Chapter 2 **From Elly van Geldern 2017 *Minimalism***

Building blocks

This chapter reviews the lexical and grammatical categories of English and provides criteria on how to decide whether a word is, for example, a noun or an adjective or a demonstrative. This knowledge of categories, also known as parts of speech, can then be applied to languages other than English. The chapter also examines pronouns, which have grammatical content but may function like nouns, and looks at how categories change.

Categories continue to be much discussed. Some linguists argue that the mental lexicon lists no categories, just roots without categorial information, and that morphological markers (e.g. *–ion, -en*, and zero) make roots into categories. I will assume there are categories of two kinds, lexical and grammatical. This distinction between lexical and grammatical is relevant to a number of phenomena that are listed in Table 2.1. For instance, lexical categories are learned early, can be translated easily, and be borrowed because they have real meaning; grammatical categories do not have lexical meaning, are rarely borrowed, and may lack stress. Switching between languages (code switching) is easier for lexical than for grammatical categories.

Lexical	**Grammatical**
First Language Acquisition starts with lexical categories, e.g. *Mommy eat.*	Borrowed grammatical categories are rare: the prepositions *per, via,* and *plus* are the rare borrowings.
Lexical categories can be translated into another language easily.	Grammatical categories contract and may lack stress, e.g. *He**’s** going* for *he **is** going.*
Borrowed words are mainly lexical, e.g. *taco, sudoko, Zeitgeist.*	Code switching between grammatical categories is hard:
Code switching occurs: I saw *adelaars* (English Dutch) eagles	******Ik am talking to the neighbors*. I (Dutch – English)

Table 2.1: The practical use of a distinction between lexical and grammatical categories

Traditional parts of speech are noun, pronoun, adjective, determiner, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. This use is meant in the question in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Parts of speech

We'll divide the parts of speech into three groups and ignore the interjections since they can be of any category.

The outline of this chapter is as follows. In section 1, we examine the lexical categories, N, V, A, and P. The grammatical categories D, T, and C are discussed in section 2. Section 3 treats pronouns separately because they have a little of both categories. Finally, section 4 gives a brief overview of the chapter.

1 Lexical categories

The five lexical categories in English are Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, and Preposition. They carry meaning and words with a similar (synonym) or opposite meaning (antonym) can often be found. Frequently, the noun is said to be a person, place, or thing and the verb is said to be an event or act. These are semantic definitions. Semantic definitions are not completely adequate and we'll need to define categories syntactically (according to what they combine with) and morphologically (according to how the words are formed).

As just mentioned, a noun generally indicates a person, place or thing (i.e. this is its meaning). For instance, *chair, table*, and *book* are nouns since they refer to things. However, if

the distinction between a noun as person, place, or thing and a verb as an event or action were the only distinction, certain nouns such as *action* and *destruction* would be verbs, since they imply action. These elements are nevertheless nouns because of their syntactic behavior and morphological shape. In (1) and (2), *actions* and *destruction* are preceded by the article *the*, *actions* can be made singular by taking the plural *–s* off, and *destruction* can be pluralized with an *–s*. That makes them nouns.

(1) The **actions** by the government helped a lot.
(2) The earth quake caused the **destruction** of that city.

Apart from plural *-s*, other morphological characteristics of nouns are shown in (3) and (4). Possessive *'s* (or genitive case) appears only on nouns, e.g. the noun *Emily* in (3), and affixes such as *-er* and *-ism*, e.g. *writer* and *postmodernism* in (4), are also typical for nouns.

(3) **Emily's** uncle always knows the answer.
(4) That **writer** has destroyed **postmodernism**.

Syntactic reasons for calling certain words nouns are that nouns are often preceded by *the*, as *actions* and *government* are in (1), as *destruction* is in (2), and as *answer* is in (3). Nouns can also be preceded by the demonstrative *that*, as in (2) and (4), and, if they are followed by another noun, there has to be a preposition, such as *by* in (1) and *of* in (2), connecting them.

The nouns *action* and *destruction* have verbal counterparts, namely *act* and *destroy*, and (1) and (2) can be paraphrased as (5) and (6) respectively.

(5) The government **acted** too late.
(6) The earth quake **destroyed** the villages.

Just as nouns cannot always be defined as people or things, verbs are not always acts, even though *acted* and *destroyed* are. The verb *be* in (7), represented by the third person

present form *is*, does not express an action. Hence, we need to add state to the semantic definition of verb, as well as emotion to account for sentences such as (8).

(7) The story **is** interesting.

(8) The memoir **seemed** nice (to me).

Some of the morphological characteristics of verbs are that they can express tense, e.g. past tense ending *–ed* in (5), (6), and (8); that the verb ends in *-s* when it has a third person singular subject and is present tense; and that it may have an affix typical for verbs, namely *-ize*, e.g. in *modernized* in (4) (note that it is *-ise* in British English). Syntactically, they can be followed by a noun, as in (6), as well as by a preposition and they can be preceded by an auxiliary, as in (4). Some of the major differences between nouns and verbs are summarized in Table 2.2 below.

In English, nouns can easily be used as verbs and verbs as nouns. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the context in which a word occurs, as in (9), for example, where Shakespeare uses *vnckle*, i.e. `uncle', as a verb as well as a noun.

(9) York: Grace me no Grace, nor **Vnckle** me,
I am no Traytors **Vnckle**; and that word Grace
In an vngracious mouth, is but prophane.
(Shakespeare, *Richard II*, II, 3, 96, as in the First Folio edition)

Thus, using the criteria discussed above, the first instance of `uncle' would be a verb since the noun following it does not need to be connected to the verb by means of a preposition, and the second `uncle' is a noun since `traitor' has the possessive *'s*. Note that I have left Shakespeare's spelling, punctuation, and grammar as they appear in the First Folio Edition. I follow the original spelling in other examples as well.

Other examples where a word can be both a noun and a verb are *table, to table; chair, to chair; floor, to floor; book, to book; fax, to fax; telephone, to telephone*; and *walk, to walk*. Some of these started out (historically) as nouns and some as verbs. For instance, *fax* is the

shortened form of the noun *facsimile* which became used as a verb as well; *pdf* (portable document format) is another noun that is now used as a verb. A sentence where *police* is used as noun, verb, and adjective respectively is (10a); (10b) is nicely alliterating where *pickle* is used as a verb, adjective, and noun; and (10c) has *fast* as adjective, adverb, and noun.

(10) a. **Police police police** outings regularly in the meadows of Malacandra.

b. Did Peter Piper **pickle pickled pickles**?
(Alyssa Bachman's example)

c. The **fast** girl recovered **fast** after her **fast.**
(Amy Shinabarger's example)

As a summary, I provide a table. Not all of these properties are always present of course. Morphological differences (a to c; h to j) involve the shape of an element while syntactic ones (d to f: k to m) involve how the element fits in a sentence. The semantic differences (g and n) involve meaning, but remember to be careful here since nouns, for instance, can have verbal meanings as in (1) and (2) above.

		Noun (N)		Verb (V)
Morphology	a.	plural *-s* with a few exceptions, e.g. *children, deer, mice*	h.	past tense *-ed* with a few exceptions, e.g. *went, left*
	b.	possessive *'s*	i.	third person singular agreement *-s*
	c.	some end in *-ity, -ness -ation, -er, -ion, -ment*	j.	some end in *-ize,-ate*
Syntax	d.	may follow *the/a* and *this/that/these/those*	k.	may follow an auxiliary e.g. *have* and *will*
	e.	modified by adjective	l.	modified by adverb
	f.	followed by preposition and noun	m.	followed by noun or preposition and noun
Semantics	g.	person, place, thing	n.	act, event, state, emotion

Table 2.2: Some differences between N(oun) and V(erb)

Differences (e) and (l) are evident in (11), which shows the adjective *expensive* that modifies (i.e. says something about) the noun *book* and the adverb *quickly* that modifies the verb *sold out.*

(11) That **expensive** book sold out **quickly**.

Adverbs and Adjectives are semantically very similar in that both modify another element, i.e. they describe a quality of another word: *quick/ly, nice/ly*, etc. The main syntactic distinction is as expressed in (12).

(12) **The Adjective-Adverb Rule**
An adjective modifies a noun;
an adverb modifies a verb and a degree adverb modifies an adjective or adverb.

Since an adjective modifies a noun, the quality it describes will be one appropriate to a noun, e.g. nationality/ethnicity (*American, Navajo, Dutch, Iranian*), size (*big, large, thin*), age (*young, old*), color (*red, yellow, blue*), material/personal description (*wooden, human*), or character trait (*happy, fortunate, lovely, pleasant, obnoxious*). Some instances of the use of the adjective *nice* are given in (13) and (14). Traditionally, the use in (13) is called predicative and that in (14) attributive.

(13) The book is **interesting.**
(14) An **interesting** book is on the table.

Adverbs often modify actions and will then provide information typical of those, e.g. manner (*wisely, fast, quickly, slowly*), as in (11), or duration (*frequently, often*), or speaker attitude (*fortunately, actually*), or place (*there, abroad*), or time (*then, now, yesterday*). *As well* and *also*, and negatives such as *not* and *never,* are also adverbs in that they usually modify the verb. When adverbs modify adjectives or other adverbs, they are called degree adverbs (*very,*

so, too). These degree adverbs have very little meaning (except some that can add flavor to the degree, such as *exceedingly* and *amazingly*) and it is hard to find synonyms or antonyms. It therefore makes more sense to consider this subgroup of adverbs grammatical categories. They also do not head a phrase of their own, and when it looks as if they do, there really is another adjective or adverb left out. The *very* in (15) modifies *important*, which is left out.

(15) How important is your job to you? **Very.**
(from CBS 60 Minutes 1995).

The adverbs *very* and *quickly* appear in (16) and (17).

(16) This Zuni figurine is **very** precious.
(17) They drove **very quickly.**

In (13) and (14), *interesting* modifies the noun *book*. In (15), the degree adverb *very* modifies the adjective *precious*; and in (17), it modifies the adverb *quickly*, which in its turn modifies the verb *drove*.

Sentence (16) shows something else, namely that the noun *Zuni* can also be used to modify another noun. When words are put together like this, they are called compound words. Other examples are given in (18) and (19).

(18) So the principal says to the [**chemistry** teacher], "You'll have to teach physics this year."
(COCA Science Activities 1990)
(19) Relaxing in the living room of his unpretentious red [**stone** house], …
(COCA Forbes 1990)

Some of these compounds may end up being seen or written as one word, e.g. *girlfriend, bookmark, mail-carrier, fire engine, dog food,* and *stone age.* When we see a noun modifying another noun, as in (18) and (19), they can be compounds. A compound has a distinct stress

pattern from two words: try pronouncing `a greenhouse' and `a green house'. The space and hyphen between the two words indicate degrees of closeness.

Often, an adverb is formed from an adjective by adding *-ly*, as in (17). However, be careful with this morphological distinction: not all adverbs end in *–ly,* e.g., *fast, hard,* and *low*, whereas some adjectives end in *–ly,* e.g. *friendly, lovely, lively,* and *wobbly*. Check to see what it modifies in a sentence, using rule (12). For instance, in (20), *fast* is an adjective because it modifies the noun *car*, but in (21), it is an adverb since it modifies the verb *drove*.

(20) That **fast** car must be a police car.

(21) That car drove **fast** until it hit the photo radar.

In a number of cases, words such as *hard* and *fast* can be adjectives or adverbs, depending on the interpretation. In (22), *hard* can either modify the noun *person*, i.e. the person looks tough or nasty, in which case it is an adjective, or it can modify *look* (meaning that the person was looking all over the place for something, i.e. the effort was great) in which case *hard* is an adverb.

(22) That person looked **hard.**

Some of the `discrepancies' between form and function are caused by language change. For instance, the degree adverb *very* started out its life being borrowed as an adjective from the French *verrai* (in the 13th century) with the meaning `true', as in (23).

(23) *Under the colour of a **veray** peax, whiche is neuertheles but a cloked and furred peax.*
`Under the color of a true peace, which is nevertheless nothing but a cloaked and furred peace.' (Cromwell's 16th century Letters)

Here, what looks like a *–y* ending is a rendering of the Old French *verrai.* In Old English, adverbs do not need to end in *–lich* or *–ly*. That's why `old' adverbs sometimes keep that shape, e.g. *first*

in (24) is a `correct' adverb, but *second* is not. The reason that *secondly* is prescribed rather than *second* is that it was borrowed late from French, when English adverbs typically received –*ly* endings.

(24) … **first** I had to watch the accounts and **secondly** I'm looking at all this stuff for when I start my business. (from a conversation in the BNC Corpus)

A last point to make about adjectives and adverbs is that most (if they are gradable) can be used to compare or contrast two or more things. We call such forms the comparative (e.g. *better than*) or superlative (e.g. *the best*). One way to make these forms is to add *-er/-est*, as in *nicer/nicest*. Not all adjectives/adverbs allow this ending, however; some need to be preceded by *more/most*, as in *more intelligent, most intelligent*. Sometimes, people are creative with comparatives and superlatives, especially in advertising, as in (25) and (26), or in earlier forms as in (27).

(25) mechanic: "the **expensivest** oil is ..."

(26) advertisement: "the **bestest** best ever phone".

(27) To take the **basest** and **most poorest** shape ... (Shakespeare, *King Lear* II, 3, 7)

There are also irregular comparative and superlative forms, such as *good, better, best*; *bad, worse, worst*. These have to be learned as exceptions to the rules, and can be played with, as in the pun `When I am bad, I am better'.

To summarize, the table below lists differences between adjectives and adverbs. Not all of these differences have been discussed yet, e.g. the endings *–ous, -ary, -al,* and *–ic* are typical for adjectives and *–wise*, and *–ways* for adverbs, but they speak for themselves.

		Adjectives (Adj)		Adverbs (Adv)
Morphology	a.	end in *–ous, -ary, -al, -ic*; mostly have no *–ly;* and can be participles	d.	end in *-ly* in many cases, *–wise*, *-ways*, etc. or have no ending (*fast, now*)
Syntax	b.	modify N	e.	modify V, Adj, or Adv
Semantics	c.	describe qualities typical of nouns, e.g: nationality, color, size.	f.	describe qualities of verbs, e.g: place, manner, time, duration, etc. and degree in adjectives/ adverbs

Table 2.3: Differences between adjectives and adverbs

Prepositions typically express place or time (*at, in, on, before*), direction (*to, from, into, down*), causation (*for*), or relation (*of, about, with, like, as, near*). They are invariable in form and have to occur before a noun, as (28) shows, where the prepositions are in bold and the nouns they go with are underlined.

(28) **With** their notes **about** biology, they went **to** the woods.

On occasion, what look like prepositions are used on their own, as in (29).

(29) He went **in**; they ran **out**; and he jumped **down**.

In such cases, these words are considered adverbs, not prepositions. The difference between prepositions and adverbs is that prepositions come before the nouns they relate to and that adverbs are on their own, modifying something but movable.

Some other examples of one word prepositions are *during, around, after, against, despite, except, without, towards, until, till,* and *inside*. Sequences such as *instead of, outside of, away from, due to,* and *as for* are also considered to be prepositions, even though they consist of more than one word. Infrequently, prepositions are transformed into verbs, as in (30).

(30) They **upped** the price.

Some prepositions have very little lexical meaning and are mainly used for grammatical purposes. For instance, *of* in (31) expresses a relationship between two nouns rather than a locational or directional meaning.

(31) The door **of** that car.

Prepositions are therefore a category with lexical and grammatical characteristics. Here, however, I will treat them as lexical, for the sake of simplicity. A partial list is given in Table 2.4.

about, above, across, after, against, along, amidst, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beneath, beside(s), between, beyond, by, concerning, despite, down, during, except, for, from, in, into, inside, like, near, of, off, on, onto, opposite, outside, over, past, since, through, till, to, toward(s), under, underneath, until, up, upon, with, within, without

Table 2.4: Some prepositions in English

2 Grammatical Categories

The grammatical categories are Determiner, Auxiliary, Coordinator, and Complementizer. In this chapter and the next, we will use D for all determiners, T (tense) for the auxiliaries - later, we add A(spect) and M(ood) - and C for both coordinator and complementizer. It is hard to define grammatical categories in terms of meaning because they have very little. Their function is to make the lexical categories fit together.

The determiner category includes the articles *a(n)* and *the*, as well as demonstratives, possessive pronouns, possessive nouns, some quantifiers, some interrogatives, and some numerals. So, determiner (or D) is an umbrella term for all of these. They will be summarized in Table 2.5. Determiners occur with a noun to specify which noun is meant or whose it is.

The indefinite article is often used when the noun that follows it is new in the text/conversation, such as the first mention of *an elephant* in (32) is. The second mention of *elephant* is preceded by the definite article *the*. Both belong to the category of determiner.

(32) **An elephant** marched hundreds of kilometres and briefly crossed into Somalia this month marking the first time **the animal** has been seen in the country in 20 years, conservationists said Wednesday. (http://phys.org/news/2016-03-elephant-somalia-years.html)

There are four demonstratives in English: *this, that, these*, and *those*, with the first two for singular nouns and the last two for plural ones. Sentence (33a) includes a singular and a plural demonstrative. Possessive pronouns include *my, your, his, her, its, our*, and *their*, as in (33b). Nouns can be possessives as well, but in that case they have an *-'s* (or ') ending, as in (33c).

(33) a. **That** coyote loved **these** trails.

b. **Their** kangaroo ate **my** food.

c. **Gucci**'s food was eaten by Coco.

In (33b), *their* and *my* specify whose kangaroo and whose food it was, and the possessive noun *Gucci's* in (33c) specifies whose food was eaten.

Determiners, as in (32) and (33), precede nouns just like adjectives but, whereas a determiner points out which entity is meant (it specifies), an adjective describes the quality (it modifies). When both a determiner and an adjective precede a noun, the determiner always precedes the adjective, as in (34a), and not the other way round, as in (34b) (indicated by the asterisk).

(34) a. **Their** irritating owl ate my delicious food.

b. *Irritating **their** owl ate delicious my food.

Interrogatives such as *whose* in *whose books*, *what* in *what problems*, and *which* in *which computer* are determiners. Quantifiers such as *any*, *many, much,* and *all* are usually considered determiners, e.g. in *much work, many people*, and *all research*. Some are used

before other determiners, namely, *all, both*, and *half*, as in (35). These quantifiers are called pre-determiners, and abbreviated Pre-D. Finally, quantifiers may be adjectival, as in *the many problems* and in (36).

(35) **All** the books; **half** that man's money; **both** those problems.

(36) The challenges are **many/few.**

Numerals are sometimes determiners, as in *two books*, and sometimes more like adjectives, as in *my two books*. Table 2.5 shows the determiners in the order in which they may appear. There are three quantifiers that appear before definite articicles, demonstratives, and possessives and these are labeled pre-determiners. I have added the category adjective to the table since some of the words that are clear determiners can also be adjectives (e.g. appear after copula verbs). The categories are not always completely clear-cut, and (37) sheds some light on the difference.

	Pre-D	**D**	**Post-D or Adj**
quantifier	all, both half	some, many, all, few(er) any, much, no, every, less, etc.	many, few
article		the, a	
demonstrative		that, this, those, these	
possessive		my, etc., NP's	
interrogative		whose, what, which, etc.	
numeral		one, two, etc.	one, two, etc.

Table 2.5: Determiners

(37) **The Determiner-Adjective Rule**

A Determiner points to the noun it goes with or who it belongs to;

An Adjective gives background information about the noun.

In this book, and in current generative grammar, the category of T stands for Tense and this category contains the finiteness, tense, and agreement information. T can house auxiliaries,

when it is finite, and the infinitival marker *to*, when it is non-finite. We'll first look into finiteness and then at the kinds of auxiliaries English has.

The difference between finite and non-finite clauses can be seen as follows. A complete sentence consists of a subject and a finite verb. A finite verb agrees with the subject (which is only visible in the present tense) and indicates present or past. Its subject has nominative case, which can only be seen in the case of pronouns in Modern English, i.e. the subject pronoun of finite verbs must be nominative *I, you, he, she, it, we* and *they*, not accusative *me, him, her, us* or *them* (*you* and *it* are both nominative and accusative). Table 2.6 provides all personal and possessive pronouns in English.

	1S	2S	3S	1P	2P	3P
Nominative (subject)	I	you	he, she, it	we	you	they
Accusative (object)	me	you	him, her, it	us	you	them
Genitive (possessive)	my (mine)	your(s)	his, her(s), its	our(s)	your(s)	their(s)

Table 2.6: The case of personal and possessive pronouns

Finite sentences include a finite verb or a verb group with one finite verb as its first (or only) member. A verb group is centered around a lexical verb, *going* in (38), but it is *have* that makes the entire sentence finite.

(38) I [**have** been going] there frequently. finite sentence with finite verb *have*

Have is finite in (38) because it shows subject agreement (*have* rather than *has*, as in (39)), indicates present tense (*have* rather than *had*, as in (40)), and has a nominative subject (*I* rather than *me*, as in the ungrammatical (41)).

(39) He **has** been going there frequently.

(40) He **had** been going there frequently.

(41) *Me have been going there frequently.

Note that in some varieties of English, sentences such as (41) are grammatical.

Modals, as in (42), are finite even though (for historical reasons) they never display subject-verb agreement.

(42) I **might** have done that.

Only finite sentences are complete sentences. Most of us, however, use fragments in informal speech, in poetry, e.g. Carl Sandburg in the excerpt in (43) from *Follies*, or even in formal writing.

(43) Shaken,
The blossoms of lilac,
And shattered,
The atoms of purple.
Green dip the leaves,
Darker the bark,
Longer the shadows.

Nevertheless, incomplete sentences are generally frowned upon in formal writing. Sentence (44) below is not a complete sentence but is a sentence fragment.

(44) Mentioning syntactic trees yesterday.

Sentence (55) can become a full sentence by adding a subject and a finite verb as in (45).

(45) **I was** mentioning syntactic trees yesterday.

As will be shown in a later chapter, non-finite sentences can only be part of other sentences. It is always a good idea to count the number of lexical verbs. For instance, how many lexical verbs are there in (46)?

(46) I have heard her sing too often.

In (46), there are two lexical verbs, *heard* and *sing*, and only the first verb group is finite since *have* is finite (e.g. the subject of *have* is nominative *I).* The verb group that *sing* is the sole member of is non-finite since its subject is accusative *her*.

Other sentences that include a non-finite verb are (47) and (48), with the non-finite verbs in bold. Note that the infinitive marker *to* is part of the verb group.

(47) **Seeing** the ordinary as extraordinary is something we all like to do.

(48) She forgot **to google** them.

In (47), *seeing, is, like,* and *do* are lexical verbs, but only *is* and *like* are finite. In (48), *forgot* and *google* are the lexical verbs, but only *forgot* is finite.

A sentence can contain many verb groups, a (potentially) indefinite number if the speaker had enough energy and could continue, as in (49). This shows the recursive nature of language, as mentioned in chapter 1.

(49) I noticed that she mentioned that he was saying that she should tell him ...

Imperatives are used to order someone to do something. They often lack a subject, as in (50), but this need not be the case, as (51) shows. Imperatives are complete sentences and not sentence fragments.

(50) Draw the trees for these sentences.

(51) You, draw trees for this.

As its name implies, the auxiliary verb functions to help another verb, but does not itself contribute greatly to the meaning of the sentence. Verbs such as *have, be,* and *do* can be full verbs, as in (52), or auxiliaries, as in (53). In (52), *have* has a meaning `to possess' and occurs without any other lexical verb. In (53), on the other hand, *have* does not mean `possess' or

`hold', but contributes to the grammatical meaning of the sentence, namely past tense with present relevance. The same is true for *be* in (54); it contributes to the grammatical meaning emphasizing the continuous nature of the event.

(52) I **have** a book in my hand.

(53) I **have** worked here for 15 years.

(54) That reindeer may **be** working too hard.

Because auxiliaries help other verbs (except when they are main verbs as in (52)), they cannot occur on their own, as the ungrammaticality of (55) shows.

(55) *I must a book.

The characteristics of auxiliaries in English are summarized in Table 2.7 and a list of some of them appears in Table 2.8.

a.	They must be used with a lexical verb (unless the verb is elided)
b.	They have little meaning; rather, they express tense, mood, and aspect
c.	They invert in questions, as in ***Are*** *you going?*
d.	They occur before *n't*, as in *You **are**n't going.*
e.	They are used in tags, as in *You are going, **are**n't you?*
f.	They are used for emphasis, as in *If you **do** go, let me know.*

Table 2.7: Characteristics of auxiliary verbs

modal:	may, might, can could, shall, should, will, would, must
semi-modal:	have to, ought to, wanna, gonna, need, dare, etc.
perfect:	have
progressive:	be
dummy:	do
passive:	be, get

Table 2.8: Auxiliaries in English

Coordinators are relatively simple and join similar categories or phrases. Complementizers introduce subordinate clauses and look remarkably similar to prepositions and adverbs. We abbreviate both as C.

Coordinators such as *and* and *or* join two elements of the same kind, e.g. the nouns in (56).

(56) Rigobertha **and** Pablo went to Madrid **or** Barcelona.

They are also sometimes called coordinating conjunctions, as in Figure 2.2, but in this book, we'll use coordinator. There are also two-part coordinators such as *both ... and, either ... or*, and *neither ... nor*.

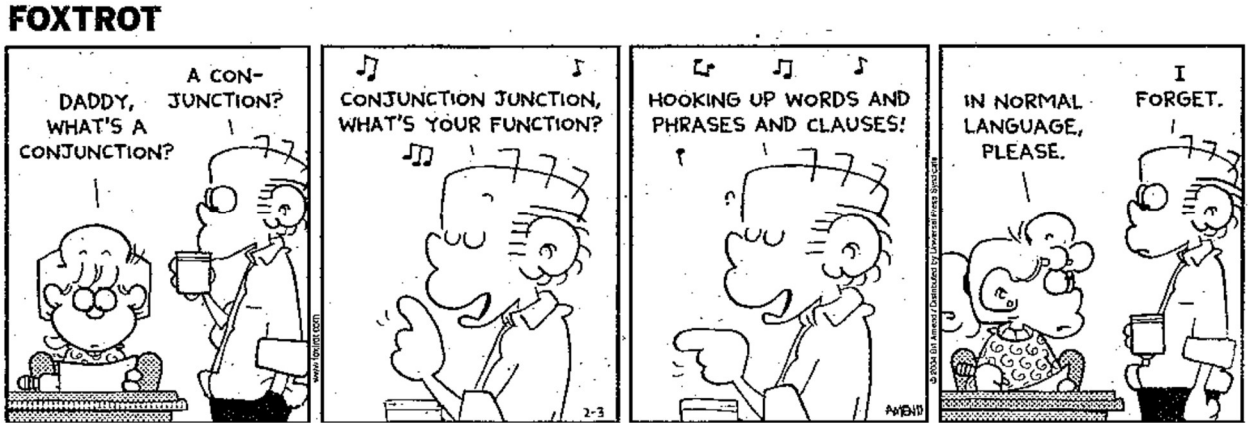

Figure 2.2: Connecting sentences

Complementizers such as *that*, *because, whether*, *if*, and *since* join two clauses where one clause is subordinate to the other, as in (57). The subordinate clause is indicated by means of brackets.

(57) Rigobertha and Pablo left [**because** Isabella was about to arrive].

They are also called subordinating conjunctions or subordinators. We will use complementizer. Like prepositions, coordinators and complementizers are invariable in English (i.e. never have

an ending), but complementizers introduce a new clause whereas prepositions are connected to a noun. Some examples of complementizers and some of their other functions (if they have them) are provided in Table 2.9.

C	example of C use	other use	example of other use
after	**After** she left, it rained.	preposition	**after** him
as	Fair **as** the moon is, it…	degree adverb	**as** nice
because	(43)	--	
before	**Before** it snowed, it rained.	preposition	**before** me
for	I expect **for** you to do that.	preposition	**for** Santa
if	**If** she wins, that will be great	--	
so	He was tired, **so** he went to sleep	adverb	**so** tired
that	I know **that** the earth is round.	D	**that** book
when	I wonder **when** it will happen.	adverb	He left **when**?
while	She played soccer, **while** he slept	noun	A short **while**

Table 2.9: A few complementizers

We can now formulate another rule, namely the one in (58).

(58) **The Preposition-Complementizer-Adverb Rule**

A Preposition introduces a noun (e.g. ***about*** *the book*);

a Complementizer introduces a sentence (e.g. ***because*** *he left)*; and

an Adverb is on its own (e.g. *She went* ***out;*** and ***Unfortunately****, she left*).

These categories are often ambiguous in Modern English because prepositions and adverbs can change to complementizers.

3 Pronouns

Pronouns are a hybrid category since they do not carry much lexical meaning but they can function on their own, unlike articles, auxiliaries, and complementizers, which need something to follow them. This makes them hard to classify as lexical or grammatical categories.

Personal pronouns, such as *I, me, she, he* and *it*, and reflexive pronouns, such as *myself, yourself*, and *herself,* are seen as grammatical categories by many (myself included). The reason is that they don't mean very much: they are used to refer to phrases already mentioned. However, personal and reflexive pronouns are similar to nouns, since they function as Subjects and Objects. Thus, a determiner such as *the* cannot stand on its own, but *she*, as in (59), can.

(59) **She** knows that **she**'s a con artist (COCA 2012 ABC)

Personal pronouns can be divided according to number into singular and plural and according to person into first, second, and third person. For example, *I* and *me* are first person singular, and *we* and *us* are first person plural. The second person pronoun *you* is used both as singular and as plural. Third person singular pronouns *he/him, she/her*, and *it* are further divided according to gender; the third person plural pronouns *they* and *them* do not distinguish gender. Refer to Table 2.6 for a summary of the different personal pronouns.

Some pronouns look like the determiners we saw in the previous section. Almost all determiners, except the articles, can stand on their own, e.g. demonstratives, such as *that* in *that is a problem*. Thus, they are very much like pronouns but they can also have a noun following.

Apart from personal and reflexive pronouns, there are some possessive pronouns that occur on their own, and are therefore not determiners. Examples are *mine, yours, his, hers, ours*, and *theirs*, as in (60a). These pronouns appear when the noun they specify has been left unspecified. Thus, (60a) could be rewritten as (60b), with *mine* replaced by *my mess*.

(60) a. That mess is not **mine**, but it is **yours**.

b. That mess is not my mess, but it is your mess.

The result is awkward, however, and I will suggest that *mine* and *yours* are really independent pronouns, not determiners with the noun left out.

The other determiners, namely interrogatives, quantifiers, and numerals can occur independently too, as in (61). It will be up to you as the reader to decide whether these are independent pronouns or are really determiners preceding nouns that have been left out.

(61) **What** would be solved if **all** chose **two**?

Indefinite pronouns, such as *anyone, anybody, everyone, someone, something*, and *nothing*, occur frequently and are in many ways similar to personal pronouns. There are many other indefinites that are similar to adverbs, e.g. *anywhere, nowhere, sometime*, and *somewhere*, or to degree adverbs, e.g. *somewhat*. They are *pro*-forms and can stand in for an adverb.

As for the labels, this book will label something a determiner if it can have a noun following it but a pronoun if it can't. In a tree, it'll use D for determiner and DP for pronoun (though some people use D for both).

4 Conclusion

This chapter reviews how to distinguish the basic building blocks of English that we'll use to build phrases in the next chapter. We've seen a lot of ambiguity among lexical categories. For instance, nouns can often be verbs because English has lost many of the endings that earlier made nouns and verbs distinguishable.

Rules such as (58), repeated here as (62), are needed because grammatical categories and semi-grammatical categories such as prepositions are also often ambiguous. I have added the description for determiner from (37).

(62) **The P/C/A/D Rule**

A Preposition introduces a noun;

a Complementizer introduces a sentence;

an Adverb is on its own; and

a Determiner points to the noun it goes with and who it belongs to.

Let's look at the ambiguity of *that*. It can be a complementizer (*I know **that** he left*) and a determiner (***that** book*). The word *for* can be a complementizer (*I expected **for** him to do that*) and a preposition (***for** that reason*). Many other examples exist, e.g. the complementizer *before* can be a preposition, an adverb, and a noun (according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*).

At the end of this chapter you should be able to label the categories of the words in any English text and provide reasons for your answers.

Keywords

Lexical and grammatical categories (N, V, A, P, D, T, C), finiteness, case, agreement, types of auxiliaries, pronouns.

Exercises

A Look at the below text and identify the lexical verbs and prepositions.

Text

Mayor Mark Mitchell and the Tempe City Council recently approved a 20-year agreement with SolarCity that will put Tempe on the map as an energy efficient city. Mitchell and the council hope the approval will advance the city's plan to provide 20 percent of energy through renewable sources by 2025. "We just recently installed solar panels on the fire and courts building and we are just now breaking ground on the Library Complex Solar Project, which will provide about 35 percent of energy to the complex," said Tempe Public Information Officer Melissa Quillard. (from the East Valley Tribune, 5 November 2015)

B Do the same for the C-elements and adverbs.

C In sentence (22) of section 1, which interpretation has your preference?

D Which verbs in the text of A are finite?

More challenging

E Select a text in a language other than English (100 words) and provide word-by-word glosses. Then identify the determiners and prepositions (or postpositions).