

October 6, 2003

CLASS 18: FINITE CLAUSES

SENTENCES AND CLAUSES

We defined a **sentence** as consisting of a **subject** and a **predicate**. Also, we have used the terms **'sentence'** and **'clause'** interchangeably — indeed, this definition of sentence/clause led to the postulation of a **small clause**: a **predication structure** (i.e. predicate and subject) without **tense**. What if a given structure contains **two predicates** (such as our prototypical one, the **verb**)? Most of such instances also contain **two subjects**. In these cases it is easy to argue that we have **two sentences**, or clauses: a **main clause** (or simply *sentence*, *independent* or *superordinate clause* — our *S*) and an **embedded clause** (or simply *clause*, also *dependent* or *subordinate clause*).

In this class, we will see that we have to **modify** or **extend S** for **embedded clauses** (‘?’):

- (1) [s The teacher might think [? that the students will take more syntax classes]] .

We can note first that only **lexical verbs** play a role for determination of the number of clauses — **modals** and **auxiliaries** do not. And in the case of (1) we’re dealing with two predicates (or verbs), each with its own subject. And in (1), some little guy holds the two together: *that*. This guy is a **complementizer** (like *if*, *whether*, *because*, or *since*) — which can **often be omitted**:

- (2) [s The teacher might think [? Ø the students will take more syntax classes]] .

Second, we can observe that what both clauses in (1)/(2) show is **finite tense**:

- (3) a. *The teacher think that the students will take more syntax classes.
a. *The teacher thinks that the students to take more syntax classes.
a. *The teacher to think that the students be taking more syntax classes.

Recall from our discussion of **verbfulness** that it doesn’t really matter whether the lexical verb is finite or not, as long as **one** and **at most one** verbal element is (lexical verb, modal, auxiliary).

THE FUNCTIONS OF CLAUSES

Clauses can have different **functions**: they can function as the **subject** (of a further predicate), they can be **direct objects** (*complement clause* of a predicate), **subject predicates** (functioning as the predicate to a subject NP), or **adverbial** (optional clause, e.g. modifying some verb):

- (4) a. [That Miss Emma eats her food] is necessary.
b. Joy thinks [(that) Miss Emma ate her food] .
c. The problem is [that she didn’t eat her food] .
d. She didn’t eat her food [because she wasn’t hungry] .

Thus clauses can function as roughly half of the functions in a sentence — they **can’t function as indirect objects, objects of phrasal verbs, or prepositional objects** (see Class 24 maybe).

THE STRUCTURE OF EMBEDDED CLAUSES

We need to **integrate complementizers** into our clause structure. With out simple *S*, there’s no room. So (for the time being) we simply **extend S to S’** (*S*-bar, as in *N’*, *V’* etc.):

- (5) a. [s [NP The teacher] [VP [V’ [VGP might think] S’]]]
b. [s’ [c that] [s [NP the students] [VP [V’ [VGP will take] [NP more syntax classes]]]]]

Since in this case **S’ is the sister of V** (or *VGP*), it is *V*’s complement — a **complement clause** (or the direct object of the verb). On the other side of *S’* we see that **C and S are sisters**, i.e. that **a sentence can be the complement of a complementizer** (hence the term!). This *C* holds all kinds of complementizers, so that we can now analyze a whole bunch of additional clause types.

- (6) [s The teacher asked [s’ [c whether] [s the students will take more syntax classes]]] .

In class we go over the structure of the sentences in (4). (NB: Since we analyze all elements of verbal character as part of *VGP*, there’s no problem with assigning the **copula V/VP-status**.)

Adverbial clauses need not always be introduced by a complementizer — a **preposition** can take over this part as well. In fact, prepositions become complementizers in many languages, and sometimes both categories exist, such as the **complementizer/preposition *for*** in English. (Question for discussion: Should such a preposition be a preposition or a complementizer?)

In *MASOE* we will address the issue of **extraposition**, where a **dummy subject *it*** comes in:

- (7) a. [That Miss Emma eats her food] is necessary.
b. It is necessary [that Miss Emma eats her food] .

COORDINATE SENTENCES

Just as we can coordinate PPs, NPs, or VPs, we can **coordinate clauses or sentences**.

- (8) a. [Miss Emma didn’t eat her food] and [Joy was upset] .
b. [Miss Emma didn’t eat her food] and [Joy was working] .

There is a large debate what the **structure of coordination** should look like — or whether all coordinate structures should even be **identical**. There is an intuitive differences between (8a), where **one coordinate follows from the other** (at least under one interpretation), and (8b), where **the two don’t stand in any relation to one another** (unless there is some weird context).

- (8) a. [s Miss Emma [V’ [VGP didn’t eat] [NP her food]] [s’ [c and] [s Joy was upset]]]
b. [s [s Miss Emma didn’t eat her food] and [s Joy was working]]

I leave the decision **up to you**, and **up to the context** (however you see fit or are comfortable).

Further readings:

You can read up some more on finite clauses in Brinton 2000: Ch. 9 (pp. 215-224).

Readings for next class:

van Gelderen 2002: Ch. 8 plus summary of Chs. 7-8 (pp. 135-148)