

CHAPTER

7
Parts of a
Sentence

LEARNING OUTCOMES

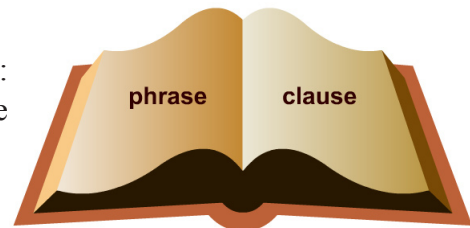
By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Differentiate between a phrase and a clause;
2. Differentiate the operations of special types of clauses such as the “that” clause and the “if” clause;
3. Identify what a subject is and its function in a sentence;
4. Identify what a predicate is and its function in a sentence; and
5. Identify what an object is and its function in a sentence.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few chapters, we learned that there are many kinds of parts of speech which come together to make the English language work. Each of these chapters is devoted to a particular kind of word, whether it is a noun, a verb, a preposition or so forth. In this chapter, we are going to focus on the sentence instead, and what constitutes a sentence.

There are basically two kinds of sentence parts: a phrase and a clause, and in this chapter we will consider both of them in detail.



7.1 PHRASES AND CLAUSES

7.1.1 Phrases

A phrase is part of a sentence that lacks a subject and a verb. It consists instead of a group of words but cannot function as a sentence. This group of words in a phrase acts together as if they are a single word. Phrases function, for examples, as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.

There are five basic types of phrases as shown in Figure 7.1.



Figure 7.1: Five basic types of phrases

(a) Prepositional Phrase

A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and ends with nouns or pronouns. These nouns or pronouns are known as the “objects” of the preposition. Most prepositional phrases function as adjectives or adverbs in a sentence.

Examples:

As adverb:

At the end of the month, John finally took his father to see the doctor.



As adjective:

The student with the best grades will get free movie tickets to watch the new blockbuster movie.



(b) Verb Phrase

A verb phrase consists of a verb and any of the auxiliaries (would, have, etc.). It functions as a verb in the sentence.

Consider the verb phrases in the following example:

Scholars **have argued** that finding alternative energy sources **would be** a good idea, and many attempts **have been made** over the years toward this goal, but so far, none **have achieved** much success.




(c) Infinitive Phrase

An infinitive phrase consists of the infinitive (“to” + verb) and an object. An infinitive phrase usually functions as a noun, but they can also be used as adverbs and adjectives.

Phrase	Functions
To make him happy is her greatest desire.	Noun, subject of sentence
Mr. and Mrs. Tan wanted to buy the expensive house .	Noun, object of sentence
Kassim brought someone to meet his father yesterday, but I don't know who.	Adjective: "to meet his father" modifies someone"
She will study to ensure that she gets better grades in the coming exam.	Adverb: "to ensure that she gets better grades" modifies "study"


(d) Gerund Phrase


We learned in chapter 3 that a gerund looks exactly like a present participle (-ing word) but functions as a noun. Hence, a gerund phrase would function like a noun as well.



Eating ice-cream calms him down.

Smoking five packets of cigarettes a day will damage your health in no time.





Your **scolding him** has left him dejected and miserable.

(e) Participial Phrase

A participial phrase is a group of words that begins with participles. Participial phrases often act like adjectives, but they can also replace nouns sometimes.

The girl **singing the song** is my sister.



The audience fell silent, **surprised at the beauty of her voice**.




In the following sentences, identify if the phrase or phrases are prepositional, verb, participial, gerund or infinitive.

1. Being happy is the most important thing in my life.
2. Forgotten by everyone in the village, Mariah tries to lead a new life.
3. She will try to be early, but she is afraid that she might be caught in traffic.
4. The employees have heard that they will receive a big bonus this year from the company.
5. Taking shelter in that old house would be a good idea except that I hear it is haunted by a vengeful ghost who would not be too happy about our being there.
6. Angered by her accusation, John decided never to help her again.
7. The dog barking all through the night belongs to Mrs. Selvam.
8. I brought a good friend to see her, but she refused to listen to his advice.
9. They have decided to visit Penang for their holidays.
10. Drinking a glass of milk every morning is good for your health.

7.1.2 Clauses


Unlike a phrase, a clause contains a subject, a verb, and usually an object as well.

Consider the following sentences:



Sally slept.

(subject [Sally] + verb = clause)



Sally ate a pie.

(subject + verb + object [a pie] = clause)

There are two kinds of clauses as shown in Figure 7.2.



Figure 7.2: Two kinds of clauses

(a) Independent Clause

An independent clause is a clause that can stand alone. It is also known as the main, simple, or primary clause. This means that it is a complete sentence on its own. The clauses given above are examples of independent clauses.

It is called a simple clause because it has the basic subject and predicate necessary to form a sentence. It is usually also very short. If we want to combine independent clauses to make bigger, more complex sentences, we use conjunctions or a semi-colon to do this.

Example 1:

Mr. Vikram is a rich man. He is a generous man.



1

Mr. Vikram is a rich **and** generous man.

2

Mr. Vikram is a rich man; he is a generous man.

We can combine the two independent clauses into a single one with the conjunction “and” or a semi-colon.

Example 2:

Kevin is very hardworking. He does not do well for exams.



Kevin is very hardworking, **but** he does not do well for exams.

Here are two independent clauses which can be combined into a single sentence with the conjunction “but”.

(b) Dependent Clause

A dependent clause, on the other hand, is the part of a sentence that cannot function on its own. It is also known as a “subordinate clause”, and it adds information to the sentence by acting as an adjective, adverb, or noun.

It is often the case that a dependent clause is introduced by a relative pronoun (see Chapter 2), a comma or a subordinating conjunction. Look for either commas or conjunctions to identify dependent clauses.

(i) **Dependent Clauses as Nouns.**

Examples:

I wonder **whether** John has booked the ticket?



Whatever is covered under the blanket has started to snore.

She knew **that** her father had a serious accident many years ago.



(ii) **Dependent Clauses as Adjectives.**

Examples:

Fred, **who** had been dating my sister for the last four years, finally proposed marriage.
(modifies Fred)



The man **who was cheated out of his savings** is wearing a suit **that he borrowed from his lawyer**.

(iii) **Dependent Clauses as Adverbs.**

A dependent clause introduced by a conjunction can act similarly to a one word adverb. Place a comma after the dependent clause if it appears before the main clause; do not use a comma if the dependent clause comes after the main clause.

Examples:

As soon as they were married, they began looking for a house to buy.



Although she searched every corner of the house, she could not find the missing earring.

The dog faithfully followed his master wherever he might go.



He only read the book so that he could claim that he was first to read it in class.

She married him because he reminded her of her ex-boyfriend.



If our guests hear loud screams coming from the tower, they may begin to suspect that there is a ghost.

Finally, there are two more kinds of dependent clauses which you should also consider. They are known as the **restrictive clause** and the **non-restrictive clause**.

(iv) Restrictive Clauses

A restrictive clause (also known as the “essential clause”) is usually a dependent clause acting as an adjective. It provides information that is necessary to identify the person or thing it is modifying.

Note that a comma is not needed to set off a restrictive clause from the rest of the sentence.

Examples:



Only someone **who** truly likes Sidney Sheldon will read all his novels.

The clause tells us what kind of person will read all Sheldon's novels.



The boy **who sits in the back of the class** seldom speaks.

The clause tells us which boy it is.

(v) Non-Restrictive Clauses

A non-restrictive clause (or “unessential clause”) gives information which is not strictly necessary. The information may be interesting, but it is not needed for us to be able to identify the person or thing that the clause modifies.

For non-restrictive clauses, you must use commas to set them off from the rest of the sentence.


Examples:

Tamara, **who** is standing by the door, teaches English and History at an expensive all-girls' school.



The clause modifies Tamara, but you don't need the clause to know who she is because she has been named.

Now, compare the following restrictive and non-restrictive clauses:



Non-restrictive:
The pianist, who wore glasses, launched into a powerful concerto.

In this sentence, there is only one pianist, so the clause is not vital to identify her.

Restrictive:
The pianist who wore glasses was chosen to appear on "Selamat Pagi Malaysia".

In this sentence, it is important that the clause is there to help us identify which pianist has been chosen to appear on the TV program.



There are two independent clauses in each of the following sentences. Combine them to form a single sentence using the relative pronoun provided in the brackets.

Note that you may have to change the structure of the sentence whenever necessary.

1. Lila was a married woman. She lived in Kuala Lumpur. (who)
2. She is sitting in the room. The room is located next to the kitchen. (which)
3. The television has been stolen. My family missed watching it. (which)
4. The old lady was standing by the road. I stopped for her. (who)
5. She received a letter. It was handwritten. (that)
6. That's the man who painted the picture. I was sold for a lot of money. (which)
7. I'm interested to meet that woman. Her face reminds me of my mother. (whose)

8. That rich woman bought the house. It is located by the seaside. (that)
9. We followed the sign. It shows the direction to the village. (which)
10. The inspector spoke to the man. The man witnessed the robbery last night. (who)



Identify if the sentence in capital letters is a dependent or independent clause.

1. If you don't fix the car, IT WILL CONTINUE TO LEAK OIL.
2. WHILE THE CAR IS BEING FIXED, we will need to car pool with our neighbors.
3. It isn't necessary to study all night for tomorrow's test IF YOU HAVE STUDIED CONSISTENTLY EVERYDAY.
4. Before you take part in the competition tomorrow, YOU WILL NEED TO REST.
5. I can't buy the apartment SINCE I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY.
6. WHETHER HE ATTENDS THE PARTY OR NOT, I have decided to go.
7. I WILL STOP PRACTISING THE PIANO when you put the baby to bed.
8. Until he apologises to me for his rude behaviour, I REFUSE TO TALK TO HIM.
9. I brought along my umbrella BECAUSE IT LOOKED LIKE IT MIGHT RAIN.
10. SINCE YOU'VE ALREADY SEEN THIS SHOW, we will watch a different one instead.

7.1.3 Special Types of Clauses

(a) That Clause

That clauses are usually statements which are introduced by the word “that”.

For example:

I agree **that** this story is interesting.



They decided **that** eating out too often is bad for their health.



The problem with “that” clauses is usually related to its verb and object (see 7.4).

Consider the following examples:



I concluded **that** the reason behind poor health is lack of sleep.

I assured **that** they could handle the exams.



I convinced **that** the exams are not too difficult.

Notice that sentences 2 and 3 are not correct. In sentence 2, the pronoun “they” is unclear and in sentence 3, it is not clear who is being convinced by me. In these two sentences, an indirect object is necessary to clarify the meaning.

For example:

I assured **my students** **that** they could handle the exams.



I convinced **my students** **that** the exams are not too difficult.

Hence, verbs like “assured” and “convinced” require indirect objects for the clause to work. Then, there are some verbs that can either use an indirect object or not. But with such verbs, the preposition “to” is also necessary.

For example:

The salesperson **proved** *(to the customers)* that this product is the best in the market. She **mentioned** *(to them)* that many people have used it and found it very helpful.



The teacher **announced** *(to the students)* that class will be cancelled next week. She **declared** *(to them)* that she is going on strike.



Finally, there are “that” clauses in which the indirect object is optional.

For example:

I **promised** *(them)* that the test would be easy.



Table 7.1 summarises the discussion on “that” clauses, with some examples.

Table 7.1: That Clause

Type of “that” Clause	Examples of Verbs
Does not need an indirect object	agree, answer, notice, assert, conclude, know, realise, state, think
Indirect object is optional, but if used, it requires “to”	admit, explain, mention, point out, prove, reply
Must use an indirect object	assure, convince, inform, notify, remind, tell
Indirect object is optional	promise, show, teach, warn, write

(b) If Clause

The “if” clause is also known as the “conditional clause” because it states a condition. An “if” clause is always a dependent clause, and must be connected to an independent clause to form a complete sentence. If the “if” clause precedes the independent clause, the two clauses must be separated by a comma. If the “if” clause comes after the independent clause, then a comma is not necessary.

Examples:

If you study hard, you will pass your test.



Even if you study hard, it doesn't necessarily mean you will do well in your exams.

There are four types of “conditions” indicated by the “if” clause.

(i) Zero Conditional

Functions:

- Both clauses (dependent and independent) are in the simple present tense.

Example:

If you read widely, you will learn many things.



- The Zero Conditional is used to talk about situations that are always true if something happens.

Example:

If you stare at the sun for too long, you will hurt your eyes.



(ii) Type-One Conditional (Real Conditional)

Functions:

- The dependent clause (the “if” clause) is in the simple tense; the independent clause is in the future tense.

Example:

If you want, I will talk to him about your problem.



- The type-one conditional shows a possible result based on an action taken in the present.

We will be late if we don't leave now.



- For purposes of politeness, sometimes both clauses are in the future tense.

Example:

If you will help me, I will repay your kindness with my friendship.

**(iii) Type-Two Conditional**

Functions:

- The dependent clause is in the simple past tense, and the independent clause is in the “would + infinitive” form.

Example:

If I became President, I would eradicate world hunger.

- This conditional refers to present and future situations. It is used to talk about unreal - impossible, improbable or imaginary - situations. It refers to an unlikely or hypothetical condition and its probable result.

Example:

If you had studied more, you would pass the test.

**(iv) Type-Three Conditional**

Functions:

- Use the past perfect in the if-clause and “would have + past participle” in the result clause.

Example:

If he had worked harder, he would have saved enough money to buy a house.



- This clause is used to talk about a situation in the past that did not happen.

Example:



If you had invited them, they would have come.



For more details on the “if” clause, visit the following website:
<http://www.perfectyourenglish.com/grammar/if.htm>

7.2 SUBJECTS

Earlier, we learned that a complete sentence must consist of a subject and a predicate (and sometimes an object as well). The subject of a sentence is the person, place, thing, or idea that is doing or being something. You can identify the subject of a sentence if you can find the verb. In other words, the subject is that which the verb refers to.

Consider the following example:

Tom is driving the red car.

In this sentence, the verb is "driving", and the person doing the verb is "Tom". So "Tom" is the subject.



Consider the following sentence:

The desks in the classroom must be replaced.

The verb is "replaced", but what is it that has to be replaced? The answer is "the desks:", which means that "the desks" is the subject.



A **simple subject** consists of a single subject in the sentence. The two examples above consist of single subjects. Sometimes, there may be compound subjects in a sentence.

Consider the following sentences with compound subjects:

John and Mary will be married tomorrow.



Red, blue, green and purple are my favourite colours.

Sometimes, the subject of a sentence can be an entire clause.

Consider the following example:

What he has learned during his visit to Cambodia
will remain with him for the rest of his life.



It is obvious that the verb “will remain” does not refer to “what he has learned”, or “his visit to Cambodia”, or even “he”, but the entire clause.

In English, the subject of a command or order is usually left out of the sentence because it is understood who the subject already is.

Before answering the questions, read the
instructions carefully.



Although there is no evident subject in the sentence, it is clear that the subject is whoever that is attempting the questions.



Identify the subject in the following sentences.

1. His fear of heights kept him from visiting high places.
2. There will be three concerts in the arts centre tonight.
3. Would you willingly exchange your Italian stamp with my Canadian one?
4. Despite the heavy storm last night, the village suffered relatively minor damages.
5. After they went shopping, Ramlah and her brother bought a birthday present for their mother.
6. Since coming to Malaysia, John has put on a lot of weight.
7. Yesterday afternoon, the students planted a tree in the school compound to commemorate Earth Day.
8. Her knowledge of history helped the team win the competition.
9. Meanwhile, fog and darkness was gathering in the village.
10. Step to the left and watch out for the wet paint on the wall.

7.3 PREDICATE

If the subject is the person, thing or place doing or being something, then a **predicate** completes the sentence. A **simple predicate** consists of only a verb, a compound verb or a verb phrase.

The ice **melted**.

The ice **has been melting**.

The ice **melted, diluted and made the drink tasteless**.

A **compound predicate** consists of two (or more) such predicates, all of which pertain to the same subject.

The ice **began to melt and soon made the drink tasteless**.

7.4 OBJECT

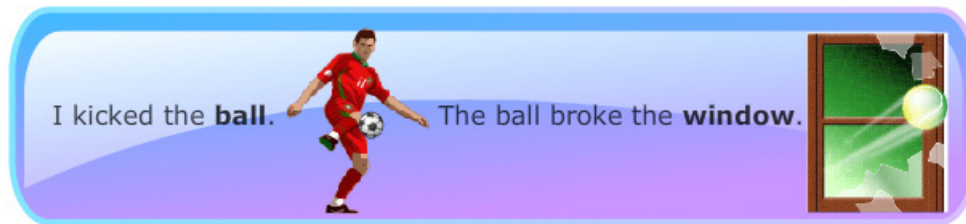
Sometimes a sentence may also include an object.

There are two kinds of objects in a sentence as shown in Figure 7.4.

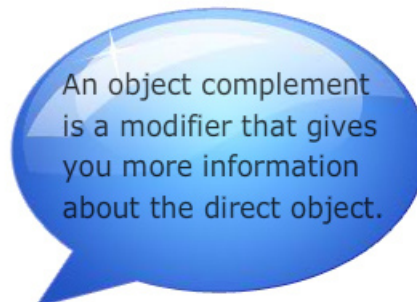


- A direct object is the person, place or thing that things are being done to.
- In other words, they are the receiver of action within a sentence.

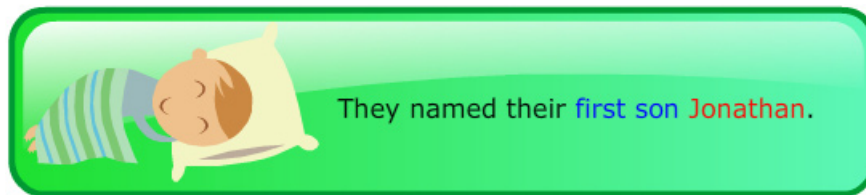
Consider the following examples:



It is important that you differentiate between the **direct object** and an **object complement**.



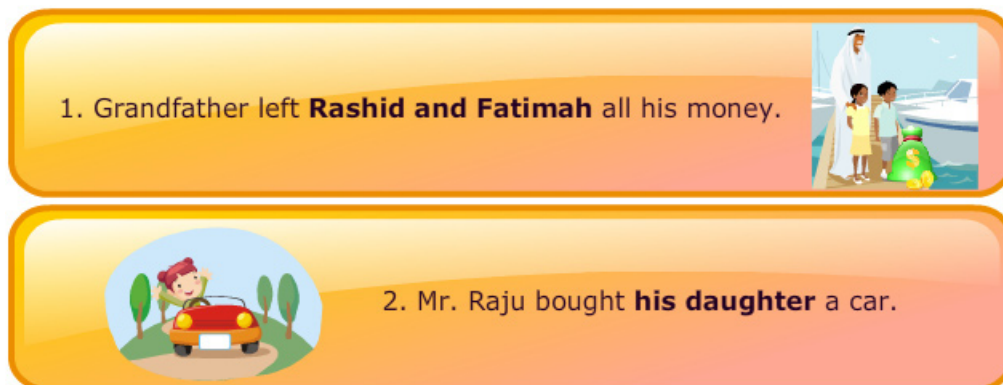
For example:



In this sentence, “first son” is the direct object while “Jonathan” is the object complement, which describes the direct object.

In some sentences, the action of the verb is done to someone or something that is not the direct object, but to an object that is related to the direct object. This kind of object is known as an **indirect object**.

Consider the following examples:



In the first sentence, the direct object is “money” and the indirect (compound) object is “Rashid and Fatimah”.

Now, can you figure out which are the direct and indirect objects in the second sentence?



Pronouns take different forms when they are used as the subject (I, he, she, we) or object (me, him, her, us) of a sentence.

Please refer to Chapter 2 for elaboration.

SUMMARY

1. The clause or simple sentence is the basic unit that embodies our construal of representational meaning and interpersonal meaning.
2. The clause is also the unit whose elements can be reordered in certain ways to facilitate the creation of textual meaning.

KEY TERMS

Sentence

Infinitive Phrase

Phrase

Gerund Phrase

Clause

Participial Phrase

Prepositional Phrase

Verb Phrase

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