

THE SENTENCE STRUCTURE IN MODERN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

A sentence is a group of words containing a subject and a predicate that expressing a complete thought. Sentences have structure that can be represented by phrase structure trees containing syntactic categories and the concept of structure is fundamental to the study of syntax. Sentences are organized according to two basic principles: constituent structure and syntactic dependences.

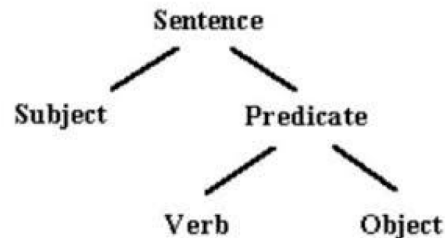
Keywords: Sentence definitions, Structure definition, sentence structure, Sentence Construction, Basic Sentence Patterns and Sentence analysis

SENTENCE DEFINITIONS

A *sentence* is the largest independent unit of grammar; it begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, question mark, or exclamation point. Or the sentence is traditionally (and inadequately) defined as a word or group of words that expresses a complete idea and that includes a subject and a verb.[3] principally and according to *traditional grammarians*, a sentence is “a group of words containing a *subject* plus a *predicate* and expressing a complete thought. [4]

A basic sentence is a complete thought or idea – *subject + predicate*. It’s also known as a simple sentence.

✓ **Subject (Noun Phrase)** – one of two main parts of a sentence containing the *subject* noun or a pronoun – a person, place or thing – often accompanied by modifiers. Therefore, the noun or pronoun is who or what the sentence is about.



✓ **Predicate** – One of two main parts of a sentence containing the verb, object, or phrases governed by the verb.

Example: *Henry plays video games too much.*

SN V Obj N

Predicate

Where “*Henry*” = subject noun, “*plays*” = verb, and “*video games*” is the object noun. Therefore, the words, “*plays video games too much,*” make up the predicate. The object of a sentence is the noun or pronoun directly related to and affected by the subject’s action (verb). The object is NOT who or what a sentence is mainly about; it’s not the focus of the sentence. [5&13]

▪ **The General Characteristics Sentence** is the second linguistic unit falling under *syntax*. Sentence, as well as phrase, must be considered on a separate level of linguistic analysis. Among various definitions given to the sentence the most general one is following: *sentence is the minimal syntactic structure used in speech communication, distinguished by predication and built up of words according to a definite syntactic pattern*. This definition focuses on *three aspects* of the sentence: *pragmatic, semantic and structural*. The sentence is a means of *communication*, in contrast to a phrase which performs nominative function. *Intonation* is a specific feature of the sentences as a unit of communication. In the *semantic aspect*, the sentence is characterized by its

specific category of predication which establishes the relation of the named phenomena to actual life. The center of *predication* is a *finite verb*. *Predication* is performed through the *verbal categories* of *tense* and *mood*. The *structural* aspect is confined to the fact that every actual sentence is built up according to a *definite syntactic pattern*. The variety of such *patterns* is specific of a particular language, but their number is always finite. [9]

STRUCTURE DEFINITION

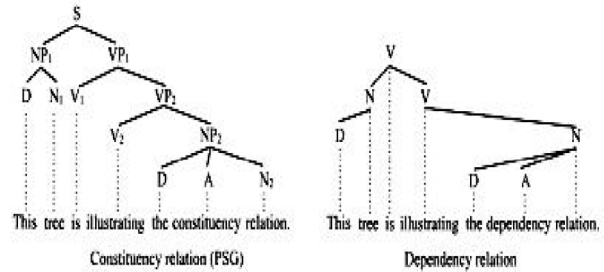
The concept of *structure* is fundamental to the study of syntax. But it is a very general concept that can be applied to any complex thing, whether *it's a bicycle, a commercial company, or a carbon molecule*. When we say of a thing that it is *Complex* we mean, not that it is complicated.

- a. it is divisible into parts (called *constituents*),
- b. there are different kinds of parts (different *categories* of constituents),
- c. the constituents are arranged in a specifiable way,
- d. that each constituent has a certain specifiable *function* in the structure of the thing as a whole

When anything can be analysed in this way, we say that it has *Structure*. In considering structure it is important to note that, more often than not, the constituents of a complex thing are themselves complex. In other words, the parts themselves consist of parts, which may in turn consist of further parts. When this is so we may speak of a *Hierarchy* of parts and of *Hierarchical Structure*.

A bicycle consists not just of its components but, much more importantly, in *the structure that results from fitting them together in a particular way*.

SENTENCE STRUCTURES



Sentences are organized according to two basic principles: constituent structure and syntactic dependencies.

- ✓ **Constituent structure:** refers to the hierarchical organization of the subparts of sentence
- ✓ **Syntactic dependencies:** there are dependencies among elements in the sentence. In other words, the presence of a particular word or morpheme can depend on the presence of some other word or morpheme in a sentence. There is a direct object in a sentence depends on whether the verb is transitive or intransitive. [6]

No.	Examples	Syntactic dependencies
1	What will Max <i>chase</i> ?	The verb <i>chase</i> is <i>transitive</i> , yet there is <i>no direct object</i> following it. There is a "gap" where the direct object should be.
2	Where has Pete <i>put</i> his ball?	The verb <i>put</i> selects a <i>direct object</i> and a <i>prepositional phrase</i> , yet there is no PP following <i>his ball</i> .
3	Which dog do you think <i>loves</i> bones?	The embedded verb <i>loves</i> bears the <i>third-person-s</i> morpheme, yet there is no obvious subject to trigger this agreement.

Sentence structure is normally displayed by means of a *tree diagram* (the so-called 'phrase structure') and by a system of *re-write rule* one can move from an initial unit (the entire sentence) to the individual elements (a so-called 'terminal string'). [7]

Chomsky offered the view that *grammar* is a *set of rules* for *forming* sentences. A *sentence* consist of a *noun phrase* (NP) followed by a *verb phrase* (VP). In turn, the **VP** consists of a *transitive verb* (V₁) and an NP; the last NP consists of a **Det** and a **N**. In early 80's **Chomsky** set up a new model of grammar, **Government and Binding (GB)**, which presents *phrases* and *sentences* as developing out of the lexical properties of words. Each word may project a phrase i.e. it may grow into a phrase. *Phrase Structure Rules* are no longer necessary, being predictable from the lexical properties of words.

▪ **Phrase-Structure Rules and Tree Diagrams:** We have formulated all phrase-structure rules: **e.g.:** *The boy with red shorts kicked the ball.*

- S → NP Aux VP
- NP → (Det) (AP) N (PP)
- VP → V (NP) (PP) (Adv) (CP)
- PP → PREP (NP)
- AP → Adj (PP)
- CP → Comp S

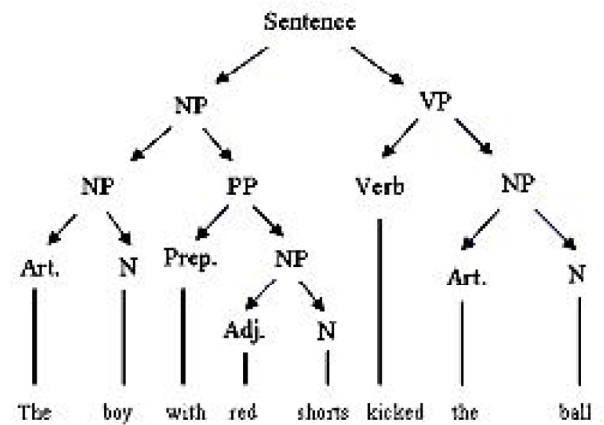


Figure 1.1.2.

These represent the fact that a sentence has an NP and a VP; that an NP has an N; that a VP has a V; and that a PP has a PREP.

▪ **Information Structure:** one category of information structure is the distinction between *given*

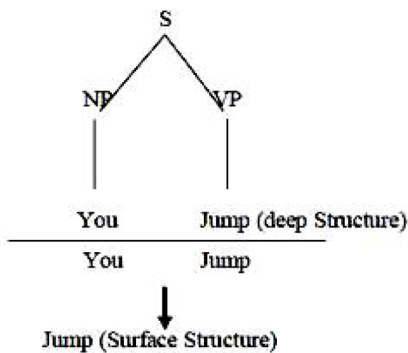
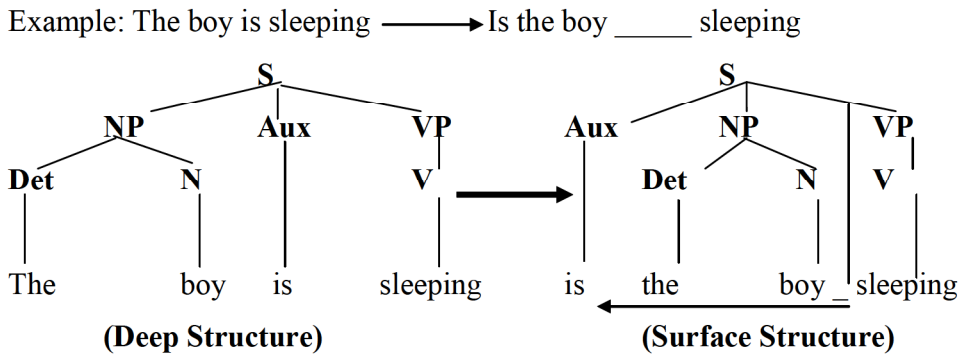
and *new information*. *Given information* is information currently in the forefront of the addressee's mind; *new information* is information just being introduced into the discourse. Consider the following two-turn interaction:

Alice: Who ate the pizza?
Dana: Erin ate the pizza.

In Dana's answer, the *noun phrase* "Erin" represents *new information* because it is being introduced into the discourse there; by contrast, "the pizza" in the reply is *given information* because it can be presumed to be in the mind of Alice, who has just introduced it into the discourse in the previous turn. [2]

According to the *Brno theory* of functional sentence perspective created by *Firbas*, the interpretation of the information structure of a sentence relies on *specific syntactic, semantic, contextual, and in spoken language prosodic criteria*. [1]

▪ **Transformational Rules:** A way to capture the relationship between a *declarative* and a *question* is to allow the *phrase structure rules* to generate the structure corresponding to the declarative sentence, and have another formal device, called a **transformational rule**, move the *auxiliary* in front of the *subject*. Take the first *auxiliary verb* following the *subject NP* and move it to the left of the *subject*.



Questions are generated in two steps.

1. The phrase structure rules generate a basic structure.
2. Aux movement applies to produce the derived structure.

The basic structures of sentences, also called deep structure, are specified by the phrase structure rules.

The structures that result from the application of transformational rules are called **surface structures**. The phonological rules of the language (pronunciation rules) apply to surface structures. *If no transformations apply, then deep structure and surface structure are the same.* If transformations apply, then surface structure is the result after all transformations have had their effect. Much syntactic knowledge that is not expressed by phrase structure rules is accounted for by translations, which can alter phrase structure trees by moving, adding, or deleting elements. [6]

▪ **Structure Dependent Rules:** transformations act on structures without regard to the words that they contain. They are structure dependent. This is a further demonstration that rules are structure dependent. The rule allows *that* to be omitted when it precede a sentence complement but not in subject position, as illustrated by these pairs:

I know that you know *I know you know*
That you know bothers me. **You know bothers me.*

▪ **Sentence Construction:** includes rules and methods for writing. The **structure of a sentence** includes the use of *noun, verb, adverb, etc.* There are rules and methods in structuring sentences. There are *four types of sentence* (syntax) depending on the *structure*. They are: *simple, compound, complex and compound-complex.*

1. **Simple Sentences:** contains a subject (noun/ noun phrase) and a predicate (verb/ verb phrase). It communicates one complete idea as an independent clause. It's a complete sentence.

E.g.: The President flew to Camp David.
 Subject Predicate

2. **Compound Sentences:** is the logical combination of two complete thoughts or independent clauses to form one sentence. It is usually linked by a coordination conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet and so*) and use a comma before coordinating conjunction that connects two independent clauses or use a semicolon to connect two closely related or parallel independent clauses.

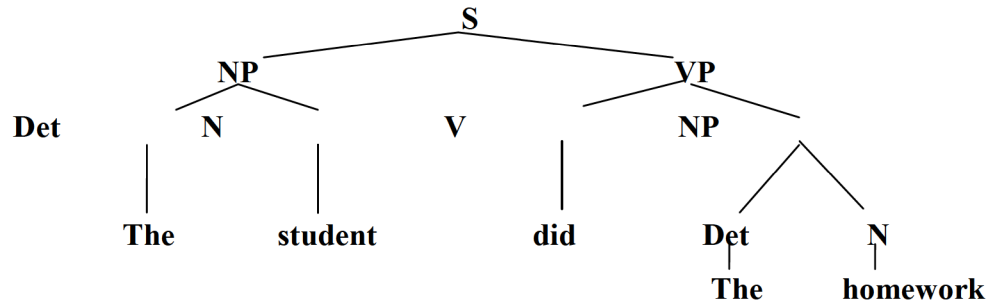
E.g.: -The new art show opened today; and the crowd was immense.
 Independent Clause Conj Independent Clause

3. **Complex Sentences:** includes a *dependent clause* linked to *two independent clause* by a *subordinating conjunction* (*after, although, as, because, before, if, since, though, unless, until, when, whenever, where, while*) of some kind to form a complete sentence. And use a *comma* following an introductory *subordinate clause* to separate it from the *independent clause*. When the subordinate clause follows the independent clause, no comma is needed. [5&13]

E.g.: When the new art show opened at the museum, the crowd was immense.
 Dependent Clause Independent Clause

4. **Compound-Complex Sentences:** is a compound sentence with one or more *independent clauses and dependent clauses.* Conjunctive adverbs (*also, finally,*

$S \rightarrow NP + VP$, $NP \rightarrow Det + N$, $VP \rightarrow V + NP$, $V \rightarrow T + V$, $T \rightarrow \text{past}$
 $Det \rightarrow \text{the}$, $N \rightarrow \{ \text{student, homework} \}$, $V \rightarrow \text{do}$, $Past \rightarrow \text{-ed}$



§ **Analyse Sentence Structure:** Research on syntax has been particularly intensive in the last 50 years or so. By and large one can recognize three main aims in the analysis of sentence structure contained in this recent literature.

- 1) to reveal the hierarchy in the ordering of elements
- 2) to explain how surface ambiguities come about
- 3) to demonstrate the relatedness of certain sentences

CONCLUSION

Sentences have structure that can be represented by *phrase structure trees* containing *syntactic categories*. Phrase structure trees reflect the speaker's mental representation of sentences. Ambiguous sentences may have more than one phrase structure tree.

Phrase structure trees reveal the linear order of words, and the constituency of each syntactic category. There are different kinds of syntactic categories; *phrasal categories*, such as **NP** and **VP**, are decomposed into other syntactic categories; *lexical categories*, such as Noun and Verb, and *functional categories*, such as Det, Aux, and Comp. The internal structure of the phrasal categories is universal. It consists of a *head* and its *complements*. The particular order of elements within the phrase is accounted for by the *phrase structure rules* of each language. The sentence is headed by Aux, which carries such information as tense, agreement, and modality. Phrase structure rules characterize the basic phrase structure trees of the language, the *deep structures*.

Transformational rules account for relationships between sentences such as declarative and interrogative

pairs including *wh-question*. Much of the meaning of a sentence is interpreted from its deep structure. The output of the transformational rules is the *surface structure* of a sentence, the structure to which the phonological rules of the language apply.

Structure dependent that movement rules may not move phrase out of certain structures such as coordinate structures.

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