

ENGLISH 287, FALL 2007, HANDOUTS

PART 2: FILLING IN THE BASICS

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THREE PERSONS, 2 GENDERS, AND OTHER NUMBERS

English nouns are usually inflected for **number**, and any tense-bearing verb is expected to agree in number with their simple subject. English nouns no longer have special forms for **person** and **gender**, but the English personal pronouns do, and they are expected to agree in these and number with the nominals they refer to. Worse yet, our personal pronouns still show **case**. When they serve as subjects, the tense-bearer must agree with them in person and number.

Number

English nouns are either **singular** or **plural in number**, and any tense-bearing verb must "agree" with the head noun of their subject noun phrase. Most plural nouns have an "-s" ending, but not all, as one can see in the plural subjects of these sentences:

- (1) **Men** stink.
- (2) **Mice** fly.

Some nouns have plural form but can still be treated as singular:

- (3) **Linguistics** stinks.
- (4) **Mathematics** rocks.

Another complication is the existence of **collective nouns**, nouns which stand for a group of things--like the word group itself. The form of such words, rather than their meaning, usually determines the number with which the verb agrees, as with "army" (singular) or "trousers" (plural). Some words (like "staff") have a singular form but can be used with plural verbs in some contexts, so one needs to be familiar with the word one is using:

- (5) The **army** is very large.
- (6) His **trousers** are wool.
- (7) The **staff** is large.
- (8) The **staff** have small offices.

Person and the Personal Pronouns

As a grammatical term, **person** refers to the relationship between the speaker, the addressee(s), and the action. When we are talking about pronoun subjects, the pronouns "I" and "we" are in the first person because the speaker is included. The pronoun "you" is in the second person, because it refers to the person(s) addressed. The pronouns "he," "she," "it", and "they" are in the third person, as are all nouns. Most English verbs have a special form for the third person present singular. All other persons use the same form of the verb, generally the base form of the verb:

- (9) I rock.
- (10) You rock.
- (11) He rocks.
- (12) She rocks.
- (13) It rocks.
- (14) We rock.
- (15) You rock.
- (16) They rock.

Except for the eccentric verb *be*, there are no distinctive verb forms for number or person in the past tense. The past tense equivalents for all of the above sentences would use "rocked" as the verb. In addition to distinguishing number in the past tense, *be* is also unique in having a distinctive form for the first person present singular, and in not using its base form at all in the present tense:

- (17) I am, I was.
- (18) You are, you were.
- (19) He is, he was.
- (20) She is, she was..
- (21) It is, it was.
- (22) We are, we were.
- (23) You are, you were.
- (24) They are, you were.

Case

The personal pronouns we have used as subjects—*I, you, he, she, it, we, they*—are said to be in the **nominative case**. They should always be used when the pronoun is the subject, even when it is a compound subject, as in sentence (25):

(25) George and I go back a long way.

In theory, the nominative pronouns should be used when they are complements of a verb like “be” and refer back to the subject. In practice, their use in such cases sounds stogy and affected. In everyday speech, Standard American tends to prefer sentences (26) and (27) to the technically more “correct” sentence (28):

(26) It is me.

(27) It's me.

(28) It is I.

Efforts to teach people to use “I” in such situations have simply led people to regard “I” as more formal in general, leading to its incorrect use following a preposition, when “me” is the correct choice:

(29) *This was important for him and I.

The process whereby efforts to speak “correct” English simply leads to new errors is known as **hypercorrection** and is a well-known symptom of having taken too many English classes. Even so, it may be safest to use the nominative pronoun in such cases when writing formal prose.

When personal pronouns serve as objects, Standard English uses the **objective case**, like the “me” in sentence (29). Neither *you* nor *it* changes form to show the objective case, but the other personal pronouns do, giving us the following pairs: *I/me, he/him, she/her, we/us, they/them*. In some grammars, the objective case is called the **accusative case**. Like the term “nominative,” the term “accusative” comes to English from the grammars of other languages where nouns change form to indicate their sentence function; “accusative” is often used as the term for the case of direct objects.

Reflexive Pronouns

When a pronoun refers to a pronoun or noun phrase appearing in the same sentence, we use the appropriate **reflexive pronoun**. The reflexive personal pronouns—*myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, themselves*—are generally used in object positions, as in sentences (30) and (31):

(30) I hurt **myself**.

(31) The hidden observer revealed **himself**.

Reflexive pronouns can appear with their nominative equivalents in a subject position when used for emphasis, as in sentences (32) and (33) below:

(32) **I myself** have no problem with this.

(33) **We ourselves** are at fault.

The reflexives are unusual in allowing for a distinction in number in the second person: “yourself” vs. “yourselves”. The singular “themselves,” on the other hand, is not an accepted usage, even if one is trying to avoid gender problems. “Theirselves” is also non-Standard and should be avoided in formal prose:

(34) ?A professor should keep **themselves** from playing favorites.

(35) ?They kept to **theirselves**.

Both “themselves” and “theirselves” have been around for some time, however, and are in fairly wide use. Their unacceptability is one of those shibboleths which one might as well follow in practice without stigmatizing others who use these formulations.

One sometimes finds reflexive pronouns used where regular objective personal pronouns would suffice and vice versa. A sentence like sentence (36) gives a false sense of formality, though it may not be worth correcting, while a sentence like (37) is acceptable only in very informal situations:

(36) In this position, you will be reporting directly to **?myself**.

(37) I went to the kitchen and got **?me** a beer.

Subject-Verb Agreement Problems

The subject-verb agreement rule may seem simple enough when we have only a single noun and verb, but there are non-standard dialects of English which have abandoned showing number on the verb. In those dialects, sentence (38) is a perfectly acceptable sentence, though we've marked it with an asterisk as unacceptable in Standard English:

(38) *George stink.

Truth be told, we have no difficulty in understanding the meaning of such a sentence, though we have marked it with an asterisk, our convention for marking expressions as grammatically unacceptable. After all, English has been abandoning various inflections for many centuries now. Nevertheless, a lack of subject-verb agreement is a relatively noticeable departure from Standard English, and users who make such "errors" are well advised to learn the standard form, at least for formal speech and writing.

Even speakers of Standard English may get confused about subject-verb agreement when the main noun (known as the simple subject) comes with a bunch of modifying material in the subject noun phrase (the complete subject), especially if that modifying material includes noun phrases which differ in number from the main subject noun phrase, as in a sentence like this:

(39) My second cousin once-removed George, whose parents spoiled him badly even as an adult, stinks.

We call it subject-verb agreement, but only the verb with an ending showing tense has to agree with the subject. In most of the sentences we have considered so far, there is only one verb and it shows the tense. Modals do not show number, person, or gender, and they are followed by tenseless forms of the verb. If there is no modal in a sentence, only the first of any other auxiliaries will agree with the subject. We'll look at this problem again after we have dealt with some more complicated subject NPs.

Pronoun Reference Problems

Personal pronouns are supposed to agree with in number, person, and gender with their **antecedent**, the noun phrase they refer back to. Within a particular sentence, the most common problems in pronoun agreement are probably failures in number agreement resulting from the same sort of confusions as generate failures in subject-verb agreement. Another common problem is **number shift**. It is not hard to start out a paper talking about "students" in general and using plural pronouns like "they" and then shift midway to talking about "the" generic "student" and using a singular pronoun like "one." Some writers careen back and forth, inducing dizziness in the poor reader.

One problem that occurs both within and between sentences is a lack of clarity resulting from uncertainty about which noun phrase is the antecedent the writer has in mind:

(40) ?George and Homer missed the deer, and **it** kicked **him**.

(41) ?George and Homer missed the deer, and **it** escaped **him**.

(42) ?George and Homer missed the deer, and **it** haunted **them**.

In sentence (40), we understand that the "it" refers to "the deer," but we aren't sure which man was kicked. In sentence (41), we seem to have used a singular pronoun to refer to two people, a particularly unforgivable form of number shift. In sentence (42), the question is whether the "it" refers only to "the deer" (now presumably a ghost) or to the entire preceding statement, "George and Homer missed the deer." As our sentences grow longer and more complex, it becomes easier to fall into such ambiguities.

Gender as a Problem

The most troublesome pronoun use problems these days are created by the requirement for agreement in gender, the grammatical sex ascribed to an object. Phrases like "grammatical sex" and verbs like "ascribed" may seem a bit too careful—or in the case of "grammatical sex," possibly kinky. Remember that we sometimes refer to inanimate objects in these terms—for example, calling a ship "she"—with no sense that their sex life goes beyond grammar.

If the sex of the animate being referred to is unknown or indeterminate, choosing either "he" or "she" is likely to offend some readers. Some authors alternate between the two, an option which works best when applied to chapters of a longer work; in short essays, the effect is simply confusing. If one must make a choice, the masculine pronoun might seem preferable, as in sentence (43) below, since English has historically used the masculine tense in such cases, but there is little profit in unnecessarily offending readers, and that choice is bound to do so, as implying that students and professors are mostly male:

(43) The student should make a point to see his professor in his office.

There is no generally satisfactory solution to such problems. On an informal basis, many of us use a plural pronoun with a singular antecedent, even to modify singular nouns, as in sentence (41). Unfortunately, this handy solution violates the rule that pronouns should agree with their antecedent, and so is unacceptable in the eyes of many.

(44) The student should make a point to see their professor in their office.

A variety of gender-neutral animate singular pronouns have been suggested. Probably the best known are the Spivak pronouns, named for Michael Spivak, found here in sentence (45). Even in academic circles, the use of these can baffle readers, so one probably shouldn't use them in most cases, even though they fill an obvious need:

(45) The student should make a point to see eir professor in eir office.

Some authors deliberately alternate "he" and "she" from sentence to sentence or chapter to chapter, a tactic which is unnecessarily annoying, although it can work in longer works. In some cases, one may be mandated to use "he/she" or some variant thereof, as in sentence (46). Readers are getting more used to seeing this in official prose, but it plays hell with sentence rhythm and probably should be a last resort.

(46) The student should make a point to see his/her professor in his or her office.

If one possibly can do so, it is desirable to revise the sentence to avoid having to choose between masculine and feminine pronouns when the context doesn't make the choice clear. The sentences below represent some of the possible ways of doing so: making everything plural (47), simply repeating the original noun (48), rewriting the sentence to allow the use of the indefinite pronoun one (49), and rewriting to avoid pronouns entirely (50). Any of these may be the best solution in a particular case.

(47) Students should make a point of seeing their professors in their offices.

(48) A student should make a point to see the student's professor in the professor's office.

(49) An office visit to one's professor is a good idea.

(50) Office visits give a student and a professor an opportunity to get to know each other outside of the classroom.

Gender issues in pronoun use are obviously part of a general concern with avoiding language which makes assumptions that may be seen as excluding some of one's readers. In the sentence whose variations we've been following, using the generic masculine for a student probably doesn't make much difference, except in certain disciplines, but using a pronoun that seems to assume that professors will be male might well offend some female readers. Paying attention to one's pronouns may help one avoid other unnecessarily off-putting expressions as well.

FILLING IN THE BASICS: WHAT YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO NOW

- Recognize irregular noun plurals.
- Identify errors in subject-verb agreement and be able to explain why they are errors and how to correct them.
- Recognize cases in which pronouns fail to agree with their antecedents and be able to correct them.
- Rewrite sentences to avoid potentially problematic pronoun gender issues.

FOUR KINDS OF QUESTIONS

English has a variety of ways of asking questions, not all of which require a distinctive sentence form. We can, for example, simply put a question mark at the end of a normal declarative sentence:

- (1) George dances?

In speaking, we would say this sentence with a **rising intonation** at the end to indicate that it was a question. In either case, the phrase structure of the sentence remains the same as the declarative sentence, and such questions are sometimes known as **declarative questions** (or **echo** questions). They are one of several examples of cases in which English uses one kind of sentence form to accomplish aims associated with a different form—some parents and bosses, for example, express all of their commands as interrogatives—*Could you get this for me?*—but still expect them to be obeyed as commands.

There is, however, a kind of sentence form used especially for questions, the **interrogative sentence** type. It comes in several varieties, the yes/no question, the tag question, and the WH-question. All of these share a common characteristic, a kind of movement called **INVERSION**. This is sometimes called **subject-verb inversion**, but that name over-simplifies the process. Unlike the English of Shakespeare's time, modern English does not allow us to simply invert the verb and subject to make a question:

- (2) *Dances George?

What INVERSION really does is move the tense/modal element in front of the subject—the element we've been labeling **I** on our phrase structure trees. It turns out to be a fairly complicated process, one which makes life hard for non-English speakers attempting to learn the language. We'll start out by looking at the simplest form, in which a modal verb ("can") is moved in front of the subject ("George" or "he"):

- (3) **Can George** dance?
 (4) George can dance, **can't he**?
 (5) What **can George** dance?

Yes/No Questions with Modals

When we think of interrogative sentences, we most often think of sentences like (3) above. Questions of this sort are called **yes/no questions** because they call for a yes or no answer. Because they ask whether or not an equivalent declarative sentence would be true or false, we can think of them as derived from the equivalent declarative sentences by INVERSION:

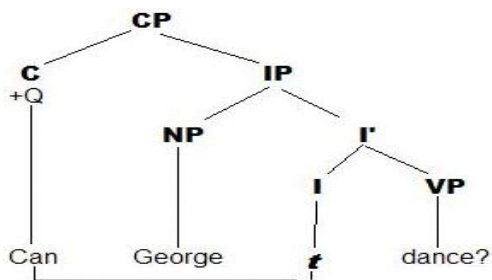
- (6) George can dance => Can George dance?
 (7) George could dance => Could George dance?
 (8) George may dance => May George dance?
 (9) George might dance => Might George dance?
 (10) George must dance => Must George dance?
 (11) George will dance => Will George dance?
 (12) George would dance => Would George dance?
 (13) George shall dance => Shall George dance?
 (14) George should dance => Should George dance?

All of these have the same pattern and all are grammatical. We might notice, though, that questions with *may*, *might*, and *must* seem a bit awkward, not quite idiomatic. The same is true of such archaic or marginal modals as *need*, *dare*, and *ought to*:

- (15) ?George need dance => ?Need George dance?
 (16) ?George dare dance => ?Dare George dance?
 (17) George ought to dance => ?Ought George to dance?

Although INVERSION moves these modals in front of the subject, we know that the modal is part of the predicate rather than part of the subject. In diagramming such sentences, we indicate our knowledge of this by showing that the modal has left a **trace (t)** behind in its move. To provide a place for it to move to, we can think of question sentences like this as a kind of complementizer phrase (**CP**), headed by a marker (+Q) that shows this is a question. The INVERSION would

then move the modal from its place in its **IP** to the position underneath that question marker.



Tag Questions with Modals

Tag questions are less frequently discussed but are very common in everyday speech. Where there is a modal verb in the sentence, the modal is copied to the end of the sentence, where it precedes a pronoun which stands for the subject **NP**, agreeing with it in person, number, and gender. In Standard English, a negative is added to positive sentences and subtracted from negative sentences, though this requirement is so often omitted in informal speech that one probably should not regard it as incorrect in that venue. The negative can be, and usually is except in very formal prose, attached by contraction to the modal verb, but it need not be, and doing so sounds very awkward with *may* and *shall* in particular. Most modals, though, have two tag question forms for positive sentences:

- (18) George can dance, can't he? George can dance, can he not?
 (19) George could dance, couldn't he? George could dance, could he not?

For sentences that are negative to begin with, however, there is usually only the one positive tag question possibility, and even that should be avoided with *may*, *might*, *must*, and possibly *shall*.

- (20) George would not dance, would he?
 (21) George shouldn't dance, should he?

The modal *will* has an irregular contracted form:

- (22) George will dance, won't he? George will dance, will he not?

Conventionally, speakers use tag questions to suggest that they anticipate agreement with the statement being questioned. Often enough, however, they are simply afterthoughts and/or requests for reassurance. Tag questions can be represented by trees, but we'll spare you that complication for now.

WH-Questions with Modals

INVERSION is also used in questions beginning with interrogative pronouns. These can be called *WH-Questions* because the commonest **interrogative pronouns** begin with *WH*: *who*, *whom*, *which*, *what*, *where*, *when*. In the underlying declarative sentence, the interrogative pronoun can serve a variety of functions, including *which* as a determiner:

- (23) George will dance with **which girl**?
 (24) George will dance with **whom**?
 (25) George will dance **what**?

Although one can imagine saying any of the sentences just above, perhaps with an air of incredulity, the general rule is that a movement process called **WH-MOVEMENT** applies along with INVERSION. **WH-MOVEMENT** moves the interrogative pronoun to the beginning of the sentence, ahead of the modal moved by INVERSION. When *which* or *what* is used as a determiner, the whole noun phrase is moved. In prepositional phrases, however, the preposition can be left behind, though it need not be, unless one is writing for someone who is a real purist about ending sentences with a preposition:

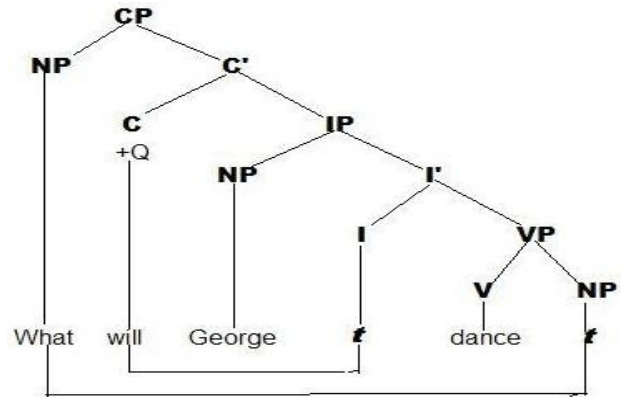
- (26) **Which** girl will George dance with?
 (27) **With whom** will George dance?
 (28) **What** will George dance?

Interrogative pronouns like *when*, *where*, and the honorary *WH*-word *how* can be thought of as originating as adjunct adverbials in the underlying declarative sentence:

- (29) George will dance **when**? => **When** will George dance?
 (30) George will dance **where**? => **Where** will George dance?

(31) George will dance how? => How will George dance?

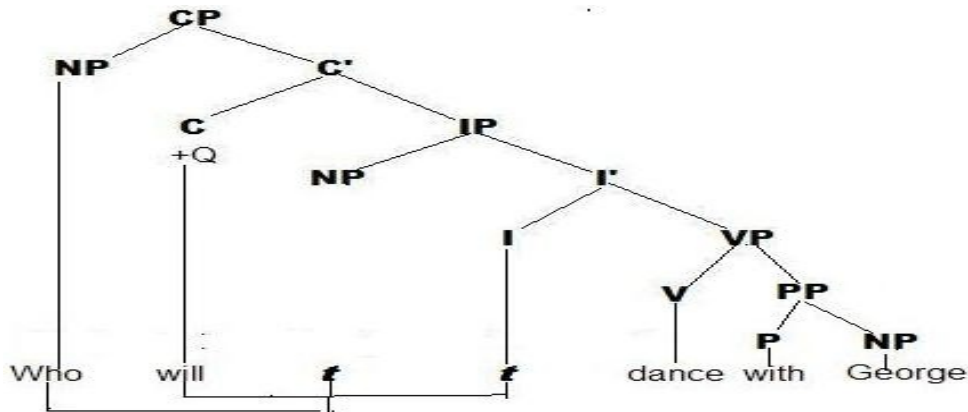
When we come to diagram a sentence like *What will George dance?*, we want our diagram to show our knowledge that *what* is the direct object of the underlying declarative sentence, as well as our knowledge that *will* began as a modal in that sentence. The result is a diagram with not one, but two trace labels (*t*), connected by some ugly lines. The WH-interrogative pronoun winds up in the specifier position of the complementizer phrase, so we now have a C-bar level as well.



We have so far avoided sentences like the following:

(32) Who will dance with George?

Who is the subject of sentence (32), but our two movements cancel each other out. We can either declare this an exception to our rules for interrogative sentences, or we can think of such sentences as having had the modal moved around the subject by INVERSION only to have the subject moved back in front by WH-MOVEMENT. In diagramming, at least, it seems desirable to adopt the latter analysis, leading to a diagram like that below:



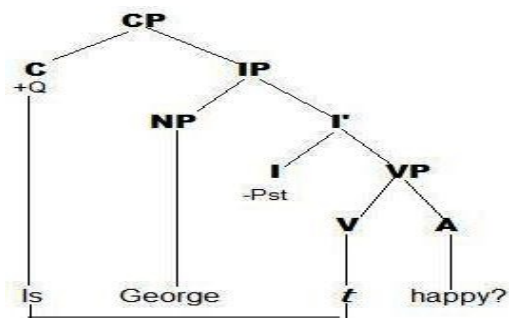
Interrogatives with *Be* as a Linking Verb

Although we have said that modern English does not allow main verbs to move by INVERSION, there is one main verb which always does so, *be*. When there is no modal, a tensed form of *be* can undergo INVERSION. Let us start with a simple yes/no questions:

(33) George is happy
=> is George happy?

Other linking verbs (like "seem") can not undergo INVERSION. It is, however, possible with the main verb *have*, particularly in British English:

(34) George has an umbrella => Has George an umbrella?



This makes some sense, because both *be* and *have*, can be used as **auxiliary verbs**, though not as modal auxiliaries, in forms will be considering later. Whether *be* is an auxiliary or a main verb,

though, it is not subject to INVERSION unless it is the tense-bearing verb. If there is an initial modal, for example, only that modal moves:

(35) George will be happy => Will George be happy?

We can take this into account by adding some qualifying clauses to our rule describing INVERSION as moving the tense/modal element in front of the subject. Or we can keep that rule and add a new rule saying that if that element is empty, a form of *be* (or *have*) can be moved into it:

Tag questions with *be* as a main verb follow the same pattern. If *be* is the main verb and the only verb (and thus tensed), it is copied to the end of the sentence, but not if there is another verb in front of it:

(36) George is happy, isn't he?

(37) George will be happy, won't he?

The same is true of *WH*-questions:

(38) Where is George?

(39) Where will George be?

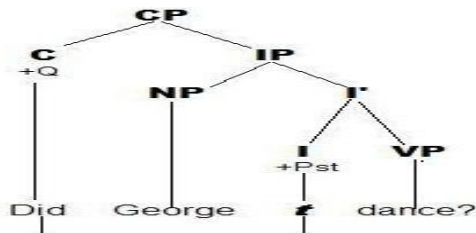
Interrogatives with Normal Main Verbs

For most main verbs, sentences in which they are unaccompanied by modals and other auxiliaries form yes/no questions like this:

(40) George dances => **Does** George dance?

(41) George danced => **Did** George dance?

In effect, the tense still moves in front of the subject, the verb *do* comes in to supply a verb to carry the tense. This process is known as *DO-INSERTION* or *DO-SUPPORT*, and it has some other uses which we'll encounter later. In sentences where the original verb is in the present tense, the tense will appear as *do* or *does*. In sentences where the original verb is in the past tense, the tense will appear as *did*.



The verb of the underlying declarative sentence appears in an untensed form in the yes/no question, just as the verbs following a modal *do*. For this reason, among others, *do* in such cases is sometimes considered a modal verb. We can also reverse this process when we want to show what is the statement being questioned. If the form of *do* is *does* or *do*, our underlying sentence will be in the present tense; if the form of *do* is *did*, then the underlying sentence will be in the past tense.

In tag questions, the tense/modal element is copied to the end of the sentence but remains in the original sentence as well. This means that although *DO-INSERTION* is applied to the question tag, the original verb retains its tense:

(42) George dances => George dances, **doesn't** he?

(43) George danced => George danced, **didn't** he?

Finally, *WH*-questions are also subject to *DO-INSERTION*. As before, questions with *who* as the subject are an exception. Whatever movements we assume have applied to them leave the tense element next to the verb phrase, so *do* is not required:

(44) How **did** George dance?

(45) Who danced?

Verbs which can undergo INVERSION are known as **operators**, and we can describe this use of "do" as *do* functioning as a operator in interrogatives. It is a versatile verb which has other uses as well. We'll come back to it later.

FILLING IN THE BASICS: WHAT YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO NOW

- Ask a yes/no question or a tag-question based on a simple declarative sentence without changing the tense or meaning of the sentence being asked about.
- Produce an equivalent declarative sentence for a sentence in any one of the three main interrogative sentence forms.
- Use the CP-structure to draw a tree-diagram representing the structure of a yes/no question or a WH-question and its relationship to an equivalent declarative sentence.

POSSESSIVES

English nouns retain only one of the **case** inflections which bedevil us when we learn some other languages—the **possessive**, generally formed by adding “s” to the end of the head noun of a noun phrase, an ending which sounds in speech the same as the plural ending, illustrating the thrifty character of our language and its possibilities for confusion. The possessive case is used to indicate that one noun phrase belongs with another in some way. It is used for relationships well beyond those normally suggested by the term “possession,” and serious grammarians often prefer to call this the **genitive** case. There are possessive forms of the personal pronouns as well. The possessive seems likely to remain in English for some time, though the last few centuries have seen an increased use of alternative phrases beginning with “of.”

Possessive Nouns and Noun Phrases as Determiners

The ability to form a possessive is one of the defining characteristics of nouns, along with the existence of singular and plural forms. The most common use of possessive nouns is in the determiner position. Like articles and demonstratives, possessive nouns serve as **central determiners**. One sign of this is that possessives cannot occupy the same determiner position as articles like “the.” Sentences (1) and (2) below are possible, but sentence (3) is ungrammatical:

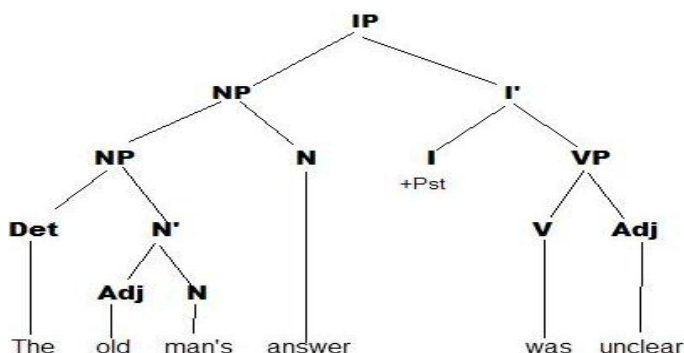
- (1) **The** old car hit the pole.
- (2) **George’s** old car hit the pole.
- (3) ***The George’s** old car hit the pole.

The problem with sentence (3) is that we interpret its “the” as applying to George rather than the car, and proper names like “George” don’t usually have determiners. In sentence (4) below, “the” is part of a possessive noun phrase, “the man’s,” a point which may be clearer when we use a demonstrative as a determiner, like the “this” in sentence (5):

- (4) **The man’s** old car hit the pole.
- (5) **This man’s** old car hit the pole.

To make this analysis clear, any phrase structure trees we draw for noun phrases which include possessive noun phrases as determiners should show the possessives in the specifier slot normally occupied by other determiners. Our first division of the subject of sentence (5) would be between the specifier “this man’s” and the rest of the noun phrase, the N-bar “old car.” Where this is only a possessive determiner and the head noun, we can skip the N-bar level unless it comes up within the possessive itself, as in sentence (6) below:

- (6) **The old man’s** answer was unclear.



Notice that in sentence (6), the definite article “the” shows that both writer and reader have some idea which old man is being talked about, though the “answer” he gave remains unspecified. Like other determiners, possessive noun phrases, although modifying the head noun, come in front of any true adjective modifying the same noun. In *The man’s old car*, it is the car which is “old,” the man’s age remaining unknown. If we said *The old man’s car*, the man would be old but the age of the car would be unknown.

Although the ending which signals the possessive is normally found attached to a noun, English allows it to appear at the end of noun phrases which have modifiers following the noun, as in sentence (7):

(7) The old man in the car’s answer was unclear.

The kind of structure illustrated by sentence (7) above is called the **group genitive**. Its existence is a reminder that it is the noun phrase as a whole which is serving the determiner function. Even so, it carries with it the possibility of confusing the reader and should be avoided outside of familiar idioms and proper nouns which include postmodifying phrases, as in sentence (8):

(8) The King of England’s horse hit my car.

Other Uses for Possessive Nouns and Noun Phrases

In special cases, possessive nouns or noun phrases can serve in the usual nominal positions, as subjects, direct objects, or objects of a preposition. They can also appear as subject complements. The following sentences illustrate those possibilities:

- (9) George’s was the best answer.
- (10) Her car hit George’s.
- (11) Martha saw Cecily at George’s.
- (12) The best answer was George’s.

Possessive nouns can even be found as the objects of the preposition *of* in an odd formation called the **double genitive**. In theory, the possessive ending in sentence (13) is redundant, but in practice it is preferred for proper nouns and pronouns and used for common nouns as well:

(13) Martha ripped a coat of George’s.

Possessive Personal Pronouns

As one might expect, personal pronouns also show the possessive case. The most common **possessive personal pronouns**--*my, your, his, her, its, our, their*--can appear in the determiner position. None of these comes with an apostrophe, not even *its*. Save the *it’s* with an apostrophe for contractions of *it is*. Try not to confuse the possessive *their* with the contraction *they’re* either.

- (13) My birthday rocked.
- (14) Your plane flew.
- (15) His breath stinks.
- (16) Her music rocks.
- (17) Its value sank.
- (18) Our dog bites.
- (19) Their shirts match.

Like possessive noun phrases, these possessive pronouns occupy the same determiner position as articles and cannot appear with them in the same noun phrase. The following sentences are therefore marked as unacceptable:

- (20) *My the dog barks loudly.
- (21) *The my dog barks loudly.

On the other hand, these possessives, except for *his* and *its*, cannot be used in the traditional noun positions in which one can sometimes find possessive noun phrases. For the remaining ones, when used as subjects, objects, or subject complements, we use a separate set of **independent possessive personal pronouns**: *mine, yours, hers, ours, theirs*. Even when these end in an *s*, they still have no apostrophe:

- (22) The best essay was mine.
- (23) Yours is the worst.
- (24) His car crashed into hers.
- (25) He is a particular friend of ours.
- (26) The victory is theirs.

FILLING IN THE BASICS: MORE THAT YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO NOW

– Recognize the following basic pronouns in relative simple sentences: demonstratives as stand-alone pronouns, demonstratives as determiners, personal pronouns in the nominative case, personal pronouns in the objective case, possessive personal pronouns as determiners, independent possessive personal pronouns, reflexive pronouns.

–Distinguish any words or phrases occupying the central determiner position within a noun phrase and be able to say whether they are articles, demonstratives, possessive personal pronouns, or possessive noun phrases.

–Identify the sentence function played by a possessive noun phrase or an independent possessive personal pronoun.

TWO MORE ADVERBIALS

So far we have mostly avoided two of the most common adjunct adverbials, those which answer the questions “when” and “why.” The reason is that **time and place adverbials** are unusual in that they seem to be able to modify nouns, either as subject complements or in the postmodifying position within a noun phrase.

Time and Place Adjuncts

Like most adjunct adverbials, **time adverbs** and **place adverbs** (also called **locatives**) are usually found at the end of the verb phrase in which they have a role, but they can be moved in front of the verb or even to the front of the sentence for emphasis:

- (1) George will dance **here**.
- (2) Martha will dance **there**.
- (3) George will dance **soon**.
- (4) Martha will dance **then**.
- (5) George will **then** dance.
- (6) A fool and his money are **soon** parted.
- (7) **Here** I stand.

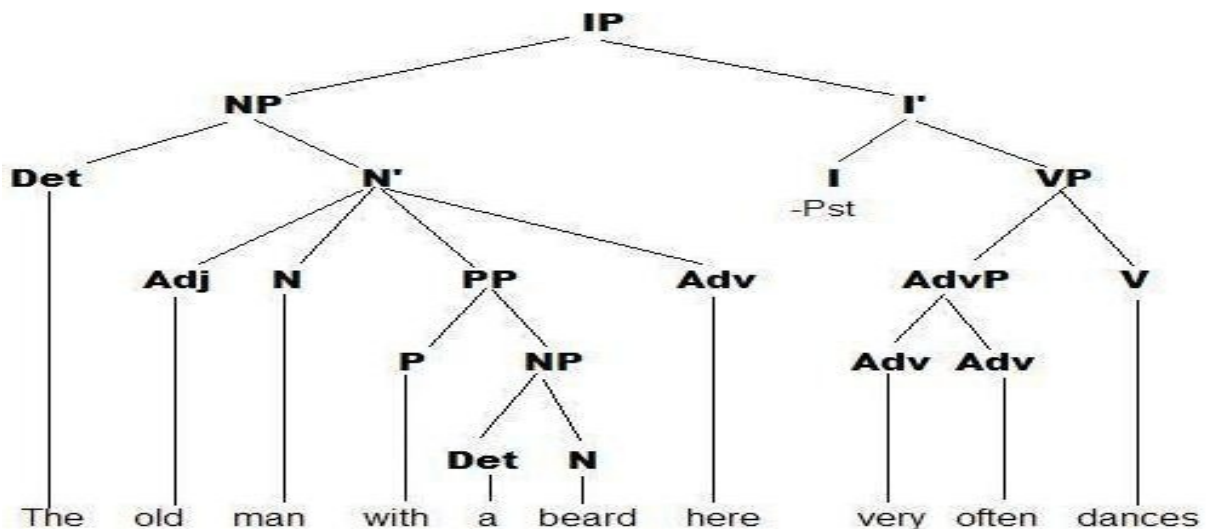
Prepositional phrases also serve as time and place adverbials. As adjuncts, these are also generally found at the end of clauses. They do not fit easily into the pre-verb adverb position, but they can be moved to the front of the sentence. They are certainly more easily moved there than some adjuncts, such as instrumentals. When it seems necessary, they are sometimes set off with a comma for clarity:

- (8) George will dance **on the table**.
- (9) Martha will dance **after the show**.
- (10) **At present**, we have no bananas.
- (11) **In my house** we never eat spinach.

Noun phrases also serve as adverbials, especially time adverbials. This is an odd case in which you have words and phrases whose sense and normal function is nominal but whose function in a particular sentence is adverbial—e.g., modifying a verb:

- (12) We ate spinach **this evening**.
- (13) **Last night** we had squash.

Adverbial noun phrases are not all that common but they are an obvious problem for our analysis of sentences. Sentence (12) is not hard to diagram, but students are often tempted to label it as some kind of object. In sentence (13), it is even easier for students to lose track and think that “last night” must be a part of the subject; such sentences should be diagrammed as having moved the adverbial from its original end of sentence position.



Other Uses of Time and Place Adverbials

Not to be outdone, time and place adverbials, unlike other adjunct adverbials, can appear as subject complements and as post-modifying elements in a noun phrase—adverbials in sense but adjectivals in function. Here are some examples of their use as subject complements:

- (14) The meeting is **here**.
- (15) Our deadline is **soon**.
- (16) My aunt's pen is **on the table**.
- (17) Their duel was **before dawn**.
- (18) My appointment is **this afternoon**.

Just as adjectives used as subject complements are called **predicate adjectives**, and most noun phrases used as subject complements are called **predicate nominatives**, the adverbs and adverbial expressions used as subject complements are called **predicate adverbials**. These are the three types of subject complements, and predicate adverbials are the least common, occurring only with the verb *be* and not with other linking verbs.

We are so used to linking verbs taking adjectives as their complements that it is easy to misidentify predicate adverbs as adjectives. Even more confusing are **postmodifying** adverbs and adverbials in noun phrases, where their function is very clearly adjectival. In each of the sentences below, the adverbial is part of the subject noun phrase and is modifying “meeting,” the head noun of that phrase.

- (19) The meeting **here** went well.
- (20) The meeting **at my house** went badly.
- (21) The meeting **tomorrow** will be there.
- (22) The meeting **on Tuesday** will be here.
- (23) The meeting **last night** was a disaster.

Like other postmodifying elements in noun phrases, adverbials can lead sloppy readers to misidentify the simple subject, leading to subject verb agreement errors. In diagramming such sentences, make sure that the postmodifying adverbials are shown as part of the noun phrase. Like adjectives, they are shown in the N-bar portion of the noun phrase, separate from the determiner, if there is one.

Clausal Adverbials of Time and Place

The questions “when?” and “where?” can also be answered by clauses introduced by **subordinating conjunctions**, obviously including the words *when* and *where* themselves. Like the complement clauses discussed earlier, clauses which serve adverbial functions are called **dependent clauses** or **subordinate clauses** because they depend on or are subordinate to the clauses in which they serve, and sentences which include them are called **complex sentences**. As with clauses introduced by coordinating conjunctions like *and*, subordinate clauses may be set off by commas, but they need not be. The following sentences show adjunct adverbials of time which are, respectively, adverb phrases (24), prepositional phrases (25), noun phrases (26), and subordinate clauses (27):

- (24) I was awake **very early**.
 (25) I was awake **before dawn**.
 (26) I was awake **this morning**.
 (27) I was awake **before the sun rose**.

Notice that traditional grammar treats “before dawn” in sentence (25) as a preposition, but “before the sun rose” in sentence (27) as a subordinate clause, with the part of speech assigned to “before” changing appropriately. Sentence (25) would be regarded as a **simple sentence** because it has only one clause, but sentence (27), with two clauses, one dependent on the other, would be regarded as a **complex sentence**,

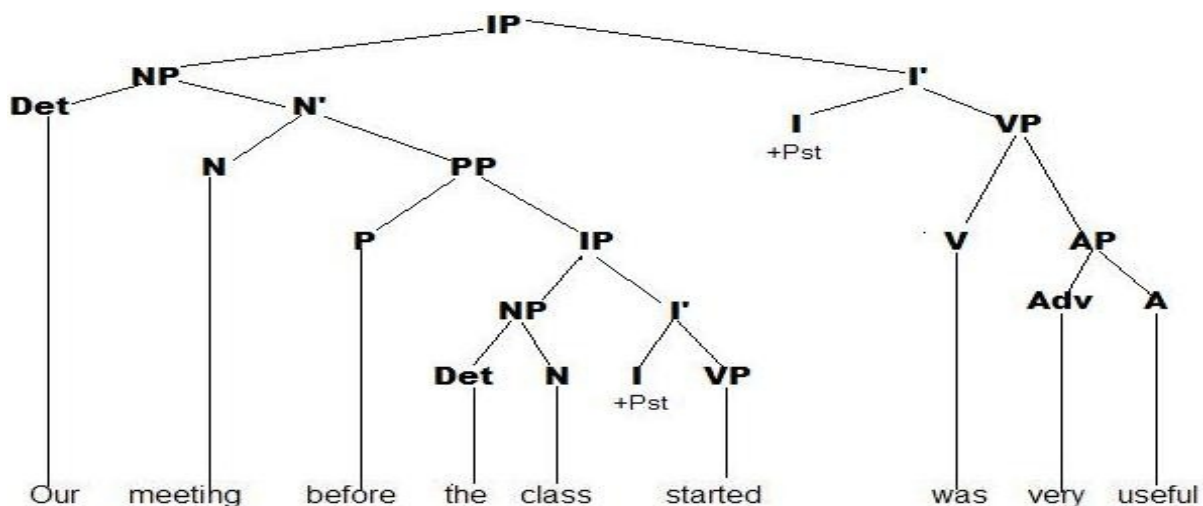
Like other adverbials, clausal adverbials are most often found at the end of clauses but can be moved to the front:

- (28) **When morning came**, I was already awake.
 (29) **Before the sun rose**, I was awake.

Like other time and place adverbials, subordinate clauses of time (and occasionally place) can serve non-adverbial functions, including as subject complements and post-modifier in a noun phrase:

- (30) This college is **where we met**.
 (31) Our meeting **before class started** was very useful.

Subordinate clauses introduced with *WH*-words like *when* and *where* are diagrammed as **CP** clauses having undergone *WH-MOVEMENT*, the same kind of movement used to create *WH*-questions. In other such clauses, the subordinating conjunction can be treated as having begun its life in the specifier position of the clause. With words like “before,” some linguists would prefer to treat the structure as a prepositional phrase with “before” as a preposition taking an **IP** as its complement. The diagram below shows this analysis, but don’t try it on your local English teacher:



FILLING IN THE BASICS: MORE THAT YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO NOW

– Recognize adverbs and adverbials of time or place, whatever their sentence function, distinguishing them from adverbials of frequency, instrumentals, intensifying adverbials, and manner adverbials.

– Say whether a subject complement is a predicate adjective, predicate nominative, or predicate adverbial.

– Recognize the complete and simple subject of a sentence when it has an adverbial in front of it, even when that adverbial is itself a noun phrase.

– Recognize postmodifying time and place adverbials as part of noun phrases when they modify its head noun.

– Be able to diagram noun phrases and verb phrases which include time and place adverbials, including adverbial subordinate clauses.

2 TENSES, 2 AUXILIARIES, 2 PARTICIPLES, 2 ASPECTS, 2 VOICES

Accounts of English grammar sometimes described a great number of English tenses but English really only inflects its verbs for two tenses, the present and the past. All other “tenses” are phrasal, using modals followed by untensed verbs, as for the “future tense,” or other auxiliary verbs followed by **participles**, which are used to form the progressive and perfect aspect and the passive voice. English verbs have both a **present participle** and a **past participle**, and those names themselves create confusion about the tense of the clauses in which they appear. The tense, if there is one, is that of the first verb in a clause, and whether any participle is “present” or “past” has nothing to do with the tense of the clause. Before we go much further, stop, take a deep breath, and repeat to yourself several times these two points:

(a) *English only inflects for the past tense or present tense*

(b) *Only the first verb in a clause is inflected for tense and then only if it is not a modal verb.*

Present Participle, Past Participle

We have already encountered several of the principal forms of English verbs, the parts which someone learning a new verb needs to know to use it correctly. (None of these forms apply to modals, however.) The **base form** of the verb is the form we use to look it up in the dictionary, the form we use after “please” or “let’s” in imperative sentences. For every verb but “be,” this is also the form used in the present tense except for the **third-person present singular**, which has its own form, usually with the ubiquitous “-s” ending. Most verbs form the **past tense** with an “-ed” ending; this is also sometimes known as the **simple past**, to avoid confusion with the constructions we are about to discuss. English verbs, other than modals, have two participles, the **ing-participle** and the **en-participle**, better known as the present and past participles. Two English verbs, “be” and “have” are used as **auxiliaries** in combination with these participles.

The **ing-participle** is one of the few really dependable features of English. Every English verb that can be a main verb forms one of its participles by adding an “-ing” to the base form. Even “be,” which is regular in almost no other way, has “being” as its present participle. This participle can be used with “be” as an immediately preceding auxiliary verb but not with an immediately preceding form of “have”:

(1) George **is being** playful.

(2) George **was looking** at the animals.

- (3) *George has looking at the animals.

What some grammarians call the **en-participle**, on the other hand, is anything but regular. “Be,” to be sure, forms its past participle by adding an “-en” ending (giving us “been”), and many other irregular verbs do as well, but regular English verbs, the vast majority, form this participle with the same “-ed” ending as their regular past tense, so that it is also known as the **ed-participle**. Other verbs have different forms altogether. When non-native speakers learn English, they have to memorize the many irregular forms. This participle appears preceded both by forms of *be* and by forms of *have*:

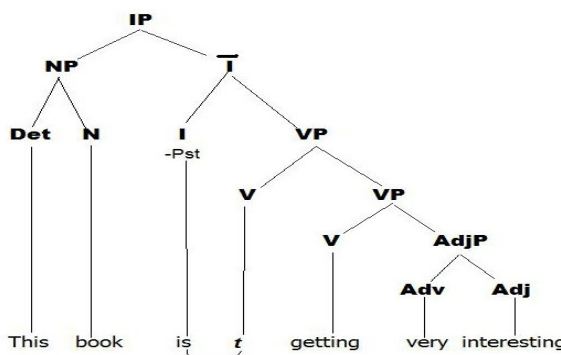
- (4) George has been useless.
 (5) George had grown accustomed to her face.
 (6) George was taken to the hospital.
 (7) George is buried in Grant’s Tomb.

In sentences (4) and (7), an *en*-participle is preceded by a present tense form of an auxiliary verb. The tense of these sentences is, therefore, present tense, even though we may call the participles “past” participles. For some reason, students find this hard to remember. Take another deep breath and recite these points over and over:

(c) All verbs make a present participle by adding *-ing* to the base form, but the presence of a present participle does not make a sentence present in tense.

(d) Having an *en*-participle (*ed*-participle, past participle) does not make a sentence past in tense.

When they occur as a part of verb phrases, participles are still acting as verbs. In a sequence of verbs, the last verb is always the **main verb** and it will often be a participle. When we diagram a series of verbs, we don’t want to suggest that there is no distinction among them. When *be* and *have* appear as auxiliaries, then, they are shown as verbs heading their own verb phrase, and taking as their complement a verb phrase headed by the next verb. If there is no other auxiliary in front of them, they may be shown as moved under the tense/modal I.



Progressive Aspect

The participles have various uses in English sentences, but when they are serving as one of the verbs they are being used to signal either **aspect** or **voice**. Aspect in English generally refers to whether the action of a verb is marked for being in progress or already completed, but our use of the various forms is not always consistent. In traditional grammars, aspect is often conflated with tense. When a present participle is preceded by a form of *be*, we have **progressive aspect**, present or past as determined by the first verb in the sequence:

- (8) The ship is heading into a storm. [PRESENT PROGRESSIVE]
 (9) The captain was drinking heavily last night. [PAST PROGRESSIVE]

The tense here indicates the point in time from which the action is being viewed. A ship which *is heading into a storm* is doing so at the current time of the story. The captain who *was drinking heavily last night* may not be drinking still but last night his drinking was continuous. Handbooks which insist on recognizing the modal *will* as a future tense would treat sentence (10) below as a future progressive:

- (10) The storm will be coming soon. [FUTURE PROGRESSIVE?]

When we speak, as people often do, of the “present progressive tense,” we are really using a sort of shorthand for “present in tense, and progressive in aspect.”

There are some verbs and adjectives which seldom or never take the progressive. Such verbs and adjectives are called **stative** because they characteristically represent states of being. Other languages with forms roughly equivalent to the English progressive do not necessarily have the same restriction, so that some non-native speakers will produce questionable sentences like this:

(11) ?I am believing you now.

The opposite of **stative** is **dynamic**, a category in which most verbs and adjectives are found but a name one need not learn.

Perfect Aspect

The other brand of aspect recognized in English, is the **perfect aspect**. It is signalled by the past participle preceded by a form of the verb *have*. In the following sentences, the adverb of frequency (“often”) is serving as the specifier of the **VP** which is the complement of the auxiliary verb.

(12) I have often walked down this street before. [PRESENT PERFECT]

(13) I had often walked down this street before. [PAST PERFECT]

In such sentences, the tense tells us what time perspective the action is being viewed from. If I “have often walked” someplace, I am talking about anytime in my life up to this very moment. If I “had often walked” there, I am talking about actions completed before some point or event in the past, probably one specified in the preceding or following sentences. Because the action has already been completed in either case, students can have particular difficulty in recognizing a sentence like (12) above as the **present perfect**. But only if the participle is preceded by the auxiliary “had” do we have the **past perfect**. The auxiliary “has” always marks the sentence as present, and “have” is either a present form or a base form following a modal and forming a future perfect or modal perfect:

(14) I will have seen this before. [FUTURE PERFECT?]

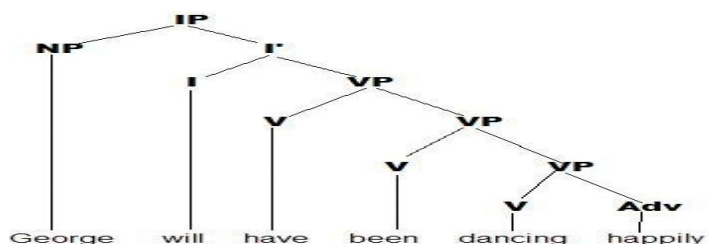
Although the two forms of aspect might seem opposed to each other, the **perfect progressive** is not that unusual a combination, perhaps because modern English rather prefers to use the progressive for the current time, rather than the simple present. The auxiliary perfect marker “have” always comes first, so that the form of “be” used will always be “been”

(15) It has been raining hard. [PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE]

(16) It had been raining hard. [PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE]

(17) It will have been raining hard. [FUTURE PERFECT PROGRESSIVE?]

In diagramming such combinations, one simply multiplies cases in which an auxiliary verb takes the remaining parts of the verb phrase as a verb phrase predicate. Modals like “will,” of course, go under the tense/modal marker (**I**).



Passive Voice

A past participle can also be preceded by a form of *be*, as in the following:

(18) We were robbed by the referees.

Whenever a form of *be* is followed by a past participle we have a special kind of structure called the **passive**. In a passive sentence, the grammatical subject of the sentence is not the person or thing which performs the action but one of its objects. If the agent which performs the action

(like “the referees”) is present in the passive sentence at all, it is placed in a prepositional phrase beginning with “by.” The original verb becomes a past participle preceded by “be.” A non-passive (**active**) sentence equivalent of sentence (18) would be:

(19) The referees robbed us.

The technical term for **passive** (and **active**) is **voice**. As with the perfect, the actual tense of a sentence is determined by the first verb in the sequence. Sentence (18) above is **past passive** because of “were,” not because of the past participle “robbed,” and the “is” in sentence (20) below makes the sentence **present passive** despite the presence of the past participle “buried”:

(20) George **is buried** in Grant’s Tomb.

Passives have a variety of uses in English, and often enough the original agent of the action is unknown or unspecified:

(21) We **were robbed**.

It is easiest to recognize a passive sentence by its form (*be* + past participle) rather than rely on one’s sense of the sentence’s meaning. Because most English sentences are in active voice, we generally don’t bother to specify that when identifying the tense, aspect, and voice of a sentence.

For writers, it is a handy exercise to practice turning passive sentences into their active equivalents and vice versa, but linguists seem to have stopped talking about PASSIVE movements. For one thing, the kind of phrase structure analysis we have been using with progressive and perfect aspect works perfectly well to show the passive, without our becoming involved with trace labels and so on. This is true even for very complex structures which combine the passive with various aspects. In such structures, the passive always comes last, so that the main verb will always be a past participle:

Passive Problems

The passive voice has a bad name in writing for a couple of reasons. For one, it introduces the relatively puny (though hard-working) verb “be”--that is, sentence (22) seems more forceful than either sentence (23) or sentence (24):

(22) The referees robbed us.

(23) We were robbed by the referees.

(24) We were robbed.

A more serious problem with the passive is that it allows us to say something happened without saying who did it, eliminating the subject of the equivalent active sentence. Sometimes this simply loses information; sometimes it is evasive prose. Sentence (3) above, for example, expresses our sense of grievance without having the guts to come out and say that we mean the referees. The absence of overt agents is particularly common in bureaucratic prose (both government and business), where it allows a total evasion of individual responsibility, leading to committee minutes full of It was noted that, it has been reported that, it was decided that and the like.

When, then, should one use the passive? It is always appropriate to use the passive when one sincerely does not know the agent. If someone breaks into our house, for example, sentence (3) is perfectly OK, without adding “by someone” to make it clear that we don’t know who did it. It is also appropriate to use the passive for a clearer transition; if you’ve been talking about “us” for several sentences, either sentence (2) or sentence (3) avoids shifting the focus.

In addition, one needs to follow the rule of “When in Rome, do as Romans do.” In particular, remember that the modern university is just another bureaucracy, and that academic writing is bureaucratic writing. The use of the first-person “I” is taboo in many forms of academic writing. This will often force one to use the passive (and other awkward structures)--e.g., “The subjects were asked.” Hold your nose and comply.

Auxiliary Verbs in Questions

Since “be” can undergo INVERSION as a main verb, it is not surprising to find that it can undergo INVERSION as an auxiliary, whether it is forming the passive or the perfect:

(24) We were robbed ==> Were we robbed?

(25) He was lying ==> Was he lying?

Although Americans customarily used DO-INSERTION when “have” is a main verb, even we have it undergo INVERSION when it is an auxiliary:

(26) Your kid has mumps ==> Does your kid have mumps?

(27) They have been drinking ==> Have they been drinking?

As sentence (27) shows, when there is more than one auxiliary, only the first one moves around the subject. If there is a modal present, it will always be the first and the one to move:

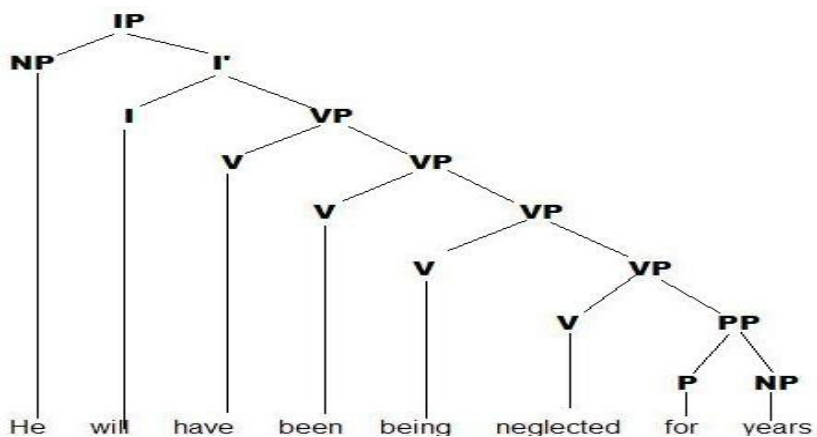
(28) They could have talked this out ==> Could they have talked this out?

Identifying Tense, Aspect and Voice

Now that we have covered these various possibilities, we can summarize how to identify the tense, aspect, and voice of a clause. If a clause has only **one** verb, that verb will be either in the present tense or the past tense, there will be no aspect, and the voice will be active.

If a clause has **two** verbs, it all depends on the first verb. If the first verb is a modal, there is no aspect, the voice will be active, and there will be no tense unless the modal is *will* and one chooses to call that future tense. If the first verb is a form of *have*, the second should be a past participle (even if it looks like a past tense), and the tense depends on the tense of *have*, and the clause is in perfect aspect and active voice. If the first verb is a form of *be*, the tense depends on the tense of *be*; if the second verb is a present participle, the clause is in perfect aspect and active voice, but if the second verb is a past participle, the clause has no aspect and is in passive voice.

If a clause has **three or more** verbs, just take them one by one. The tense, if any, still depends on the first verb in the sequence, which should be either a modal or a form of *be*. The perfect aspect always comes next, so if the first or second verb in the sequence is a form of *have*, it should be followed by a past participle, and the clause will have perfect aspect. The progressive aspect is next; if a form of *be* (even *been* or *be* itself) is followed by a present participle, the clause has progressive aspect. The passive is always the last item signalled. If the last verb (the main verb, therefore) is a past participle and the preceding verb in the sequence is any form of *be* (including *been*, *be*, and *being*), then the clause is in passive voice; otherwise, it is active.



FILLING IN THE BASICS: MORE THAT YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO NOW

- Say whether a verb form in a given sentence is the base form, the third-person present singular, the past tense, the present participle, or the past participle.
- Identify the tense, aspect(s), and voice of a simple declarative sentence, avoiding confusions caused by present and past participles.
- In a given sentence, say whether “be” is being used to form the passive, to form the progressive, or as a main verb.
- In a given sentence, say whether “have” is being used to form the perfect or as a main verb.
- In a given sentence, say whether a past participle is helping to form the passive or helping to form the perfect.
- Convert an active declarative sentence to its passive voice equivalent and vice versa.

VARIETIES OF LINKING VERBS AND TRANSITIVE VERBS

There are a few variations on our basic verb types which are so common in everyday speech and writing that one needs to learn them, but which we have put off till now because they introduce additional complications: linking verbs other than “be,” particularly the so-called sensory verbs, and transitive verbs which take more than just direct objects as their complements.

The Other Linking Verbs

So far, our only examples of a linking verb have been forms of “be.” In some ways, “be” is the basic linking verb; when in doubt about the verb in a sentence, one can try replacing it with a form of “be,” and if that works, the original verb is probably a linking verb. On the other hand, “be” is unique in many ways: it is the only linking verb which can undergo INVERSION as a main verb, it is the only linking verb that also serves as an auxiliary, and it is the only linking verb which can have predicate adverbials as subject complements. It is also one of a handful of verbs which are used exclusively as linking verbs. The verb “be” can be called **copular** or **the copula** when used as the main verb, and omitting it, as some foreign languages and non-standard varieties of English do, is sometimes called **copula deletion**, though some would call all linking verbs copular.

There are a couple of other verbs which serve almost most exclusively as linking verbs, “become” and “seem,” and several others which frequently do so, like “appear” and “remain.” None of them undergo INVERSION when they are forming interrogatives. All these verbs can have predicate adjectives as subject complements, and none of them can have predicate adverbials. “Become” and “remain” can have predicate nominatives as subject complements:

- (1) Janet **becomes a woman**.
- (2) George **remains an idiot**.

The words “seem” and “appear” can take predicate nominatives, but the result seems a bit formal, so many of us tend to provide an extra “to be” for clarity:

- (3) George seems a dork ==> George seems **to be** a dork.
- (4) George appears a simple newspaper boy ==>
George appears **to be** a simple newspaper boy.

Some linking verbs which otherwise resemble “become” can not take predicate nominatives at all, presumably because this creates confusion with their other uses—for example, “evolve,” “get,”

“grow,” “keep,” “prove”, or “turn.” These verbs are linking verbs only with predicate adjectives.

Sensory Verbs as Linking Verbs

One set of linking verbs can be especially hard to recognize, because its members are usually functioning as transitive or intransitive verbs. These are the **sensory verbs**, like *feel*, *look*, *smell*, *sound*, *taste*. These verbs are subject complements only when they are taking predicate adjectives as subject complements:

- (5) Dan **felt** angry.
- (6) George **looks** weary.
- (7) Hannah **smells** sweet.
- (8) Jane **sounds** prudish.
- (9) Hannah **tastes** sweet.

To add to the possibilities for confusion, most words connected to the senses cannot be used as linking verbs. One cannot, for example, “hear loud” or “listen loud.” It helps to be able to recognize an adjective when one sees it. If an adjective shows up by itself in a place where one is expecting a direct object, one should suspect that we have a linking verb.

Transitive Verbs With Indirect Objects

The verb “give” is the most common example of a relatively small set of transitive verbs which can take two objects, two noun phrase complements. They can be called **ditransitive verbs**. In sentence (10) below, it is just a normal transitive verb, taking a direct object. Sentence (11) specifies who the **recipient** or **beneficiary** of the gift is, putting it in a prepositional phrase head by “to.” In sentence (12), however, the recipient is placed after the verb and in front of the direct object. In such cases, the direct object remains “a puppy” and the first NP (like “George” here) is called the indirect object:

- (10) We gave a puppy.
- (11) We gave a puppy to George.
- (12) We gave George a puppy.

Verbs of this sort are sometimes called **dative verbs** because some languages have special dative case-endings to identify recipient nouns instead of using a preposition as in sentence (11) or word order as in sentence (12). Some other verbs which can be ditransitive (or dative) are “buy,” “offer,” and “sell.” The sentences below illustrate such verbs used as both simple transitive verbs and then as ditransitive (or dative) verbs. The direct objects are underlined to show that they do not change:

- (13) We bought a ticket, and then we bought our dog a ticket.
- (14) Ben offered twenty bucks, and then George offered Greta twenty bucks.
- (15) Ginger sold the horse, and then Amber sold my brother the horse.

Noun phrases which could serve as indirect object can become the subjects of passive sentences:

- (16) My brother was sold the horse by Amber.

Transitive Verbs with Object Complements

Ditransitive verbs need to be distinguished from another set of verbs which take two complements, complex transitive verbs like “consider”:

- (17) She considered George a friend.

In such cases, the first noun phrase is the direct object--that is, “George” is the object of her consideration. The second noun phrase, a friend, actually says something about George. We can show this by inserting a “to be” in between the direct object and the second noun phrase or by substituting an adjective for it:

- (18) She considered George to be a friend.
 (19) She considered George friendly.

In such structures, the second noun phrase or the adjective is called an **object complement** or object **predicative**. It has the same relation to the direct object as a subject complement (or subject predicative) does to the subject, which is one reason one can test for them by inserting “to be” or changing the complement to an adjective. As with subject complements, adjectives are the most common kind of object complement.

Here are some more such verbs, used first as regular transitive or intransitive verbs and then as complex transitives. The object complements are underlined.:

- (20) George called Martha. George called Martha sexy.
 (21) Gwen named the puppy. Gwen named the puppy Misty.
 (22) Dagbert thought hard. Dagbert thought the test a hard one.

Looking for the Direct Object

Certain verbs (like “give”) are particularly apt to serve as ditransitives, while others (like “consider”) occur often as complex transitives. Just to make life a bit more confusing, though, a verb like “make” can be either—and a regular old transitive as well. In sentence (23) below, “made” is just a transitive verb with one complement, a direct object (“a lampstand”). In sentence (24), however, it has acquired an indirect object (“her grandmother”) in front of the direct object (still “a lampstand”), and we would call this a ditransitive structure. In sentence (25), however, “her grandmother” is now the direct object, with “very happy” as an object complement describing it (or her); this would be a complex transitive sentence:

- (23) Sarah made a lampstand.
 (24) Sarah made her grandmother a lampstand.
 (25) Sarah made her grandmother very happy.

When we look at such sentences, we need to look first for the direct object. Who or what gets “made” in these sentences? Answering that will give us “a lampstand” as the direct object in sentences (23) and (24) and “her grandmother” as the direct object in sentence (25).

There is another test we can use to see if a noun phrase immediately following the verb is an indirect object. Can we make that noun phrase the object of “to” or “for” and move the resulting prepositional phrase further toward the end of the sentence. This test will show that “her grandmother” is an indirect object in sentence (26) but cannot be in sentence (27):

- (26) (a) Sarah made a lampstand for her grandmother. [OK]
 (27) (a) *Sarah made very happy for her grandmother. [NONSENSE]

This test works on all the indirect objects we identified above:

- (28) We bought our dog a ticket ==> We bought a ticket for our dog.
 (29) George offered Greta twenty bucks ==> George offered twenty bucks to Greta.
 (30) Amber sold my brother the horse ==> Amber sold the horse to my brother.

One also needs to watch out for cases in which direct object noun phrases are followed by noun phrases serving as time adverbials, vocatives, or interjections. In the sentences below “gave” is simply a normal transitive verb, with “a whole dollar” as its direct object:

- (31) We gave a whole dollar last week!
 (32) We gave a whole dollar last week, grandmother!
 (33) We gave a whole dollar last week, my God!

FILLING IN THE BASICS: MORE THAT YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO NOW

– Be able to say whether a verb in a particular sentence is serving as a base form, the third

person present singular, the past tense, the present participle, or the past participle.

– Recognize any linking verb in a sentence.

– Be able to say whether a verb which can serve in more than one kind of predicate is acting as a linking verb or not.

– In a simple sentence, identify words or phrases serving the following functions: adjunct adverbial, direct object, indirect object, object complement, sentence adverbial (disjunct), subject, subject complement.

– Give the active voice equivalent of a passive sentence with a recipient/beneficiary as the subject.

– Recognize when a transitive verb is simply that and when it is serving as a special kind of transitive verb like ditransitive or complex transitive.