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Introduction

To express a full range of thoughts and ideas, we need to be able to combine words into larger units - phrases and sentences.

We all know what a noun is because we were taught that it is a name, place, person, thing or event. A verb is an action. An adjective modifies or describes a noun, and an adverb modifies a verb. A pronoun replaces a noun

The yinkish dripner bloked quastofically into the nindin with the pidibs quirshickly above the mjornk.

Yinkish: It is an adjective because it is between the and a supposed noun (dripner); it also takes the suffix -ish which creates adjective

Dripner: It is a noun because it is after the supposed adjective; it comes after the; it is the subject of the sentence as well.

Blorked: It is a verb because it comes after the subject; it takes the tense marker -ed.

Quastofically: This is possibly an adverb since it has the adverbial marker -ly; it comes after the supposed verb blorked.

Nindin: It is possibly a noun since it occurs after the

Syntactic Categories

Lexical Category (Open Class)

Nouns (N)
Verbs (V)
Adjectives (A/Adj)
Adverbs (Adv)
Prepositions (Prep)

Lexical or open categories express content and allow new additions. There are five main members in this group: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions. An open class means we can add new words to this class.

Note that the reason for this categorization is due to three qualities: Inventory, Productivity, and Semantics:

1. Inventory: this refers to the number of items in each category
- Lexical: Unlimited

Functional Category (Closed Class)

Determiners (Det)
Negation (Neg)
Degree words (Deg)
Auxiliary verbs (Aux)

functional or closed categories express function or grammatical information. This group is often fixed with very limited members

- Functional: Limited; Countable
- 2. Productivity: this refers to the possibility of creating new items
- Lexical: Yes
- Functional: No
- 3. Semantics: this is about the meaning behind the words/items
- Lexical: There is an association of meanings
- Functional: Contentless; often needing help from those with meaning

the open class contains an unlimited number of words.

This is what we refer to as productivity

Lexical categories are meaningful while functional categories are usually countable and often need help from words belonging to a lexical category.

Lexical Categories

Nouns

Love is clearly a noun but it is an abstract concept that does not fall under the tangible meanings of noun. Similarly, 'kick' doesn't fall under the traditional meanings because it refers to an action—not be confused with the verb 'to kick' (remember zero derivation)

For nouns, there are special affixes that indicate that word is a noun. Some of these suffixes include -ment, -tion, -ity, -ness, etc. These endings can be found in nouns such as improvement, construction, reality and happiness. These suffixes are what we call derivational suffixes.

Nouns can also carry inflectional suffixes which add grammatical information to nouns; these include the plural suffix -s that indicates plurality when it attaches to a noun and -'s which expresses possession.

For example, in the word pencils, the suffix -s makes the noun 'pencil' plural (i.e. many pencils). The reason why pencil is a noun is because it can take the plural suffix -s

Morphological Distribution of Nouns

- reality is a noun based on its morphological form.
 - It carries the derivational suffix -ity which signals a noun.

- This is what we call morphological distribution or morphological evidence
- Therefore, morphological evidence refers to the (type of) affix that is attached to a word.
- Consider the word *developers*. This word is a noun for two reasons:
 - 1) The suffix -er which attaches to verbs and creates nouns as in *teacher*, *driver*, etc.
 - 2) The suffix -s which is a plural marker and attaches to nouns
- Note that the suffix -s only attaches to nouns that follow the regular plural formation of nouns. Some nouns, however, do not follow this rule. For instance, consider the word *child*. The plural form of this word is *children*, not **childs*. In this case, we call *children* an irregular form that does not follow the regular rule.

Syntactic Distribution of Nouns

- The man pushed the girl at the airport.
Indeed, the underlined word is a noun since it is preceded by the determiner *the*. We can also say it is a noun because it is the subject of the sentence since subjects are usually nouns. As you can see, in this example, there is no morphological evidence to help us identify *man* as a noun

There are different syntactic criteria to determine whether a word is a noun or not. These may include:

1. It is preceded by a determiner: a. Some children b. The art of speaking c. Many students

The underlined words are nouns since they are preceded by a determiner. A determiner is a word that normally precedes a noun to *identify* it. In the above examples, *some*, *the*, and *many* are determiners. You will learn more about determiners in the 'Functional Categories' section of the reading.

2. It is the subject or the object of the sentence: a. My son plays the guitar. b. That tired student is applying to law school. c. My manager's daily reminders made us angry.

As you can see, the underlined words are also nouns since they function as subjects or objects of the sentences. Subjects are, in most cases, nouns.

3. They sometimes come after adjectives.

Consider the following examples: a. *A hungry lion* b. *Those happy children* c. *Two constructive comments*

In these examples, the word *hungry*, *happy*, and *constructive* are adjectives which are followed by nouns *lion*, *children*, and *comments*.

4. They may be preceded by a preposition.

Prepositions are usually words that come before nouns and show the relationship between the noun and what comes before that preposition. Some English prepositions are *by*, *from*, *in*, *to*, *during*, *after*, *before*, etc. In the following examples, prepositions come before nouns. a. *by noon* b. *before the trip* c. *during class* d. *under the desk*

Verbs

Verbs usually indicate the action of the sentence; however, verbs may also express *perception*, *mental states* or *connecting functions*. The first group is called **action verbs** while the second group is called **state verbs**.

Types of Verbs

Some verbs are **main verbs** and some verbs are **helping verbs** or **auxiliaries**. Helping verbs include *regular auxiliaries* and *modal auxiliaries*

1. Main Verb

Main verbs express actions or states of being and may occur independently.

2. Helping Verb or Auxiliary Verbs

Helping verbs support main verbs and cannot occur independently.

a. Regular Auxiliaries

(BE, DO, HAVE)

The three regular auxiliary verbs in English are **BE**, **DO** and **HAVE**. In the following sentences, the regular auxiliaries are underlined while main verbs are *italicized*.

a. Our neighbours are *mowing* the lawn.

AUX=BE

b. He did not *get* any sleep last week.

AUX=DO

c. The students have not *submitted* their assignments yet.

AUX=HAVE

b. Modal Auxiliaries

(can, could, will, would, shall, should, may, might, must, etc.)

The modal auxiliaries are underlined while main verbs are *italicized*.

a. You must *stop* at the red light. b. It might *rain* tomorrow. c. He should see a doctor.

Can you tell the meaning of the modals in the above sentences? In the first sentence, the modal 'must' conveys *obligation*. In the second sentence, the modal 'might' means *probability*, and in the third sentence 'should' suggests *advice*.

Question: *If there is more than one auxiliary or helping verb in a sentence, can you determine the order of the helping verbs with regards to the main verb?*

- a. First comes the **modal auxiliary**
- b. Next comes any form of **HAVE**
- c. Then comes a form of **BE**
- d. Finally comes the **Main Verb (MV)**

Morphological Distribution of Verbs

The word *realize* is a verb based on its morphological form. It carries the derivational suffix *-ize* which signals a verb.

Consider the word *identified*. This word is a verb for two reasons:

- 1) the suffix *-ify* which attaches to a root and creates a verb as in *verify*, *mystify*, etc.
- 2) the suffix *-ed* which is a past tense marker and attaches to verbs.

Note that the suffix *-ed* only attaches to verbs that follow the regular past tense formation of verbs. Some verbs, however, do not follow this rule. For instance, consider the verb *think*. The past form of this word is *thought*. In this case, we call *thought* an irregular form that is it does not follow the regular rule.

Syntactic Distribution of Verbs

The man was pushing the girl at the airport.

Correct! The underlined word is a **verb** since it is preceded by the auxiliary *was*

There are different syntactic criteria to determine whether a word is a noun or not.

These may include:

1. Verbs are preceded by an auxiliary:

- a. Julie had made plans to go to Europe. b. The children were playing in the sandbox. c. I am writing a novel. d. Sam could buy his ticket now.*

As we saw earlier, main verbs can be preceded by an auxiliary (regular or modal).

Notice how the main meaning or specification of the action always comes from the main verb. Auxiliary verbs simply add grammatical information or tell us something about the intent, possibility or advice.

2. Verbs come after the subject of the sentence:

- a. Usman bought a new car. b. Thornetta Davis sings the blues with passion. c. The man with an ugly scar sits by the river every morning. d. I jogged late in the evenings.*

English is a language that requires the verb to be preceded by a subject. Since the subject typically denotes the doer of the action, or the experience of a state, it makes sense for the verb to follow the subject. Note that not all languages follow this convention.

3. Verbs may come after negation:

Finally, verbs often occur after negations. Take a look at the sentences below:

- a. I did not sleep well this week. b. Yuka has not played the guitar in many years. c. Omeed will not come to the party. d. They are not planning their school year.*

To form negated sentences, the negation *not* must occur before the main verb!

Constituent

Constituency Tests

As the name suggests, we are going to test the small group of units in a clause to see whether or not they are considered constituents. There are many tests that are available, but we will focus on the following:

- a. **Replacement Test** (aka pro-form)
- b. **Stand-Alone Test**
- c. **Movement Test** (clefting)

2.1. Replacement/Pro-form Test

If you can replace one word or group with a single word, then the selected text is probably a constituent. In this case, you will need to try to replace the selected text/phrase with a word that is *similar* to the syntactic category of the original text. For instance, if the selected text is a noun phrase, it is best to replace it with a *pronoun* or a *similar noun*. Let's look at the following example.

(3) [*The quick brown fox*] jumps over the lazy dog.

The answer is **Yes!** If you replace [*the quick brown fox*] with the pronoun '*it*', the sentence is still grammatical:

(4) [*It*] jumps over the lazy dog.

2.2. Stand-Alone Test

The stand-alone test is also called the Q/A (question/answer) test. In this test, you essentially remove the constituent-in-question and see whether or not the selection can be used as a response to a question. If so, then it is probably a constituent. Now consider the sentence (3) again with the selected constituent. Is the bracketed string of words a constituent under this test?

The quick brown fox jumped over [*the lazy dog*].

Apply the stand-alone test:

(5) **Question:** What did the quick brown fox jump over?

Answer: The lazy dog

As you can see, the question/answer pair works well. Therefore, we can say that [*the lazy dog*] is a constituent.

How about this one:

The [*quick brown fox*] jumped over the lazy dog.

(6) **Question:** *the who jumped over the lazy dog?

Answer: quick brown fox

As you can see, you cannot form a question here since a part of the constituent 'the quick brown fox' is left behind. Therefore, [*quick brown fox*] is not a constituent in this sentence.

2.3. Movement/Clefting Test

2.3.1. Movement

Movement is another constituency test. If you can move a group of words around in the sentence, and the sentence that is formed is grammatical (and the meaning is still retained), then they form a constituent. Therefore, movement test is a tool which allows us to move a group of words as a unit. Consider the following sentence:

(7) I like [*big bowls of green beans*].

Let's see if the bracketed words form a constituent:

(8) **Movement Test:** *Big bowls of green beans, I like!*

As you can see, the sentence is still grammatical, and the meaning is the same. Therefore, [*big bowls of green beans*] is a constituent.

Remember the movement test is only reliable when you keep the meaning the same as in the original sentence (or as close to it as you can).

2.3.2. Clefting

Clefting involves putting a string of words between **It was** (or **It is**) and a **that** at the beginning of the sentence.

(9) She received [*a beautiful bouquet of flowers*].

(10) **Clefting Test:** It was [*a beautiful bouquet of flowers*] that she received.

We conclude that [*a beautiful bouquet of flowers*] forms a constituent since the resulting sentence is grammatical.

