



# Syntax 2

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# Syntax: The structure of clauses

- ▶ Some more instances
- ▶ Should we go tomorrow?
- ▶ Does the teacher like strong chili?
- ▶ Will the teacher give his wife a valuable gift?
- ▶ When did the train travel on the line through the mountains?
- ▶ Is this structure possible INTER + NP + VP



# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- The previous structures allow us to provide generalization about possible forms of clauses – nevertheless- this structures do no present the similarities and differences in meaning among the clauses.
- By recognizing grammatical relations associated with formal elements–
  - + we can account for differences of meaning expressed by formally related sentences.
  - + We can describe clausal syntax not just only form the perspective of the structure



# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- ▶ **Three different types** of grammatical relations
- ▶ **Experiential roles**
- ▶ **Subject object**
- ▶ **Theme**



# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- ▶ Experiential roles
- ▶ Consider the following examples, each of them with the types of unit (NP, VP and PP)

'The train is leaving from platform two'

Is the train leaving from platform two?

On the platform two the train is leaving

The NP in these cases specifies the thing that is engaged in it, the thing that is moving or about to move



# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- ▶ What about this, are they identical to the previous examples in terms of structure?
- ▶ The train was shunted from the platform
- ▶ Was the train shunted from the platform?
- ▶ What about the NPs here, does it have the same grammatical relation?




# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- Clearly not, in the first example the NP was engaged in the activity, perform it or did it. In the last example the NP is something that is acted on.
- Two different roles for NPs
- + Actors : Their function in the clause is to indicate the doer of the event.
- + Undergoers: The designate the patient or sufferer of the event, what the event happened
- These terms are label for grammatical roles




# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- What about this sentence?
  - *“The famous linguist died”*.
  - Is the famous linguist an Actor or and Undergoer?
  - Do not confuse the meanings of the corresponding lexical items with the grammatical role Actor and Undergoer.
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# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- ▶ In the case of the VP we talk about the grammatical role: **Event**
  - ▶ These three elements, Actor, Undergoer or Event give us an idea of how the clause structure so as to express a particular type of meaning.
  - ▶ These meanings are called **experiential** or **representational** goals.
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# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- ▶ The three aforementioned grammatical relations may not be sufficient to describe the syntax of any language.
- ▶ Many languages required a **subject** and perhaps also an **object**
- ▶ **Indicate the grammatical relations in the following sentences.**
- ▶ The sniper shot the tourist
- ▶ The tourist was shot by the sniper
- ▶ Does the tourist in the second sentence share any grammatical behaviour with the sniper in the first sentence?



# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- ▶ 1.They both occur in the first place, immediately preceding the verb.
  - ▶ 2.The verb in each sentence agrees with each NP.
  - ▶ 3.Both NPs could be replaced by nominative pronouns. (He or she)
  - ▶ 4.If a tag is added, its pronoun picks out these NPs (didn't she?) and (wasn't he?)
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- ▶ This similarities in behaviour motivate identifying **Subject** as a grammatical relation in English **distinct from actor**.
  - ▶ Nevertheless, linguistic discussion as regards whether the subject is a meaningful grammatical relation or simply a formal grammatical relation associated with a NP in a particular position.



# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- **Object**

- It is more difficult to associate the object with a meaningful grammatical relation.

- A vantage point from which the clause is perspectivized.

- *“The teacher will give a the pupil a gift”.*

- The object here offers a secondary vantage point. Then we find two vantage points, the subject and the object.

- As they both are concerned with the selection of positions for perspectivizing the situation (how the speaker views the situation and present it to the hearer)

- **Interpersonal meaning** (Halliday): Concerned with the interactive dimension of language, with the establishment of a shared perspective.



# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- ▶ Theme
- ▶ Consider the following sentences
- ▶ 'The priest met the bishop in Hamburg the following day'
- ▶ 'The bishop the priest met in Hamburg the following day'.
- ▶ 'The following day the priest met the bishop in Hamburg'
- ▶ 'In Hamburg, the priest met the bishop the following day'
  
- ▶ Indicate Actor, Undergoer and Event
- ▶ Do the clauses differ in meaning?



# Syntax: Grammatical relations

- ▶ The first NP specifies what the clause is about – in other words- it serves in the grammatical role **Theme** sometimes called **topic**
- ▶ However in the last two sentences the first PP did not specify what the clause was about but a particular setting within which the event occurred.
- ▶ Something common to both: the theme anchors the message down, providing a fixed point from which the sentence can be expanded. (IKEA example)
- ▶ The type of meaning conveyed by the theme is **textural**: it serves to give texture to the clause, distinguishing it from an arbitrary string of words.