

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-bànjal-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 katab 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?**