

Syntax Exercises

Exercise 1

Consider the following stanza from Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky":

- (1) 'Twas *brillig*, and the slithy *toves*
Did gyre and *gimble* in the wabe;
All *mimsy* were the borogroves,
And the mome raths *outgrabe*.

Although the meaning of this stanza is rather obscure, you are nevertheless able to determine the syntactic categories of the words. (i) Give the categories of the italicized words in (1), using the two criteria discussed in Chapter 2. (ii) Are all the words in (1) invented? Which ones are actual words of English? Why was it essential not to change these words?

Exercise 2

What criteria do you use to determine whether the italicized words in (2) are verbs or nouns? Can you use similar criteria for the italicized words in (3)?

- (2) a. These *giraffes* often have a neck ache.
b. They have never *imported* video games from China.
c. We tried to *understand* their proposal.
d. My favourite *canary* is sitting on the TV set.
- (3) a. He *can* surely help her.
b. This *can* is filled with worms.
c. She is *exercising* again.
d. *Exercising* is rubbish.

Exercise 3

(i) Identify the syntactic category of the bracketed constituents in the following sentences and (ii) give two constituency tests to show that these bracketed constituents are actually constituents.

- (4) a. This cat slept [under the invisibility cloak] yesterday.
b. [The cat behind the chair] is rather scared.
c. The brave knight stabbed the dragon [with his sword].

Exercise 4

Are the underlined strings of words constituents or not?

- (5) a. Humpty Dumpty washed himself with soapy water.
b. The greedy mouse devoured the cheese in the tower.
c. The Cheshire Cat dislikes grey mice with pink tails.
d. The Mad Hatter will give some herbal tea to Alice.
e. Humpty Dumpty and the Cheshire Cat never eat together.

Exercise 5

Are the constituents in (6) ambiguous?

- (6) a. more exciting ideas
b. the Italian teacher
c. the Austrian teacher

Exercise 6

The sentences in (7) are ambiguous. Try to paraphrase the different meanings of these sentences to show the ambiguity.

- (7) a. Dumbledore greeted the boy with a smile.
b. Hagrid said that he was happy after the party.

Exercise 7

Underline the subjects in the following sentences:

- (8) a. Hagrid can't believe it.
b. The girl with curly red hair surprised everybody.
c. Harry thinks that Dumbledore is really wise.
d. That Dumbledore could be wrong is unthinkable.

Exercise 8

Underline the objects in the following sentences:

- (9) a. Hagrid will feed his pet dragon in the morning.
b. Hagrid sent his friends a parcel.
c. Hagrid thinks that his pet dragon is wonderful.

Exercise 9

Consider the following sentence in which the arguments of the ditransitive verb "give" are underlined. (i) Is every complement of the verb "give" an argument? (ii) Is every argument of the verb "give" a complement? (iii) Give the subcategorization frame of "give" in example (10). (iv) What kind of information is contained in the subcategorization frame of a verb?

- (10) Hagrid will give a friend his pet dragon after class.

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Exercise 10

Decide whether the underlined strings of words in (11) are constituents or not.

- (11) a. That Hogwarts is famous is known to everyone.
b. The English team beat the French unexpectedly.
c. Ron greeted the dark-haired girl with a kiss.
d. Hagrid put the baby dragon into a cradle.
e. Aunt Petunia will faint soon.

Exercise 11

Give the subcategorization frames for the underlined words in (12) and (13):

- (12) a. The owls are sleeping near the fire-place.
b. Neville usually shaves Ron.
c. Hagrid is walking his pet dragon in the woods.
d. Dudley thinks that brownies are delicious.
- (13) a. The school of wizardry lies behind a mountain.
b. Dudley is jealous of Harry.
c. Hermione solved the puzzle.
d. Ron phoned her from the train.

Exercise 12

The sentences in (14) and (15) are ungrammatical, as indicated by the asterisk. (i) Try to make them grammatical. (ii) Can you think of a reason why they are ungrammatical?

- (14) a.* Miss Marple solved in the kitchen the crime.
b.* Miss Marple kissed passionately Poirot.
c.* These students study with passion magic.
- (15) a.* Students with long hair of magic look handsome.
b.* The teacher from England of magic is quite funny.

Exercise 13

A list of thematic roles is given in (16), which is partially based on Radford (1997: 163):

(16) Different types of thematic roles:

AGENT/CAUSER:	instigator of some action
EXPERIENCER:	entity experiencing some psychological state
GOAL:	entity towards which something moves
INSTRUMENT:	entity used to perform some action
LOCATION:	where some action occurs
PATIENT/THEME:	entity undergoing the effect of some action
POSSESSOR:	entity possessing some entity
RECIPIENT:	entity receiving some entity
SOURCE:	where some action originates

The arguments are underlined in the following sentences. Identify the thematic role assigned to each of these arguments.

- (17) a. Hagrid always feeds his pet dragon at dawn.
b. Malfoy hit Ron again.
c. Hermione really likes Harry.
d. Hermione sent Harry a message.
e. Hagrid put the kettle on the stove.
f. Dobby adores woolly things.
g. The key opened the secret door.

Exercise 14

In sentence (18) the complement is underlined and the adjunct is italicized. Based on this example state what the difference is between a complement and an adjunct.

- (18) The wizzard stabbed several witches *after midnight*.

Exercise 15

Underline the complements of the underlined words in the following sentences:

- (19) a. She was snoring in the cosy kitchen.
b. All of these students love magic.
c. The Slitherins don't like the boy with red hair.
d. This professor of alchemy is famous.

Exercise 16

Circle the adjuncts in the following sentences:

- (20) a. He was waiting for her in the kitchen.
b. She kissed him passionately.
c. They quickly moved the body.
d. He slowly sharpened the knife in the kitchen.

Exercise 17

How many arguments do the underlined verbs take? Does your analysis for the verbs in (21) pose a problem in (22)? Discuss.

- (21) a. Dudley is eating cake.
b. Dudley drinks a glass of coke.
c. Hermione is writing an essay.
d. Hagrid is expecting visitors.
- (22) a. The Weasleys are eating in the kitchen.
b. Aunt Petunia drinks.
c. Hermione's father writes.
d. Aunt Petunia is expecting.

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Exercise 18

Give the subcategorization frame of each verb in the following sentences:

- (23) a. Philip Marlowe solved the bloody murder.
b. Miss Marple is whistling in the kitchen.
c. Chimsky is devouring bananas.
d. These chemistry professors admire the expert from Paris.

Exercise 19

(i) Circle the element which occupies Infl (I) and (ii) underline the VP in the following sentences:

- (24) a. Jane can solve any murder.
b. Jane will patiently wait for Hercule in the garden.
c. Marlowe might be snoring again in the kitchen.

Exercise 20

(i) Determine the structure of VP in (25a) on the basis of the sentences in (25b) to (25e), and (ii) draw a phrase marker for the VP in (25a). Use triangles for the DP 'a secret meeting', and the PPs 'at home' and 'in the afternoon':

- (25) a. Malfoy will organize a secret meeting at home in the afternoon.
b. Malfoy will organize a secret meeting at home in the afternoon, and Dobby will probably do so too.
c. Malfoy will organize a secret meeting at home in the afternoon, and Dobby will probably do so in the evening.
d. Malfoy will organize a secret meeting at home in the afternoon, and Dobby will probably do so in the kitchen in the evening.
e.* Malfoy will organize a secret meeting at home in the afternoon, and Dobby will probably do so a fancy dress party in the kitchen in the evening.

Exercise 21

Draw phrase markers for the following DPs:

- (26) a. this young hippogriff
b. Romanian dragons
c. these dragons with spiky tails

Exercise 22

Draw phrase markers for the sentences in (27):

- (27) a. Gromit will read a novel.
b. This girl can sleep soundly.
c. These monsters are guarding the castle.

Exercise 23

The underlined elements in the sentences in (28) can sit under the I node. What distinguishes these elements from lexical verbs?

- (28) a. He might laugh.
b. He can laugh.
c. He is laughing again.
d. He has laughed.
e. He laughs a lot.

Exercise 24

Draw phrase markers for the sentences in (29):

- (29) a. Wallace really likes Gromit.
b. Shawn believes that his friends have escaped.

Exercise 25

The following sentences consist of various constituents. (i) Identify as many as possible and prove that they are constituents by using different constituency tests (one test per constituent).

- (30) a. Dumbledore will greet the boy with a smile.
b. The dark ghost often laughs in the dark.

Exercise 26

Consider the following sentences:

- (31) a. What have the muggles discovered this morning?
b. Who spotted the fancy car in the sky?
c. When did they find the giant?

Write down the underlying structure (i.e. Deep Structure) for the three sentences above.

Exercise 27

Based on sentence (32), form as many wh-questions as possible and indicate the transformations by means of traces.

- (32) Polar bears can sleep peacefully on an ice floe.