

MA GRAMMAR / WEEK 12

Finite and nonfinite complements

MA Grammar · Week 12
Quirk et al., Chapter 16

Does changing the complement change meaning?

Constructed contrast

Rana remembered to email the tutor.

Rana remembered emailing the tutor.

Today's goals

Identify complement forms.

Interpret understood subjects.

Explain lexical and semantic restrictions.

Finite complements can report propositions

Factual pattern

The tutor confirmed that the file was complete.

Suasive pattern

The tutor recommended that each student revise the file.

Wh-complements can be finite or nonfinite

Finite indirect question

We established whether the data were public.

Wh-infinitive

We discussed how to annotate the data.

The second lacks an overt subject and finite tense.

Subjectless complements require interpretation

To-infinitive

The students hoped to finish early.

Students are the understood finishers.

-ing clause

The students enjoyed comparing the examples.

Students are the understood comparers.

Form choice is lexical and semantic

Remember to send: remember the required action, then send.

Remember sending: recall an earlier sending event.

Try to revise: attempt the revision.

Try revising: use revision as a possible solution.

An overt NP need not be a matrix object

Constructed example

We would prefer the students to submit one joint report.

Quirk's monotransitive analysis

Prefer [the students to submit one joint report].

The NP is subject of the infinitival complement.

Theory check · Keep the whole complement

I disliked [the students interrupting the speaker].

The -ing clause has the students as its overt subject.

Compare: I disliked [their interrupting the speaker].

Does dislike target the students themselves or the interruption event?

Workshop 1 · Identify form and subject

1. We discovered that the figures were inconsistent.
2. The team agreed to check the source.
3. I remember checking the source.
4. We prefer the team to check the source.

Identify the complete complement and explain who performs each action.

Drill key · Bracket the full span

Items 1–2

1: finite that-clause complement.

2: subjectless to-infinitive; the team are the checkers.

Items 3–4

3: subjectless -ing complement; I is the understood checker.

4: infinitival clause with overt subject the team.

Workshop 2 · Asking an advisor for more

“Is it OK to ask my advisor to contribute more to the paper (other than just critiquing)?”

Authentic extract · Academia Stack Exchange
Public question by derelict, 18 December 2014

Find the two to-infinitives.
Who is understood to ask, and who is to contribute?

Identify the actors before classifying ask

The writer is the contextually understood asker.

My advisor is understood as the contributor.

To the paper is a PP, not a third infinitival clause.

The matrix uses anticipatory it; the asking clause is extraposed.

Text laboratory · A supervision exchange

Constructed teaching data

- 1 Rana: I remembered to save the revised file.
- 2 Tutor: I remember reading an earlier version.
- 3 Rana: I hope to compare the two versions tonight.
- 4 Tutor: I would prefer you to preserve the original examples.
- 5 Rana: I dislike people changing a quotation without marking it.
- 6 Tutor: We should decide whether to shorten the discussion.

Create a complement inventory

Bracket the complement and label its form in every line.

Identify overt and understood subjects.

Explain the temporal contrast between lines 1 and 2.

Test one matrix passive and explain what the result supports.

Suggested analysis of the exchange

Subjectless clauses

- 1: to save; Rana is the saver.
- 2: reading; tutor is the reader.
- 3: to compare; Rana is the comparer.
- 6: whether to shorten; likely we.

Clauses with overt subjects

- 4: you is subject of to preserve.
- 5: people is subject of changing.
- The whole events complement prefer and dislike.

Challenge · Does -ing always mean past?

They avoided changing the quotation.

Claim: changing guarantees an actual earlier change.

Explain how the meaning of avoided defeats that claim.

Exit response · Two memories

I remembered to submit the form.

I remembered submitting the form.

Explain the order of remembering and submitting in each.

State why a tense-only explanation is insufficient.

Prepare the investigation data

Code 20–30 authentic tokens across two English registers.

Keep at least 10 tokens per register and retain context.

Record uncertain cases and the exact coding rule.

Next week: Quirk et al., §§16.48–67.