

Introduction to English Linguistics

4: Grammar and Syntax I



P. S. Langeslag

Grammar and Syntax

Grammar

The rules of language, comprising syntax and inflectional morphology

Syntax

The hierarchical structure of language

Grammar: Traditional Parts of Speech of English

- ▶ Noun
- ▶ Adjective
- ▶ Pronoun
- ▶ Verb
- ▶ Adverb
- ▶ Preposition
- ▶ Conjunction
- ▶ Interjection
- ▶ Article
- ▶ (Determiner)
- ▶ (Numeral)

Grammar: Traditional Parts of Speech of English

- ▶ Noun
- ▶ Adjective
- ▶ Pronoun
- ▶ Verb
- ▶ Adverb
- ▶ Preposition
- ▶ Conjunction
- ▶ Interjection
- ▶ Article
- ▶ (Determiner)
- ▶ (Numeral)

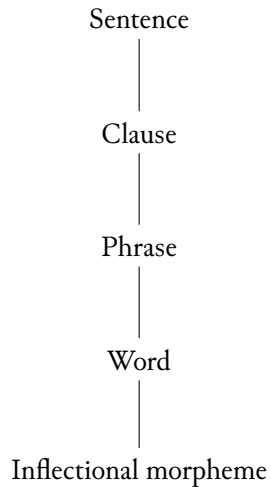
Lexical Words (Open Class)

- ▶ Noun
- ▶ Adjective
- ▶ Non-auxiliary verb
- ▶ Adverb
- ▶ Interjection

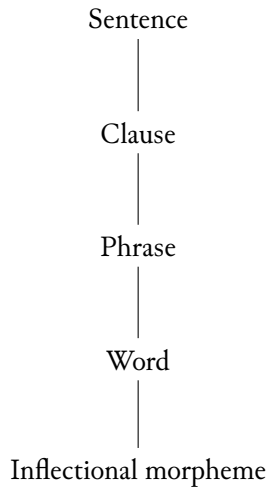
Function Words (Closed Class)

- ▶ Article
- ▶ Pronoun
- ▶ Preposition
- ▶ Auxiliary verb
- ▶ Conjunction
- ▶ Determiner

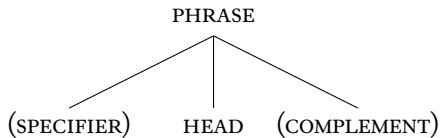
Syntax: Hierarchy



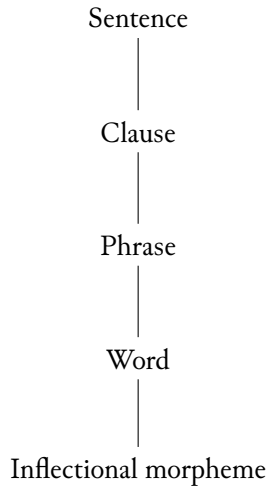
Syntax: Hierarchy



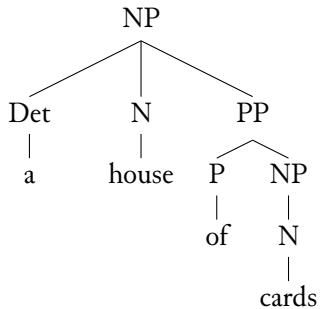
Phrase Structure



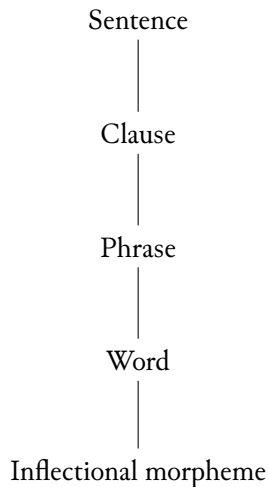
Syntax: Hierarchy



Phrase Structure



Syntax: Hierarchy



Clause

Complete syntactic unit* that typically accommodates exactly one finite verb,** or else at least one participle.***

* i.e. structure governed by a verb (simplification)****

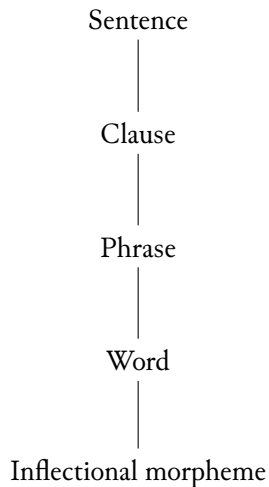
** The **predicator**; never more than one *finite* verb except in a contained clause

*** Clauses without verbs often have implied (finite) verbs

**** Syntacticians say that the structure is governed by an abstract category

inflection or tense

Syntax: Hierarchy



Clause

Complete syntactic unit* that typically accommodates exactly one finite verb,** or else at least one participle.***

* i.e. structure governed by a verb (simplification)****

** The **predicator**; never more than one *finite* verb except in a contained clause

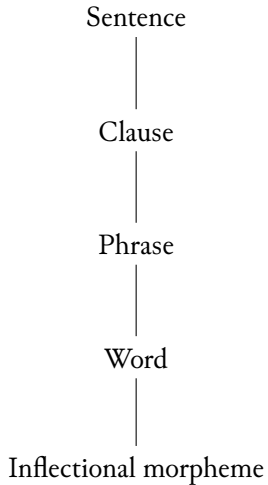
*** Clauses without verbs often have implied (finite) verbs

**** Syntacticians say that the structure is governed by an abstract category
inflection or tense

Verbs

- ▶ Finite: inflected for person, number, tense, and/or mood (and/or voice)
- ▶ Non-finite:
 - ▶ Infinitive: dictionary form
 - ▶ Participle: behaves like an adjective
 - ▶ Gerund: behaves like a noun (“-ing form”)

Syntax: Hierarchy



Sentence Types

- ▶ Declarative
- ▶ Interrogative
- ▶ Imperative
- ▶ (Exclamative)

Subordination


When Claudia got home, she slammed the door.

Subordination

I see
what you did there.

Coordination

Tristan likes Aubrey, but Aubrey likes books.



Conjunctions

Coordinating

- ▶ and
- ▶ but
- ▶ or
- ▶ nor
- ▶ for
- ▶ so
- ▶ yet

(FANBOYS)

Subordinating

- ▶ Logical: if, because, since, as, (al)though, unless, whereas, etc.
- ▶ Temporal: before, after, while, once, since, until, etc.
- ▶ Spatial: where, wherever

Coordination

1. I don't know (and) I don't care.
2. Either he's gone (or) he's well hidden.
3. ? Are you ready (or) what?

Subordination

1. I'm not worried, because I have my savings.
2. If you blink, it's gone.

Subordination Without Conjunctions

Object Clauses

1. I see what you did there.
2. Do you know who drew this picture?

Relative Clauses

1. I am the night whose embrace you dread.

Traditional Elements of Syntax

Aishah often eats berries in the garden.

▶ Subject

▶ Predicate

▶ Predicator

▶ (Modifier)

▶ Adverbial phrase

▶ Prepositional phrase

▶ (Complement)

▶ Object

- Direct

- Indirect

(Mair: *verb phrase*)

(Mair: *predicate*)

Clause Elements

Code	Full Label	Description
S	Subject	Governing noun phrase
V	Verb	The finite verb (Mair's predicate P)
O	Object	Noun phrase
A	Adverbial	Adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions
C	Complement	Adds information to an S/O
V _{aux}	Auxiliary verb	<i>have</i> done, <i>should</i> do
V _{non-fin}	Non-finite verb	have <i>done</i> , should <i>do</i>
O _d	Direct Object	Object the action is done to (acc.)
O _i	Indirect Object	Indirectly affected object (dat.)
C _s	Subject Complement	Adds information to an S
C _o	Object Complement	Adds information to an O

Parsing for Clause Elements

S	V	O
Dog	bites	man

Parsing for Clause Elements

V	O
Bite	that man!

Parsing for Clause Elements

S	V	O	A
Our dog	bit	a man	yesterday.

Parsing for Clause Elements

A	V _{aux}	S	V _{non-fin}	O
Why	would	a dog	bite	a man?

Parsing for Clause Elements

V	O _i	O _d
Give	me	all your strawberries!

Parsing for Clause Elements

S	V	C _s
The sun	is	bright.

Parsing for Clause Elements

S	V	O	C _o
The sun	makes	me	happy.

Word Order in Present-Day English

headclause: SVO

Jack eats carrots.

subclause: SVO

I know [that Jack eats carrots].

~~I know [that Jack carrots eats].~~

adv + headclause: SVO

Then Jack ate a carrot.

~~Then ate Jack a carrot.~~

adv + headclause: VS (only with certain
intransitive verbs)

Then came the aftershock.

imperative: VO

Eat your greens!

interrogative with *be*: VS

Why was he here?

interrogative with aux.: vSV

What have I done?

Word Order in Old English

headclause SVO

headclause VSO

headclause SOV

subclause SOV

adv + headclause VSO

adv + headclause SV

adv + headclause + prep. VSO_i

adv + headclause + prep. VO_iS

prep + headclause VSO

prep + headclause SVO

subclause SO_iV

subclause O_iVS

imperative VSO

God lufode Iācob.

Wæs hē Osrices sunu.

Þū þæt cwæde.

Ic wāt [þæt þū mē gehyrst].

Ðā slōg se wind þone lēg on þæt hūs.

Þā sēo fæmne cwæð: ...

Þā cwæð se engel tō hyre: ...

Þā cwæð him hælend tō: ...

On þære tīde cwæð Petrus ...

On ðā m dāge hē gemette āne ēa.

Ic wāt [þæt hē inc ābolgen wyrð].

Ic wāt [þæt ūs cymð se Mæssias].

Ne et ðū of þām trēowe!

Word Order in Middle English

headclause SVO

Adam clepide alle thingis.

headclause VS

And maad is euen and moru, the thrid day.

subclause SVO

And God saiz [that it were good].

adv + headclause SVO

Than Noe vndirstode that wateres hadden
cesyd vpon erthe.

adv + headclause VS

Than came Hernyer the trauteur.

imperative: VO

Honour thi fader and thi moder.

interrogative: VS

Where art thou?

Why comaundide God to 3ow, that 3e
shulden not ete of ech tree of paradys?

Word Order in Sum

- ▶ Old English
 - ▶ Comparatively variable
 - ▶ Often considered a V2 language (headclause verbs tend to occur in second position)
 - ▶ Default headclause order controversial; originally SOV? (see Russom)
 - ▶ Subclauses tend to concentrate their verbs at the end (SOV)
 - ▶ Imperatives have VSO
- ▶ Middle English
 - ▶ Less variable than OE, more variable than PDE
 - ▶ Normally SVO
 - ▶ Interrogative clauses do not use a dummy auxiliary
 - ▶ Imperatives have VO
- ▶ Present-Day English
 - ▶ Rigidly SVO in declarative statements
 - ▶ Interrogatives and imperatives start with the (auxiliary) verb
 - ▶ Imperatives have VO

Bibliography

Ringe, Don, and Ann Taylor. *A Linguistic History of English*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006/2014.

Russon, Geoffrey. *The Syntax of “Beowulf”: Word Order, Poetic Meter, and Formulaic Technique in the Old English Verse Clause*. London: Uppsala Books, 2025.