

## 1 Constituency

**Coordination test** — Only words and phrases of the same category can be combined using conjunctions. So anything two words or phrases that can be conjoined are the same category.

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|---|--|
| (1) Cats <b>and</b> dogs are furry.             | (5) *I [slept and dreamt] about linguistics.     |
| (2) He will sink <b>or</b> swim.                | (6) I saw [[deer] and [florp]] in the meadow.    |
| (3) You can run <b>but</b> you can't hide.      | (7) I want to [[run] and [florp]] in the meadow. |
| (4) I [[slept] and [dreamt about linguistics.]] |  |

**Substitution test** — Only constituents can be replaced by shorter words/phrases. So if you can replace something with a shorter word or phrase, it's a constituent.

- (8) I watched my favourite movie last night.  
(9) \*I watched my favourite it last night.  
(10) I saw the big fat hairy guy that you met while shopping at the new store in College Mall. —I saw him too.

**Movement** — Constituents can move to positions in the sentence other than where they would normally go. Movement must involve the *whole constituent*.

**Question formation** — Only the whole constituent can be replaced by a question word.

- (11) Laura will drive her car on the weekend.  
(12) **What** will Laura drive on the weekend?  
(13) **When** will Laura drive her car?  
(14) \***What** will Laura drive [her \_\_\_\_] on the weekend?  
(15) \***When** will Laura drive her car [on the \_\_\_\_]?

**Topicalisation** — Only the whole constituent can be topicalised.

- (16) I don't like peas, but **peanuts** I like \_\_\_\_.  
(17) They didn't think he could win the election, but **win the election** he did \_\_\_\_.  
(18) \*I didn't know he'd be happy about the outcome, but [happy about \_\_\_\_] he was.

**Clefting** — Only the whole constituent can be clefted.

- (19) It was **on the desk** that the cat was sleeping \_\_\_\_.  
(20) It was **the cat** that \_\_\_\_ was sleeping on the desk.

### 1.1 Exercises

- p. 232 #15
- p. 233 #16. Here are some extra sentences:

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| (21) Bill found a dollar.           | (24) Bill sent a text message to Tom.                      |
| (22) Tom said it was hot.           | (25) Bill found Tom with the waiter.                       |
| (23) The clerk told Bill to pay up. | (26) Bill laid the doughnuts in the fridge in his kitchen. |

## 2 Ambiguity

**ambiguity** — the property of having two or more meanings

**lexical ambiguity** — when a word has more than one meaning; e.g. in these newspaper headlines

- (27) PROSTITUTES APPEAL TO POPE
- (28) IRAQI HEAD SEEKS ARMS
- (29) SOVIET VIRGIN LANDS SHORT OF GOAL AGAIN
- (30) CHILD'S STOOL IS GREAT FOR USE IN GARDEN

**structural ambiguity** — results from the structure of the phrase or sentence

- (31) I once shot an elephant in my pajamas.
- (32) Tonight's program will discuss sex with Dr. Ruth Westheimer.
- (33) We will not sell gasoline to anyone in a glass container.
- (34) This mixing bowl is designed to please any cook with a round bottom for efficient beating.
- (35) a large [man's hat] / [a large man's] hat

Constituency tests can show the source of the ambiguity:

(36) John hit **the man with the bat**.

- Replacement:

- (37) John hit **him**.
- (38) John hit **him** with the bat.

- Question formation:

- (39) **Who** did John hit \_\_\_\_?
- (40) **Who** did John hit \_\_\_\_ with the bat?

- The two structures:

- (41) John [VP hit [NP the man [PP with the bat]]]
- (42) John [VP hit [NP the man] [PP with the bat]]

### 2.1 Exercises

- Apply constituency tests to find out what the different sets of constituents are in (31)-(34).
- Come up with a structurally ambiguous sentence. Apply constituency tests to find out what the two different interpretations of the constituents are.

## 3 Syntactic categories: Exercises

- p. 233 #18
- p. 233-4 #19
- p. 234 #20
- p. 234 #21
- p. 234 #22