English Grammar

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Outline

1. <u>Word Classes</u>

2. Constituents & Phrases

3. Clauses

Word Class: Definition

- a.k.a Part of Speech

- Traditional definition based on meaning

  - Noun: names of places, people, things

  - Verb: denote action or state of being

- More rigorous definition:

  - Consider word form and distribution

Noun (1)

- ## Marked inflectionally by plural & genitive

  - regular: cat, cats, cat's, cats'; church, churches, church's, churches'

  - irregular plural: feet, theses, passers-by

  - genitive is regularly marked by 's: feet's, theses',

- ## Mass noun vs. Count noun

  - mass noun usu. singular only: courage, music, weather, happiness

  - but some may inflect plural if used as count noun: "I want some cheese" vs. "These three cheese are from Holland"

- ## Proper noun vs. Common noun

  - Proper Noun names specific entity: John, London, Monday - conventionally capitalized

Noun (2)

- Genitive/Plural inflections are phonetically similar

- Inflected genitive, aka "marked genitive", contrasts with "periphrastic genitive" using "of":

  - my mother's friends - friends of my mother

  - the top of the mountain - *moutain's top (sounds awkward)

  - Human nouns more likely to employ marked genitive as opposed to mass nouns: "in John's absence" vs. * "in hope's absence"

- Types of genitive:

  - <u>possession</u>: Edward's hat; <u>origin</u>: Sally's cable (she sent it); <u>appositive</u>: the city of New York (the city is NY); <u>partitive</u>: a few of the men (several, not all of the men); <u>subjective</u>: John's arrival; <u>objective</u>: the army's defeat (someone defeated the army); <u>descriptive</u>: a ship's bell (a bell made for a ship); <u>measure</u>: a month's delay

Noun (3)

- Some derivational suffixes characteristic of nouns

  - gang<u>ster</u>, hunt<u>er</u>, hand<u>ful</u>, train<u>ee</u>, host<u>ess</u>, real<u>ism</u>, normal<u>cy</u>, grow<u>th</u>

- Typical distributions:

  - The NOUN is here

  - Give me some NOUN

  - Show me a NOUN

  - NOUN is good

  - {my, this, much, many} NOUN; {the, some, a} NOUN

Pronoun (1)

- Pronouns distribute like noun phrases

- Semantically, pronouns can

  - refer to entities in the real world (he, she, who)

  - refer to something/someone in previous context (the car... which)

  - serve as general reference (indefinite pronoun: nobody, anyone)

  - perform purely grammatical function: expletive it/there (It rained)

Pronoun (2): Personal Pronoun

- <u>quite irregular</u>: singular vs. plural; subject vs. object; two genitive forms; gender distinction in 3rd person singular

- "We" is ambiguous. inclusive: "We (you & I) should go" vs. exclusive: "We (someone not including you) intend to stop you"

- Object forms used after verbs & prepositions; 1st possessive used before nouns, 2nd possessive in absolute position (This is mine)

- Reflexive (I hurt myself) & emphatic forms (He himself said so) by -self

SINGULAR				
Person	Subject	Object	1st Possessive	2nd Possessive
1	I	me	my	mine
2	you	you	your	yours
3 masculine	he	him	his	his
3 feminine	she	her	her	hers
3 neuter	it	it	its	its
PLURAL				
1	we	us	our	ours
2	you	you	your	yours
3	they	them	their	theirs

Pronoun (3): Demonstrative Pronouns

- ### this & that

  - plural form: these & those

- ### Used alone or as determiners

  - He said that vs. He asked for that book

- ### Common use in speech (this):

  - I read this article the other day **-** here the specificity of reference is missing

Pronoun (4): Relative Pronoun

- ## Personal <u>who</u> & Impersonal <u>which</u>

    - who has object form <u>whom</u>, genitive form <u>whose</u>

- ## Standard use & casual use may differ:

    - The man who cam in was Tim

    - The person <u>whom/who</u> you saw gave permission

    - The girl <u>with whom</u>/ε she studies is my daughter

    - The boy whose book you have is outside

    - He wants the picture <u>which</u>/ε you took of him

- ## <u>That</u> is sometimes called relative pronoun, sometimes complementizer:

    - They ordered the book that I needed

Verb (1)

- Typically inflected for person, number, tense, aspect

  - bake

  - 3rd person singular (-s): he bakes

  - present participle (-ing): we are baking

  - past tense (-ed): I baked

  - past participle (-ed): she has baked

- Some irregular inflections in past, past participle

  - bet (bet, bet); sell (sold, sold); become (became, become); go (went, gone)

- Marked (to) vs. Bare infinitive

  - marked: to bake

  - bare: I don't bake

Verb (2)

- "be", "have", "do" are used as lexical verb (John is happy) & <u>auxiliary verb</u> (John is going); they have irregular, suppletive forms:

  - be: singular (am, are, is); past (was, were); present participle (being); past participle (been)

  - have: 3rd person singular (has); past (had); present participle (having); past participle (had)

  - do: 3rd person singular (does); past (did); present participle (doing); past participle (done)

- <u>Modal verb:</u>

  - can (could), will (would), shall (should), may (might), must

  - contrary to other verbs, they can't appear as marked infinitive (*to must) and lack inflection for 3rd person singular

Verb (3)

- Subjunctive form: uninflected verb where otherwise expected

  - I insist she go (goes)

  - I demand that they be (are) told

  - If I were (was) to go, what then?

  - I move that she ask (asks) them to come.

- Common derivational suffixes for verbs:

  - indemnify, widen, hyphenate, synthesize, sparkle

- Common positions:

  - Birds X. He will X. Fred X happy. People X such things.

  - V+particle (put up), V+preposition (look at), V+part+prep (put up with), V+N (take a bath, do work), V(copular)+A (be satisfied)

Adjective (1)

- Typical inflection: comparative(-er), superlative(est)

  - big: bigger, biggest

  - sometimes suppletive: good, better, best

  - uninflectable adjectives occur with "more", "most", e.g. more beautiful

- Certain adjectives derive many from nouns:

  - noisy (noise), funny (fun), friendly (friend), manly (man)

- Gradable vs. Classifying adjectives

  - gradable (characteristic it describes is subject to comparison): "beautiful"

  - classifying: main, principal, true, daily, female

  - with gradable adjectives, some instances of pairs are more frequent:

    - How deep (not how shallow); How old (not how young); It's a yard long (not short)

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Adjective (2)

- ## Distribution varies (like any other word class)

  - Gradable adj, after intensifers: very old, rather sweet, quite nice

  - Classifying adj don't: *very main, *rather principal, *most pregnant

  - Attributive (before noun) vs. predicative (after verb) positions:

    - a real hero, the hero was real; the late Jones, Jones was late;

    - some can only be used predicatively as complements: e.g. Kim is awake/afraid/ashamed

  - Certain fixed expressions have Noun Adj: attorney general, court martial

Adverbs

- Typical derivational suffix -ly

  - (note it's not inflectional)

  - e.g. quickly, slowly, beautifully

  - adjectives that end in -ly (not adverbs): friendly, manly, worldly

  - other suffixes marking adverb: onward, backwards, sideways, headlong

- A few adverbs have comparative/superlative forms

  - badly, worse, worst; well, better, best;

- Adjective vs. Adverb: it's a question of distribution

  - I caught an early train; I arrived home early.

  - He aimed at the higher target; He aimed higher next time.

Other POS

- Other POS are identified solely by distribution

- Conjunction

  - Coordinating: and, but

  - Subordinating: because, if, when

  - Correlating: either X or, Not only X but also; whether X or

  - Conjunctive adverb (distribute like conjunction but behave like adverb)

    - John left. Mary stayed, however / However, Mary stayed. Also: Moreover, nevertheless

- Preposition: governs the noun phrase following it

  - to, at, over, between, in spite of, because of, in case of

Ambiguities (1)

- **-ing ending may be verb, noun, adjective**

  - as derivation suffix marking nouns (usu. concrete objects): e.g. building, railing, painting, opening.

  - as gerunds (i.e. verbal noun): e.g. <u>Singing</u> is fun; He likes <u>fishing</u>.

    - Note <u>buildings</u> can take plural inflection but <u>singing</u> cannot.

  - as adjective (relates to feeling): <u>interesting</u> example, <u>amusing</u> character

  - truly ambiguous: "He was <u>entertaining</u>"= funny or doing entertainment?

- **-ed ending may be verb or adjective**

  - attached to noun to derive adjective: (very) <u>isolated</u> place; he is <u>tired</u>.

Ambiguities (2)

- They began a new round of talks (noun)

- She pointed to a round area in the middle (adjective)

- Please round it off (verb)

- He went round the corner (preposition)

- She'll come round to our point of view (adverb)

- Go and ask that man (determiner)

- I want that (demonstrative pronoun)

- He's not that fat (intensifying adverb)

- They died that we might be free (conjunction)

- It was then that I noticed her (complementizer)

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4. Generative Grammar

Noun Phrase

- A NP is a construction that typically has either a noun or pronoun as its central constituent.

    - the[DT] man[N]

    - I knew [he could do it] - headed by pronoun

    - [Marrying him] was a mistake - verb acting as noun

    - [He who hesitates] is lost - restrictive relative clause

    - [My husband Fred] is here - unrestrictive appositive

Adjective Phrase

- A typical AP has an adjective constituent as head

    - [[very [Intensifier] cold [Adj] AP] weather NP]

- AP that do not occur as parts of NP, i.e. those used predicatively, show considerable variety:

    - He is <u>fond of chocolate</u> - prepositional phrase a complement

    - John is <u>impatient</u> vs John is <u>impatient to go</u> - complement not obligatory

    - John is <u>difficult to please</u> - followed by infinitive

Verb Phrase

- VP may be subcategorized into:

  - Finite: always occur as clause predicators, <u>include tense</u>, and have a subject, e.g. I <u>was looking</u> for a solution

  - Non-finite:

    - He seems to <u>like</u> me. "like" is predicator of infinite clause "to like me", shares subject "he" with "seems".

    - <u>Being alert</u>, he avoided the unlit street. <u>To become proficient</u>, you must work hard.

- Tense (past/present) & Aspect (perfect.progressive)

  - past tense indicates an action/state has been completed relative to either present or some past time. I <u>leave</u> for Rome tomorrow vs. I <u>left</u> Rome

  - perfect: auxiliary verb "have" + past participle (-en). I <u>have been</u> ready

  - progressive: aux verb "be" + present participle (-ing). John <u>is watching</u> a

Adverb Phrase

- AdvP typically has adverb as head, modified by:

  - Intensifier: <u>very quietly</u>; PP: <u>worst of all</u>; clause: <u>earlier than we expected</u>

- It may be found as internal constituents of:

  - NP: nearly all the books, such as mess, the man outside

  - AdjP: extremely sorry, good enough

  - PP: just outside London, right into the crowd

  - VP: was driving slowly, is living here

- Semantically, AdvP tell us "how", "when", "where"

  - as predicative adjuncts: He left (quietly), They did it (very quicky)

  - as VP complements: Put it <u>there</u>, John is <u>at the back</u>, We are <u>on time</u>.

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3. <u>Clauses</u>

Basic Clause

- A phrase doesn't occur by itself, needs context

- A clause is defined as a construction that has a NP (subject), followed by VP (predicate)

  - Finite clause: NP VP with subject-verb agreement

- Predicate and Roles:

  - NP roles: agent, patient, (an animate or object undergoing action expressed in predicate) experiencer, instrument (The key opened the door), theme (subject or complement in copula construction: John is an actor), goal/source (We went to New York) , locative (He lives in NY), benefactive (They made it for her), temporal (They left on Thursday)

  - The predicate contains a lexical verb and often one or more complements. These verbs can be classified by the complements they take: intransitive, (mono)transitive, ditransitive, linking/copula (verbs taking NP/AdjP as subject complement or obligatory adverb after "be"), object complement (e.g. We elected him president)

Verb-Particle Construction

- Phrasal Verbs: verb + particle (particles look like adverbs but have little semantic content)

  - Slow down! Slow up! (contrast with: Hands down! Hands up!)

  - The plane took off on time. It didn't catch on. He passed away.

  - Transitive phrasal verbs allow movement: They blew up the bridge. They blew the bridge up.

- Prepositional Verbs: verb + PP, with preposition determined by the verb

  - They commented on his appearance. We will attend to the matter. We won't laugh at you. It consists of three parts.

  - Note question form: What did they comment on? - behaves as unit

- Phrasal-Prepositional Verbs:

  - She walked out on him. He got away with it.

Coordination & Embedding (1)

- Coordinating conjunctions (<u>and</u>, <u>but</u>, <u>or</u>) often require similar constituents and are reversible

  - Exceptions: He is a lawyer and wealthy. Tell him an I'll get you the thing.

  - Conjunctive adverbs: <u>however</u>, <u>furthermore</u>, <u>nevertheless</u>

- Embedded Clauses (i.e. subordinate clause)

  - 3 types: relative clause, noun clause, adverb clause

  - Embedded in a Matrix clause, which may be a Main clause (one that could stand its own)

Coordination & Embedding (2)

- ## Relative clause:

  - Constituents of noun phrase, can view as "substitute". E.g. The girl <u>who came</u> is his sister [the girl came]. Introduced by relative pronoun (who, whom, whose, which, when, why) or complementizer (that), or nothing.

  - E.g. The book <u>which he read</u> belonged to John [he read the book]. The money <u>that you owe</u> is due. The book <u>you want</u> is out.

- ## Noun clause:

  - Fills a position typically occupied by noun phrase in the matrix clause

  - (Subj) <u>What he said</u> disturbed us all. (Obj) He said <u>that he was hungry</u>.

- ## Adverb clause:

  - Usu. either a predicate adjunct (He resigned <u>after the takeover was complete</u>), or sentence adjunct (<u>After it was complete</u>, he resigned)

  - Introduced by subordinating conjunction: because, before, while, until, since..

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Tag	Description	Example	Tag	Description	Example
CC	Coordin. Conjunction	*and, but, or*	SYM	Symbol	*+,%, &*
CD	Cardinal number	*one, two, three*	TO	"to"	*to*
DT	Determiner	*a, the*	UH	Interjection	*ah, oops*
EX	Existential 'there'	*there*	VB	Verb, base form	*eat*
FW	Foreign word	*mea culpa*	VBD	Verb, past tense	*ate*
IN	Preposition/sub-conj	*of, in, by*	VBG	Verb, gerund	*eating*
JJ	Adjective	*yellow*	VBN	Verb, past participle	*eaten*
JJR	Adj., comparative	*bigger*	VBP	Verb, non-3sg pres	*eat*
JJS	Adj., superlative	*wildest*	VBZ	Verb, 3sg pres	*eats*
LS	List item marker	*1, 2, One*	WDT	Wh-determiner	*which, that*
MD	Modal	*can, should*	WP	Wh-pronoun	*what, who*
NN	Noun, sing. or mass	*llama*	WP$	Possessive wh-	*whose*
NNS	Noun, plural	*llamas*	WRB	Wh-adverb	*how, where*
NNP	Proper noun, singular	*IBM*	$	Dollar sign	*$*
NNPS	Proper noun, plural	*Carolinas*	#	Pound sign	*#*
PDT	Predeterminer	*all, both*	"	Left quote	*(' or ")*
POS	Possessive ending	*'s*	"	Right quote	*(' or ")*
PP	Personal pronoun	*I, you, he*	(	Left parenthesis	*([, (, {, <)*
PP$	Possessive pronoun	*your, one's*	)	Right parenthesis	*(],), }, >)*
RB	Adverb	*quickly, never*	,	Comma	*,*
RBR	Adverb, comparative	*faster*	.	Sentence-final punc	*(. ! ?)*
RBS	Adverb, superlative	*fastest*	:	Mid-sentence punc	*(: ; ... – -)*
RP	Particle	*up, off*			

- Main reference: R. Wardhaugh, Understanding English Grammar--A Linguistic Approach, Blackwell Publishing