

3 A Skeletal Introduction to English Grammar

KEY CONCEPTS

- Clauses
- Sentences
- Phrases
- Complementation and modification
- Words
- Morphemes
- Parts of speech
- Regular and irregular forms
- Grammatical categories
- Sounds and spelling
- Form, function, meaning

INTRODUCTION

This chapter has a number of purposes. First, it aims to place the study of grammar within the larger study of discourse and text. Second, it aims to provide a review of traditional grammatical concepts and terminology for those who have studied grammar before. If you have not studied grammar before, it will give a very simple introduction to grammatical ideas and plenty of practice in using those ideas in straightforward exercises. Third, it provides a basis for the deeper and more critical study of language that we present in the remainder of this book and in Book II. In this chapter we only provide examples of concepts; we do not justify those concepts or their application (though we will sketch how to justify analyses in our section on Form, Function, and Meaning). Our goal is to help you get up to speed in recognizing basic grammatical elements. Because the presentation in the following chapters progresses from the smallest units (sounds), and works upward to the largest (sentences), we begin this chapter with the largest units, clauses and sentences, and work downward to the smallest.

We use language to communicate with each other. This communication may occur in conversation, which can be either directly face-to-face or mediated by some technology such as the telephone. We may also communicate by writing to each other. Communication in which language is used is called **discourse** and the products of discourse are called **texts**, which can be recordings of spoken communication or the writings that constitute a written discourse. Discourse is coherent, cohesive, contextualized, and purposeful communicative activity. We will have more to

say about discourse and texts in our chapter on Discourse. The texts that realize a discourse are composed of various kinds of linguistic units, the most important of which is the **sentence**. The sentence is the largest unit to which the grammatical rules of a language apply. **Sentences** are composed of one or more clauses; a **clause** is composed of at least two phrases, one of which plays the role of **subject**, the other, of **predicate**; **phrases** are composed of one or more words functioning as a single grammatical unit; **words** are composed of morphemes; **morphemes** are meaningful sequences of phonemes (units of sound); **phonemes** are the units of sound that distinguish words or morphemes from each other. They are represented more or less adequately by **letters** of the alphabet.

CLAUSES

Because sentences are composed of one or more clauses, we begin with a discussion of the latter. Clauses represent simple states of affairs. These may be states or events. **States** are unchanging situations; **events** are situations in which something changes.

The simplest type of complete clause must have two phrases, one functioning as the subject and the other as the predicate. In the following examples the subject is italicized and the predicate is bolded. Note that both subject and predicate can consist of one or more words:

Squirrels **jump**.

Dogs **chase cats**.

Jack and Jill **ran up the hill**.

A clause **is composed of a subject and a predicate**.

You **should have been there**.

The students **left the room quietly**.

the little lame balloonman **whistled far and wee** (e.e. cummings)

Reality TV **is a crashing bore**.

He **tried to avoid the freighter**.

The author **was born in 1943**.

FDR **was a great leader**.

Their voices **make up the story**.

Husbands **give wives flowers**.

Linguistics **will expand knowledge of language**.

The book **deals with contemporary issues in political ethics**.

Four people **were killed today in a small plane crash in San Diego**.

It **is raining**.

You **know the answers to most of these questions**.

Exercise

1. Put brackets around the complete subject and complete predicate in each of the following clauses. For example, [*All politicians*] [*give speeches*].

(Subject) (Predicate)

- a. This section has a number of purposes.
- b. We provide copious exercises for you.
- c. Sentences stand alone.
- d. We begin with easy exercises.
- e. Beginning writers leave out parts of sentences.
- f. I need a cup of tea.
- g. You should try yoga for your nerves.
- h. Karate is excellent exercise.
- i. The queen may move any distance in any direction.
- j. Alice and the March Hare went to the Mad Hatter's tea party.
- k. Politicians lie.
- l. Politicians tell lies.
- m. Our library is rather small.
- n. Its collection consists of old books.
- o. It is raining heavily.
- p. The astronauts sent greetings to the earth-bound.

2. A very simple question: What is the typical order of subject and predicate in English clauses?

Besides occurring before the predicate, subjects are often defined as the phrase that represents something about which something is said by the predicate, or about which the predicate answers a question. For instance, we can view the subjects (italicized) in the following clauses as representing something about which the predicates (bolded) say something or answer a question about the subject. For instance, *What can we say about dogs? They bark:*

Dogs **bark**.

Flannery O'Connor **wrote several books**.

His mother **sent him a care package**.

He **paid an unscrupulous dealer \$400,000 for a vintage DB 6**.

Subjects are traditionally viewed as expressions that represent the doer

of the action represented by the verb of the clause. They can often answer the question, *Who did what the predicate describes?* For example, *Who wrote many great plays? Oscar did.* This is true in the following examples:

Donald ate a pizza.
Dick walked the dog.
Peggy went to the concert.

Notice that the subject is the first word or phrase in each of the clauses above. This is often the case, but not always. In the following examples, another phrase precedes the subject. Again, the subjects are italicized:

In the stormy seas, *Jim O'Neill* is doing his best to win a yacht race.
Manipulated by MI6, *O'Neill* is dragged into a bloody confrontation.

Exercise

Identify the subject and predicate in the following clauses.

- Fortunately, I still have time to prepare for the semester's classes.
- According to the great majority of atmospheric scientists, the earth is warming alarmingly.
- Evidently, the globe is in for increasingly extreme weather.
- Surprisingly, people are not doing very much about this.
- Hopefully, they will begin adapting soon.

An essential grammatical element in a predicate is its **main verb**. Every complete clause must have one. The italicized words below are the main verbs in their respective clauses:

Tom Foote *went* to sea as a young man.
Welch *chronicles* the family history of the Condons.
The plot *grew* frightening.
Martha *resembles* her mother.
Donald *owns* a Testarossa.
The tank *weighs* over 6,000 pounds.

Traditionally, main verbs are defined as words that denote actions or states of being. The verbs italicized just above fit this definition. Note,

though, that most of them end in *-s* and occur after the subject.

Exercise

Put brackets around the main verb in each of the following clauses. For example, *The cat [escaped] from the house.*

- a. This chapter has several purposes.
 - b. The book provides copious exercises for you.
 - c. The student appears calm.
 - d. We begin with easy exercises.
 - e. Unskilled writers omit parts of sentences.
 - f. Sentences stand alone.
 - g. Government mismanagement caused huge losses.
 - h. She tried yoga for her nerves.
 - i. The queen moves for any distance in any direction.
 - j. Alice and the March Hare went to the Mad Hatter's tea party.
 - k. It rains heavily here.
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-

Some clauses contain phrases that play the role of **object**. Object phrases generally follow the main verb and are part of the predicate. They are italicized in the following examples. Note that object phrases may consist of one or more words:

Dogs chase *cats*.

Tigers eat *meat*.

His military service took *him* around the world.

This collection of photographs captures *the beauty of California's northern coastline*.

Objects are traditionally viewed as the expression denoting the “receiver” of, or the entity directly affected by, the situation represented by the verb. Thus, if the subject represents the agent of the action denoted by the verb, then the subject does whatever is denoted by the verb to whatever is represented by the object. This definition fits all of the examples immediately above.

Exercise

1. Put brackets around the entire object in each of the following sen-

tences. For example, *John Lennon wrote [many great songs].*

- a. Oscar ate the hamburger.
- b. Akim read his book.
- c. The CEO told several lies.
- d. Some sentences contain modifiers.
- e. Cats like catnip.

2. Very easy question: What is the typical order of subjects, verbs, and objects in English clauses?

Some sentences contain two objects, separated by brackets in the following examples:

- a. Frederick sent [*his mother*] [*flowers*] for her birthday.
- b. Mathilda gave [*the children*] [*a pumpkin*].
- c. The book shows [*its readers*] [*all of the most important monuments*].
- d. Dad baked [*the children*] [*a birthday cake*].

Both objects are part of the predicate and follow the main verb in these clauses. The first is the **indirect object**; the second is the **direct object**. Again, note that each can consist of one or more words.

Traditionally, the indirect object is viewed as the phrase that represents the “recipient” of whatever is denoted by the direct object, or the “beneficiary” of whatever situation is denoted by the clause. Thus, *his mother* is the recipient of *flowers* according to (a) above, and *the children* represents the beneficiary of dad’s baking in (d).

Exercise

1. Put brackets around both complete objects in each of the following clauses, and indicate which phrase is the direct and which is the indirect object. For example, *She gave [the dog](Indirect) [a bone] (Direct).*

- a. We offer all our customers unparalleled values.
- b. The store rented them the video.
- c. Show me your etchings!
- d. Bring my friend another beer!
- e. Send the senator a protest letter!

2. Pronouns are words like *I, you, he, she, it, they*, and their relatives *me, your, him, her, its, them*, and the like. Substitute an appropriate pronoun for the italicized phrases in the clauses below. For example, *James Joyce wrote Ulysses and Finnegans Wake* > *He wrote them*.

- a. *Hemingway* admired *Faulkner*.
 - b. *Navratilova* beat *Evert*.
 - c. *The women* outnumber *the men*.
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Your response to the last exercise should have been:

- He admired him.
She beat her.
They outnumber them.

We want you to notice that you chose different pronoun **forms** to replace subject and object phrases. By form we mean the observable grammatical characteristics of expressions, such as their pronunciation (e.g., *compáct, cómpact*), what endings they have (e.g., *-ize* on verbs such as *realize*), what endings they may add (e.g., *-s* indicating plural on nouns), where they appear in sentences (e.g., *him* occurs as an object), and what kinds of expressions can substitute for them (e.g., pronouns for noun phrases, *do (so)* for predicates).

Clauses may contain one or more **modifiers**, also called **adverbials** or **adjuncts**, which may take several different grammatical forms and which may occur in several different positions:

- Proceed *cautiously/with caution*. [Adverbial at end]
Linguists write *slowly*. [Adverbial at end]
Unfortunately, grammarians *frequently* disagree. [Adverbial at beginning and in middle]
One can *easily* find biographies of all the presidents. [Adverbial in middle]
The papers have been *carefully* selected and edited/*with taste*. [Adverbial in middle and at end]
[*In the nineteen twenties*,] [*at the age of fourteen*,] Seamus Murphy began his apprenticeship. [Adverbials at beginning]
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Exercise

1. Put brackets around each entire modifier in each of the following

clauses. Where a clause contains more than one modifier, identify the individual ones separately. For example, [*Fortunately*], *they will [eventually] get well.*

- a. Move quickly!
- b. At the end of your studies, you'll get a job overseas.
- c. Guglielmo Marconi created the radio transmitter despite widespread skepticism.
- d. In 1894, Marconi sent a wireless signal more than 1.5 miles.
- e. By the end of his life, Marconi had acquired great wealth.

2. In each of the following clauses put brackets around the complete subject, complete object(s), main verb, and the complete expression of any modifiers. Do not identify modifiers within subjects, objects, or other modifiers. For example, [*The astronauts*] (*Subject*) [*landed*] (*Main verb*) [*their spaceship*] (*Direct object*) [*safely*] (*Modifier*).

- a. The Insectoids landed yesterday.
- b. These space travelers reached the planet Armeron.
- c. Below the surface, they get a real shock.
- d. In this strange world, a powerful new energy source pulses.
- e. A few jolts from these Volt Stones supply all their power.
- f. Giant insects prowl the planet.
- g. To protect themselves, the Insectoids disguise their spaceships.
- h. They build a bug-zapping trap. (Adapted from Lego web site)

Besides their main verbs, clauses may also contain **auxiliary** or “**helping**” **verbs**: *be, have, do, can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must*. These occur before, and in addition to, the main verb:

Sentences *may* contain auxiliary verbs.

Books *are* written by obsessive compulsives.

Do all tigers eat meat?

Would you please close the door?

We *can* offer these books at the special price of \$19.95.

A clause may contain several auxiliary verbs (up to four, in fact):

She [*could*] [*be*] lost in the forest.

He [*has*] [*been*] waiting all his life to meet his soul mate.

He [*should*] [*have*] [*been*] spending his time on more important things.

Exercise

1. Identify any auxiliary verb(s) in each of the following clauses. For example, *We [are] expecting rain.*
 - a. Oscar is waiting for a train.
 - b. Frieda has finished all her homework.
 - c. The Insectoids have built a protective shield.
 - d. He must be staying for dinner.
 - e. She could have been arrested by the TSA officers.
 2. Easy question: Where do(es) the auxiliary verb(s) occur relative to the subject and the main verb?
 3. Turn each of the clauses (a) through (e) in Exercise (1) just above into a question. For example, *Is Oscar waiting for a train?*
 4. What happens to the relative order of subject and auxiliary verb in the creation of these questions?
 5. When a clause contains more than one auxiliary verb, which one is affected by the creation of a question? (NB (d) and (e) in Exercise (1).)
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The verbs *be*, *have*, and *do* may be either auxiliary or main verbs. If one of them is the only or the last verb in a clause, then it is a main verb:

- The concert *was* a great success.
- The Insectoids *have* a new power source.
- John *did* the dishes.
- The reading series has *been* wonderful.
- Frieda has already *had* her lunch.
- Oscar is *doing* his homework.
- The kid may be *doing* poorly at school.
- She should still *be* in the library.

Clause types

At this point we will distinguish seven types of clauses. We begin with the **voice** distinction between **active** and **passive** versions of sentences. Sentence (a) is active and (b) is its passive version:

- a. Richard Dawkins wrote *A Devil's Chaplain*.

- b. *A Devil's Chaplain* was written by Richard Dawkins.

Note that the passive version has a form of *be* (*was*) as an auxiliary verb and a phrase beginning with *by*. Note also that the subject of the passive (*A Devil's Chaplain*) corresponds to the object of the active, and that the object of *by*, (*Richard Dawkins*) corresponds to the subject of the active.

The *by* phrase is optional; it can often be omitted without reducing the sentence to a fragment:

- c. Someone has abandoned this car.
d. This car has been abandoned.

We distinguish three sentence types according to different **moods**: the declarative, the interrogative, and the imperative. Sentences (a) through (f) are **declarative** (a.k.a. **indicative**):

- e. John should be here soon.
f. Fred left early.

Note that the subject of (e), *John*, is before the auxiliary verb *should*, and in (f) the subject *Fred* is before the main verb *left*. Declarative sentences are typically used to make assertions, although like all sentence types, they can be used for several purposes.

Imperative sentences contain neither a subject nor an auxiliary verb:

- g. Get up!
h. Stop that!

Imperative sentences are typically used to give orders, directions, and instructions. For instance, the instructions in cookbooks are typically written in the imperative: *Mix the chopped apple with the other ingredients and pour into greased pan.*

There are two main types of **interrogative** sentences, **Yes/No interrogatives** (so called because they are used when a *yes* or *no* answer is expected), and **Wh-** or **Information interrogatives**, which are used when a more elaborate answer than just *yes* or *no* is expected. Sentence (i) is a Yes/No interrogative. Note that its auxiliary verb *will* comes before its subject, *John*:

- i. Will John be here soon?

Remember that when a sentence contains more than one auxiliary verb, it is the first of these that moves to the left of the subject:

j. Will John be leaving soon?

(k) is a Wh-interrogative. It begins with *what* and its auxiliary verb, *should*, occurs before its subject, *you*:

k. What should you be doing now?

A clause's **polarity** has to do with whether it is **positive** or **negative**. Examples (a-k) are all positive. Negative clauses are created by placing *not* after the first auxiliary, *should* in (l):

l. You should not be sleeping here.

The first auxiliary and *not* can be contracted into a single word:

m. You *shouldn't* be sleeping here.

Negative sentences may be declarative, like (l) and (m). They can also be interrogative:

n. Shouldn't you be sleeping over there?

And imperative:

o. Don't touch me!

Note the appearance of *don't* in the negative imperative.

And (p) is both negative and passive:

p. Rome wasn't built in a day.

Exercise

For each of the following sentences say whether it is (i) active or passive; (ii) declarative, interrogative, or imperative; and (iii) positive or negative. For example, *Couldn't it have been left behind?* Passive, in-

terrogative, negative.

- a. House Republicans have a new leader.
 - b. Can I borrow your mulcher?
 - c. Call us at 555-3232.
 - d. Heroic leadership is not required.
 - e. Children from Jamaica have been barred from the National Spelling Bee.
 - f. Jody-Anne was the first Jamaican winner.
 - g. Buy more, save more.
 - h. Was the case made well enough by House managers for a conviction?
 - i. Area hospitals have been warned of mislabeled drugs.
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SENTENCES

In written English and other familiar languages, sentences are quite easy to recognize: they typically begin with a capital letter and end with a period or its equivalent. From a linguistic point of view, sentences are the largest grammatical units. They are also intuitively complete in two senses: first, they may stand alone as informative units, and second, and more importantly, they include all required grammatical elements. This paragraph is composed of sentences, and each of the following is a sentence:

Cats purr.

Tigers eat meat.

Some birds cannot fly.

Journalists think that they do important work.

Bill Gates is fighting for the rights of all capitalists.

If wishes were cars, I'd drive a Ferrari.

Language learners and beginning writers commonly leave out parts of sentences, creating **fragments**, like:

Cats.

Meat.

Fly.

That they do important work.

For the rights of all capitalists.

If wishes were cars.

Some fragments may be perfectly appropriate in certain contexts, for example, as answers to questions:

What animals purr? *Cats.*

What do tigers eat? *Meat.*

What is Bill Gates fighting for? *For the rights of all capitalists.*

Exercise

For each expression below, say whether it is a sentence or a fragment. Explain how you decided. For example, *Lipitor reduces the risk of stroke*. (Sentence because it includes both subject [*Lipitor*] and predicate [*reduces the risk of stroke*]). *About Lipitor*. (Fragment because it has no main verb and therefore no subject and predicate).

- a. The Jacket has a fully adjustable hood.
- b. All seams are tape-sealed.
- c. Fully waterproof, full of features.
- d. Breathable Nylon Rainwear—lightweight, packable, affordable.
- e. That is Land's End Rainwear.
- f. Both the Jacket and Pants come with a stuff sack.
- g. Sized to fit over light layers.
- h. The Pants have a full mesh lining, an elastic waist with drawcord, two side pockets, and side ankle zips.
- i. Imported.

(Adapted from Land's End Catalog The Real Stuff February 1999, p. 49.)

Sentences come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some consist of only a single clause. That is, they are **simple sentences** and have only one main verb, one subject, and one predicate, though they may include modifiers of various sorts. A useful way to begin identifying clauses in sentences is to count main verbs. For each main verb there will be a clause.

Linguists write slowly.

Dogs chase cats.

Peter O'Neill is missing.

Cyclists should always wear bike helmets.

Other sentences are **coordinate** (a.k.a. **compound**) because they combine two or more clauses or smaller sentences within them by connecting them with *and*, *but*, or *or*:

[Dogs chase cats] *but* [cats chase mice].

[Elizabeth Bowen lived between England and Ireland all her life] *and* [her death marked the end of the Anglo-Irish literary tradition].

Complex sentences also contain two or more clauses, but at least one of them is **subordinate** to another in the sense that it plays a grammatical role such as subject, object, or modifier in the larger sentence. Clauses that function as objects are often referred to as **complement clauses**. In the following examples the subordinate sentence is italicized and its role is given in parentheses:

That this is a witty and entertaining book does not justify its high price. (Subject)

Oscar thinks *that Lady Bracknell is a fine creation*. (Object/Complement)

To improve your stamina, jog five miles every day. (Modifier)

I read your short story, *although you asked me not to*. (Modifier)

While researching the history of the castle, Robertson unearthed one of the great scandals of twentieth century Scotland. (Modifier)

If you think carefully about it, language is extraordinarily complex. (Modifier)

When you leave, shut the door behind you. (Modifier)

Exercise

1. For each of the following sentences say whether it is simple, compound/coordinate, or complex. For example, *Tony was eating dinner when the police barged in*. Complex because it contains a main clause (*Tony was eating dinner*) and a subordinate clause (*when the police barged in*).

- A nice seasonal note emerged from the Vatican.
- Three of the curia's computers are known as Raphael, Michael, and Gabriel.
- Raphael maintains what is known as a firewall and it protects the Pope's website from hackers.
- We thank you for your custom throughout 2002 and we look forward to your patronage again in 2003.

2. Put brackets around the entire subordinate clause in each of the following sentences. For example, *[When he died in 2005,] Wilson had just finished his play "Radio Golf."*

- a. Journalists think that they do important work.
- b. John has read two books since he woke up.
- c. That Fred would do such a thing is very surprising.
- d. If wishes were cars, I would drive a Ferrari.

3. Put brackets around the entire subordinate clause(s) in each of the following sentences, and for each one you identify, say whether it functions as a subject, object/complement, or modifier. For example, *You might think [that they had other things on their minds] (Object/complement).*

- a. When you fly long distances, you get jet lag.
- b. Many people believe that politicians are dishonest.
- c. That she is late is extremely distressing.
- d. If I had enough money, I would buy myself the latest David Brown automobile.

The term **clause** is used to refer to simple sentences. It is also used to refer to sentences within larger sentences. We refer to the clause that all other clauses are subordinate to as the **main clause**. So we can speak of main, subordinate, and coordinate clauses in sentences. *Would you marry me anyway* is the main clause of the sentence *If I were a carpenter and you were a lady, would you marry me anyway?*

Exercise

In each of the following examples, put brackets around each clause and then say for each whether it is a main clause, a subordinate clause, or a coordinate clause. For example, *[Linguists believe] (Main clause) [that they understand the nature of language pretty well] (Subordinate clause).*

- a. Journalists think that they do important work.
 - b. If wishes were cars, I'd drive a Ferrari.
 - c. Cats purr and tigers eat meat.
 - d. When you arrive, call us.
-
-

Some sentences include both coordinate and subordinate clauses. These are called **compound/complex** sentences:

[_{S1} *When he's good*, he's very, very good] but [_{S2} *when he's bad*, he's horrid]

In this example, *but* coordinates S1 and S2, however, S1 and S2 each contain a modifying subordinate clause beginning with *when* (italicized).

Exercise

In each of the following examples, put brackets around each clause and then say whether it is a main clause, a subordinate clause, or a coordinate clause. For example, [*Mahogany Gamble says*] (*Main clause*) [*that membership has exploded*] (*Subordinate clause*) and [*that many new members are from non-Buddhist families*] (*Subordinate clause*)—the two subordinate clauses are coordinated/conjoined by *and*.

- a. Biologists believe that tigers can swim and that dodoes are extinct.
 - b. If it rains and the weather gets cold, we won't go for our hike.
 - c. Susan felt pretty bad, but when she went to the doctor, he couldn't find anything wrong with her.
 - d. Although the house is Wi-Fi, the laptop can't access the internet unless the main PC is also logged on.
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PHRASES

Phrases are grammatical units composed of one or more words that function as unified parts of clauses. They are traditionally viewed as not containing both a subject and a predicate, e.g., *this old house*, *the Sopranos*, *crime scene investigator*, *should do important work*, *in a balloon*, *very wicked*, are all phrases. But *this old* and *should do important* are not complete phrases.

Exercise

For each of the following items say whether it is a phrase, a sentence, or a clause. For example, *Wherever you go, you can now email* (*Sentence*); *At your service* (*Phrase*); *that the clock isn't correct* (*Clause*).

- a. A Christmas story from Belfast.
- b. At 30,000 feet.
- c. Extraordinarily beautiful.

- d. Come out with your hands up!
 - e. The administration should have performed better.
 - f. Question:
 - g. What do you call a group of chess grand masters who are bragging to each other in a hotel lobby?
 - h. Answer:
 - i. Chess nuts boasting in an open foyer.
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-

Phrases are constructed around a **head word**, that is, the main word of the phrase. This may be the only word in the phrase, like *Cats* and *purr* in *Cats purr*. Phrases may also include modifiers, objects/complements.

- the café (Head: café, Modifier: the)
 - the all-night café (Head: café, Modifiers: the, all-night)
 - in the all-night café (Head: in, Object/Complement: the all-night café)
 - the old man in the all-night café (Head: man, Modifiers: the, old, in the all-night café)
 - important work (Head: work, Modifier: important)
 - do important work (Head: do, Object/Complement: important work)
 - the wood-shed (Head: wood-shed, Modifier: the)
 - to the wood-shed (Head: to, Object/Complement: the wood-shed)
-
-

Exercise

For each of the following phrases, mark the head word with H, any modifiers with M, and any objects/complements with O. Make sure to identify the entire expression in each instance.

For example, [*The*] [*cat*] [*in the hat*].

(M) (H) (M)

- a. Happy Christmas
 - b. a steep hill
 - c. the experts in the government
 - d. a meeting in the new conference room
 - e. free appraisal
 - f. the only word in the phrase
 - g. celebrating our 20th anniversary
 - h. to the mountains
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COMPLEMENTATION AND MODIFICATION

Words, phrases, and sentences play several roles in language, two of which are complementation and modification. We have already seen these roles in examples, but have not discussed them *per se*. We will do that here.

Complementation

When one element in an expression creates the expectation that another expression will also occur, the expected element **complements** (i.e., completes) the expecting element. (Note the spelling—*complements* not *compliments*.) For example, a preposition like *on* requires a phrase denoting notions such as location or time, as in *on the pavement*, *on time*, *on your mark*; and a verb such as *buy* requires a phrase denoting something bought, as in *buy lunch*.

Exercise

Identify the entire complement phrase in each of the following expressions. For example, *to [the store]*:

- a. for better or worse
 - b. keep the change
 - c. during the storm
 - d. sell your car
 - e. at an important juncture
-
-

Modification

A word alone denotes an entire class of things, for example, *motorcycle* denotes the entire class of things we call motorcycles. When one expression is modified by another, then, generally the two expressions together denote only a subset of the things denoted by the unmodified expression. For example, in the phrase, *Harley-Davidson motorcycles*, the head, *motorcycles*, is modified by *Harley-Davidson*, and consequently the whole phrase denotes just those motorcycles that are Harley-Davidsons.

Phrases may include many modifiers, as in *tall, black, neutered, male, domestic, short-haired cat*. Here we have six modifiers each restricting the potential reference of the word *cat*. The result of piling on these modifiers is that the referent of the phrase must satisfy all of them—it must be a cat that is tall, black, neutered, male, domestic, and short-haired. Each modifier acts like a criterion that the ultimate referent(s) of the phrase must satisfy.

Notice that modifiers are not required or implied by the expressions

they modify. These expressions would be grammatically complete without the modifiers—though of course adding or removing modifiers affects the meaning and consequently the referents of the modified expressions.

Exercise

Identify the modifier(s) in each of the following expressions. For example, *[an] [excellent] wine*:

- a. expensive tastes
 - b. barely awake
 - c. drive quickly
 - d. someone special
 - e. little lame balloonman (e.e. cummings)
-
-

WORDS

Words are the units from which phrases are constructed. In ordinary written English they are generally separated from each other by spaces. All the items separated by spaces in this paragraph are words.

Words can be created in a number of ways. Some, like *cat*, are internally quite simple. Others are created by combining two or more words together to create another word. For example, *rainfall* is composed of *rain* and *fall*; all three are separate words. Words created in this way are called **compounds** or **compound words**.

Exercise

The following are compound words. Note that some are spelled without internal spaces, some with hyphens, and some with internal spaces, separating their constituent words. Separate them into their component words. For example, *Peace Corps* consists of *Peace* and *Corps*. (This is an extremely easy exercise. It is designed to get you accustomed to thinking about the various spelling formats for compounds words.)

boy-friend, fishing rod, holding pattern, pickpocket, kill-joy, nose-dive, make-believe, fast-food, software, now generation, put-down, drawback, son-in-law, forget-me-not, carbon-date, color-code, test-market, free-associate, double-book, overbook, overeducate, bad-mouth, childproof, leadfree, fail-safe, ready-made, over-qualified. (L. Bauer 1983 pp. 202-213).

MORPHEMES

Words may be constructed from one or more morphemes. **Morphemes** are the smallest forms (i.e., spoken and/or written units) in a language that have meanings or grammatical functions. (Note: they are not the smallest units of meaning.) *Cat* is a word consisting of one morpheme, *cat*. *Cats* consists of two morphemes, *cat* and *-s*. *Inactive* contains three: *in-*, *act*, and *-ive*.

From the point of view of their functions in words, morphemes may be divided into three classes: **derivational**, **inflectional**, and **root**. Adding a derivational morpheme to a word or to another morpheme creates a separate, though related, word. For example, adding the derivational morpheme *-er* to the word *read* creates the word *reader*. In the following examples, the derivational morphemes are in bold: *man-**hood***, *king-**dom***, *act-**or***, *anti-**thet-ic-al***, *act-**ive***, *re-act-**or***, *act-**iv-ate***, *wise-**ly***. Notice that there may be several derivational morphemes in a word.

While adding derivational morphemes to a root or word creates a separate word, adding an **inflectional morpheme** merely creates a modified version of the word to which it is added. Inflections are added to words to indicate such things as plural, past tense, or comparison. They are bolded in the following examples: *paint-**ed***, *book-**s***, *small-**er***. Modern English uses only eight inflectional morphemes:

- s plural of nouns: *coats*
- ’s genitive of noun phrases: *Harry’s*, *the kid next door’s*
- er comparative of short adjectives and adverbs: *faster*
- est superlative of short adjectives and adverbs: *fastest*
- s third person, singular, present tense of verbs: *sleeps*
- ed regular past tense of verbs: *pointed*
- ing progressive marker on verbs (occurs with *be*): *is eating*
- ed/-en past participle marker of verbs (occurs with *have* and passive *be*):
has eaten, *has asked*, *was challenged*

The **root** morpheme of a word is the morpheme left over when all derivational and inflectional morphemes have been removed. Thus, *seem* is what remains when we remove the derivational morphemes {-ing} and {-ly} from *seemingly*, and must therefore be its root.

If an inflectional morpheme occurs in an English word, it will always follow the root and any derivational morphemes, as in:

tele-phon-ist-s
D R D I

A morpheme attached before the root of a word is said to be **prefixed**; a morpheme attached after the root of a word is said to be **suffixed**.

“Word” is ambiguous. On one meaning, *phone* and *phones* would be two separate words, but on another meaning, they would be different versions of the same word. We can eliminate the ambiguity with a little lexical ingenuity. We’ll say that the inflected forms of a word are **word forms**, and we’ll call the word that they are inflected forms of a **lexeme**. This implies that derivationally related words are different lexemes.

Exercise

1. The expressions listed below are derived words. Identify their roots with R and the derivational morphemes with D. For example, [*fail*] (R) [*ure*] (D); [*de*] (D) [*act*] (R) [*iv*] (D) [*ate*] (D).

leadership, heroic, national, statement, music, musical, legal, legality, legislator, customizing, setting, enable, disable, disability.

2. Identify the individual morphemes in the following words. Mark roots with R, derivational morphemes with D, and inflectional morphemes with I. For example, [*person*] (R) [*al*] (D) [*s*] (I).

telephonic, dusted, repainted, leaders, expectations, surprises, believers, waiting.

PARTS OF SPEECH

Words can be grouped into **parts of speech** or **word classes**. Traditional grammars of English and other western European languages usually recognize eight such classes: **nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns, articles, and conjunctions**. Some add a ninth, **interjections**, though strictly speaking, this is a use made of many different types of expressions, and not a part of speech at all.

The parts of speech may be gathered into two groups, the **lexical** (a.k.a. **major**) word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and the **grammatical** (a.k.a. **minor**) word classes (prepositions, pronouns, articles, conjunctions). Lexical words are an **open** class in the sense that new words may be added fairly freely. The grammatical classes are **closed**, meaning that it is harder to add new members to them. The lexical class words also convey the main meaning elements of sentences, whereas the grammatical classes tend to perform grammatical functions such as relating expressions to each other: for example, *of* relates *the class* to *top* in *top of the class*. The meanings

associated with grammatical words are often referred to as **grammatical meanings** to distinguish them from the **lexical meanings** associated with lexical words.

The **noun** class includes such words as *book, coat, dog, human, milk, freedom*. Nouns are traditionally viewed as words that denote persons, places, ideas, and things.

Verbs include words such as *eat, leave, know, be, have, own, cough*. They are traditionally viewed as words that denote actions and states of being.

Adjectives include words such as *old, wise, red, attractive, friendly*. They denote qualities and are traditionally defined as words that modify nouns.

Adverbs include *wisely, attractively, regretfully, rapidly, wildly, knowledgeably, frequently*. They are traditionally defined as words that modify verbs, though they also modify adjectives, adverbs, and sentences.

Prepositions include *up, to, toward, along, by, with, onto*. These denote direction, instrumentality, and a number of other such notions.

The **conjunctions** divide into two classes: **coordinating** (*and, but, or*) and **subordinating** (*that, if*). Conjunctions join expressions to each other in various ways.

Pronouns divide into several subtypes, of which we'll mention only one here: **personal pronouns** (*I, you, he, she, it, they* and their variant forms).

Wh-words include *who, whom, whose, what, when, where, why, how*.

English uses two types of **article**: **definite** (*the*) and **indefinite** (*a*). Other languages may use one (Irish) or none (Latin).

Auxiliary verbs include *be, have, do* and the **modal auxiliaries**: *will, would, can, could, shall, should, may, might, must*.

We will critically review the traditional definitions of these word classes in our chapters on Major and Minor Parts of speech.

Exercise

Using the descriptions and lists just above, identify the part of speech of each of the following words. For example, *songbird* (noun).

may, an, whose, her, but, if, from, strangely, strange, write, writer, octopus, the, their, must, indefinitely, because, mysterious, wander, how.

REGULAR AND IRREGULAR FORMS

Regular forms are those that follow the general patterns of the language; irregular forms are those that do not. Regular English nouns are marked

for plural by the addition of *-(e)s*: *book, books; class, classes*. Irregular nouns have numerous plural forms: *child, children; mouse, mice; man, men; alumna, alumnae; cherub, cherubim*. Some of these irregulars derive from historically earlier regular patterns: *ox, oxen*; others are due to the effects of borrowing: *corpus, corpora; datum, data*.

Regular verbs form their past tense and past participle forms by adding *-(e)d*: *kiss, kissed; owe, owed*. Irregular verb forms generally derive from earlier English patterns: *ring, rang, rung; buy, bought; dive, dove*.

Exercise

Give five more examples of irregular nouns and verbs.

GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES

We have already mentioned the grammatical categories of plural, tense, person, voice, mood, and polarity. A fuller list of grammatical categories, their meanings, and further examples includes:

Number (whether one or more than one entity is being referred to):

singular (*book*) and plural (*books*)

(relevant to nouns, pronouns, verbs)

Gender (whether the entity or entities being referred to are male, female, or neither): masculine (*he*), feminine (*she*), neuter (*it*)

(relevant to pronouns, nouns)

Person (whether the speaker, addressee, or some other entity is being referred to): first (*I*), second (*you*), third (*they*)

(relevant to pronouns and verbs)

Case (whether the pronoun or noun is the subject, object, or modifier in its clause): nominative (*I*), objective (*me*), genitive (*my, mine*)

(relevant to pronouns, nouns, and noun phrases)

Tense (whether the past, the present, or the future is being referred to):

present (*kiss/es, drive/s*), past (*kissed, drove*), future (*will kiss; may drive*)

(relevant to verbs)

Aspect (the name given to linguistic forms that indicate characteristics of situations such as whether they are spread out over a period of time, i.e., progressive, or completed but still relevant, i.e., perfect):

progressive (*is kissing*)

perfect (*has eaten*)

(relevant to verbs)

Voice (whether the subject of a clause represents the entity responsible for the event, i.e., active, or affected by it, i.e., passive):

active (*We have eliminated polio.*)

passive (*Polio has been eliminated.*)

(relevant to whole clauses)

Mood (having to do with the kinds of clauses typically used to make statements, ask questions, or give orders/directions):

indicative (*The snows have melted.*)

interrogative (*Have you ever been to Europe?*)

imperative (*Take out the garbage!*)

(relevant to whole sentences)

Polarity (whether a clause is positive or negative):

positive (*The package arrived.*)

negative (*The package didn't arrive.*)

(relevant to whole clauses)

Exercise

1. For each of the following words identify its number, gender, person, and case, where relevant. For example, *he*: *singular, masculine, third person, nominative/subject case*.

its, Mary's, she, him.

2. For each of the following clauses identify its tense, aspect, voice, mood, and polarity, where relevant. For instance, *She hasn't been seen by anyone since last Friday*: *present, perfect, passive, indicative, negative*.

- a. We will be arriving late tonight.
- b. Ahmed is staying with us till Sunday.
- c. Fritz overstayed his welcome.
- d. Is James in his study?
- e. Enjoy yourselves!
- f. Don't leave home without it!
- g. Hasn't Oscar been arrested yet?

SOUNDS AND SPELLING

Sounds and spelling must be kept conceptually distinct. We should always be clear about whether we are discussing sounds or letters. Long before anyone wrote, people spoke to each other. When we learned our first language,

we learned the spoken version before we learned the written one. When we learned to read and write, we probably learned to associate letters with sounds, first one letter to a sound (and vice versa). For example, we learned to use the letter <s> to represent its most typical hissing sound, [s]. Later we learned that many letters are associated with several sounds (and vice versa). For example, <c> sometimes represents the sound typically associated with <s>, as in *city*, and sometimes the sound typically associated with <k>, as in *cat*, and sometimes both, as in *electric* [k] and *electricity* [s].

Sounds are more basic to language than letters; letters represent sounds, not the other way around. Having said that, however, we must also acknowledge that in highly literate societies such as ours, the written version of language has more prestige than the spoken version—because it is generally associated with more prestigious functions. We are so literate that even when we are required to pay attention to the sounds of our languages, we are strongly influenced by how they are spelled; we tend to “see” sounds rather than to hear them. We hope that our chapter on Phonetics and Phonology will redress that imbalance.

Letters, as we mentioned, are visual symbols for sounds. English has approximately 40 sounds that it uses to distinguish words from each other. If we were to design an ideal writing system for a language like English, we might consider associating each significant sound with a single letter. However, our letters derive from Latin, which got them from Etruscan, which got them from Greek, which got them from Phoenician, so they’ve been around the block quite a bit and don’t fit the language very consistently. There are only 26 of them to represent the 40 or so sounds. This disparity is particularly acute among the vowels, for which we have just 6 symbols (counting <y>) to represent about a dozen different vowel sounds. <i> does at least double duty; it represents different sounds in *bit* and *bite*, (the “silent <e>” alerts us to the difference). And many sounds are represented in several ways: the sound [f], as in *father*, may be represented by the letters <f> in *frankly*, <ph> in *physics*, and <gh> in *enough*.

While the letters themselves came to English (and other European languages) from Latin, English “borrowed” lots of words from lots of other languages, often keeping a version of the original language’s spelling. The result is that the way we spell particular sounds often depends on the word the sound is in and where that word came from. For example, the sound [f] is written as the letter <f> in native English words such as *feather* and *finger*. However, the same sound is spelled <ph> in many words that were borrowed into English from Greek, such as *phone* or *Philadelphia*.

The sounds used to distinguish words from each other in a language are

called **phonemes**: [p] and [b] distinguish *pat* and *bat* so they are English phonemes.

But phonemes are pronounced differently in different contexts. If you listen carefully, you will notice that the [p] of *pat* differs from the [p] of *spat*. The former [p] is considerably breathier than the latter. The different pronunciations of a phoneme are its **allophones**. The pronunciation differences among the allophones of a phoneme do not distinguish among words in a language. For instance, there is no pair of separate English words which are identical except that where one member of the pair has breathy [p] where the other has non-breathy [p].

Exercise

Identify three more instances in which English spells a single sound in more than one way and three more instances in which an English letter or group of letters represents more than one sound.

FORM, FUNCTION, AND MEANING

Our discussion has depended on concepts that we must now discuss somewhat more fully. These are the notions of **form** (observable grammatical characteristics), **function** (role or relation in an expression), and **meaning** (what an expression denotes or refers to; the information encoded by an expression).

Form

The notion of **form** refers to the observable elements that make an object what it is. A toothbrush, for instance, has the formal features of a 5”–6” long narrow handle with a bunch of bristles at one end. Individual toothbrushes might have other formal characteristics such as a particular color, particular stiffness of bristles, devices for massaging the gums, etc., but only the first two formal features must be present for something to be identified as a toothbrush.

In grammar, we make use of formal features to identify the category that an expression belongs to. In the study of parts of speech, for example, the form of a word comprises its observable linguistic properties. Besides whether it is spoken, gestured, or written, these formal features include:

- a. Actual and potential inflectional elements, e.g., looks, looked, looking
- b. Actually occurring derivational elements, e.g., goodness, goalkeeper

- c. Stress (emphasis), e.g., *cómpact*, *compáct*
- d. Potential position in grammatical structures, e.g., adjectives may occur before the nouns they modify
- e. Potential for grammatical operations such as substitution, e.g., *the woman* may be “replaced” by the pronoun *she* in a sentence.

These features serve as the basic criteria for identifying parts of speech. For instance, consider how we might assign the word *realize* to the class of verbs. First, it has the potential to accept inflectional endings typical of verbs: *realizes*, *realized*, *realizing*. It also ends in the verb-creating ending *-ize*. The word can occur after other words commonly associated with verbs: *will realize*, *has realized*, *to realize*. Finally, it can be replaced (along with its associated elements) by the form *do (so)(too)*, as in *She realized that “The Simpsons” was more than just a cartoon, and so did he*.

Note that in this example not all of the criteria are useful. Stress tells us little about the part of speech of *realize*. But in words such as *convért* (verb) and *cónvert* (noun), stress provides a useful clue. Much of the skill involved in linguistic analysis requires the use of appropriate formal tests. Applying them shows that:

- a. Any word is potentially a member of several different parts of speech, e.g., *hit* can be both a noun and a verb.
- b. The meaning of a word provides no reliable clue to its part of speech, e.g., verbs are often characterized as words that denote actions or states, but the words *actions* and *states* are both nouns.
- c. Distinguishing the formal properties of words is a necessary preliminary to assigning them to a class.
- d. Formal criteria apply in different ways to different words. In the case of *realize*, inflectional and derivational clues were available; in the case of *convert*, stress information was available. But for a word such as *since*, we would have had to rely on its potential positions in sentences.

Function

The functional view of language asks, “What is an expression’s role in its sentence?” For an analogy, let’s return to our toothbrush. Generally, one uses a toothbrush to clean one’s teeth. In language, **function** designates the role that an expression plays in a larger unit, in particular, the **relationship** of the expression in question to other expressions in the larger unit. Table 1 identifies the main functions used in this text.

Subject	Predicate
Direct Object	Indirect Object
Object of Preposition	Complement
Modifier	Head

TABLE I. MAJOR GRAMMATICAL FUNCTIONS

The modifier-head relation may exist between many different pairs of parts of speech. For example (the head word appears in italics):

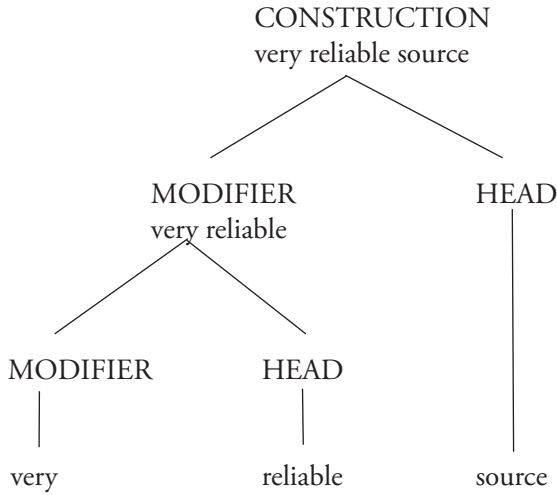
- a. reliable *source* (Adjective—Noun)
- b. *something* strange (Noun—Adjective)
- c. *ran* swiftly (Verb—Adverb)
- d. cautiously *approached* (Adverb—Verb)
- e. very *reliable* (Intensifier—Adjective)
- f. very *cautiously* (Intensifier—Adverb)

A **head word** serves as the main element of the construction that contains it; **modifiers** qualify a head. The head is thus the “syntactic center” of the construction. If the head changes, other parts of a sentence containing the construction may be affected:

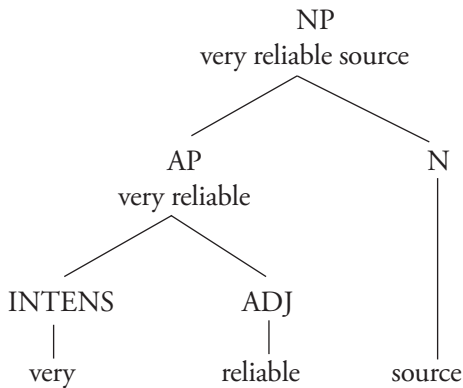
- a. A reliable *source* **is** hard to find.
- b. Reliable *sources* **are** hard to find.

The use of the singular *source* calls for an article (*a* or *the*) and a singular verb, *is*; the plural *sources* is incompatible with *a* and requires a plural verb, *are*. *Reliable* has no effect on these changes. In some cases, e.g., (c,d) above, modifiers can appear either before or after the head. Finally, some words (such as *very* and *quite*) nearly always function as modifiers. As in much grammatical analysis, there is no single formal characteristic for a modifier-head relation. Each instance calls for the use of different principles.

Functions can also occur within functions, as in, [[very reliable] source]. In this case, we have two headwords, *reliable* and *source*. *Reliable* serves as the headword of the construction *very reliable* and *source* serves as the headword of *very reliable source*, in which *very reliable* is analyzed as a unified modifier. Our analysis can be represented clearly in a tree diagram:



As we will observe later, tree diagrams are used also to represent layers of grammatical structure based on *formal* grounds. This mode of representation is more common in modern linguistics than the Reed-Kellogg (functional) diagrams you may be familiar with from school grammar lessons. Thus the phrase above might be formally labeled as in:



(NP = noun phrase; AP = adjective phrase; N = noun; ADJ = adjective; INTENS = intensifier)

The headword will typically determine the grammatical category of the phrase that it heads. Thus a phrase with a noun head will be a noun phrase; one with a verb head will be a verb phrase; and so on.

Meaning

The third perspective on grammar is that of **meaning**, i.e., the definition of an expression or the information potentially communicated by it. In this topic, we include the meaning of words, phrases, and whole sentences. A simple example of lexical (word) meaning used in grammatical analysis is the familiar definition of a verb as a word that denotes “action or state of being.” Another familiar example is the traditional definition of the subject of a clause as the “doer of an action.” Several chapters in this book will say more about such constructional meanings in regard to phrases, clauses, and entire sentences.

Our position in this book is that the study of grammar can take place most successfully when built on a solid base of formal analysis. Thus our chapters on parts of speech identify parts of speech primarily by analyzing their forms. Our emphasis on form does not at all imply that function or meaning is unimportant to language. Exactly the opposite is true, and we do include functional and semantic commentary on parts of speech and other grammatical forms. However, we will not rely solely or even primarily on function or meaning as criteria for identification. As we proceed to phrases and clauses, we will be able to make a more extensive use of the functional and meaningful properties of grammar, precisely because of our strong formal foundation. Our goal is to help you make appropriate use of all these facets in your thinking and teaching about language.

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GLOSSARY

CLAUSE: grammatical unit composed of two phrases—subject and predicate.

DIRECT OBJECT: the phrase traditionally viewed as representing the “recipient” of the action denoted by the main verb, or as representing the entity/ies directly affected by the event denoted by the main verb. Typically occurs after the main verb.

DISCOURSE: coherent, cohesive, contextualized, and purposeful communicative activity.

FORM: an expression’s observable characteristics, including actual and potential inflections, actual derivational endings, stress, potential position in grammatical structures, and potential for grammatical operations.

FUNCTION: the roles an expression plays in a sentence. Functions include Subject, Predicate, Direct Object, Indirect Object, Object of a Preposition, Complement, Adjunct, Modifier, Head.

HEAD: main element in a grammatical construction.

LETTER: graphic unit, which in an alphabet, approximately represents a phoneme.

LEXEME: the basic form of a word; the form that you would look up in a dictionary (see **WORD FORM**).

MEANING: definition of an expression or the information potentially communicated by an expression, studied in semantics and pragmatics.

MODIFIER: an expression qualifying the head of a grammatical construction.

MORPHEME: the smallest linguistic unit that has a meaning or grammatical function; composed of one or more phonemes.

PHONEME: a contrastive sound unit, more or less adequately represented by one or more letters of the alphabet.

PHRASE: a grammatical unit composed of one or more words.

RELATIONSHIP: the role or function of a word or phrase in a sentence.

SENTENCE: the largest unit to which the grammatical rules of a language apply; may be composed of one or more clauses.

TEXT: language produced during discourse; can be produced as written documents or as recordings of spoken communication.

WORD: a grammatical unit composed of one or more morphemes.

WORD FORM: an inflected form of a word (see **LEXEME**).