BBI 3212 ENGLISH SYNTAX AND MORPHOLOGY

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SYNTAX
PART 1

REFER TO TEXT BOOK “AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH SYNTAX” BY JIM MILLER
TOPICS

- Overview
- Constituent structure
- Linear order and hierarchical order
- Constituents: Phrases and clauses
- Tree Diagrams
- Ambiguity
- Syntactic categories of phrases (NP, VP, PP, etc)
- Types of clauses
- Constructions

OVERVIEW: Grammar and Syntax

- GRAMMAR - The framework of a language (the whole structure of a language)

- It includes words, formation of words, arrangement of words, relationships between words, meaning of words, the sound system of the language, etc.

- Syntax and morphology – part of the grammar of a language

- WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BOOK OF GRAMMAR USAGE AND A BOOK OF SYNTAX?
OVERVIEW: GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX

- **GRAMMAR USAGE (traditional grammar)** - prescriptive (in addition to description), focuses on common mistakes, partial towards standard and written forms, aims to ‘teach’ correct usage

- **SYNTAX** – mainly descriptive (describes how speakers of a language know and use the rules of grammar), a study of patterned relations between the components of sentences, tries to put forward concepts to describe how words combine into phrases and sentences, processes of word arrangement/order, and relationships between words

OVERVIEW: Syntax

- **Syntax** - refers to the relationship between the grammatical components of language in use. It is the nature, quality or type of relationship between the components in any given statement
OVERVIEW: SYNTAX

The study of syntax:
- Starts with identifying concepts that will explain rules that govern word order
  - Eg. my bag / bag my *
  - The bag that was torn / That was torn the bag *
- Eg. He ran / He ran towards the kitchen
  - He shot* / He shot towards the kitchen

How can the rules explaining word order be described? How do we even start to talk about the rules?

How can parts of a sentence be described?

HEADS AND MODIFIERS

- Words are grouped into phrases
- A Phrase acts as a unit
- A Phrase consists of one head and its modifiers

What is the relationship between a head and its modifiers?

The head is the word in a phrase that controls the other words (modifiers)

Concept:
- Control, Dependency relations/dependencies

The modifiers provide extra information in addition to the central information provided by the head

Concept:
- Narrowing down of meaning
Heads and Modifiers

More examples of ‘control’ by the head (Noun heads).

- *Lecturer gave a very difficult assignment
- The lecturer gave a very difficult assignment
- Jane came.
- *The Jane came.
- *Elephant is a mammal.
- The elephant is a mammal.
- *An elephants is a mammal.

Heads and Modifiers

More examples of ‘control’ by the head (Preposition heads).

- To the village
- In the house
- Along the river
- *On the brown
- *Above the pretty
- *Behind the jump
- Above the pretty picture
- *To he
- To him
- *For my
- For myself
Heads and Modifiers

Meaning relations
- The head conveys the central piece of information, while the modifiers convey extra information
  - E.g. a beautiful girl
  - on the shelf
  - Jane passed the examination
  - He drove/ He drove a Volvo

Complements and Adjuncts

Two types of modifiers

- OBLIGATORY → COMPLEMENTS
- MODIFIERS
- OPTIONAL → ADJUNCTS
Complements and Adjuncts

Complements are obligatory (required) to complete the syntax and the meaning of the phrase or clause.

THE HEAD OF THE ENTIRE CLAUSE = VERB

E.g. The man gave some money to the beggar last week.

*Gave some money to the beggar last week.

*The man gave.

1. The verb (head) in the clause requires a subject. Therefore the subject is a complement of the verb (head).
2. The verb ‘gave’ requires an object to complete the meaning of the clause.
3. It also requires an oblique object, ‘beggar’.

Complements and Adjuncts

e.g. The dog slept in the kennel in the yard.

1. ‘The dog’ = subject = obligatory = complement
2. ‘In the kennel’ = non directional phrase for verb not expressing movement = adjunct
3. ‘in the yard’ = optional = adjunct
Complements and Adjuncts

- E.g. Erin\text{\textendash}put\text{\textendash}it\text{\textendash}on\text{\textendash}the\text{\textendash}shelf.

1. ‘Erin’ = subject = obligatory = complement
2. ‘It’ = direct object = obligatory = complement
3. ‘on the shelf’ = locative prepositional phrase = required to complete the syntax = complement

Constituent structure
ARRANGEMENT OF WORDS

How do we know that words must be arranged in a certain order in a sentence and not others?

e.g. The beautiful girl / *The girl beautiful / *Beautiful girl the

e.g. The girl who is beautiful / *The beautiful who is girl

e.g. The girl who was my childhood friend is beautiful / The girl is beautiful who was my childhood friend

phrases

- Words are arranged in units called phrases and phrases are arranged into units called clauses to form sentences.
- A phrase is a group of interrelated words. They function and move as a unit in the syntax of a sentence.
- Speakers of a language know the boundaries of phrases in the language.
clauses

- A clause is made up of phrases.
- Within a clause, we can talk about the relationship between the phrases in it.

Linear order of words

- The linear order of words is important. The syntactic category of each word can be identified.

  Eg. *The beautiful girl is my friend.*

  det  adj  n  copula-v  pro  n

However, the linear order does not capture effectively what speakers of a language know.
Linear order and hierarchical order

- The beautiful girl is my friend.

How does a speaker know that the words in the sentence can be broken up into meaningful groups?

Eg. (The [beautiful girl]) (is [my friend]). √

(The beautiful) (girl is my) (friend). X

Hierarchical organisation of words in sentences

- Words are not arranged individually in a linear fashion. They are grouped into meaningful units called constituents, and these constituents are arranged in particular orders in sentences.
- As these groups of words can occur within bigger groups of words, there is hierarchical structure to their arrangement.
- This is the constituent structure of words.
- Speakers of the language know the structure; they can ‘read’ into the words, the organisation of words into phrases and so on.
- As linguists, we try to discover this knowledge that is in the heads of speakers of the language and try to represent them overtly.
Representing the structure of phrases

The beautiful girl is my friend.

Constituents
Representing the structure of phrases

*The beautiful girl is my friend.*

**NOT Constituents**

Ambiguity

- *He talked to the people in the room.*

The sentence can be interpreted in two different meanings.

What are the two possible meanings of the sentence?

The meaning changes as you group the words in different ways. ➔ the sentence has more than one possible constituent structure.
He talked to the people in the room.
Syntactic categories of phrases

- *He talked to the people in the room.*
- *He* - NP (other examples: the bag, beautiful girl)
- *talked* to the people in the room — VP
- *to the people in the room* — PP
- *in the room* — PP
- *happy* about his marks — AP
- *went* to the market — VP
TOPICS

- Overview
- Heads and modifiers
- Constituent structure
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- Constituents: Phrases and clauses
- Ambiguity

Next lecture:
- Test for phrases
- Syntactic categories of phrases (NP, VP, PP, etc)
- Types of clauses
- Tree Diagrams
- Constructions