**Topic 1: The Simple Sentence - Handout**

According to the type and number of obligatory clause elements (sentence constituents) **seven clause types** can be distinguished:

**SV, SVO, SVC, SVA, SVOO, SVOC and SVOA**

Any number of optional clause elements can be added without changing the clause type: *I’m speaking. I’m speaking now*. (SV)

*He is at home. He is probably at home now*. (SVA)

*They will be late. Surely they will be late again tonight*. (SVA)

Clause types are closely connected with verb classes:

**verb classes clause types examples**

**intransitive verbs** SV *He is working*.

**transitive verbs** SVO (monotransitive) *He’ll get a present.*

SVOO (ditransitive) *He’ll get us some tickets.*

SVOC (complex-transitive) *He got his hat wet.*

SVOA (complex-transitive) *He got his friends into trouble*.

**copular verbs** SVC *It’s getting dark.*

SVA *He got through the window*.

**multiple class membership** - e.g. the verb *to get* can belong to different classes (see above)

Sometimes different interpretations are possible:

*She is preparing her family dinner.* (SVO or SVOO)

**complementation** of the verb - comprises any clause/sentence element that is needed in order to form a **grammatically acceptable sentence** (O, C, and A).

*The milk tastes*. (incomplete structure) x *The milk tastes sour*. (SVC)

**syntactic characterization of clause elements**

**verb -** realized by VP, normally present in all clauses, determines what other elements must occur, in simple sentence always finite verb phrase;

**subject -** typically NP, determines the number and person of the verb, subjective form of pronouns;

**object -** typically NP, normally follows S and V, if two objects, then usually the indirect one precedes the direct one, O can become S of the corresponding passive structure, objective form of pronouns;

**complement -** typically NP or AdjP, subject complement (relates to the S) x object complement (relates to the O), does not have a corresponding passive subject:

**adverbial -** can be realized by AdvP, PP, NP or clause

e.g. *I’m coming tonight/in the evening/this afternoon/when I finish my work*.

can occur in more than one position, frequently optional except in SVA and SVOA

Note on **middle verbs:**

They seem transitive but normally occur only in the active voice:

e.g. *They have two sons. It doesn’t fit you.*

*Three times seven equals twenty-one*.

**semantic roles of clause elements**

Some examples of the most frequent semantic roles follow:

**subject**: agentive participant (***I****’m preparing breakfast*.)

**direct object**: affected participant - animate or inanimate - directly involved in the action expressed by the verb (*We’ve sold* ***our car***.)

**indirect object**: recipient participant - animate - passively involved

(*We’ve bought* ***them*** *a car*.)

**subject or object complement**:

attribute - identification or characterization

*Peter is my brother. Peter is a student.*

*They named their son Peter. They considered Peter a good student.*

attribute - current or resulting:

*He is happy. The milk turned sour.*

*We consider him happy. The heat turned the milk sour.*

**Subject - verb concord**

- most important is **concord of 3rd person number** between S and V

- clauses, PPs, adverbs functioning as subject count as singular for **number concord**

e.g. *Smoking is dangerous. In the evening is best for him*.

Note: A S which is not clearly semantically plural requires a singular verb.

Exceptions: singular nouns ending with -s (e.g. *measles, mathematics, physics*) and

plural nouns lacking inflection (e.g. *cattle, people, vermin, clergy*)

**grammatical concord** x **notional concord** (agreement according to the idea of number rather than the presence of the grammatical marker) - **collective nouns**

*The audience were enjoying the whole match*. (collection of individuals)

*The audience was enormous*. (a single undivided body)

**coordinated subject** When using *and*, it is necessary to distinguish between coordination and coordinate apposition:

e.g*. His brother and the editor of his papers was/were with him when he died*.

(*was* - brother and editor have the same reference; *were* - two different people)

**either … or, neither … nor**:

When conjoins differ in number, the **principle of** **proximity** is applied, i.e. the number of the second conjoin determines the number of the verb, as in:

*Either your brakes or your eyesight is at fault.*

*Either your eyesight or your brakes are at fault.*

**concord of person**: *I am/He is your friend. I was/He was/You were a good student*.

**subject-complement and object-complement concord**

*My son is a student. x My sons are students.*

*I consider my son a good student. x I consider my sons good students.*

**pronouns and determiner reference**

The agreement between a pronoun or a determiner and its antecedent is **coreference** rather than grammatical concord: e.g. *He injured himself. He/John hurt his hand*.

The pronoun *they* is used as a 3rd person singular pronoun that is neutral between masculine and feminine (*everyone, everybody, someone, somebody, anyone, anybody*, *no one, nobody*) - e.g. *Every student has to pass their test today*.

**vocatives** are either **calls,** drawing attention of the person(s) addressed, or **addresses**, expressing the speaker’s relationship or attitude to the person(s) addressed: usually NPs in any clause position (I,M,E), separate tone unit, intonation - usually fall-rise

Vocatives can be: names, standard appellatives, terms for family relationships, titles of respect, markers of status, personal pronouns, nominal clauses, etc.

**negation - clause negation** (*not* between the operator and the predication: *They are not here*.)  **words negative in form and meaning** (e.g. *That was no accident*.)

**words negative in meaning but not in form** (e.g. *seldom, rarely, scarcely, barely, hardly, little*, few (e.g. *I seldom get any sleep, either*.)

**nonassertive items** - clause negation is frequently followed by one or more nonassert. items (determiners, pronouns, adverbs), e.g. *He doesn’t ever visit us. He is not at school any longer. I don’t like her much.*

**scope of negation** - stretch of language over which the negative item has a semantic influence; normally extends from the negative item itself to the end of the clause;

**focus of negation** (the placement of nuclear stress), **local negation** (e.g. *not long ago*), **negation of modal auxiliaries** (auxiliary negation x main verb negation)