

# COURSE TITLE: SYNTAX

WEEK 6: SYNTACTIC LINKAGES

UNIT LECTURER: DR.LILLIAN KEMUNTO OMOKE

UNIVERSITY OF EMBU, KENYA

# INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Last week, we looked at the sentence/ clause elements, their syntactic functions.
- ▶ We determined that they elements are organized systematically to communicate meaning.
- ▶ The verb is the most important as it is present in all clauses.
- ▶ It is also controls which other elements are selected.
- ▶ Phrases constituents also agree with each other.
- ▶ The subject is also important.
- ▶ These constraints and selections are important are part of grammar.

# INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Linkage- to link
- ▶ We use various devices to show linkage- connectors
- ▶ It also leads to cohesion-
- ▶ In this lesson, we are going look at these devices.

# LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ▶ By the end of the lesson, you should be able to:
- ▶ 1. Explain the meaning of agreement
- ▶ 2. Discuss the types of agreement
- ▶ 3. Examine the grammatical constraints.

# SYNTACTIC LINKAGES

- ▶ Syntactic linkage -the devices (mainly morphological) by which speakers can signal which words, phrases or clauses are linked.
- ▶ Miller (2002) A general concept which subsumes the traditional concepts of agreement and government.
- ▶ the traditional distinction does not sit easily with the analysis of phrases into heads and modifiers, with heads controlling the modifiers.
- ▶ Some parts of the traditional concepts are compatible with the view that verbs are the heads of clauses; but others are not,
- ▶ particularly the relationship between subject noun and verb.

# AGREEMENT - noun phrase

- ▶ Noun phrases Agreement is found inside noun phrases
- ▶ The relationship is prominent between determiners and heads
- ▶ A queen
- ▶ The queen
- ▶ Three queens.
- ▶ Here, general reference vs specific reference
- ▶ The head therefore controls the determiner/
- ▶ Singular vs plural
- ▶ The three phrases can function as subjects, objects, complements.

# Noun phrase agreement

A LION AND TWO TIGERS ARE SLEEPING IN THE CAGE.

This reference is specific- we have in mind particular species

TIGERS ARE DANGEROUS ANIMALS

This reference is general- we have in mind the class 'tiger' without specific reference to particular tigers.

Use of definite and indefinite articles

The definite article is used to mark the phrase the phrase introduces as definite.

The- use to show something that can be identified uniquely in the contextual or general knowledge shared by the speaker and hearer. ( Quirk, et. al (1985)

Quirk, R. et, al. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Pearson Education ltd, pg. 725

# Noun phrase agreement

- ▶ It is notionally the ‘unmarked’ (used for singular count nouns)-
- ▶ The conditions for the use of ‘the’ do not obtain.
- ▶ a/an used where the referent has not been mentioned before, and is assumed to be unfamiliar to the speaker or hearer.
- ▶ The ZERO article - a situation where the indefinite article does not occur:
- ▶ With plural count nouns and with non count nouns, the indefinite article does not occur.
- ▶ Hence the use of the zero article:
- ▶ Milk is good for children
- ▶ Do you like music?

# Noun phrases in a copular relation

- ▶ English requires an article with a singular noun as a complement:
- ▶ Mary is a teacher.
- ▶ He is a mason,
- ▶ However, in some cases, the zero article occurs in such constructions, where the complement/ appositive, names a unique role or task:
- ▶ Messi is (the) captain of the team.
- ▶ As (the) chairman of the committee, I declare this meeting closed.
- ▶ Ngugi, Author of 'The River Between' has written many other books.
- ▶ Note that if the subject is plural, the complement (in NP) is also plural
- ▶ Mary and James are teachers.

# Proper Noun phrase modification

- ▶ When they have the normal unique denotation, they can only be modified by nonrestrictive modifiers:
- ▶ Nonrestrictive relative clauses or nonrestrictive apposition:
- ▶ Theseus, a Greek hero, killed the Minotaur.
- ▶ Prof. Mathew, who lives next door, works at the university.
- ▶ Proper nouns sometimes take features of common nouns and accept restrictive modification of various kinds:
- ▶ The Mary I know is a teacher.

# Pronoun agreement

- ▶ Number: Pronouns must agree in number with their antecedents. For example:
  - ▶ Singular: "The boy lost his book."
  - ▶ Plural: "The boys lost their books."
- ▶ Gender: Pronouns must match the gender of their antecedents. In English, this typically involves:
  - ▶ Masculine: "He is a doctor."
  - ▶ Feminine: "She is a teacher."
  - ▶ Neuter: "It is a cat."

# Pronoun agreement

- ▶ Person: Pronouns must agree in person (first, second, third). For example:
  - ▶ First person: "I went to the store."
  - ▶ Second person: "You are my friend."
  - ▶ Third person: "They enjoy hiking."
- ▶ Case: Pronouns must be in the correct grammatical case (subject, object, possessive) depending on their role in the sentence:
  - ▶ Subjective case: "He loves pizza."
  - ▶ Objective case: "The teacher called him."
  - ▶ Possessive case: "That is her book."

# Pronoun agreement

- ▶ Collective Nouns: When using collective nouns (e.g., "team," "group"),
- ▶ the pronoun may agree with the noun in singular or plural form depending on whether the group is being treated as a single unit or as individuals. For example:
  - ▶ Singular: "The team has its uniforms."
  - ▶ Plural: "The team are wearing their uniforms."
- ▶ Indefinite Pronouns: Some indefinite pronouns can be tricky. For example, "everyone" and "someone" are singular, while "many" and "few" are plural:
  - ▶ "Everyone should bring his or her lunch."
  - ▶ "Many have made their choices."

# RESTRICTIVE AND NONRESTRICTIVE

- ▶ The choice of relative pronoun is dependent on:
- ▶ The relation of the relative clause to its antecedent, restrictive or nonrestrictive.
- ▶ The woman *who is approaching us* seems to be someone I know.
- ▶ The woman, *who is approaching us*, seems someone I know.
- ▶ The type: personal or nonpersonal:
- ▶ The person who I was visiting...
- ▶ The book which I was reading.....

# SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

- ▶ Number:
  - ▶ Singular Subjects: A singular subject takes a singular verb.
  - ▶ Example: "The cat runs fast."
  - ▶ Plural Subjects: A plural subject takes a plural verb.
  - ▶ Example: "The cats run fast."
- ▶ Person:
  - ▶ In some cases, verbs may also change according to the person of the subject.
  - ▶ First Person: "I am happy."
  - ▶ Second Person: "You are happy."
  - ▶ Third Person: "He/She is happy."

# Subject - verb agreement

- ▶ Compound Subjects:

- ▶ When two or more subjects are joined by "and," they typically take a plural verb.

- ▶ Example: "The cat and the dog are playing."

- ▶ If the subjects are joined by "or" or "nor," the verb agrees with the subject that is closest.

- ▶ Example: "Neither the teacher nor the students were prepared."

- ▶ Indefinite Pronouns:

- ▶ Some indefinite pronouns are treated as singular (e.g., "everyone," "somebody"), while others are plural (e.g., "many," "few").

- ▶ Example (singular): "Everyone loves their mother."

- ▶ Example (plural): "Many are interested in the topic."

# SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

► **collective Nouns:**

- Collective nouns can take either singular or plural verbs depending on whether the group is being considered as a single unit or as individuals.
  - Example (singular): "The team is winning."
  - Example (plural): "The team are celebrating their individual successes."

# GOVERNMENT

- ▶ This refers to a syntactic relationship where one element
- ▶ (usually a verb or preposition) can impose certain restrictions on another element (typically a noun phrase).
- ▶ For instance, a verb may require its object to be in a specific case.
- ▶ the case of a pronominal Subject is **governed** by the verb—it must be nominative:
- ▶ She loves elephants.
- ▶ \*Her loves elephants. (ungrammatical)
- ▶ Conversely, the verb **agrees** with the grammatical number of the Subject. So if the Subject is plural, the verb must be in a plural form (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd person plural form):
- ▶ We love elephants.
- ▶ \*We loves elephants. (ungrammatical)

# GOVERNMENT

- ▶ The main thing is that government means that one controls the other, a sort of "If () *then* ()" relationship, whereas with agreement both arguments can be changed to produce a grammatical sentence.
- ▶ In the sentence "She loves elephants," one cannot change both "she" and "loves" to get some related sentence wherein the word "her" is used, meaning the verb **governs** the subject.
- ▶ On the other hand, in the sentence "She loves elephants," it would be perfectly grammatical and related to say "She loves the elephant." Disregarding the rules of definite article use
- ▶ (I'm not opening that can of worms), this sentence changed the object while retaining the verb, therefore meaning the verb **agrees** with the object.

# GOVERNMENT

- ▶ VERBS
- ▶ The type of verb determines the constituents-
- ▶ Called syntactic valency:
- ▶ Intransitive
- ▶ Monotransitive
- ▶ Ditransitive
- ▶ Intensive

# Patterns

- ▶ SV
- ▶ SVO
- ▶ SVA
- ▶ SVC
- ▶ SVOC
- ▶ SVOA

# PHRASES

- ▶ NP- The determiners come first in NP structure
- ▶ There is an order- pre-determiners- central determiners- post determiners
- ▶ Pre-modifiers- must be adjectives or nouns
- ▶ Head
- ▶ Post-modifiers- specific structures such as:
- ▶ Pp
- ▶ clauses

# head, modifiers constraints

- ▶ Order:
- ▶ Modifiers often have a specific order in relation to their heads.
- ▶ For example, in English:
  - ▶ Adjectives typically precede nouns: "a red apple."
  - ▶ Adverbs often follow verbs: "runs quickly."

- ▶ Selectional Restrictions:
- ▶ Heads may impose constraints on the types of modifiers that can appear with them based on meaning.
- ▶ For instance:
- ▶ The noun "idea" can be modified by "great" but not by "quick," as the latter does not logically fit with "idea."

# Head, modifier constraint

- ▶ Projection: The head of a phrase can project its properties onto the entire phrase.
- ▶ For example, a noun phrase will take the number and case of its head noun:
  - ▶ "The cat" (singular) vs. "The cats" (plural).

# Head, modifiers

- ▶ Maximal Projection:
- ▶ In a phrase, the head may allow for modifiers to combine with it to form a larger phrase.
- ▶ This can lead to constraints on how many modifiers can occur:
  - ▶ "The very tall man" (where "very tall" modifies "man").

# Head, modifier relationship

- ▶ **Structural Position:**
- ▶ The position of modifiers can also be constrained by syntax rules.
- ▶ For example:
- ▶ Prepositional phrases typically appear after the noun they modify:
- ▶ "the book **on the table.**"

# Importance of understanding heads, modifier relations

- ▶ Recognizing the roles of heads and modifiers, along with their constraints, is crucial for analyzing sentence structure and meaning.
- ▶ It helps in understanding how phrases are formed and how they function within sentences.
- ▶ The expensive gifts appeared extremely expensive.

# SUMMARY

- ▶ CONSTRAINTS
- ▶ RELATIONS
- ▶ NOUN AGREEMENT
- ▶ PRONOUN AGREEMENT
- ▶ SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

# REFERENCES

- ▶ Miller, J. (2002). *An introduction to English syntax*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- ▶ Quirk, R. et, al. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Pearson Education ltd.