

Syntax Seminar (BBN-ANG-252): Handout 2

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This is a summary of BESE: Ch. 2.1.5 and 2.3.

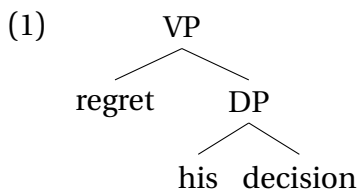
1 Week 1: recap

- Sentences are built with the help of rules.
 - The sentence is organised in a hierarchical structure.
 - Words are organized into phrases: phrases have a specific syntactic distribution.
 - The head of the phrase determines its identity:
- ↪ verb phrases (VPs), adjectival phrases (APs), preposition phrases (PPs), inflectional phrases (IPs), determiner phrases (DPs), degree adverb phrases (DegPs), and complementizer phrases (CPs)

2 More on constituents

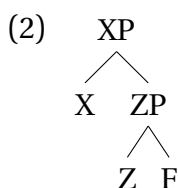
- “The elements that make up a larger part of the structure are called its **constituents** and the constituents that directly make up a part of structure are called its **immediate constituents.**” (BESE: p. 65)

In (1), the verb and its complement, the DP, are immediate constituents. Everything inside the DP is a constituent of the whole phrase, though not an immediate constituent.



- (1) is a **tree** diagram: The elements that make up the tree (words and phrases, etc.) are called **nodes** and the lines that join the nodes are **branches**.
- A node which has immediate constituents is called the **mother** of those constituents and the constituents are its **daughters**. Two nodes which have the same mother are **sisters**.

↪ Identify the mothers, daughters and sisters in (2). Identify the projecting heads.



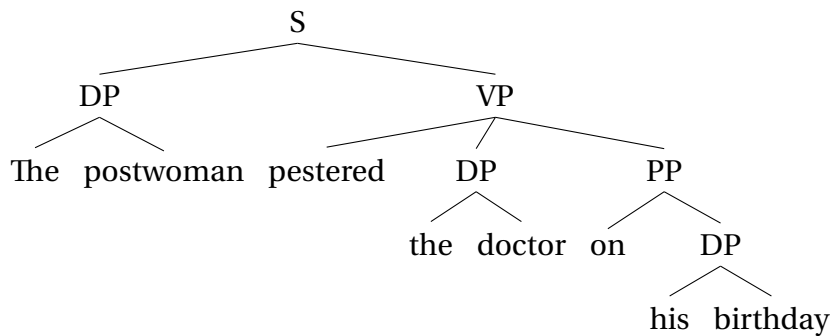
- (1) can also be represented as a bracketed structure: each constituent is surrounded by square brackets; the label is placed on the open bracket of the constituent.

(3) $[_{VP} \text{ regret } [_{DP} \text{ his decision }]]$

- Last week we discussed the sentence in (4). Its tree diagram is as in (5).

(4) $[_S [_{DP} \text{ The postwoman }] [_{VP} \text{ pestered } [_{DP} \text{ the doctor }] [_{PP} \text{ on } [_{DP} \text{ his birthday }]]]]]$

(5)



↪ Let's try to draw a tree for (6).

(6) $[_S [_{DP} \text{ The postwoman }] [_{VP} \text{ thinks } [_{CP} [_{DP} \text{ the doctor }] [_{VP} \text{ is } [_{AP} \text{ cute }]]]]]]]$

Homework: Draw the trees for (7).

- (7) a. $[_S [_{DP} \text{ the postman }] [_{VP} \text{ lost } [_{DP} \text{ his key }] [_{DP} \text{ yesterday }]]]$
 b. $[_S [_{DP} \text{ the student }] [_S [_{DP} \text{ who }] [_{VP} \text{ has just passed } [_{DP} \text{ the exam }]]]]] [_{VP} \text{ is } [_{AP} \text{ very happy }]]]]$

3 Constituency tests

- We identify the constituents of a sentence with the help of a number of tests.
- **Substitution (/replacement):** “the distribution of an element shows us that it has a certain status in the sentence and all elements which have the same distribution will have the same status.” (BESE: p. 75)

Consider (8): *the bull* can be replaced by *it* and *worried the china-shop owner* can be replaced by *charged*.

- (8) a. The bull worried the china-shop owner.
 b. It charged.

the bull is a DP → *it* is a DP, too

worried the china-shop owner is a VP → *charged* is a VP, too

- Pronominal replacement (Note [E.G.]: these elements are often referred to as ‘replacives’ or ‘pro-forms’)

- (9) a. The bishop hid his gun and *he* jumped into the getaway car. → replaces the DP
b. This robbery of a bank was more successful than that *one*. → replaces the NP
c. The bishop hid his gun and the verger *did so* too. → replaces the VP
d. The bishop was guilty and *so* was the verger. → replaces the AP

NB: (9d) is restricted to predicative APs, cf. **the guilty bishop and the so verger*
CPs can be replaced by either *it* or *so*:

- (10) a. They said the bishop robbed the bank, but I don’t believe *it*.
b. They said the bishop is dangerous, but I don’t think *so*.

Q: How can you substitute PPs?

- **Movement (/displacement)**: the sentence in (11b) is a variant of (11a) where the constituent *the bishop* has undergone fronting (topic movement).

- (11) a. The policeman searched the bishop.
b. The bishop, the policeman searched __.

- Consider also (12) where the VP undergoes similar movement.

(12) I thought the policeman would search the bishop, and [search the bishop], he did __.

- Other types of movement: *wh*-movement (the constituent is replaced by a *wh*-expression)

(13) Whom did the policeman search __?

- Recall the ambiguous sentences from last week:

- (14) a. Peter saw [the boy [with the binoculars]].
the boy had the binoculars
b. Peter [saw [the boy] [with the binoculars]].
Peter had the binoculars

The bracketing of (14a), i.e., the PP forming a single constituent with the DP, is further confirmed by the movement test:

(15) The boy with the binoculars, Peter saw __.

Note: (15) is no longer ambiguous. This is because the moved element must be interpreted as a single constituent and not as two separate constituents that have been moved together.

On the other hand, when the PP and *the boy* do not form a constituent, as in (14b), we can front only the DP:

(16) The boy, Peter saw __ with the binoculars.

- **Coordination:** works between constituents of the same type – and they also must have the same function

- (17) a. [these boys] and [those girls]
 b. [have sung] and [are now dancing]
 c. *the [boys and danced] have [sung and girls]

- **Clefting** (not discussed in the textbook):

It-cleft: It is X phrase that/*wh*-expression ... X here must be a constituent.

- (18) [My cat] likes fish. → It is [my cat] that likes fish.

Specificational pseudoclefts: *Wh*-expression ... is X phrase

- (19) My cat will [play in the garden]. → What my cat will do is [play in the garden].

- Single-word phrases

(20) VP
 |
 V
 |
 smiled

(21) DP
 |
 D
 |
 that

(22) PP
 |
 P
 |
 there

4 Exercises

- Apply the constituency tests to the italicized elements in (23) and (24):

(23) I messaged *the professor of linguistics*.

- Movement/displacement:
- Substitution/replacement with a personal pronoun:
- Cleft:

(24) I bought *the book* of poems.

- Movement/displacement:
- Substitution/replacement with a personal pronoun:
- Cleft:

Q: Based on the tests, what can we conclude about the italicized elements in (23) and (24)?

- Which constituent test has been applied in (25)? And what does the result tell us about the italicized element?

(25) Karen wanted to stay home today and *stay home* she did.

Homework:

- What pro-forms can replace the DPs and PPs in (26)?

(26) The bishop that just left was hiding a gun under his mitre.

- Explain why the sentences in (27) are ungrammatical. (Hint: It might be helpful to construct the grammatical variants of these examples in order to determine what causes the ungrammaticality.)

- (27) a. *The student, I haven't seen of physics lately.
b. *Mike invited the woman with long hair, Jamie invited the her with short hair.
c. *Yesterday I met Paul and with Peter.
d. *Whose did you see favourite film?
e. *She can paint with her mouth and with pleasure.
f. A: Where have you been? B: *The park.
g. *It is park that I saw Mary in the.

- Optional: Watch these videos by Professor Caroline Heycock on the substitution and movement tests:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dNzzEJc3rc&list=PLNRhI4Cc_QmvBzEBJFi0UfmMR4ew9TFw0&index=4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWCUC4bpaYs&list=PLNRhI4Cc_QmvBzEBJFi0UfmMR4ew9TFw0&index=5