



Activity 3

This is an exercise on syntax. In linguistics, syntax is the set of rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure of sentences in a given language. This could include word order and the relationship of the parts (phrases) and sub-parts (words) with each other. Let us understand this sub-discipline of linguistics using some exercises.

Given below are ten syntactic categories, that is, categories that different kinds of words fall into in a sentence. Five of them are lexical, and the other five, non-lexical. You are required to classify the words given in brackets below into these ten types. Do not worry about the meaning of lexical and non-lexical as of now. We shall delve into that later in the exercise. Wherever necessary, I have mentioned in brackets the kinds of elements that should be included in the categories to assist you. If you do not understand the words mentioned in box brackets, please feel free to look them up. Remember to carefully note the popular abbreviations which have been used in this exercise, and kindly familiarise yourself with their usage.

A. Lexical Categories:

- 1) Noun (N) [nouns and pronouns]
- 2) Verb (V)
- 3) Adjective (A) [all but demonstrative adjectives]
- 4) Preposition (P)
- 5) Adverb (Adv) [adverbs that modify verbs by adding a distinct meaning to them]

B. Non-lexical (Functional) Categories

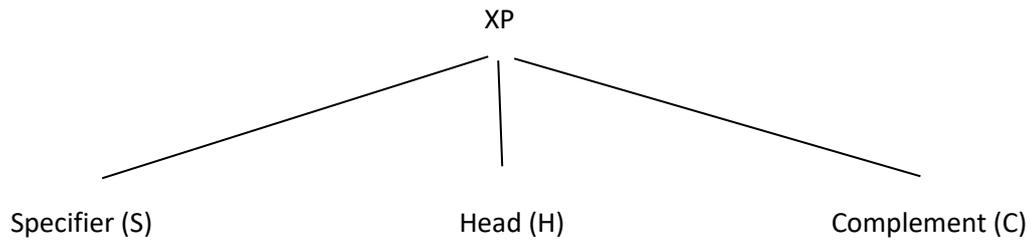
- 6) Determiner (Det) [articles and demonstrative adjectives]
- 7) Degree Word (Deg) [adverbs which modify adjectives or adverb]
- 8) Qualifier (Qual) [adverbs which inform the frequency or proportion of a verb but do not add a distinct meaning to it]
- 9) Auxiliary (Aux) [modals and auxiliaries]
- 10) Conjunction (Con)

(therefore, they, an, gently, can, indeed, to, huge, intend, thus, very, in, perhaps, is, hardly, rigorously, disabuse, so, since, have, those, more, small, upon, new, melt, by)

We shall now learn to draw phrase structure diagrams. We can form phrases from all the lexical categories namely noun phrase (NP), adjective phrase (AP), verb phrase (VP), adverb phrase (AdvP)



and preposition phrase (PP), but we cannot form them from non-lexical categories. Apart from this basic technical difference between lexical and non-lexical categories, the other difference is that the items in the lexical categories have their own distinct meanings, whereas those in the functional categories only aid the construction of grammatical and meaningful sentences.



There can be up to three (but sometimes, less than three) components, namely specifier, head, and complement, in any of the five phrases mentioned above. The head is the main word in the phrase, and the phrase gets its name from grammatical category of the head. Let us look at some examples:

E.g. 1 'The boy'

This is a NP with 'the' as the specifier, and 'boy' as the head. 'the' is a Det and 'boy' is a N.

E.g. 2 'quite certain'

AP

S quite Deg

H certain A

E.g. 3. Always eat

VP

S always Qual

H eat V

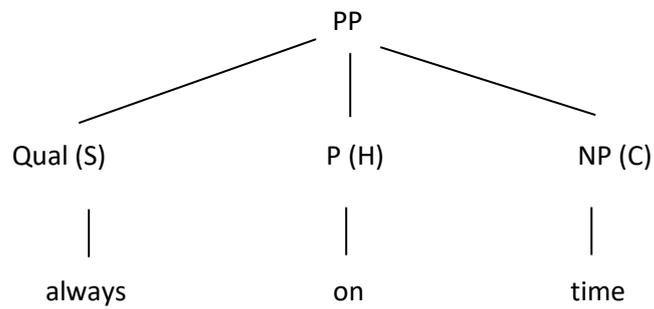
Please solve the following like examples 2 and 3 given above:

a. always late

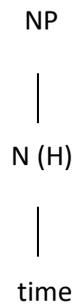
b. so grand

c. very true

The complement is often another phrase. For example,



Note that the NP which is the C here can itself be represented in the form of a tree as follows. Also note that it does not have a S or C, and thus has only one element, that is the H itself.



Now draw phrase structure trees for the following phrases:

- i. on the tree
- ii. never eat chocolates
- iii. do your homework

Thanks for your time, and congratulations for completing this exercise.