



# Sentence Structure 1

Learning and Teaching Unit  
EASS Division



# Overview

This session will address the following:

- clause;
- simple sentence;
- compound sentence; and
- complex sentence.



# A Clause

- A clause consists of some words that include a subject and a verb.

e.g. **We studied.**

(S) (V)

- A sentence may consist of just one clause or two/more clauses.
- A sentence may be simple, compound or complex.

# Simple Sentences

- A simple sentence has at least one clause:

e.g. **The students** enjoyed **the lecture**.

**S**                      **V**                      **O**

e.g. **It was** an interesting discussion.

**S**   **V**                      **O**

- Each sentence:
  - is stated in terms of SVO;
  - has a finite form of the verb;
  - cannot be broken into smaller sentences because each sentence has just one verb;
  - has just one clause; and
  - each sentence is grammatically correct.

# Simple Sentences

- A sentence is a simple sentence because it has a main clause with a finite verb.
- Look at the following examples:  
e.g. **She** laughs.                      **Susan** comes.

- Each sentence:
  - has a SV structure;
  - has an intransitive verb (cannot take an object);
  - cannot be broken into smaller sentences because each has one verb element;
  - is grammatically correct; and
  - has a main clause with a finite form of the verb.

# Simple Sentences

- A structure may have a clause but it is still not a simple sentence.

e.g. **Since** **the assignment tasks** **were** **handed out.** ← Incomplete

Conjunction      S      V      O



- The sentence contains a clause but is not a simple sentence.
- It begins with a conjunction which requires further information.
- It is not a simple sentence as it is grammatically incomplete.



# Activity 1

**Look at the text below. Rewrite the paragraph using only simple sentences.**

Models and methods of teaching, or different educational practices, date back to the pretherate societies in ancient Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq). As city-states flourished (c. 3000-500 BCE), three major civilizations—the Sumerians, Akkadians, and Babylonians—developed the framework for the teaching of literature, writing, mathematics, and astronomy. Indeed, it was in the ancient Babylonian city of Ur that the tenets for the “traditional” or didactic model of teaching and learning are evident. Clearly, the Babylonian school curriculum centred on the memorization of literary works, emphasis on cuneiform script, and the focus on mathematical achievement; the teaching methodology was one of drill and practice reflecting the basic levels of what modern-day educators will identify as Bloom's Taxonomy—knowledge, comprehension, and application.



# Activity 1: Model Answer

**Different educational practices** date back to the preterate societies in ancient Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq). **The Sumerians, Akkadians, and Babylonians** developed the teaching of literature, writing, mathematics, and astronomy framework. **The tenets for the “traditional” or didactic model of teaching and learning** are evident in the ancient Babylonian city of Ur. **The Babylonian school curriculum** centred on the memorization of literary works. **There was an emphasis on the cuneiform script.** **The focus was** on mathematical achievement. **The teaching methodology** was one of drill and practice. **Modern-day educators will identify this as Bloom's Taxonomy—**knowledge, comprehension, and application.



# Compound Sentences

- The following sentence consists of two shorter sentences or clauses joined together with a conjunction **and**.

e.g. **It has been very difficult writing the report** **and** **I have missed the due date.**

↑  
sentence 1 – clause 1

↑      ↑  
coordinating conjunction      sentence 2 - clause 2

- In the above example, each clause can stand on its own.
- Grammatically these clauses are of equal status.
- This sentence is a compound sentence.
- A compound sentence can have two or more clauses of equal status.
- Each clause is a main clause and can stand alone.

# Compound Sentences

- In order to form compound sentences by linking clauses, we use the following conjunctions at the appropriate place:

- Coordinating conjunctions/coordinators: *and*, *or* and *but* are mainly used to form compound sentences as illustrated in the examples
- Coordinating coordinator *or* with *not*: *nor* can be used with negative first clause. See examples below.
- Coorelative coordinators: *either...or* are used for emphasising an alternative course of action. See examples below.





# Compound Sentences: and, or

- A compound sentence can have more than two clauses.
- The coordinating coordinators *and* and *or* are used to link more than two main clauses in a compound sentence.

e.g. **You can present the report in written form *or* do a 30 minute presentation *or* do one of the other tasks.**

**You asked for feedback *and* I provided you with some comments *and* I refuse to do anything more.**

- In the above examples, the sentences are too short to place a comma between two main clauses.





# Compound Sentences: *either...or*

- We can use *either...or* in a compound sentence to express an alternative.
- The coordinator *or* begins the second clause.
- *or* places emphasis on the alternative – second part of the compound sentence.

e.g. **Either you resubmit the assignment or accept the failing grade.**

**Either you contribute to the group task or obtain a zero for that part of the assignment.**

Note: two pairs of correlative coordinators *neither...nor* and *both...and* can grammatically **link phrases** but **not clauses**. Therefore, these cannot for part of compound sentences.

# Activity 2

**Look at the sentences below. Write a paragraph of compound sentences where possible. Use transition words if necessary.**

The *liberal* orientation was popularised in the 1960s.

It involves teachers acting as facilitators in students' development of knowledge and skills—particularly relating to inquiry and decision-making.

The orientation looks at the “whole” student, in preparation for “life rather than work” (Kemmis et al. 1983).

Students understand and engage somewhat with valuing processes and aspects of society in need of reform.

Students do not attempt to radically change beliefs or practices.

The various approaches share an emphasis on students understanding and engagement in morality.

This is in relation to their own personal agency and individual constructions of knowledge and valuing processes.



# Sample Answer

*The liberal orientation was popularised in the 1960s, and involves teachers acting as facilitators in students' development of knowledge and skills—particularly relating to inquiry and decision-making. The orientation looks at the “whole” student, in preparation for “life rather than work” (Kemmis et al. 1983). Students understand and engage somewhat with valuing processes and aspects of society in need of reform. However, they do not attempt to radically change beliefs or practices. The various approaches share an emphasis on students understanding and engagement in morality, in relation to their own personal agency and individual constructions of knowledge and valuing processes.*



# Complex Sentences

- A complex sentence has two or more clauses.
- The clauses in a complex sentence are not of the same status (main clauses).
- In a complex sentence, one clause is a main clause with one or more subordinate clauses.

e.g. **I contacted the tutor immediately** **when** ***I heard that she could not find my report.***

↑
↑
↑

main clause
conjunction
subordinate clause

clause 1

clause 2

- The main clause can stand alone and is called **independent clause**.
- It is not dependent on the subordinate clause which begins with the adverbial **when**.
- Clause 2 cannot stand alone. It is known as a dependent clause.



# Complex Sentences: Examples

e.g. **When the tutor demonstrated the process, we started making progress on the research.**

↑  
subordinate/dependent clause  
beings with the adverbial when

↑  
main/independent clause

**Soon after we handed in our assignment, we realised that we had not addressed all sections of the task.**

adverbial

↑  
main clause

**I remember that the student came to see me a few weeks ago and complained the task was too difficult.**

main clause   conjunction   subordinate clause 1   conjunction   subordinate clause 2



# Activity 3

Analyse the sentence below into the different categories.

**She was very tired when she returned from uni, but started to work on her essay immediately, where she did such a bad job as she was fatigued from her long day of studying.**

<b>She was very tired</b>	<b>: main clause 1</b>
<b>when she returned from uni</b>	<b>: subordinate clause 1</b>
<b>but started to work on her essay immediately</b>	<b>: main clause 2</b>
<b>where she did such a bad job</b>	<b>: subordinate clause 2</b>
<b>as she was fatigued from her long day of studying</b>	<b>: subordinate clause 3</b>



# Activity 4

Look at the paragraph below. Identify which of these are simple, compound and complex sentences.

The *postmodern* orientation is the most recent, and involves a critique of notions of truth and reality. This framing favours the teaching of multiple perspectives on issues and knowledge, and a critical deconstructive orientation towards social values and practices—such that the hegemony or discursive truths/assumptions of any given time or culture are revealed. Students can deconstruct and co-construct values, but must be self-reflexive. Teachers often take an adversarial role in relation to the student, acting as a “deconstructor, not a mere supporter in the traditional sense of the word” (Morton and Zavarzadeh 1991, p. 11). Their aim is to develop in the student a critical oppositional position in relation to the dominant order, such that the partisan subject self-reflexively acknowledges their own partiality, in the sense of what Morton and Zavarzadeh term “both incompleteness and committedness” (1991, p. 12). In acknowledging their split or partial nature, the student sees themselves as constituted by a set of incoherent subject positions produced by cultural discourses. Having denaturalised themselves, they are able to see the arbitrariness of all seemingly natural meanings and cultural organisations. So while the secure sense of self is erased, the space of culture is opened up for reorganisation and creative change.

# Sample Answer

Look at the paragraph below. Identify which of these are simple, compound and complex sentences.

**The *postmodern* orientation is the most recent, and involves a critique of notions of truth and reality (CP).** This framing favours the teaching of multiple perspectives on issues and knowledge, and a critical deconstructive orientation towards social values and practices—such that the hegemony or discursive truths/assumptions of any given time or culture are revealed (CX). Students can deconstruct and co-construct values, but must be self-reflexive (CX). Teachers often take an adversarial role in relation to the student, acting as a “deconstructor, not a mere supporter in the traditional sense of the word” (Morton and Zavarzadeh 1991, p. 11) (CX). Their aim is to develop in the student a critical oppositional position in relation to the dominant order, such that the partisan subject self-reflexively acknowledges their own partiality, in the sense of what Morton and Zavarzadeh term “both incompleteness and committedness” (1991, p. 12) (CX). In acknowledging their split or partial nature, the student sees themselves as constituted by a set of incoherent subject positions produced by cultural discourses (CX). Having denaturalised themselves, they are able to see the arbitrariness of all seemingly natural meanings and cultural organisations (CX). So while the secure sense of self is erased, the space of culture is opened up for reorganisation and creative change.



# Summary

- A clause consists of words that include subject and verb.
- A simple sentence consists of at least one clause.
- A sentence is stated in terms of subject-verb-object.
- A compound sentence can have two or more clauses of equal status.
- Each clause in a compound sentence can stand alone.
- A complex sentence can have two or more clauses which are not of equal status.
- In a complex sentence, one clause is a main clause with one or more subordinate clause.



# References

Parrott, M 2000, *Grammar for English language teachers*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom.

Slim, M 2004, *Explore good English grammar: master the structure of the language*, ADR (London) Ltd, England.



# Thank You

## Q & A