

Introduction to the Grammar of English

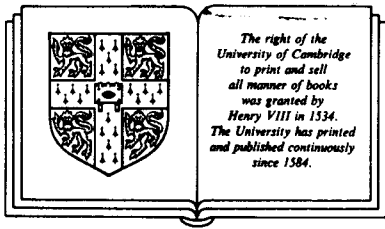
RODNEY HUDDLESTON

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH

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PREFACE

This book is written primarily for students of linguistics in universities and other tertiary institutions. It assumes no previous knowledge of linguistics: the first three chapters introduce the theoretical concepts and methodological principles needed to follow the later descriptive chapters. I have likewise made minimal assumptions about the reader's familiarity with 'traditional grammar' – all terms borrowed from the traditional repertoire, such as 'noun', 'transitive verb', 'relative clause', and so on, are fully explained. Although the book covers a fair amount of the grammar, it is not simply a short grammar of English, inasmuch as it devotes a good deal of attention to the problem of justifying the analysis proposed (where, for example, it differs from the traditional analysis) or of choosing between alternative analyses – it is in this sense that it is directed towards the student of linguistics. It does not, however, attempt to formalise the grammar: it is not 'generative' – and it is not written within the framework or model of any particular contemporary school of linguistics such as 'transformational grammar', 'systemic grammar', 'functional grammar' or the like. It follows, rather, a 'structural' approach, in a very broad understanding of that term, one where the grammatical categories postulated derive from a study of the combinational and contrastive relationships the words and other forms enter into. The aim is to give a reasonably careful and precise account of major areas of English grammar that will provide a foundation for more advanced work in theoretical linguistics.

For practical reasons I have confined my attention to Standard English; there is, of course, a good deal of regional variation within Standard English: I have drawn attention to such variation in a number of places but have not attempted to give a systematic description of it. Also for practical reasons I have been highly selective in the references given at the end of each chapter under the heading 'Further reading': I have very often mentioned only relatively recent works, but the reader who follows up these references will of course generally find there details of earlier works on the topics concerned.

I would like to express my gratitude to Frank Palmer, of the Editorial Board, for his support, advice and comments on draft chapters. A number

Preface

of other friends and colleagues were good enough to give their time to read all or part of the book in draft form: my thanks are due to Barry Blake, Bob Cochrane, Peter Collins, Bob Dixon, Dick Hudson, Steve Johnson, Hank Kylstra, David Lee, Jeff Pittam and Neil Smith for their comments on particular chapters, and especially to Peter Matthews, Bernard Comrie, Sidney Greenbaum and Graham Mallinson for numerous constructive suggestions on the whole book at various stages of writing – but they are not of course to blame for the weaknesses that remain. I would also like to thank Deborah McNeill for the marvellous job she made of typing a long and complex manuscript – and for her stoicism in the face of repeated and often massive revision. Finally my greatest debt is to my wife Cheryl; much of the book has been written at weekends: I thank her for putting up with the long period of neglect that this has necessitated, and for her constant support and encouragement.

TABLE OF SYMBOLS AND NOTATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Bold face italics indicate lexemes (see 1.1).

Ordinary italics are used for citing sentences, words and other forms (in orthographic representation).

Underlined italics indicate location of sentence stress in cited examples.

- / / obliques enclose phonological representations of forms.
- / oblique is used to abbreviate examples: *He can/will go* is an abbreviation of *He can go* and *He will go*.
- () parentheses enclose optional elements: *He spent the money (that) you gave him* indicates that the *that* may be present, *He spent the money that you gave him*, or absent, *He spent the money you gave him*.
- [] square brackets enclose relevant context for an example: [*Nobody*] *I know* [*thinks that*] represents the form *I know* considered as occurring in the context '*Nobody _____ thinks that*'.
- < > angle brackets enclose letters representing different speakers: <A> *What are you doing?* – *Reading the paper* cites an exchange where *What are you doing?* is uttered by one speaker, *Reading the paper* by another.
- * asterisk indicates that what follows is ungrammatical – at least in the construal under consideration.
- ? indicates that the grammaticality (or, if followed by *, the ungrammaticality) of what follows is questionable.
- † indicates a hypothetical form from which some actual form is transformationally derived (see 1.4).

Subscripts distinguish different words or lexemes (*bottle*_N vs *bottle*_V); superscript descriptive terms distinguish different uses of a single word or lexeme (*what*^{interrogative} vs *what*^{relative}), while superscript numerals distinguish lexical homonyms (*bat*¹ vs *bat*²) – see 3.2.

ROMAN SMALL CAPITALS are used for emphasis.

Roman bold face is used for important technical terms when explained.

“ ” single quotation marks are used for quotations and as ‘scare quotes’, e.g. for technical terms not yet explained.

“ ” double quotation marks are used to represent meanings.

{ } braces are used within double quotation marks to indicate semantic constituent structure.

The following abbreviations are used for syntactic classes, functions and other categories:

A	adjunct	O	object
Adj	adjective	O ^d	direct object
AdjP	adjective phrase	O ⁱ	indirect object
Adv	adverb	P	predicator
AdvP	adverb phrase	PC	predicative complement
Art	article	PC ^o	objective predicative complement
Aux	auxiliary verb	PC ^s	subjective predicative complement
C	complement	pers	person
Comp	complement	pl	plural
Detnr	determiner	PossP	possessive phrase
Detve	determinative	PP	preposition phrase
EVP	extended verb phrase	Prep	preposition
Mod	modal auxiliary	S	subject
MV	main verb	sg	singular
N	noun	V	verb
NP	noun phrase	VP	verb phrase

Phonological symbols:

Consonant phonemes

/p/	as in <i>pie</i>	/v/	as in <i>view</i>	/n/	as in <i>no</i>
/t/	<i>tie</i>	/θ/	<i>thigh</i>	/ŋ/	<i>wing</i>
/d/	<i>die</i>	/ð/	<i>thy</i>	/l/	<i>lie</i>
/k/	<i>car</i>	/s/	<i>see</i>	/r/	<i>row</i>
/g/	<i>go</i>	/z/	<i>zoo</i>	/j/	<i>you</i>
/tʃ/	<i>chew</i>	/ʃ/	<i>shy</i>	/w/	<i>we</i>
/dʒ/	<i>jaw</i>	/h/	<i>high</i>		
/f/	<i>few</i>	/m/	<i>my</i>		

Vowel phonemes

/i:/ as in <i>peat</i>	/ʌ/ as in <i>putt</i>	/ɛə/ as in <i>paired</i>
/ɪ/ <i>pit</i>	/əʊ/ <i>pole</i>	/ʊə/ <i>poor</i>
/e/ <i>pet</i>	/aɪ/ <i>pile</i>	/ə/ <i>sofa</i>
/æ/ <i>pat</i>	/aʊ/ <i>pout</i>	

' precedes accented syllable in the word, as in '*photo*, *a'fraid*.

↓ indicates intonation with falling terminal, ↑ with rising terminal

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I

Basic concepts in grammar

The term 'grammar' is used in a number of different senses – the grammar of a language may be understood to be a full description of the form and meaning of the sentences of the language or else it may cover only certain, variously delimited, parts of such a description. Here we shall use it in one of these narrower senses, embracing **syntax** and **morphology**. Syntax is concerned with the way words combine to form sentences, while morphology is concerned with the form of words. We will launch without delay into a discussion of basic concepts in syntax and morphology, returning in §8 to the distinction between grammar in this sense and various other components of a full description and to the basis for dividing grammar into syntactic and morphological subcomponents. The only terms that we shall need to anticipate are 'phonology' and 'semantics': phonology deals with the sound system, with the pronunciation of words and sentences, semantics deals with meaning.

I.1 Words and lexemes

Syntax deals with combinations of words, we have said, morphology with the form of words. But again the term 'word' has been used in a variety of senses. For our immediate purposes it will suffice to draw just one distinction, which we can approach by considering the relation between, say, *tooth* and *teeth*: are they different words or the same word? From one point of view they are clearly different words: they are pronounced and spelt differently, they differ in meaning, and they occur in different positions in sentences (so that we could not, for example, replace *tooth* by *teeth* in *This tooth is loose* or *teeth* by *tooth* in *These teeth are loose*, and so on). Yet they are also traditionally said to be different forms of the same word. This is a more abstract sense: we abstract away the differences between them to isolate what is common to both. It will be helpful to distinguish both terminologically and notationally between these two senses. I shall use **word** for the less abstract concept, **lexeme** for the more abstract one, and I shall cite words in ordinary italics, lexemes in bold face italics. We accordingly say that *tooth* and *teeth* are different words, but **forms** of the same lexeme *tooth*.

More specifically, we will say that *tooth* is the 'singular' form of ***tooth*** and that *teeth* is its 'plural' form. The words *tooth* and *teeth* are thus each analysed into two components, the abstract lexeme and what we shall call an **inflectional property**. These properties are relevant to both the morphological and syntactic components of the grammar (and for this reason are commonly referred to also as 'morphosyntactic properties'). The morphology will include rules for deriving the various inflectional forms of a lexeme from the 'lexical stem', while the syntax will include rules specifying under what conditions a lexeme may or must carry a given inflectional property. Thus it is a fact of morphology that the plural of ***tooth*** is *teeth*, whereas it is a fact of syntax that if ***tooth*** enters into construction with ***this*** there must be 'agreement' in number, i.e. both must carry the singular inflection or both the plural. Similarly, the morphology will tell us that the 'past participle' of the verb ***see*** is *seen*, whereas the syntax will say that a past participle is required in the 'passive' construction, as in *He was seen by the caretaker*.

Not all words enter into inflectional contrasts such as we find between *tooth* and *teeth*, *this* and *these*, or *see*, *sees*, *saw*, *seeing* and *seen*. Usually, as with words like *because*, *of*, *however*, *besides*, this is because there is simply no inflectional property present at all – and, precisely because there is no inflectional property to abstract away, the concept of lexeme will be inapplicable in such cases. Thus *because* is a word that is not a form of any lexeme. In other cases we can recognise an inflectional property even though it is not independently contrastive: *alms* does not contrast with singular **alm*, but we can still analyse it as a plural form, and conversely *equipment* does not contrast with plural **equipments* but we can still analyse it as a singular form. In these cases we can invoke the concept of lexeme, so that *equipment*, for example, will be the singular form of the lexeme ***equipment***. When we say that ***equipment*** has a singular form but no plural form we are talking about the same kind of entity as when we say that ***tooth*** has *tooth* as its singular form and *teeth* as its plural form. But it is of course contrasts like that between *tooth* and *teeth* that provide the *raison d'être* for the lexeme concept: if it were not for these we would have no lexeme-word distinction, ***tooth*** vs *tooth*, to generalise to cases like ***equipment*** vs *equipment*.

1.2 Constituent structure

Words are not the only units that we need in describing the structure of sentences. Although we can break a sentence down into a sequence of words, we will not go from sentence to word in a single step but will recognise units intermediate in size between sentence and word. For example, in

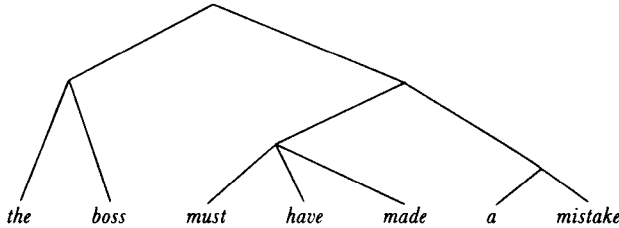
- (1) *The boss must have made a mistake*

it is intuitively obvious that although *a* is immediately adjacent in the

sequence to both *made* and *mistake*, it is more closely related to the latter than to the former: this relationship between *a* and *mistake* can then be described by saying that they go together to form a **constituent** of the sentence. More generally, the syntactic analysis of a sentence will assign to it a **constituent structure** which identifies the full hierarchy of its constituents.

A standard way of representing constituent structure diagrammatically is illustrated in (2):

(2)



This diagram identifies eleven constituents: the seven words, represented by the bottom row of points, and four intermediate units, *the boss*, *must have made*, *a mistake*, and *must have made a mistake*. The point from which the lines lead down to *a* and *mistake* represents the constituent *a mistake*, and so on. By contrast *made a* is not a constituent: there is no point from which the lines lead down to just this pair of words.

If we read the diagram from the top downwards we see that the sentence is divided first into *the boss* and *must have made a mistake*: these are said to be the **immediate constituents** (or **ICs**) of the sentence. Each of them is then broken down into its own ICs, *the* and *boss* for the first, *must have made* and *a mistake* for the second – and so on until we reach the bottom.

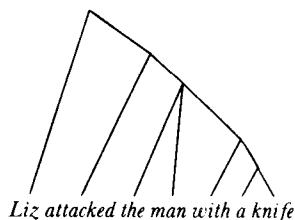
‘Constituent’ is a relational concept: if *x* is a constituent, it must be a constituent of something. For example, in (2) *must have made* is a constituent of the sentence – and also of *must have made a mistake*. Similarly with ‘immediate constituent’: *must have made* is an IC of *must have made a mistake* (but only of this). It follows that the sentence itself is not a constituent: as the maximal unit in syntax it is not part of any other unit. We will then apply the term **construction** to the sentence and any constituent except the minimal ones, the words. Thus with ‘constituent’ we are as it were looking upwards: *x* is a constituent if it is part of some element higher in the hierarchy; and with ‘construction’ we are looking downwards: *x* is a construction if it is analysable into, i.e. constructed from, one or more elements lower in the hierarchy.¹

¹ This allows for the special case where a construction has only one IC. For example the imperative sentence *Stop!* contains only one word, but we will still speak of it as a construction: it is constructed from that one word. It is for this reason that I say ‘higher/lower in the hierarchy’ rather than the more concrete ‘larger/smaller’. (See 3.3 for further discussion of this issue.)

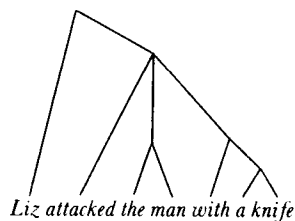
Finally we will use **form** as a general term covering both constituents and constructions. Thus in (2) there are eleven constituents, five constructions and twelve forms. Notice that this use of 'form' is consistent with that introduced in the last section, where we spoke of *teeth*, for example, as a form of the lexeme **tooth**: in *He cleaned his teeth* it is *teeth* not **tooth** that is a constituent of the sentence, so that *teeth* like *his teeth*, *cleaned*, *cleaned his teeth*, etc., will be a form.

A given sequence of words may be a constituent in one sentence but not in another. Thus *John and Bill* is a constituent of the sentence *He saw John and Bill at the races* but not of *He saw John and Bill did too*. Moreover, a single sentence may have two (or indeed more) constituent structure analyses, each corresponding to a different interpretation. *Liz attacked the man with the knife*, for example, is syntactically ambiguous, being analysable (approximately) as shown in (3) or (4);

(3)

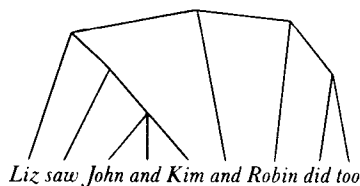


(4)

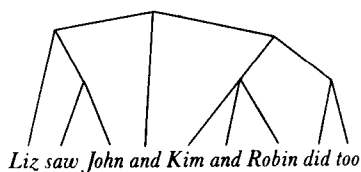


Analysis (3) corresponds to the interpretation "Liz attacked the man who had a knife" – here *the man with a knife* forms a constituent, and serves to pick out the person whom Liz attacked. Analysis (4), by contrast, represents the structure the sentence has under the interpretation "Liz used a knife in her attack on the man" – here *the man* and *with a knife* do not go together to form a constituent, but are both ICs of the larger constituent *attacked the man with a knife*, with *the man* identifying the person attacked and *with a knife* giving information about the means of attack, not about the man. Sometimes such ambiguities are resolved 'prosodically' – the different constituent structures are distinguished by the intonation and rhythm (similarly in writing they may be resolved by punctuation). An elementary example is *Liz saw John and Kim and Robin did too*, which can be analysed (again approximately) as either (5) or (6):

(5)



(6)



(5) matches the interpretation “John and Kim were seen by Liz and they were also seen by Robin”, whereas (6) corresponds to “John was seen by Liz and he was also seen by Kim and Robin”. In any normal utterance of the sentence the prosodic features (or punctuation) would show clearly whether *Kim* was coordinated with *John*, as in (5), or with *Robin*, as in (6). But in general relatively little information about the constituent structure is derivable directly from the physical signal: constituent structure is an abstract property of sentences.

In discussing example (1) I said it was intuitively obvious that *a* goes with *mistake* to form a constituent, but clearly it will not do to proceed simply on the basis of intuition – we need to find less subjective evidence for our analysis. What kinds of evidence are relevant is a question we shall take up later – one cannot determine the constituent structure without considering other aspects of the syntax and it will therefore be better to proceed to the other main concepts, leaving till the next chapter the issue of how one chooses one analysis rather than another.

1.3 Syntactic classes and functions

The constituent structure analysis of a sentence identifies the forms and their hierarchical arrangement one within another. We must now consider how the various forms are to be further described.

In the first place, they will be assigned to syntactic **classes** and **subclasses** on the basis of various types of shared properties. Thus words will be assigned to such primary classes as noun, verb, adjective, etc., and to such subclasses as proper noun, common noun, transitive verb, etc. Forms occurring higher in the constituent hierarchy can be classified in an analogous way as noun phrases, verb phrases, clauses, interrogative clauses, and so on. If we return to our example sentence, *The boss must have made a mistake*, we can extend the earlier analysis by incorporating a sample of such classificatory information in the following way: