The structure of sentences

• Syntax - the study of sentence structure
  – sentences constructed according to a system of rules summarised in a grammar - hence grammatical v. ungrammatical
  – the largest construction to which the rules of grammar apply
  – consists of one clause (simple sentence) or more than one clause (multiple sentence)

• types of multiple sentences
  – compound sentences - clauses are linked by coordinating conjunctions - and, but, or; each clause can stand on its own as a sentence - independent clause or main clause
  – complex sentences - clauses linked by subordinating conjunctions e.g. because, when, since; one clause (subordinate) dependent on the other (main clause); subordinate clause cannot stand on its own

Clause elements

• Core clause elements - subject and predicate
  – (S) subject: identifies theme or topic of clause
  – (V) verb: obligatory clause element; determines other elements in the clause e.g. object
  – (O) object: identify who is directly affected by action of verb (O1) & recipient of action (O2)
  – (C) complement: give further information about other clause elements (either Subject - S or Object - O1)
  – (A) adverbial: adds extra information about situation, time of action, location or manner

Syntactic categorization

• subject
  • typically an NP; can be pronoun or subordinate clause e.g. what he said was funny, it was funny
  • occurs before verb in declarative clauses; after operator in interrogative clauses (yes-no questions)
  • determines number and person of verb in 3rd person present tense e.g. She looks fine. They look fine
  • can contain a series of coordinated NPs e.g. John and Mary are arriving tomorrow
  • some pronouns have a distinctive form as subject e.g. I saw her, she can see me

Object:

• can be NPs, pronouns or subordinate clauses e.g. She said I’d been foolish
• follows subject and verb if subject complement, and direct object if object complement
• indirect object precedes direct object but the order is reversed in clauses like she gave the pen to John
• some pronouns take distinctive form when used as objects e.g. I gave them the books
• coordinated NPs can function function as object e.g. she saw a dog, a cow and a cat - S+V+O

Categorization (ctd)

• Complement:
  • subject complement follows subject and verb; verb often a form of be or other copular verbs - they link complements to subjects e.g. she became a nurse, it sounds good
  • object complement follows direct object to which it is related e.g. She made me angry

Adverbial:

• can be AdvPs, PPs, NPs or subordinate clauses e.g. I laughed when I saw you, we walked in the garden
• occur in various positions in a clause (mainly at the end) e.g. Twice I asked him, I asked him twice

Complementation

• Obligatory v optional elements
  – O, C and A elements in a clause required for verb complementation (may be termed obligatory in this sense) Consider e.g. *Your dinner seems, *You can put the dish
  – Elements may be grammatically optional (for verbs with multiple-class membership e.g. • They are eating v They are eating lunch
  • He is teaching v He is teaching history
  • We elected her v we elected her our representative