verbs**, will be followed by a **lexical verb** such as *live* unless the speaker is asking a question; in that case, *can* will be probably followed by a noun, like in *How on earth can Andrew live in Finland?* This clearly is due to the fact that Contemporary English is a fixed-word-order language, with two main implications:

- A change in distribution will carry a change in meaning (e.g. *My friend likes people* does not mean the same as *People like my friend*).

- Some orderings of words are unacceptable in standard contexts of use, poetry sometimes excluded (e.g. *this house* vs. **house this*; *shall go* vs. **go shall*; *in Paris* vs. **Paris in*).

2.2 THE USE OF CONSTITUENCY TESTS

Constituency is a grammatical concept that concerns morphemes, words, phrases and **clauses**, and is defined as the relation between a linguistic unit (i.e. the constituent) and the larger unit it is a part of. We will explore this point in the examples below:

- (1) *Agreements*
- (2) *The idea that your mom could not remember was striking.*
- (3) *The guest threatened the woman with the knife.*

The noun *agreements* in (1) can be decomposed into the following constituents: (a) the verbal base *agree*, (b) the derivational morpheme *-ment*, and (c) the plural morpheme *-s*. The sentence in (2) is more complex; it can be read in two different ways, at least, which depends precisely on the way its constituents are thought to be arranged. In the first reading, your mom had consistently shown a prodigious memory for all the data she might be asked to repeat; unluckily, due to Alzheimer, she has started forgetting names, people, etc. That is the reason why anyone who knew about her genius will regard it as striking that she is no longer able to bring some information into her mind. In this case, *that your mom could not remember* is a *that*-clause with the function of Complement of the Head noun *idea*, and the **subordinator** *that* cannot be omitted if the structure is to remain grammatically acceptable. In the second reading, based on a more fortunate alternative reality, *that your mom could not remember* is a **relative clause** fulfilling the function of **Post-modifier** or **Qualifier**; therefore, the relative *that*, whose antecedent is *the idea*, can be replaced by *which* in formal contexts (i.e. *The idea which your mom could not remember was striking*) or, more often than not, directly omitted (i.e. *The idea your mom could not remember was striking*), due to the fact that the pronoun is the Direct Object in the subordinate clause. As for (3), it is a different example of syntactic ambiguity, where the prepositional phrase *with the knife* can be the answer to the question ‘With which tool did the guest threaten the woman?’, thereby fulfilling the function of **Adverbial** of Instrument; or it can be analysed as a constituent modifying the Head noun *woman*, because the woman the guest threatened was actually in the kitchen preparing a salad with a knife in her hand.

In view of the above, it is easy to see why scholars who do morphosyntactic analysis tend to make use of a wide range of **operational tests** in order to disambiguate linguistic strings whose meaning might be open to interpretation due to their grammatical complexity. These tests manipulate some portions of a

hierarchical structure. The main rationale behind them is the potential to identify constituency, degree of (in)dependence, obligatoriness and optionality, four notions key to understanding structural composites. In this section, special attention is paid to the tests most frequently cited in the literature: the passive transformation, *wh*-question, **clefing**, pro-form substitution, fronting, omission, **coordination**, and the ordering principle. Their simultaneous application will prove effective if the reader does not forget their possible restrictions.

2.2.1 Passive transformation

The passive transformation is probably the first constituency test students learn to use in order to check the status of a linguistic unit; in particular, it is very useful to identify Direct Objects in **transitive** clause patterns. In example (1a) below, we know that *a book* fulfils this syntactic function because, if the sentence is transformed into the passive, this unit is changed into the Subject of the corresponding passive counterpart (1b).

- (1) a. *Joseph bought a book.*
- b. *A book was bought by Joseph.*

Sometimes a transitive verb may need another Object naming the entity to which the Direct Object is transferred, either literally or figuratively. This is known as **ditransitive** clause pattern. Given that the English language prefers animate and/or human referents in initial position, in this case, two alternative transformations of (2a) below will be available: (2b), where the Indirect Object has become the Subject of the passive sentence, and (2c), which may be the least likely option.

- (2) a. *Joseph gave Jack a book.*
- b. *Jack was given a book (by Joseph).*
- c. *A book was given (to) Jack (by Joseph).*

Although this test works especially well with transitive verbs, sometimes it can be applied to **intransitive** clause patterns when a prepositional phrase is included, as in (3a):

- (3) a. *Jack sat on the book.*
- b. *The book was sat on (by Jack).*

Some exceptions must be taken into account at this stage. That is the case of *that*-clauses with the function of Direct Object. Although, following the pattern mentioned above, we might consider it possible to change them to Subject position in the passive sentence, example (4b) proves this is not the preferred option. This can be explained on the grounds of the end-weight principle ruling the English

language, whereby the heaviest element of the sentence is placed towards the end of the sentential structure.

- (4) a. *Joseph thought that Jack hadn't understood the message of the book.*
 b. **That Jack hadn't understood the message of the book was thought (by Joseph).*

2.2.2 Wh-question or answer fragment

Question elicitation shows the ability of a sequence of words to stand alone as a reply to a question. Since it can be applied to almost all the clause constituents, it tends to be overused and erroneously taken as one of the most successful operational tests. In (1b), the speaker is asking what Joseph bought. The answer in (1c) is *A book*, a noun phrase which, as a whole unit, fulfils the function of Direct Object.

- (1) a. *Joseph bought a book.*
 b. *What did Joseph buy?*
 c. *A book.*

Since the speaker was really interested in getting to know the time when this event took place, she asked her interlocutor another question concerning this matter; the answer is (2c) (i.e. *at the very moment he had some free time to go to the bookshop*), which is a single clause constituent functioning as Adverbial of Time.

- (2) a. *Joseph bought a book at the very moment he had some free time to go to the bookshop.*
 b. *When did Joseph buy a book?*
 c. *At the very moment he had some free time to go to the bookshop.*

2.2.3 Clefting

If you can fit your string into the frame *It {be} X that/wh-word S* (where you move the string X from inside S), X is a constituent (1b). We call this phenomenon clefting because the original sentence is cleft, or divided, into two different clauses. Similarly, if it is possible to fit your string into the frame *Wh-word S {be} X* (where, again, you move the string X from inside S), X is a constituent (1c). The second transformation is known as **pseudo-clefting**.

- (1) a. *Joseph bought a book.*
 b. *It was a book that Joseph bought.*
 c. *What Joseph bought was a book.*

Pragmatically speaking, the effects both may have on the hearer are rather different. The dubious nature of the dependent clause (a relative, a *that*-clause or

nothing of the like) is another issue linguists do not always agree upon; you will study this linguistic puzzle at some point.

2.2.4 Pro-form substitution or replacement

Only constituents can be replaced by pro-forms like *it*, *them*, *that*, *there*, *do that*, *that way*, etc. In the examples below we can see how the Subject (i.e. *The student who had some money*) makes up a single unit, because the whole phrase can be replaced by the personal pronoun *he* (1b). The same applies to the Direct Object (i.e. *a very interesting book on Critical Discourse Analysis*), which has been replaced by the pronoun *it* (1c).

- (1) a. *The student who had some money could buy an interesting book on Critical Discourse Analysis.*
- b. *He could buy an interesting book on Critical Discourse Analysis.*
- c. *The student who had some money could buy it.*

Examples (1d) and (1e) show the incorrect application of the test to only a fragment of the whole constituent, and the subsequent ungrammatical output.

- d. **He who had some money could buy an interesting book on Critical Discourse Analysis.*
- e. **The student who had some money could buy an it on Critical Discourse Analysis.*

As for example (1f), it is the answer to the question ‘Did he have some money to buy an interesting book on Critical Discourse analysis?’. It proves that *could buy an interesting book on Critical Discourse Analysis* is another individual clause constituent called **Predicate**; in this case, we have substituted *did* for both the Predicator and the Direct Object.

- f. *Yes, he did.*

2.2.5 Fronting or topicalisation

This test involves moving the sequence under analysis to the front. In (1b) below, we can observe a shift in the typical distribution of the Direct Object (i.e. *a book on grammar*), which tends to follow the Predicator (i.e. *bought*), to initial position.

- (1) a. *Joseph bought a book on grammar yesterday.*
- b. *A book on grammar Joseph bought yesterday.*

Passing this test means that the unit is a whole constituent. Nevertheless, remember that the more tests you apply to a given unit, the easier to prove or to rule out its status.

2.2.6 Omission or deletion

The application of this test is very useful to check whether a sequence of words can be omitted without affecting its grammaticality. In truth, then, deletion is key to distinguishing obligatory from optional constituents, rather than to simply identifying constituency. Optional constituents such as **Modifiers**, Qualifiers or Adverbials can be safely omitted, and thus qualify as constituents. In (1b), *best* modifies the reference of the Head noun *friend*. Although, semantically speaking, its deletion may have some consequences in the real world, because the speaker may have other friends who are not so kind, and without this data the hearer may get lost, grammatically speaking, however, the output is absolutely correct. Likewise, the omission of the relative clause *who had some pocket money*, with the function of Qualifier, deprives the hearer from additional information that justifies the action carried out by the Subject, but does not result in ungrammaticality. *Yesterday* and *in Granada* are two Adverbials that locate the action spatio-temporally; again, if we delete them, we will not know the when and the where of this book-buying; all in all, as mentioned above, this will not have any negative impact on the correctness of the syntactic structure in question.

- (1) a. *My best friend, who had some pocket money, bought a book in Granada yesterday.*
- b. *My (best) friend (, who had some pocket money,) bought a book (in Granada) (yesterday).*

Conversely, as (2a), (2b) and (2c) suggest, the omission of units which are compulsory due to their syntactic function (e.g. the Head of the noun phrase and the Predicate) or the pragmatic information they provide (e.g. the possessive pronoun) would result in ungrammatical sentences.

- (2) a. **(My) best friend, who had some pocket money, bought a book in Granada yesterday.*
- b. **My best (friend), who had some pocket money, bought a book in Granada yesterday.*
- c. **My best friend, who had some pocket money, (bought) a book in Granada yesterday.*

Given that the verb *to buy* is normally used in transitive contexts, we could have added (2d) below to the catalogue of unacceptable sentences we have already listed

as well; nonetheless, this can also be found to have an intransitive reading; that is the reason why you will have noticed we have not asterisked it.

- d. *My best friend, who had some pocket money, bought (a book) in Granada yesterday.*

2.2.7 Coordination

Initially, this test assumes that only constituents of the same type, or category, can be joined by a **coordinator** (e.g. *and*, *but*, *or*) as in (1), where *a book* and *a pencil* are two noun phrases that would happen to fulfil the function of Direct Object.

- (1) *Joseph bought a book and a pencil.*

Coordination is also an indicative of symmetry as far as **syntax** is concerned; that is, if two units can be coordinated, this means that they are on the same syntactic level, as above; if, on the contrary, they cannot be connected by a coordinating conjunction, they will not, as example (2b) shows:

- (2) a. *Joseph bought a book in Granada.*
 b. **Joseph bought a book **and** in Granada.*

Although the application of this test is assumed by scholars and is explained in most textbooks, it is perhaps the least reliable of all the tests mentioned.

2.2.8 The ordering principle

English poor inflectional **morphology** explains the importance of this principle (see chapter 4), which is characteristic as well of end-focus languages, that is, of those languages where informational newness falls at the end of the structure. Although it is more often used to identify functional constituents such as Subjects, Direct Objects, Indirect Objects and, to a certain extent, Adverbials, this can also be applied to determine phrasal structures, in which constituents tend to show the same distribution (e.g. Modifiers precede Head nouns in noun phrases as in *Ugly waves were crashing over the boats*). Whilst example (1a) displays the prototypical ordering of **declarative** sentences, where the Subject (i.e. *Joseph*) precedes the Predicator (i.e. *has given*), (1b) is a prototypical *yes/no* **interrogative** sentence, which favours the initial position of the **operator** (i.e. *has*) followed by the Subject and the main verb. Both examples also show the usual distribution of frequency adverbs such as *always*, *never*, *ever*, *often* or *seldom*: they normally tend to go before the main verb (i.e. *given*); and, if any auxiliary verb were present (e.g. *has*), they would go after them.

- (1) a. *Joseph has always given Jack nice books.*
 b. *Has Joseph ever given Jack nice books?*

Finally, example (2) illustrates the well-known sequence of Adverbial positions the reader will be familiar with: manner (i.e. *slowly*), place (i.e. *on the blank page*) and time (i.e. *earlier that morning*).

- (2) *Joseph had written his signature slowly on the blank page earlier that morning.*

We must acknowledge, though, that this can be modified on the basis of a certain degree of flexibility Adverbials tend to have, as exemplified in (3a) to (3c) below. The reallocation of the adverb *later* will not have any grammatical implications; nonetheless, the change in pragmatic meaning is quite another matter.

- (3) a. *Later an American handbook took a more comprehensive view.*
 b. *An American handbook later took a more comprehensive view.*
 c. *An American handbook took a more comprehensive view later.*

2.3 THE REPRESENTATION OF CONSTITUENT STRUCTURE

It is Structuralism first, with its emphasis on the immediate constituent structure of each sequence (something they came to call **Immediate Constituent Analysis**, traditionally, also known as **parsing**), and Generative grammar later, with its emphasis on the rules generating language sequences, which advocate for the use of different graphic representation schemes of constituency. **Tree diagrams** are also probably one of the most frequently used by both scholars and students; the clarity with which constituency and dependency is shown is for sure the reason why this is the preferred option in syntax lessons. Below you can see the tree diagrams of two different sentences.

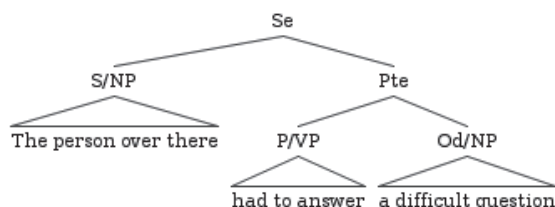


Figure 1. Tree diagram: clause constituents

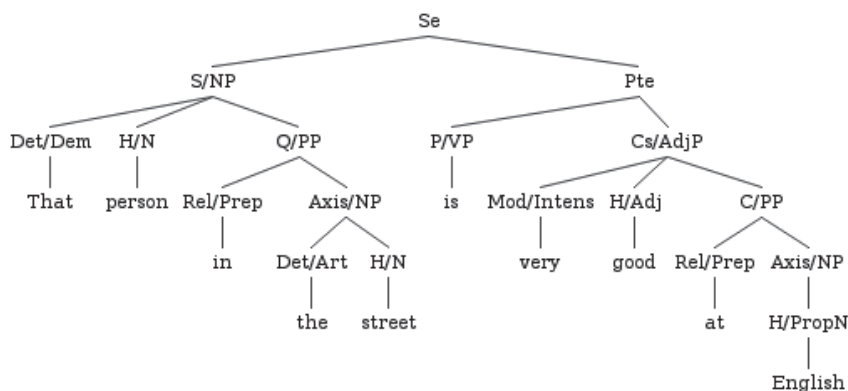


Figure 2. Tree diagram: clause and phrase constituents

In Fig. 1 above, we have identified the main clause constituents, that is, Subject and Predicate, and within the Predicate, Predicator and Direct Object; but, as the reader will have noticed, there are no indications whatsoever about the internal structure of the phrases the sentence consists in: (a) *The person over there*, (b) *over there*, (c) *there*, (d) *had to answer*, (e) *a difficult question*, and (f) *difficult*. Nevertheless, this information is provided in Fig. 2, where we have been able to spot both clausal and phrasal constituents, to which syntactic labels have also been assigned.

Although popular as well, bracketing, diagramming, nesting or Chinese boxes may not be as transparent or may not include so much data as trees. In (1a) and (1b), the reader can see how the examples analysed above can be decomposed into their constituents by means of brackets, which may already seem to be somewhat hard to interpret:

- (1) a. [Se [S/NP [Det/Art **The**] [H/N **person**] [Q/PP [Rel/Prep **over**] [Axis/AdvP [H/Adv **there**]]]] [Pte [Ptor/VP **had to answer**] [Od/NP [Det/Art **a**] [Mod/AdjP [H/Adj **difficult**] [**question**]]]]]
- b. [Se [S/NP [Det/Dem **That**] [H/N **person**] [Q/PP [Rel/Prep **in**] [Axis/NP [Det/Art **the**] [H/N **street**]]]] [Pte [Ptor/VP **is**] [Cs/AdjP [Mod/Intens **very**] [H/Adj **good**] [C/PP [Rel/Prep **at**] [Axis/NP [H/PropN **English**]]]]]]]

As for Fig. 3, it shows an example taken from the Internet where boxes prove to be little user-friendly:

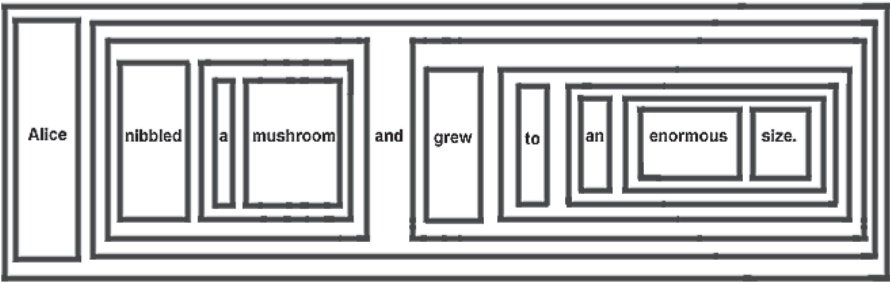


Figure 3. Chinese boxes: clause and phrase constituents

Finally, Fig. 4 below illustrates what a sentence diagram looks like. Although functional labels are avoided, it is true that constituents are presented in a more straightforward fashion than above, which makes this model applicable with pedagogical purposes.

- (2) *The grey monkey quickly chased the brown weasel around the mulberry bush.*

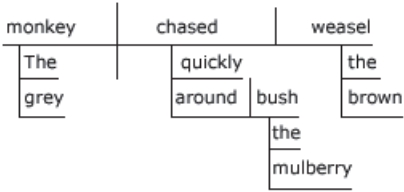


Figure 4. Sentence diagram

Further reading

Burton-Roberts, N. 1997². *Analysing Sentences: An Introduction to English Syntax*, Harlow: Longman; Chapters 1 and 2.

Carnie, A. 2010. *Constituent Structure*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Chapters 2, 3 and 9.

Huddleston, R. 1988. *English Grammar: An Outline*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Chapter 4.

Jacobson, P. 1996. Constituent Structure. In K. Brown & J. Miller (eds.), *Concise Encyclopedia of Syntactic Theories*. Oxford: Elsevier; 54-67.

Online Resources for Studying English Syntax.
<http://faculty.washington.edu/dillon/GramResources/>
 Structural Syntax: Immediate Constituents.
<http://eweb.furman.edu/~wrogers/syntax/ic.htm>

Syntactic Analysis.

<http://web.grinnell.edu/individuals/dobbs/DrSyntax/synexer.html>

Syntax Tree Generator.

<http://mshang.ca/syntree/>

Exercises

1. Apply the appropriate criteria to determine whether the words in bold below are nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs:
 - a. *Co-operative **feeding** and **care** increases the likelihood of rearing those young that are produced.*
 - b. ***Research** on these animals is **continuing**.*
 - c. *The number of people ill with AIDS **increases**.*
 - d. *Our **volunteers** **have** provided much **love** to many hurt and **lonely** people **there**.*
 - e. ***Now**, the **support** our volunteers provide **cannot** be measured in **purely** practical terms.*
 - f. *I recognised the **need** to train more volunteers.*
 - g. *We **would** like to recruit people who are **willing** to be an ACET-link in their church.*

2. Identify the constituents of the sentences below and generate a graphical tree diagram for each by using <http://ironcreek.net/phpsyntaxtree>:
 - a. *We saw a group of young men.*
 - b. *The thing that bothered Mike was under the table.*
 - c. *English visitors are frying tomatoes.*
 - d. *Joseph asked the student who he had seen.*
 - e. *She left them in tears.*
 - f. *They gave her cat food.*

3. Use all the constituency tests available to explain the two potential readings of each of the examples below:
 - a. *Jack watched the fireworks in the courtyard.*
 - b. *What students prefer is being ignored by their teacher.*
 - c. *Mom has always enjoyed walking and bathing dogs.*
 - d. *The children asked more specific questions.*
 - e. *The people who saw the film frequently hated it.*
 - f. *They seemed to be discouraging students.*