Branches of morphology

○ **Inflectional** morphology: suffixes (more precisely inflections) that encode grammatical information are attached to a lexeme and create a different word-form of the same lexeme. In English there are only 6/7 regular inflections: 1) –s for the plural and 3rd person singular, 2) 's for the Saxon genitive, 3) –ed for the past tense and past participle, 4) –ing for the present participle and gerund, 5) –er for the comparative and 6) –est for the superlative. Inflections are consistent: their meaning and function is always the same

○ **Derivational** morphology: affixes create new lexemes. Derivational affixes aren't consistent and can be attached to a restricted number of word classes and lexemes (e.g. the suffix -ness can't be attached to all the adjectives to form nouns. Ugly+ness= ugliness, but beautiful+ness doesn't exist). Moreover, derivational affixes can change the word-class, inflections can't.

NB: **Lexeme**: word as abstract unit of a language. E.g. READ
Different grammatical forms of the same lexeme are **word-forms**. E.g. Reads, reading, readable

Dr. Fabio Ciambella

How to form new words in English

○ **Affixation** (derivational and inflectional morphology): prefixation or suffixation. Some suffixes that change the word-class of a lexeme are classified following the grammatical category they create: nominal, adjectival, adverbial suffixes. Others are classified according to their meaning: agentive (-er in influenc<u>er</u>, boom<u>er</u>), instrumental (-er in mix<u>er</u>), diminutive (-ette, -let, or –kins as in daddykins), gender-making (-ess in actress) suffixes. Prefixes can be negative (dis-, un-, non-), augmentative (super-, ultra-), etc. Some affixes can create more new words than others. This is due to their **productivity**. Some words can't be formed by affixation if there's already another word that denotes the same concept (e.g. cow+let doesn't exist because there's already calf to denote a little cow): **blocking**.

○ **Compounding**: combining two or more words (e.g. Facebook). Compounds can be spelt as a single word, with the hyphen or as two words. They are generally stressed on the left-hand element (or **modifier**). The right-hand element gives the meaning and the word-class (so it is called the **head** of the compound). Most compounds are nominal, adjectival and verbal. NN compounding is the most productive in English (e.g. ice-cream), while VV is the rarest.

○ **Conversion**: changing the word-class without changing the form (e.g. 'millennial' as an adj. → noun)

○ **Shortening**

1. Truncation = deleting a part of the name: e.g. Will for William

2. Clipping = deleting part of a word: e.g. my fav for my favo(u)rite

3. Blend = deleting part of two words (or just one of the two) to form another one: e.g. Instagram from 'Instant camera'+'telegram'

4. Abbreviations = initialisms (pronounced letter by letter as in the UK, the USA, FBI, UN, etc.) or acronyms (pronounced as single words as in NATO, NASA, POTUS, FLOTUS, etc.)

Dr. Fabio Ciambella

Syntax

○ Structure of the sentence

○ Phrase (=sintagma): syntactic constituents

○ How to test constituents?

1. Pronominalisation: if a string of words can be replaced by a pronoun (even a wh-pronoun), it is a phrase (E.g. John comes from Yorkshire. John = he, from Yorkshire = there)

2. Movement: if a string of words can be moved to other positions, it is a phrase (e.g. John comes from Yorkshire = From Yorkshire John comes [OK], not *Yorkshire John comes from →'from Yorkshire' is a phrase, 'Yorkshire' alone is not)

3. Coordination test: if two expressions can be coordinated by 'and' they are phrases (E.g. 'from AND Yorkshire' are not separable because this phrase doesn't make sense)

4. Sentence-fragment test: if a string of words can be replaced by a question to be answered, it is a phrase (=analisi logica. E.g. John comes from Yorkshire. Who comes from Yorkshire? John. → John is a phrase)

The structure of phrases (1)

○ Head: most important element (i.e. word-class, syntactic category, part of speech or lexical category) that gives the name to the phrase. The other elements are its projections. According to the head, phrases can be:

1. Noun phrases (NPs)

2. Prepositional phrases (PPs)

3. Adjective phrases (APs)

4. Verb phrases (VPs)

5. Adverb phrases (ADVPs)

○ Elements can be classified according to 3 criteria:

1. Semantic classification (nouns = things or people, verbs = actions or events, adjectives = properties or qualities, prepositions = relations, adverbs, conjunctions, demonstratives, possessives, articles – these latter three known as determiners)

2. Morphological classification (according to certain affixes. E.g. the suffix –ed indicates a past tense, a past participle)

3. Syntactic classification (certain word classes have certain position within a sentence. E.g. adjectives usually come before the noun they refer to)

61

The structure of the phrases (2)

O Phrase structure rules:

1. S (sentence) = NP VP – e.g. Bob sings
2. NP = (D) (AP) N (PP) – e.g. The beautiful landscape of the Mid-West
3. PP = P NP – e.g. of the Mid-West
4. VP = V (NP) (PP) – e.g. sing a song for me
5. AP = (ADV) A – e.g. incredibly smart
6. ADVP = (ADV) ADV – e.g. more slowly

O Within this structure there can be other sentences, known as subordinate clauses

1. **Phrase** (=sintagma) = the smallest syntactic unit (head+projections)
2. **Clause** (= proposizione) = minimal syntactic unit made up of subject+VP. They can be matrix/main or subordinate clauses
3. **Sentence** (=frase) = largest syntactic unit (one or more clauses)
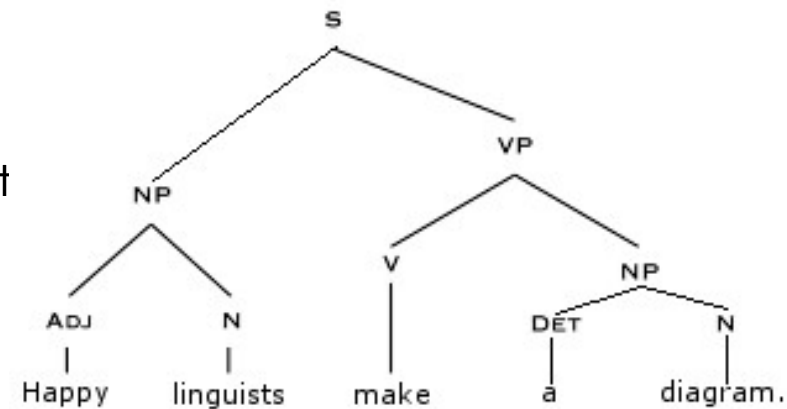
Functions of constituents

○ **Predicate**: verb

○ **Subject**: Subject-verb agreement (sharing the same person and number). Its position is fixed: before the verb phrase. Subjects in English are obligatory. Case distinction between subject and object is only visible with pronouns (I – me, etc.)

○ **Object**: The object-verb agreement doesn't exist in English (e.g. She has three dogs). The object occurs immediately after the verb. Verbs that need an object are transitive, otherwise they are intransitive. Sometimes transitive verbs can do without the object (e.g. She ate [what?] and went away. Object understood or covert).

NB: Transitive verbs can have the passive, but in English there are also **ditransitive** verbs (e.g. give, show, etc.) which have two objects: direct (DO=someone/something that undergoes the action/event described by the verb) and indirect (IO=goal, recipient or beneficiary of the action described). E.g. Camilla gave me (=IO) a piece of cake (=DO). → I (=S) was given a piece of cake (=DO) by Camilla. → A piece of cake (=S) was given to me (=complement)

○ **Adverbial** (or **adjunct**): they provide info about the circumstances of the action described by the predicate, the subject and the object(s). They are modifiers and can be of time, location, manner, cause, purpose, etc. They aren't obligatory, so they can be eliminated without the sentence losing its meaning. Adverbial is not adverb! Adverb = word class, adverbial = sentence function that can often correspond to an adverb.

○ (Other) **complements**: general term to refer to constituents strictly connected (semantically and syntactically) with heads of phrases. E.g. The book of French (of French=complement). A particular case is the **predicative** complement, with such verbs as 'be, seem, become, appear, etc.' that behaves like objects but they aren't even because they can't be passivized. E.g. George seems a policeman in that suit. 'A policeman' seems like a direct object, but it can't be passivized (The sentence 'a policeman is seemed by George in that suit' can't exist in English)