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# SYNTACTIC CHARACTERIZATION OF CLAUSE ELEMENTS

When we talk of PHRASES we are talking of FORMAL CATEGORIES – the way phrases are formed

- When we talk of CLAUSE ELEMENTS we are thinking of the way different kinds of formal phrases FUNCTION, how the same kind of phrase can express different elements.

**VERB (V)** – always realized by a VP; normally present in all clauses; determines what other elements must occur; in a simple sentence always a finite verb phrase

**SUBJECT (S)** – typically a NP (head word: either a noun or a subjective form of pronouns); determines the number and person of the verb, where relevant

**OBJECT (O)** – typically a NP (head word: either a noun or an objective form of pronouns); normally follows the S and V, if two objects, then usually the indirect one precedes the direct one; can become the S of the corresponding passive clause

**COMPLEMENT (C)** – typically a NP or an AdjP; subject complement relates to the S x object complement relates to the O; does not have a corresponding passive subject.

**ADVERBIAL (A)** – can be realized by an AdvP, PP, NP or a CLAUSE:

e.g. I'm coming later / in the afternoon / this evening / when I've finished my homework. ; adverbial can occur in more than one position in the clause; frequently optional except in SVA and SVOA.

### ***Which verbs can normally build the passive?***

Transitive verbs (there are exceptions, though – so called MIDDLE VERBS that seem transitive but normally occur only in the active: They have three daughters. This jumper doesn't fit you. Three times three equals nine.

### ***- Semantic roles of clause elements***

We talk about so called PARTICIPANTS, i.e. entities realized by NOUN PHRASES

Some examples of the most common semantic roles:

SUBJECT has got a typical semantic role of the agentive participant, i.e. the animate participant that causes the happening denoted by the verb:

**John is cleaning the windows.**

DIRECT OBJECT has got a role of the affected participant – animate or inanimate, not causing the happening but directly involved in the action expressed by the verb:

**We've sold our house.**

INDIRECT OBJECT has got a role of the recipient participant – animate being, passively involved by the happening or state:

**I bought him a book.**

SUBJECT or OBJECT COMPLEMENT has got a role of the attribute – two subtypes:

identification and characterization:

IDENTIFICATION: She is a teacher. They named their son James.

CHARACTERIZATION: She is a good teacher. I find him very intelligent.

attributes may be current or resulting:

CURRENT ATTRIBUTE: She's my sister. She seems unhappy. I consider him my best friend.

(with verbs used statively)

RESULTING ATTRIBUTE: She became a teacher. He turned traitor. She drives me mad.

(with verbs used dynamically)