MĂDĂLINA CERBAN

The Syntactic Structure of Complex Sentences

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Foreword

If we were to present the book in very few words, we would say that it is a theoretical/practical approach to the syntax of complex sentences given the fact that theory and practice are constantly interwoven throughout the whole work.

The Syntactic Structure of Complex Sentences in its present form has been devised to serve two immediate purposes, i.e. as a course book and reference grammar resource for Romanian native students who read/study English and as a necessary introduction to the analysis of English complex sentences that will carry further the study of English at BA and MA levels. Each chapter has been structured to include a theoretical presentation of the selected issues, followed by true-false items briefly checking the theoretical presentation as well as a large amount of language practice meant to enable the students to gain understanding and awareness of the relationships between clauses and the transformations they need to undergo.

As the target population may be larger than initially intended by the author of the course the author provides straightforward explanations regarding the syntax of English complex sentences, analyzing the components they are made up of, identifying the main and subordinate (embedded) clauses and pointing out the most accurate constructions that can be used in certain clauses.

User friendliness has been the author's constant target and, consequently, the book has been devised to have as many parts or chapters as the types of complex sentences; the ways simple sentences combine in order to make up complex structures are also presented.

The examples that follow every assertion are easy to understand, logical, and as short as the minimal context allows it. Bolds and italics are used consistently in order to make the book agreeable to the reader.

Every chapter is followed by exercises that are varied in form, purpose and degree of difficulty in order to make the students understand how clauses within complex sentences function.

The Author

CHAPTER 1

Types of Complex Sentences

1.1. General considerations

A simple sentence is made up of relatively simple grammatical structures. For example, noun phrases can contain determiners, adjectives and noun heads. A complex sentence consists of an infinite number of simple sentences which can repeat over and over again in a given sentence. The reason for this extraordinary potential is the **recursive** quality of language.

Recursive processes depend a lot on clauses. A clause is any structure which contains its own verb. A clause that can form a sentence by itself is called **independent** clause. A coordinated sentence like *Mother was cooking, and father was watching TV* contains two independent clauses. A **subordinate** or **dependent** clause is a clause that can not stand alone as a grammatical entity. In a sentence like *I wanted John to go*, *John to go* is a subordinate clause. When a structure contains a subordinate clause, the containing structure is called **matrix clause** (Berk, 1999: 217). If the matrix clause also contains the main verb of the sentence, then it is considered to be **the main clause.** Sometimes one subordinate clause is contained within another subordinate clause; in this case the containing matrix clause is not the main clause of the sentence.

e.g. *I hoped my parents to come.*

In this example *hoped* is the main verb, and *my parents to come* is a subordinate clause.

Subordinate clauses will usually contain a **subordinator** (which is also called **complementizer**). This is represented by one or more small function words or special suffixes which signal that the following verb will not have the form and will not function as the main verb of the sentences. The most common subordinators are: *that, for, -ing forms, infinitives* and *pro-forms* beginning with *wh-*.

Clauses can have many grammatical functions: Subject, Direct Object, Indirect Object, Subject Complement, Object Complement, Adverbial Modifier. Practically, clauses have the same functions as phrases do in simple sentences. In fact, complex sentences maintain the structure of the simple sentences.

As stated before, sentences may have different degrees of complexity. They may consist of two or more main clauses or they may consist of one or more clauses with one or more dependent clauses. They are called simple, compound, complex or compound-complex sentences, depending on the types of clauses they contain.

For didactic reasons, only compound, complex and compound-complex sentences are being dealt with, and each of these types will be explained in detail below.

1.2. Compound Sentences

Compound sentences, also called coordinated sentences, consist of two or more clauses joined by coordinating

conjunctions or simply coordinators. Each part is a complete clause that can stand by itself. Most grammarians recognize three conjunctions (coordinators) in English – *and, but, or*- but it is not always clear that these three forms really constitute a coherent grammatical category. Les common is *yet*, followed by *for*. *Yet* and *for* are generally considered to be more formal than the other three conjunctions, *and, but* and *or*.

Note: Because *for* and *yet* have other sentence functions, less proficient ESL/EFL learners are occasionally confused when these words are used as coordinators. They must learn to distinguish between *for* as a preposition and *yet* as an adverb from their coordinating conjunction counterparts.

e.g.	**Function**
*She came **for** me.*	preposition
*She came **for** we had invited her.*	coordinator
*We haven't eaten **yet**.*	adverb
*He had eaten, **yet** he was still hungry.*	coordinator

1.2.1. Coordinators

*(i) Conjunction **and***

This conjunction can be used to conjoin various structures, from single lexical items to independent clauses, namely sentences. Normally, conjunction *and* only joins the same structural types, i.e. two subjects, two predicates, two (in)direct objects etc. When three or more items are conjoined in written English, *and* is used only between the last two. This constraint does not apply to spoken English. The items that can be conjoined

are of several types, and can perform several functions as in the examples below:

(i) Noun phrases functioning as:

- Subject: ***Mary and John*** *are brothers.*
- Direct Object: *I like* ***football and volleyball.***
- Indirect Object: *I lent* ***John and Mary*** *my car.*
- Adverbial Modifier of place: *I myself have driven all the way* ***to Spain and Italy.***

(ii) Verbs:

e.g. *My mother has* ***advised and supported*** *me all my life.*
They ***danced and joked*** *a lot at Mary's party.*

(iii) Modals:

e.g. *I* ***can and will*** *help you.*

(iv) Predicates

e.g. *Mary* ***dressed and went out****.*
The students ***wrote their papers, handed them out to the teacher and left the classroom****.*

(v) Adverbs

e.g. *They* ***ran far and fast****.*
She was dancing ***elegantly and gracefully****.*

(vi) Intensifiers

The President got ***more and more*** *upset.*

(vii) Prepositions

e.g. *The kids ran* ***in and out*** *of the door.*
The men strolled ***up and over*** *the hill.*

(viii) Adverbial prepositional phrases

e.g. *They Mike walked* ***down the stairs and out the door****.*

(ix) Adjectives and adjectives phrases

e.g. *The castle was* ***immense and bleak.***

The manager was ***very angry and very loud****.*

(x) Sentences

e.g. ***My mother was cooking and my father was reading the newspaper.***

Next year ***I will be visiting foreign countries and my sister will be staying home.***

It is obvious that nearly all morphological classes can be conjoined with *and*. Pre-nominal adjectives are generally enumerated without *and*, e.g. *a beautiful, intelligent girl*, although there are contexts in which they can be coordinated by *and*, e.g. *a mean and nasty person.* Unlike pronominal adjectives, predicatives cannot be simply enumerated, they must always be coordinated, e.g. *The child was* ***smart and nice****.* Articles can be conjoined under any circumstances while conjoined demonstratives are usually unacceptable, e.g. *I want* ***this and that*** *book* (?). Conjoined genitive determiners are infrequently used, e.g. *This is* ***his and her*** *house* (?). However, conjoined demonstrative and genitive determiners can be acceptably employed if the speaker points to the referents while speaking in order to separate the participants to the conversation. Conjoined genitive Noun Phrases are perfectly acceptable, although the genitive markers are attached to the second element in the noun phrase:

e.g. *Mike and Carol' father* (Mike and Carol have the same father)

my son and his friend's teacher (the teacher is one and the same for the two students)

Typically, *and* is an additive conjunction, bringing new information by attaching a word or a phrase of the same type. But the additive relationship between two or more coordinated constructions is often determined by social conventions. If somebody says *I bought four chairs and a table for my terrace,* the collocutor understands that the chairs and the table are a set, but if we say *I bought some chairs and a table*, the same collocutor will understand that the chairs and the table are separate, i.e. they are not a set.

There are some special cases when conjoined items have a conventional order, e.g. *fish and chips, bread and butter, black and white.* In most instances the order can be violated, but there is one case in which an exceptionally strong order is observed: *You and I* or, colloquially, *you and me*. *Me and you** is not acceptable.

In certain cases frequently coordinated items that are always associated (and coordinated) have taken on the status of idioms, and in such situations the order is never reversed:

e.g. *I love* ***rock and roll****.*

By and large*, they decided to support their president.*

The newly weds ***wined and dined*** *their guests at the most famous restaurant in Miami.*

Wined and dined is special because the expression cannot be used but together. A person cannot *wine* or cannot only *dine*. *By and large* is also special because it is made up of two different