

**Ministry of Higher Education  
& Scientific Research  
University of Tikrit  
College of Education for Humanities  
Department of English  
M.A. Studies/ Linguistics: Contrastive Analysis.**



# **Syntactic Contrastive Analysis**

Submitted by:

**Jasmine Kaisar Ibrahim**

**Fatima Mahmood Eidan**

Submitted to:

**Prof. Muhammed Barjes Salman (PH.D)**

**2023-2024**

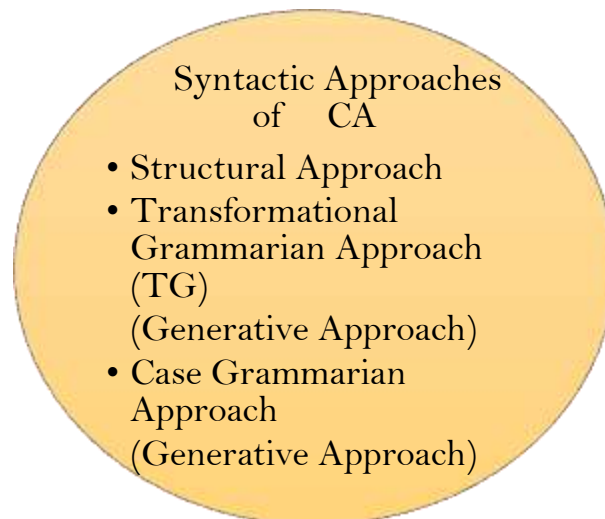
## Syntactic Contrastive Analysis

Ke (2019: 115) stated that the term **Syntax** as defined by (Crystal: 1987) is the way in which words are arranged to show relationships of meaning within a sentence (and sometimes between sentences). The term comes from **syntaxis**, the Greek word for “arrangement”.

1. **Classical European languages** (e.g. Greek and Latin) are characterized by complicated changes in word forms, so inflectional morphology is quite important in their grammars.
2. **Most modern languages**, however, resort to word order and function words for the expression of grammatical meanings, so they set great store by syntax.

Most syntactic studies have been focused on sentence structure, for this is where the most important grammatical relationships are expressed. In contemporary studies on syntax, **three major approaches to CA** are worthy of special attention; these are:

- + **The Structural approach,**
- + **The Transformational Grammarian (TG) approach, and**
- + **The Case Grammarian approach, the latter two being known collectively as the generative approach in combination with a few other approaches.**



Ⓢ**Note:** Contrastive analysis that utilizes **the structural approach** primarily focuses on **surface structures**, whereas contrastive analysis that employs **generative approaches** primarily emphasizes **deep structures**.

## The Structural Approach (Surface-Structure Contrasts)

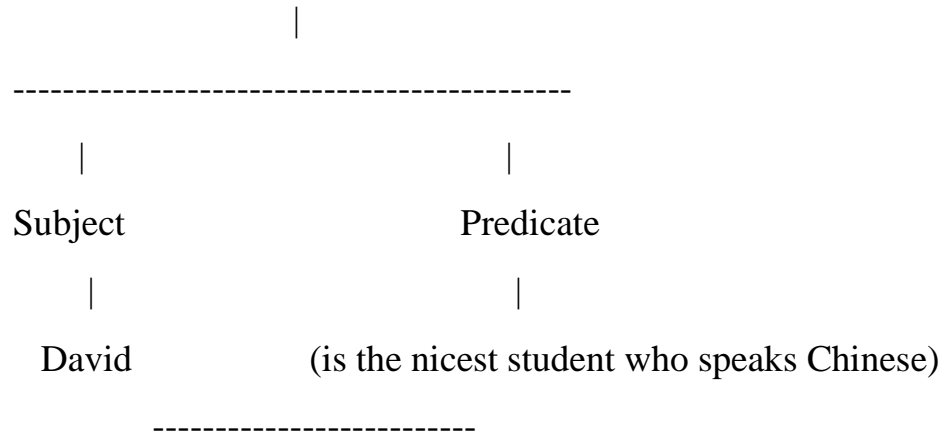
☉**Structural Model:** refers to a linguistic model that was the focus of early studies on syntactic contrastive analysis. It was developed and elaborated upon by structuralists such as **Leonard Bloomfield (1887-1949)** and **Harris (1909-1992)**. The model served as the basis for the University of Chicago Contrastive Analysis Series, edited by **Ferguson**. According to **Harris**, the structural model could be utilized for comparative purposes, allowing for the measurement of grammatical structure differences and the determination of the maximum difference or similarity between two language systems.

☉**Immediate Constituent (IC) analysis** is a linguistic, analytic technique developed by structuralists to analyze the structure of sentences or phrases. According to IC analysis, any grammatical construction that is not "simple" (composed of only one element) can be broken down into pairs of constituents. In IC analysis, a construction is analyzed by identifying its immediate constituents, which are the smallest meaningful units or phrases that make up the construction. These immediate constituents can be further analyzed into smaller constituents until the simplest constituents are reached (**Ke, 2019:116**).

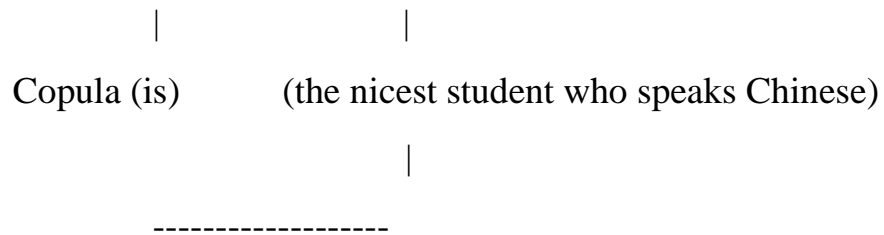
**For example**, let's consider the word "**disgraceful**." In IC analysis, "disgraceful" can be broken down into two immediate constituents: "disgrace" and "ful." The suffix "-ful" is a meaningful unit that can be added to words to indicate full of or characterized by something. In this case, "disgraceful" means full of disgrace.

**Similarly**, the word "**ungraceful**" can be analyzed into two immediate constituents: "un" and "graceful." The prefix "un-" is a meaningful unit that can be added to words to indicate negation or reversal. In this case, "ungraceful" means not graceful. IC analysis follows the principle that any construction made up of the parts ABC can be analyzed as either **AB + C** or **A + BC**. It allows linguists to understand the hierarchical structure of sentences and phrases by breaking them down into smaller constituents. The same procedure applies to larger constructions: thus while nice old woman splits into nice + old woman (A + BC), very old woman has the IC: very old + woman (AB + C).

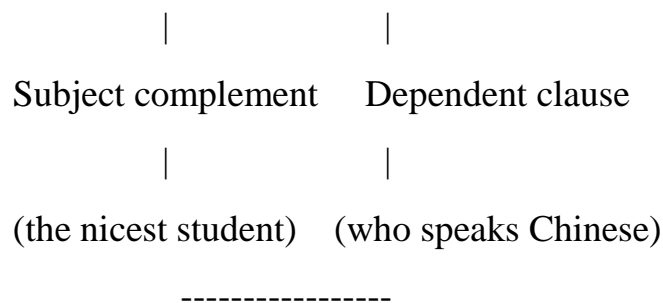
The complete analysis of the sentence "**David is the nicest student who speaks Chinese**" can be represented in the following Immediate Constituent (IC) branching diagram: The sentence breaks down into the Subject (David) and the Predicate (is the nicest student who speaks Chinese). (**David is the nicest student who speaks Chinese**)



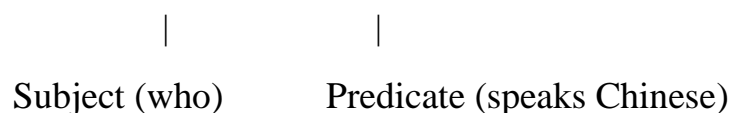
The predicate may be further analyzed into two constituents: is and the nicest student who speaks Chinese, "**is the nicest student who speaks Chinese**"



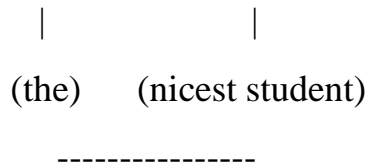
The latter being composed of two constituents: the nicest student, and the dependent clause who speaks Chinese. "**the nicest student who speaks Chinese**"



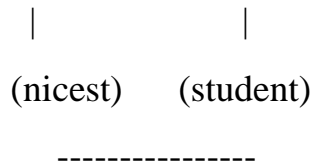
The dependent clause is likewise constituted of the Subject (who) and the Predicate (speaks Chinese). "**who speaks Chinese**"



We are then left with the subject complement of the main clause—the nicest student, which is an ABC construction having the two ICs the and nicest student.



And finally “**nicest student**” has the two ICs: nicest and student.



In such an analysis no reference is made to the meaning of a construction or its putative ICs. The whole process of analysis hinges on the notion of **distribution** or what naturally “goes with” what. **In the given text, "distribution"** refers to the notion of how linguistic elements are organized and combined based on their natural associations and patterns of co-occurrence. The analysis described does not directly consider the meaning of a construction or its putative Immediate Constituents (ICs), but rather focuses on the relationships between elements based on their distributional properties.

In the case of the phrase "**light house keeper,**" the determination of whether it should be analyzed as "**AB + C**" or "**A + BC**" **depends on the context and the intended meaning.** The phrase can refer to a keeper who maintains a light house or a keeper who maintains light houses. **The choice between the two analyses relies on the distributional properties and the semantic associations of the words involved.**

**Similarly,** in the example about “**the movie Titanic**”, the meaning and interpretation of the sentence **rely on the distribution and context.** The understanding of "light houses which were kept by competent light house keepers" and "the ocean liner had followed it" depends on the semantic relationships established through distributional patterns and the context of the sentence. In the context of immediate constituent (IC) analysis, the concept of **omissibility** is used to determine the boundaries and structure of constituents within a sentence.

Ⓞ**Omissibility** refers to the ability to omit or remove a certain element from a construction while still maintaining grammaticality.

In the given example of "**rather nice girl**," the decision regarding its analysis is based on **omissibility**. If we omit the word "**nice**," we are left with the grammatical construction "rather girl." However, if we omit "**rather**," we are left with the grammatical construction "nice girl." This observation suggests that the phrase "**Adj + NP**" (**adjective + noun phrase**) is **a construction** in English, while "**Adv + NP**" (**adverb + noun phrase**) is **a non-construction**. **Based on this omissibility test**, the phrase "rather nice girl" would be analyzed as (a) rather than (b). The analysis would consider "rather nice" as a single constituent, with "rather" functioning as an adverb modifying the adjective "nice" within the construction (**ibid: 117**).

By examining the **omissibility** of elements and observing the resulting grammaticality, linguists can determine the boundaries of constituents and make informed decisions about their analysis within a sentence. **Omissibility serves as a valuable criterion in identifying and understanding the structure of language.**

The analysis described in the previous response can be seen as **a two-dimensional approach** that considers both **the construction-types (horizontal axis)** and **the sets of possible fillers or immediate constituents (ICs) for each position within the construction (vertical axis)**. **The horizontal axis**, referred to as the **syntagmatic axis**, focuses on the arrangement and combination of linguistic elements within a specific construction or syntactic structure. It examines how different elements come together to form a larger grammatical unit and how they function in relation to each other.

**The vertical axis**, known as **the paradigmatic axis**, looks at the set of possible alternatives or choices for each position within the construction. It explores the potential fillers or ICs that can occupy a particular syntactic slot or position. This axis considers the options available for a given grammatical role or category, such as the choice between different adjectives that can modify a noun. **The distinction between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes was introduced by linguist John Lyons** in his seminal work "**Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics**" (1968). This two-dimensional analysis offers valuable insights into the organization and structure of language.

In the given sentence, "**He gave her a lovely X yesterday**," the syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis can help us narrow down the possible options for the noun represented by "**X**." In this case, we can determine that "**X**" is a noun based on its position following the determiner "**a**" and the adjective "**lovely**." Paradigmatic analysis considers the potential options within a specific category. In this case, we can propose a list or

paradigm of nouns that could fit in the sentence, such as "present," "watch," "dress," and so on. The specific noun is not given, but we can make educated guesses based on the context. In **Fries'** account of English sentence structure, he defines **Ⓞgrammar** as "**the devices of form and arrangement**" from a structuralist perspective. The term **Ⓞ"arrangement"** refers **to the relative order of elements within constructions**, while **the formal devices operating at the level of grammar can be categorized into four types:**

- 1) **Morphological markers:** These are affixes or suffixes that modify the form of words. For example, the German suffix "-keit" and the English suffix "-ness" in the words "Sauberkeit" and "cleanliness" respectively, mark these words as nouns.
- 2) **Function words:** These are words such as articles (e.g., "the," "a/an"), conjunctions (e.g., "and," "but"), and prepositions (e.g., "in," "on," "at") that signal the likely presence of certain classes of elements before or after them. These function words provide grammatical information and help establish relationships between words or phrases in a sentence.
- 3) **Word order:** The arrangement of words in a sentence is another formal device in grammar. Word order refers to the specific sequence in which words or phrases appear in a sentence. Different languages have different word order patterns, such as subject-verb-object (SVO) in English, verb-subject-object (VSO) in Irish, or subject-object-verb (SOV) in Japanese. Word order plays a crucial role in determining the grammatical structure and meaning of a sentence.

**She gave the cat a rat.**

**She gave the rat a cat.**

- 4) **Suprasegmentals:** are phonological elements like stress and intonation. They serve as indicators to the listener, conveying information about the nature of an utterance, such as whether it is a question or a statement. Suprasegmentals also provide cues about the grammatical category of a word, distinguishing between verbs and nouns, or indicating the grammatical case of a noun, such as genitive singular or nominative plural.

When conducting a contrastive analysis on the structural model, we examine how two languages being compared utilize the four formal devices mentioned earlier. It is common for languages to exhibit preferences for certain formal devices over others, leading to the distinction between "**analytic**" and "**synthetic**" languages. During the analysis, we are likely to observe that the first language (**L1**) expresses a particular meaning using one device, while the second language (**L2**) conveys the same meaning using a different device. For example, in **English**, function words known as "articles" (such as "the" and "a") are used to indicate the contrast between definite and indefinite reference. On the

other hand, languages like **Russian** and **Arabic** achieve the same contrast through word order; **definite reference** is achieved by using **proper nouns** such as (علي، أحمد), or **pronouns** such as (أنه، أنت)، or by adding (ال) before the noun and many other ways, whereas **indefinite reference** is achieved by using **a general noun (a non-specific noun)** such as:

(كتاب، مدرسة، طالب)

### ⓄIndefinite Articles:

**English:** "A" or "an" are the indefinite articles in English. "A" is used before nouns that start with a consonant sound, while "an" is used before nouns that start with a vowel sound. They refer to any non-specific noun.

Example: "I saw a man in the street."

**Arabic:** In Arabic, the indefinite article is not used in the same way as in English. Instead, the absence of the definite article indicates an indefinite noun.

Example:

"رَأَيْتُ رَجُلًا فِي الشَّارِعِ" (Ra'aytu rajulan fi ash-shari') translates to "I saw a man on the street." Here, the absence of the definite article "ال" (al-) indicates that the noun "رَجُلًا" (rajulan) is indefinite.

### ⓄDefinite Articles:

**English:** "The" is the definite article in English and is used to refer to a specific noun that is already known or has been mentioned before.

Example: "The man is reading the book."

**Arabic:** In Arabic, the definite article has different forms depending on the gender and number of the noun. The definite article "ال" (al-) is used before the noun.

Example:

"الرَّجُلُ يَقْرَأُ الْكِتَابَ" (Ar-rajulu yaqra'u al-kitab) translates to "The man is reading the book."