

Noun Phrase

Gramatika 1 - 09

PHRASE

- a **PHRASE** consists of **1 or more words**.
- Language forms can be broken down to **CONSTITUENTS** (e.g. sentence to phrases)
- The **identity of phrases** can be shown by **SUBSTITUTION** a multi-word phrase can often be replaced by a single word without destroying the overall meaning.
=> *[The opposition] [is demanding] [a more representative government].*
 vs. [It] [demands] [something].
- The identity of phrases can also be shown by **MOVEMENT TESTS**; a phrase can be moved as a unit.
=> *A more representative government is demanded by the opposition.*

EMBEDDING

... creating **multiple interpretations**, as in:

[Mr Adamec] [threatened] [to quit] [last night].

[Mr Adamec] [threatened] [to quit [last night]].

(possibly an empty threat that he expressed "last night" without actually quitting)

(his threat was that he would actually quit last night)

Last night Mr Adamec threatened to quit.

(which of the two could be paraphrased this way?)

NB:

- **Words** make up **phrases**, which behave like **units**.
- Phrases can be identified by **substitution** and **movement tests**.
- Differences in **phrase structure** correlate with differences in **meaning**.
- Phrases can be **embedded at different levels**.

SIMPLE NOUN PHRASE

- A noun phrase consists of a head noun and a determiner and may have an adjective.
- Simple noun phrases consist of pronouns, numerals or nouns with articles, or nouns with other closed-class items that occur before the noun head including pre-determiners (pre-det), determiners (det.) and post-determiners (post-det.).
 - *[These girls] have [many books].*
 - *[The two boys], who live next door, are [twins].*
 - *[A rose] is [a flower].*

COMPLEX NOUN PHRASE

- A **complex noun phrase** describes the noun in more detail with another word(s) or a phrase:
 - *[The books [in his bag]] are heavy.* (prepositional phrase)
 - *[The students [interested in biology]] attended the lecture.* (adj. phrase)
 - *[The girl [carrying all the books]] is [an honour student].* (participle phrase)
- A complex noun phrase often contains the obligatory **HEAD** (a word that could stand alone as a simple noun phrase) as well as a:
 - determiner, pre-modifier** (before the head), **post-modifier**

SIMPLE vs. COMPLEX

- A simple noun phrase:

[Books] are expensive.

- A complex noun phrase: ??

The new biology books that I was required to buy were expensive.

The Delta Airlines flight to New York is ready to board.

The ability to give to others is an important character trait.

COMPLEX NOUN PHRASE EXAMPLES

PREMODIFICATION

(Det, Pre-Mod)

HEAD

POSTMODIFICATION

(Post-Mod)

all these young beautiful

GIRLS

the exact

ANSWER

his really quite unbelievably happy

FAMILY

a

BOOK

with yellow covers

the

MAN

who told you the secret

the

GIRL

speaking English fluently

the

ROAD

back

Text sample:

Only multi-word phrases marked; embedded phrases not marked.

Multi-word lexical units not marked as phrases.

- *[Mr Ladislav Adamec, the Czechoslovak Prime Minister,] threatened [to quit] [last night], as [hard bargaining] continued [for a second day] [with the opposition] [over the shape of the new government].*
- *[Mr Adamec] had talks [with the opposition leader, Mr Vaclav Havel,] [on the cabinet lineup]. He later went [on national television] [to state] that he [would stand down] unless [his new government] gained [public backing].*

...

- *[The opposition Civic Forum, which rejected the Communist-dominated cabinet unveiled by Mr Adamec at the weekend,] [is demanding] [a more representative government staffed mainly by experts].*

Exercise: in the following examples, phrases have been placed in brackets:

- Identify all noun phrases (NP) and prepositional phrases (PP), and underline the main word – the so called head (i.e. noun / pronoun, or preposition).

1. [They] [could have signed] [that check].

2. [He] [is] [a sweet boy]. [He] [came] [to my wedding] and [he] [looked] [so handsome].

3. [You] [mush have] [some fun] [with that].

4. [I] [also] [told] [him] [the story of my life].

5. [The rebels] [had held] [Makati] [since Saturday].

Exercise: One phrase can be embedded in another phrase. E.g., a prepositional phrase has a noun phrase embedded inside it:

She stayed **[for [a few days]]**.

In the following sentences, place brackets around noun phrases embedded inside prepositional phrases:

1. What did you do with the cookies?
2. I can just come by her house on the way.
3. I think she went to the prom with him.
4. Wisteria branches eventually grow to tree-size width and are meant for the sturdies pergolas and arbors.

Exercise:

Find examples of multiple embedding and mark them off by bracketing:

1. I've met a bunch of people.
2. My eyes were often full of tears.
3. He was a poet, a teacher of philosophy, and a man with a terrible recent history.
4. David Garrow, a scholar who won a Pulitzer for his biography of King, was skeptical about the whole notion of an autobiography.