

Open Learning  
Translation Department

Third Year  
Second Term

# Semantics & Syntax

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## GOOD MORNING EVERYONE!

I want you to download from the internet this book "An Introduction to language" by Victoria Fromkin.

As I told you, we are going to deal with syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

Last time, we talked about **phrase structure rules**, and we dealt with a number of them:

### 1. $S \rightarrow NP VP$

Any sentence contains a noun phrase and a verb phrase.

### 2. $NP \rightarrow (Det) N$

A noun phrase contains a determiner (optional) and a noun (obligatory).

The head of the noun phrase is the noun.

E.g. Sarah slept.

"Sarah" is a noun phrase with no determiner.

E.g. the doctor comes.

"the doctor" is a noun phrase with determiner.

**Note:** the parentheses with Det mean that it is optional.

### 3. $VP \rightarrow V$

A verb phrase contains a verb (obligatory).

The head of the verb phrase is the verb.

E.g. Ali left.

"left" here is a verb phrase.

### 4. $VP \rightarrow V NP$

A verb phrase contains a verb and a noun phrase.

E.g. Sarah walked the dog.

"walked" is the verb, and "the dog" is the noun phrase.

### 5. $VP \rightarrow V PP$

A verb phrase contains a verb and a prepositional phrase.

E.g. Sarah walked in the garden.

“in the garden” is a prepositional phrase included within a verb phrase.

## 6. PP → P NP

A prepositional phrase contains a preposition and a noun phrase.

The head of the prepositional phrase is the preposition.

So, we have six phrase structure rules until now.

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Today, we are going to analyze different sentences and rules.

### ✎ John went on a trip.

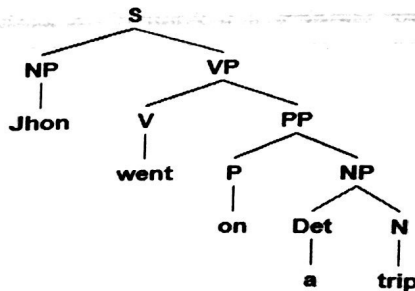
-This sentence contains a noun phrase “John” and a verb phrase “went on a trip.” (Rule N. 1)

-The noun phrase contains a noun “John.” (Rule N. 2)

-The verb phrase contains a verb “went” and a prepositional phrase “on a trip.” (Rule N. 5)

-The prepositional phrase contains a preposition “on” and a noun phrase “a trip” (Rule N. 6)

-The noun phrase consists of a determiner “a” and a noun “trip.” (Rule N. 2)



### ✎ Some students are studying for travelling.

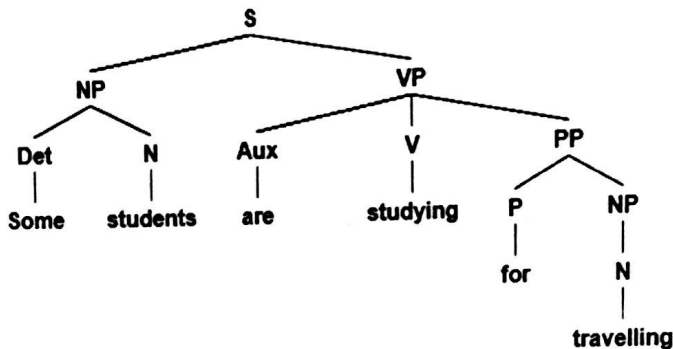
-This sentence contains a noun phrase "Some students" and a verb phrase "are studying for travelling." (Rule N. 1)

-The noun phrase contains a determiner "some" and a noun "students." (Rule N. 2)

-The verb phrase contains an auxiliary "are," a verb (head) "studying" and a prepositional phrase "for travelling." (Rule N. 5)

-The prepositional phrase contains a preposition (head) "for" and a noun "travelling." (Rule N. 6)

-The noun phrase contains a noun "travelling." (Rule N. 2)



**Student:** what if we have "he" in a sentence?

**Professor:** we consider it a noun phrase, even if it is a pronoun.

**The professor said that students passed the exam.**

-This sentence consists of a noun phrase "The professor" and a verb phrase "said that students passed the exam." (Rule N. 1)

We call the sentence "that students passed the exam" a **complementiser phrase** (CP), and we call "that" a **complementiser** (C). So, we have a new rule:

7. VP → V CP

-The verb phrase consists of a verb "said" and a complementiser phrase sentence "that students passed the exam." (Rule N. 7)

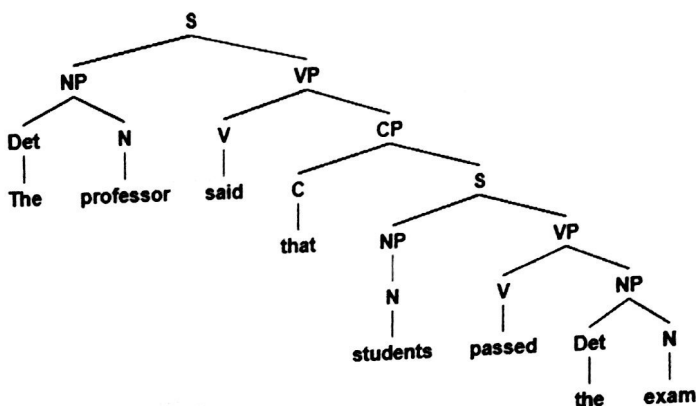
-The complementiser phrase consists of a complementiser "that" and a sentence "students passed the exam".

This is a new rule:

### 8. CP → C S

-The sentence consists of a noun phrase "students" and a verb phrase "passed the exam." (Rule N. 1)

-The verb phrase consists of a verb "passed" and a noun phrase "the exam." (Rule N. 4)



Complementisers are **that, whether, if**.

**Note:** "that" can come as a determiner.

E.g. that book.

~~Q~~ **I don't know whether I should talk about it.**

-This sentence consists of a noun phrase "I" and a verb phrase "don't know whether I should talk about." (Rule N. 1)

-The verb phrase consists of a verb "don't know" and a complementiser phrase "whether I should talk about it." (Rule N. 7)

The verb has three constituents: an auxiliary, “not” and the main verb.

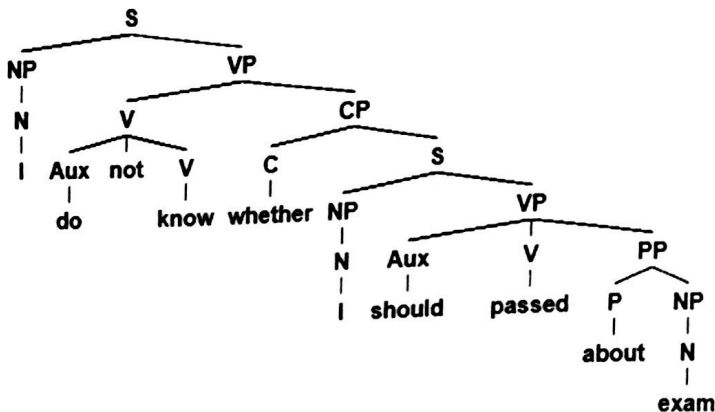
-The complementiser phrase consists of a complementiser “whether” and a sentence “I should talk about it.” (Rule N. 8)

-The sentence consists of a noun phrase “I” and a verb phrase “should talk about it.” (Rule N. 1)

-The verb phrase consists of an auxiliary ‘should,’ a verb “talk” and a prepositional phrase “about it.” (Rule N. 5)

-The prepositional phrase consists of a preposition “about” and a noun phrase “it.” (Rule N. 6)

-The noun phrase consists of a noun “it.” (Rule N. 2)



Note: “not” is just a negation form. It doesn’t have a category.

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In syntax, we have a rule called recursive rule. By using it, we reapply rules to generate a new set of sentences.

☞ **The girl walked down the street with a gun toward a bank.**

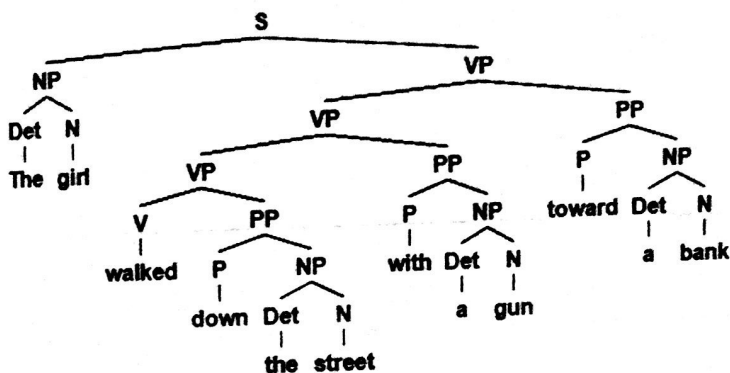
-This sentence consists of a noun phrase “The girl” and a verb phrase “walked down the street with a gun toward a bank.” (Rule N. 1)

The verb phrase follows rule N. 5:  $VP \rightarrow V PP$ , but it has a sequence of three prepositional phrases. So, we should have three verb phrases. With each prepositional phrase, we have a verb phrase.

How do we do that?

We use the **recursive rule** to reapply rule N. 5 and generate new sentences:

1. The girl walked down the street.
2. The girl walked with a gun.
3. The girl walked toward a bank.



As you can see, by using the recursive rule, we could apply rule N. 5 three times to have three verb phrases with three prepositional phrases.

**Student:** do we consider the recursive rule a new phrase structure rule?

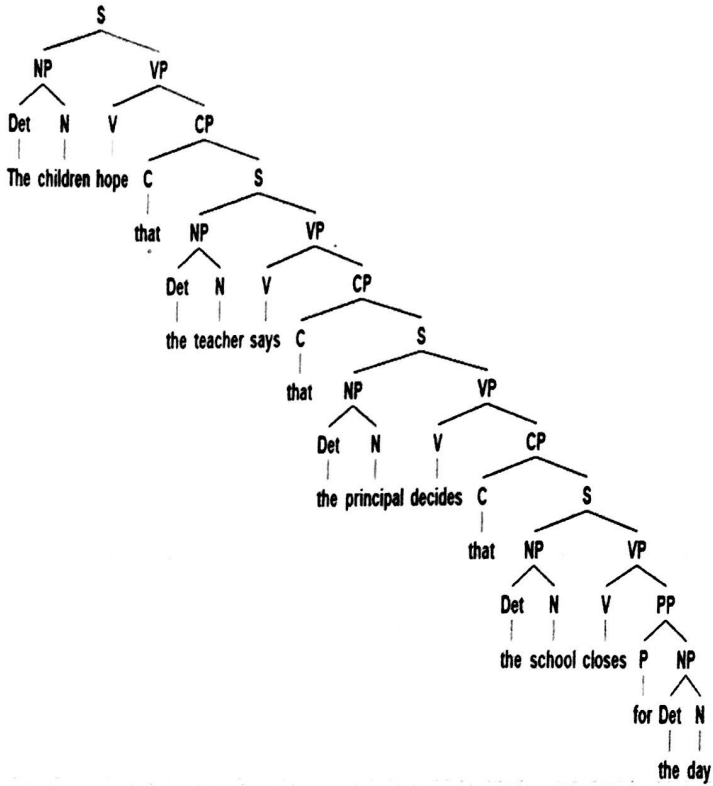
**Professor:** no, we just apply it on the rules.

**Student:** is the recursive rule only used for verb phrases?

**Professor:** no, it is also for noun phrases and adjective phrases.

☒ The Children hope that the teacher says that the principal decides that the school closes for the day.

Here, we have three complementiser phrases. So, we need to reapply rule N. 8 recursively.



*That is all for today  
See you next week*

