

# THE ENGLISH SENTENCE

(Materials based on: Huddleston, R. & Pullum, G.K. (Eds.), 2002. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. London: CUP **and** Greenbaum, S., & Quirk, R. 1990. *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*. Hong Kong: Longman)

# Sentence vs. Clause: Grammatical differences

- a) *I found her an interesting partner.*
- b) *Winter had come and snow lay thick on the ground.*
- c) *Although I admire her reasoning, I reject her conclusions.*

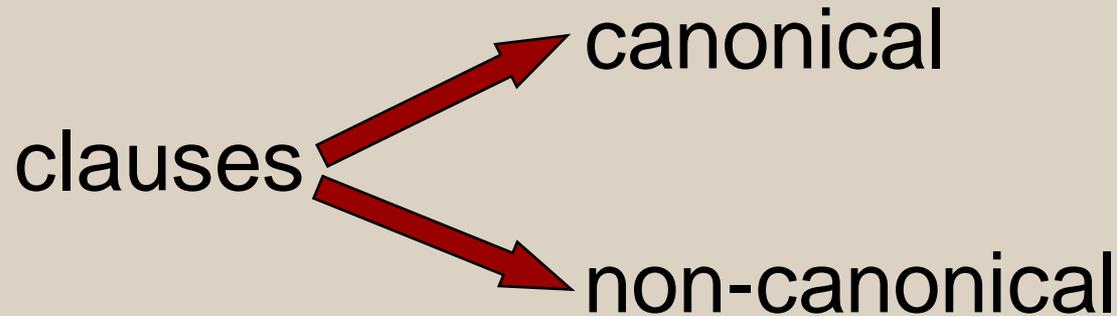
**Clause:** clauses are part of a sentence.

**Sentence:** sentences are a combination of clauses.

# Clause and Sentence typology

- Hierarchical structure of a sentence:  
***Word > Phrase > Clause > Sentence***
- **Types of clauses:**
  - Independent
  - subordinate
- **Types of sentences:**
  - Simple
  - Compound
  - Complex

# Clause and Sentence typology



- Structure of canonical clauses:  
[<sub>Clause</sub>[Subject (NP)] [Predicate (VP)]]

# Canonical vs. non-Canonical clauses

## 1. Polarity

### positive vs. negative

(1) He is very rich. (CANONICAL)

(2) He isn't very rich. (NON-CANONICAL)

## 2. Clause type

### declarative vs. interrogative & imperative

(1) She enjoyed the film. (CANONICAL)

(2) Did she enjoy the film? (NON-CANONICAL)

(3) Enjoy the film. (NON-CANONICAL)

# Canonical vs. non-Canonical clauses

## 3. Subordination

### main vs. subordinate & relative clauses

- (1) She studies grammar (CANONICAL)
- (2) I think [that she studies grammar] (NON-CANONICAL)
- (3) She is the girl [who studies grammar] (NON-CANONICAL)

### Non-finite clauses

- (4) [Studying grammar] was a great idea. (NON-CANONICAL)

# Canonical vs. non-Canonical clauses

## 4. Coordination of sentences

(1) John washed the car. (CANONICAL)

(2) Mary watched TV. (CANONICAL)

(3) John washed the car and Mary  
watched TV. (NON-CANONICAL)

# Canonical vs. non-Canonical clauses

## 5. Information packaging

(the way the information is presented)

- **Passives** (active vs. passive voice)

(1) [the dog] bit [me] (canonical)

(Subj-NP-Ag) (Obj-NP-Pat)

(2) [I] was bitten [by the dog] (non-canonical)

(Subj-NP-Pat) (Obl-PP-Ag)

# Canonical vs. non-Canonical clauses

- **Preposing**

(preposed object)

(1) John likes tennis (default)

(2) tennis John likes (preposed)

- **Extraposition**

(extraposed subject)

(1) That I overslept was unfortunate.(basic)

(2) It was unfortunate that I overslept.

# Canonical Clause Patterns Based on Complementation

## 1. Intransitive (**SV**)

(1) The ice melted.

(2) The dog died.

(3) He is eating.

## 2. Complex intransitive (**SVCs**)

(1) He seems tired.

## patterns for canonical clauses

### 3. (Mono)transitive (**SVO**)

(1) He bought a new car

### 4. Complex transitive (**SVOC<sub>o</sub>**)

(1) They held him prisoner.

### 5. Ditransitive (**SVOO**)

(1) We gave them some food

# Dividing sentences into immediate constituents: *grammatical complexity*

- *Jake was fixing the car in the middle of the street.*
- *Kate told me Joe had an accident yesterday.*

Structural (and semantic) ambiguity

# Dividing clauses/sentences into immediate constituents: *Constituency Tests*

## 1) *Sentence fragments:*

“Wh” questions (WHO, HOW, WHICH, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHOSE, WHY).

## 2) *Pronominalisation:*

Replacing a sequence of words with a single word without changing the overall structure.

## 3) *Movement:*

The movement of a sequence of words without altering the meaning of the sentence.

# Obligatory and Optional Constituents

- Analyse (a, b) into their immediate constituents:

*a) She left two years ago.*

*b) She left me two years ago.*

- Number of constituents.
- Syntactic pattern.

# Obligatory and Optional Constituents

- Now consider these sentences:
  - c) *She put the book on the table.*
  - d) \* *She put on the table.*
  - e) \* *She put the book.*
- Why are (d-e) ungrammatical?
- What conclusions can be drawn from examples (a-b) vs. (c-e)?

# Structural types of clauses

- **Finite clauses:** Those whose verb is finite.
  - *I found your purse under the sofa.*
- **Non-finite clauses:** Those whose verb is non-finite.
  - *Having finished all my homework, I went to the park with my friends.*
- **Verbless clauses:** Those which have an omitted verb, typically BE.
  - *He talked about the different patients he was treating, many of them mentally ill.*

# **Syntactic clause types & discourse function.**

- ***Declarative clauses***
- ***Interrogative clauses***
- ***Imperative clauses***
- ***Exclamative clauses***

# Declarative clauses

- SV structure
- Situational ellipsis: declarative clauses without explicit subject, though it can be inferred from the context.
- VS structure: The fronting of some complements of the the predicate provoke a S-V inversion.
  - *Up went the balloon.*

# Interrogative sentences

- **Closed Interrogative Clauses** (limited range of possible answers):
  - Polar interrogatives
  - Alternative interrogatives
  - Interrogative tags
- **Open Interrogative Clauses** (open range of possible answers):
  - Wh- interrogatives

# Interrogative sentences

- **Polar Interrogatives**

- They open with an auxiliary followed by the subject.
- They expect affirmation or negation
  - *Are you happy?*

- **Alternative Interrogatives**

- They open with an auxiliary followed by the subject.
- They present alternatives
  - *Is the meeting today, tomorrow, or next Monday?*

# Interrogative sentences

- **Interrogative tags**

- It consists of an auxiliary and a subject pronoun (second and final element).
- The choice of the auxiliary is given by the preceding declarative clause.
- Their main function is to elicit confirmation or agreement rather than eliciting information.
  - *We haven't done anything wrong, have we?*

- **Wh-Interrogatives**

- A wh- element is positioned initially and there is subject-auxiliary inversion.
  - *Which version did they recommend?*

# Imperative Clauses

- ***Positive Imperatives:***
  - Usually they don't have an overt grammatical subject.
  - When there is an overt subject, it may be the subject pronoun *you* or a 3rd person subject NP.
    - *You shut up!*
    - *Somebody open this door.*
    - *Parents with two children leave the room.*
  - The verb is in the plain form

# Imperative Clauses

- **1<sup>st</sup> person inclusive *let*-imperatives:**
  - Overt subject: 1st person plural.
  - Subject in the objective case just after “let”.
    - *Let’s consider the effect of such an approach.*
- **Imperative with emphatic “do”:**
  - It makes the message more persuasive or insistent.
  - “do” must appear in initial position.
  - “do” is possible if
    - there is no overt subject: *Do have some tea.*
    - “let’s” is present: *Do let’s go for a walk*

# Imperative Clauses

- ***Negative Imperatives:***
  - “don’t” / “do not” need to be added in initial position so as to negate an imperative clause.
  - Replace assertive by non-assertive items when necessary.
    - *Don’t ask me anything else.*

# Exclamative Clauses

- They have an initial phrase introduced by “*what*” or “*how*”.
  - *What a disaster you are!*
  - *How wonderfully you dress!*
- They normally follow an SV order.

# The four major communicative functions

STRUCTURAL TYPE	FUNCTIONAL TYPE	SPEECH-ACT FUNCTION	STRUCTURE	EXAMPLE
Declarative clause	Statement	Inform	SV structure	<b>It's</b> strong
Interrogative clause	Question	Elicit	VS structure	<b>Is it</b> strong?
			Wh- word, VS structure	<b>How good is she?</b>
			Auxiliary + subject pronoun	<b>Isn't it?</b>
Imperative clause	Command, request	Direct	V structure	<b>Be</b> strong!
Exclamative clause	Exclamation	Express	Wh-word, SV structure	<b>How good she is!</b>

Source: BIBER, D., JOHANSSON, S. ET AL., EDS. 1999. *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. London: Longman