Preface

- Knowing the grammar of your native language is an enormous help for anyone embarking on the study of another language, even if it has rather different grammatical principles; the contrasts as well as the parallels aid understanding.

This book isn't the last word on the facts of Standard English, or about grammar more generally, but we believe it will make a very good foundation. It is based on a much bigger one, The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language (CGEL), written between 1990 and 2002 in collaboration with an international team of other linguists. That book often contains much fuller discussion of the analysis we give here, together with careful argumentation concerning the alternative analyses that have sometimes been advocated, and why they are less successful.

The process of writing this book, and The Cambridge Grammar before it, was continually surprising, intriguing, and intellectually exciting for us. Some think the study of English grammar is as dry as dust, probably because they think it is virtually completed, in the sense that nothing important in the field remains to be discovered. But it doesn't seem that way to us. When working in our offices and meeting for lunchtime discussions we usually found that we would have at least one entirely new discovery to talk about over sandwiches. At the level of small but fascinating details, there are thousands of new discoveries to be made about modern English. And even at the level of the broad framework of grammatical principles, we have frequently found that pronouncements unchallenged for 200 years are in fact flagrantly false.

We are pleased that we were again able to work with Kate Brett of Cambridge University Press, the same senior acquisitions editor who saw CGEL through to completion, and with Leigh Mueller, our invaluable copy-editor. We have constantly drawn on the expertise that was provided to CGEL by the other contributors: Peter Collins, David Lee, Peter Peterson, and Lesley Stirling in Australia; Ted Briscoe, David Denison, Frank Palmer, and John Payne in England; Betty Birner, Geoff Nunberg, and Gregory Ward in the United States; Laurie Bauer in New Zealand; and Anita Mittwoch in Israel. There are many topics covered in CGEL that we couldn't have tackled without their help, and this shorter presentation of some of those topics is indebted to them at various points.

The School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland generously continued to provide an academic and electronic home for Rodney Huddleston while he worked full-time on this project. Professor Junko Itō, Chair of the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Cruz, helped a lot by arranging Geoff Pullum's teaching schedule in ways that facilitated his participation in completing this book. And most importantly, we would like to thank our families, who have been extraordinarily tolerant and supportive despite the neglect of domestic concerns that is inevitable when finishing a book. Vivienne Huddleston and Barbara Scholz, in particular, have seen less of us than (we hope) they would have liked, and taken on more work than was their proper share in all sorts of ways, and we are grateful.

1 Introduction

1 Standard English
2 Descriptive and prescriptive approaches to grammar
3 Grammatical terms and definitions

1 Standard English

English is probably the most widely used language in the world, with around 400 million native speakers and a similar number of bilingual speakers in several dozen partially English-speaking countries, and hundreds of millions more users in other countries where English is widely known and used in business, government, or media. It is used for government communications in India; a daily newspaper in Cairo; and the speeches in the parliament of Papua New Guinea. You may hear it when a hotel receptionist greets an Iranian guest in Helsinki; when a German professor talks to a Japanese graduate student in Amsterdam; or when a Korean scientist lectures to Hungarian and Nigerian colleagues at a conference in Bangkok.

A language so widely distributed naturally has many varieties. These are known as dialects. That word doesn't apply just to rural or uneducated forms of speech; the way we use it here, everyone speaks a dialect. And naturally, this book doesn't try to describe all the different dialects of English there are. It concentrates on one central dialect that is particularly important: the one that we call Standard English.

We can't give a brief definition of Standard English; in a sense, the point of this whole book is precisely to provide that definition. But we can make a few remarks about its special status.

The many varieties of English spoken around the world differ mainly in pronunciation (or 'accent'), and to a lesser extent in vocabulary, and those aspects of language (which are mentioned but not covered in detail in this book) do tend to give indications of the speaker's geographical and social links. But things are very different with grammar, which deals with the form of sentences and smaller units: clauses, phrases and words. The grammar of Standard English is much more stable and uniform than

1 We use boldface for technical terms when they are first introduced. Sometimes later occurrences are also boldfaced to remind you that the expression is a technical term or to highlight it in a context where the discussion contributes to an understanding of the category or function concerned.
its pronunciation or word stock: there is remarkably little dispute about what is grammatical (in compliance with the rules of grammar) and what isn’t.

Of course, the small number of controversial points that are trouble spots like who versus whom – get all the public discussion in language columns and letters to the editor, so it may seem as if there is much turmoil, but the passions evinced over such problematic points should not obscure the fact that for the vast majority of questions about what’s allowed in Standard English, the answers are clear.  

Moreover, in its written form, Standard English is regarded worldwide as an uncontroversial choice for something like an editorial on a serious subject in any English-language newspaper, whether in Britain, the USA, Australia, Africa, or India. It is true that a very few minor points of difference can be found between the American English (AmE) and British English (BrE) forms of Standard English; for example, BrE speakers will often use She may have done where an AmE speaker would say She may have; but for the most part using Standard English doesn’t even identify which side of the Atlantic the user comes from, let alone indicate membership in some regional, ethnic, or social group.

Alongside Standard English there are many robust local, regional, and social dialects of English that are clearly and uncontroversially non-standard. They are in many cases familiar to Standard English speakers from plays and films and songs and daily conversations in a diverse community. In [1] we contrast two non-standard expressions with Standard English equivalents, using an exclamation mark (!) to indicate that a sentence belongs to a non-standard dialect, not the standard one.

1. [1] STANDARD NON-STANDARD
   i. a. I did it myself.      b. 'I done it myself.
   ii. a. I haven't told anybody anything. b. 'I ain't told nobody nothing.

We should note at this point that elsewhere we use a per cent sign to mark a Standard English form used by some speakers but not all (thus we write *It mayn't happen* because some Standard English speakers use mayn’t and some don’t). And when our focus is entirely on Standard English, as it is throughout most of the book, we use an asterisk to mark sequences that are not grammatical (e.g., *ran the away dog*), ignoring the issue of whether that sequence of words might occur in some non-standard dialects. In [1], though, we’re specifically talking about the sentences of a non-standard dialect.

Done in [ib] is a widespread non-standard ‘past tense’ form of the verb do, corresponding to Standard English did – in the standard dialect done is what is called a ‘past participle’, used after have (I have done it) or be (It was done yesterday).  

² For example, try writing down the four words the, dog, ran, away in all twenty-four possible orders. You will find that just three orders turn out to be grammatical, and there can be no serious disagreement among speakers as to which they are.

³ Throughout this book we use bold italics to represent items from the dictionary independently of the various forms they have when used in sentences: did is one of the forms of the item listed in dictionaries as do (the others are does, done, and doing); and was is one of the forms of the item listed as be.

• In [ii] there are two differences between the standard and non-standard versions. First, ain’t is a well-known non-standard form (here meaning ‘haven’t’); and second, [ib] exhibits multiple marking of negation: the clause is marked three times as negative (in ain’t, nobody, and nothing), whereas in [ia] it is marked just once (in haven’t).

Features of this sort would not be used in something like a TV news bulletin or a newspaper editorial because they are generally agreed to be non-standard. That doesn’t mean dialects exhibiting such features are deficient, or illogical, or intrinsically inferior to the standard dialect. Indeed, as we point out in our discussion of negation in Ch. 8, many standard languages (they include French, Italian, Polish, and Russian) show multiple marking of negation similar to that in [ii]. It’s a special grammatical fact about Standard English that it happens to lack multiple negation marking of this kind.

§ 1 Standard English

*Formal and informal style*

The distinction between standard and non-standard dialects of English is quite different from the distinction between formal and informal style, which we illustrate in [2]:

2. [2] FORMAL INFORMAL
   i. a. He was the one with whom she worked. b. He was the one she worked with.
   ii. a. She must be taller than I. b. She must be taller than me.

In these pairs, both versions belong to the standard dialect, so there is no call for the exclamation mark notation. Standard English allows for plenty of variation in style depending on the context in which the language is being used. The [a] versions would generally be used only in quite formal contexts. In casual conversation they would very probably be regarded as pedantic or pompous. In most contexts, therefore, it is the [b] version, the informal one, that would be preferred. The informal Standard English sentences in [b] occur side by side with the formal variants; they aren’t non-standard, and they aren’t inferior to the formal counterparts in [a].

Informal style is by no means restricted to speech. Informal style is now quite common in newspapers and magazines. They generally use a mixture of styles: a little more informal for some topics, a little more formal for others. And informal style is also becoming more common in printed books on academic subjects. We’ve chosen to write this book in a fairly informal style. If we hadn’t, we wouldn’t be using we’ve or hadn’t, we’d be using we have and had not.

Perhaps the key difference between style and dialect is that switching between styles within your native dialect is a normal ability that everyone has, while switching between dialects is a special ability that only some people have. Every speaker of a language with style levels knows how to use their native language more formally (and maybe sound more pompous) or talk informally (and sound more friendly and casual). But to snap into a different dialect is not something that
everyone can do. If you weren't raised speaking two dialects, you have to be something of an actor to do it, or else something of a linguist. Either way you have to actually become acquainted with the rules of the other dialect. Some people are much better than others at this. It isn't something that is expected of everyone. Many (probably most) Standard English speakers will be entirely unable to do a convincing London working-class, or African American vernacular, or Scottish highlands dialect. Yet all of them know how to recognize the difference in style between the [a] sentences and the [b] sentences in [2], and they know when to use which.

2 Descriptive and prescriptive approaches to grammar

There is an important distinction to be drawn between two kinds of books on English grammar: a book may have either a descriptive or a prescriptive goal.

Descriptive books try to describe the grammatical system that underlies the way people actually speak and write the language. That's what our book aims to do: we want to describe what Standard English is like.

Prescriptive books aim to tell people how they should speak and write – to give advice on how to use the language. They typically take the form of usage manuals, though school textbook treatments of grammar also tend to be prescriptive.

In principle you could imagine descriptive and prescriptive approaches not being in conflict at all: the descriptive grammar books would explain what the language is like, and the prescriptive ones would tell you how to avoid mistakes when using it. Not making mistakes would mean using the language in a way that agreed with the descriptive account. The two kinds of book could agree on the facts. And indeed there are some very good usage books based on thorough descriptive research into how Standard English is spoken and written. But there is also a long tradition of prescriptive works that are deeply flawed: they simply don't represent things correctly or coherently, and some of their advice is bad advice.

Perhaps the most important failing of the bad usage books is that they frequently do not make the distinction we just made between STANDARD VS NON-STANDARD DIALECTS on the one hand and FORMAL VS INFORMAL STYLE on the other. They apply the term 'incorrect' not only to non-standard usage like the [b] forms in [1] but also to informal constructions like the [b] forms in [2]. But it isn't sensible to call a construction grammatically incorrect when people whose status as fully competent speakers of the standard language is unassailable use it nearly all the time. Yet that's what (in effect) many prescriptive manuals do.

Often they acknowledge that what we are calling informal constructions are widely used, but they choose to describe them as incorrect all the same. Here's a fairly typical passage, dealing with another construction where the issue is the choice between I and me (and corresponding forms of other pronouns):

[3] Such common expressions as it's me and was it them? are incorrect, because the verb to be cannot take the accusative: the correct expressions are it's I and was it they?, but general usage has led to their acceptance, and even to gentle ridicule of the correct version.

By 'take the accusative' the author means occur followed by accusative pronoun forms like me, them, us, etc., as opposed to the nominative forms I, they, we, etc. (see Ch. 5, §8.2). The book we quote in [3] is saying that there is a rule of English grammar requiring a nominative form where a pronoun is 'complement' of the verb be (see Ch. 4, §4.1). But there isn't any such rule. A rule saying that would fail to allow for a construction we all use most of the time: just about everyone says It's me. There will be no ridicule of It is I in this book; but we will point out the simple fact that it represents an unusually formal style of speech.

What we're saying is that when there is a conflict between a proposed rule of grammar and the stable usage of millions of experienced speakers who say what they mean and mean what they say, it's got to be the proposed rule that's wrong, not the usage. Certainly, people do make mistakes - more in speech than in writing, and more when they're tired, stressed, or drunk. But if I'm outside on your doorstep and I call out It's me, that isn't an accidental slip on my part. It's the normal English way to confirm my identity to someone who knows me but can't see me. Calling it a mistake would be quite unwarranted.

Grammar rules must ultimately be based on facts about how people speak and write. If they don't have that basis, they have no basis at all. The rules are supposed to reflect the language the way it is, and the people who know it and use it are the final authority on that. And where the people who speak the language distinguish between formal and informal ways of saying the same thing, the rules must describe that variation too.

This book is descriptive in its approach, and insofar as space permits we cover informal as well as formal style. But we also include a number of boxes headed 'Prescriptive grammar note', containing warnings about parts of the language where prescriptive manuals often get things wrong, using the label 'incorrect' (or 'not strictly correct') for usage that is perfectly grammatical, though perhaps informal in style.

3 Grammatical terms and definitions

Describing complex systems of any kind (car engines, legal codes, symphonies, languages) calls for theoretical concepts and technical terms ('gasket', 'tort', 'crescendo', 'adverb'). We introduce a fair amount of grammatical terminology in this book. To start with, we will often need to employ the standard terms for

---

three different areas within the study of language. Two of them have to do with the grammatical form of sentences:

- **syntax** is the study of the principles governing how words can be assembled into sentences (*I found an unopened bottle of wine* is admissible but *I found a bottle of unopened wine* is not);

- **morphology** deals with the internal form of words (*unopened* has the parts *un-, open*, and *-ed*, and those parts cannot be combined in any other order).  

But in addition to their form, expressions in natural languages also have meaning, and that is the province of the third area of study: **semantics**. This deals with the principles by which sentences are associated with their literal meanings. So the fact that *unopened* is the opposite of *opened*, and the fact that we correctly use the phrase *an unopened bottle of wine* only for a bottle that contains wine and has not been opened, are semantic facts about that expression.

We will need a lot of more specific terms too. You may already know terms like **noun**, **verb**, **pronoun**, **subject**, **object**, **tense**, and so on; but we do not assume any understanding of these terms, and will devote just as much attention to explaining them as to other terms that you are less likely to have encountered before. One reason for this is that the definitions of grammatical terms given in dictionaries and textbooks are often highly unsatisfactory. This is worth illustrating in detail, so let’s look at the definitions for two specific examples: the term **past tense** and the term **imperative**.

### Past tense

The term ‘past tense’ refers to a grammatical category associated with verbs: *likes* is a present tense form and *liked* is a past tense form. The usual definition found in grammar books and dictionaries says simply that the past tense expresses or indicates a time that is in the past. But things are not anything as straightforward as that. The relation between the grammatical category of past tense and the semantic property of making reference to past time is much more subtle. Let’s look at the following examples (the verbs we need to compare are underlined):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFINITION WORKS</th>
<th>DEFINITION FAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>i</strong>. <em>The course started last week.</em></td>
<td><em>I thought the course started next week.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ii</strong>. <em>If he said that, he was wrong.</em></td>
<td><em>If he said that, he wouldn’t believe him.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iii</strong>. <em>I offended the Smiths.</em></td>
<td><em>I regret offending the Smiths.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The usual definition works for the [a] examples, but it completely fails for the [b] ones.

In [i], the past tense *started* in the [a] case does locate the starting in past time, but in [b] the same past tense form indicates a (possible) starting time in the future.

So not every past tense involves a past time reference.

---

---

- In [ii] we again have a contrast between past time in [a] and future time in [b].
- In [i] it’s a matter of whether or not he said something in the past. In [b] it’s a matter of his possibly saying it in the future: we’re supposing or imagining that he says it at some future time; again, past tense, but no past time.
- In [iii] we see a different kind of contrast between the [a] and [b] examples. The event of my offending the Smiths is located in past time in both cases, but whereas in [a] *offended* is a past tense form, in [b] *offending* is not. This shows that not every past time reference involves a past tense.

So if we used the usual definition to decide whether or not the underlined verbs were past tense forms we would get the wrong answers for the [b] examples: we would conclude that *started* in [ib] and *said* in [iiib] are not past tense forms and that *offending* in [iiiiib] is a past tense form. Those are not correct conclusions.

It is important to note that we aren’t dredging up strange or anomalous examples here. The examples in the [b] column are perfectly ordinary. You don’t have to search for hours to find counterexamples to the traditional definition: they come up all the time. They are so common that you might well wonder how it is that the definition of a past tense as one expressing past time has been passed down from one generation to the next for over a hundred years and repeated in countless books.

Part of the explanation for this strange state of affairs is that ‘past tense’, like most of the grammatical terms we’ll use in this book, is not unique to the grammar of English but is applicable to a good number of languages. It follows that there are two aspects to the definition or explanation of such terms:

- At one level we need to identify what is common to the forms that qualify as past tense in different languages. We call this the **general** level.
- At a second level we need to show, for any particular language, how we decide whether a given form belongs to the past tense category. This is the **language-particular** level (and for our purposes here, the particular language we are concerned with is English).

What we’ve shown in [i] is that the traditional definition fails badly at the language-particular level: we’ll be constantly getting wrong results if we try to use it as a way of identifying past tense forms in English. But it is on the right lines as far as the general level is concerned.

What we need to do is to introduce a qualification to allow for the fact that there is no one-to-one correlation between grammatical form and meaning. At the general level we will define a past tense as one whose primary or characteristic use is to indicate past time. The examples in the right-hand column of [i] belong to quite normal and everyday constructions, but it is nevertheless possible to say that the ones in the left-hand column represent the primary or characteristic use of this form. That’s why it is legitimate to call it a past tense.

But by putting in a qualification like ‘primary’ or ‘characteristic’ we’re acknowledging that we can’t determine whether some arbitrary verb in English is a past tense
The imperative [ib] has a different form of the verb, be as opposed to are in [ia]. (With other verbs the forms are not overtly distinct, as evident in [ii], but the fact that there is an overt difference in [i] is a clear distinguishing feature.) While you is overtly present in [ia], it is merely implicit or ‘understood’ in [ib]. You is called the subject. It’s a major difference between the constructions that subjects are normally obligatory in declaratives but are usually omitted in imperatives.

There’s a good deal more to be said about the structure of imperatives (see Ch. 9), but here we just want to make the point that the definition found in textbooks and dictionaries of very limited value in helping to understand what an imperative is in English. A definition or explanation for English must specify the grammatical properties that enable us to determine whether or not some expression is imperative. And the same applies to all the other grammatical terms we will be making use of in this book.

In dismissing the two meaning-based definitions we just discussed, we don’t mean to imply that meaning will be ignored in what follows. We’ll be very much concerned with the relation between grammatical form and meaning. But we can only describe that relation if the categories of grammatical form are clearly defined in the first place, and defined separately from the kinds of meaning that they may or may not sometimes express.

1. Footnote A pointed out that only three orderings of the words the, dog, ran, away are grammatical. Which are the three grammatical orderings of those words? Discuss any possible grounds for doubt or disagreement that you see.
2. Consider features of the following sentences that mark them as belonging to non-standard dialects of English. Rewrite them in Standard English, keeping the meaning as close as possible to the original.
   i. It ain’t what you do, it’s the way how you do it.
   ii. She don’t pay the rent regular.
   iii. Anyone wants this stuff can have it.
   iv. This criteria is totally useless.
   v. Me and her brother were late.
3. Consider what features of the following sentences mark them as belonging to formal style in Standard English. Rewrite them in informal or neutral style, keeping the meaning as close as possible to the original.
   i. To whom am I speaking?
   ii. It would be a pity if we’re to give up now.
   iii. We hid the documents, lest they be confiscated.
   iv. That which but twenty years ago was a mystery now seems entirely straightforward.
   v. One should always try to do one’s best.
4. For each of the following statements, say whether it is a morphological, syntactic, or semantic fact about English.
   i. Wherever I saw a host of yellow daffodils is true, I saw some yellow flowers is also true.
   ii. The string of words *He it saw can be made grammatical by placing the word it after the word saw.
   iii. Nobody could truly say they believe that he saw it if they didn’t also believe that it was seen by him.
   iv. The verb hospitalise is formed from hospital by adding -ise.
v A witness who truthfully asserted I saw a host of yellow daffodils would have to answer No if asked Was everything blue?
vi Fall doesn't take the -ed suffix: fell occurs, not *failed.

vii You can't insert every in the sentence A man's got to do what a man's got to do and get a grammatical result.

viii When someone says I was going to walk but I decided not to, the sense is the same as if they had said I was going to walk but I decided not to walk.

ix Of can be the last word of a Standard English sentence.

x A completed grammatical sentence of Standard English that begins 'I believe that we...' must continue in a way that includes at least one verb.

5. Explain briefly in your own words, in the way you would explain it to someone who had not seen this book, what the difference is between a descriptive grammar book and a prescriptive one. Choose one or two grammars (of any language) from those accessible to you, and use them as examples, saying whether you think they are descriptive or prescriptive.

6. A significant number of newspapers in English are published in mainly non-English-speaking countries, and many of them have web editions – examples include The Times of India (India; timesofindia.indiatimes.com); Cairo Times (Egypt; www.cairotimes.com); Straits Times (Singapore; straitstimes.asia.com.sg); New Straits Times (Malaysia; www.nst.com.my); Jamaica Gleaner (www.jamaica-gleaner.com); etc. Collect some articles from several of these, sticking to subjects that minimise give-away local references, and see if native speakers of English can identify the country of origin purely from the grammar or other aspects of the language.

The primary topic of this book is the way words combine to form sentences in Standard English. Sentences are made up from words in regular ways, and it is possible to describe the regularities involved by giving general statements or rules that hold for all the sentences in the language. To explain the rules for English we will need a number of technical terms. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce most of those (or at least the most important ones). We do it by taking a high-speed reconnaissance flight over the whole terrain covered in the book.

What we mean by calling a word a technical term is simply that you can't guess how to use it on the basis of the way you may have used it so far; it needs an explanation, because its use in the description of a language has a special definition. We may give that explanation just before we first use the term, or immediately following it, or you may need to set the term aside for a few paragraphs until we can get to a full explanation of it. This happens fairly often, because the vocabulary of grammar can't all be explained at once, and the meanings of grammatical terms are very tightly connected to each other; sometimes neither member of a pair of terms can be properly understood unless you also understand the other, which makes it impossible to define every term before it first appears, no matter what order is chosen.

The account we give in this chapter is filled out and made more exact in the chapters that follow. This chapter provides a short overview of the grammar that will enable you to see where the detailed discussions of particular categories and constructions fit into the overall organisation. We'll rely heavily on qualifications like 'usually', 'normally', 'in the most basic cases', and so on, because we're giving an outline, and there are details, refinements, and exceptions to be explained later in the relevant chapter.

Here and there in this chapter we take the opportunity to draw attention to some of the contrasts between our analysis and that of a long tradition of English
grammatical description going back to the late sixteenth century. By the eighteenth
century this traditional line of work on grammar was quite well developed and
began to harden into a body of dogma that then changed very little in the nine-
teenth and twentieth centuries. Yet many aspects of this widely accepted system are
clearly mistaken. We do not want to simply present once again what so many ear-
lier books have uncritically repeated. There are many revisions to the descrip-
tion of English that we think greatly enhance the coherence and accuracy of the
description, many of them stemming from research in linguistics since the middle
of the twentieth century, and we will offer brief comparative comments on some of
them.

1 Two kinds of sentence

The syntactically most straightforward sentences have the form of a single
clause or else of a sequence of two or more coordinated clauses, joined by a
coordinator (e.g., and, or, but). We illustrate in [1]:

[1] i CLAUSAL SENTENCES (having the form of a clause)
   a. Kim is an actor.
   b. Pat is a teacher.
   c. Sam is an architect.

ii COMPOUND SENTENCES (having the form of a coordination of clauses)
   a. Kim is an actor, but Pat is a teacher.
   b. Kim is an actor, Pat is a teacher, and Sam is an architect.

The distinction between the two kinds of sentence is drawn in terms of clauses
(one versus more than one), which means we’re taking the idea of a clause to be
descriptively more basic than the idea of a sentence. Example sentences cited in the
rest of this chapter and in the following eleven chapters will almost invariably have
the form of a clause; we return to sentences having the form of a coordination of
clauses when we discuss coordination more generally, in Ch. 14.

2 Clause, word and phrase

The most basic kind of clause consists of a subject followed by a predicate. In the simplest case, the subject (Subj) is a noun and the predicate (Pred) is a
verb:

[2] Subj  Pred     Subj  Pred     Subj  Pred
    Things change.  Kim left.  People complained.

More often, the subject and/or the predicate consist of more than one word while
still having a noun and/or verb as their most important component:

[3] Subj  Pred     Subj  Pred     Subj  Pred
    All things change.  Kim left early.  Some people complained about it.

Expressions such as all things and some people are called noun phrases –
phrases with a noun as their head. The head of a phrase is, roughly, the most
important element in the phrase, the one that defines what sort of phrase it is. The other
elements are dependents.

Similarly, left early and complained about it are verb phrases, phrases with a
verb as head. Again, early and about it are dependents of the verb.

Traditional grammars and dictionaries define a phrase as containing more than
one word. But it’s actually more convenient to drop this requirement, and generalsee
category ‘noun phrase’ so that it covers things, Kim and people in [2], as well as
all things and some people in [3]. There are lots of places besides the subject posi-
tion where all these expressions can occur: compare We need clients and We need
some clients or This is good for clients and This is good for some clients, and so on.

It would be tedious to have to talk about ‘nouns or noun phrases’ in all such cases.
So we prefer to say that a noun phrase (henceforth NP) normally consists of a noun
with or without various dependents. (In other words, the head is accompanied by
zero or more dependents.)

It’s much the same with other categories of phrase, e.g., verb phrases. Com-
plained in [2], just like complained about it in [3], can be regarded as a verb phrase
(VP). And the same general point will hold for the rest of the categories we intro-
duce below: although they can contain more, they sometimes contain just a head
and nothing else.

3 Subject and predicate

Basic clauses can be analysed as a construction consisting of subject plus predicate, as in [2] and [3]. The predicate typically describes a property of the
person or thing referred to by the subject, or describes a situation in which this
person or thing plays some role. In elementary clauses describing an action, the subject
normally indicates the actor, the person or thing performing the action, while the
predicate describes the action, as in Kim left and People complained in [2]. But this
is rather vague: meaning doesn’t give much guidance in distinguishing the subject
from the predicate.

Syntactically, however, the subject is quite sharply distinguished from other
elements by (among others) the following properties:

It usually has the form of an NP.

Its default position is before the verb.
The last two of these points are illustrated by contrasts of the following kind:

[BASIC]

i. The clock has stopped.
ii. Kim is downstairs.
iii. Some customers complained.

[intervrogative]

b. Has the clock stopped?
B. Is Kim downstairs?
D. Did some customers complain?

Here the [a] version represents the basic form while the [b] version is interrogative (a type of clause characteristically used to ask questions). The constructions differ with respect to the position of the subject: it precedes the verb in [a], but follows it in [b]. In [iii] the interrogative differs also in that it contains the verb do, which is absent from [a]. This do is often added to form interrogatives, but the general point is nonetheless clear: the subject precedes the verb in the basic version and follows it in the interrogative. One useful test for finding the subject of a clause, therefore, is to turn the clause into an interrogative and see which expression ends up after the (first or only) verb.

4 Two theoretical distinctions

Before we continue with our survey we pause to introduce two theoretical distinctions frequently needed in the rest of the book. One (§4.1) is the distinction between functions and categories, which is implicit in the elementary description of the clause that has already been given. The second (§4.2) is a clarification of two senses of the term 'word'.

4.1 Functions and categories

In our example Some people complained about it we have said that some people is subject and that it is an NP. These are two quite different kinds of concept. Subject is a function, while NP is a category. Function is a relational concept: when we say that some people is subject we are describing the relation between it and complained, or between it and the whole clause. It is the subject of the clause, not simply a subject. A category, by contrast, is an expression which is grammatically alike. An NP is (setting aside a narrow range of exceptions) simply a phrase with a noun as head (it’s not the NP of anything, it’s just an NP). The class of NPs thus includes an indefinitely large set of expressions like the following (where underlining marks the head noun): some people, all things, Kim, people (as used in People complained), the people next door, the way home, and so on.

The reason we need to distinguish so carefully between functions and categories is that the correspondence between them is often subtle and complex. Even though there are clear tendencies (like that the subject of a clause is very often an NP), a single function may be filled by expressions belonging to different categories, and expressions belonging to a single category may occur in different functions. We can see this in the following examples:

[5]

one function, different categories

i. a. His guilt was obvious.
ii. b. Some customers complained.

one category, different functions

b. His guilt was obvious.
b. Some customers complained.

• In the left-hand column the underlined expressions both function as subject: they stand in the same relation to the predicate was obvious. But while his guilt is an NP (having the noun guilt as head), that he was guilty isn’t – it’s a clause, with its own subject (he) and its own predicate (was guilty).

• In the right-hand column some customers is in both cases an NP, but it has different functions. It is subject in [i], but in [ii] it has the function of ‘object’, which we explain in §6 below.

4.2 Words and lexemes

The term ‘word’ is commonly used in two slightly different senses. The difference can be seen if we ask how many different words there are in a sentence such as:

[6]

They had two cats and a dog; one cat kept attacking the dog.

Focus on the four we’ve underlined. The second and fourth are obviously instances of the same word, but what about the first and third? Are these instances of the same word, or of different words? The answer depends on which sense of ‘word’ is intended.

In one sense they are clearly different: the first contains an s at the end.

But there is a second sense in which they’re merely different forms of the same word.

In this book we restrict word to the first sense and introduce a new term, lexeme, for the second sense. The ‘lex’ component of ‘lexeme’ is taken from ‘lexicon’, which has more or less the same meaning as ‘dictionary’ – and ‘lexicograph’ has to do with writing dictionaries. Cat and cats are different words, but forms of the same lexeme. The idea is that they are the same as far as the dictionary is concerned: the difference is purely grammatical. They are covered under a single dictionary entry, and in most dictionaries there is no explicit mention of cats.

The difference between the various forms of a lexeme is a matter of inflection. Cat and cats, then, are different inflectional forms of the same lexeme – the singular and plural forms respectively. In order to distinguish the lexeme as a whole from its various forms we represent it in boldface: cat and cats are inflectional forms of the lexeme cat. Similarly, take, takes, took, taking, taken are inflectional forms of the verb lexeme take. And big, bigger, biggest are inflectional forms of the adjective lexeme big.
Not all lexemes show inflectional variation of this kind. For those that don’t, the
distinction between word and lexeme is unimportant, and we will represent them in
ordinary italics, as with the, and, very and so on.

5 Word and lexeme categories: the parts of speech

The traditional term ‘parts of speech’ applies to what we call categories of
words and lexemes. Leaving aside the minor category of interjections (covering
words like oh, hello, wow, ouch, etc., about which there really isn’t anything interesting
for a grammar to say), we recognise eight such categories:

(c) Function

Nouns generally function as head of NPs, and NPs in turn have a range of functions,
including that of subject, as in [2] and [3].

(d) Differences from traditional grammar

Our noun category covers common nouns (illustrated in (a) above), proper nouns
(Kim, Sue, Washington, Europe, etc.) and pronouns (I, you, he, she, who, etc.). In
traditional grammar the pronoun is treated as a distinct part of speech rather than a
subclass of noun. This, however, ignores the very considerable syntactic similarity
between pronouns and common or proper nouns. Most importantly, pronouns are
like common and proper nouns in their function: they occur as heads of NPs. They
therefore occur in essentially the same range of positions in sentences as common
and proper nouns – and this is why traditional grammars are constantly having to
make reference to ‘nouns or pronouns’.

5.2 Verbs

(a) Meaning

We use the term situation for whatever is expressed in a clause, and the verb is the
chief determinant of what kind of situation it is: an action (I opened the door), some
other event (The building collapsed), a state (They know the rules), and so on.

(b) Inflection

The most distinctive grammatical property of verbs is their inflection. In particular,
they have an inflectional contrast of tense between past and present. A past tense
that is marked by inflection is called a preterite.

In the present tense there are two forms, depending on properties of the subject
(primarily whether it is singular or plural):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRETERITE</th>
<th>PRESENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She worked in Paris.</td>
<td>She works in Paris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He knew the answer.</td>
<td>He knows the answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They worked in Paris.</td>
<td>They work in Paris.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The singular subject she and he occur here with the present tense forms works and
knows while plural they occurs with work and know. Verbs have other inflectional
forms too, such as the one marked by the ending -ing seen in They are working in Paris.

(c) Function

Verbs characteristically occur as head of VPs that themselves function as predicate in a clause. As head of the VP, the verb largely determines what other elements are permitted in the VP. Thus English allows She left the airport but not *She arrived the airport; it allows He seemed mature but not *He knew mature; and so on.²

(d) Subclasses

There is a very important distinction between a small class of auxiliary verbs and the rest, called lexical verbs. The auxiliary verbs have a number of special properties. One is that they can sometimes precede the subject. This occurs in interrogatives:

[9] AUXILIARY VERB LEXICAL VERB

Although [b] is ungrammatical, there is a way of forming an interrogative corresponding to the clause You speak French: the auxiliary verb do is added, so the interrogative clause has an extra word: Do you speak French?

Auxiliaries are usually followed (perhaps not immediately) by another verb, as can and do in the foregoing examples are followed by speak. Notice also It will rain; They are working in Paris; She has gone home. The words will, are, and has are all auxiliary verbs.

5.3 Adjectives

(a) Meaning

Adjectives characteristically express properties of people or of concrete or abstract things. Thus when they combine with the verb be the clause generally describes a state: The soup is hot. Max was jealous, etc.

(b) Function

Most adjectives can occur in either of two major functions, attributive and predicative:

[10] ATTRIBUTIVE PREDICATIVE
    i. a. some hot soup     b. The soup is hot.
    ii. a. a jealous husband b. He became jealous.

In the attributive use the adjective functions as modifier to a following noun in NP structure. In the predicative use it generally occurs after the verb be or one of a small subclass of similar verbs such as become, feel, seem, etc.

² Throughout this book we use an asterisk (*) to mark the beginning of a string of words that is not a sentence of Standard English. That's the only thing asterisks will be used for.

(c) Gradability and inflection

The most central adjectives are gradable — that is, they denote properties that can be possessed in varying degrees, properties like those expressed by big, good, hot, jealous, old, etc. The degree can be indicated by a modifier, as in fairly big, surprisingly good, very hot, extremely jealous, three years old — and can be questioned by how: How big is it?, etc.

One special case of marking degree is by comparison, and with short adjectives this can be expressed by inflection of the adjective:

    Kim is old.    Kim is older than Pat.  Kim is the oldest of them all.

This inflectional system is called grade: old is the plain form, older the comparative form, and oldest the superlative form.

Gradability, however, is less distinctive for adjectives than the functional property (b) above, as it is not only adjectives that can be gradable.

5.4 Determinatives

(a) Definiteness

There is a class of words called determinatives. The two most common members are the words the and a. These function as determiner in NP structure. They mark the NP as definite (in the case of the) and indefinite (in the case of a). I use a definite NP when I assume you will be able to identify the referent. I say Where's the dog?, for example, only if I'm assuming you know which dog I'm referring to. There's no such assumption made with an indefinite NP, as in I could hear a dog barking.

(b) Determinative vs determiner

Notice that determinative is the name of a category (a class of words), while determinant is the name of a function. There are other determinatives besides the and a; examples include this, that, some, any, many, few, one, two, three, etc. They can likewise function as determiner, but that isn't their only function. In It wasn't that bad, for example, the determinative that is modifier of the adjective bad.

(c) Differences from traditional grammar

Traditional grammars generally don't use the term 'determinative'. The words in that class are treated as a subclass of the adjectives. But in fact words such as the and a are very different in grammar and meaning from adjectives like those illustrated in §5.3 above, so we put them in a distinct primary category.

5.5 Adverbs

(a) Relation to adjectives

The most obvious adverbs are those derived from adjectives by adding -ly:
Words like those in [ii] constitute the majority of the adverb class, though there are also a fair number of adverbs that do not have this form, some of them quite common: they include almost, always, not, often, quite, rather, soon, too, and very.

(b) Function

It is mainly function that distinguishes adverbs from adjectives. The two main functions of adjectives exemplified in [10] are attributive and predicative, but adverbs do not occur in similar structures: compare *a jealous husband and *He became jealously. Instead adverbs mostly function as modifiers of verbs (or VPs), adjectives, or other adverbs. In the following examples the modifying adverb is marked by single underlining and the element it modifies by double underlining:

13. i. MODIFYING A VERB OR VP  
   She spoke clearly, I often see them
   ii. MODIFYING AN ADJECTIVE  
   a remarkably good idea, It's very expensive
   iii. MODIFYING AN ADVERB  
   She spoke quite clearly, It'll end quite soon

5.6 Prepositions

(a) Meaning

The most central members of the preposition category have primary meanings expressing various relations of space or time:

14. across the road, after lunch, at the corner, before Easter

   in the box, off the platform, on the roof, under the bridge

(b) Function

Prepositions occur as head of preposition phrases (PPs), and these in turn function as dependents of a range of elements, especially verbs (or VPs), nouns and adjectives. In the following examples we use single underlining for the preposition, brackets for the PP, and double underlining for the element on which the PP is dependent:

15. i. DEPENDENT ON A VERB OR VP  
   I sit [by the door], I saw her [after lunch]
   ii. DEPENDENT ON A NOUN  
   the man [in the moon], the day [before that]
   iii. DEPENDENT ON AN ADJECTIVE  
   keen [on golf], superior [to the others]

(c) Differences from traditional grammar

In traditional grammar the class of prepositions only contains words that combine with nouns (actually, in our terms, NPs). The examples of prepositions in [14] and [15] above all comply with that, and we'll continue to limit our choice of preposition examples the same way in the early chapters. But in Ch. 7, §2, we drop this restriction and extend the membership of the preposition category. We'll show that there are very good reasons for doing this.

5.7 Coordinators

The central members of the coordinating category are and, or, and but—in traditional grammar they are called 'coordinating conjunctions'. Their function is to mark the coordination of two or more expressions, where coordination is a relation between elements of equal syntactic status. This syntactic equality is typically reflected in the ability of any one element to stand in place of the whole coordination, as in:

16. i. We need a long table and at least eight chairs.
   ii. a. We need a long table, b. We need at least eight chairs.

In [i] we have a coordination of a long table and at least eight chairs, each of which can occur in place of the whole, as evident from the two examples in [ii]. Precisely because the elements are of equal status, neither is head: coordination is not a head + dependent construction.

5.8 Subordinators

(a) Function

The most central members of the subordinator category are that, whether, and one use of if— the one that is generally interchangeable with whether (as in I don't know whether if it's possible). These words serve to mark a clause as subordinate. Compare, for example:

17. MAIN CLAUSE  
   a. He did his best.
   SUBORDINATE CLAUSE  
   b. I realise [that he did his best].

He did his best in [a] is a main clause, one which, in this example, forms a sentence by itself. Addition of the subordinator that changes it into a subordinate clause. Subordinate clauses characteristically function as a dependent element within the structure of a larger clause. In [b] that he did his best is a dependent of the verb realise, and hence is part of the larger clause I realise that he did his best. That is often optional: in I realise he did his best the clause he did his best is still subordinate, but it is not overtly marked as such in its own structure.

(b) Differences from traditional grammar

One minor difference is that we follow most work in modern linguistics in taking subordinators and coordinators as distinct primary categories, rather than subclasses of a larger class of 'conjunctions'. More importantly, we will argue in Ch. 7, §2.1, for a relabelling of the boundaries between subordinators and prepositions — but again we will in the meantime confine our examples to those where our analysis matches the traditional one in respect of the division between the two categories.
5.9 The concept of prototype

The brief survey we’ve just given shows something important. Categories like noun, verb and adjective have not just one property distinguishing them from each other and from other categories: they have a cluster of distinctive properties. But while there are lots of words that have the full set of properties associated with their category, there are others which do not. Take *equipment*, for example. It’s undoubtedly a noun, but it doesn’t have a plural form the way nouns generally do.

We use the term *prototypical* for the central or core members of a category that do have the full set of distinctive properties.

* Cat and dog are examples of prototypical nouns, but *equipment* is a non-prototypical noun.

  * Go, know, and tell (and thousands of others) are prototypical verbs, but *must* is non-prototypical, because (for example) it has no preterite form (*I* musted work late yesterday is ungrammatical), and it can’t occur after to (compare *I don’t want to go with *I don’t want to must work late*).

  * Big, old, and happy are prototypical adjectives, while *asleep* is non-prototypical because it can’t be used attributively (*an asleep child*).

We introduce the concept of prototype here because the parts of speech provide such clear examples of it, but it applies throughout the grammar. It applies to subjects, for instance. The NP *his guilt,* as in the clause *His guilt was obvious,* is a prototypical subject, whereas in *That he was guilty was obvious* the subordinate clause *that he was guilty* is a non-prototypical subject. It differs from *his guilt* in that it can’t invert with an auxiliary verb to form an interrogative (that is, we don’t find *Was that he was guilty obvious?*).

6 The structure of phrases

A phrase normally consists of a head, alone or accompanied by one or more dependents. The category of the phrase depends on that of the head: a phrase with a noun as head is a noun phrase, and so on.

We distinguish several different kinds of dependent, the most important of which are introduced in the following subsections.

6.1 Complement and modifier

The most general distinction is between **complements** and **modifiers,** as illustrated for VPs and NPs in [18], where complements are marked by double underlining, modifiers by single underlining:

[18] i **VP** He kept her letters for years.

ii **NP** She regularly gives us [very useful] advice on financial matters.

Complements are related more closely to the **head** than modifiers. In the clearest cases, complements are obligatory: we cannot, for example, omit her letters from [i]. In [ii] the complement is optional, but its close relation to the head is seen in the fact that the particular preposition *on* which introduces it is selected by advice: advice takes on, fear takes of, interest takes in, and so on. A more general account of the distinction between complements and modifiers will be introduced when we come to look at clause structure in Ch. 4.

6.2 Object and predicative complement

The next distinction applies primarily within the VP. Two important subtypes of complement are the **object** and the **predicative complement,** illustrated in [19]:

[19] **OBJECT**

i a. I met a friend of yours.

   b. She was a friend of yours.

ii a. Sam appointed a real idiot.

   b. I felt a real idiot.

iii a. [very friendly] can’t be an object

   b. They seemed very friendly.

Objects are found with a great number of verbs, while predicative complements occur with a quite limited number of verbs, with *be* by far the most frequent. The constructions differ in both meaning and syntax.

- A prototypical object refers to a person or other entity involved in the situation. In [iia] there was a meeting between two people, referred to by the subject and object, while in [iib] we have a situation involving Sam and a person described as a real idiot. A predicative complement, by contrast, typically expresses a property ascribed to the person or other entity referred to by the subject. In [iib] a friend of yours gives a property of the person referred to as *she,* while in [iibb] a real idiot doesn’t refer to a separate person but describes how I felt.

- The most important syntactic difference is that a predicative complement can have the form of an adjective (or AdjP), as in [iibb], whereas an object cannot. Thus we cannot have, say, *I met very friendly or *Sam appointed very friendly.

6.3 Determiner

This type of dependent is found only in the structure of NPs, where it serves to mark the NP as definite or indefinite. Certain kinds of singular noun usually require the presence of a determiner. In *The dog barked or I need a key,* for example, the determiners *the* and *a* are obligatory.

The determiner function is usually filled by determinatives (see §5.4 above), but it can also have the form of a **genitive** NP, as in *Fido’s bone or the dog’s owner,* where *’s* is the marker of the genitive.
7 Canonical and non-canonical clauses

There is a vast range of different clause structures, but we can greatly simplify the description if we confine our attention initially to canonical clauses, those which are syntactically the most basic or elementary. The others, non-canonical clauses, can then be described derivatively, in terms of how they differ from the canonical ones.

Canonical clauses consist of a subject followed by a predicate, as illustrated in [2] and [3]. The subject is usually (but not invariably) an NP, while the predicate is always - in canonical clauses - a VP.

Non-canonical clauses contrast with canonical ones on one or more of the dimensions reviewed in §§7.1–7.5, below.

7.1 Polarity

**Polarity** is the name of the system contrasting positive and negative clauses.

(20) POSITIVE NEGATIVE (non-canonical)
a. He is very careful.  b. He isn't very careful.

Canonical clauses are positive, while negative clauses are non-canonical. The grammar will have a special section describing how negation is expressed. In [b] the negation is marked on the verb; it can also be marked by not (He is not very careful) or by some other negative word (Nobody liked it).

7.2 Clause type

Canonical clauses are **declarative**. Clauses belonging to any other clause type are non-canonical. We illustrate here two of these other clause types, interrogative and imperative.

(a) Interrogative

(21) DECLARATIVE INTERROGATIVE (non-canonical)
a. She can mend it.  b. Can she mend it?

Declaratives are characteristically used to make statements, while interrogatives are associated with questions. Syntactically, the subject she of interrogative [b] follows the verb instead of occupying the default position before the verb (see §3 above).

(b) Imperative

(22) DECLARATIVE IMPERATIVE (non-canonical)
a. You are patient.  b. Be patient.

Imperatives are characteristically used to issue what we call directives, a term covering requests, commands, instructions, etc.

7.3 Subordination

The distinction between **subordinate** and main clauses has already been introduced in connection with our discussion of subordinators as a word category. All canonical clauses are main clauses. Subordinate clauses characteristically function as a dependent within a larger clause, and very often they differ in their internal structure from main clauses, as in the following examples:

(23) MAIN SUBORDINATE (non-canonical)
i a. She's ill.
ii a. We invited the Smiths.
iii a. Some guy wrote the editorial.
b. I know that she's ill.
b. Inviting the Smiths was a mistake.
b. He's the guy who wrote the editorial.

- In [ib] the subordinate clause is complement of the verb know. It is marked by the subordinator that, though in this context this is optional: in I know she's ill the subordinate clause does not differ in form from a main clause.
- In [ii] the subordinate clause is subject of the larger clause. Its structure differs more radically from that of a main clause: the subject is missing and the verb has a different inflectional form.
- The subordinate clause in [iii] is called a relative clause. The most straightforward type of relative clause functions as modifier within the structure of an NP and begins with a distinctive word such as who, which, when, where, etc., that 'relates' to the head of the NP - who in our example relates to guy.

7.4 Coordination

One clause may be **coordinated** with another, the relation usually being marked by means of a **coordinator** such as and or or. Again, canonical clauses are non-coordinate, with coordinate clauses described in terms of the structural effects of coordination. Compare:

(24) NON-COORDINATE COORDINATE (non-canonical)
That's Bill.
That's Bill or I'm blind.

Here the coordination is marked by or in the second clause. In this example there is no marking in the first clause: coordinate clauses do not necessarily differ from non-coordinate ones, just as subordinate clauses do not necessarily differ from main ones.
7.5 Information packaging

The grammar makes it possible, in many cases, to say essentially the same thing by means of syntactically different constructions. It allows us to present - or package - the information in a variety of ways. Canonical clauses always present the information in the syntactically most elementary way. In Ch. 15 we review a fair number of constructions which differ from canonical clauses on this dimension; here we illustrate with just three: passive, preposing, and extraposition.

(a) Passive clauses

[25] ACTIVE            PASSIVE (non-canonical)
   a. The dog bit me. b. I was bitten by the dog.

These have the same meaning; they describe the same situation and if used in the same context it would be impossible for one to be true while the other was false.

The terms active and passive reflect the fact that in clauses describing an action the subject of the active version (in [a] the dog) denotes the active participant, the performer of the action, while the subject of the passive version (in [b] I) denotes the passive participant, the undergoer of the action. Syntactically the passive version is clearly much more complex than the active by virtue of containing extra elements: the auxiliary verb was and the preposition by. It is for this reason that we take the passive as a non-canonical construction.

(b) Preposing

[26] BASIC ORDER           PREPOSING (non-canonical)
   a. I gave the others to Kim. b. The others I gave to Kim.

Here the two versions differ simply in the order of elements - more precisely, in the position of the object the others.

- In [a] the object occupies its default position after the verb.
- In [b] it is preposed, placed at the beginning of the clause, before the subject.

Canonical clauses have their elements in the basic order, with departures from this order being handled in our account of various types of non-canonical clause, such as the preposed complement construction in [b].

(c) Extraposition

[27] BASIC (no extraposition)            EXTRAPPOSITION (non-canonical)
   a. That I overslept was unfortunate.  b. It was unfortunate that I overslept.

- In [a] the subject is a subordinate clause - occupying the usual subject position.
- In [b] the subject position is occupied by the pronoun it and the subordinate clause appears at the end: it is called an extraposed subject.

In pairs like this, the version with extraposition is much more frequent than the basic one, but we still regard version [a] as syntactically more basic. The extraposition construction is virtually restricted to cases where the basic subject is a subordinate clause. It's the [a] version that matches the canonical structure of clauses with NPs as subject, e.g., The delay was unfortunate. And [b] is (slightly) more complex in structure: it contains the extra word it.

7.6 Combinations of non-canonical features

Non-canonical clause categories can combine, so that a clause may differ from a canonical one in a number of different ways at once:

[28] CANONICAL               NON-CANONICAL
   i. a. Sue can swim.  b. He says that Sue can't swim.  
   ii. a. Kim took the car.  b. I wonder whether the car was taken by Kim.

The underlined clause in [b] is both subordinate and negative. The one in [ii] is interrogative and passive as well as subordinate. (In subordinate clauses, an interrogative clause of this type is marked by the subordinator whether, not by putting the subject after the verb.)

8 Word structure

We have space for very little material on word structure here, but we need to point out that words are made up of elements of two kinds: bases and affixes. For the most part, bases can stand alone as whole words whereas affixes can't. Here are some examples, with the units separated by a decimal point, bases double-underlined, and affixes single-underlined:

[29] en-danger slow-ly un-just work-ing black-bird's un-gentle man-ly

The bases danger, slow, and just, for example, can form whole words. But the affixes can't: there are no words *en, *ly, *un. Every word contains at least one or more bases; and a word may or may not contain affixes in addition.

Affixes are subdivided into prefixes, which precede the base to which they attach, and suffixes, which follow. When citing them individually, we indicate their status by putting after prefixes (en-, un-) and before suffixes (-ly, -ing).

Exercises

1. Divide the main clauses of the following examples into subject and predicate.
   Underline the subject and double-underline the predicate. (For example: This is the house that Jack built.)
   i. I think it's a disgrace.
   ii. The guy in that house over there works for the city.
   iii. Most of the mistakes he made were very minor.
   iv. The thing that puzzles me is why no one called the police.
from each of the eight categories listed in
the previous exercise (and in [7] in the text
of this chapter).
5. Is it possible to make up an eight-word
sentence that contains exactly one word of
each category? If it is, do it; if not, explain
why.
6. Classify the underlined clauses below as
canonical or non-canonical. For the non-
canonical ones, say which non-canonical
clause category or categories they belong
to.
   i Most of us enjoyed it very much.
   ii Have you seen Tom recently?
   iii He tends to exaggerate.
   iv Who said she was ill?
   v I've never seen anything like it.
   vi They invited me, but I couldn't go.
   vii This house was built by my
       grandfather.
   viii It's a pity you live so far away.
    ix I'm sure she likes you.
    x Tell me what you want.

3. Assign each word in the following examples
to one of the part-of-speech categories: noun
(N), verb (V), adjective (Adj), determinative
(D), adverb (Adv), preposition (Prep),
subordinator (Sub), coordinator (Co).
   i She lives in Moscow.
   ii The dog was barking.
   iii Sue and Ed walked to the park.
   iv I met some friends of the new boss.
   v We know that these things are extremely
       expensive.
4. Construct a plausible-sounding, grammatic-
al sentence that uses at least one word
from each of the categories listed in
the previous exercise (and in [7] in the text
of this chapter).

1. Verb inflection

Verbs are variable lexemes. That is, they have a number of different
inflectional forms that are required or permitted in various grammatical
contexts. For example, the lexeme fly has a form flown that is required in a context like [1a],
where it follows the verb have, and a form flew that is permitted in a context like
[1b], where it is the only verb in a canonical clause:


Notice that we said that flown is required in contexts like [1a], but that flew is
permitted in contexts like [b]. This is because in [b] we could have flies instead of
flew. And there is of course a difference in meaning between Kim flew home and
Kim flies home: the former locates the situation in past time, while the latter locates
it in present or future time.

We see from this that there are two kinds of inflection: in some cases an inflec-
tional contrast serves to convey a meaning distinction, while in others (like the flown
of [1a]) the occurrence of a particular inflectional form is simply determined by a
grammatical rule.

1.1 The verb paradigm

The set of inflectional forms of a variable lexeme (together with their
grammatical labels) is called its paradigm. In some languages the verb paradigms
are extremely complex, but in English they are fairly simple. The great majority of
verbs in English have paradigms consisting of six inflectional forms. As illustration,
3 Verbs, tense, aspect, and mood

1 Verb inflection

Verbs are variable lexemes. That is, they have a number of different inflectional forms that are required or permitted in various grammatical contexts. For example, the lexeme fly has a form flown that is required in a context like [1a], where it follows the verb have, and a form flew that is permitted in a context like [1b], where it is the only verb in a canonical clause:


Notice that we said that flown is required in contexts like [1a], but that flew is permitted in contexts like [b]. This is because in [b] we could have flies instead of flew. And there is of course a difference in meaning between Kim flew home and Kim flies home: the former locates the situation in past time, while the latter locates it in present or future time.

We see from this that there are two kinds of inflection: in some cases an inflectional contrast serves to convey a meaning distinction, while in others (like the flown of [1a]) the occurrence of a particular inflectional form is simply determined by a grammatical rule.

1.1 The verb paradigm

The set of inflectional forms of a variable lexeme (together with their grammatical labels) is called its paradigm. In some languages the verb paradigms are extremely complex, but in English they are fairly simple. The great majority of verbs in English have paradigms consisting of six inflectional forms. As illustration,