

Overview of topics

- What is Syntax?
- Word Classes

What to remember and understand:

Syntax, difference between syntax and semantics, open/closed class words, all word classes (and be able to distinguish them based on morphology and syntax)

1 What is Syntax?

Syntax – the part of linguistics that studies sentence structure:

- word order:
I want these books.
**want these I books.*
- agreement – subject and verb, determiner and noun, . . . often must agree:
He wants this book.
**He want this book.*
I want these books.
**I want this books.*
- How many complements, which prepositions and forms (cases):
I give Mary a book.
**I see Mary a book.*
I see her.
**I see she.*
- hierarchical structure – what modifies what
We need more (intelligent leaders). (more of intelligent leaders)
We need (more intelligent) leaders. (leaders that are more intelligent)
- etc.

Syntax is not about meaning! Sentences can have no sense and still be grammatically correct:

Colorless green ideas sleep furiously. – nonsense, but grammatically correct

**Sleep ideas colorless furiously green.* – grammatically incorrect

Syntax: From Greek *syntaxis* from *syn* (together) + *taxis* (arrangement).

Cf. *symphony*, *synonym*, *synthesis*; *taxonomy*, *tactics*

2 Word classes

- Words in a language behave differently from each other.
- But each word is not entirely different from all other words in that language.

⇒ Words can be categorized into **word classes** (lexical categories, parts of speech) based on their morphological, syntactic and semantic properties:

Open versus closed classes:

- **Open class** – new items are added to the class over time – nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.
- **Closed class** – contains small number of words; new items are added very rarely – determiners, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions

2.1 Open Classes

2.1.1 Nouns (N)

- morphology – most nouns form plural
cat-s, house-s, kiss-es, men, sheep
- syntax – usually has a determiner (except proper names like *John*) and can be modified by an adjective:
Determiner (Adjective) ___
a cat, many kisses, few men, several sheep
a small cat, many exciting kisses, few clever men, several bored sheep
- semantics – name of a person, thing or place.
But: problem with abstract nouns (*beauty, anger, aspect*) and actions (*a thump*).

2.1.2 Verbs (V)

- morphology – form third person, past tense, past participle, present participle:
walk walks walked walked walking
go goes went gone going
buy buys bought bought buying
run runs ran run running
- syntax:
 1. can combine with an auxiliary ___
will go, have seen, should run, must leave, is swimming
 2. can be modified by and adverb: Adverb ___ or ___ Adverb
usually sleep, read carefully
- semantics – usually describes an action, a process or a state of being
But: problem with some verbs (*know, remember*)
But: hard to distinguish from nouns describing actions (*a thump*)

2.1.3 Adjectives (A, Adj)

- morphology:
 1. form comparative and superlative forms:
cool – cooler – coolest, successful – more successful – most successful, good – better – best
 2. many can be changed into adverbs by the *-ly* suffix:
sad – sadly, funny – funnily, nice – nicely, beautiful – beautifully
- syntax:
 1. Can modify a noun: Determiner — N
a tall man, a cool day, a wonderful trip
 2. Can be modified by an adverb: Adverb —
very clever, extremely clever, unusually hot
- semantics – usually describes a quality or attribute

2.1.4 Adverbs (Adv)

quickly, soon, morally, today, here, very, before

- morphology – often formed from adjectives by the *-ly* suffix.
But: *good – well, fast – fast, friendly – friendly, eastward*
- syntax – can modify verbs (hence ad-verbs), adjectives & often other adverbs.
 1. V — or — V
stop abruptly, usually eat
 2. — Adj
amazingly cheap, very bad (very cannot modify a verb), *quite nice*
 3. — Adv
very quickly, quite soon

2.1.5 Summary of open classes

	Morphology	Syntax	Semantics
Noun	plural <i>house – houses</i>	D (Adj) — <i>the big <u>house</u></i>	thing, person, place
Verb	tenses, ... <i>walk – walked</i>	combines with an Aux <i>would <u>walk</u></i>	action
Adj	comparative, superlative <i>big – bigger – biggest</i>	D — N <i>the <u>big</u> house</i>	quality, property
Adverb	often has <i>-ly</i> suffix <i>really</i> , but: <i>well</i>	modifies V, Adj, Adv <i>a <u>really</u> big house</i>	manner, extend

2.2 Closed Classes

2.2.1 Determiners (Det)

articles (*a, the*), quantifiers (*many, any, all, several*), possessives (*my, your, his, her*)

Syntax – come before nouns: ___ (Adj) N

2.2.2 Auxiliary verbs (Aux)

will, may, must, shall, would, can, have

Syntax:

1. Is followed by a verb: ___ V
It will rain. You must be quiet.
2. Is negated directly: ___ *not*
He cannot swim. She would not come.
**He doesn't can swim. *She doesn't would come.*

Normal verbs vs. Auxiliary verbs:

	Verbs	Auxiliary verbs
negation	needs aux <i>do</i> <i>I don't want it.</i> <i>*I want not it.</i>	directly <i>*I don't will come.</i> <i>I will not come.</i>
question	needs aux <i>do</i> <i>Do you know it?</i> <i>Know you it?</i>	inversion <i>*Do you will come?</i> <i>Will you come?</i>
agreement	yes <i>He knows it.</i> <i>*He know it.</i>	no <i>*He wills come</i> <i>He will come</i>

Be, have and *do* are sometimes normal verbs and sometimes auxiliary verbs. (*I don't have it.* vs. *I have not seen it.*)

2.2.3 Pronouns (Pron)

Words that stand for a noun or a whole noun phrase.

I, you, he, she, it, we, they, me, him, her, us, them

Note: It is better to classify possessives (traditionally called possessive pronouns) as determiners. Syntactically, pronouns and possessives behave differently – pronouns act as nouns, but possessives modify nouns:

pronoun: *I run.* – **My run.*

possessive: *John likes my house.* – **John likes I house.*

pronoun: Based on Latin *pro* (*for*) + *noun*

2.2.4 Prepositions (P)

in, on, about, with, at, to, of, under

Syntax: stand before noun phrases (see later, simply NP = Det (Adj) N)

Semantics: usually express spacial, temporary, etc. relations.

on the table, with nice colors, about mammals

2.2.5 Conjunctions (Conj)

and, or, but, ...

Syntax connect two words or phrases on the same level

1. N — N (*women and men*)
2. V — V (*run or walk*)
3. Adj — Adj (*warm but rainy*)
4. S — S (*I will talk and he will write.*)
5. etc.

2.3 Words belonging to more than one lexical category

Some words belong to several categories:

- They have similar meaning:
 - *She talks very much.* vs. *She is giving three talks.*
 - *It's cold.* vs. *I got a cold.*
- They have completely different meanings:
 - *I can't bear the noise.* vs. *There is a bear in the wood.*
 - *tree barks* vs. *the dog barks*

Virtually all English nouns can be turned into verbs.