

Nouns and Verbs

Proper & Common Nouns

- In traditional school of grammar, a noun is usually defined in terms of meaning: A noun is the name of a person, place or thing. We earlier described a noun phrase as an article-noun combination, but a little investigating will show us that not all noun phrases have the same constituents. In some cases, a single word is the noun phrase:

(Tarzan saw a leopard)

(Rover saw a leopard)

Therefore, our earlier RULE **NP -----> Art N** is inadequate because it does not describe all possible noun phrases.

- We will call all names like *Tarzan* and *Rover* Proper nouns (NP). Specific names of persons, places, objects, and institutions, such as Elizabeth, Tennessee, Oldsmobile, Microsoft, and Harvard, are proper nouns. In our example above, the noun phrase does not have an article in front of it. Therefore, we would need an additional noun-phrase rule to describe them:

NP -----> NC

- If *Tarzan* and *Tennessee* are proper nouns, let us call the more generalized nouns, the ones that are used as proper names and are not usually begun with upper-case letters, **COMMON NOUNS (NC)**. Examples of common nouns are *sophomore, state, car, company, and college*. Therefore, we can revise our rule above accordingly:

NP -----> NP

NP-----> Art NC

Examples:

The engineer startled Sidney

Ali bought a car

Transitive & Intransitive Verbs

- # Earlier we defined verb phrases as:

VP -----> V NP

- Now consider the following examples:

The monkey wheezed.

The monkey laughs.

The monkey died.

- Here the verb phrase seems to consist of a single word. Lone words that we saw in the examples will be called INTRANSITIVE VERBS (VI). Wheezed, laughs, and died are all intransitive verbs. Another way of describing them is to say that an intransitive verb is a verb that is not followed by a noun phrase. In contrast, verbs like saw, imitated, and resembles are all **TRANSITIVE VERBS (VT)**, because each is followed by a noun phrase. Some verbs can be used in either category (**The game ended**) (**A riot ended the game**).

- **# Some verbs can be used in either category:**

(The game ended)
(A riot ended the game).

- We already noted that the first noun phrase in our examples is often referred to as **SUBJECT** of the sentence. Similarly the noun phrase that follows a verb is often called the **DIRECT OBJECT**. A transitive **verb** is said to take a direct object, while an intransitive verb does not.
- The similarity between transitive and intransitive verbs leads us to classify them in the same general category: VERBS. We have considered verbs from a purely structural point of view. In traditional grammar, however, they are defined in terms of meaning:

A verb is a word that expresses action or being.

- **#** We can revise our verb-phrase rule to account for the existence of both intransitive and transitive verbs:

VP -----> VI
VP -----> VT NP

- **Examples:**

The rain continued.
The rain annoyed Paul.

Simplifying the Phrase-Structure Rules

NP -----> Art NC
NP-----> NP

- These rules can generate the following noun phrases in the following

Examples:

Chevrolet hired Ralph
Ramona ordered a pizza

- But sometimes proper nouns are preceded by an article, and sometimes common nouns are not.

Examples:

Ralph own a Chevrolet
Ramona loves pizza

Simplifying the Phrase-Structure Rules

- It would seem, then, that at least four different rules are needed for describing noun phrases:

a- NP -----> NC

b- NP -----> Art NC

c- NP -----> NP

d- NP -----> Art NP

The grammar is now getting unpleasantly complicated. Is there anything we can do about it? Fortunately there is. Because *a and b* are so similar to *c and d*. We can simplify the way we write rules for noun phrases>>>Let's replace the rules (*a-d*) with two general rules:

**** We will no longer bother about the distinction between PROPER & COMMON nouns.

NP -----> N

NP -----> Art N

Simplifying the Phrase-Structure Rules

Of course not every noun can take an article, therefore we can summarize the two rules earlier in a single statement. A noun phrase contains a noun, which may or may not be preceded by an article. In the writing of phrase-structure rules, PARENTHESES () allow us to express OPTIONAL elements.

NP -----> (Art) N

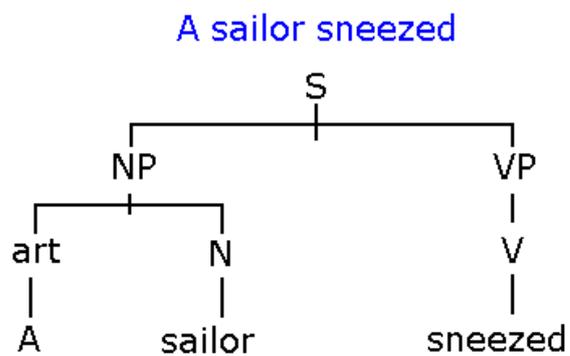
In the same manner, we will no longer note the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs. We will write one rule that is equivalent to the two rules presented earlier.

VP ----> V (NP)

Exercises

1- Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:

- a. A sailor sneezed.
- b. Lucy threatened the librarian.
- c. The company fired Mansour.
- d. Mohammed loves London.



Notes:
