

An Introduction to the Grammar of English

Revised edition

Elly van Gelderen

John Benjamins Publishing Company

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John Benjamins Publishing Company
Amsterdam / Philadelphia



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gelderen, Elly van.

An introduction to the grammar of English / Elly van Gelderen. -- Rev. ed.
p. cm.

Rev. ed: 2010.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. English language--Grammar. 2. English language--Grammar, Historical. 3. English language--Social aspects. 4. English language--Syntax. I. Title.

PE1106.G38 2010

428.2--dc22

2009043299

ISBN 978 90 272 3270 0 (HB; alk. paper) / 978 90 272 1168 2 (PB; alk. paper)

ISBN 978 90 272 8862 2 (EB)

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John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

Foreword

To the student:

You don't have to read long books or novels in this course – no *Das Kapital*, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Middlemarch*, or *War and Peace*. There isn't too much memorization either. It should be enough if you become familiar with the keywords at the end of each chapter. Use the glossary, if it is helpful, but don't overemphasize the importance of terminology.

The focus is on arguments, exercises, and tree drawing. You need to practice from the first week on, however, and you may also have to read a chapter more than once. Pay attention to the tables and figures; they often summarize parts of the text. The course is not particularly difficult but, once you get lost, go for help!

The book is divided in four parts (Chapters 1 to 3, Chapters 4 to 6, Chapters 7 and 8, and Chapters 9 to 11), with review sections after each. Chapter 1 is the introduction; skip the 'about the original edition' and 'preface to the second edition', if you want.

About the original edition

The philosophy behind the book hasn't changed in the second edition so I have adapted the preface to the first edition here and have then added things special to the second edition.

This grammar is in the tradition of the Quirk family of grammars, such as the work of Huddleston, Burton-Roberts, Aarts & Wekker, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik whose work in turn is based on a long tradition of grammarians such as Jespersen, Kruisinga, Poutsma, and Zandvoort.¹ However, it also uses the insights from generative grammar.

While following the traditional distinction between function (subject, object, etc.) and realization (NP, VP, etc), the book focuses on structure and makes the function derivative, as in more generative work. The book's focus on structure can be seen in the treatment of the VP as consisting of the verb and its complements. Abstract discussions, such as what a constituent is, are largely avoided (in fact, the term constituent is since it

1. These are all well-known references, so I have refrained from listing them in the references.

is a stumbling block in my experience), and the structure of the NP and AP is brought in line with that of the VP: NPs and APs have complements as well as modifiers.

A clear distinction is made between lexical and functional (here called grammatical) categories. Lexical categories project to phrases and these phrases have functions at sentence level (subject, predicate, and object). In this book, the functional categories determiner, auxiliary, and (phrasal) coordinator do not project to phrases and have no function at sentence level. They function exclusively inside a phrase or connect phrases. Hence, determiner, auxiliary, and coordinator express realization as well as function. Complementizers and those coordinators that introduce clauses do head the CP in this second edition. The reason that I have changed the S' from the first edition into a CP is two-fold. (a) The S' is confusing since it is not an intermediate projection and (b) the CP is more in line with current syntactical frameworks. The CP can function as subject, object, and adverbial. In a generative syntax book, I would of course have all functional categories project to phrases such as DP, QP, and TP, but for an introductory grammar book, I think having the lexical categories (and the C) project is a better choice. The distinction between lexical and functional category is of course not always clearcut, e.g. adverbs, pronouns, and some prepositions are in between. I do bring this up.

On occasion, I do not give a definitive solution to a problem because there isn't one. This lack of explanation can be caused either because an analysis remains controversial, as in the case of ditransitive verbs and coordinates, or because of the continual changes taking place in English (or any other language for that matter). Instead of giving one solution, I discuss some options. I have found that students become frustrated if, for instance, they can reasonably argue that a verb is prepositional in contexts where 'the book says' it is an intransitive verb. The emphasis in this book is on the argumentation, and not on presenting 'the' solution. The chapter where I have been quite conservative in my analysis is Chapter 6. The reason is that to provide the argumentation for a non-flat structure involves theta-theory, quantifier-float, and the introduction of the TP and other functional categories. This leads too far.

The book starts with a chapter on intuitive linguistic knowledge and provides an explanation for it based on Universal Grammar. At the end of each chapter, there is a discussion of prescriptive rules. In my experience, students want to know what the prescriptive rule is. Strangely enough, they don't want the instructor to tell them that, linguistically speaking, there is nothing wrong with splitting an infinitive or using *like* as a complementizer. They want to (and should) know the rule. I have not integrated the topics in the chapters since I want to keep descriptive and prescriptive rules separate although that is sometimes hard. The topics are added to give a flavor for the kinds of prescriptive rules around and, obviously, cannot cover all traditional usage questions.

The chapters in this book cover ‘standard’ material: categories, phrases, functions, and embedded sentences. There are a few sections that I have labeled optional, since, depending on the course, they may be too much or too complex. The last chapter could either be skipped or expanded upon. It should be possible to cover all chapters in one semester. The students I have in mind (because of my own experience) are English, Humanities, Philosophy, and Education majors as well as others taking an upper level grammar course in an English department at a university. I am assuming students using this book know basic ‘grammar’, for instance, the past tense of *go*, and the comparative of *good*. Students who do not have that knowledge should be encouraged to consult a work such as O’Dwyer (2000).

Even though I know there is a danger in giving *one* answer where more than one is sometimes possible, I have provided answers to the exercises. It is done to avoid having to go over all exercises in class. I hope this makes it possible to concentrate on those exercises that are interesting or challenging.

I would like to thank my students in earlier grammar courses whose frustration with some of the inconsistencies in other books has inspired the current work. I am sure this is not the first work so begun. Many thanks also to Johanna Wood for much helpful discussion that made me rethink fundamental questions and for suggesting the special topics, to Harry Bracken for great comments and encouragement, to Viktorija Todorovska for major editorial comments to the first edition, to Tom Stroik for supportive suggestions, to Barbara Fennell for detailed comments and insightful clarifications, and to Anke de Looper of John Benjamins for her insights on the first edition. For help and suggestions with the (originally planned) e-text as well as the paper version, I am very grateful to Lutfi Hussein, Jeff Parker, Laura Parsons, and to Susan Miller.

Preface to the second edition

It was time for an updated version of *A Grammar of English*. Some of the example sentences read as if they were 10 years old and they are. Thus, Bill Clinton hasn't been the US president for a long time and Benazir Bhutto and Yasser Arafat are no longer alive. It is also so much more accepted to use corpus sentences, and these examples may speak more to the users. To keep the text clean of references, I give very basic references, e.g. "CBS 60 Minutes", and not always the exact date. It is now so easy to find those references that I think they aren't needed. Many contemporary example sentences come from Mark Davies' *Corpus of Contemporary American English* and the *British National Corpus*; the older ones from the *Oxford English Dictionary* or from well-known plays.

I have updated the cartoons, added texts to be analyzed, rearranged and added to the Special Topics, and provided more figures and tables. There is also a website that lists relevant links, repeats practice texts from this book for analysis, and contains some resources: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~gelder/grammar.htm>. I have deleted the 'Further Reading' section since it was useless: too much detail on the one hand and then very general references to introductory textbooks on the other hand. I think the students who would use this section are smart enough to figure out other references for themselves.

Due to a computer error that changed N' and V' etc into N and V (after the second page proofs had been corrected), the first edition of this book had to be physically destroyed and what ended up the first edition in 2002 was actually a reprint. There were a few typos that survived this process. I hope that these are corrected and that not too many new ones have been created.

I am very happy that the first edition has been useful in a number of different settings and places, e.g. in Puerto Rico, Norway, Turkey, Spain, Macedonia, The Netherlands, the US, and Canada. I have used it myself with a lot of satisfaction, and would like to thank many of my students in ENG 314 at Arizona State University. The areas that I personally did not like in the first edition are the flat auxiliary verb structures in Chapter 6 and the S' (and S) in Chapter 7. As mentioned, I have only changed the S' to CP, but haven't introduced a DP, TP, or an expanded TP because this isn't appropriate for the audience. I have eliminated traces and use what looks like a 'copy' or sometimes the strike-through font. In Chapter 6, I have also introduced timelines for tense and aspect since students often ask about the names of tenses.

I would like to thank some of the same people as I did for the first edition, in particular Johanna Wood, Harry Bracken, and Laura Parsons. For comments in book

reviews and beyond, I would like to thank Anja Wanner, Carsten Breul, Christoph Schubert, and Nina Rojina. I am especially grateful to Mariana Bachtchevanova, Eleni Buzarovska, Lynn Sims, James Berry, Amy Shinabarger, James Dennis, Wim van der Wurff, and Richard Young for detailed comments after teaching with the book, and also to Terje Lohndal. Thanks to Alyssa Bachman for providing a student perspective and helping me add to sections that were less clear. Continued thanks to Kees Vaes and Martine van Marsbergen.

Elly van Gelderen
Apache Junction, Arizona
November 2009

Abbreviations

Adj	Adjective	N'	N-bar, intermediate category
AdjP	Adjective Phrase	neg	negative
Adv	Adverb	NP	Noun Phrase
Adv-ial	Adverbial	ObjPr	Object Predicate
AdvP	Adverb Phrase	OED	Oxford English Dictionary
AUX	Auxiliary	P	Preposition
BNC	British National Corpus	pass	passive auxiliary
BrE	British English	pf	perfect auxiliary
C	Complementizer or Coordinator	PO	Prepositional Object
CP	Complementizer Phrase (or Coordinator Phrase)	PP	Prepositional Phrase
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American	Pre-D	Pre-determiner
D	Determiner	Pred	Predicate
(D)Adv	Degree Adverb	prog	progressive auxiliary
DO	Direct Object	Pron	pronoun
E	Event time	RC	Relative Clause
e.g.	'for example'	S	Sentence (or Speech on time line)
i.e.	'namely'	SC	Small Clause
inf	infinitive marker to	SU	Subject
IO	Indirect Object	SuPr	Subject Predicate
N	Noun	V	Verb
		V'	V-bar, intermediate category
		VGP	Verb group
		VP	Verb Phrase
?	Questionable sentence.		
*	Ungrammatical sentence.		
^	May occur more than one.		

List of figures

Figure 1.1	Structural Ambiguity	3
Figure 1.2	How to use 'dude'!	7
Figure 2.1	Connecting sentences	22
Figure 2.2	<i>Gently into that ...</i>	28
Figure 3.1	From inside or into?	52
Figure 3.2	Multiple Negation	57
Figure 4.1	A schema of the functions of NPs, VPs, and AdjPs	77
Figure 4.2	<i>Lie ahead</i>	79
Figure 4.3	<i>Who</i> or <i>whom</i> ?	84
Figure 5.1	Adverbials	89
Figure 5.2	More Phrasal verbs	92
Figure 5.3	The functions of PPs and AdvPs	96
Figure 5.4	Glasses	98
Figure 5.5	<i>Put off until after</i>	99
Figure 5.6	<i>Back up over</i>	100
Figure 6.1	Timelines for tense and aspect	110
Figure 6.2	Three progressives	111
Figure 6.3	<i>I think not</i>	113
Figure 6.4	<i>Drawed</i> and <i>drew</i>	117
Figure 6.5	Timelines for tense and aspect (final version)	121
Figure 7.1	A pony	133
Figure 7.2	Quotative 'like'	148
Figure 8.1	Embedded sentences	157

List of tables

Table 1.1	Alice's Ambiguities	3
Table 2.1	Some differences between N(oun) and V(erb)	14
Table 2.2	Differences between adjectives and adverbs	18
Table 2.3	Some prepositions in English	19
Table 2.4	Determiners	21
Table 2.5	A few complementizers	22
Table 2.6	The categories in English	26
Table 3.1	Finding a phrase	45
Table 4.1	Subject tests	66
Table 4.2	Verbs with direct and indirect objects	70
Table 4.3	Examples of verbs with subject predicates	71
Table 4.4	Verbs with direct objects and object predicates	71
Table 4.5	Examples of the verb classes so far with their complements	74
Table 5.1	Examples of phrasal verbs	93
Table 5.2	Differences among objects, su/obj predicates, and adverbials	93
Table 5.3	Verb types and their complements	96
Table 6.1	Characteristics of auxiliary verbs	106
Table 6.2	Auxiliaries and their affixes	114
Table 6.3	Some finite, lexical, and auxiliary verbs	119
Table 7.1	Terms for clauses	140
Table 8.1	Embedded clause	152
Table 8.2	The non-finite CP	154
Table 9.1	Components of the PP, AdjP, and AdvP	172
Table 9.2	Examples of nouns with modifiers and with complements	174
Table 9.3	Functions inside the NP	175
Table 9.4	Modifiers and complements to N: a summary	179
Table 10.1	Restrictive and Non-Restrictive RC	191
Table 10.2	Relative Clauses and Complement Clauses	192
Table 10.3	Examples of Reduced RC	193
Table 10.4	The sisters of CP	198

Table of contents

Foreword	XI
Preface to the second edition	XV
Abbreviations	XVII
List of figures	XIX
List of tables	XXI
CHAPTER 1	
Introduction	1
1. Examples of linguistic knowledge	1
1.1 Sounds and words	1
1.2 Syntactic structure	2
2. How do we know so much?	5
3. Examples of social or non-linguistic knowledge	6
4. Conclusion	8
Exercises	9
Class discussion	9
Keys to the exercises	10
Special topic: Split infinitive	10
CHAPTER 2	
Categories	12
1. Lexical categories	12
1.1 Nouns (N) and Verbs (V)	13
1.2 Adjectives (Adj) and Adverbs (Adv)	15
1.3 Prepositions (P)	18
2. Grammatical categories	19
2.1 Determiner (D)	19
2.2 Auxiliary (Aux)	21
2.3 Coordinator (C) and Complementizer (C)	21
3. Pronouns	23
4. What new words and loanwords tell us!	24
5. Conclusion	25
Exercises	27
Class discussion	29
Keys to the exercises	30
Special topic: Adverb and Adjective	32

CHAPTER 3	
Phrases	35
1. The noun phrase (NP)	36
2. The adjective phrase, adverb phrase, verb phrase and prepositional phrase	39
2.1 The adjective phrase (AdjP) and adverb phrase (AdvP)	39
2.2 The verb phrase (VP)	40
2.3 The prepositional phrase (PP)	41
3. Phrases in the sentence	42
4. Coordination of phrases and apposition	43
5. Finding phrases and building trees	45
5.1 Finding the phrase	45
5.2 Building trees	46
6. Conclusion	49
Exercises 50	
Class discussion 51	
Keys to the exercises 52	
Special topic: Negative concord 56	
Review of Chapters 1–3	59
Exercises relevant to these Chapters:	60
Class discussion	60
Keys to the exercises	61
Example of an exam/quiz covering Chapters 1 to 3	63
Keys to the exam/quiz	63
CHAPTER 4	
Functions in the sentence	65
1. Subject and predicate	65
2. Complements	68
2.1 Direct and indirect object	68
2.2 Subject and object predicate	70
3. Verbs and functions	72
4. Trees for all verb types	74
5. Light verbs (optional)	76
6. Conclusion	77
Exercises 78	
Class discussion 80	
Keys to the exercises 80	
Special topic: Case and agreement 83	

CHAPTER 5**More functions, of prepositions and particles** **86**

1. Adverbials 86
2. Prepositional verbs 90
3. Phrasal verbs 90
4. Phrasal prepositional verbs (optional) 93
5. Objects and adverbials 93
6. Conclusion 96

Exercises 97

Class discussion 99

Keys to the exercises 100

Special topic: The passive and 'dummies' 102

CHAPTER 6**The structure of the verb group (VGP) in the VP** **105**

1. Auxiliary verbs 105
2. The five types of auxiliaries in English 107
 - 2.1 Modals 107
 - 2.2 Perfect *have* (pf) 109
 - 2.3 Progressive *be* (progr) 110
 - 2.4 Passive *be* (pass) 111
 - 2.5 The 'dummy' *do* 112
3. Auxiliaries, 'affix hop', and the verbgroup (VGP) 113
4. Finiteness 114
5. Relating the terms for verbs (optional) 116
6. Conclusion 118

Exercises 120

Class discussion 121

Keys to the exercises 122

Special topic: Reduction of *have* and the shape of participles 122**Review of chapters 4–6****124**

Examples of midterm exams covering Chapters 4 to 6 127

Example 1 127

Example 2 127

Example 3 128

Key to example 1 129

Key to example 2 130

Key to example 3 131

CHAPTER 7	
Finite clauses: Embedded and coordinated	132
1. Sentences and clauses	133
2. The functions of clauses	134
3. The structure of the embedded clause: The Complementizer Phrase (CP)	135
4. Coordinate sentences: The Coordinator Phrase (CP)?	138
5. Terminological labyrinth and conclusion	139
Exercises 141	
Class discussion 142	
Keys to the exercises 143	
Special topic: Preposition or complementizer: The 'preposition' <i>like</i> 146	
CHAPTER 8	
Non-finite clauses	149
1. Non-finite clauses	149
2. The functions of non-finites	151
3. The structure: CP	152
4. Coordinating non-finites	154
5. Conclusion	155
Exercises 156	
Class discussion 157	
Keys to the exercises 159	
Special topic: Dangling participles and gerunds 161	
Review of Chapters 7 and 8	164
Exercises 165	
Keys to the exercises 165	
Sample quiz/exam, covering Chapters 7 and 8 166	
Keys to the quiz/exam 167	
CHAPTER 9	
The structure of the PP, AdjP, AdvP, and NP	169
1. The structure of the PP, AdjP, and AdvP and the functions inside	170
2. The structure of the NP and functions inside	172
3. Arguments for distinguishing complements from modifiers (optional)	176
3.1 Complement and modifier follow the head N	176
3.2 Complement and modifier precede the head N	177
4. Conclusion	179
Exercises 181	

Class discussion	182
Keys to the exercises	183
Special topic: Pronoun resolution	188

CHAPTER 10

Clauses as parts of NPs and AdjPs 189

1. Relative clauses (RC) 189
2. Inside the NP: Relative and complement clauses 190
 - 2.1 Relatives 190
 - 2.2 Complement clauses 191
 - 2.3 Reduced relative clauses 192
3. NPs as compared to AdjPs, AdvPs, and PPs 193
4. More on RCs 194
5. The structure of modifiers and complements (optional) 195
6. Conclusion 198

Exercises 199

Class discussion 200

Keys to the exercises 200

Special topic: Relative choice and preposition stranding 203

CHAPTER 11

Special sentences 205

1. Questions/Interrogatives: The CP 205
2. Exclamations 207
3. Topicalization, passive, cleft, and pseudo-cleft 208
4. Conclusion 209

Exercises 210

Keys to the exercises 210

Special topic: Comma punctuation 211

Review of Chapters 9–11 214

Home work 1, on Chapter 1 and Special topics 215

Home work 2, covering Chapters 2–11 215

Home work 3, or take-home exam, covering Chapters 7–11 216

Examples of Final Exams 217

Example 1 217

Example 2 219

Example 3 220

Glossary	222
References	229
Index	230