

# Università di Cagliari



Corso di Laurea in:  
**Economia e Gestione Aziendale**  
Economia e Finanza  
**Economia e Gestione dei Servizi Turistici**

Luisanna Fodde/Olga Denti/  
Caterina Cambosu/  
M.Antonieta Marongiu  
a.a. 2017-2018



# The Structure of the English Sentence



Syntax is the way in which words are arranged to show relationships of meaning within sentences. It is the study of sentence structure.

Sentences are constructions that can stand on their own as statements or utterances, and have a syntactic structure, generally made of a subject and a predicate.

# The Structure of the English Sentence



1. She asked for a book
2. Come in
3. The horse ran away because the train was noisy.

The sentence is the largest unit to which syntactic rules apply.

# SENTENCE WORD ORDER



The English language generally follows a strict word order in the affirmative and interrogative sentences:

## AFFIRMATIVE SENTENCES

**Subject/Verb/Object (Predicate): SVO**

**HE DRIVES A CAR**

**THEY FOLLOW THE ROAD**

**THE DOCTOR IS COMING** (*translate into Italian*)

**IT IS A BEAUTIFUL DAY** (*translate into Italian*)

**Why?**

**Lack of inflection**

# SENTENCE WORD ORDER

**QUESTIONS** OR INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES HAVE INVERTED WORD ORDER.

THEY MUST ALWAYS CONTAIN AN AUXILIARY VERB;

*Verb / Subject / Object ?*

**ARE THEY HAPPY?**

*Aux. Verb / S / Verb/ Obj.?*

**DOES HE DRIVE A CAR?**

**WAS HE TALKING TO YOU?**

**SENTENCES (PERIODO-FRASE) BEGIN WITH A CAPITAL LETTER AND END WITH A FULL STOP.**

## AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

**A** sentence is something which begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop? This traditional definition, which applies only to the written language, is faulty on three counts.

- We have to allow for question marks and exclamation marks as well (as in the first sentence of this caption).
- Punctuation is often not used in writing, and yet we still know when a construction is a sentence. Many advertisements, public notices, newspaper headlines, and legal documents lack punctuation marks.
- People disagree about the best way to punctuate a text. In particular, some manuals of style say we should never end a

sentence before such words as *and* or *but*, and this rule is often taught in schools. Its source lies in the uncontrolled way in which young children use *and* in their early written work, reflecting its frequency in natural conversation. But there are other manuals which accept that authors often do begin sentences in this way (usually to emphasize a contrast in meaning), and these do not condemn the usage. It is a regular feature of the style of the present author, who finds it on occasion a much more dramatic and rhythmical way of drawing a contrast than to use the various alternatives available. To replace *but* by *however* two sentences above, for example, would be to slow down the movement of the paragraph quite noticeably – in his view an unnecessary change of pace in a piece of text which wishes to make its point quickly and economically.

# SENTENCE WORD ORDER



**for and Macintosh Windows available Hot  
Potatoes is**

**HOT POTATOES IS AVAILABLE FOR MACINTOSH AND  
WINDOWS**

went skating Mark and Sally on Saturday

**MARK AND SALLY WENT SKATING ON SATURDAY**

way cool ice cream eating is to good off a

**EATING ICE CREAM IS A GOOD WAY TO COOL OFF**

# SENTENCE WORD ORDER



swimming go ? Kelly and I allowed are to

ARE KELLY AND I ALLOWED TO GO SWIMMING?

the and walked store candy Mary some bought  
to .

MARY WALKED TO THE STORE AND BOUGHT SOME CANDY

ice cream nuts top on like and I chocolate  
with syrup .

I LIKE ICE CREAM WITH NUTS AND CHOCOLATE SYRUP ON  
TOP.

# TYPES OF SENTENCES



**Major sentences** are the most frequent. They can be broken down into a specific and logical pattern of elements: **Subject/Verb/Object**

The stock broker **bought many shares** for his client;

The price of petrol **has been rising**

## MINOR SENTENCES

**M**inor sentences are not constructed in a regular way. They use abnormal patterns which cannot be clearly analysed into a sequence of clause elements, as can major sentences. There are only a few minor sentence types, but instances of each type are frequently used in everyday conversation and when conversations are represented in fiction. They are also common in certain types of written language, such as notices, headlines, labels, advertisements, sub-headings, and other settings where a message is presented as a 'block'.

Minor sentences do not follow all the rules of grammar. For example, in a major sentence the verbs can change their persons: *How do you manage?* > *How does he manage?* But the greeting *How do you do?* is a minor sentence, and we cannot change the person to *\*How does he do?* (without changing the sense

into something quite different). Nor can we change the tense and ask *\*How did you do?* The sentence has to be learned as a whole, and used as an idiom (p.162).

It will be seen from this example that some types of minor sentence look quite complex – so much so that on a first impression they might be thought to be displaying a major pattern. But in each case there is something 'odd' about them. For example, one type uses an archaic verb form (the subjunctive) to express wishes, as in *God save the Queen!* and *Heaven forbid!* Another type uses question words idiosyncratically: *How come she's gone out?* These are minor sentences because it is not possible to introduce the full range of normal grammatical changes into their structure, to produce such forms as *God saves the Queen* or *God doesn't save the Queen*. Only major sentences allow systematic variations of this kind.



# THE SENTENCE



**IT MUST CONTAIN ONE OR MORE CLAUSES (PROPOSIZIONE):**

I (S) quickly (Adv.) shut (V) the door (Obj.)

I (S) quickly (Adv) shut (V) the door Obj)  
(**INDEPENDENT CLAUSE**), before (Adv.T.) the  
dog (S) could come in (V) (**DEPENDENT  
CLAUSE**).

# CLAUSES



A CLAUSE (*PROPOSIZIONE*) IS A UNIT THAT CAN BE ANALYSED INTO THE ELEMENTS **S**, **V**, **C**, **O** AND **A** (**Subject**, **Verb**, **Complement**, **Object** and **Adverb**)

IT USUALLY CONTAINS MORE THAN ONE ELEMENT

# CLAUSES



**A CLAUSE (*PROPOSIZIONE*) MUST ALWAYS CONTAIN A VERB.**

**SUBJECT, VERB AND OBJECT ARE THE USUAL COMPONENTS OF A CLAUSE.**

*My father gave me this watch;  
John was listening to his radio.*

*larger than the sentence text*

DISCOURSE LEVEL

Sentence Connectivity

We arrived at the shop just as the butcher was clearing away. As a result the big dogs enjoyed their unexpected bones, and the little puppies liked the scraps.

SENTENCE LEVEL

Sentence

the big dogs enjoyed their unexpected bones, and the little puppies liked the scraps.

CLAUSE LEVEL

Clause

the big dogs enjoyed their unexpected bones

PHRASE LEVEL

Phrase

their unexpected bones

WORD LEVEL

Word

un-expect-ed

# CLAUSE ELEMENTS

**5 types of clause elements,**  
each expressing a particular kind of meaning.

The President has appointed Mr.  
*Gentiloni* Prime Minister last year

1) the **Subject**: identifies the theme or topic of the clause;

2) the **Verb**: expresses actions, states of being, sensations;

# CLAUSE ELEMENTS

## 5 types of clause elements

---

- 3) The **Object**: identifies who or what has been affected by the action of the verb;
- 4) The **Complement**: gives extra information about another clause element;
- 5) The **Adverbial**: adds information about the situation.

# SENTENCES



Examples of simple (ONE VERB)  
sentence (or clause) structures:

**John (S) carefully (A) searched (V) the  
room (O)**

**The girl (S) is (V) now (A) a student ( C ) at  
a large university (A)**

**His brother (S) grew (V) happier ( C )  
gradually (A)**

**It (S) rained (V) steadily (A) all day (A)**

# SIMPLE SENTENCES

ONE FINITE CLAUSE: THE LENGTH IS NOT DETERMINANT.

THE NOUN PHRASES WHICH FORM THE SUBJECT, OBJECT OR ADVERBIAL OF THE SENTENCE DO NOT LIMIT ITS SIMPLICITY:

S

A number of people

V

saw

O

the terrible accident

C

in the early afternoon

# FINITE VERBS

Finite verbs, sometimes called **main verbs**, are limited by time (tense), person, and number.

Who **killed** the president?

The broker **bought** shares in Wall Street

# NON-FINITE VERBS

A nonfinite verb form - such as a **participle, infinitive, or gerund** - is not limited by time (tense), person, and number.

- 1) The shares **bought** in Wall Street soon lost their original value.
- 2) **Going** to the airport I met Julia.
- 3) **To save** time, I ran towards the station.

# SENTENCE FUNCTIONS

## 4 Classical types of sentence function:

STATEMENT, QUESTION, COMMAND, EXCLAMATION

A **statement** is a sentence whose purpose is to state, i.e. to convey information. Statements traditionally have a declarative structure, in the sense that they declare or make something known

# SENTENCE FUNCTIONS

A **question** is a sentence which seeks information.

## **3 types of questions:**

- a) Yes-no questions
- b) *Wh*-questions
- c) Alternative questions (containing the connective *or*).

# SENTENCE FUNCTIONS



**Commands** or **directives** are sentences which instruct someone to do something.

Commanding, Inviting, Warning, Pleading,  
Suggesting, Advising, Permitting, Requesting,  
Mediating, Expressing good wishes, Expressing an  
imprecation.

# SENTENCE FUNCTIONS

**Exclamations** are sentences which show that a person has been impressed or roused by something.

Single word or short phrase:

*Oh Dear!*

*Gosh!*

*What a mess!*

*How nice!*

# Multiple Sentences

Simple sentence: **one clause**

Compound sentences: **more finite clauses** linked together by a co-ordinating conjunction (and, or, but)

- *He has quarrelled with the chairman, and has resigned.*
- *The baby was crying but his father wasn't listening.*

# Multiple Sentences

Complex Sentences: **two or more finite clauses** linked together so that one clause is an integral part of the other:

Grammatical S.: *It is late* (simple independent sentence)

Ungrammatical S.: *Because it is late* (subordinate or dependent clause)

Grammatical: *I am going home because it is late* (complex sentence: independent with dependent).

# Complex Sentences



**I am going home because it is late**

**THE CLAUSE** *because it is late* **FORMS THE ADVERBIAL (or prepositional phrase) OF THE INDEPENDENT CLAUSE. THE ADVERBIAL TELLS US THE REASON WHY THE SUBJECT IS GOING HOME. It is the subordinate or dependent clause**

# Subordinate Clauses

## SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

- ADVERBIALS

- RELATIVES

- CLAUSES THAT FUNCTION AS  
SUBJECTS, OBJECTS, COMPLEMENTS

The heavy rain which had fallen the night before  
caused many damages to the town;

- *We asked her what to do;*

- *That he won the marathon surprised everyone;*

- *The result was that Moretti won.*

# THE PHRASE



**Phrases are larger structural units that come between the word and the clause (or sentence).**

**They represent the SUBJECT, VERB, OBJECT, COMPLEMENT OR ADVERBIAL of the clause.**

*That boy / cannot open / that heavy door*

# THE PHRASE

Phrases are normally multi-words, but also single words can be regarded as phrases, as long as they are expandable into a larger unit:

SUPPER, OUR SUPPER, THE BIG SUPPER.

The second and third examples must be considered as expansions of a central element or HEAD: SUPPER.

# THE PHRASE



Hilary/ couldn't open/ the big windows /for  
a long time

NOUN PHRASE: WHEN THE CENTRAL  
WORD - OR HEAD- OF A PHRASE IS A  
NOUN.

VERB PHRASE: WHEN THE HEAD IS A  
VERB.

# THE PHRASE

**NOUN PHRASE** (*It, John, the girl, that beautiful blue-eyed girl*);

**VERB PHRASE** (*gave, has been challenged, having been pushed*);

**ADJECTIVE PHRASE** (*very much happier, nice, rather happy*)

**PREPOSITIONAL / ADVERBIAL PHRASE** (*at a large university, for me ; carefully, steadily, all day, every year, for a long time*)