

# Clause Structure

Tallerman: Chapter 3

# Simple Sentences

- **The clause and the simple sentence**
  - **A clause has a subject and a predicate**
    - *Predicate* in this sense comprises the verb + modifiers and phrases selected by the verb.
  - **A *simple sentence* is a sentence that contains just one clause.**
    - A little initiative goes a long way towards a better workout.
    - Childreach has hitched its Wagon to a Hollywood star vehicle in no uncertain terms.
    - The priceless publicity boost from the movie landed in the charity's lap two years ago.

[*The Times-Picayune and Parade*]

- **An independent clause can stand alone, without being attached to another clause.**
- **An independent clause in many languages must contain a finite verb.**
- ***Finite verbs* are marked for grammatical categories associated with verbs: e.g. tense, aspect, person-number agreement.**

– **Independent clauses in other languages:**

- *Na-bànjál-ya*      na ana-na      lai nyungga      (Kambera)  
3SG:SU-put-3SG:OBJ the child-3SG at I  
‘He left his child with me.’
- Dytyna *spyt*.      (Ukrainian)  
child      sleep:PRES:3SG  
‘The child is asleep.’
- Ape    yu    ati    o    de.      (Ndyuka)  
there your heart FUT be  
‘Your heart will be there.’

– **Some languages allow independent clauses consisting of a subject and predicate with no verb:**

- Al-bet      da      nadif katir      (Chadian Arabic)  
DEF-house this:M:SG clean very  
‘This house is very clean.’

- **Finiteness and auxiliaries**
  - **A finite verb can be a *main verb* or an *auxiliary verb*.**
    - An auxiliary always co-occurs with a main verb.
      - Kim hasn't read this book but Bill has [elliptical]
    - In English only one verb per clause can be finite.
      - John doesn't like coffee.
      - \*John doesn't likes coffee.
      - \*John doesn't liked coffee.
  - **A main verb typically has more semantic content than an auxiliary.**
    - 'Auxiliaries are words that express the tense, aspect, mood, voice, or polarity of the verb with which they are associated' (Schachter 1985).

## – **Modal auxiliaries**

- Express permission, necessity, ability, etc.
- English modals don't take 3:SG marker -s
  - \*Kim *mays* come over tonight.
- English modals do show non-past/past distinction:
  - *Can/could, may/might, shall/should, will/would, must*
- Modals precede the bare uninflected form of the verb.
  - You **could** *be* happy.

## – **Aspectual auxiliaries: *be, have***

- Main verb uses: *Kim is happy, I had a cold*
- Aspectual auxiliary uses:
  - Progressive: Lee is singing.
    - » Some form of *be* precedes the present participle
  - Perfect: Mary has eaten.
    - » Some form of *have* precedes the past participle

- **Main verb appears at the end of a string of auxiliaries**
- **The first verb is always the finite verb**
- Jack *may have been working* late.

*may*

MODAL + BARE INFINITIVE

*have*

HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

*been*

BE + PRESENT PARTICIPLE

*working*

MAIN VERB

- **Non-finite verbs**

- Some languages only have finite verbs (Mohawk, Nahuatl, Nuggubuy, Ainu)
- Non-finite verbs are generally not marked for grammatical categories.

- **Infinitives:**

- Not particularly common
- Some languages have special inflections
  - French *-er, -ir, -re*
- In English, we have to identify an infinitive by its distribution
  - *to* is an infinitive marker
  - The verb *be* has a special infinitive form (*be*)
    - » I want **to be** in Paris.
  - Modals require a following bare infinitive
    - » He might **be** in Paris.



## – The present participle in English:

- Used in the progressive construction, with auxiliary BE:
  - Kim was **laughing** loudly.
- Also other functions:
  - Kim kept on **laughing**.
  - **Laughing** loudly, Kim rushed into the room.
  - I found Kim **laughing** in the corner.
- Present participles can modify nouns, where it can be debated whether they are adjectives or verbs:
  - This very **boring** film
  - A very **uninteresting** idea
  - A (\*very) **sleeping** child
- *-ing* forms used as nouns are called “gerunds”:
  - Their **singing** was beautiful.
  - **Driving** is a hassle in Vancouver.

## – The past participle in English

- Used in perfect aspectual constructions, with auxiliary HAVE:
  - Kim has **eaten** squid.
- Many irregularities: *eaten, swum*  
Regular verbs use the past tense form: *talked, earned*
- The past participle is also used in passives with auxiliary BE:
  - This book was **written** last year
- Past participles have other functions:
  - **Beaten** soundly, the team sadly returned home.
  - We found the vase **broken** into pieces
- Past participles can modify nouns, where it can be debated whether they are adjectives or verbs:
  - A **written** report
  - An **unwritten** rule

# Complex Sentences

- **Coordinating conjunctions can conjoin main clauses** (not called ‘complex sentences’).
  - The Rhode Island-based charity is one of the world’s biggest non-sectarian children’s aid organizations, **and** Ndugu is a 6-year-old named Abdallah Mtulu. [*The Times-Picayune*]
- **Complex sentences have one main clause and (at least) one subordinate clause.**
  - When you are ready to add to the weight you are lifting, never go above a 3 percent to 5 percent increase in any given week.
  - Childreach officials say they are satisfied with their disclosures.
  - In her lifetime Woolf was considered to have come from a family of great beauties. [*The Times-Picayune*]

- **Subordinate clauses are embedded within another clause, the matrix (or ‘main’) clause.**
  
- **Subordinate clauses can have different functions in the main clause.**
  - Sometimes the subordinate clause is selected by the verb in the main clause as an object complement clause:
    - John expects that Mary will leave.
  - Sometimes the subordinate clause functions as the subject of the main clause:
    - For Mary to leave surprised John.
  - Sometimes the subordinate clause has an adverbial function:
    - John arrived before Mary left.
  - Sometimes the subordinate clause modifies a noun:
    - The news that Mary left surprised John.
    - The news that I reported surprised John.

- **The main clause does not have to precede the subordinate clause(s).**
  - As the incursion was happening, Iraqi officials denied that American forces were in the city. [*New York Times*, 4/5/03]
  
- **Each sentence has just one main clause, but a potentially infinite number of subordinate clauses.**
  - I believe that John expected Bill to arrive before his parents returned home after they took their trip to Italy.
  - *Recursion* is found in all human languages.
  
- **‘Main clause’ does not equate to ‘main verb’.**
  - All clauses (except for those with no verbal predicate) have a main verb and maybe auxiliaries.

- **Distinguishing English main and subordinate clauses:**
  - **All main clauses contain a finite verb; subordinate clauses may contain a finite verb too, but not all do.**
    - [We just wanted [to let them [know [we are here] ] ] ]  
[*New York Times*, 4/5/03]
  - **Only embedded clauses can have a complementizer in English.**
    - It is no surprise **that** scholars are sensitive about outsiders trespassing on their turf. [*The Times-Picayune*]
    - **For** John to leave early would upset Mary.
    - I wonder **whether** Jack will come.

- **Complementizers can't introduce main clauses in English:**
  - \***Whether** it will rain today.
  - \***That** my friend claimed Sue liked chips.
  
- **However, languages with complementizers in main clauses are widespread.**
  - **Aya** Ali ketab darad? (Persian)  
Whether Ali books has  
'Does Ali have any books?'
  - **Qu'**elle est bavarde (French)  
that she is talkative  
'What a chatterbox she is'

[Examples from Radford 1988]

– **Only main clauses have subject-auxiliary inversion to form yes-no questions.**

- As the incursion was happening, **did Iraqi officials** deny that American forces were in the city?
- \*As the incursion was happening, Iraqi officials denied that **were American forces** in the city?

– **Only main clauses have tag questions.**

- As the incursion was happening, Iraqi officials denied that American forces were in the city, **didn't they?**
- \*As the incursion was happening, Iraqi officials denied that American forces were in the city, **weren't they?**