

February 5, 2004

## **CLASS 4: CONSTITUENCY [PHRASES]**

### **TESTING FOR PHRASEHOOD**

We now have grammatical **categories** on the table, and the notion of a structured **phrase**.

Question: *How do we know what constitutes a particular phrase – where it begins and ends?*

For this purpose, we must **establish phrasehood** between different words that are purported to form a particular phrase. Part of this endeavour relates to the traditional notions of **subject**, **predicate**, and so forth. But we will do more than **label functions**: we will provide **arguments for constituency**. *Constituents are phrases* and as such they come with certain properties; all phrases have properties (which are captured by **constituency tests**), some even share the same, other properties/constituency tests are unique for a particular phrase.

### **CONSTITUENCY TESTS**

#### **(1) Pronominalization [WORKS WELL FOR NP, VP, SOME ADVERBIAL PP]**

A complete constituent is replaceable by a single word (pro-form or word of same category).

- (a) *a personal pronoun replaces a noun phrase*  
The fat man ate a hamburger, didn't he?
- (b) *the dummy verb do replaces a verb phrase*  
Jacques likes hamburgers, and Monique does too.  
\*Jacques likes hamburgers, and Monique does fries too.
- (c) *the adverbs there and then replace prepositional phrases*  
Dylan went to the store after school and Dudley went there then too.

#### **(2) Interrogation [WORKS FOR ANY PHRASE THAT CAN BE AN ANSWER]**

A complete constituent serves as an answer to a *wh*-question.

- (a) *a noun phrase*  
What did Jacques eat for dinner? A large, juicy hamburger. / \*A large, juicy.  
Who ate a hamburger for dinner? Jacques. / \*The fat.
- (b) *a prepositional phrase or adverb phrase*  
When did Jacques eat a hamburger? At noon/yesterday.  
Why did Jacques eat a hamburger? Because he was hungry.
- (c) *sometimes a verb phrase (this is not a particularly good test)*  
What did Jacques do? ?Ate a hamburger.

**(3) Movement [WORKS WELL FOR ANY PHRASE THAT CAN BE DISPLACED]**

A complete constituent can be moved or can occur in different positions in a sentence, but it retains its integrity or configuration; its unity cannot be disrupted.

If we begin with the sentence *Jacques ate a hamburger for dinner*, the following types of permutations can occur (these will be studied in more detail later):

- (a) *fronting (preposing) of a noun phrase or an adverbial prepositional phrase*  
A hamburger, Jacques ate for dinner (not a steak).  
For dinner, Jacques ate a hamburger.
- (b) *movement of noun phrases in a passive sentence*  
A hamburger was eaten by Jacques.  
cf. The man rang the bell of the church.  
The bell of the church was rung by the man.  
\*The bell was rung of the church by the man.
- (c) *inversion of the subject noun phrase and the auxiliary verb in a question*  
Did Jacques eat a hamburger for dinner?
- (d) *focusing of a noun phrase or an adverbial prepositional phrase in a “cleft sentence”*  
It was Jacques who ate a hamburger for dinner.  
It was a hamburger that Jacques ate for dinner.  
It was for dinner that Jacques ate a hamburger.  
cf. It was the bell of the church that the man rang.  
\*It was the bell that the man rang of the church.  
\*It was of the church that the man rang the bell.
- (e) *focusing of a noun phrase or a verb phrase in a “pseudocleft sentence”*  
What Jacques ate for dinner was a hamburger.  
What Jacques did was eat a hamburger for dinner.  
What Jacques did for dinner was eat a hamburger.  
cf. What the man rang was the bell of the church.  
\*What the man rang of the church was the bell.  
What the man did was ring the bell of the church.

**(4) Omission [WORKS WELL FOR NP and PP, CONSTITUENTS WITHIN VP]**

A complete constituent, if it is optional, may be deleted, but not all constituents are optional.

Jacques ate (a hamburger) (for dinner). \*Jacques ate a (hamburger) for (dinner).

**(5) Conjunction [WORKS WELL FOR VIRTUALLY ALL PHRASES]**

Complete constituents are joined by conjunctions such as *and* or *or*.

The cat and the mouse ran away.

The quite large and smoothly rounded stone.

She read the newspaper and ate lunch.

He runs very quickly and extremely gracefully.