



Sentence Structure 2

Learning and Teaching Unit EASS Division



Overview

This workshop will address the following:

- noun phrases;
- verb phrases;
- preposition phrases;
- other basic principles and patterns;
- subjects;
- direct objects;
- object verbs;
- complements and complement verbs; and
- adverbials.



Sentence

e.g. **The students** **enjoyed** **the lecture.**
S **V** **O**
Noun phrase verb phrase preposition/adjective/ adverb phrase

e.g. **It** **was** **an interesting discussion.**
S **V** **O**
Noun phrase verb phrase preposition/adjective/ adverb phrase

Noun Phrase

noun phrase		
Determiner	modifier	Noun (headword)
This	old	textbook

- Determiners include articles, quantifiers, numbers, possessive adjectives (my, your, their) and demonstrative adjectives (this, that, these, those).
- Modifiers may be:
 - adjectives: **old** textbook
 - nouns: **brick** houses
 - possessive forms: **tutor's** instructions
 - adverb-adjective combinations: **elaborately discussed** argument

Complex Noun Phrases

Complex noun phrases can include subordinate clauses:

noun phrase	
	subordinate clause
The project	I told you about in the last lecture

- They often include preposition phrases

noun phrase	
	preposition phrase
The problem	with offshore students

Verb Phrases

Verb phrases can consist of:

	Example
a single-word main verb	...studied.
a multi-word main verb	...told off.
one or more auxiliary verbs and a main verb	...had been studied. ... ought to be told off.
two main verbs	...want to learn. ...recommend learning.

Preposition Phrases

Preposition phrase	
	Noun phrase
across	the campus
with	language and learning support

Preposition phrases may also form part of a larger noun phrases:

Noun phrase	
	Preposition phrase
the assignment	on group presentation
new model	with many forms of learning support



Other Basic Principles and Patterns

Adjective phrases:

- contain an adjective, which may follow one or more adverbs

e.g. **not very** informative **significantly** quite different

Adverb phrases:

- contain an adverb, which may follow one or more other adverbs

e.g. **rather** quickly **only** once



Activity 1

Analyse the text below and identify the various categories of patterns (noun, verb, preposition, adjective and adverb phrases).

The upsurge in university crime alert systems is an interesting research topic in its own right.

However, these systems represent something much larger. They are harbingers of what the future holds for the delivery of news in the larger society.

Thirty three percent of the respondents in a recent Pew (Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project) survey reported accessing news on their hand-held devices (Pew, 2010).

Now from CNN to the *New York Times*, all mainstream media outlets are trying to figure out effective ways to deliver news to and from hand-held communication devices.

Activity 1: Sample Answer

Analyse the text below and identify the various categories of patterns (noun, verb, preposition, adjective and adverb phrases).

The **upsurge in university crime alert systems (np)** is **(vp)** an **interesting research topic (np)** in its own right.

However, **these systems (np)** represent **(vp)** something much larger **(adjp)**.

They are harbingers of what the future holds for the delivery of news in the larger society.

Thirty three percent of the respondents **in a recent Pew (prepp)** (Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project) survey **reported accessing (vp)** news **on their hand-held devices (prepp)** (Pew, 2010).

Now **from CNN to the New York Times (prepp)**, all mainstream media outlets **(np)** are **trying to figure out (vp)** **effective ways (adjp)** to **deliver (vp)** news **to and from hand-held (prepp)** communication devices.



Subjects

- Usually come immediately before the verb phrase in a clause;
- Frequently consist of a noun phrase; and
- Often tell us what the predicate (everything in the clause that comes after the subject) is about.

Subject	Predicate
The researchers	examined.
The article I told you about	can be found in that journal.

Direct Objects

Direct objects:

- usually come after the verb phrase; and
- are normally noun phrases.

Subject	Verb phrase	Direct object
The students	wrote	an essay.
The students	wrote	an essay for one part of the assessment.

- We use direct objects only after certain types of verbs, known as ‘object verbs’.

Object verbs

•Object verbs:

Subject	Object	Direct object
The lecturer	marked	the report.
The counsellors	run	a workshop on managing stress.

- make a certain amount of sense on their own but we feel that there is ‘something missing’ if they are not followed by a direct object.
- we can normally use object verbs in passive constructions

Subject		Object verb
Some students	got	caught.



Complements

- Usually tell us something about the subject (what it is; how it feels or what it is like).
- complements may consist of:
 - a noun phrase (He became a better student.)
 - an adjective or adjective phrase (It became more difficult)
 - a preposition phrase (The students were over confident.)
- These complements are sometimes called subject complements as they describe something about the subject of the clause.

Complement Verbs

- Usually do not make sense on their own
- Are used to connect the subject to the complement in a clause.

Subject	Complement verb	Complement
Education	is	for everyone.
They	are	quite intelligent.

- Complement verbs usually express something about:
 - being (be, uses of remain, stay)
 - seeming (seem, uses of appear, feel, look, smell, taste)
 - becoming (become, uses of get, grow)

Subject	Complement verb	Complement
She	felt	overwhelmed.
They	grew	tired of all the work.



Adverbials

- Adverbials are usually phrases beginning with a preposition, adverb or noun (one word adverbials are known as adverbs):
 - preposition phrases : in the resource library
 - adverb phrases : often enough
 - noun phrases : study period five
- Adverbials are usually phrases that we choose whether or not to add to a clause.
- They often provide information about how, where or when something is done or takes place.

Subject	Verb phrase	Complements and objects	Adverbials
The researchers	have found	significant findings	that proof their hypothesis.

Clauses

- Most clauses consist of a subject and predicate.
- The subject is what usually comes before the verb phrase and the predicate everything else.

Subject	Predicate			
	Verb phrase	Indirect object	Direct object	Complement
They	like		social work.	
They	have been			rather hardworking.
They	gave	their course-mates	the news.	
They	named		the seminar	'Exam Preparation'.
They	laughed.			

Five Types of Predicate

- The verbs we choose determines what types of constituents we can use in the predicate.

Verb type	What has to follow the verb phrase	Example
Object verb	direct object	They like social work.
Complement verb	complement	They have been rather hardworking.
Two-object verb	indirect object (1) + direct object (2)	They gave their course-mates (1) the news (2).
Object-complement	direct object (1) + complement (2)	They named the seminar (1) 'Exam Preparation' (2).
No-object verb	nothing	They laughed.



Activity 2: Word Order Errors

- Look at the sentences below. Identify the errors.
 - 1) Breakup distress in university students the form of complicated grief may take.
 - 2) The criteria for complicated grief defined as intensive intrusive thoughts, pangs of severe emotion, distressing yearnings, feeling excessively alone and empty, unusual sleep disturbances, and loss of interest in personal activities have been.
 - 3) Complicated grief is with a death associated.
 - 4) Complicated grief scores were more related to it was found anxiety, depression, social functioning, and general health than symptoms of uncomplicated grief in a study that measured both uncomplicated grief and complicated grief compared to.
 - 5) Those who had experienced complicated grief and depression reported higher levels of grief and more sleep disturbances and anxiety symptoms.



Activity 2: Sample Answer

- Look at the sentences below. Identify the errors.
- 1) Breakup distress in university students may take the form of complicated grief.
 - 2) The criteria for complicated grief have been defined as intensive intrusive thoughts, pangs of severe emotion, distressing yearnings, feeling excessively alone and empty, unusual sleep disturbances, and loss of interest in personal activities.
 - 3) Complicated grief is associated with a death.
 - 4) In a study that measured both uncomplicated grief and complicated grief, it was found that complicated grief scores were more related to anxiety, depression, social functioning, and general health compared to symptoms of uncomplicated grief.
 - 5) Those who complicated grief and depression had experienced higher levels of grief and more sleep disturbances and anxiety symptoms reported.



Activity 3

Read the text below and identify the errors.

Initiator status (i.e., who ended the relationship) research yielded mixed results also.

While one researcher that the level of distress was unrelated to who ended the relationship (self or other) reported (Waller, 2008), another group suggested that both men and women who were rejected experienced more depression, loss of self-esteem and intrusive thoughts than those who did the rejecting (Perilloux & Bus, 2008).

Depression occurred in only those individuals who had been rejected in another study, not in those who the rejection (Ayduk, Downey, Testa, & Yen, 1991) initiated.

Comparing in an experimental study those who saw a scenario in which they were rejected versus a scenario in which they did the rejecting, were noted higher levels of breakup distress in those who saw the scenario of being rejected (Waller, 2008).



Activity 3: Sample Answer

Read the text below and identify the errors.

Research on the initiator status (i.e., who ended the relationship) also yielded mixed results.

While one researcher reported that the level of distress was unrelated to who ended the relationship (self or other) (Waller, 2008), another group suggested that both men and women who were rejected experienced more depression, loss of self-esteem and intrusive thoughts than those who did the rejecting (Perilloux & Bus, 2008).

In another study, depression occurred in only those individuals who had been rejected, not in those who initiated the rejection (Ayduk, Downey, Testa, & Yen, 1991).

In an experimental study comparing those who saw a scenario in which they were rejected versus a scenario in which they did the rejecting, higher levels of breakup distress were noted in those who saw the scenario of being rejected (Waller, 2008).



Summary

- The basic pattern of a sentence is subject + predicate.
- Most clauses contain a subject and predicate.
- The subject usually comes before the verb phrase and consists of a noun phrase.
- The predicate can be made up of verb phrase, direct objects, indirect objects, complements and adverbials.
- The verb type determines what is to follow.
- Direct objects usually follows verb phrases and consists of noun phrases.
- Object verbs are usually followed by a direct object.
- Complements tell us something about the object.
- Complement verbs connect the subject to the complement.
- Adverbials provide information about how, where or when something is done or takes place.



References

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