

INTRODUCING
**ENGLISH
SYNTAX**

A Basic Guide for Students of English

PETER FENN AND
GÖTZ SCHWAB



Introducing English Syntax

Introducing English Syntax provides a basic introduction to syntax for students studying English as a foreign language at university. Examining English phrase and sentence structure from a descriptive point of view, this book develops the reader's understanding of the characteristic features of English sentence construction and provides the necessary theoretical apparatus for engaging with the language.

Key features include:

- A unique framework combining theoretical and practical approaches to provide an insight into the intricacies of English syntax;
- An accessible and clear style which guides the learner through analysis, application and practical construction of sentences;
- A range of exercises at the end of each chapter and a brand new e-resource housing answers and commentaries to these exercises.

This book requires no previous knowledge of linguistics and is essential reading for students and teachers of applied linguistics and EFL/ESL, as well as those who seek a basic grounding in English sentence structure.

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Introducing English Syntax

A Basic Guide for Students of English

Peter Fenn and Götz Schwab

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Contents

<i>List of symbols and abbreviations</i>	viii
Introduction	1
0.1 <i>Who this book is for</i>	1
0.2 <i>What this book does</i>	1
0.3 <i>What is syntax?</i>	3
0.4 <i>The role of meaning</i>	4
0.5 <i>The connection to language teaching and training</i>	5
1 Basic elements of grammatical structure	6
1.0 <i>Structure</i>	6
1.1 <i>What are word-classes or 'parts of speech'?</i>	6
1.2 <i>The phrase</i>	8
1.3 <i>What word-classes are there, and what are their characteristic features?</i>	10
1.4 <i>Phrase, clause and sentence</i>	28
<i>Exercises</i>	32
2 The simple sentence and its grammatical functions	34
2.0 <i>Structure and function</i>	34
2.1 <i>Sentence functions explained</i>	35
2.2 <i>Verb complementation</i>	43
2.3 <i>Functions in the sentence</i>	44
<i>Exercises</i>	48
3 Structural variations of the simple sentence and functional consequences	50
3.0 <i>Basic sentence operations</i>	50
3.1 <i>Questions (the interrogative)</i>	50
3.2 <i>Voice: active to passive</i>	54

vi Contents

3.3	Negation	57	
3.4	Commands (<i>the imperative</i>)	60	
	Exercises	62	
4	Phrases and their structure (I)		64
4.0	Phrases	64	
4.1	The noun phrase	64	
4.2	The prepositional phrase	79	
4.3	The adjective phrase	82	
4.4	The adverb phrase	87	
	Exercises	94	
5	Phrases and their structure (II)		96
5.1	The verb phrase	96	
5.2	Effects of negative, interrogative and passive on the verb phrase	103	
5.3	Auxiliary pro-forms	107	
5.4	Two- and three-part verbs	108	
	Exercises	120	
6	The multiple sentence		122
6.1	Co-ordination	122	
6.2	Further aspects of co-ordination	123	
6.3	Subordination	127	
6.4	Subordination without conjunctions	138	
	Exercises	139	
7	Non-finite clauses in the complex sentence (I): the infinitive		141
7.0	Non-finite clauses	141	
7.1	The infinitive clause	141	
7.2	The infinitive clause as verb complementation	143	
7.3	The subject of an infinitive clause	146	
7.4	Some special cases in complementation by infinitive clause	149	
7.5	The infinitive clause as subject	152	
7.6	Semantics: implicative meanings of catenatives with infinitives	154	
7.7	Tense and aspect	155	
	Exercises	158	
8	Non-finite clauses in the complex sentence (II): the gerund		161
8.0	The gerund	161	
8.1	The gerund clause	162	

8.2	<i>The semantics of the gerund</i>	167
8.3	<i>The gerund clause as catenative complementation</i>	169
8.4	<i>Questions of tense and aspect</i>	181
8.5	<i>The action nominal</i>	184
	<i>Exercises</i>	186
9	Non-finite clauses in the complex sentence (III): the participles	188
9.0	<i>The participles</i>	188
9.1	<i>The present participle and its clause</i>	189
9.2	<i>The past participle and its clause</i>	201
	<i>Exercises</i>	207
10	The complex phrase (I): the complex noun phrase	209
10.0	<i>The complex phrase</i>	209
10.1	<i>Postmodifiers: the relative clause</i>	211
10.2	<i>Postmodifiers: other structures as reduced relative clauses</i>	221
10.3	<i>Postmodifiers: apposition</i>	224
	<i>Exercises</i>	228
11	The complex phrase (II): complex prepositional and adjective phrases	231
11.0	<i>Complex prepositional and adjective phrases</i>	231
11.1	<i>The complex prepositional phrase</i>	232
11.2	<i>The complex adjective phrase</i>	234
	<i>Exercises</i>	244
12	Selected clause constructions	246
12.0	<i>Return to sentence-level: particular clause constructions</i>	246
12.1	<i>Extraposition</i>	246
12.2	<i>False subject constructions</i>	248
12.3	<i>Existential sentences</i>	251
12.4	<i>Cleft sentences</i>	253
12.5	<i>Nominal relative clauses</i>	255
12.6	<i>Interrogative clauses</i>	258
	<i>Exercises</i>	259
	<i>Bibliography</i>	261
	<i>Index</i>	262

Symbols and abbreviations

Symbols

[]	square brackets are used to indicate a subordinate clause at sentence level.
//	slants are used to show subordinate clauses inside phrases (i.e. at phrase level).
Ø	indicates omission of a certain element.
	indicates that the particular unit could be analysed further.
	arrows indicate a general connection between two items (as discussed in the accompanying text).
	a kinked left-pointing arrow indicates the relation of a clause inside a phrase to the head of the phrase.
»	indicates a relation of presupposition between two elements.
→	indicates an implicative relation between two elements.
→	indicates the negation or destruction of a former implicative relation.

Sentence function

S	Subject
P	Predicator
O_i	Indirect object
O_d	Direct object
A	Adverbial
C_s	Subject complement
C_o	Object complement

Other abbreviations

- ELT English Language Teaching
EFL English as a Foreign Language
ESL English as a Second Language

Reference abbreviations

- LGSWE Biber, D. *et al.* (1999). *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow: Longman.
- SAGE Fenn, P. (2010). *A Student Advanced Grammar of English*. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto.



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Introduction

0.1 Who this book is for

This book is intended for both teachers and learners of English. Though primarily aimed at non-native speakers, it will be of interest also to native speakers who are professionally involved in the ELT field or in general linguistics, and to those who simply wish for an overview of the central characteristics of English phrase and sentence structure. It is not a practical grammar, though it does give advice to the learner on various points of difficulty in using the language. The book is oriented to a general international readership within an applied linguistics and ELT framework. The core material was developed within the European context of higher education with special emphasis on language teacher training. Though it deals with many basic issues and concepts ‘bottom up’, the book is aimed at the intermediate and advanced student in university training, as well as at the practising teacher.

It can be used:

- as a textbook for seminars in syntax and linguistics;
- as a reference work;
- as a self-study course;
- to supplement existing practical courses in English grammar;
- as a first introduction to fields of language dealt with more theoretically in model-based linguistic studies (such as generative grammar);
- for purposes of general reading on the nature and character of English.

No previous knowledge of linguistics is necessary.

0.2 What this book does

The book examines English phrase and sentence structure from a descriptive point of view. The object of study, that is, is the language itself and its central syntactic characteristics, in particular as far as they potentially affect language-learning processes. In other words the treatment here is **applied linguistic** in nature, and is not intended as a contribution (nor indeed as opposition) to any particular

2 Introduction

theoretical model of syntax (for example, transformational-generative grammar, the Minimalist Program, the Lexical-Functional Approach, Generalised Phrase Structure Grammar, cognitive linguistic approaches, construction grammar, etc.). Nevertheless, the approach does have certain theoretical points of origin and pre-supposes one or two basic principles that need mentioning briefly. These are set out below, together with other goals we are pursuing and aspects of content that are dealt with.

- The type of analysis used here is what we call **structural-functional**, since it takes as a starting point the two parallel levels of grammar and language function, i.e. the systematic relations between form and meaning within a sentence.

It is based on concepts that are traditional in talking about language, such as word-classes and functional roles. However, they are more clearly defined and more consistently applied here than in many traditional treatments.

- Essentially, the ‘system’ is based in its modern form on that used by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik in their epoch-making descriptive work *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (1972) and its various sequel publications, in particular *A University Grammar of English* (1973). It is further developed, analysed and refined in Fenn, *A Student’s Advanced Grammar of English* (SAGE) (2010), but is presented here for the first time in a specific introduction to **syntax**. The latter was used as a reference source whenever it was felt that detailed information might be necessary. Further reference is made in the text to another standard grammar of English based on Quirk *et al.* (1972), *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (LGSWE) by Biber *et al.* (1999). Rooted in corpus linguistics, this provides further information on the use and scope of a wide range of grammatical phenomena discussed here.
- The theoretical approach to **sentence functions** is in principle **semantic**. It is rooted in the conception of real-world ‘roles’ in events, such as **agent**, **patient**, **recipient**, etc. and regards these as reflected in functions like **subject** and **object**.
- Besides providing the reader with a solid basis for analysing and categorising sentences and their parts, the book also aims to give both practical and theoretical insight into many of the key structures (e.g. non-finite verb forms) which influence sentence and clause patterns in English. It thereby contributes significantly to the furtherance of high-level language awareness in the learner.
- There is thorough definition and explanation of standard concepts used in talking about syntax, and of the principles of their application. Exercises are provided at the ends of sections or chapters.
- Although we do not distinguish between written and oral codes in detail, we do in places take into account the fact that oral communication has to some extent its own grammatical features (Biber *et al.* 1999, 2002), which can deviate from standard written forms of the language.

- The book has a definite, though flexible, course structure. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 address the basic questions of form and function in grammar, so that the reader can quickly grasp the rudiments of sentence-functional analysis and apply them to simple sentences. Not until after this do we go into the details of phrase structure (Chapters 4 and 5), which we conceive of as a second level of analysis below that of the sentence. The reader now has all the tools required for the analysis of simple sentences and the phrases composing them. In Chapter 6 we return to the functional level of the sentence, expanding the object of analysis from the simple to the complex sentence, and dealing with the issues of co-ordination and subordination at sentence level. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 address themselves to non-finite clauses, and Chapters 10 and 11 look at complex phrases. In Chapter 12, finally, we focus on specific kinds of clause and sentence construction.

0.3 What is syntax?

Syntax describes how words ‘hang together’: that is, the rules and principles that underlie their **combination** in sentences and phrases. First of all, as a field, syntax should be seen together with its ‘neighbours’ in language studies: **morphology** and **semantics**. And also, to add two more to those, with **phonetics** and **phonology**, which examine the sounds of speech. These are the different areas of study in the scientific examination of language and languages. But the terms also mean the characteristics of language itself, both generally and specifically. For instance, we can talk about the phonetics of English (in other words, the kinds of **speech sounds** used), or the semantics of a particular phrase or sentence (i.e. its **meaning**), or the morphology of this or that individual word: that is, its **grammatical form**.

These, then, are the different ‘departments’ of language and language study, and syntax is one of them.

Syntax has an especially close relationship to morphology. Both these fields concern rules about forms and structures. Together, they make up the larger area that we normally call **grammar**. Grammar therefore has two major components: the grammar of individual words (morphology) and the grammar of joining them into larger units like sentences (syntax). For illustration let us apply the two fields to a sentence example:

(1) Amy enjoys watching sad films.

Picking out examples of ‘grammar’ here we can say, for instance, that the verb *enjoy* has the third person singular ending, the verb *watch* is in the gerund, and the noun *films* is in the plural. What we have now described is the morphology of those words, i.e. the particular grammatical form in which they appear in this sentence. Morphology, then, is what we might call **word grammar**. But the sentence does not consist of just isolated words, of course. In every sentence there is a grammatical relationship **between** the different words. This second level of

4 Introduction

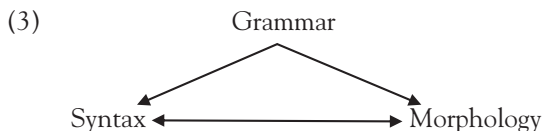
grammar ('beyond the word') is what we call syntax. When we say, for example, that *Amy* is the subject of the sentence, *watching sad films* is the **direct object** of *enjoys* and *sad films* is the direct object of *watching*, then we are referring to the grammatical level of syntax. Other **syntactic** points we might observe could concern **word order**: this type of sentence conveys a statement (in contrast, for instance, to a question) and therefore has to have **declarative** word order, with the subject *Amy* in front of its verb *enjoys*. Another point is that here the adjective *sad* has to precede the noun that it describes. And so on.

What must also be taken into account is the connection between syntax and morphology: the grammatical form of a word often depends on its relationship to other words. The reason for the third person singular *-s*-ending on the verb *enjoy*, for example, is that it has to agree grammatically with its subject *Amy*, a noun that also has the morpho-semantic characteristic of third person singular. Or take the gerund form of *watching*. This is triggered by the verb *enjoy* in front of it. With some other verb, e.g. *want*, we would need an infinitive, i.e. a different morphological form of *watch*:

(2) *Amy wants to watch sad films.*

The syntax of a sentence, then, can affect the morphology of the individual words. On the other hand, the morphology of the words often tells us something about their actual or possible syntactic relationships to other words in the same sentence. When we look at *enjoys*, say, we know that it has to have a third person singular noun as subject before it. A clause with a gerund verb, like *watching sad films*, is a typical direct object. Other possible positions would be as subject (*Watching sad films is Amy's favourite hobby*), or following a preposition (*Amy is always for watching sad films*). The morphology of a word can therefore indicate its syntactic role and position in a given or possible sentence.

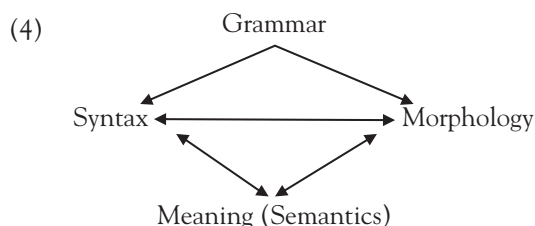
So, although they deal with different areas of grammar, syntax and morphology are really two sides of the same coin and have a two-way relationship:



0.4 The role of meaning

Our diagram in (3) covers the form side of things, i.e. the shapes of words and the relations between them when they are linked in sentences. This is normally all that we think of when we think of grammar. But actually this leaves a further very important component out. Grammar also reflects meaning. Consider example (1) again. The morphology of *enjoys* that connects it syntactically to *Amy* is not just part of an internal code programme. The syntactic connection represents a

meaning: it refers to a link between a person and an action. Specifically it tells us that the person carries out an action and has a particular emotional attitude towards this. Similarly, the tense and aspect morphology of *enjoys* (present tense, simple form) conveys the idea of a present habit or regularity. Syntax and morphology are therefore partly responsible for the semantics of a sentence, i.e. its meaning content. So we should add this to our grammar diagram as follows:



Note that here too we have a two-way relationship. The grammar conveys the meaning, but the intended meaning also determines the grammar.

Though this book is specifically about syntax, we will often refer to its close relation to morphology and semantics.

0.5 The connection to language teaching and training

Our own long experience in the realm of ELT and EFL teacher training shows that many advanced students, and even teachers of English, have only a rather hazy idea of some of the central concepts in applied syntax. Limited cognitive awareness of key characteristics of English sentence structure also means limited ability to grasp and deal with pedagogical issues involved in learning, teaching and using the language. This book aims to fill the gaps. It attempts to provide a comprehensive frame of reference and a fund of systematic descriptive knowledge, supporting both student and teacher in the development of an informed and reflective professional practice.

1 Basic elements of grammatical structure

1.0 Structure

The term **structure** is used in this book to cover the following:

- any kind of **morphological feature**: plural/singular of nouns, verb categories like tense, aspect or person, verb forms like gerund/infinitive, etc., adjective features like comparative/superlative, and so on. (This is just a small selection of examples.)
- any kind of **syntactic construction**: the *of*-genitive, *do*-support, negation, declarative, the interrogative, the imperative, the passive, relative clauses, cleft sentences, extraposition, etc.
- grammatical categories of words known as **word-classes** or **parts of speech**: nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, etc.

All this concerns grammatical characteristics of words and groups of words that are permanent and individual, and do not depend on particular sentences. What contrasts with structure is the idea of **function** (subject, object, etc.), which, as we will see later, is a sentence-dependent concept. For the moment we will stay with structure. Function is discussed in the next chapter. The aspect of structure that we want to look at more closely now is the word-class, which needs some detailed explanation.

1.1 What are word-classes or ‘parts of speech’?

Word-classes are a good example of how morphology, syntax and semantics interact with each other. The basis in this case is morphology. Words of the same class have the same grammatical forms. **Verbs**, for instance, change according to the type of subject they have (= **person**: *I am, you are, he is*), and the time they refer to (= **tense**: **present tense**, *I am*; **past tense**, *I was*). **Nouns** have **number**, i.e. singular and plural forms (*woman* → *women*), **Adjectives** and **adverbs** have the category of **comparison**: *slow* → *slower* → *slowest*; *slowly* → *more slowly* → *most slowly*. And so on. Many members of particular word-classes also show typical endings, e.g. *-ive*, *-ible/-able* for adjectives (*massive, respectable*), *-ion* and *-ity*

for nouns (*station, integrity*), *-ise* and *-ate* for verbs (*realise, compensate*), *-ly* for adverbs (*slowly, quickly*), etc. This means that members of one word-class can be converted into members of another (a morphological process called **derivation**): *sensitive* (adjective) → *sensitivity* (noun), *nation* (noun) → *nationalise* (verb), etc.

However, although the external features of word-classes are morphological, it is syntax that shows their real purpose. A word-class comprises members that do the same job syntactically. Members of the same class occur in the same places in a sentence and have similar relationships to members of other word-classes. For instance, we typically start a declarative sentence with a noun or pronoun and follow it with a verb. Sometimes, depending on the verb, this is enough:

- (1) noun + verb
Jenny drinks.

To say more, we might follow this with another noun and extend this further with an adverb:

- (2) noun + verb + noun + adverb
Jenny drinks tea regularly.

But the options are restricted. The second noun cannot swap positions with the verb (**Jenny tea drinks regularly*)¹ and an adjective could not replace the adverb (**Jenny drinks tea regular*). On the other hand, there is nothing to be said against putting adjectives before the nouns:

- (3) adjective + noun + verb + adjective + noun + adverb
Young Jenny drinks green tea regularly.

This is not just about position. Some word-classes are more closely associated than others. Adjectives, we can see here, relate typically to nouns, whereas adverbs relate to verbs and verb sequences. Further examples of close neighbours are articles and nouns, and prepositions and nouns. Conjunctions, on the other hand, combine the larger parts of sentences that we call phrases and clauses (see 1.4 below for a detailed discussion of these terms).

So we can see that word-classes tell us a great deal about what goes where in a sentence.

Finally, semantics also plays a large role in the character of word-classes. Traditionally, in fact, it is meaning, rather than syntax or morphology, that is used to define word-classes, especially in the teaching of children. This is not surprising, as meaning is more easily understood by young learners than grammar. In this approach, nouns, e.g. are said to refer to things and people, verbs are labelled 'doing words', signifying actions, and adjectives are thought of as 'describing nouns'. Linguists have often criticised descriptions of this kind as vague and unreliable. And it is true that they can easily be contradicted. For instance, abstract nouns (such as *love* and *hate*) do not really mean 'things'. Words like *action* and

movement refer, obviously, to 'actions', yet they are not verbs. On the other hand, verbs are not just 'doing words': they can mean states (*Vanessa strongly resembles her sister*) or experiences (*Alan caught a cold*).

Nevertheless, there is a lot of truth in semantic characterisation. It is not enough for a full definition, but gives us a good indication of typical cases or **prototypes**. Not all nouns refer to 'things' or people, certainly. But the reverse is usually true, i.e. that almost all words referring to things or people do belong to the class of nouns. Similarly, the typical meaning of a verb is that it refers to an event or state, even though a few nouns do the same thing. Furthermore, verbs always link other elements in the sentence together as **participants** in the event or state. This is not only a grammatical relationship, but a semantic one. For instance, in

(4) John kissed Mary

the verb tells us that John and Mary became involved with each other, and moreover in a certain general way: John caused what happened and he caused it to happen to Mary. This is what we call in semantics an **agent–patient** relationship. It is not exclusive to verbs, nor is it always present when verbs are used, but it is prototypically part of verb meaning in sentences that have the pattern Noun + Verb + Noun. This shows generally that when we use grammar, we also **think meaning**. In the more detailed discussion of the individual word-classes further below, we will therefore examine matters from both grammatical and semantic perspectives. The next section, meanwhile, introduces the important concept of **phrase**, an analytical category closely allied to word-class.

1.2 The phrase

The sentences in the examples (1)–(4) look as if they are composed simply of strings of individual words in sequence. This is not the whole story, however. We said above that certain word-classes associate particularly closely with each other, e.g. articles and adjectives with nouns. Certain words, that is, form groups. If we want to show word relationships in sentences more accurately, we have to take account of this. A more exact portrayal of (3) above, for instance, could look like this:

(5) (adjective + noun) + verb + (adjective + noun) + adverb
 (Young Jenny) drinks (green tea) regularly.

Young and *Jenny* on the one hand, and *green* and *tea* on the other, belong together. The verb *drinks* and the adverb *regularly* are just single words. But we could expand these too (grammatically speaking, that is) into groups, e.g. *has drunk* and *quite regularly*:

(6) (Young Jenny) (has drunk) (green tea) (quite regularly).

Such groupings as now shown in the brackets in (6) are vital building-blocks of the sentence, and are known as phrases. Each one acts as a unit. If a phrase is moved to another part of the sentence (for stylistic reasons, say, or because the sentence construction changes syntactically), it must be the whole phrase that moves, and not just a part of it, as, e.g. with the passive:

(7) (Green tea) (has been drunk) (quite regularly) (by (young Jenny)).

Though there are certain exceptions to this rule, phrases in principle remain together and act as a group. This applies particularly to sentence functions (discussed in detail in Chapter 2), which relate to phrases as a whole: for instance, the subject of (6) is *Young Jenny* and the direct object *green tea*, which becomes the subject in the passive version in (7). It is phrases, therefore, rather than individual words, that comprise the first level of sentence organisation.

Notice that each phrase has a main word (respectively *Jenny*, *drunk*, *tea* and *regularly*). This is called the **head** of the phrase. The word-class of the head gives its name to the phrase. As *Jenny* and *tea* are nouns, *young Jenny* and *green tea* are **noun phrases**. The phrase *quite regularly* has the adverb *regularly* as its head, and is therefore an **adverb phrase**. The verbs in a sentence form the **verb phrase**, here *has drunk* (with *drunk* as the head). Similarly, there are **adjective phrases** (e.g. *very big*, with the adjective *big* as the head), and **prepositional phrases** (e.g. *in the house*, with the preposition *in* as the head). Phrases can also include others, as shown in (7) by the prepositional phrase *by young Jenny*, which contains the noun phrase *young Jenny*.

The concept of being 'included' or 'contained' within a particular unit of sentence organisation is expressed by the linguistic term **constituent**, which refers to component elements of larger units. Words are therefore constituents of phrases and phrases can be constituents of sentences or of other phrases.

A final word must be said on single words: *drinks* and *regularly* in (5) above were 'expanded' into units of more than one word. We did this in order to explain the term phrase and demonstrate its central features. In actual fact, however, linguistics treats single words already as phrases. It does so precisely because they are capable of extension into a multi-word unit with themselves as potential heads. Looked at from the opposite point of view, most multi-word phrases can be reduced syntactically to their heads alone and the phrase structure of the sentence will remain intact. *Drinks* and *regularly*, then, represent phrases (a verb phrase and an adverb phrase respectively), i.e. phrases with only one constituent. And by the same token the single-word constituents of (1), (2) and (4) can now be described, more accurately in a syntactic sense, as phrases:

(8) noun phrase + verb phrase
Jenny drinks.

(9) noun phrase + verb phrase + noun phrase + adverb phrase
Jenny drinks tea regularly.

(10) noun phrase + verb phrase + noun phrase
John kissed Mary.

1.3 What word-classes are there, and what are their characteristic features?

If you look a word up in a dictionary, you will find that its word-class (part of speech) is given before the meaning. For instance:

<i>house</i> , noun:	A building for human habitation
<i>make</i> , verb:	to construct, build, or create, from separate parts

This underlines a point made above: that word-class is a **permanent feature** of a particular word, i.e. part of its individual character.

We generally distinguish between the following main word-classes: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners.

We will now point to basic features that identify each word-class, using the three different perspectives of semantics, morphology and syntax. The functional aspect of syntax will not be discussed here, however, as functions are not introduced until the next chapter. Under the 'syntax' heading we will confine ourselves for the moment to other kinds of relationship between words.

1.3.1 Nouns

- Semantics:

Nouns denote **entities**, i.e. living things (*person, woman, plant, animal*), objects (*table, road, car*), other physical phenomena (*weight, distance, electricity, rain, wind*), and abstractions like concepts and ideas (*wish, religion, memory, economics, friendship*). Names such as *Peter, London, Christianity, Communism* are called **proper nouns** and are spelt with capital letters. Nouns have further semantic features that not only identify them as nouns but also influence their morphology and syntax. Many can be counted, but others cannot. Those referring to persons can imply male or female identity (i.e. sex or gender).

- Morphology:

An important feature of nouns is what we call number: that is, they can be **singular** or **plural**. The singular is the 'normal' or unmarked form (*cat*) and the plural is marked, usually just by adding the ending *-s* (*cats*). There are various irregular plural forms, e.g. internal change of vowel (*man*→*men*, *goose*→*geese*), same form as singular (*sheep*→*sheep*), etc.

Another important feature related to this is **countability**. Most nouns are what we call **count** nouns, i.e. they appear in the singular and plural with numbers (*one girl, ten girls*). But there are also many **non-count** nouns. These cannot appear with numbers. Some are only singular (*tea, wheat, information*), others are only plural (*surroundings, clothes*).

And finally, a third central feature of nouns is their **person status**. This is a wholly semantic factor, but it has a kind of 'sleeping' morphological character that appears grammatically in the relationship to other word-classes like pronouns and verbs. Consider the sentence:

- (11) Our neighbour is celebrating in her garden, but although we like her, she has not invited us.

Note that the noun *neighbour* ‘controls’ the choice of any following pronoun that refers back to it. As the garden belongs to the (apparently female) neighbour we have to say **her** garden and not **our garden*, followed by *we like her* (and not, for instance, **We like them*), and **she** has not. . . (rather than **You have not. . .*). This is the morphology of a category that we call person. It forces pronouns to correspond in certain ways to their ‘parent’ nouns (i.e. their **antecedents**), which can only be referred back to by *he*, *she*, *it* or *they*. As these are known grammatically as **third person** pronouns, nouns are also regarded as having third person status. (The division of **person status** into three sub-categories numbered first, second and third is explained fully under Pronouns below). Example (11) also shows us that pronoun choice (in the singular at least) is further restricted by whether the noun refers to a thing or a person and in the case of a person whether the person is male or female. This is known as **gender**, and is differentiated according to **masculine** (*he*), for male persons, **feminine** (*she*), for female persons, and **neuter** (*it*) for things.

- Syntax:

- Nouns

- can be preceded by **determiners**, such as **articles** (see below), and also by adjectives:
The big cat.
These accompanying words form a unit with the noun that we call a noun phrase.

- Nouns

- occur (alone or in a phrase) **before** and **after verbs**:
The dog followed the boy.
 - occur (alone or in a phrase) **after prepositions**:
On the table; in anger; under a large tree.

1.3.2 Pronouns

Pronouns are specialised semantic and morphological variants of nouns. They are not really a separate word-class, but form a sub-division of nouns. Basically, they are used to **stand for** nouns, i.e. represent them, in certain grammatical and communicative contexts.

- Semantics:

Pronouns step in as substitutes for **full nouns** that speakers cannot use, or do not wish to use, in particular circumstances. The most general reason is to avoid repeating a noun (and more usually a whole noun phrase) which has already been mentioned:

- (12) The milkman usually comes around 11 o'clock, but today **he's** very late. Maybe **his** cart has broken down. **That** was the reason why he was late on one day last week. The cart is an old **one that** he's been driving for years.

12 Basic elements of grammatical structure

Back-reference to previous elements of texts and dialogues is known generally as **anaphora**. The back-referring item is called the **anaphor**. Pronouns are one of the most common examples of anaphor. In (12) the pronouns printed in bold type all show this anaphoric relationship. Note, however, that what they refer back to is different in each case. That is, each pronoun here represents a particular sub-category with its own distinct kind of use:

he —————> anaphor for —————> *the milkman*
[personal pronoun]

his —————> anaphor for —————> *the milkman*, but in the
[possessive pronoun] **genitive** and showing
possession (i.e. really a
replacement for *the*
milkman's)

that —————> anaphor for —————> the content of the second
[demonstrative pronoun] sentence, which could be
expressed by a noun like
event or *occurrence*, and
is referred to by the
pronoun with emphasis.

one —————> anaphor for —————> *cart*
['prop' pronoun] replacing a single noun
inside a noun phrase.

that —————> anaphor for —————> the prop pronoun *one* in a
[relative pronoun] following relative clause
that describes *one* (and
thereby *cart*, of course)
more closely.

Further pronoun types are: **reflexive pronouns** (*myself, yourself, himself*, etc.), **interrogative pronouns** (*who?, what?, which?*, etc.), and **indefinite pronouns** (*somebody, anybody, no-one*, etc.). **Numerals** (*one, two, three*. . .) and **quantifiers** (*much, many, some, any*, etc.) can also do duty as pronouns, even though that is not their basic job and not their primary word-class. This does not exhaust the list, but what we have mentioned so far is enough to illustrate the general meaning of the word-class, and at the same time the individual semantic variety among its members. At its most extreme this can be seen with the indefinite pronouns, which unlike the other types are not anaphoric. They do, nevertheless, have a kind of representation function semantically.

- Morphology:

Corresponding to the semantic variety, the different pronoun types all have their own individual and specific morphological features. Most prominent are the **personal pronouns**. These dominate the pronoun scene, so to speak. They are the most common type, and when we think of pronouns we tend automatically to think of personal pronouns as a prototype. They are also closely related to two other groups: the **possessive pronouns** and the reflexive pronouns.

- Personal pronouns are sub-divided into persons, as mentioned above, and distinguished also in terms of number:

<i>Person</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First	I	we
Second	you	you
Third	he, she, it	they

A point to note is that gender is marked only in the third person singular. A further point is that, unlike full nouns, the personal pronouns are marked for **case**. That is, their syntactic status in a sentence (position and function) is marked **morphologically**. There are two case forms, subject (= those in the box above), and object, as follows:

<i>Person (object forms)</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First	me	us
Second	you	you
Third	him, her, it	them

The category of person originates in the social situation of speech, i.e. has to do with what we call **pragmatic meaning**. It belongs to the more general pragmatic category of **deixis** (= speaker-related meaning). In personal deixis speakers do three things: they refer to themselves as speakers (**first person**: *I/we*); they refer to the people they are addressing (**second person**: *you*); and they refer to third parties, i.e. people and things not involved in the *I–you* exchange (**third person**: *he/she/it/them*). This explains why nouns have the morphological idea of person attached to them, since full nouns are always used in the sense of third parties to a conversation. Third person pronouns are basically the only ones that are **directly anaphoric**. First and second persons can be regarded as representatives of proper nouns, i.e. the names of the speaker and the addressee: but they do not really ‘refer back’ to them, except perhaps in a rather abstract way.

14 Basic elements of grammatical structure

- o Possessive pronouns follow the pattern of the personal pronouns:

<i>Person</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First	my	our
Second	your	your
Third	his, her, its	their

Possessive pronouns are not pronouns syntactically, however (see below under Syntax). If we want to use them as ‘real’ pronouns, i.e. standing alone, they have to be in their ‘**pronoun possessive**’ forms, as in:

- (13) This book is **mine**, not **yours**.

This is the complete table of pronoun possessives:

<i>Person</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First	mine	ours
Second	yours	yours
Third	his, hers	theirs

- o Reflexive pronouns follow partly the possessive pronouns and partly the object forms of personal pronouns, adding the ending **-self/-selves** to them. Semantically, reflexive constructions mean literally that the subject does something ‘to itself’, as in

- (14) **She** has hurt **herself**.

Reflexive pronouns therefore have to signal **person agreement** with the subject pronoun:

<i>Person</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First	myself	ourselves
Second	yourself	yourselves
Third	himself, herself, itself	themselves

Demonstrative pronouns are marked for number, i.e. they have separate forms for singular (*this/that*) and plural (*these/those*). The same applies to the **prop pronoun**: *one* (singular), *ones* (plural).

The **relative pronouns** *who*, *which* and *that* are differentiated in use according to semantic criteria, which we will not discuss further here (see Ch. 10.1, on relative clauses). *Who* has an object form (*whom*) and a genitive (*whose*). Note that *who* and *which* can also be interrogative pronouns.

A further *Doppelgänger* is *that*, which, as we have just seen, also features as a demonstrative pronoun (see below under Syntax).

- Syntax:
Anaphoric reference with most pronouns generally involves the whole noun phrase, and not just part of it:



- (15) **The big brown** dog had hurt **itself** badly. **It** could not stand on **its** back legs.

An exception here is the prop pronoun, whose job is to replace just the noun part of a noun phrase:

I wanted to buy red **shoes** for my daughter, but she preferred white **ones**.
Other major syntactic points are the following:

- Possessive pronouns, as was said above, are **not** pronouns syntactically, but determiners (see further below). That is, they have the function of article words in larger noun phrases. We will therefore refer to them from now on as **possessive determiners**. Only what we called above the pronoun possessives have real pronoun status syntactically. The same is true of demonstrative pronouns. Only when they appear **without** a following noun, as in (12) above, are they pronouns in a syntactic sense. But with a noun following (**this** problem, **that** cat) they are **demonstrative determiners**.
- Anaphora is a semantic relationship (i.e. it is a form of reference). But it also has a variety of morphological consequences, as we saw above, e.g. personal pronouns, reflexive pronouns, possessive determiners, pronoun possessives have to **agree** morphologically with their antecedents. This is therefore a syntactic relationship too, as the grammar of one word in a sentence affects the grammar of another. Another example is the case of personal pronouns. Case is a morphological feature, but is dependent on sentence function (see next chapter), which is a syntactic relation. This is just a further pointer to what we said at the beginning of this chapter: semantics, morphology and syntax **interact** in a sentence to produce its total meaning.
- Relative pronouns introduce relative clauses.
- Interrogative pronouns introduce questions and interrogative clauses (see Chapter 3, 3.1).

1.3.3 Verbs

- Semantics:
Verbs, as we have already said, typically denote **actions** and **states**, i.e. things that ‘happen’, ‘last’ and ‘go on in time’:

- (16) a. The dog **followed** the boy.
b. Karen **is** a teacher.

The close relation to time is shown by the fact that we can ask questions referring to the verb using expressions like *When?* and *How long?*:

For how long/When did the dog follow the boy?

How long has Karen been a teacher?

Another close connection to time is that verbs always show us, through tense, how an occurrence or state relates to the moment of speech, e.g. before it (**past**), simultaneous with it (**present**), both at once (**present perfect**), and so on. Tense is part of morphology, as we will see immediately. Nevertheless, it points to something semantic, i.e. a time reference that is a basic component of verb meaning.

In a more general way we can say that verbs have a semantically **connecting** effect: they link the other 'participants' named (typically the subject noun and any elements following the verb) with each other. In doing so they produce a message, or what is sometimes referred to as a **proposition**. In (16)a. above, for instance, the two noun phrases *the dog* and *the boy* are brought into a meaningful relationship with each other through the verb. The same applies to *Karen* and *a teacher* in (16)b. Some verbs, it is true, can create a proposition without anything following:

- (17) a. David snores.
b. Karen sang.

But they still form a link, i.e. bind the noun to themselves to form a sense unit or message.

It is the semantic conception of a proposition that lies behind the **sentence** as a **grammatical unit** (see below under Syntax).

- Morphology:
In English the verb is the word-class with the most complex system of forms. We can see this already in a relatively simple statement like

- (18) Jenny drinks coffee.

Firstly, the verb has an ending (-s) that is connected grammatically with the noun *Jenny*, which refers to the 'doer' (or **agent**) of the action. The agent, in sentences like this one, generally has the function of subject. Functions belong in the next chapter, as we have said, but the term subject is important here already, as it is this (or, more exactly, the noun in that function) that determines the ending of the verb. It does this according to the person status of the noun, here third person singular. In other words a third person singular noun requires this characteristic to be shown also in the verb ending. Syntactically, this is another example of agreement, this time **subject-verb agreement**, also known as **concord**. Verbs, then, are also marked for person, or, more exactly, they are marked according to the person status of their subject noun (since person is properly speaking a characteristic of nouns, not verbs).

Tables like the following, showing all the person forms of a particular verb (here *be*) are familiar to every language learner:

Person	Singular	Plural
First	I am	we are
Second	you are	you are
Third	he/she/it is	they are

This is what we call a **conjugation**. To **conjugate** a verb means to put it in all its person forms like this. But we can also speak of an individual verb form (such as *he is*) as a **conjugated** verb form, i.e. one that agrees with its subject noun. A verb like this is also known traditionally as a **finite** verb. By contrast, a **non-finite** verb has no subject agreement and is unchangeable: very often, in fact, it has no subject at all. Non-finite verbs are the various **participle** and **infinitive** forms, and the **gerund**. This is an important distinction, because finite verb forms have other characteristics too. In (18), e.g. the third person singular *-s*-ending does not just signify person, but also tense (present) and **aspect** (**simple**). An example such as *You were driving* is marked for second person (singular or plural, as the case may be), past tense, and **progressive aspect**. In English, that is, finite verbs always show – apart from subject–verb agreement – also tense and aspect. By contrast, non-finite verbs usually do not. Take, for instance the infinitive in

- (19) Jenny decided **to drink** coffee.

To drink here relates to the past; yet it has no past tense marking of its own, any more than it is marked for person. It simply takes over these meanings (i.e. that *Jenny* is the subject and the action of *drink* is past-related) from the preceding finite verb. It is true that non-finite verbs have certain tense and aspect forms of their own, but they are used only in a limited way.

Further prominent morphological characteristics of verbs are the following:

- Composite verb forms:

Finite verbs like *drinks* in (18) consist of just a single verb. Most, however, are composed of two or more separate verbs in partnership, such as *have drunk*, *were drinking*, *have been drinking*, *will drink*, *can drink*, and so on. These are **composite** verb forms. Most of them are made up of one auxiliary verb + lexical (or main) verb, though some have two or even three auxiliaries:

Auxiliary verb(s)	+	Main verb
↓		↓
<i>have</i>	+	<i>drunk</i>
<i>were</i>	+	<i>drinking</i>
<i>can</i>	+	<i>drink</i>
<i>have been</i>	+	<i>drinking</i>
<i>should have been</i>	+	<i>drunk</i>