

# SYNTAX

*by* Fatchul Mu'in

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AN INTRODUCTION TO  
**LINGUISTICS**

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Banjarmasin, November 2019

Nanik Mariani, Fatchul Mu'in & Yusuf Al Arief



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## PREFACE

The book entitled An Introduction to Linguistics is intended for providing materials to our students attending the subject of Introduction to Linguistics. Up to the present time, the subject has been lectured by using the handouts as a result of our compilation of some references on language and linguistics. This book is written based on the handouts that have been used since the writers handled the subject.

The materials discussed in this book cover What is a Language, Characteristics of Language, What is Linguistics, Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Transformational Grammar, Semantics, Sociolinguistics, and Psycholinguistics. In What is a language, the writers elaborate on the definition and concept of Human Language and Animal Language. In Characteristics of the human language, they explain some concepts on “A language is systematic, A language is arbitrary, A language is social, A language is spoken, A language is used for communication, and A language is complete for its speakers.”

In Linguistics and Language Teaching, they present the definition of linguistics and its branches of linguistics, and linguistics in language teaching.

In Phonetics, they present the concept of phonetics and organs of speech are used for producing speech sounds, both vowels, and consonants, and will be explained how to differentiate voiced from voiceless sounds. While in classification of consonants, the kinds of consonants based on (a) Manner of Articulation, namely: Plosives/Stops, Fricatives, Affricates, Nasals, Lateral/Liquids, and Semi-vowels/Glides, and (b) Place of Articulation, namely: Bilabial, Labiodental, Interdental, Alveolar, Palatal, Velar, dan Glottal sounds will be explained in detail so that the students understand the mechanism of producing the consonants. In the classification of vowels, the kinds of vowels: (a) Front, Central, Back Vowels, (b) Open, Half-open, Close, Half-close vowels, and (c) Rounded and Unrounded Vowels and (d) Tenses and Lax Vowels will be elaborated.

In Phonology, the definition of phonology and the difference between phonetics and phonology will be presented. Also, in this chapter, phonemes, phones, and allophones will be discussed; these sub-topics include the ways to identify phonemes and phones, and also allophonic variation. The minimal pairs and minimal sets are also presented. The other sub-topic contains a brief description of Phonological Rules and its types such as Aspiration, Vowel Lengthening, Vowel Nasalization, Flapping, dan Nasal Deletion. The description is meant to help students to classify sounds in the processes of aspiration, vowel lengthening, vowel nasalization, flapping, and nasal deletion.

In Morphology, the definition of morphology, differences between phonemes and morphemes, differences between morphemes dan allomorph, and types of morphemes: Free morphemes and Bound morphemes are presented. This chapter also discusses the Word-formation process to show the students the process of word-formations (inflection and derivation).

In Syntax, the definition of syntax, content words and functional words, syntactical construction, and its types and sub-types, syntactic devices, and syntactical analysis are presented and elaborated. In Transformational-Generative Grammar, the definition of TG Grammar and its principles, and types of transformation are discussed briefly.



In Semantics, the definition of semantics and its aspects are discussed. While in Pragmatics, the definition of pragmatics and the difference between pragmatics and semantics are elaborated. While in Sociolinguistics, the definition of sociolinguistics, Language in socio-cultural aspects, Language variation, Language use, etc. are explained. And, in Psycholinguistics, the definition of psycholinguistics, the relation of linguistics and psychological aspects, language acquisition and language learning, mastery of two or more languages are presented.

## Chapter VII

# SYNTAX

Fatchul Mu'in

### Introduction

Syntax refers to "the whole system and structure of a language or of languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes also phonology and semantics." It includes the syntax, but it's not limited to that. The syntax of a language is also referred as, "the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.", " the grammatical structure of words and phrases to create coherent sentences.

Syntax is roughly about word order. Grammar has two overlapping meanings: 1. Everything about how a language works, including syntax as a subset. 2. How words are inflected, conjugated, declined according to aspect, degree, gender, mood, number, person, tense, etc. One part of grammar is called *Morphology*. It has to do with the internal economy of words. So a word like *bookkeepers* has four morphemes (*book, keep, -er, -s*) and is put together with morphology. The other part is called *Syntax*. It has to do with the external economy of words, including word order, agreement; like the sentence *For me to call her sister would be a bad idea* and its syntactic transform *It would be a bad idea for me to call her sister*. That's syntax. English grammar is mostly syntax.

From the other perspective, the syntax is defined as the study of arrangements of words into phrases, clauses, and sentences or syntactical constructions. The smallest units of syntax are words. When two or more words are arranged in a certain way, the result refers to syntactical construction. In other words, it can be said that a syntactical construction is a construction in which its immediate constituents (IC-a) are words (or free morphemes). An immediate constituent (IC) refers to a constituent (or element) that directly form the construction.

As has been mentioned before, the smallest units of syntax are words. Then, words will be discussed in the following.

Based on one perspective, grammarians classify the words into eight types of parts of speech in the English language: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. The part of speech indicates how the word functions in meaning as well as grammatically within the sentence. An individual word can function as more than one part of speech when used in different circumstances. Understanding parts of speech is essential for determining the correct definition of a word when using the dictionary. Meanwhile, structural linguists classify words into two great classes: content and function words.

Firstly, the parts of speech cover: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. Let us explain them in following:

#### 1. Noun

A noun is a word for a person, place, thing, or idea. Nouns are often used with an article (*the, a, an*), but not always. Proper nouns always start with a capital letter; common nouns do not. Nouns can be singular or plural, concrete or abstract. Nouns show possession by adding 's. Nouns can function in different roles within a sentence; for example, a noun can be a subject, direct object, indirect object, subject complement, or object of a preposition.

*The young **girl** brought me a very long **letter** from the **teacher**, and then she quickly disappeared. Oh my!*

See the TIP Sheet on "Nouns" for further information.

## 2. Pronoun

A pronoun is a word used in place of a noun. A pronoun is usually substituted for a specific noun, which is called its antecedent. In the sentence above, the antecedent for the pronoun *she* is the girl. Pronouns are further defined by type: personal pronouns refer to specific persons or things; possessive pronouns indicate ownership; reflexive pronouns are used to emphasize another noun or pronoun; relative pronouns introduce a subordinate clause; and demonstrative pronouns identify, point to, or refer to nouns.

## 3. Verb

The verb in a sentence expresses action or being. There is a main verb and sometimes one or more helping verbs. ("*She can sing.*" *Sing* is the main verb; *can* is the helping verb.) A verb must agree with its subject in number (both are singular or both are plural). Verbs also take different forms to express tense.

## 4. Adjective

An adjective is a word used to modify or describe a noun or a pronoun. It usually answers the question of which one, what kind, or how many. (Articles [*a, an, the*] are usually classified as adjectives.)

## 5. Adverb

An adverb describes or modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb, but never a noun. It usually answers the questions of when, where, how, why, under what conditions, or to what degree. Adverbs often end in *-ly*.

## 6. Preposition

A preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence. Therefore a preposition is always part of a prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase almost always functions as an adjective or as an adverb. The following list includes the most common prepositions:

## 7. Conjunction

A conjunction joins words, phrases, or clauses, and indicates the relationship between the elements joined. Coordinating conjunctions connect grammatically equal elements: *and, but,*

or, nor, for, so, yet. Subordinating conjunctions connect clauses that are not equal: because, although, while, since, etc. There are other types of conjunctions as well.

## 8. INTERJECTION

An interjection is a word used to express emotion. It is often followed by an exclamation point such as: *Oh!... Wow!... Oops!*

### Content and Function Words

Secondly, the structural linguists classify words in two great classes, namely: Content and Function Words. The first class is known as content words and the second one is known as function words. Content words are usually nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. A noun tells us which object, a verb tells us about the action happening, or the state. Adjectives give us details about objects and people and adverbs tell us how, when or where something is done. Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs give us important information required for understanding. Function words help us connect important information. Function words are important for understanding, but they add little meaning beyond defining the relationship between two words. Function words include auxiliary verbs, prepositions, articles, conjunctions, and pronouns. Auxiliary verbs are used to establish the tense, prepositions show relationships in time and space, articles show us something that is specific or one of many, and pronouns refer to other nouns (<https://www.thoughtco.com/content-and-function-words-1211726>).

The first group include : (1) nouns, (2) verbs, (3) adjectives, and (4) adverbs. Whereas, the second group include words such as (1) auxiliary words (can, may, must, shall, and will), (2) determiner articles (a, the, this, that, many, some, etc), (3) prepositions (on, at, in, above, etc), (4) qualifiers (very, somewhat, quite, etc), interrogators (when, how, who, etc), (5) negators (not, never), (6) subordinators (is, as, although, etc), and (7) coordinators (and, or, but, etc). Both content words and function words are used to form syntactical constructions.

Content words are different from function words in some cases. These content words have some characteristics as follows. *Content words* have *precise lexical meanings*, namely: meanings of words as found in a dictionary or when they occur in isolation such as meanings of 'Ali,' 'kicked,' and 'dogs.' 'Ali', for instance, refers to 'a certain human being called 'Ali', 'kicked' means 'hitting by using one's foot which happened in the past time', and 'dogs' refers to 'more than one four-footed animal'; whereas, *function words* do not have clear lexical meaning such a word 'of.' 'Of' may mean 'possession' (for instance, the house of my father) and it may mean 'relationship of an action and its object' (for example, the running of the boy).

*Content words* are different from function words concerning their frequencies of occurrence. The former has a low frequency of occurrence, and the latter has a high frequency of occurrence. For instance, a certain kind of content words like 'chair' (noun), 'write' (verb), 'green' (adjective), and 'clearly' (adverb) are not always found or used in dialogue (conversation) or a writing activity. On the other hand, a certain kind of *function word* like 'of' (preposition) is often used in utterance or discourse, both when people speak and write.

The difference between content and function words concerns their numbers. The former is said to be high in number, and the latter is known as those which are limited in number. In this relation, we cannot imagine the number of nouns or verbs. There must be many words categorized as nouns or verbs (also, adjectives or adverbs). On the other hand, the number of 'auxiliary words'

can be easily counted by hand.

The difference between content and function words concerns their formal markers. The former have formal markers. A noun, for instance, can be identified by using its formal markers such as inflectional suffixes (for example, -s in dogs, derivational suffixes (for example, -ment in statement), and its position after noun determiners (for instance, the- in the book). Whereas, the latter do not have formal markers that can be used to identify them. In this relation, we do not have 'a marker' or 'a means' to determine a word 'in'; there is nothing in the word 'in' that tells that it is a preposition.

Lastly, the difference between content and function words in what we often call open and closed classes of words. This is to say that the former is said to be open classes of words, and the latter are known as closed classes of words. When words are open, they mean that they may change from time to time; the number of contents can increase in line with the development of culture and technology. When words are closed in nature, they mean that they hardly ever increase in their number.

#### Syntactical Constructions

Syntactical construction may be in the form of phrases, clauses, or sentences. A phrase or sentence can be analyzed based on its *immediate constituents* (IC-s). This term was introduced by Bloomfield, who illustrated how it was possible to a sentence (*Poor John ran away*) and split it up into two IC-s (*Poor John* and *ran away*), and each IC can be further analyzed into its IC-s. So *Poor John* consists of *Poor* and *John*; and *ran away* consists of *ran* and *away*. When the constituent(s) can be further analyzed into its(their) IC-s, the constituent(s) are identified as *ultimate constituent(s)*. In this relation, it can be said that *Poor*, *John*, *ran*, and *away* are the *ultimate constituents* of the sentence *Poor John ran away*.

#### Types of Syntactical Constructions

In theoretical linguistics, a distinction is made between **endocentric** and **exocentric** constructions. A grammatical construction (for instance, a phrase or compound) is said to be *endocentric* if it fulfills the same linguistic function as one of its parts, and *exocentric* if it does not.

A **syntactical construction** just specifies types of syntactic categories. It does *not* use particular words of the language. This is true in linguistics and whoever wrote your text is also applying the same principle to logic (although many logicians don't conform to this usage). In (elementary) logic, the syntactic categories are *sentence*, *conjunction* (also called a *two-place connective*), and *one-place connectives* (for example, negation).

There are two types of syntactical constructions. They are (1) endocentric construction and (2) exocentric construction. An *endocentric construction* consists of an obligatory head and one or more dependents, whose presence serves to modify the meaning of the head.

The constructions such as "big house", "sing songs", "Ali, the English Language Education student", or "Ali and Umar" are endocentric because the one word in each case carries the bulk of the semantic content and determines the grammatical category to which the whole constituent will be assigned. The phrase *big house* is a noun phrase in line with its part *house*, which is a noun. Similarly, *sing songs* is a verb phrase in line with its part *sing*, which is a verb. A construction "Ali, the English Language Education student" is also endocentric due each of its IC belongs to the same class as a whole construction. The same is true of *very long*; it is an adjective phrase in line with its part *long*, which is an adjective. In more formal terms, the distribution of an endocentric construction is functionally equivalent, or approaching equivalence, to one of its parts, which serves as the center, or head, of the whole. An endocentric construction is also known as a *headed* construction, where the head is contained "inside" the construction. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endocentric\\_](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endocentric_)

and\_exocentric#Exocentric\_construction).

An endocentric construction is a construction in which at least one of the IC-s belong to the same form class as the whole construction. For instance, a construction 'green book.' To identify whether this construction is endocentric or not, we can test by using the following sentence.

*Green book* is on the table.

When we delete 'book,' the sentence will be :

*Green* is on the table \*

Of course, and the sentence is not accepted because there is a sentence with an adjective as its subject.

When we delete 'green,' the sentence will be :

*Book* is on the table.

This sentence is acceptable. This shows us that one of the IC-s of the construction 'green book' e.g. 'book' belongs to the same form class as the construction 'green book.' In other words, an IC 'book' can replace the position of 'green book.' Therefore, the construction is called 'endocentric construction.'

An exocentric construction consists of two or more parts, whereby the one or the other of the parts cannot be viewed as providing the bulk of the semantic content of the whole. Further, the syntactic distribution of the whole cannot be viewed as being determined by the one or the other of the parts ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endocentric\\_and\\_exocentric#Exocentric\\_construction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endocentric_and_exocentric#Exocentric_construction)). An exocentric construction is a construction in which none of the IC- s belongs to the same form class the whole construction. For instance, we have a construction '...in the room.' We can test in the same way as we did before. We use 'in the room' in a sentence:

They slept *in the room*.

Let us pay attention to 'in the room.'

When we delete 'in,' the sentence will be:

They slept *the room* (\*)

This is not a complete sentence, and therefore, it is not accepted. When we delete 'in,' the sentence will be :

They slept *in* (\*)

The sentence is also not complete and therefore, it is not accepted. Because none of the IC-s belongs to the same form class as the construction 'in the room,' it is called 'exocentric construction.' In this case, we can say that either 'in' or 'the room' can replace the position of the construction 'in the room.'

### **Sub-types of Endocentric Construction**

There are three sub-types of endocentric construction. They are (1) attributive construction, (2) appositive construction, and (3) coordinative construction.

An attributive construction is a construction that consists of two IC-s. The first IC is called a modifier (M) and the second one is called 'a head (H)' such as in the construction 'green book.' An IC 'green' is a modifier, and an IC 'book' is ahead. Some words that can be functioned as 'modifiers' are adjectives, verbs in past participle and verbs in present participle, and nouns such as 'strong' in 'the strong boy,' 'finished' in 'we need the finished products,' and 'swimming' in 'he is swimming in the swimming pool,' and 'stone' in 'a stone house' respectively.

English has four possible ways of making attributive construction: M – H such as 'green house', 'my book', swimming pool, etc, (2) H– M such as 'number two', 'the woman in blue jean', etc., (3) M– H– M

such as 'as soon as possible', 'the best friend of mine', etc., and (4) H - M - H such as 'do not talk', 'will never die', etc. An appositive construction is a construction that consists of two IC-s. The first IC is a noun or noun phrase, and the second one is a noun or noun phrase. The function of the second one is to clarify the first one. In a written form, the first noun or noun phrase and the second one are separated by a comma (,) such as a construction '*Aryati, the student of ULM, is always on time.*'

A coordinative construction is a construction that consists of two IC-s. The first one is combined with the second one by using coordinators such as 'and, or, but, both...and, either...or and neither...nor'. The example of the construction is '*you and I will attend the meeting.*' Sub-types of Exocentric Construction.

There are three sub-types of exocentric construction. They are :(1) directive construction, (2) complementation construction, and (3) predicative construction.

A directive construction is a construction that consists of two IC-s. The first IC is a director and the second one is its object. The *director* may be in the form of verbal elements such as 'give' that is followed by its object 'money' to form a construction 'give money'; it may be in the form of preposition such as 'on' that is followed by its object 'the chair' to form a construction 'on the chair'; or it may be in the form of conjunction 'after' that is followed by its object 'he went home' to form a construction 'after he went home'.

A complementation construction is a construction that consists of two IC-s. The first IC is a copula or copulative verb 'be,' and the second one is its complement. The following is some examples of this type of construction:

(I) am a teacher be (am) + a noun as a complement (He) is strong. be (is) + an adjective as a complement

(They) are in the room à be (are) + an adverb of place as a complement

Some verbs are similar in their function to a copulative verb 'be. They are 'become (become angry), get (get dark), go (go mad), grow (grow old), turn (turn red). In one case, the verbs have almost the same meaning as 'be.' That is to say that a sentence 'I am angry' is similar in meaning to a sentence 'I become angry.' In other cases, they are different from 'be.' In this relation, when the sentence is changed into a negative or an interrogative sentence, it is altered differently. For instance, a negative form of the sentence 'I am angry' is 'I am not angry'; whereas, a negative form of the sentence 'I become angry' is 'I do not become angry.'

A predicative construction is a construction that consists of two IC-s. The first IC is a subject and the second one is a predicate. This construction refers to what we have known as a sentence. The two essential things in the sentence are the uses of a subject and a predicate or a noun/noun phrase plus a noun/noun phrase. The following examples show the kind of construction:

1. He is angry He (subject) + is angry (predicate)
2. He sings well He (subject) + sings well (predicate)
3. People elect him a president. He (subject) + elect him a president (predicate).

### **Analysis of Syntactical Construction**

We have said that a sentence can consist of a predicate and its arguments. So in a sentence such as (1):

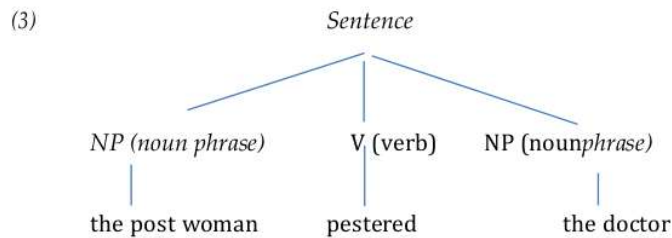
(1) Prudence pestered Dennis

We have the verb pestered as the predicate which relates the two arguments Prudence, the agent and Dennis, the patient. Now consider a slightly more complex case:

(2) the post woman pestered the doctor



This could mean exactly the same thing as (2), on the assumption that Prudence is a post woman and Dennis is a doctor. In this case, the arguments seem to be the post woman and the doctor, a sequence of words made up of a determiner followed by a noun. But what status do these sequences of words have in the sentence? It seems as though they function as single words do in (1), inasmuch as they constitute the same arguments as *Prudence* and *Dennis* do. Thus these two words seem to go together to make up a unit which is the functional equivalent of the proper nouns in the original sentence. This unit is called a **phrase**. We can represent this as follows:



Thus, a sentence has more internal structure to it than we have so far been assuming. Not only can sentences contain words and other sentences, but they can also contain phrases.

To make the drawing of the structures clearer in what follows, we will use the symbol *S* to stand for sentences and the symbol *P* to stand for phrases. Though it should be made clear that these symbols have no place in the system, we will eventually develop and are used now as mnemonics which stand for something we have yet to introduce properly.

Two questions arise immediately: do sentences contain any more phrases than those indicated in (3), and what can phrases contain? To be able to answer these questions, we must first look a little more closely at the properties of phrases in general. The first thing to note is that just as words have distributions in a sentence, so do phrases. This is obvious from the above example, as the phrases *the post woman* and *the doctor* distribute in the same way that the nouns *Prudence* and *Dennis* do:

wherever it is grammatical to have *Prudence*, it will be grammatical to have *the postwoman* and where it is ungrammatical to have *Prudence* it will be ungrammatical to have *the postwoman*:

- a. *Prudence* is considerate *the postwoman* is considerate
- b. I saw *Prudence* I saw *the postwoman*
- c. they spoke to *Prudence* they spoke to *the postwoman*
- d. \*we *Prudence* *Dennis* \*we *the postwoman* *Dennis*

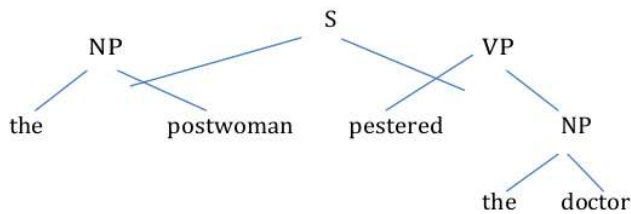
With this in mind, consider the following:

- (4) a *Prudence* pestered *Dennis* on Wednesday
- b *Prudence* persisted on Wednesday

It seems that in the position where we have pestered *Dennis* we can have the verb persisted. This is not surprising as the verb pestered is used transitively in (4a), with a nominal complement (*Dennis*) whereas persisted is used intransitively in (4b), without a complement. However, if intransitive verbs distribute the same as transitive verbs plus their complements, this means that transitive verbs and their complements form a phrase that has a distribution in



the same way that a determiner with its nominal complement distributed like certain nouns. Thus a more accurate description of the sentence than (3) would be



### Syntactic Devices

The arrangement of words does not always refer to syntactical construction. Not all combinations of words are said to be syntactical or grammatical constructions. In linguistics, a grammatical construction is any syntactic string of words ranging from sentences over phrasal structures to certain complex lexemes, such as phrasal verbs. Grammatical constructions form the primary unit of study in construction grammar theories. In construction grammar, cognitive grammar, and cognitive linguistics, a grammatical construction is a syntactic template that is paired with conventionalized semantic and pragmatic content. In generative frameworks, constructions are generally treated as epiphenomenal, being derived by the general syntactic rules of the language in question ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammatical\\_construction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammatical_construction)). For instance, *'books many,' 'many book,' 'he sing,' 'the president gave his agree,' and 'I go school.'*

In improving the arrangements of the words above, we need some syntactic devices. We use a *word-order* for improving 'books many'; this arrangement must be changed into 'many books.' We use an inflectional suffix -s to make 'he sing' syntactic; this arrangement must be turned into 'he sings.' We use a derivational suffix -ment to improve *'the president gave his agree'* and the resultant form is 'the president gave his agreement.' At last, we use a function word 'to' to make 'I go school' acceptable and after 'to' is inserted, the resultant form will be a syntactical construction, namely: 'I go to school.'

## READING MATERIALS

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