

INTRODUCTION TO SYNTAX

LNG 3211 English Syntax

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LINGUISTICS & SYNTAX

Syntax is the **central component** of human language.

Language has often been characterized as the systematic correlation between certain types of oral/graphic forms for spoken/written language; and, for signed language, they are manual.

LINGUISTICS & SYNTAX (CONT.)

It's not the case that every possible meaning that can be expressed is correlated with a unique, unanalyzable form.

Rather, each language has **a stock of meaning-bearing elements** and different ways of combining them to **express different meanings**, and these ways of combining them are themselves meaningful.

Chris gave the
notebook to Dana.

Dana gave the
notebook to Chris.



These two sentences contain exactly **the same** meaning-bearing elements, i.e. words.



They have **different** meanings because the words are combined differently in them.

These different combinations fall into
the realm of syntax;

²the ²two

sentences differ not in terms of the words
in them but rather in terms of their syntax.

SYNTAX & GRAMMAR

- The difference -

Syntax is how a sentence is worded and structured.

Syntax is "the study of principles and processes by which **sentences** are constructed in particular **languages**."

It consists of the type of sentence and word order.

It refers to length of sentences.

SYNTAX & GRAMMAR

- The difference -

Grammar is the study of rules governing the use of language.

Grammar is "the set of **structural** rules that governs the composition of **clauses, phrases,** and **words** in any given **natural language.**"

SYNTAX HAS LITERARY MEANING AND USE,

while Grammar just shows good form.

SYNTAX & GRAMMAR

- The similarity -

Both **Grammar** and **Syntax** are usually focus at the **level of words-in-sentences** but can spill over into these and other subfields.

Grammar and Syntax are the knowledge of making a good phrase, clause, and absolutely in making a correct sentence.

Both of them are used in a abstract way, and also refer to **the structure of a single language**, and in either case "Syntax" is a subset of "Grammar".

In addition "Grammar" is used in a different way, to mean the prescriptive grammar of a language.

“Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.”

is a sentence composed by Noam Chomsky in 1957 as an example of a sentence whose grammar is correct but whose meaning is nonsensical.

DEFINITIONS TO SYNTAX

- Syntax is the study of the structure of phrases, clauses and sentences.
- In other words, Syntax is the study of how words are combined to produce sentences.

DEFINITIONS TO SYNTAX (CONT.)

To make clear the meaning, of Syntax, let us clarify three aspects involved.



Catogories



Phrase Structure



Transformation



Categories

- Words in a language are organized into different **categories**, or in traditional terms, **parts of speech**.
- Categories may be lexical e.g. Nouns (N), Verbs (V), Adjectives (A), Prepositions (P), Adverbs (Adv) or non-lexical e.g. Determiners (Det), Auxiliaries (Aux), Conjunctions (Conj), Degree words (Deg) or phrasal e.g. Noun phrases, Verb phrases, Adjective phrases, Prepositional phrases, Adverb phrases.



Phrase Structure

- Phrase Structure is the division of a sentence into part, or **constituents**, and the division of those constituents into subparts.
- There are **four ways** to determine phrase structures:
 1. substitution test
 2. the ability of constituents to "move"
 3. conjoined with a similar sequence
 4. anaphora



Transformation

- A transformation is an **operation** that moves a phrasal category (e.g. NP, VP, PP) from one location to another within a structure.
- There are **two levels** of syntactic structure:
 1. Deep Structure
 2. Surface Structure



Transformation (Cont.)

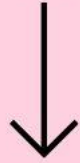
1. Deep Structure

- Deep structure is formed by the PS rules in accordance with the head's subcategorization properties.
- Deep structure plays a special role in the interpretation of sentences.

2. Surface Structure

- Surface structure, results from applying whatever transformation are appropriate for the sentence in questions.

Phrase structure rules



Deep structure -- (subcategorization restricts choice of complement)



Transformations

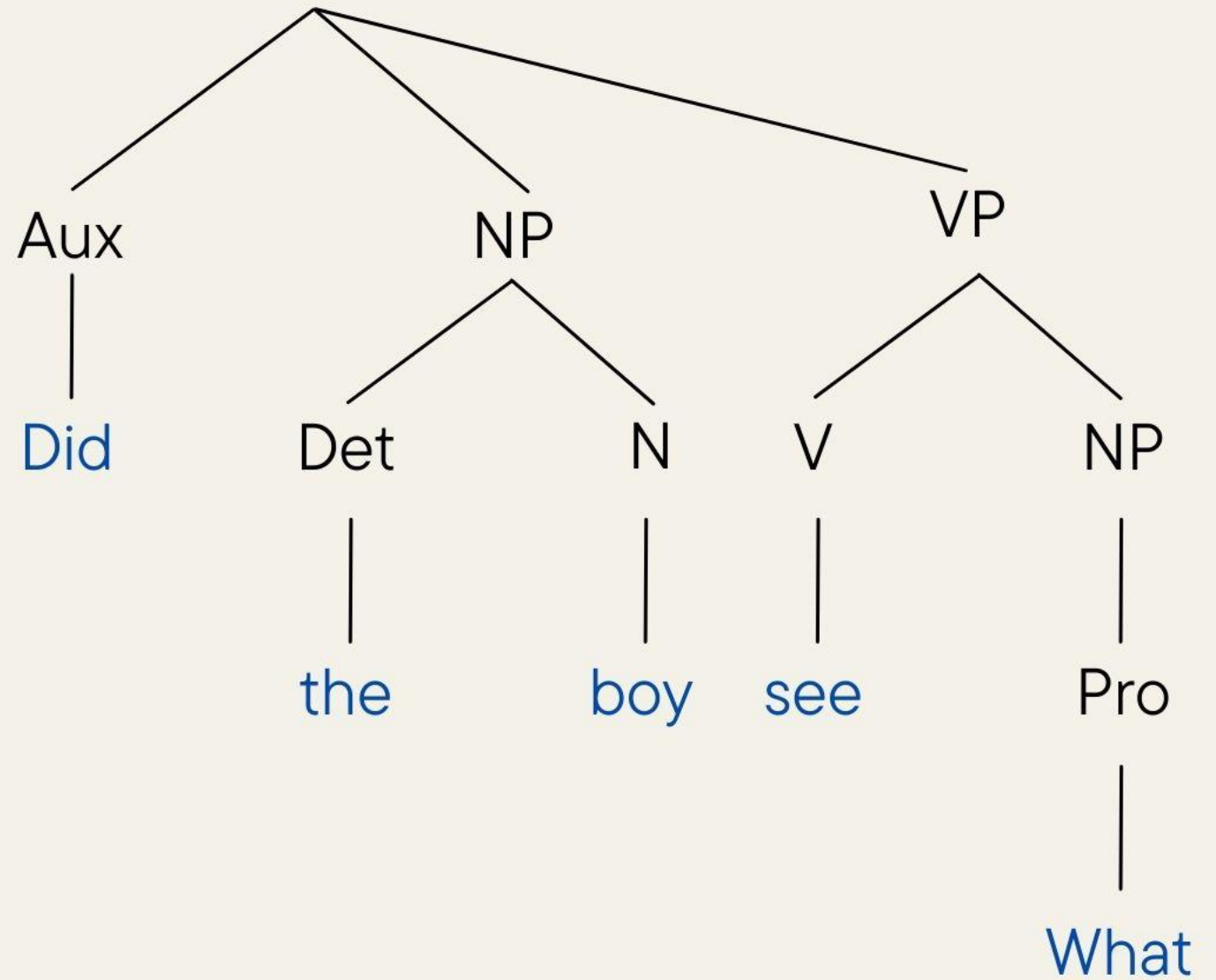


Surface structure

FOR EXAMPLE



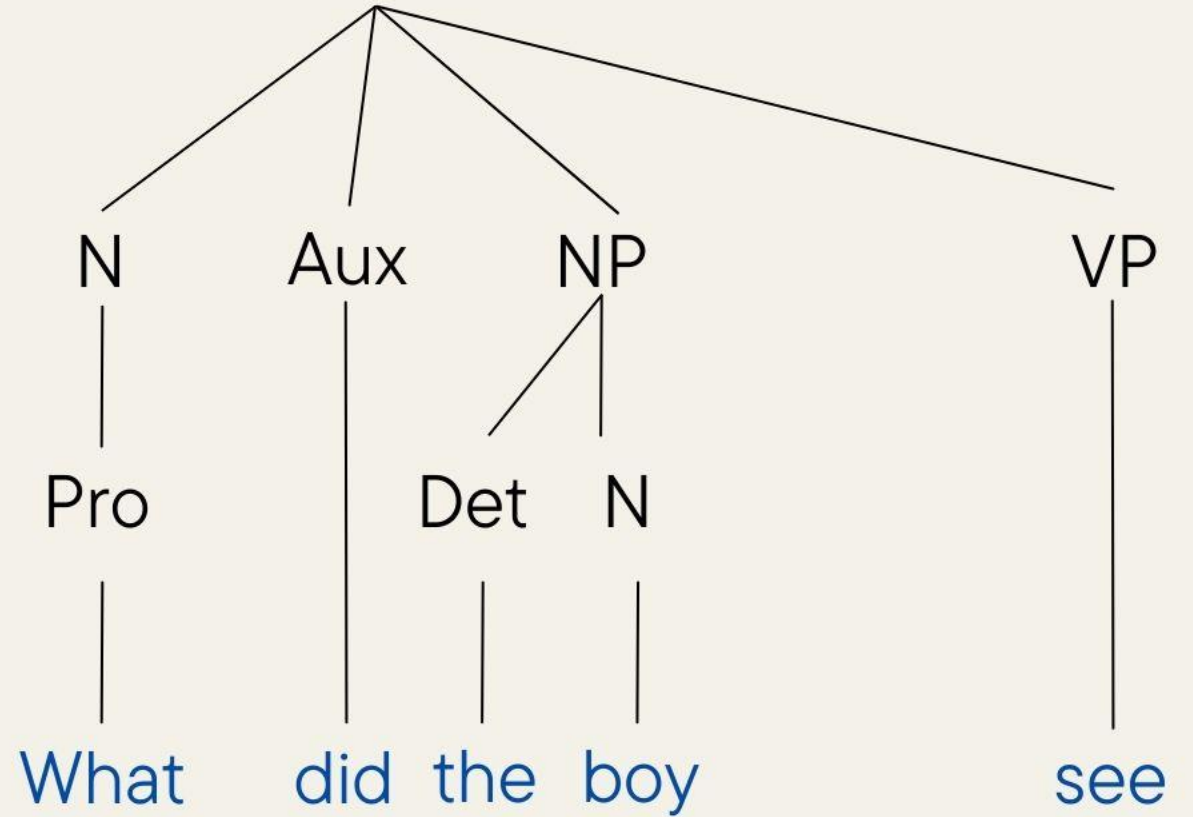
What did the boy see?
(Deep structure)



FOR EXAMPLE



What did the boy see?
(Surface structure)



REFERENCES

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