



IIT Madras

ONLINE DEGREE

English I (Basic English)
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Lecture 45

Clause Structure

Today, we are going to talk about Clause structure, you know in nature all natural entities are built with units, some units are large, they include smaller units, and a small unit has a further a smaller unit and a smaller unit has further still smaller unit. So, we have already seen that there are in the language, the sounds are themselves made of many units, then there is syllable, there is a word, words get together in phrases, phrases get together in the clause, the clause is the higher-level unit. Today, we will talk about kinds of the clause, how to identify your clause and what functions do clause do in a language like English. Here we go.

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- Clause is a higher level structure than phrase.
- Just as a phrase has one or more words, a clause has one phrase or more.
- For instance, see the following sentence.

It was Monday morning.

It has two phrases:

- NP [*It*]
- VP [*was Monday morning*]
- NP [*Monday morning*]



A clause is, of course, a higher-level structure than a phrase, just as two words come together. At least two there could be more, they come together to make a phrase. Similarly, at least two phrases, there could be more come together to make a clause. So, it is a higher-level unit. In the construction of language, then the phrase is.

So, for instance, 'it was Monday morning' is a clause. It is also a sentence; we will talk about that later. But just now we are talking about the clause. It is a clause. It has two phrases. The first is a noun phrase; a noun phrase has only one word it, then it has a verb phrase, was Monday morning. Verb phrase, of course, includes another noun phrase 'Monday morning'.

So, there can be phrased within the phrase; there can be a noun phrase within verb phrase, verb phrase within noun phrase that is all possible. But for the clause to be, there must at least be two phrases, noun phrase, verb phrase. That is why it is a higher-level structure.

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- But a clause is a higher structure than a phrase. A clause has at least one verb with tense. See the following.

He recollected what work he had for the day.

- There are two clauses in this sentence.
 - *He recollected*
 - *what work he had for the day.*



Please, look at another example. He recollected what work he had for the day, without looking at the bottom part of the slide, can you say how many clauses this sentence has? It has two clauses, there are two clauses in this sentence, first is 'he recollected' and the second is 'what work he had for the day'. Next.

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- You may note that both the clauses have at least one verb each with tense. In clause (4), "recollect" is in past tense, making it "recollected".
- In clause (5), "had" is also a past tense auxiliary verb.



Now, you may also note that both the clauses have at least one verb, each with tense, not without tense, either present or past. So, both the clauses have a verb, which has tense in clause 4, recollect is in the past tense, he recollected. So, recollect plus -ed that is the past tense, making it recollected.

In the next clause, 'what he had', so had is the verb which is in the past tense, of course, it is an auxiliary verb, its present tense is has or have, but this verb is in the past tense, had. So, there are two clauses because there are two verbs with tense in this sentence. Next.

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- The following sentence has only one clause.

It was Monday morning.

Why does it have only one clause?

Because it has one verb only, "was", and it is in past tense



But, the following sentence has only one clause. Now, it should be easy for you to say why, why it has only one? Why does it have only one clause? The answer is obvious now because it has only one verb. What is the verb? 'Was' and this is the past tense, it does not matter what tense it is so long as there is a tense you cannot have a clause without a verb with some tense either present or past. Next.

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- The following sentence, on the other hand, has three clauses.

Swaminathan left his seat, jumped on the platform, and placed his note-book on the table.

- Can you say which clauses?
 - a. *Swaminathan left his seat,*
 - b. *jumped on the platform,*
 - c. *and placed his note-book on the table.*



The following sentence, on the other hand, has more than one clause, it has three clauses without going down the second half in the bottom part of the slide. Can you say, what clauses there are in this sentence? We said there are three clauses in this sentence; what are those? If you look carefully at it, you will see that the first clause is Swaminathan left his seat, what is the verb here? 'Left'.

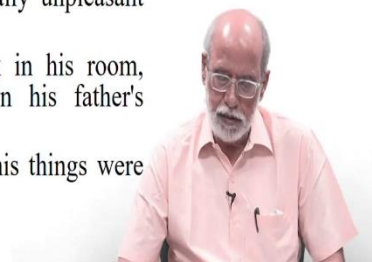
Next, jumped on the platform, what is the verb here? Jump in the past tense so 'jumped', jumped on the platform and the third and the final clause is and placed his notebook on the table. So placed, placed plus ed, place plus past tense is placed. So this sentence, Swaminathan left his seat jumped on the platform and placed his notebook on the table has three clauses because there are three verbs with tense incidentally, all the three happened to be in the past tense. Next.

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ACTIVITY



1. Can you say how many clauses each of the following sentences has. You can also make a note of these clauses separately and compare your work with answers given at the end.
 - a. Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes.
 - b. He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar
 - c. By eight he was at his desk in his room, which was only a corner in his father's dressing-room.
 - d. He had a table on which all his things were thrown in a confused heap.



Let us do something. Now, I think you have got the point that there is a clause so long as there is a verb with tense if that is clear to you, you should be able to do this activity very easily. Look at the sentences given here and then can you say, which part of this sentence forms a clause? Or how many clauses are there in each sentence? Make a note on your notebook or on your computer and compare your work with answers given at the end of this unit.

So first, for example, Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes, we have already done it for you, it should not be difficult. So, how many clauses here equal to the number of verbs? So, like that, ask yourself that question every time you are confronted with a task like this, ask yourself, how many verbs I find in this sentence that have a tense? And it will not be difficult for you to find correct answers.

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ANSWERS



Activity 1 :

- a. *Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes.* – One clause only, only one verb, “was”.
 - b. *He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar* – one clause only because it has only one verb “consider” which has an +ed and , therefore, is in the past tense.
 - c. *By eight he was at his desk in his room, which was only a corner in his father's dressing-room.*
It has two clauses, because it has two verbs with tense.
 - 1. By eight he was at his desk in his room,
 - 2. which was only a corner in his father's dressing-room.
- It has two clauses, one in c.1 with “was”, past tense, after “eight”. The other in c.2 has only one verb, “was”, which is past tense auxiliary verb.



Go to the next screen, compare your answers. So, number one, Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes; it has only one clause because it has only one verb with tense that is 'was'. Next sentence, he considered Monday, specially unpleasant in the calendar, how many clauses, again only one clause, because it has only one verb consider, which has past tense, so it is considered.

Next, by eight, he was at his desk in his room, which was only a corner in his father's dressing room. How many clauses here, two clauses. Why? Because there are two verbs here in the past tense. One is by eight he was. So, as is the verb this is in the past tense. Next is, which was only a corner of in his father's dressing-room. The verb again is was, it is again in the past tense, but there are two verbs, therefore two clauses. Next.

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- On these lines you can create for yourself more exercises and check them with a dictionary. Once you identify a verb with tense, you have identified a clause, no matter how big or small.

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On these lines, you know, take any sentence from any book, any audio video listen to it carefully. Make a note and ask yourself how many clauses there are in this sentence for us to be able, for us to be able to write you know, for us, for whom English is not the mother tongue. So, for us to be able to write and speak English correctly, grammatically, it is important that we understand the structure of a sentence.

And to understand the structure of a sentence, it is extremely important that we understand concepts like phrase and clause. So, on these lines just as I have told you, take some lines, paragraphs from an audio clip or from a book and ask yourself how many clauses are there in this, once you identify a verb with tense you have identified a clause no matter how big or small that clause might be. Next.

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- A sentence must have at least one clause with complete information, without having to depend on elements outside itself.
- But each clause is not a sentence. If that clause does not have both subject and its Verb inside, then it cannot be a sentence by itself, though it is still a clause.

He had a table on which all his things were thrown in a confused heap.



No matter how big or small it is, a clause is a clause only when a group of words actually is a clause, only when it has at least one verb with tense either present or past. But, now comes the second point. So, the first point is how do we identify a clause, a clause has a verb with a tense, no exception at all. Second thing, now we are going into types of clause.

So, is each clause a sentence? If that clause does not have both subject and its verb inside, if it has to depend upon some information outside the clause, then it is not a sentence then it cannot be a sentence by itself though it is still a clause. So, for example, look at this sentence, he had a table on which all his things were thrown in a confused heap, how many clauses here? Two, number one he had a table, number two, on which all his things were thrown in a confused heap.

Why is this long string one clause only? Because it has only one verb with tense that is 'were' on which all his things were thrown in a confused heap? Can they both do the, do they both have the status of a sentence? Let us see. Next.

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- So, “He had a table” is both a clause and a sentence. But “on which all his things were thrown in a confused heap” is incomplete for meaning. Without going outside the clause, you do not know what noun “which” refers to.



So, here a table is both a clause and a sentence, it can be by itself it is independent, it does not need to extend upon anybody else's shoulder you know, it can be by itself, but the other part of this sentence on which all his things were thrown in a confused heap is incomplete for meaning, without going outside the clause, you do not know what noun which refers to, on which all the things, what which, who is that which.

So, this is incomplete, and therefore, it has only one clause, which is capable of becoming a sentence by itself. You can chop the sentence there, and you can say he had a table full stop. It is a sentence, but you cannot do so with the later part of it. You cannot chop the sentence and say, on which all his things were thrown in a confused heap is also a sentence, no. Next.

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- The following sentence has only one verb with tense, and therefore has only one clause and that clause is a sentence.

There were huge windows on the left showing vast open grounds bound at the other extreme by the railway embankment.



The following sentence has only one verb with tense and therefore has only one clause, and that clause is a sentence, long sentence, so many words, but only one verb with tense and what is that? There were huge windows on the left, you know 'were' all others are additional phrases.

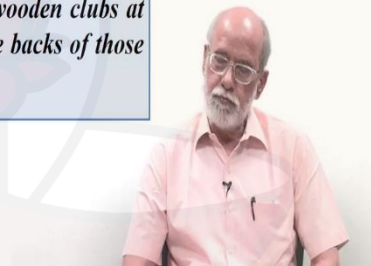
There were huge windows on the left, adverbial clause. Showing vast open grounds, manner, bound at the other extreme once again you know showing location bound at the other extreme by the railway embankment agent, but only one, only one verb with tense that is where. Therefore, no matter how long this clause is, it has, it is still only one clause. Next.

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ACTIVITY

2. How many clauses are there in the following sentence? Identify them. You can also say which of these clauses can be a sentence, and which others cannot be.

Mani replied that he had a pair of wooden clubs at home with which he would break the backs of those that dared to tamper with him.



So, you know it is very easy, you can identify. You can say for example, in this case, you have been asked to say 'Mani replied that he had a pair of wooden clubs at home with which he would break the backs of those that dare to tamper with him' how many clauses are there in this sentence? The answer is easy. Ask yourself how many verbs does this sentence have with tense? And the answer will be obvious to you. Go to the next.

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ANSWERS



- a. *Mani replied*
- b. *that he had a pair of wooden clubs at home*
- c. *with which he would break the backs of those*
- d. *that dared to tamper with him.*

- a. can be a sentence.
- b. is a sentence any way.
- c. c-d are sentences but a part of each of them depends upon other elements to complete their sense.



Here is the answer. Mani replied it could also be a sentence, but other things from b to c to d there cannot become, they depend upon something else that he had a pair of wooden clubs at home. What does that qualify, what does that refer to that is the object of reply.

Similarly, with which he would break with what you would break the heads, so which qualifies something else somewhere else, that dared to tamper with him once again who is that. So, you know, you have to go outside the clause and therefore, complete information and that is why these clauses are only merely clauses, they are not potentially sentences. Next.

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- Those clauses that can make a sentence by themselves are called “Principal Clause”, or “Main Clause”, or “Independent Clause”. Others are called “Subordinate Clause”.
- Look at the following sentence again.

Mani replied that he had a pair of wooden clubs at home with which he would break the backs of those that dared to tamper with him.



So, those clauses that can by themselves become a sentence can variously called some grammar books, some books of grammar called such clauses principal clause or main clause

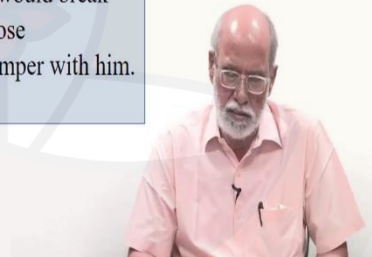
or independent clause. All other clauses are called subordinate clause; no subordinate clause can be there unless it is preceded or followed by a main clause also called principal clause, also called an independent clause within that sentence.

A sentence may or may not have a subordinate clause; it must have a main clause, it must have an independent clause or a principal clause, the subordinate clause is optional, you have it, you do not have it, it will still be a sentence if you have the main clause. So, look at the following sentence again 'Mani replied that he had a pair of wooden clubs at home with which he would break the backs of those that dare to tamper with him', how many clauses and which of these are main and which of these are subordinate?

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- Main and subordinate clauses in this sentence are as follows:

Main Clause	Subordinate clause
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mani replied	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• that he had a pair of wooden clubs at home• with which he would break the backs of those• that dared to tamper with him.

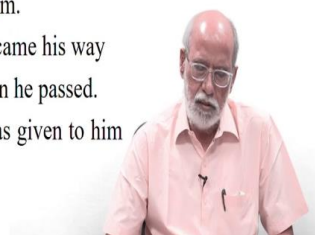


Look at the chart, Mani replied is the main clause, and it has three subordinate clauses, what are those, see the right-hand column.

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ACTIVITY

3. Look at the following sentence and then identify main and subordinate clauses there.
 - a. Those were the four that he liked and admired most in his class.
 - b. No teacher ever tried to prod him.
 - c. Mani bullied all strangers that came his way
 - d. People usually slunk aside when he passed.
 - e. He solved any problem that was given to him in five minutes



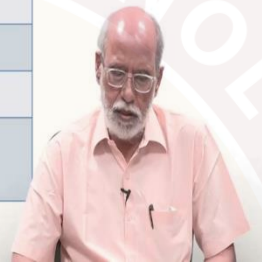
Next, now, if you so like, do the following sentences look at the following sentences and identify main and subordinate clauses there.

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ANSWERS



	Main Clause	Subordinate Clause
a.	Those were the four	that he liked and admired most in his class.
b.	No teacher ever tried to prod him	
c.	Mani bullied all strangers	that came his way
d.	People usually slunk aside	when he passed.
e.	He solved any problem in five minutes	that was given to him



We have done it, for you can compare your work with the answers given here. Now, if you got the answers right, then even then, you can go and do some additional exercise provided as an additional input to this unit of this module of the course. But if you did not get them right, take more examples from language more of this sort and once again, the trick is to ask yourself, how many verbs are there? Then ask yourself, does this verb have a tense?

If the answer to both these questions is yes, there is a verb here, and it has a tense, then it is a clause. Next, you ask, is it the main clause the principal clause? The independent clause? The answer is, can it stand by itself? Does it have complete information? Yes, then it is the main clause. No, for something it depends upon information not available within this clause, then no matter how long, no matter how short, it is not the main clause, it is a subordinate clause.

So, you can take examples of language, identify clauses, marked type of clauses, and compare them with work already there in the grammar books or you know, we have suggested some books of grammar to you or you can mail us, call us, and we will try and help you. Thank you very much. Have a good day.