

Complex sentence structure

MA Grammar · Week 7
Quirk et al., Chapter 14

Where is the subordinate clause?

Constructed example

The tutor said that the students could leave when they had finished.

Today's goals

Separate form from function.
Identify immediate hosts.
Draw a clause hierarchy.

Complexity is a relation between clauses

Coordination

[The seminar ended] and [the students left].

Subordination

The students left [when the seminar ended].

A clause functions within a larger structure.

Matrix is not the entire complex sentence

Complete sentence

The tutor said [that the students could leave].

Matrix structure

The tutor said [...].

Remove the subordinate clause to identify the matrix residue.

Finite and nonfinite are forms

Finite

because the students were ready

The verb phrase carries tense or a finite modal.

Nonfinite

to complete the analysis
having checked the examples
revised by the tutor

A verbless clause still expresses a relation

Constructed example

Although tired, the students completed the task.

Analysis

Although [the students were] tired is a useful expansion.

Tired is predicated of the students.

Form and function answer different questions

I know [that the deadline has changed].

Form: a finite that-clause. Function: direct object of know in Quirk's analysis.

[When the deadline changes], notify the group.

Form: a finite when-clause. Function: temporal adverbial.

Theory check · Build the hierarchy

We know [that the students will revise [when they receive feedback]].

Identify the immediate host of each subordinate clause.

Give the form and function of each embedded clause.

Explain why a list of three verbs is not a hierarchy.

Workshop 1 · Label form and function

1. We expect [to finish on Friday].
2. [Although incomplete], the draft was useful.
3. The tutor asked [whether the data were public].
4. [Having checked the source], Rana saved the extract.

Identify a host and an understood subject where relevant.

Drill key · Keep the labels separate

Items 1–2

1: nonfinite to-infinitive complement;
understood subject we.

2: verbless concessive adverbial;
incomplete describes the draft.

Items 3–4

3: finite subordinate interrogative; object of
asked.

4: nonfinite -ing adverbial; understood
subject Rana.

Workshop 2 · A Study in Iraq invitation

“If you are interested, visit the website please”

Authentic extract · University of Mosul, College of Arts
Study in Iraq webpage

Locate the clause boundary.
What is the form of each clause?

An imperative is not an infinitive

The if-clause is a finite conditional adverbial.

The matrix is an imperative with visit as its verb.

The imperative's addressee is understood as you.

The absence of an overt subject does not make visit nonfinite here.

Text laboratory · An ethics application

Constructed teaching data

- 1 We propose to examine how students request feedback.
- 2 Before collecting examples, we will check that the messages are public.
- 3 Although brief, each extract must retain enough context.
- 4 The team will exclude any message that identifies a private participant.
- 5 If the context is unclear, we will record the uncertainty.

Draw a hierarchy before writing labels

Mark every finite, nonfinite and verbless subordinate clause.

Show how line 1 contains an embedded question inside an infinitival complement.

Identify the understood subject of collecting and the referent described by brief.

Explain one case where a subordinator alone does not establish function.

Suggested analysis of the application

Nested complements

- 1: propose [to examine [how students request feedback]].
- 2: check [that the messages are public].

Adverbials and modification

- 2: before collecting, with we understood.
- 3: although brief describes each extract.
- 4: that identifies modifies message.
- 5: if introduces a condition.

Challenge · Every that means the same?

Compare lines 2 and 4 of the application.

What follows check, and what follows message?

Test whether that fills a role inside its own clause.

Exit response · Show the immediate host

We hope to discover why the students left early.

Bracket the two subordinate clauses.

Label their forms and identify the host of each.

Prepare a small clause collection

Collect five subordinate clauses from English texts.

Retain each complete sentence and its source.

Record form, function and immediate host.

Next week: Quirk et al., §§14.21–36.