

Introduction to English Linguistics

4: Grammar and Syntax I



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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

Lexical Words (Open Class)

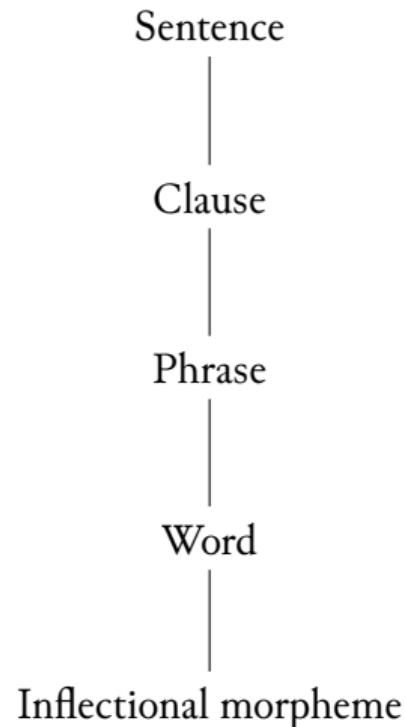
- ▶ Noun
- ▶ Adjective
- ▶ Pronoun
- ▶ Verb
- ▶ Adverb
- ▶ Preposition
- ▶ Conjunction
- ▶ Interjection
- ▶ Article
- ▶ (Determiner)
- ▶ (Numeral)

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

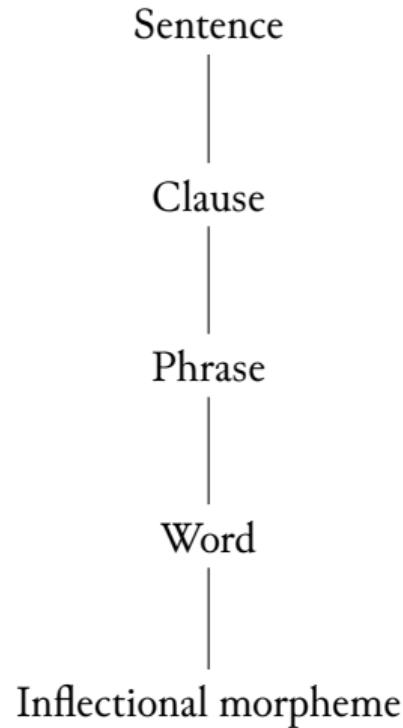
Function Words (Closed Class)

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

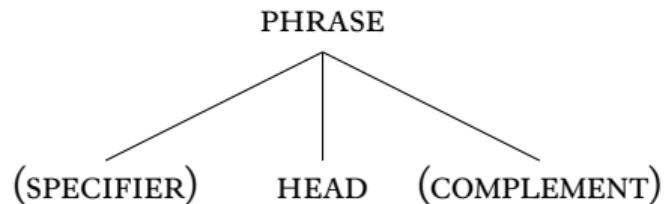
Syntax: Hierarchy



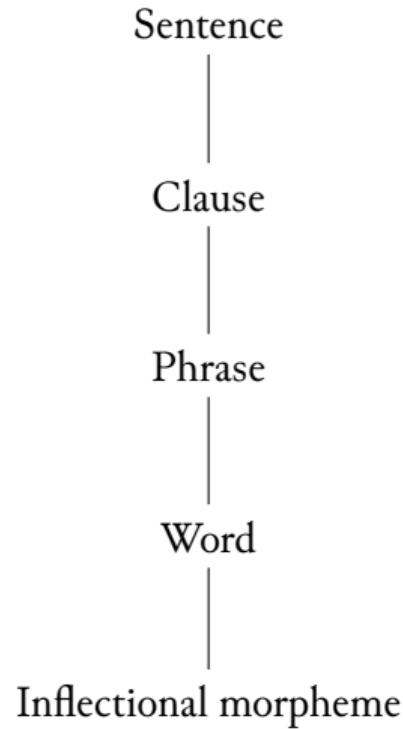
Syntax: Hierarchy



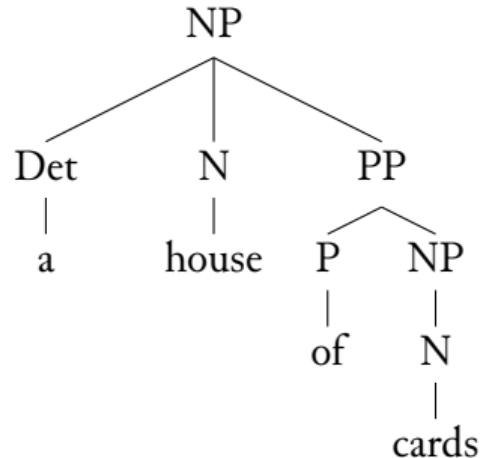
Phrase Structure



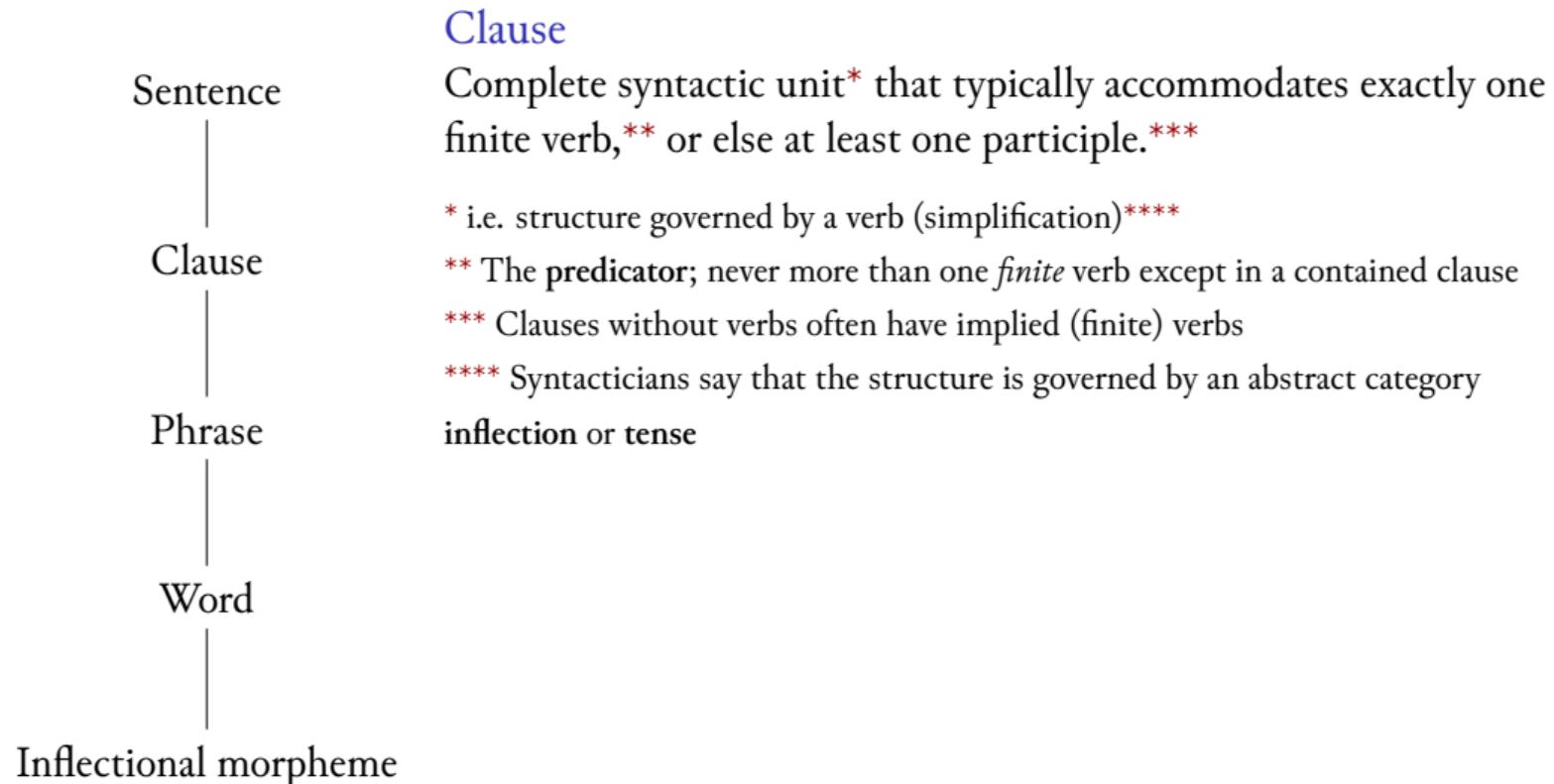
Syntax: Hierarchy



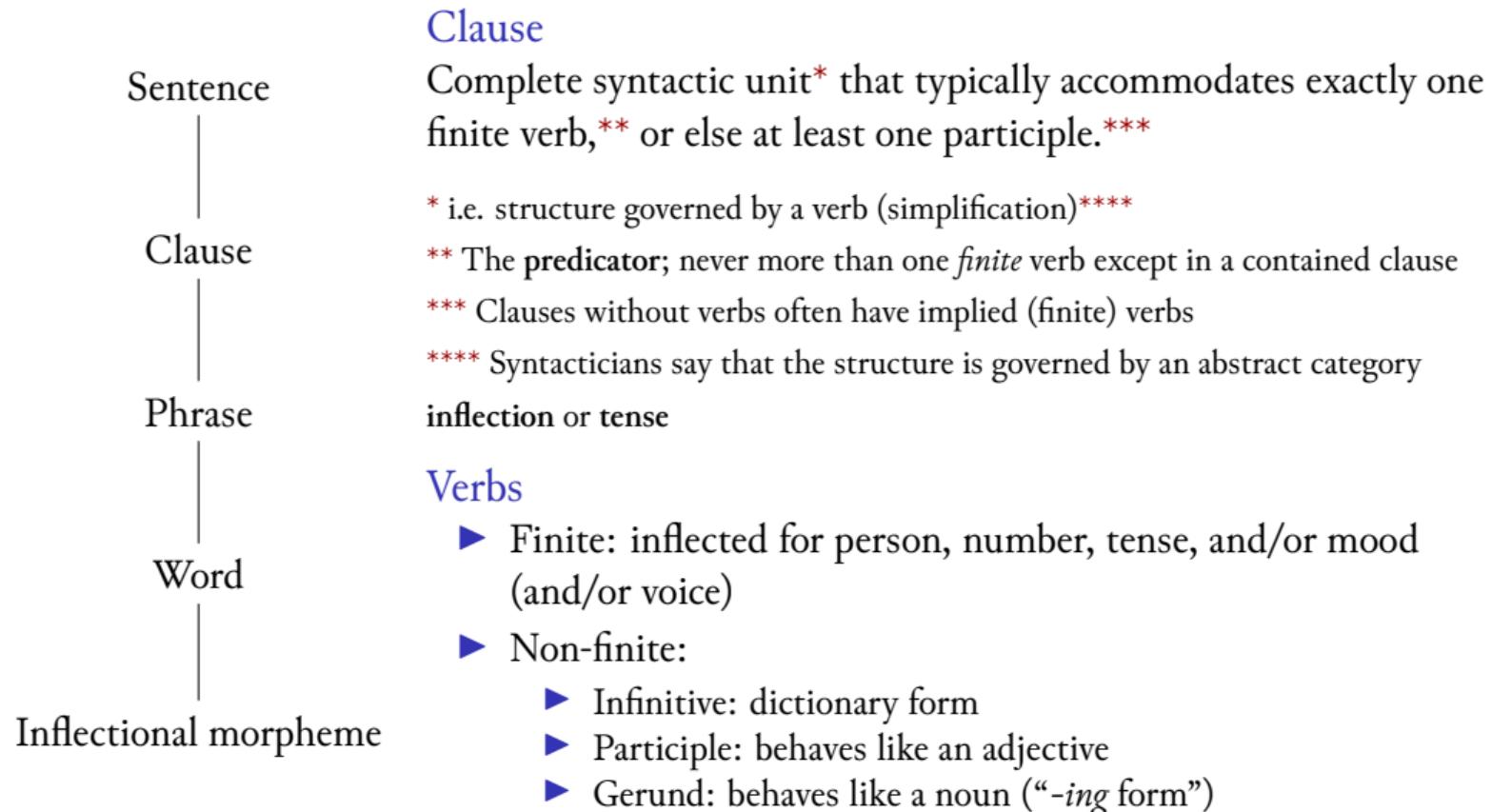
Phrase Structure



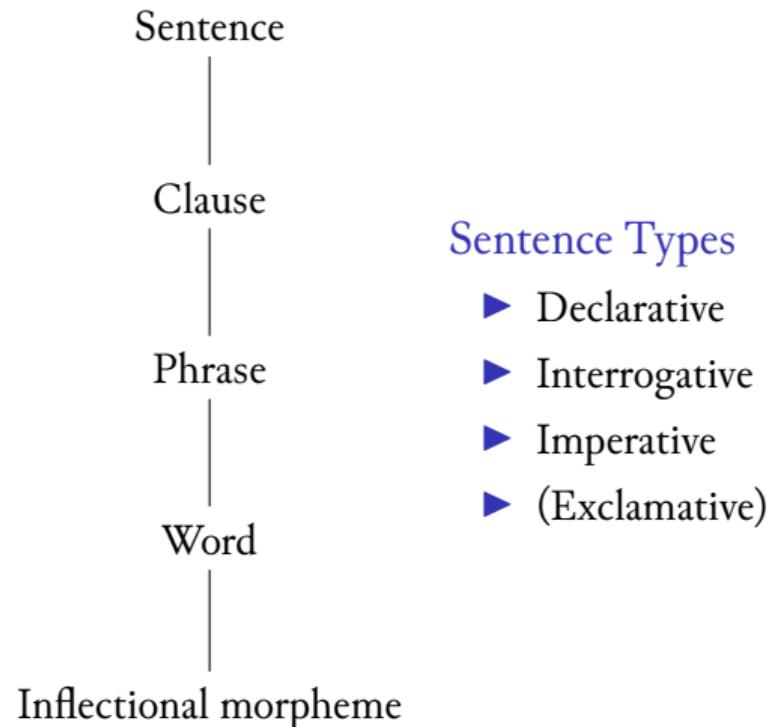
Syntax: Hierarchy



Syntax: Hierarchy



Syntax: Hierarchy



Sentence Types

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

Subordination

she slammed the door.
When Claudia got home,

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

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 done, should do</i>
V _{non-fin}	Non-finite verb	<i>have done, should 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	God lufode Iācob.
headclause VSO	Wæs hē Osrices sunu.
headclause SOV	þū þæt cwāðe.
subclause SOV	Ic wāt [þæt þū mē gehyrst].
adv + headclause VSO	Ðā slōg se wind þone lēg on þæt hūs.
adv + headclause SV	þā sēo fāmne cwæð: ...
adv + headclause + prep. VSO _i	þā cwæð se engel tō hyre: ...
adv + headclause + prep. VO _i S	þā cwæð him hālend tō: ...
prep + headclause VSO	On þāre tīde cwæð Petrus ...
prep + headclause SVO	On ðām dāge hē gemētte āne ēa.
subclause SO _i V	Ic wāt [þæt hē inc ābolgen wyrð].
subclause O _i VS	Ic wāt [þæt ūs cymð se Mæssias].
imperative VSO	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 saiȝ [that it were good].

adv + headclause SVO

Than Noe vndirstode that wateres hadden
cesyd vpon erthe.

adv + headclause VS

Than came Hernyer the trautour.

imperative: VO

Honour thi fader and thi moder.

interrogative: VS

Where art thou?

Why comaundide God to ȝow, that ȝe
shulden not ete of ech tree of paradis?

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.

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