



# **Simple sentence**

# Study materials

- Greenbaum & Quirk: *A Student's Grammar of the English Language* (1990)
- Chalker: *A Student's English Grammar Workbook* (1992)
- Gethin: *Grammar in Context* (1992)
- Yule: *Oxford Practice Grammar with answers* (2008)

# Simple sentence

- consists of a single independent clause
- the verb is always a finite verb phrase  
(e.g. *Your dinner seems ready.*)
- all sentence elements are expressed by phrases (NP, VP, AdjP, AdvP or PP)  
(e.g. *He came here after work.*)
- seven possible clause types depending on which sentence elements are compulsory. Optional adverbials can be added to sentences of any of the seven types  
(e.g. SVO(A) *He'll get a surprise soon.*)

# Seven clause types

- SV - intransitive verbs
- SVC - copular verbs
- SVA - copular verbs
- SVO - monotransitive verbs
- SVOO - ditransitive verbs
- SVOC - complex-transitive verbs
- SVOA - complex-transitive verbs

# Multiple class membership

- SV            *He's running.*
- SVC          *He's getting hungry.*
- SVA          *He got through the window.*
- SVO          *He'll get a surprise.*
- SVOO        *He got her sister a splendid present.*
- SVOC        *He got his shoes and socks wet.*
- SVOA        *He got himself into trouble.*

# Multiple class membership

- *She is preparing her family dinner.*
- SVO or SVOO
- some verbs can belong to different classes
- some verbs can have different types of complementation (e.g. the verb *get* can belong to all the types with the exception of SV)
- complementation versus complement
- grammatically acceptable (correct) sentences

# Syntactic characterization of clause elements

- **Subject** - typically NP; determines the number and person of the verb;
- **Verb** - only VP, in all clauses; determines complementation, always finite VP in simple sentence;
- **Object** - typically NP, after V; can become S of the corresponding passive structure;
- **Complement** - NP, AdjP; relates to S or O;
- **Adverbial** - can be realized by AdvP, PP, NP in the simple sentence.

## Semantic roles of clause elements

- **Subject** - agentive participant (*Peter is working.*)
- **Direct object** - affected participant, directly involved in the action, can be animate or inanimate  
(*James sold his watch yesterday.*)
- **Indirect object** - recipient, passively involved, animate  
(*We paid them the money.*)
- **Subject or object complement** - attribute, identification/characterization, current/resulting  
(*Mary is my sister./Mary is a good student.)*  
(*David seems happy./They elected David president.)*)



# Subject-verb number concord

- 3rd person number concord (S and V) (e.g. *He loves apples.*)
- grammatical x notional concord (collective nouns)  
*The audience were enjoying the whole film.*  
x *The audience was enormous.*
- coordinated S (coordination x coordinate apposition)  
*His brother and the editor of his collected papers were*  
x *was with him when he died.*
- principle of proximity (applies if conjoins differ in number)  
*Either your brakes or your eyesight is at fault.*  
*Either your eyesight or your brakes are at fault.*

# Concord

- Concord of person (verb *to be*) e.g.  
*I am here and he is there. You were my friend.*
- Subject-complement concord e.g. My child is an angel.
- Object-complement concord e.g. *I consider my children angels.*
- Co-reference - (agreement between pronoun or determiner and its antecedent) e.g. He injured himself in both legs.  
Tom hurt his foot.

# Vocatives

- **Calls** - draw attention of the person addressed
- **Addresses** - express the speaker's relationship to the person addressed
- usually NPs in separate tone units (TUs)
- not sentence elements

*(John, dinner is ready.*

impolite: You, can you help me?

abrupt: *Get me pen, somebody.*)

# Negation

- Clause negation through verb negation  
e.g. *I have not finished anything yet.*
- Words negative in form and meaning  
e.g. *no, never, none*
- Words negative in meaning, but not in form  
e.g. *seldom, scarcely, hardly, barely, little, few*
- Nonassertive items - follow clause negation  
e.g. *any, anybody, at all, ever, either, much*

# Negation

- **Scope of negation** - the stretch of language over which the negative item has a semantic influence, normally from the negative item itself to the end of the clause
- *She definitely didn't speak to him.* = 'It's definite that she didn't.'
- *She didn't definitely speak to him.* = 'It is not definite that she did.'
- **Focus of negation** - in speech signalled by the placement of nuclear stress

# Negation

- **Clausal negation** – negates the whole clause  
*I have never seen him.*
- when fronted for emphasis, **inversion**:  
*Never have I seen him.*
- **Local negation** – negates a word or phrase, without making the clause negative  
*I saw David not long ago/not for the first time.*
- when fronted for emphasis, **no inversion**:  
*Not long ago/Not for the first time I saw David.*

# Negation of modal auxiliaries

- **Auxiliary negation**

e.g. *You may not smoke in here.* (You are not allowed to smoke here.)

*You needn't pay that fine.* (You are not obliged to pay that fine.)

- **Main verb negation**

e.g. *You may not like the party.* (It is possible that you do not like the party.)

*You mustn't keep us waiting.* (It is essential that you don't keep us waiting.)