CONSTRUCTIONS

CONSTRUCTIONS – the relatively general patterns that recur in any given language.

Morphemes are combined in certain ways to form words, words are combined and arranged in certain orders to form phrases, phrases are combined to form clauses/sentences.
Each language has its own rules for constructions.
In English
- e.g. (Word level) unhappy, not happyun*
- e.g. (Phrase level) My book, not book my*
  the idea of leaving, not leaving’s idea* 
- e.g. (Clause level) The company sent the inspectors to Serdang, not
  The company sent Serdang the inspectors.*

We will focus on the construction of clauses in English.

Points to remember:
1. Different constructions give different meanings.
2. Different constructions signal different linguistic acts of the speaker.
3. A clause can realise several different constructions that are related/interconnected. They form a system.
4. Constructions are labeled according to their features/properties → different types of constructions.
Different constructions give **different meanings**.

1. I like the orange one.
2. The orange one I like. (The blue one I don't like.)
3. I saw, from the third floor of the building, a man entering the compound.
4. A man entering the compound was what I saw from the third floor of the building.
5. From the third floor of the building, what I saw entering the compound was a man.

A clause can realise several different constructions that are **related/interconnected**.

1. I saw, from the third floor of the building, a man entering the compound.
2. A man entering the compound was what I saw from the third floor of the building.
3. From the third floor of the building, what I saw entering the compound was a man.
4. Did I see a man entering the compound from the third floor of the building?
A clause can realise several different constructions that are related/interconnected.

- I saw someone entering the compound from the third floor of the building.
- Whom did I see entering the compound from the third floor of the building?
- From the third floor of the building, I saw something.
- What did I see from the third floor of the building?
  - John gave some money to Gary.
  - John gave Gary some money.

Speech acts are actions performed by the speaker by virtue of making an utterance. What is being ‘done’ as opposed to what is being ‘said’.

- The monkey is in the tree. (making a statement)
- Is the monkey in the tree? (asking a question)
- Catch the monkey in the tree. (giving a command)
- Could you get me the monkey in the tree? (making a request)

Note: ‘saying’ == not speech act
Different constructions signal different linguistic acts of the speaker.

Speakers use different constructions with different functions to create texts of different kinds, e.g., conversations, lectures, poems, reports, etc.

- E.g.: Conversations
  - Hi, Harry, where are you going?
  - To the library.

Use of informal greeting ‘hi’, short answer using infinitive phrase = typical in conversations.

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E.g.: Scientific report

Agent A is added to Agent B in the environment of C. Gas bubbles are produced and the colour of the solution is observed to turn from yellow to purple.

Passive construction, simple present tense ➞ often found in scientific texts. Why?
Constructions are **labeled** according to their **features/**properties

As clauses can realise many different constructions, it is useful to be able to label these constructions.

**TYPES OF CONSTRUCTIONS**

- Active/ passive/ middle
- declarative, interrogative, imperative
- Interrogative subtype: int. yes-no/ int. wh
- Declarative subtype: preposed theme/non-preposed theme
- Oblique object/double object
- Copula / non-copula
- Copula subtypes: ascriptive, equative, locative
- Transitive/non-transitive
- Existential/ non-existential
- Negative-positive
Active/ passive/ middle constructions

**Active:** The wealthy young man bought that piano for his secret fiancee.

- The subject is the agent, the entity that carries out the action

**Passive:** That piano was bought for his secret fiancee by the wealthy young man.

- The subject is the patient, the entity that suffers the action.

The active verb ‘bought’ is changed to ‘was bought’ (auxiliary with past participle form of the main verb), and the auxiliary agrees with the subject (person, number).

The noun phrase ‘the wealthy young man’ in the passive (long passive) referring to the agent can be omitted → short passive.
**Middle constructions:**
e.g.
The book reads well.
The wool knitted up beautifully.

The verb is active, but the subject (book, wool) is not the agent of the action. The verb is basically transitive, but used intransitively in the construction. The clause has only one NP (thus direct object is impossible). Usually modified by an adverb of manner.

**Declarative, interrogative, imperative**
- **Declarative:** the structure for making an assertion/a statement.

e.g. The book is on the table.
That animal in the cage is called a tapir.
Anne slept till five o’clock in the evening.
She donated half her library to the children’s home.
When agent A is added, the solution changes colour. The book reads well.
Declarative, interrogative, imperative

- **Declarative subtype: preposed theme/non-preposed theme**
  
  E.g.
  (I don’t like oranges). I just love apples. → Apples I just love.
  (He can sing very well). He can never dance → Dance he never can.

  The direct object is moved to the front of the clause, to emphasise the contrast between the two entities being compared.

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- **Interrogative: The structure used for asking questions**
  
  E.g.
  (Int. yes-no)
  Are you a student of UPM?
  Did you forget to pay the bills?
  Do the boys play football?
  Will you be going to Malacca tomorrow?
  (Int. wh)
  Where can I find Mr Ramesh?
  Which piano did Frank buy for his fiancee?
Interrogative

Interrogative Yes-no: Begins with an auxiliary, that agrees with the subject.

Interrogative wh: Begins with a wh-word – why, which, how, when, etc

Imperative: The structure used for making requests/ giving instructions.

E.g.
(You) Come here.
(You) Fill in the blanks with the correct answer.
(You) Give the flowers to Jenny.
(Someone) phone for an ambulance.

The verb is in its base form or its bare verb stem. There is typically no subject noun phrase.
Oblique object/double object

- Oblique object: Any noun phrase that is preceded by a preposition
  E.g. of oblique object constructions
  He sent the flowers to Fiona.
  The books were donated to the children’s home.
  They delivered the parcel for Mary.
  She was bitten by a spider.
  Tammy went to Jakarta.
  He spoke about the music.

- Double object construction: A clause that contains two objects - NP₁ and NP₂

  He sent Fiona the flowers.
  I gave the children the candy.
  They baked mother a cake.
COPULA CONSTRUCTIONS

- Copula (linking verb) – subtypes: ascriptive, equative, locative.
  NP copula AP
  Fiona is very happy (copula, ascriptive)
  NP copula NP
  Fiona is the best student (copula, equative)
  NP copula PP
  Fiona is in Auchtermuchty (copula, locative)

Ascriptive – to ascribe a property to an entity
Equative - to state that one entity is identical to another entity
Locative – to state where some entity is located
PROPERTIES OF COPULA CONSTRUCTIONS

1. COPULA constructions cannot be made passive
2. The copula verb can be moved to the front of the clause to form an interrogative
3. The pronoun that is the complement of the copula is in the nominative form

E.g.
Fiona is a student. (no passive)
Is Fiona a student? (interrogative)
It was I (who rang the bell)
Lord Voldemort is he who must not be named.
**Transitive/non-transitive**

Applies to complete constructions, not just verbs
Transitive clauses require a direct object
Intransitive clauses exclude a direct object

**Active clauses** can be transitive or intransitive
E.g. Adam walks to school everyday. (InTr)
Adam takes the bus to school (Tr.)

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**Transitive/non-transitive**

- Passive and middle clauses are always intransitive.
- E.g.
  - The book reads well. (read is a transitive verb, but the middle constructions does not allow a direct object)
- The rat was eaten by the cat (the rat = subject, no direct object)
Existential/ non-existential

- Used to introduce entities or mention them for the first time in a text.
- E.g
  - There’s a rat in the kitchen.
  - There are five students in your office.
  - There was once an old woman who lived in a shoe.
  - There was a Hottentot who was not satisfied with his lottentot.

Existential/ non-existential

- Existential constructions are also copula constructions.
- Interrogative existentials:
  - Is there a rat in the kitchen?
  - What is there in the kitchen?
Negative-positive

Positive:
- Mrs Elton admired Emma. (non-copula, declarative, active, positive)
- Did Mrs Elton admire Emma? (non-copula, interrogative yes-no, positive)
- Mrs Elton was at home. (copula, declarative, positive, active)
- Open the box. (imperative, positive, non-copula)

Negative:
- Mrs Elton didn’t admire Emma.
- Didn’t Mrs Elton admire Emma?
- Mrs Elton wasn’t at home.
- Don’t open the box.
1. He bought the piano for Wendy.
   (non-copula, active, declarative, oblique object, positive)

2. Mother wrote me a letter.
   (non-copula, declarative, active, double object, positive)

3. A letter she wrote.
   (declarative, preposed theme, active, non-copula, positive)

4. Was Jenny at the party last night?
   (copula-locative, interrogative yes-no, positive)

5. Jenny was given a present by Henry.
   ( ?)

6. Who is the prime minister of Malaysia?
   ( ?)
7. Don’t call me until I call you. (?)
8. Why can’t I call you? (?)
9. When did he donate the money to the charity? (?)
10. Why was the poster removed? (?)