

Adjectives & Linking Verbs

Adjectives

noun phrases in these sentences:

- The tiresome monkey saw a leopard.
- Severe storms battered Florida.
- An unscrupulous jeweler sold defective watches.
- The words **tiresome**, **severe**, **unscrupulous**, and **defective**, are all **adjectives (Adj)**.

In traditional grammar this category is defined as follows:

- An adjective is a word that describes or modifies a noun.

- All the following combinations of articles, adjectives, and nouns can occur in English noun phrases:

- NP -----> N
- NP -----> Art N
- NP -----> Adj N
- NP -----> Art Adj N

By using parentheses, we can write a single rule for noun phrases that will account for all structures:

- NP -----> (Art) (Adj) N

This rule allows our grammar to generate sentences such as the following:

An unscrupulous jeweler sold defective watches

The rule above is still not perfect, because sometimes more than one adjective can occur in a noun phrase:

-the old gray mare expensive new red sneakers One solution would be to add additional optional adjectives to our NP rule.

The following rule allow one, two, three adjectives in a noun phrase:

NP-----> (Art) (Adj) (Adj) (Adj)
N

You can easily think of a noun phrase with more than three adjectives:

the old old old old old philosopher.
Theoretically, there is no limit to the number of adjectives that can modify a single noun.

From now on, let's write such rule as the following:

NP -----> (Art) (Adj)+ N

The above rule can generate sentences such as these:

An officer rewarded the adventurous soldier.
The gaudy purple shirt embarrassed Amanda.

Linking Verbs

- According to the traditional definition of a verb ("a word that expresses action or being"), not all verbs are action verbs. The others, verbs that "express being," are mostly forms of the verb *be*. These forms of *be* (such as **am, is, are, was, and were**), act as the verbal equivalents of an equal sign "=": They tell us that one thing is equivalent to another.
 - Mansour is an honorable man.
 - The Cowboys were the winners.
 - Tom was persistent.
 - Such verbs are distinguished from both transitive and intransitive verbs. They are usually called "**Linking Verbs**" (VL). They are also known as **copulas**. Like a transitive verb, a linking verb can be followed by a noun phrase. Unlike other verbs, however, a linking verb can also be followed by an adjective.
- VP -----> VL NP
VP -----> VL Adj
- Frank was an architect.
 - The shoes are uncomfortable.
 - Recall that a noun phrase that follows a transitive verb is called the direct object. In traditional grammar, a noun phrase that follows a linking verb, such as an architect, is sometimes called a predicate nominative. An adjective that follows a linking verb, such as uncomfortable, is sometimes called predicate adjective. Together, predicate nominatives and predicate adjectives are called subjective complements in traditional grammar, because they are said to complete or explain the subject.
 - **In addition to forms of the verb *be*, a few other verbs are also linking verbs as the following:**
 - An unknown lawyer became the next governor.
 - Ferdinand seems intelligent.
 - Both *became* and *seems* are linking verbs because they also function much like verbal equal signs. Notice that you can substitute a form of *be* for these verbs and get roughly equivalent sentences.
 - An unknown lawyer was the next governor.
 - Ferdinand is intelligent.

Several verbs related to the five senses (look, appears, sound, smell, taste, feel) and a handful of other verbs (remain, grow, get, act) sometimes act as linking verbs and sometimes act as transitive verbs, depending on how they are used.

- Carolina felt the sandpaper.	(transitive: felt is an action)
- Carolina felt angry.	(linking: she was angry)
- Marcus smelled the flowers.	(transitive: smelled is an action)
- The flowers smelled sweet.	(linking: they were sweet)
- Others left, Sarah remained.	(intransitive: remained is something she did)
- Sarah remained the treasurer.	(linking: she was the treasurer)

- Now we can write a single rule for all of the above:
- VP -----> VL { NP or Adj }

Exercises

- 1- Underline the verb in each of the following sentences, and identify it as a transitive verb, an intransitive verb, or a linking verb. For each linking verb, state whether it is followed by a noun phrase or by an adjective.

Mom grew impatient.

Dad grew a moustache.

The baby grew.

Abdullah sounded confident.

Honesty seemed the best policy.

Mar tasted the soup.

Khalifah tower looks marvelous.

Wayne got a headache.

- 2- Draw a tree diagram for three of the above sentences.

Notes