

Open Learning

Translation Department

Third Year

Second Term

# Semantics & Syntax

Mrs. Rana Al-Dakhel



**ANWAR**  
مؤسسة الأنوار التعليمية

Let's study!  
English

## GOOD MORNING EVERYONE!

Let us write the phrase structure rules that we took:

1.  $S \rightarrow NP VP$
2.  $NP \rightarrow Det N'$  (The new version)
3.  $NP \rightarrow NP PP$
4.  $NP \rightarrow Adj NP$
5.  $NP \rightarrow NP's N'$
6.  $N' \rightarrow Adj N'$
7.  $N' \rightarrow N$
8.  $VP \rightarrow V$
9.  $VP \rightarrow V NP$
10.  $VP \rightarrow V PP$
11.  $VP \rightarrow V CP$
12.  $CP \rightarrow C S$
13.  $PP \rightarrow P NP$
14.  $NP \rightarrow N$

\*They are not written in the same order you studied.

### Note:

$NP's \rightarrow Det N'$

$NP's \rightarrow NP PP$

In the previous lecture, these two rules were written as rules 13 and 14, but Mrs. Rana said that these two are the same as rules 2 and 3 but with 's'. So, they are Not considered new rules.

### **What is the function of phrase structure rules?**

We said that we use the phrase structure rules to identify the categories of each sentence and to know the relationship between its elements or constituents.

## Heads and complements

In each noun phrase or verb phrase, we have a head and a complement. The function of complements is to modify the heads and to add extra information about them.

### ☞ An agreement over Jilly beans

This is a noun phrase.

*agreement*: head.

*over Jilly beans*: the complement of the head.

What is the kind of this complement?

It is a **noun complement** because the head is a noun.

What is the kind of this noun complement?

It is a prepositional phrase.

### ☞ His belief that justice will prevail

This is also a noun phrase.

*belief*: head.

*that justice will prevail*: complement.

What is the kind of this complement?

It is a **noun complement**.

What is the kind of this noun complement?

It is a complementiser phrase.

\*Be careful not to get confused between complementiser phrase and complement.

### ☞ Happy to be here

This is an adjective phrase.

*Happy*: head.

*to be here*: complement.

What is the kind of this complement?

It is an **adjective complement** because the head is an adjective.

What is the kind of this adjective complement?

It is an infinitive phrase.

### ✎ About the war in Iraq

They are talking here about “the war in Iraq.” We are just focusing on this phrase. “About” here is just a pre-modifier.

“the war” is a noun phrase.

*war*: head.

*in Iraq*: complement.

It is a **noun complement**, and this noun complement is a prepositional phrase.

Note: when we analyze a sentence syntactically, we say that “About” is the head of the prepositional phrase, but here it is just considered as something extra because here we are **ONLY** talking about the head (the main idea) and the complement (extra information about the head) in this particular phrase; we are not talking about syntactic analysis and phrase structure rules.

### ✎ Wrote a long story to his sister

This is a verb phrase.

*Wrote*: head.

*a long story to his sister*: complement.

It is a **verb complement** because the head is a verb, and this verb complement includes two phrases:

*a long story*: noun phrase.

*to his sister*: prepositional phrase.

### ✎ Tell John that his mother is coming

This is a verb phrase.

*Tell*: head.

*John that his mother is coming*: complement.

It is a **verb complement**, and this verb complement includes two phrases:

*John*: noun phrase.

*that his mother is coming*: complementiser phrase.

## Selection

For example, if I have the verb *wrote*, how am I going to know what to have after it? I can know from the property of the verb i.e. is it transitive or is it intransitive?

The verb *wrote* is **transitive**; therefore, we need an object.

So, the property of the head or the verb determines what comes after.

If I say, for example, the verb *slept*, I know from the property of this verb that there is no complement after it.

E.g. *I slept.*

- **Give** ⇒ transitive verb

It takes two objects: one is direct and the other is indirect.

Talking about syntax, we can have after this verb **two noun phrases** or a **noun phrase** and a **prepositional phrase**.

E.g. *the teacher gave the students the exam papers.* (NP NP)

E.g. *the teacher gave the exam papers to the students.* (NP PP)

- **Think** ⇒ transitive verb

What kind of modifiers do we have?

We have either a **complementiser phrase** or a **prepositional phrase**.

E.g. *John thinks that it is easy.* (CP)

E.g. *John thinks about his homework.* (PP)

In terms of syntax, we call this C-Selection (categorical selection) or we can say subcategorization.

- **Felt** ⇒ transitive verb

What are the categories after the verb *felt*?

We have an **adjective**.

E.g. *I felt tired*.

Also, I can include a **complementiser phrase** after it.

E.g. *I felt that I am tired*.

Let's take an example other than verbs:

- **Tired** ⇒ adjective

For C-Selection, the adjective *tired* selects a **prepositional phrase**.

E.g. *I am tired of this lecture*.

✗ **The rock murdered the man**

This sentence is grammatically and syntactically correct; it has a subject, a verb and an object. However, it is semantically wrong.

In semantics, when we say the verb *murder*, you will think in your mind about humans. The subject is a human, and the object is also a human. This is called S-Selection (semantic selection).

So, we say that this sentence violates S-Selection.

When we analyze any sentence, we should take into consideration both C-Selection and S-Selection.

✗ **The tree likes the boy**

This sentence also violates S-Selection because the verb *like* needs humans.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now, we will go back to something related to phrase structure rules.

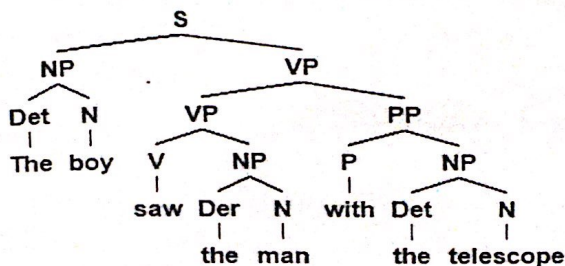
□

☒ The boy saw the man with the telescope

This sentence is **ambiguous**; it has two meanings.

The first meaning: the boy saw the man by using a telescope.

Its syntactic analysis:

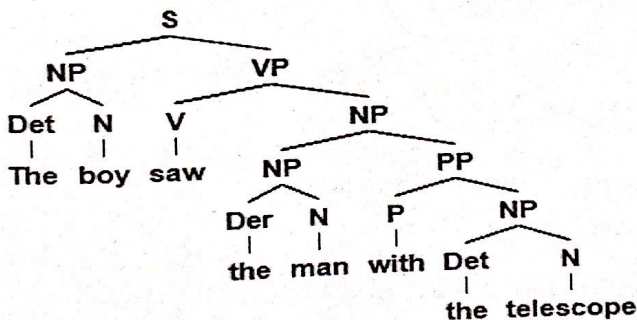


Here, the verb phrase consists of a verb phrase and a prepositional phrase.

The prepositional phrase “with the telescope” is a complement that modifies the verb “saw.” So, we notice that it is included with the verb phrase.

The second meaning: the boy saw the man who was carrying a telescope.

Its syntactic analysis:



Here, the verb phrase consists of a verb and a noun phrase.

The prepositional phrase “with the telescope” is a complement that modifies the noun phrase “the man.” So, we notice that it is included with the noun phrase.

As you can see, the syntactic analysis differs depending on the meaning of the sentence.

Next lecture, we will analyze more ambiguous sentences.

**That is all for today**  
**See you next week**

