

Thematic categories: the verb and its complements. The structure of sentences. Phrases. Structural terminology. Rewrite rules. Structural positions within the sentence

p. 53

▪ **Exercise 6**

Identify the thematic and the functional categories in the following sentence and give the feature matrix of each item by making use of the following features [$\pm F$], [$\pm N$] and [$\pm V$]:

The boy in the neighbourhood may have made a big mistake.

p. 52; h)-o)

Exercise 2

Identify the arguments in the following sentences.

- (1)
- a Peter left his family.
 - b Peter left after dinner.
 - c Peter and Mary met in the park.
 - d Mary suddenly noticed that her purse was missing.
 - e Before leaving the house she checked her bag.
 - f The purse was on the kitchen table.
 - g Peter considers Mary beautiful.
 - h John knew that Peter and Mary met in the park in the afternoon.
 - i John knows Mary.
 - j Peter wanted John out of the room.
 - k They treated their guests kindly during their stay.
 - l Peter wrote a letter to Mary the other day.
 - m He sent her a box of chocolate, too.
 - n Peter called Mary yesterday.
 - o John called Peter a liar.

▪ **Exercise 9**

The following word forms can have more than one grammatical category. State which these categories are and create sentences in order to show their different distribution.

- (1) a leaves
 b lead
 c costs
 d fly
 e rings
 f tears
 g water
 h rules
 i present
 j mine
 k left
 l long
 m fast

Ex. 10, d)

▪ **Exercise 10**

Identify the word categories in the following sentences and give the lexical entries of the verbs, auxiliaries and degree adverbs as well.

- (1) a The pretty girl will surely go for a luxury holiday in Haiti with a very tall young man.
 b His excellent idea about trade reform can probably change the economic situation of African countries.
 c A very big picture of old buildings has been sent to the former president of the electric company in Southern France.
 d The spokesman announced that the most modern houses may have been built in the centre of London for a year.
 f The ancient ruins might have been destroyed by the biggest earthquake of the century.

0. What does the term 'grammatical' mean?

What does an asterisk (*) stand for in generative linguistics?

What is a(n)...

- prepositional verb?
- intransitive verb?
- transitive verb?
- ditransitive verb?

➔ Try to define them (even if intuitively), give some English and – when possible – Hungarian examples

1.1 The Thematic categories – Verbs

- arguments: vonzatok
- complements: the arguments which **follow** the verb
(!! the subject is an argument, but not a complement)
the verb determines i) the number and ii) the category of its complements

(67) the mayor gave [the hero] [a reward] – **2 nominal complements**

(68) a. the villain awaited [**his trial**] – **1 nominal complement**

b. the villain waited [**for his trial**] – **1 prepositional complement**

- the **category of the complement** (nominal/prepositional/adjectival/adverbial/sentential) is stated as a separate piece of information in a verb's lexical entry → **subcategorization frame**:

(70) *await* **category:** [-F, -N, +V]
 Θ-grid: <agent, goal>
 subcat: [nominal]
 wait **category:** [-F, -N, +V]
 Θ-grid: <agent, goal>
 subcat: [prepositional]

- **intransitive verbs** (tárgyatlan/intranszítív igék): verbs without a nominal complement:
 - **“true intransitives”**: no complement at all – *to fly, to sleep, to laugh*: (*The dragon flew; Susan slept; Vicky laughed*):

(72) *laugh* **category:** [-F, -N, +V]
 Θ-grid: <agent>
 subcat: [∅]

- *to wait for*: **prepositional verb**

- **transitive Vs** (tárgyas/transzítív igék): verbs with a nominal complement (*to await sg*)

- verbs with one nominal complement (73a):

(73) the hero fought [the dragon]

- verbs with two nominal complements (73b): **ditransitives** (ditranszítív igék)

(74) the king gave [the hero] [half the kingdom]

- **complex transitive verbs**: take both a nominal and a prepositional complement:

(75) Percy placed [the penguin] [on the podium]

- verbs with **adjectival** (76) or **adverbial** (77) **complements**:

(76) the judge looked [mean]

(77) the pianist performed [passionately]

- verbs with **sentences as their complements** (78):

(78) Theodore thinks [Larry left]

Can you mention some other verbs that have sentences as their complements?

1 Structure

1.1 The building blocks of sentences

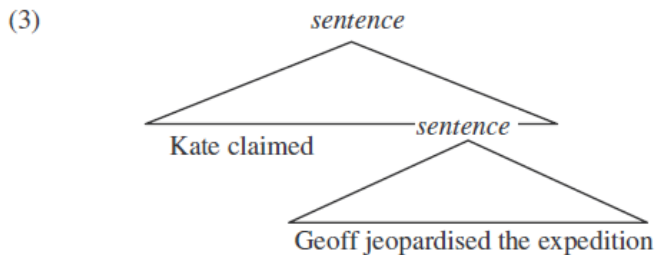
- sentences are not formed simply by putting a row of words together – if this were so then we might expect positions to be identifiable numerically, but this is not the case:

- (1)
- a. 1 2 3
 Sid saw Wendy
- b. 1 2 3 4
 Yesterday Sid saw Wendy

→ how are then grammatical positions defined, if not linearly?

- (2)
- a. Geoff jeopardised the expedition
 b. Kate claimed [Geoff jeopardised the expedition]

- the bracketed part of (2b) is the same as (2a) → (2b) has a **structure** [this is a tentative representation of the structure of the sentence]:



- no limit to how many sentences can be contained one within the other – infinitely long sentences are grammatical:

- (4)
- a this is the house [that Jack built]
 b this is the malt [that lay in the house [that Jack built]]
 c this is the mouse [that ate the malt [that lay in the house [that Jack built]]]
 d this is the cat [that chased the mouse [that ate the malt [that lay in the house [that Jack built]]]]
 e etc.

→ Let us tentatively assume the grammar to contain a rule which informally might be stated as follows (we will refine the statement in (5) later on):

(5) a sentence can be made up of (at least) words and sentences

→ the definition refers to what is being defined = a **recursive** rule – a finite set of these will be capable of defining an infinite number of expressions

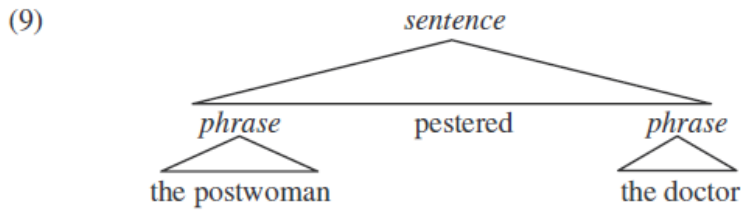
1.2 Phrases

- a sentence can consist of a predicate and its arguments:

- (7) [Prudence] pestered [Dennis]
 (8) [The postwoman] pestered [the doctor]

What is the equivalent of the term 'phrase' in Hungarian?

(8) can mean exactly the same as (7), on the assumption that Prudence is a postwoman and Dennis is a doctor → *the postwoman* and *the doctor* are units
 → they are **phrases** and have an internal structure (this is again a tentative representation):

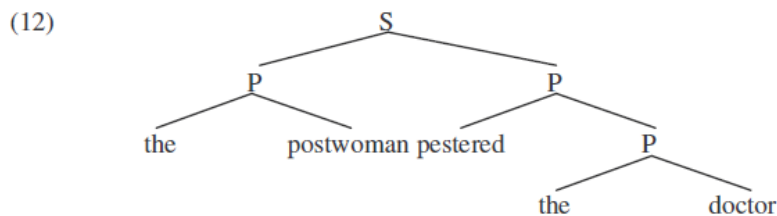


- intransitive verbs distribute the same as transitive verbs plus their complements:

(11) b. Prudence [persisted] on Wednesday
 a. Prudence [pestered [the doctor]] on Wednesday

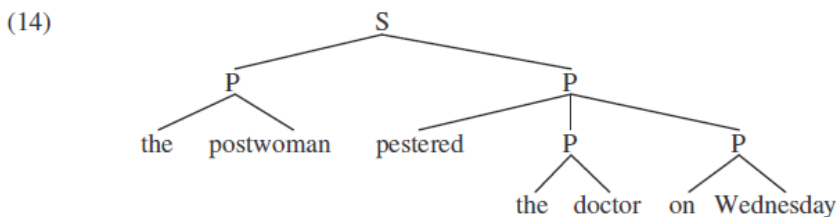
→ transitive verbs and their complements also form a phrase:

S = sentence, P = phrase:



- *on Wednesday* can be replaced by *the yesterday* → they have the same distribution → *on Wednesday* is also a phrase:

(13) The postwoman pestered the doctor [on Wednesday]/[yesterday]



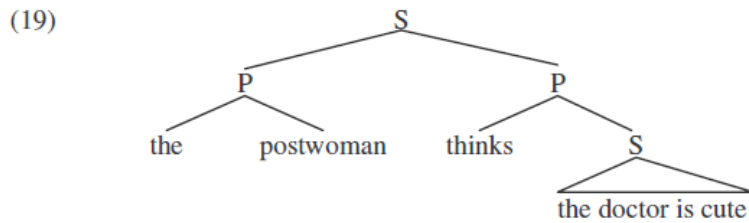
1.3 Sentences within phrases

(17) a. The postwoman [pestered the doctor]
 b. The postwoman [thinks the doctor is cute]

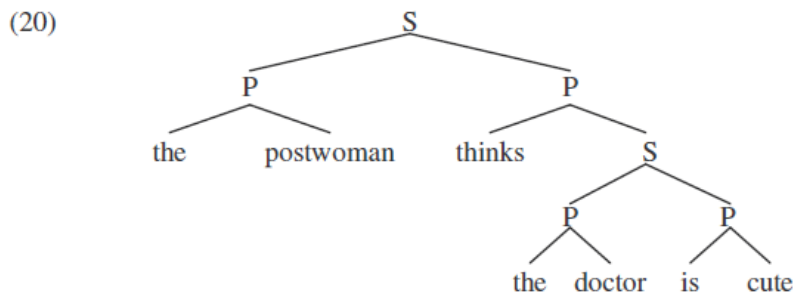
- The fact that we can substitute one phrase for another is an indication that they both are phrases → if [pestered the doctor] is a phrase, then [thinks the doctor is cute] is also a phrase
- the phrase [thinks the doctor is cute] in (17b) contains something that could stand alone as a sentence:

(18) the doctor is cute

→ Hence we have a phrase which contains a sentence:



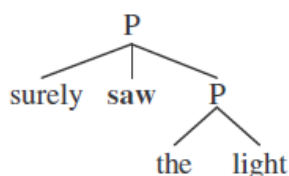
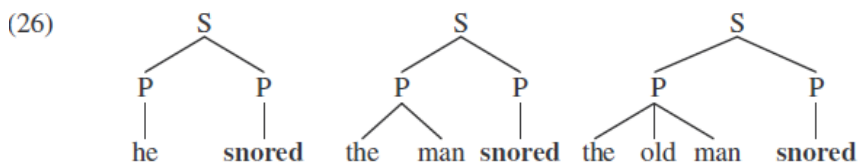
- this embedded sentence (traditionally called a **clause**) has its own internal structure – it is made up of phrases:



- recursion in structure: sentences can contain phrases which themselves contain sentences, then these sentences can contain phrases which contain sentences – and so on, indefinitely

1.4 Structural positions

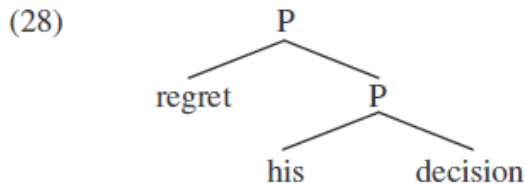
- grammatical positions (the position of the verb, the position of the subject, of the direct object and of the indirect object) cannot be defined in terms of linear order – the verb might be the 2nd, the 3rd or the nth element but still occupies the same structural position -- there is a unique structural position that verbs alone can occupy:



→ the verb always comes directly underneath S, precedes its phrasal complements and may follow adverbial modifiers

1.5 Structural terminology

- **constituents:** the elements that compose a larger part of the structure
 - **immediate constituents:** the constituents that directly make up a part of structure
- in (28), the verb 'regret' and the lower P are the immediate constituents of the upper P; 'his' and 'decision' are constituents of the upper P, but not its immediate constituents:



- a **tree diagram**
- **nodes:** the elements that make up the tree, the words and phrases etc.
- **branches:** the lines that join the nodes
- a node which has immediate constituents: the **mother** of those constituents
- and the immediate constituents are its **daughters**
- **sisters:** two nodes which have the same mother
- **brackets:** an alternative to tree diagrams:

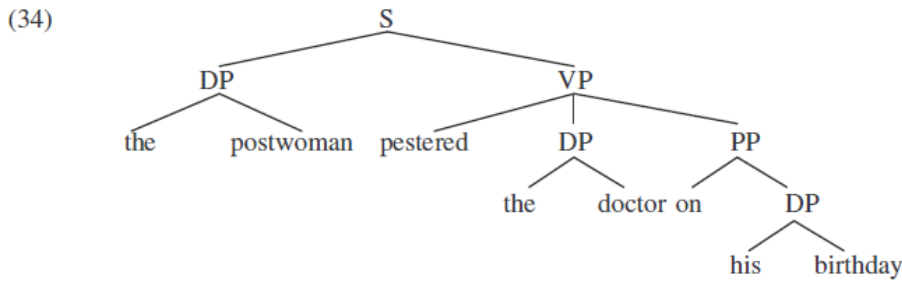
(29) [[the postwoman] [pestered [the doctor] [on [his birthday]]]]

- nodes have **labels:**

(31) [s [p the postwoman] [p pestered [p the doctor] [p on [p his birthday]]]]

1.6 Labels

- the identity of a phrase is determined by one of the words it contains → the **head** of the phrase:
 - *the postwoman; a radio; his birthday:* **determiner phrases** (DP)
 - *on his birthday:* **preposition phrase** (PP)
 phrases associated with every kind of word category:
 - verb (VPs): *pestered the doctor*
 - adjectives (APs): *keen on karate*
 - noun phrases (NP): *doctor*
 - inflectional phrases (IPs): *can dance; have moved*
 - complementiser phrases (CPs) -- sentences: *that I'm not interested in this*
 - degree adverb phrases (DegPs): *so boring; too abstract*
- different kinds of phrases have different positions and hence different distributions:



1.7 Rules

From the structure in (34) it is possible to formulate the following rules:

- (36)
- $S \rightarrow DP VP$
 - $VP \rightarrow V DP PP$
 - $PP \rightarrow P DP$
 - $DP \rightarrow D N$

→ **rewrite rules:** how to draw a tree by ‘rewriting’ the symbol on the left of the arrow for the symbols on the right

2 Grammatical Functions

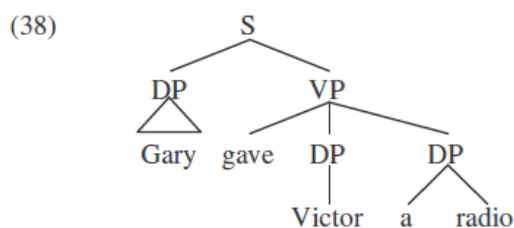
2.1 The subject

- Subject: an argument of the verb which appears to its left. The basic word order of English has one and only one argument of the verb to its left and all the others to its right:

- (37)
- a. Garry gave Victor a radio
 - b. *gave Garry Victor a radio
 - c. *Victor Gary gave a radio
 - d. *a radio Victor Gary gave

What is the term for those arguments which follow the verb?

- The subject also differs from a structural point of view from the other arguments: it is an **immediate constituent** of the sentence, whereas **all other arguments are inside the verb phrase**:



Note:

A triangle is used in a tree diagram when we do not want to represent the details of the internal structure of the phrase.

- **Agreement:** a relationship that holds **between the subject and the finite verb**:
 - ‘-s’ = inflection: it shows **tense** + the **person** and **number** of the subject (3rd person singular) (39)
 - see also the agreement of the verb *be* (*are, is, was, were*)

- (39)
- a. I/you eat breakfast at 6.30
 - c. he/she/Ernie **eats** breakfast at 9.15

- **Case:** the subject of a finite clause is in the **nominative** case (43a) (morphologically apparent **only on pronouns in English**); in all other positions English pronouns have the accusative form (43b-c):

- (43) a. I/he/she/we/they will consider the problem
 b. Robert recognised me/him/her/us/them
 c. Lester never listens to me/him/her/us/them

Does Hungarian, German, French/Italian/Spanish mark the nominative and the accusative case on **nouns**?

- The subject of a finite clause is always present in English, cf. *it* in (43-44):

- (43) **It's** raining
 (43') *Raining

- (44) **It** seems [that Roger ran away]

→ *seem* has just one argument: the clause [*that Roger ran away*] – the **complement**

→ ! from a semantic point of view there is **no subject argument** in (43-44); yet there is a semantically vacuous subject: *it* → **expletive/pleonastic** subject. **Expletive subjects are not arguments**, as they are not distributed a theta-role!

- Languages may differ whether they require an expletive subject or not

Does Hungarian, French, Italian/Spanish have expletive subjects?

- not only DP-s (determiner phrases) may be subjects:

- (57) a [PP down there] would be a good place to hide
 b [S that I don't know the answer] should not be surprising
 c [AP ill] was how I was feeling at the time
 d [VP run away] is what I advise you to do

Homework:

- 1) p. 53, Ex. 4, a) – j)

N stands for nouns

V for verbs

D for determiners

P for prepositions

Adv for adverbs

Neg for negators

C for complementisers

- 2) p. 85 Ex. 1