A COURSE IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH GRAMMAR

当代英语语法教程

罗英豪　编著

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罗英豪 编著

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PART ONE A PRELIMINARY VIEW

Chapter One Introduction

1.1 The English Language

English is no longer, as it once was, a highly inflected language. In fact, in the whole of modern English there are really only two major inflections (for Number in Nouns and Simple Past in Verbs) and four or five minor ones (for Genitive of Nouns, Objective forms of Pronouns, Comparison of some Adjectives and Adverbs, and 3rd Person Singular in the Simple Present of some Verbs) for the English language has changed from being a synthetic to an analytic one in which inflection has been practically entirely replaced by two other phenomena: (1) WORD ORDER and, (2) FUNCTION WORDS (like *from*, *in*, *shall*, *may*, *the*, *my*, *and*, *or*, *who*, *that*, *because*, *however*, *very*, *etc.*).

In English, word order within sentences is more fixed. e. g.

John hit Peter. (Peter suffered.)

Peter hit John. (John suffered.)

This rather fixed word order operates in conjunction with prepositions, which help to indicate the semantic functions of various objects. For example:

Tom walked *into* the house. (Tom was in the house.)

Tom walked *out of* the house. (Tom was outside the house.)

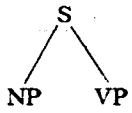
Thus we must pay utmost attention to word order within sen-

tences and the function words.

1. 2 Constituents of the Sentence

The sentence is the basis of the a syntactic system shared by speakers of English, or any other language for that matter. Every sentence (abbreviated to S) consists of two major constituents, noun phrase (NP), and verb phrase (VP), whose deep structure ①

arrangement may be shown as a tree with two branches:



This is called as TREE DIAGRAM. A rule representin this tree would state the following: A sentence consists of a noun phrase followed by a verb phrase. This rule can be abbreviated by convention as

PS Rule 1 S ⟶ NP VP

Such rules are called PHRASE STRUCTURE RULES (PS Rules). The small arrow, ⟶, called a REWRITE ARROW, means that the notion S SENTENCE is expanded (or rewritten) to include a NP and a VP.

---

① All sentences of human languages have both deep structure and a surface structure. The meaning of a sentence is conveyed by its deep structure; the form of a sentence is given by its surface structure.

the papers refused to report the trial because they were afraid to the papers refused to report the trial because they were afraid to report the trail

Even though the surface structures of the two sentences were different —— even though, in other words, the sentence had different shapes —— both sentences have exactly the same deep structure (the same meaning).

From the definition of the traditional grammar, a sentence is made up of a SUBJECT and a PEDICATE. It is important to note that the number of the subject determines what form the verb should take, called CONCORD or AGREEMENT, as in (1) *the girl is*, or as in (2) *the students are*:

The girl *is* a student. (1)

The students *are* in the classroom. (2)

From the discourse analyst's point of view each sentence has a THEME (or TOPIC), "the left-most constituent", as in (1) *the girl*, and a RHEME (or COMMENT), everything else that follows in the sentence which consists of 'what the speaker states about, or in regard to, the starting point of the utterance', as in (1) *is a student*. In many cases (often considered to the unmarked or neutral cases), the theme of declarative sentences will be a noun phrase (the grammatical subject), that of interrogatives the interrogative word, and that of imperatives the imperative form of the verb.

From the Prague School view of information structure, each sentence consists of two categoriese GIVEN INFORMATION, which the addressor believes is known to the addressee (either because it is physically present in the context or because it has already been mentioned in the discourse), as in (1) *the girl*, and NEW INFORMATION, which the addressor believes is not known to the addresee, as in (1) *is a student*.

1.3 Noun Phrase Constituents

The next phrase structure rule expands the noun phrase NP to include an obligatory head noun N, an optional determiner D, an optional premodifier M_1 and an optional postmodifier M_2; alternatively,

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Np may be expanded as a pronoun Pron. A pronoun, therefore, is not really a noun substitute, but rather replaces an entire noun phrase.

$$\text{PS Rule 2} \qquad \text{NP} \longrightarrow \begin{Bmatrix} (\text{D})(\text{M}_1)^n\text{N}(\text{M}_2)^n \\ \text{Pron} \end{Bmatrix}$$

The braces to the right of the arrow indicate that either "(D) $(M_1)^n$ $N(M_2)^n$" or "Pron" must be chosen, but not both. The parentheses indicate that the enclosed constituent does not have to appear in every noun phrase. As we know, more than one modifier may be introduced in a noun phrase. This is why the rule has the superscript n, which allows us to generate any number of modifiers. For example:

The *boy* is a pupil.
(D) (N)

The *seven-year-old* *little* *boy* is a pupil.
(D) (M_1) (M_1) N

The *tall* *little* *boy* *of seven* is a pupil.
(D) (M_1) (M_1) N (M_2)

The *tall* *little* boy *who is seven years old* is a pupil.
(D) (M_1) (M_1) N (M_2)

He is a pupil.
(Pron)

1.4 Verb Phrase Constituents

Leaving the auxiliary elements aside for the moment (for Auxiliary, see Chapter Twelve), we also know that English verb phrases can be complicated. Just as every noun phrase has to contain at least one constituent, a noun, every verb phrase has to contain at least one constituent, a VERBAL, abbreviated to VB. A verbal is thus the primary constituent of a verb phrase and is in raviably the first con-

stituent of a verb phrase in the deep structure. (Here, as elsewhere, the auxiliary and certain other details have been omitted for clarity.)

Some verb phrases contain an obligatory verbal BE and a noun phrase NP, or an adjective phrase AP, or a prepositional phrase PP or a sentence S. This can be described in a phrase structure rule:

$$VP \longrightarrow BE \begin{Bmatrix} NP \\ AP \\ PP \\ S \end{Bmatrix}$$

He is *a student of Foreign Languages Department.*

(NP)

I am *happy with my* job.

(AP)

The book is *on the* desk.

(pp)

The problem is *that he is still very young.*

(S)

Some verb phrases contain an obligatory verb VB and an unlimited number of optional adverbials AD, such as ones of time, place, manner, reason, purpose, and frequency, etc. e. g.

John is studying hard for a degree at university now

(manner) (purpase) (place) (time)

This can be described in a phrase structure rule:

$$VP \longrightarrow VB\ (AD)^n$$

In some sentences, however, the verb phrase includes the adverbial of time and the adverbial of place as an integral part not as an optional modifier or specifier because the following sentence without the adverbial is ungrammatical —— i. e. the adverbial is needed to

structurally complete the verb and thus is part of the phrase (not an optional but an obligatory element of the verb phrase).

* I live.

* The train leaves.

I live *in Changsha.*

The train leaves *at eight.*

A verbal which is the only constituent of a verb phrase is known as an INTRANSITIVE verbal.

A verb phrase may contain an obligatory verb VB, an obligatory noun phrase NP, and an unlimited number of optional adverbials AD. But in some sentences the adverbial of place or the adverbial of manner is an obligatory element of the verb phrase, as in (3) and (4). ①

John studies English.

* John put the book.

John put the book *on the desk.* (3)

* John treated me.

John treated me *kindly.* (4)

The phrase structure rule for this verb phrase is

$$VP \longrightarrow VB\ NP\ (AD)^n$$

Verbals which may be followed by a noun phrase are called TRANSITIVE verbals. Some verbals do not immediately appear to be transitive because the noun phrase following the verbal contains a preposition.

She worried *about* her son.

---

① Note: An asterisk * signifies that what follows it is an unacceptable usage.

Her father will approve *of* her marriage.

These two verb phrase rules may be combined:

$$VP \longrightarrow VB\ (NP)(AD)^n$$

Such a rule, however, does not account for the presence of two noun phrases in some verb phrase:

I handed John a note. (5)

The sentence (5) contains what is called INDIRECT OBJECT construcure. The phrase structure rule for the verb phrase must be amended to show the possibility of two noun phrases in the verb phrase:

$$VP \longrightarrow VB\ (NP)\ (NP)$$

Yet even this rule still excludes another possibility —— verb phrases, like noun phrases, may contain an embedded sentence as constituent, e. g.

The boys want to drink. (6)

The boys want the girls to drink. (7)

The phrase structture rule for verb phrases is now seen to be:

PS Rule 3 $VP \longrightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} BE \left\{ \begin{array}{l} NP \\ AP \\ PP \\ S \end{array} \right. \\ VB(NP) \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (NP) \\ (S) \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right\}$

This is not very different from "sentence is made up of a subject and a predicate." Other similarities to traditional definition are apparent, for example, in the definition of types of verbs. The copula (linking verb) V_1 is followed by a subject complement Cs, the in-

transitive verb Vi is followed be nothing, or sometimes followed by an adverbial, the monotransitive verb Vt is followed by an object O, the ditransitve verb Vd is followed by an indirect object Oi and a direct object Od, and the complextransitive verb Vc is followed by an object and an object complement Co. For example:

I. S V_i Cs John is an American.

II. S V_i C_s John is reading.

III. S Vi A John lives in America.

IV. S Vt O John studies Chinese.

V. S Vt O A John treats us kindly.

VI. S Vd Oi Od John teaches us English.

VII. S Vc O Co John has makes his son a good doctor.

The definitions at this point are virtually the same as those of traditinal grammar.

1.5 The Internal Structure of Adverbials

There are three syntactic possibilities for each sentence-final adverbial.

PS Rule 4 AD ⟶ { AD P, PP, AD CL }

The braces indicate that for each adverbial generated, one, but only one, of the three choices must be selected --i.e. an adverbial phrase AD P, a prepositional phrase PP or an adverbial clause AD CL.

Peter plays football *very well*.

Peter is playing football *on the playground*.

Peter played football *when he was a boy*.

An adverbial phrase contains an obligatory adverb AD, optionally

preceded by intensifier items. An intensifier is an item which specifies the degree to which an adverb will apply.

Peter plays football *well*.

Peter plays football *really very well*.

The prepositional phrase is expanded into a preposition P and a noun phrase NP. However, in some sentences, prepositions simply do not occur before certain nouns or noun phrases, usually with temporal (time) or positional (place) meaning, that are used adverbially.

Peter is leaving *tomorrow*.

Peter has gone *home*.

An adverbial clause gets expanded to include (a) a finite clause i. e. an adverbial subordinator followed by a new sentence, (b) a non-finite clause, i. e. an infinitive, an *-ing* form, an *-en* form, (c) a verbless clause.

(a) Peter was playing well, *although he was very tired*.

(b) Peter was playing *to win*.

(c) Peter was playing, *unaware of the danger*.

1. 6 The Internal Structure of Adjectives

Like the adverbial phrase, the Adjective Phrase (AP) can be expanded into an optional intensifier and an obligatory adjective, but unlike the adverbial phrase, may also take (a) an optional prepositional phrase or (b) an optional that-clause or (c) an optional to-infinitive clause.

PS Rule 5 AP ⟶ A (PP) or A(S)

Peter is (*very*) *tired*. (A)

(a) Peter is *tired from work*. (A PP)

(b) Peter is *glad that you can come*. (A S)

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