

# Head Words and Phrases

Tallerman: Chapter 4

# Heads and their Dependents

- **Properties of heads**
  - Head bears most important semantic information of the phrase.
  - Word class of head determines word class of entire phrase.
    - [<sub>NP</sub> very bright [<sub>N</sub> sunflowers] ]  
[<sub>VP</sub> [<sub>V</sub> overflowed] quite quickly]  
[<sub>AP</sub> very [<sub>A</sub> bright]]  
[<sub>AdvP</sub> quite [<sub>Adv</sub> quickly]]  
[<sub>PP</sub> [<sub>P</sub> inside] the house]

- Head has same distribution as the entire phrase.
  - Go inside the house.  
Go inside.
  - Kim likes very bright sunflowers.  
Kim likes sunflowers.
- Heads normally can't be omitted
  - \*Go the house.
  - \*Kim likes very bright.

- Heads select dependent phrases of a particular word class.
  - The soldiers released the hostages.
  - \*The soldiers released.
  - He went into the house.
    - \*He went into.
  - bright sunflowers
    - \*brightly sunflowers
  - Kambera
    - **Lalu** mbana-na na lodu  
too hot-3SG the sun  
'The sun is hot.'
    - \***Lalu** uma  
too house

- Heads often require dependents to agree with grammatical features of head.
  - French
    - un       livre    vert  
a:MASC book green:MASC  
'a green book.'
    - une    pomme   verte  
a:FEM apple   green:FEM  
'a green apple'
- Heads may require their dependent to occur in a particular grammatical case (government)
  - Japanese
    - Kodomo-**ga** hon-**o**       yon-da  
child-NOM   book-ACC read-PAST  
'The child read the book.'

- **More about dependents**

- Adjuncts and complements

- Adjuncts are always optional; complements are frequently obligatory
    - Complements are selected by the head and therefore bear a close relationship with it; adjuncts add extra information.

- Adjuncts:

**very bright** [<sub>N</sub> sunflowers]  
[<sub>V</sub> overflowed] **quite quickly**  
[<sub>V</sub> talks] **loudly**  
[<sub>V</sub> sings] **in the bath**  
**right** [<sub>P</sub> outside]

- Complements:

[<sub>V</sub> admires] **famous linguists**  
[<sub>V</sub> wondered] **whether to leave**  
[<sub>A</sub> fond] **of chips**  
[<sub>P</sub> inside] **the house**  
[<sub>V</sub> resorted] **to the instructions**

- When a head selects the exact preposition within a dependent PP, the PP is a complement of the head.

- In English, a complement typically occurs closer to the head than any adjuncts:
  - We met the new students yesterday.
  - \*We met yesterday the new students.
  - that picture of John on the table.
  - \*that picture on the table of John
- Passivization test:
  - Direct object complements of verb can be passivized
    - » All our friends admired Mel.
    - Mel was admired by all our friends.
    - » The magician disappeared the next day.
    - \*the next day was disappeared by the magician.
  - NPs can be passivized out of complement PPs:
    - » Jack laughed at the clown.
    - The clown was laughed at by Jack.
    - » Jack worked at the office
    - \*The office was worked at by Jack.
    - » Jack decided on the boat. (ambiguous)
    - The boat was decided on by John. (unambiguous)



- Ditransitive verbs take two complements, either an NP and a PP, or two NPs
  - *send, show, write, buy, give*
  - Kim gave the chips to Lee.  
Kim gave Lee the chips.
  - Direct object (*the chips*), indirect object ( *(to) Lee*)
- Some verbs take an NP and a PP complement, but don't have the NP NP alternation:
  - Kim put the potatoes into the pan.  
\*Kim put the pan the potatoes.
- Prepositional verbs take a PP complement headed by a specific preposition.
  - This cake consists of fruit and nuts.  
I applied for a new job.  
Bill laughed at the clown  
Sue relied on Mary.

- Some verbs select both an NP and a clausal complement (finite, non-finite, or either)
  - Kim persuaded Bill that he should leave.  
Kim persuaded Bill to leave.
  - *convince, allow, encourage, force, permit*
- Often a verb can appear in more than one subclass
  - Chris couldn't remember that long shopping list.
    - » NP complement
  - Chris remembered that they'd left it on the shelf.
    - » Finite clause complement
  - Chris usually remembers to pick up the list.
    - » Non-finite infinitival clause complement
  - Chris remembered leaving it on the shelf.
    - » Non-finite participial clause complement

- Other heads and their complements
  - Prepositions have variety in their complement structure but less than verbs
    - Intransitive:  
She lives nearby (\*the bank).
    - Transitive  
She went into \*(the house).
    - Either transitive or intransitive:  
He went inside (the house).
    - Clausal complement  
We left before Mary arrived.
    - PP complement  
The spider emerged from under the bed.

- Adjectives have less variation
  - Obligatory complement
    - » John is fond \*(of Mary).
    - This speech is totally devoid \*(of sense).
  - Optional PP complement with a specific preposition:
    - » good at spelling
    - free from any doubts
    - sorry for your friend
  - Optional clausal complement
    - » Kim felt sorry that she had been late.
    - » *sorry, happy, angry, glad, delighted*

- Nouns never take obligatory complements
  - Optional PP complements with a specific preposition
    - » a manufacturer of tires
    - » Lee's belief in extraterrestrials
  - Optional clausal complements
    - » the fact that Bill was late
    - » their demand for the library to stay open later
- Complementizers (C) can be viewed as heads selecting the clause they introduce to form a Complementizer Phrase (CP).
  - Mel said [<sub>CP</sub> **that** she was leaving]
  - [<sub>CP</sub> **For** Kim to go too] would be surprising.
  - I don't know [<sub>CP</sub> **whether** you should go]
  - I don't know [<sub>CP</sub> **whether** to go]

## – Determiners and nouns

- Traditionally determiners are considered dependents of the head noun in a noun phrase.

- They are sometimes called ‘specifiers’, a sort of adjunct occurring in a fixed position in the phrase, and other closed class words that occur with heads of different types are also termed ‘specifiers’:

- » **this** man  
**very** happy  
**very** happily  
**right** inside

- Recently, linguists have proposed that the determiner is the head of the “noun phrase”, and that this should be considered a Determiner Phrase (DP) which has an NP complement to the head D:

- [<sub>DP</sub> this [<sub>NP</sub> box of dates] ]

- Determiners fulfil a number of criteria for head status.
  - Many determiners can have the same distribution as the entire phrase.
    - » I'll have *this/that/these/those/either/some*.
  - Determiners are frequently obligatory.
    - » \*I'll have *box of dates*.
  - The head D requires its NP complement to agree with certain properties of the head:
    - » this box of dates
    - » these boxes of dates
- The “DP hypothesis” is a controversial one still, and we will continue viewing the noun as head of the phrase in question.

- **Where does the head occur in a phrase?**

- Head-initial languages

- English

- [<sub>VP</sub> **likes** chips]
      - [<sub>AP</sub> **fond** of chips]

- [<sub>PP</sub> **into** the water]
      - [<sub>NP</sub> **admiration** for Mary]

- Welsh

- [<sub>PP</sub> **dros** y ffordd]
      - over the road

- Ddaru Ceri [<sub>VP</sub> **yfed** paned o de]
      - did Ceri drink cupful of tea
      - ‘Ceri drank a cup of tea’

- Tinrin

- u [<sub>VP</sub> **tramwâ** mwâ ke maija wake]
      - I know that you much work
      - ‘I know that you work hard.’

- [<sub>NP</sub> **kò** rugi beebòrrò urá mwîê]
      - news about drowning POSSESSIVE woman
      - ‘the news about the woman’s drowning’

– Head-final languages

• Japanese

- Taroo-ga [VP Hanako-ni hana-o **ageta**]  
Taro-NOM Hanako-DATIVE flower-ACC gave  
‘Taro gave Hanako flowers.’
- [PP tomodati-**to**]  
friend-with  
‘with a friend’
- [NP sono tesuto e no **zisin**]  
that test to POSSESSIVE confidence  
‘confidence in that test’

• Lezgian

- Adaz [NP mektebda k’el-da-j **mumkinwal**] xa-na-c  
he in.school study-FUT-PARTICIPLE possibility be-PAST-NEG  
‘He did not have the possibility to learn in school.’
- Adaz [VP zun cpi-z klig-zawa-jdi **aku-na**].  
He I selves-DATIVE look-IMPf-PARTICIPLE see-PAST  
‘He saw that I was looking at them.’

# Head-Marking and Dependent-Marking Languages

- **Definitions and illustrations**

- Syntactic relationships between heads and dependents

- **Head**

- postposition/preposition
      - verb
      - (possessed) noun
      - noun

- **Dependent**

- object NP
      - arguments (subject, object)
      - possessor NP
      - adjective

- English

- **in** [<sub>NP</sub> the shower]

- (**P** + NP)

- Kim **loves** Lee

- (Su + **V** + Obj)

- Kim's **house**

- (possessor NP + **N**)

- red **book**

- (modifying A + **N**)

– Head preposition/postposition and its NP object

• **Dependent-marking**

– German: prepositions ‘govern’ the case of their object

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| » Für meinen Freund | mit meinem Freund     |
| for my:ACC friend   | with my:DATIVE friend |
| ‘for my friend’     | ‘with my friend’      |

– Chechen

» Beera-na t’e  
child-DATIVE on  
‘on the child’

• **Head-marking**

– Kaqchikel

ru-ma ri-achin  
3SG-by the-man  
‘by the man’

– Welsh

|           |              |              |
|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| » arna i  | arno fo      | arni hi      |
| on:1SG me | on:3M:SG him | on:3F:SG her |
| ‘on me’   | ‘on him’     | ‘on her’     |

– The clause: a head verb and the arguments of the verb

- **Dependent-marking**

- Japanese

- » Taroo-**ga** tegami-**o** kaita  
Tarro-NOM letter-ACC wrote  
‘Taroo wrote a letter.’

- German

- » Der Hund sah den Vogel  
the:NOM dog saw the:ACC bird  
‘The dog saw the bird.’
    - » Den Vogel sah der Hund.  
The:ACC bird saw the:NOM dog  
‘The dog saw **the bird**.’

- **Head-marking**

- Kambera

- » Hi **ku**-palu-ya

- so 1SG:SU-hit-3SG:OBJ

- ‘So I hit him.’

- » I Ama<sub>S</sub>, **na**<sub>S</sub>-kei-**ya**<sub>O</sub> na ri muru<sub>O</sub>

- the father 3SG:SU-buy-3SG:OBJ the vegetable green

- ‘Father buys the green vegetables.’

- Lit., ‘Father he-buys-it the green vegetable’

- Kaqchikel

- » Per ma x-**e-r**-komsaj-ta

- but NEG CMPL-3PL:OBJ-3SG:SU-kill-IRREALIS

- ‘but he didn’t kill them’

– Head noun and dependent possessor NP

- **Dependent marking**

- English

- » Kim's house

- Finnish

- » tytö-**n** kissa  
girl-GEN cat  
'girl's cat'

- **Head-marking**

- Saliba

- » Sine natu-**na**  
woman child-3SG  
'the woman's child'

- Kaqchikel

- » ri-ya-Ros i ru-k'in ri-Enrik **ki-te** **ki-tata**  
the-FEM-Rosa and 3SG-with the-Enrique 3PL-mother 3PL-father  
'Rosa and Enrique's mother and father'

– Head noun and dependent AP

- **Dependent-marking**

- Spanish: adjective agrees with noun in gender

|                 |                |                  |                |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| » el            | niño pequeño   | la               | niña pequeña   |
| the:MASC        | boy small:MASC | the:FEM          | girl small:FEM |
| ‘the small boy’ |                | ‘the small girl’ |                |

- **Head-marking**

- Persian: noun is marked as having a dependent

- » kûh-e bolând
    - mountain high
    - ‘high mountain’

- **Some typological distinctions between languages**
  - **Head-marking languages**
    - Abkhaz, Mayan (Jacaltec, Tzotzil, Cakchiquel), Athabaskan (Navajo), Iroquoian (Mohawk, Cherokee), Algonquian (Cree, Blackfoot), Siouan (Crow, Lakhota), Salish (Squamish)
  - **Dependent-marking languages**
    - Indo-European (German, Greek, Armenian, Slavic [Russian, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian]), Pama-Nyunngan (Dyirbal, Yidiny), Northeast Caucasian (Chechen), Dravidian (Malayalam).
  - **Neither head-marking nor dependent-marking**
    - Chinese

|                                                                            |                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Wo</b> changchang jian <b>ta</b><br>I often see he<br>‘I often saw him’ | <b>Ta</b> changchang jian <b>wo</b><br>he often see I<br>‘He often saw me’ |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- English

- A little dependent-marking

- » Kim's house    Possessor marker 's
    - » **He** met **him**    Case-marking in pronouns
    - » **these** books    Determiner-noun number agreement

- A little head-marking

- » Bill smokes    Subject-verb agreement
- I **am**, she **is**, we **are**

- Mixtures are not unusual

- German: dependent-marking plus subject-verb agreement

- » Ich      **sehe**          den      Vogel
    - I:NOM    see:PRES:1SG the:ACC bird
    - 'I see the bird.'
    - » Wir      **sehen**          den      Vogel
    - we:NOM   see:PRES:1PL the:ACC bird
    - 'We see the bird.'