

October 9, 2003

## CLASS 19: NON-FINITE CLAUSES

### NON-FINITE CLAUSES

There are basically two types of non-finite clauses: **infinitival** and **participial** clauses.

Infinitivals have the property of containing a lexical verb which shows up in the **infinitival** form. Such an infinitive may come with the **infinitival particle** *to* or it may show up **bare**.

- (1) a. Joy expected [ Miss Emma **to eat** / \* **ate** / \***eats** her food ] .
- b. She made [ her **eat** / \* **ate** / \***eats** her food ] .

Participial clauses contain a lexical verb which shows up in the **participial** form. It may be a **present participle** ending in *-ing* or a past participle ending in *-ed* / *-en*.

- (2) a. [ **Eating** / \* **Ate** / \***Eats** her food slowly ] , Miss Emma enjoyed the meal.
- b. [ **Eaten** / \* **Ate** / \***Eats** already ] , Miss Emma is not hungry anymore.

Both types of non-finite clauses have in common that they are not finite, i.e. that they **lack tense**; they also **don't show any sign of agreement** (person or number marking).

In this sense, they can both potentially refer to **past, present, future**, depending on the context.

- (3) a. [ To eat food on time ] is good / was necessary / will be useful.
- b. [ Eating food slowly ] is good / was necessary / will be useful.

And another very important property is that although they (may) have one, **the subject does not show up in nominative case, but accusative** (as noted earlier this semester in class already).

- (3) a. Joy made [ \***she** / **her** / **Miss Emma** eat her food ] .
- b. The students want [ \***he** / **him** / **the teacher** to explain this again ] .
- c. He heard [ \***they** / **them** / **the students** complaining ] .
- d. You saw [ \***I** / **me** drinking a triple whiskey ] .

The **functions** a non-finite clause can have are basically identical to those of finite clauses.

Next, non-finite clauses **may be introduced by a complementizer** (*for*), but don't have to.

- (4) I want [ (**for**) **you** to do syntax with pleasure ] .

In class we will discuss the role of (**understood**) **subjects** and (**empty**) **complementizers**:

- (5) [S' **for** /  $\emptyset$  [S [NP **you** /  $\emptyset$  ] [VP to do syntax with pleasure ] ] ]

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### Further readings:

Check out the discussion in Brinton 2000: Ch. 9 (238-255).