Chapter Summaries

for *A Student's Introduction to English Grammar* by
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Chapter 1: Introduction

English is the most widely used language in the world, though hardly suited to a global role: it has phonological and morphological complexities and a miserably difficult spelling system. Its rise has been a historical accident. It has many dialects, but this book describes just a particular one known as Standard English, widely accepted around the world as neutral.

Dialects differ most in lexicon and phonology, and not much in syntax, so disputes over points of grammar are somewhat overblown: grammatically, Standard English is extremely homogeneous.

Most of this book applies to speech as well as writing, so references to a 'speaker' always mean either a speaker or a writer (or someone able to understand speech or writing).

The British and American varieties of Standard English (BrE and AmE) differ, but in syntactic terms not much. The contrasts often involve mere preferences, not stark grammaticality differences. The differences between Standard English and the many non-standard dialects are more significant, but although they are mentioned occasionally in passing, they are not the main focus of the book.

The distinction between formal and informal style within Standard English, though, is much more central to our concerns. It is a major mistake in many pedagogical books on English grammar to have confused informal style with grammatical incorrectness.

Describing what the facts of the language are and advising on how it should best be used (e.g., in writing for wide dissemination or publication) are both respectable motivations for language study, but this book focuses on description, not on advising you how to write.

Technical terms are essential in any academic subject, and it is important that when a word is used as a technical term in the field of grammar its meaning cannot be guessed from its meaning when it is used in other domains. This book introduces many technical terms in morphology (word structure), syntax (sentence structure), and semantics (meaning). Even a term as apparently simple as 'past tense' cannot be understood without appreciating that it does not always mean "pertaining to time gone by".

Sentences have subparts called **constituents** which belong to types called **categories**, and categorized constituents have specific **functions** in the larger constituents containing them. This structure could in principle be represented pictorially with labelled boxes inside other boxes, but structural diagrams of a type known as 'trees' provide a cleaner and more elegant way of representing the order of words, the constituents, their categories, and their functions in a unified way.

This book treats grammar as a subject in which the point is not to stipulate preferences or enunciate dogma but to investigate sentence structure the way a science like chemistry investigates the structure and behaviour of matter.

Chapter 2: Overview of the book

*SIEG*2 has the same chapter structure as *CGEL* throughout its 16 chapters, and its second chapter has the same purpose as Chapter 2 of *CGEL*: to give a quick overview of the book and its terminology. We begin by distinguishing **word forms** (words as counted on a printed page) from **lexemes** (words as listed in dictionaries); these are very different: *I put the knife with the other knives* has 8 word forms but only 6 lexemes. We then introduce lexeme categories (noun, verb, etc.); the idea of **heads** and **dependents**; phrases; phrasal categories (noun phrase, verb phrase, etc.); and clauses.

From there on we organize the subject matter by reference to a class of very basic simple clauses we call **canonical** clauses, defining them as positive, declarative, active, non-coordinate, main clauses with normal constituent order. Up to Chapter 7 we limit ourselves almost entirely to canonical clauses, and then from Chapter 8 onward we deal with the ways in which a clause can be non-canonical. The topics of the chapters from 3 to 16 are roughly as follows:

3. Verbs, verb phrases, tense, aspect, auxiliaries, and modality.
4. Canonical clauses and the complements that accompany verbs.
5. Nouns, NPs, determinatives, nominals, number, person, gender, and case.
6. Adjectives, adjective phrases, adverbs, and adverb phrases.
7. Prepositions, preposition phrases, particles, and the phenomenon of stranding.
8. Adjuncts, i.e. modifier constituents and supplements (parenthetical adjuncts).
9. Negation of clauses and of constituents smaller than clauses, and scope of negation.
10. Clause type: declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative.
11. Subordination: the embedding of full clauses (content clauses) in larger clauses.
12. Relative clauses, their structure, and their role as modifier constituents in NPs.
13. Comparatives and superlatives.
14. Tenseless clauses with head verbs that are either participial or plain-form or absent.
15. Coordination: joining constituents together with words like *and*, *or*, and *but*.
16. Discourse-influenced syntactic constructions with special constituent orders.

Chapter 3: Verbs and Verb Phrases

An English verb has a set of inflected forms called a **paradigm**. There are three **primary** forms: the **plain present**, a **3rd person singular present** (formed with ·*s*), and a **preterite** (formed with ·*ed*), and three **secondary** forms: a **plain form** (sharing its **shape** with the plain present tense), a **gerund-participle** (formed with ·*ing*), and **past participle** (often sharing its shape with the preterite). But about 200 verbs in English are irregular in their preterite and/or past participle forms.

English has a **present tense**, two **past tenses**, and no future tense. The preterite is a primary form. The **perfect** is a **secondary past tense**, formed with *have* + past participle. There is no one-to-one relationship between tense and time: past tenses, for example, have various meanings that apply to non-past times such as the future.

Verbs **agree** with the **number** and **person** of the **subject** NP. But this only shows up in the difference between plain present tense and 3rd person singular present tense. (***Be*** is an exception: it has a slew of forms that no other verbs have, including 1st person singular forms in the present and preterite.)

The plain form is used in three syntactically distinct clause constructions: **imperative**, **subjunctive**, and **infinitival**.

The **progressive aspect** is formed by ***be*** and the gerund-participle. It expresses a view of the situation as in progress. The past participle following *be* forms a **passive** clause, and following *have* forms the perfect.

Most verbs are **lexical** verbs, but there is also a small set of **auxiliary** verbs. These are subdivided into **modal** (***can***, ***may***, ***must***, ***shall***, ***will***, ***ought***, ***need***, ***dare***) and non-modal (***be***, ***do***, ***have***). The auxiliary verbs have several very important properties, the main ones being their participation in **subject–auxiliary inversion** (they can precede the subject of a clause) and their negative forms ending in *·n't*.

A main clause with an auxiliary verb has a closed interrogative form with the auxiliary before the subject (*She has agreed* / *Has she agreed?*), and a negative counterpart with *·n't* (*She hasn't agreed*). In a clause like *She agrees* with no auxiliary verb, the corresponding closed interrogative is formed with an added auxiliary ***do*** (*Does she agree?*). So is the negative (*She doesn't agree*).

VPs express not just actions but states, processes, and other ideas that we call **situations**. Situations can be expressed in their entirety, **perfectively**, or in part, **imperfectively**. **Progressive aspect** almost always results in an imperfective interpretation. The perfect, a secondary past tense, often does so too (but perfect aspect, which is syntactic, should not be confused with perfective interpretation, which is semantic).

Situations in present time are usually expressed with the present tense, either perfectively (*I promise to phone her next week*) or imperfectively (*Tricia mows the lawn*). Scheduled or repeating natural situations in future time are also often expressed with the present tense in a construction called the **futurate**. In subordinate clauses, the present tense is used for most future time situations.

Preterites express past-time situations, but also have other uses. A view of a situation as impossible or highly unlikely is **modally remote** and is expressed in syntax using the **modal preterite** (*I wish she lived nearby*). **Backshift** occurs in indirect reported speech when the speech pertains to a situation typically expressed in one tense is instead expressed in another: present → preterite or present perfect (*I had to tell him Berlin was the capital of Germany*), preterite or present perfect → preterite, and clauses without tense → perfect.

Under certain conditions, the present perfect allows time adjuncts referring to the present. The preterite does not. And conversely, the present perfect mostly excludes time adjuncts referring to the past. With the present perfect the past time situation is conceived of as having some kind of CURRENT RELEVANCE, relevance to the present, whereas the preterite does not express any such relationship.

Modal auxiliaries express three main kinds of meanings: **epistemic** (relating to what's necessary or possible given our beliefs), **deontic** (relating to what's required or permitted), and **dynamic** (relating to abilities or dispositions to do things). The modals are not specialized to express one type of modality only, so ambiguity can arise.

Preterites of modals usually express some form of modality, not past time. Future time is often expressed with *will*, a modal auxiliary, and the idiom *be going*, but that doesn't make ***will*** part of the tense system.

Be has a special **irrealis** form *were*, used (especially in more formal styles) to express the same kinds of meaning as the **modal preterite** (*If he were in love with her, everything would be different*).

Chapter 4: Complements in Clauses

A clause is the smallest syntactic unit of language that can actually say something: make a claim, ask a question, or give an explicit instruction. A canonical clause consists of a constituent in subject function and another in predicate function. The predicate is the **head** of the clause ('predicate of' is just a special case of 'head of'), and is always a VP. The structure of a clause can be displayed in the form of a **tree** diagram. The lexical head of the predicate is a verb, and largely determines what other constituents can be in the clause.

Many traditional grammars say either that the subject of a clause tells the doer of the action or that it tells us what the sentence is about; both of these are useless as definitions. The subject is a complement external to the VP which comes before the verb in canonical clauses and after the first auxiliary in closed interrogatives. It determines the agreement inflection on the head verb, and takes nominative case if it is a personal pronoun.

The object in a clause with a transitive verb is also traditionally defined by a useless definition involving a phrase like "receiver of the action". It is in fact an internal complement in the VP, licensed by the verb and obligatory with some verbs; it corresponds to the subject in a passive clause with the same truth conditions, takes accusative case if it is a personal pronoun, and typically comes immediately after the verb. A ditransitive clause has two objects, the indirect object (which comes first and generally denotes a recipient or similar) and a direct object. Indirect and direct objects differ in the degree to which they can be shifted to the beginning of a clause.

Predicative complements are different from objects. They can be AdjPs rather than NPs, and when they are NPs they can lack a determiner even if singular (*They made her <u>treasurer</u>*). There is a difference between **ascriptive** predicative complements after ***be***, as in *The chairman was an irritating man* and **specifying** complements of ***be*** like *The chairman was Mike Davies*.

The most typical types of complementation in VPs give us five types of canonical clause: subject plus intransitive verb (*This failed*); subject, intransitive verb, and predicative complement (*This seemed useless*); subject, transitive verb, and object (*This causes trouble*); subject, transitive verb, object, and predicative complement (*This makes people sick*); and subject, verb, indirect object, and direct object (*This gave me nightmares*). Preposition phrases and subordinate clauses can also be complements in canonical clauses.

Chapter 5: Nouns and Determinatives

Noun phrases (NP) have nominals (Nom) as their heads, and nominals have nouns (N). Nouns inflect for singular or plural number and plain or genitive case. They take determinative phrases (DP), adjective phrases (AdjP), and relative clauses ($\text{Clause}_{\text{REL}}$) as dependents: DPs in determiner function, AdjPs and $\text{Clause}_{\text{REL}}$ as modifiers, and some nouns license preposition phrases (PP) or subordinate clauses as complements. Since all of these are often optional, an NP may consist of just a noun.

There are common nouns, proper nouns, and pronouns. We treat pronouns as just a special subclass of nouns, special in that they hardly ever take dependents. The common nouns are divided (mainly on the basis of meaning) into count nouns and non-count nouns (often called 'mass nouns'); the count nouns have plurals (*fox*, *foxes*), and occur with numerals (*three foxes*), and need a determiner when they're singular (**Fox was chased away*). A small

minority of nouns can only be count, or only be non-count, but most can be either, depending on the sense (non-count *Wine was available*; count *We tasted several wines*).

Subject NPs with singular head nouns require singular agreement on the verb of the clause in the 3rd person singular present tense (**Speed kill*; *Speed kills*).

Chapter 6: Adjectives and Adverbs

The adjectives in English are a large class of words mostly denoting stable properties of people, places, or things: quality, size, shape, weight, length, colour, age, and many others. They head adjective phrases (AdjP), which usually function as either modifiers in NPs (*a really old farmhouse*) or predicative complements in clauses (*That farmhouse looks really old*). They can also function as postpositive modifiers in NPs ([*Anything really old*] *must go*) or external modifiers in NPs (*You can't use* [*so old a joke*]).

Many of the commonest adjectives inflect for **grade**: *old* (plain), *older* (comparative), *oldest* (superlative), though the majority of adjectives indicate comparative and superlative grade by taking the adverbs *more* and *most* instead. They don't take determiners like NPs.

It is possible for an adjective to serve as the head in a definite NP with *the* as determiner, at the same time as being a modifier of that head: *the second*; *the cheapest of them*; *the very rich*. This is called **modifier-head fusion**.

Adjectives differ from determinatives in several ways. An adjective cannot make a singular count noun into a full NP (*That dog barks a lot* is grammatical but **Little dog barks a lot* is not); typical adjectives are gradable but typical determinatives are non-gradable; determinatives cannot be used predicatively; and determinatives don't identify properties of the head noun referent but rather signal definiteness or quantification.

Adjectives take complements, most commonly PPs (*proud of his achievements*), but also clauses (*glad you could be here*). They take adverbs as modifiers (*extremely old*).

Some adjectives are restricted to modifier function (*utter nonsense* but **The nonsense was utter*) and others can only be used predicatively (*The kids are asleep* but **the asleep kids*). Adjectives in attributive modifier function generally cannot have anything after the head (**a cautious to excess manager*).

Adverbs are in many cases derived from adjective bases by adding *·ly*. They head phrases (AdvPs) which can function as modifiers in many kinds of phrase, including in an AdvP modifying the meaning of another adverb. Adverbs are also capable of taking complements (*independently of these considerations*), though not many adverbs do.

Chapter 7: Prepositions and Particles

The prepositions of English make up a larger category than most people realize. They don't inflect, and they often have a core meaning relating to relations in space (*under*) or time (*after*). They head phrases (PPs) that have a wide range of uses as either modifiers or complements. As complements, PPs are often under a constraint to have a particular preposition as head (***partake*** takes a PP headed by *of*; ***listen*** takes a *to*-PP; ***abstain*** takes a *from*-PP; etc.). A few lexical heads take obligatory PP complements.

Traditionally, words like *in* have been called prepositions when they have NP complements (as in *She jumped in the pool*) but 'adverbs' when they don't (as with *She jumped in*). That is a mistake: words like *in* are not found where true adverbs are found. The

right analysis would be to say that a preposition's NP complement can be optional. This is supported by considerations of both internal evidence (what modifiers prepositions take) and external (what items select PP complements).

It is also true that words like *after* have traditionally been called prepositions when they have NP complements (as in *after the dance*) but 'subordinating conjunctions when they don't (as with *after they danced*). That is a mistake too: words like *after* should be analyzed as fully meaningful prepositions licensing clause complements. (Words like *that* are very different: they are meaningless markers of embedded clauses; we categorize them as **subordinators**.)

Having gone this far, it becomes clear that there are also descriptive advantages to categorizing some items as prepositions even though they never have NP complements: examples include *although*, *because*, *downstairs*, *here*, and *now*. These are strictly **intransitive** prepositions.

A key difference between PPs and AdjPs is that AdjP adjuncts are always predicative: they need a predicand (traditionally called an 'understood subject'). PPs always have at least some uses that are not predicative. Thus *Ahead, there was nothing but fog* is grammatical and coherent (*ahead* is a preposition, and needs no predicand), while **Awake, there was nothing but fog* is incoherent (*awake* is an adjective, and the clause provides no NP to serve as the necessary predicand: we need to know who was awake, and the clause doesn't tell us).

Some participial forms of verbs like *given* and *following* have evolved into prepositions, and thus can be used non-predicatively: the first three words of *Following the meeting there will be refreshments* can be a PP (meaning "after the meeting"), so that no predicand is needed; but in *Following the manual, we carefully put the device together* we have the verb ***follow***, which does need a predicand (and finds it in the pronoun *we*).

A small minority of prepositions – *as*, *at*, *by*, *for*, *from*, *in*, *of*, *on*, *than*, *to*, *with*, and perhaps one or two others – are **grammaticized**: they can be virtually devoid of meaning contribution, and have special syntactic roles like accompanying specific verbs or other lexical heads. For instance, *by* has the grammatical role of simply marking the NP in a passive clause that would have been the subject in the active version (*It was neglected by historians* / *Historians neglected it*), making essentially no contribution to meaning.

Several constructions involve prepositions appearing without the NPs that are understood as their complements. Some of these constructions involve *wh* phrases understood as complements in PPs, and there is often a choice between fronting the *wh* phrases on its own (*What are you alluding to?*), which is called **stranding** the preposition, and – in rather formal style – keeping the whole PP together (*To what are you alluding?*), which we call **fronting** the preposition. Various factors may strongly bias against stranding or in favour of it. And stranding is also found in one kind of passive (*This bed appears to have been slept in*).

The complements taken by prepositions are most commonly object NPs (*at <u>the cinema</u>*), but also predicative NPs (*as <u>a friend</u>*), PPs (*until <u>after lunch</u>*), AdvPs (*until <u>recently</u>*), and clauses (*after <u>they had finished</u>*). Modifiers allowed in PPs include measure NPs (*<u>a mile</u> outside Edinburgh*), AdvPs (*<u>thoroughly</u> out of fashion*), and a few odd items largely specialized as PP modifiers (*bang*, *right*, *straight*, and *way*). The preposition *ago* seems to be ungrammatical unless it has a measure NP (compare *It happened* [*<u>two years</u> ago*] with **It happened* [*ago*]).

Particles are complements of a special type, almost always intransitive PPs, that can appear either after a direct object like ordinary PPs (*She took the box <u>down</u>*) or, exceptionally, before it (*She took <u>down</u> the box*) provided it is not a pronoun (**She took <u>down</u> it*). There are

numerous idioms (not necessarily involving single constituents) involving verbs, prepositions, and/or particles; some of them are frozen, others more syntactically flexible.

Chapter 8: Adjuncts: Modifiers and Supplements

Adjuncts are divided into **modifiers**, which are fully integrated into syntactic structure, and **supplements**, which aren't. This chapter is mostly taken up with modifiers. The line between adjuncts and complements is not always completely sharp; some constituents that can have adjunct function can also serve as complements, and it isn't always straightforward to decide which is which.

This chapter surveys modifiers under 14 headings based on the semantic effect of each, not merely their special syntactic features (though there normally are a few such features as well, and those partly influence the classification). The categories assigned to the different kinds of modifier are as follows:

- manner, means, and instrument modification (indicating ways in which or techniques by which actions are accomplished)
- act-related modification (characterizing inherent properties of, or an attitude toward, the action described in the clause: its foolishness, wisdom, unexpectedness, etc.)
- locational modification (positioning or direction in geographical space)
- temporal modification (location of an event or state at a time point or in a time interval)
- degree modification (indicating degree, intensity, extent, or rank on some implicit scale)
- purpose, reason, or result modification (conveying why the action or situation depicted in the clause took place or what it resulted in)
- concessive modification (admitting to a certain reservation about the truth of what a clause depicts or claims)
- conditional modification (setting down a condition under which a claim or description holds – characteristically with the prepositions *if* or *unless*; a special subcase of this, expressed through open-interrogative syntactic means, is known as the exhaustive conditional)
- domain modification (specifying the area of life or ideas to which a statement is intendedly relevant: musical, artistic, scientific, philosophical, etc.)
- modal modification (qualifying the way in which the content of a clause relates to what holds in the real world, e.g. as being possible, necessary, probable, or likely to be true according to some view of the present or future)
- evaluative modification (supplying an evaluation of some aspect of the situation being expressed in the clause, like being fortunate or ironic or sad)
- speech-act modification (contribution the utterer's view as to the nature of the speech act that the sentence itself should be interpreted as performing: its frankness, honesty, candidness, confidentiality, etc.)
- connective modification (linking prior discourse to the sentence at hand by suggesting consequence, continuation, change of topic, etc.)

These roughly sketched classification does not preclude overlap: an adjunct can sometimes be seen as falling into two or more of the above 14 types.

Supplements are often called 'parentheticals' in other grammar books. They are very seldom described in much detail, and often not mentioned at all. They are characterized by a very loose fit with the syntax of the rest of the sentence, and are marked in writing with commas or dashes, and in speech by intonational phrase breaks. They can contribute prefatory setup remarks (*Before we begin, let me welcome our new members*), interruptions of the flow of a sentence (*The dean – and heaven knows she is hard to please – liked it a lot*), or afterthoughts (*He dresses rather flamboyantly – not that there's anything wrong with that*).

A supplement is neither a head nor a dependent. Each one is associated semantically with an **anchor** constituent, often the constituent it immediately follows, but sometimes the clause containing it. Many of the types of modifier listed above can figure as supplements instead, sometimes with a change in meaning: in *I'd prefer to speak frankly* the underlined adverb is a manner modifier specifying the way I'd like to speak, but in *I'd prefer to speak, frankly* (with a pause before the adverb in speech) it is a speech-act modifying supplement signalling that in saying this I'm being candid about my preference.

Chapter 9: Negation

Clauses come in two **polarities**: positive and negative. There are syntactic tests for them, such as the possibility of reversed-polarity tags (*It was there, wasn't it?*; *It wasn't there, was it?*). It is also possible to negate constituents smaller than clauses without negating the clause (*They were unhappy, weren't they?* is a positive clause containing the negated adjective *unhappy*; compare with *They weren't happy, were they?* – a negative clause).

Clause negation can be accomplished by marking the verb (*John didn't do anything about it*) or by marking a non-verb constituent (*John did nothing about it*). There are items, both lexical and phrasal, that can only appear in the context of a negative clause (compare *We haven't been there in ages* with **We went there in ages*). Negation only affects one part of a sentence, a part known as the **scope** of the negation.

Chapter 10: Clause Type

The terms **declarative** (*He laughed at himself*), **interrogative** (*Did he laugh at himself?*), **exclamative** (*How he laughed at himself!*), and **imperative** (*Laugh at yourself!*) are familiar from many traditional grammars. But keep in mind:

- these are **syntactic** terms, based on particular aspects of internal structure, not **pragmatic** terms talking about the properties of a speech act; and
- the terms do not apply to sentences (this chapter is not about sentence type), but to clauses: in *Don't you understand that we're in danger?* the underlined part is a declarative clause, but the larger clause containing it is interrogative; neither term applies to the whole sentence.

There are associated semantic terms. Declarative clauses are most typically used to express **statements** that can be true or false; interrogative clauses are most typically used to express **questions** that could be posed or considered; imperative clauses are most often used to give **directives** specifying what another person is ordered or requested to do; and exclamatives present statements in a way that counts as some sort of **exclamation** at the fact

that is stated. But in all four cases, the association is loose and the clause type has other uses as well.

Either main or subordinate clauses may be declarative, interrogative, or exclamative. Imperative clauses are always either main clauses (*Go home!*) or coordinate clauses (*Do that and I'll sue you*). Declarative is the default clause type.

Interrogatives are of two types, closed and open. The closed ones begin with an auxiliary verb if they are main clauses (*Wouldn't that be nice?*) or if subordinate are introduced by *whether* or *if* (*I wonder whether that would be nice*). They can be polar (where the potential answers are limited to 'Yes' and 'No') or alternative (where a list to choose from is supplied: *Do you want Beaujolais, Chardonnay, or sparkling water?*). The open ones begin with a *wh* word: *Who told you that?*. These syntactic types express two different kinds of question: closed questions have a finite range from which the appropriate answer must be picked (e.g. [i] that it would be nice or [ii] that it wouldn't), and open questions have an unbounded set of potential answers (e.g. the set of all human beings who might potentially have told you). Answers can often be **replacement phrases** (like *Aunt Doris*) rather than whole sentences (like *Aunt Doris told me that*).

Open interrogatives can sometimes express closed questions if something else limits the answer set; and either kind of interrogative can express a directive (*Shouldn't you put some clothes on?*).

Exclamatives always begin with either *what* or *how*; they don't exhibit subject-auxiliary inversion; and they do have a gap of the appropriate type for the *what* or the *how*: in *What stupid things they laughed at*, the gap is the lack of an object after *at*; in *How they treated her!* the gap is the absence of a manner adjunct at the end of the VP.

Imperatives are usually subjectless. Second-person imperatives are understood as having the addressee as predicand (*Just look at yourself* has a predicand that could be expressed by singular ***you***; in a third-person imperative like *Everybody stand* or *Nobody move* the predicand is all the people who are being addressed; and in a first-person imperative like *Let's go out* the set of people addressed includes the utterer and the people who are being addressed.

Imperatives can express various speech acts from suggestions to commands, and other clause types have a wide range of speech acts they can express. A first-person subject and an appropriate verb can be included to make explicit the speech act being performed (*I ask you to consider this*; *I command you to stop*).

Chapter 11: Subordinate Clauses

Complete clauses can be embedded in larger clauses as complements, just like NPs or PPs. When embedded, they may have different internal structure. The default type of embedded clause is the **content clause**, which is basically as complete as a main clause, including subject and tense. Content clauses can be declarative, closed interrogative, open interrogative, or exclamative.

Declarative content clauses may be introduced by the subordinator *that*, or may be bare. They can be complements in VPs, NPs, AdjPs, or PPs. They were traditionally called 'noun clauses' – a hopeless term, since they are nothing like nouns in their syntactic behaviour. One type of declarative content clause cannot serve as a main clause: the mandative subjunctive, as in *The residents insisted that he be charged with trespass*.

Closed interrogative content clauses begin with *whether* or its slightly more informal alternant subordinator, *if*. In written Standard English they generally don't exhibit subject-auxiliary inversion (compare *Were they ever found?* with *I don't know whether they were ever found*). Open interrogative content clauses begin with a *wh* phrase like *who*, *which ones*, *what*, *where*, *when*. They too generally don't exhibit subject-auxiliary inversion, though informally sentences like *It all comes down to who are you gonna trust* are quite often encountered in speech and informal writing. It is possible for an interrogative content clause to be an adjunct: *It'll happen whether you want it to or not*; *I'll be available, whatever you might want me for*.

Exclamative content clauses look very much like exclamative main clauses: compare *How lucky you were* with *I told them all how lucky you were*.

Chapter 12: Relative Constructions

A relative clause is a tensed clause containing a **gap** (roughly, an empty position where a complement would typically have been). Their primary function is as modifiers in NPs, following the head noun.

They are of either *wh* or non-*wh* type: the *wh* relatives begin with a **relative phrase** containing a *wh* word, and the non-*wh* ones don't. In the *wh* type, the relative phrase is in an **anaphoric** relationship to the head noun of the containing NP, and agrees with it in personal vs. non-personal gender: *the boys who did this* (personal gender because of *boys*); *the things which I've ordered* (non-personal gender because of *things*).

The **relativized element** (the part of the meaning that is anaphoric to the head noun and which corresponds semantically to the gap) can be deeply embedded inside the relative clause, as in *the boys who* [*Jane says* [*the police suspect* [__ *did this*], where the gap is the subject of *did*, but the relative phrase is not at the beginning of that clause, or the one containing it, but the one containing that. There are also more complex cases like *the people* [*whose house she wants to rent*], where the relative phrase is *whose house*, but it is just the word *whose* within it that is anaphoric to *people*.

Relative clauses like the ones so far considered are fully integrated into the structure of the clause containing them, and we call them **integrated** relative clauses (other works call them 'restrictive' or 'defining'). But there are also relative clauses much less integrated into the sentence, and we call them **supplementary** relative clauses, because they are supplements in the sense of Chapter 8.

Supplementary relatives have to be marked off with commas in writing, and with an intonational phrasing break in speech, and they make a semantic contribution that is a kind of omissible extra piece of information. *Scientists who use lots of jargon are irritating* has an integrated relative clause (underlined), and I'm only saying that jargon-using scientists are irritating. But a very different claim is made by *Scientists, who use lots of jargon, are irritating*. It says that ALL scientists are irritating (and it throws in an extra allegation about their jargon-using tendencies). They are always of the *wh* type; they can have proper nouns as their antecedents; they can have relative phrases with nominal heads (*It might rain, in which case we'll move indoors*); and they can be anchored to a whole clause (*Max was late, which annoyed me*).

Relative clauses use a range of *wh* words that is similar to those found in open interrogatives, but not quite identical (for example, *how* and *what* cannot be the *wh* words in relative clauses).

A special and rather peculiar relative construction is called the **fused relative**. It is not a clause, but an NP. It begins with a *wh* word serving two functions at once. In *I liked what you wrote*, the word *what* is the head of an NP as well as being the relative phrase in a relative clause modifying that head.

Chapter 13: Comparatives and Superlatives

English has special syntactic ways of indicating inequality between individual things (ranking something above or below something else on a scale) or between things and sets (ranking something higher or lower than anything else in the set). The **grade inflection** of adjectives (*big*, *bigger*, *biggest*) is deployed mainly for these purposes.

Superlatives express comparison between a member of a set and the other members in relation to some scale; if the scale is of wealth and the set is the population of the planet, we can say (at the time of writing), *Jeff Bezos is probably the richest man in the world* – ranking him as (probably) above all other members of the relevant set on the scale of how rich people are. Comparatives are used to talk about a primary entity and a secondary entity and say that one outranks the other: *Jeff Bezos is richer than Elon Musk*. Such a comparison is implicit in almost any use of an adjective that has a vague meaning: *Elon Musk is rich* implicitly compares Musk with people in general, and ranks him fairly high.

For adjectives that don't inflect, like *intelligent*, the adverbs *more* and *most* are used instead (*more intelligent*, *most intelligent*). But *more* and *most* can also be determinatives: *We don't have much time* uses the determinative ***much***, and its comparative grade form *more* is seen in *It's a pity we don't have more time*. The words *less* and *least* also belong to both adverb and determinative categories.

Two items can be compared and found equal on some scale denoted by an adjective. For this, English uses the degree adverb *as* before the adjective, and the identically spelled preposition *as* before the secondary item: *as tall as the Eiffel Tower*.

Comparison without reference to a scale – **non-scalar** comparison – is also possible: we can compare things by reference to their similarity to other things. So *They it the same way as before* compares some way of doing something with the way they did it before, and specifies that they're equivalent; *You should do it some other way than that* compares a way you should do it with some other indicated way and stipulates that they're different.

Than and *as* often take clause complements of a special type: **comparative clauses**. These have certain material missing, in ways that make them different from both content clauses (which have nothing missing) and relative clauses (which have a single gap, typically of NP type). In *better than I thought it would be* the underlined comparative clause has no complement for *be*; in *as wide as it is long* the underlined comparative clause is missing a modifier on the adjective *long* (we are equating a degree of width with a degree of length); and in *the same country as I come from*, what's missing is identification of a country to be the object of *from* (we are equating some reference country with a country of which I can say "I come from there").

In informal English, comparative clauses can be complements of the preposition *like*: in *love me like you used to* the missing material after *to* corresponds to the degree to which you formerly love me. (*Like* can take a content clause too, in informal style: *It looks like it's going to rain*.)

Chapter 14: Non-Finite Clauses

Most of the clauses we have looked at so far have had tensed verbs. But there are clauses with verbs in plain form or participial form. They are often called **non-finite** clauses, because they fall outside the traditional class of finite clauses, which originally had subjects, tenses, and verbs showing agreement. (Because of historical changes the traditional classification worked better four or five hundred years ago than it does now.) These are normally embedded in a larger clause; they never exhibit primary tense (present or preterite); they can therefore never have a modal auxiliary verb; they often don't have a subject; and parts of their meaning have to be contributed by aspects of the clause they're embedded in.

Infinitival clauses (*to write it all down*) have a verb in the plain form; most of them are marked by the word *to* before the verb; and when they have a subject the whole clause is introduced by *for* (*for him to write it all down*). A **past-participial** clause (*written it all down*) has a verb in its past participle form. A **gerund-participial** clause (*writing it all down*) has a gerund participle, and if there is a subject it will be in the genitive case (*his writing it all down*) or the accusative (*him writing it all down*).

When a non-finite clause has no subject, the semantic counterpart – a predicand – will still be necessary, so it must be supplied somehow. In some constructions, there is **syntactic determination**: the syntax dictates how to understand it. In *They want to write it all down*, the syntax of ***want*** demands that the predicate *write it all down* be understood as having the matrix subject *they* as predicand, and in *She asked George to write it all down* the syntax o ***ask*** requires the same VP to be understood with the matrix object *George* as predicand. But in other cases there is no syntactic determination: it can be arbitrary (*It's silly to panic* means it's silly for any arbitrary person to panic), or it can be left to be figured out by hearer or reader. In *Having done nothing all day, the idea of taking a walk appealed to Jim*, the hearer (or reader) can figure out that the predicand of the gerund-participial adjunct clause *having done nothing all day* is almost certainly intended to be Jim. In *While eating lunch, some new ideas came to mind*, the predicand for *eating lunch* was almost certainly intended to be whoever has the mind that came up with the ideas. Non-finite clause adjuncts that are positioned and worded carelessly so that the hearer has trouble identifying the right predicand are criticized by writing tutors and usage guides as 'dangling modifiers'.

Both *to*-infinitival clauses and gerund-participial clauses serve a wide range of functions as complements, modifiers, or supplements. *To*-infinitivals can be of interrogative clause type. Bare infinitivals (without the *to*) and past-participials, by contrast, are limited to just a few contexts where they are allowed.

An important distinction separates two kinds of intransitive verb taking infinitival complements. A verb like ***want*** takes a subject denoting an entity capable of wanting, and requires the infinitival complement to be understood with that entity as predicand: *Jill wanted to like the film* has me as the person who wanted something, and me as the person who would have liked the film if things had gone the way I wanted. At first *Jill seemed to like the film* might be taken as very similar, but it is not. ***Want*** is an ordinary verb taking a subject and infinitival complement; but ***seem*** is different. It is **transparent** to subject selection, in the sense that it imposes no requirements of its own on what its subject can be: it will accept whatever would work as the subject in its infinitival complement.

You can see this by contrasting active and passive variants of the embedded infinitival clause. *Alf hoped to impress Bob* has a completely different sense from *Bob hoped to be impressed by Alf* – the two sentences talk about different people's hopes. By contrast, *Alf appeared to impress Bob* and *Bob appeared to be impressed by Alf* have essentially the same

meaning: each is true (or false) if and only if the other one is). ***Appear*** is transparent to the grammatical relations that are switched when we form the passive.

Another way to see this involves existential clauses (with *there is*). Suppose we're talking about a spider being in the sink. *There seems* [*to be a spider in the sink*] is just as grammatical as *There is a spider in the sink*, but **There wants* [*to be a spider in the sink*] is not. The dummy *there* is compatible with ***be*** *a spider in the sink*, and that is enough to satisfy the verb ***seem***. But the verb ***want*** is very different: it needs a that denotes an entity capable of having desires. To be the subject of ***want*** an NP has to satisfy that condition as well as satisfying the requirements of the embedded infinitival VP. But an NP subject of ***seem*** acts as if ***seem*** wasn't there, and only the embedded clause mattered. Linguists talk about the subject of ***seem*** being 'raised' from the embedded clause.

There is an analog of this with transitive verbs that take an infinitical complement as well as an object: some take real objects that they relate to semantically, and others take any NP that is acceptable as the subject in the non-finite complement clause. *John persuaded a stranger to take the dog* has a totally different meaning from *John persuaded the dog to be taken by a stranger* (the first involves convincing a stranger, while the second involves convincing the dog); but there is really just one meaning for *John expected a stranger to take the dog* and *John expected the dog to be taken by a stranger*: under both descriptions, John just figured the dog handover would happen. The verb ***expect*** behaves as if it just accepts as its object whatever is the subject of the embedded clause, whereas ***persuade*** demands an object that denotes something actually susceptible to persuasion. For the very same reason, *We expected there to be a storm* is grammatical (***expect*** allows any old NP to be its object) but **We persuaded there to be a storm* is ungrammatical (there is no object for ***persuade***). Linguists speak of ***expect*** as taking a **raised object**.

Some of the same sort of behaviour as we find with infinitival complements can be found with gerund-participial complements.

To a very limited extent there are also clauses that not only don't have tense, they don't have a verb at all: *The meeting over at last, we gratefully adjourned*; but they are decidedly marginal.

Chapter 15: Coordinations

Joining constituents together with words of the **coordinator** category (*and*, *but*, *nor*, *or*) to make **coordinations** involves a syntax quite unlike anything seen in phrases or canonical clauses, though hardly any of it is treated in traditional grammar books.

A coordination doesn't have heads or dependents; all of its coordinate items have equal status; and there is no limit to how many of them there can be: *The flag had red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet stripes*.

The broad generalization about where you can put a coordination is that it can go anywhere its distinct coordinate parts could go. Because *green stripes* is grammatical, so is *red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet stripes*. There are a few exceptions; for example, we have to abstract away from agreement, because *Jo and Kim are a nice couple* is grammatical even though **Jo is a nice couple* and **Kim is a nice couple* are not. But for the majority of cases the generalization is sound.

The coordinates in a coordination do not have to be of the same category: *They are liberals and gay-friendly* grammatical although *liberals* is an NP and *gay-friendly* is an AdjP.

The coordinates must, however, have similar functions. This generalization makes a number of interesting predictions.

Coordinators can be prefixed to any category: clauses, phrases, or individual lexical categories. Generally, the order of coordinates can be altered without changing the meaning: *peas and cauliflower and beans and carrots* means the same as *carrots and beans and peas and cauliflower*.

A coordination must have a single choice of coordinator, but it may be marked on all coordinates except the first (*We grow peas and cauliflower and beans and carrots*), or just on the last coordinate (*We grow peas, cauliflower, beans, and carrots*), or possibly on none (*We grow peas, cauliflower, beans, carrots*).

The determinatives *both*, *either*, and *neither* are sometimes prefixed to the beginning of a coordination, depending on its coordinator: *both* goes with *and* (as in *both France and Germany*), *either* goes with *or* (*either Finland, Sweden, or Norway*), and *neither* goes with *nor* (*neither Latvia nor Lithuania*).

Coordination can be **layered**, by which we mean that some of the coordinates may themselves be coordinations. We would probably take *a tuna fish or ham and cheese sandwich* to be a coordination with *or* as its coordinator: it means "either a tuna fish sandwich or a ham and cheese sandwich"; the second coordinate is *ham and cheese*, which is itself a coordination with *and* as its coordinator.

Either main clauses or smaller constituents can be coordinated. Sometimes the results can be the same (*We filed in and sat down* means the same as *We filed in and we sat down*), and sometimes they are different (*one customer changed his mind and complained* does not mean the same as *one customer changed his mind and one customer complained*).

When the subject is a coordination with *and*, the predicate can apply either to each of the coordinates in the subject individually or to the whole group jointly: *Bill and Pam are highly qualified* applies the predicate to both individually; *Bill and Pam are married to each other* applies the predicate to neither of them individually but to the two of them jointly.

Various other properties can apply to some coordinations. They can have adjuncts attached inside the coordinates (*not just disappointed but deeply aggrieved*); there can be words omitted from a non-initial coordinate (*I joined the company in 2007, and Sharon ____ the following year*). Coordinators can link non-constituents (*either $100 now or $10 a week for a year*). You can coordinate two incomplete chunks and keep a bit that they share until later (*I noticed, but didn't comment on, the untidiness of his desk*). And finally, you can miss out a marked coordinate and fill it in later (*They're charging the manager with fraud – and his assistant*).

Chapter 16: Information Structure

Some of the syntactic constructions in English are discourse-sensitive: you can't use them just anywhere in paragraph or story or article. The context has to be right. These constructions include:

- **passive** clauses like *Distribution of plastic sachets of soy sauce in restaurants has been made illegal by the state of California*;
- **extraposition** clauses like *It became illegal to distribute plastic sachets of soy sauce in restaurants*;

- **existential** clauses like *There is a law in California banning distribution of plastic sachets of soy sauce in restaurants*;
- ***it*-cleft** clauses like *It was the distribution of plastic sachets of soy sauce that they banned*;
- **pseudo-cleft** clauses like *What they banned was the distribution of plastic sachets of soy sauce*;
- **dislocation** clauses like *It's banned now, the distribution of plastic sachets of soy sauce*;
- **complement preposing** clauses like *Distribution of plastic sachets of soy sauce in restaurants, the state of California banned*; and
- **complement postposing** clauses like *California banned for environmental reasons the distribution of plastic sachets of soy sauce in restaurants*.

There are also various constructions permitting the reduction of parts of clauses either to substitute elements (*I doubt it* for *I doubt that what you said is true*, or *I don't think so* for *I don't think what you said is true*), or to nothing at all (*They probably will* for *They probably will postpone the discussion until the next meeting*).