

Chapter 6

Clauses



Transformational Grammar

Engl 424

Hayfa Alhomaïd

Finite and Nonfinite Clauses

What do we mean by a Clause:

A syntactic construction containing a subject and predicate and forming part of a sentence or constituting a whole simple sentence.

There are two main types of clauses:

- Finite Clauses
- Nonfinite Clauses

➤ What is the difference between these two types?

The distinction between them is based partly on morphological criteria.

- It is finite if it contains a finite verb (verb inflected for **tense** or **agreement**).

E.g. I **spoke** to Joanne last night (past {tense}),

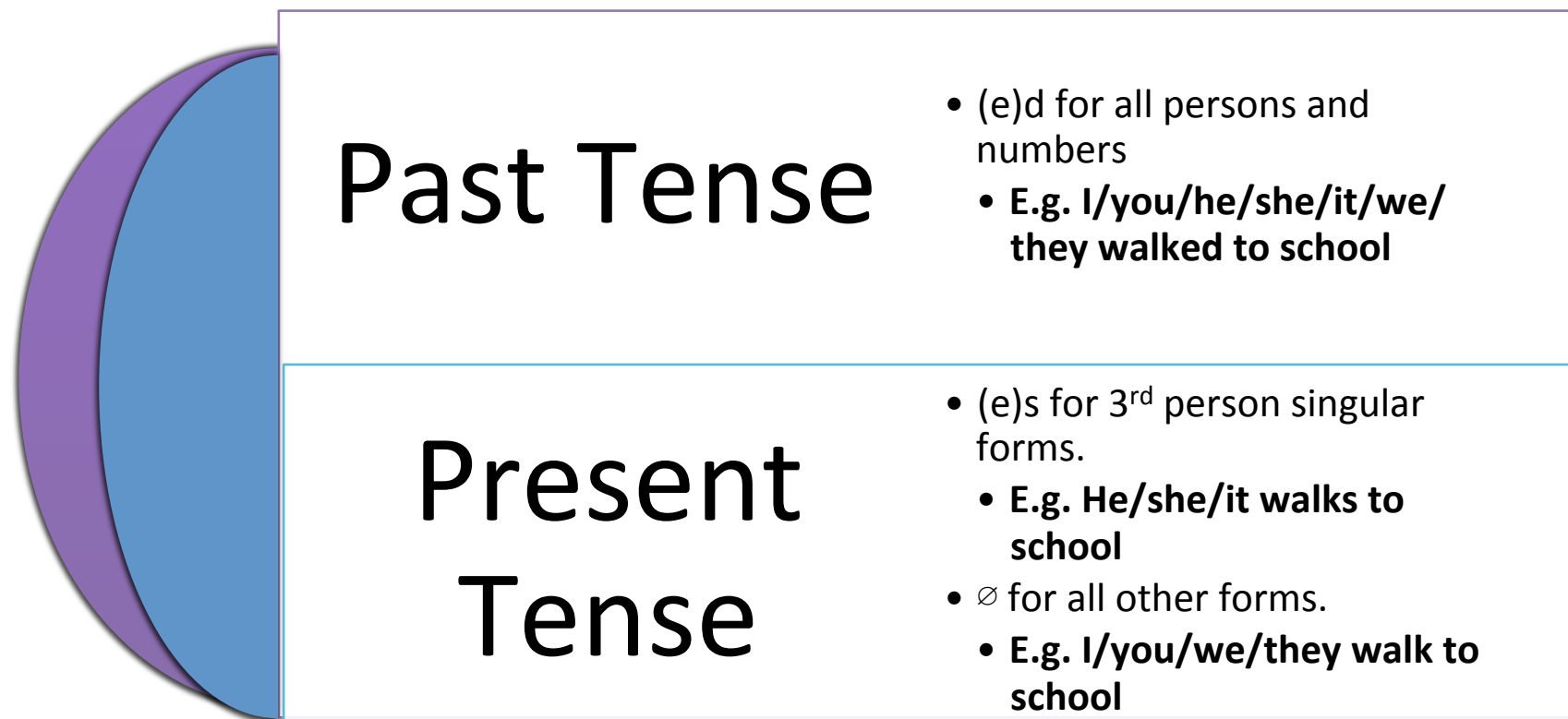
He speaks to Joanne everyday (present {tense}, 3rd person sing {agreement}).

- It is nonfinite if it lacks a finite verb (if is verbless clause, or if it contains a nonfinite **tenseless** and **agreementless** verb).

E.g. I had something to eat **before leaving** (no tense, no agreement)

Finite and Nonfinite Clauses

➔ So the relevant set of inflections for regular Verbs are:



∅ represents a 'zero inflectional morpheme'

Finite and Nonfinite Clauses

The inflections mark not only Tense but also Agreement.

E.g. He walk**s** to school

The Present Tense **-(e)s** inflection is only used with a Third Person Singular Subject, so that **-(e)s** marks not only Tense (=Present), but also Agreement (with a Third Person Singular Subject).

Agreement isn't marked in Past Tense forms at all except the Past Tense forms of the irregular Verb be

E.g. I/he/she/it **was** late ← Agreement with the first and third person singular subjects.

You/we/they **were** late ← Agreement with other subjects.

Finite and Nonfinite Clauses

There are three types of nonfinite verb-form in English:

- Uninflected infinitive forms which contain the base or stem with no added inflections (such forms are usually used after the infinitive particle *to*)

E.g. I've never known John [**to** be so rude to anyone].

- Gerund forms which contain the base plus the –ing suffix.

E.g. We don't want [it **raining** in your wedding day].

- (Perfect/passive) participle forms which contain the base plus the –(e)n inflection (though there are a number of irregular participle forms in English).

E.g. I had [my car **stolen** from the car-park].

Constituent Structure of Clauses

A clause usually starts with particle like that, for, or whether preceding the subject of the clause.

E.g. We know [**that** the President will approve the project].

We would obviously all prefer [**for** the matter to be resolved].

I couldn't really say [**whether** it will rain].

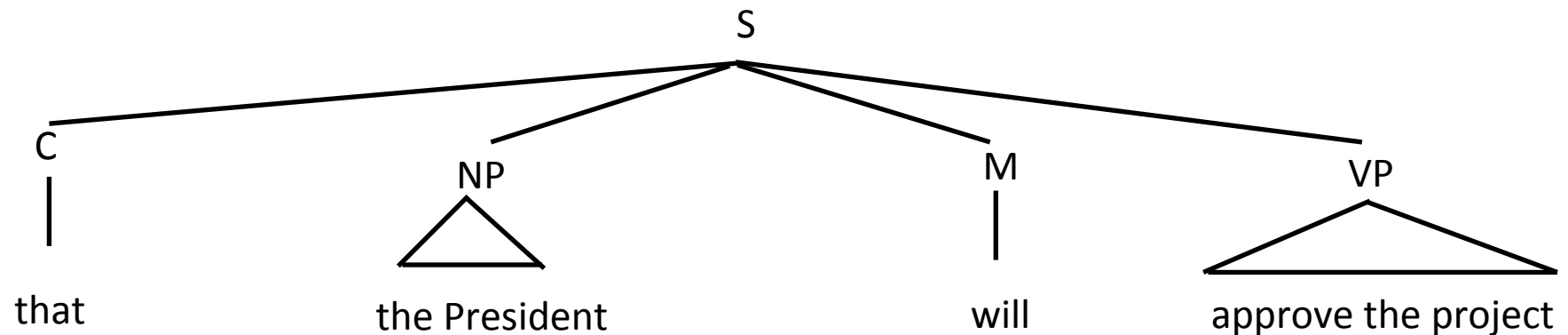
Since these particles are typically used to introduce Complement Clauses (Clauses which function as the Complement of the verbs, nouns, adjectives.... etc.), they are known as **Complementisers**, which is abbreviated as **COMP** or simply **C**.

Constituent Structure of Clauses

What is the constituent structure of Clauses which contain a C constituent?

1- One possibility suggested by Emonds (1976), and Soames and Permuter (1979) would be that C is generated within S as a sister to the subject NP of the Clause, by a rule such as:

S → C NP M VP



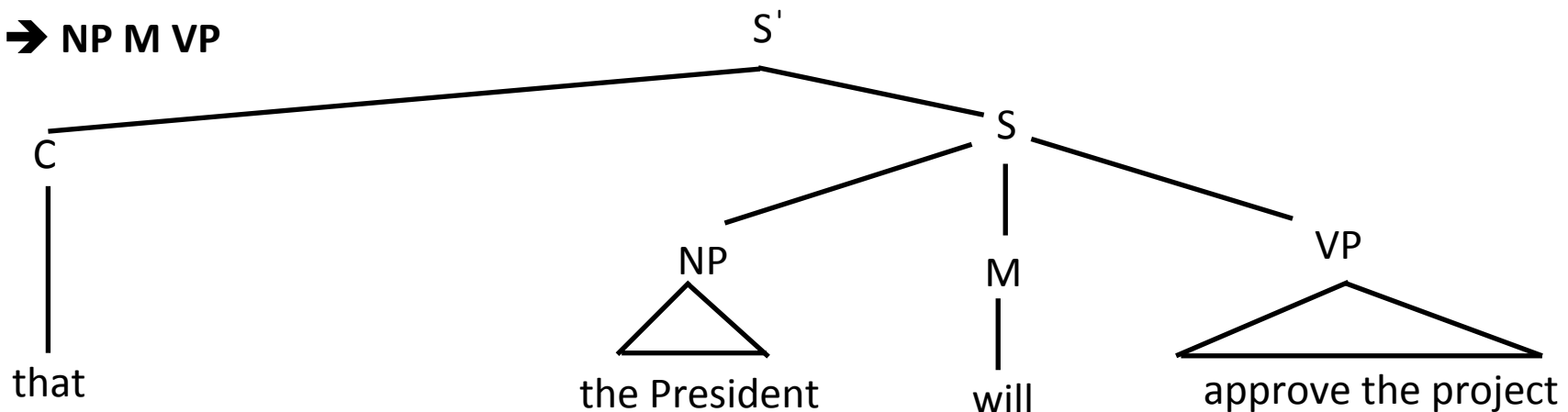
Constituent Structure of Clauses

What is the constituent structure of Clauses which contain a C constituent?

2- Bresnan (1970) suggests that C and S together form a larger clausal unit which she calls S-bar (=S'), by a rule such as:

S' → C S

S → NP M VP



But the problem with this analysis is that not all complement clauses have overt complementisers

E.g. We know [the President will approve the project].

Constituent Structure of Clauses

How do we analyze the complementiserless clauses?

There are two possibilities:

1- To say that it is an S constituent (and not an S-bar) and thus does not contain complementiser, which can be presented as
[S the President will approve the project].

2- To say that is an S-bar of the usual [C S] structure except that the complementiser position has been left 'empty', which can be presented as
[S' [C e] [S the President will approve the project].

(e= 'empty', so [C e] means that the complementiser position has been left empty).

Structure of Main Clauses

Main clauses in English contain a covert complementiser.

➤ This assumption can be applied on interrogative structures (i.e. questions) which contain an ‘inverted’ auxiliary.

E.g.

Your sister **could** go to college ➔ Subject + Modal auxiliary + verb

Could your sister go to college? ➔ Modal auxiliary + Subject + verb

Since the pre-subject position is the position typically occupied by complementisers, then we should expect clauses introduced by complementisers cannot contain inverted auxiliaries, and conversely.

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➤ One evidence for this assumption is the form known as 'semi-indirect speech'

E.g.

'Will I get a degree?' John wondered.	Direct speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of the present tense Auxiliary (will) • The inversion of the Auxiliary • The use of the first person pronoun.
John wondered whether he would get a degree.	Indirect speech or reported speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of the past tense Auxiliary form (would) • No inversion of the auxiliary • The use of the Third Person pronoun.
John wondered would he get a degree.	Semi-indirect speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of the past tense Auxiliary form (would) • The inversion of the auxiliary • The use of the Third Person pronoun.

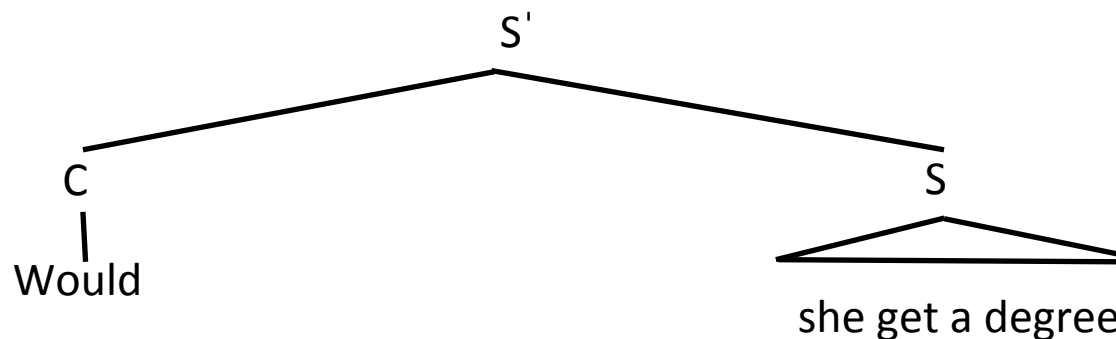
From this we can conclude that the presence of the complementiser (whether) excludes the possibility of having an inverted Auxiliary in pre-subject position.

E.g. *John wondered whether would he get a degree.

Structure of Main Clauses

So the analysis of the interrogative sentences must have the status of an S-bar constituent containing the Modal Auxiliary in C

E.g. Would she get a degree?



So, as a conclusion of what we reached so far we can say: All Ordinary Clauses (Embedded and Main clauses) have the status of S-bar constituents of the schematic form [C S], and thus contain a C constituent which may either be filled (by an overt complementiser or an inverted auxiliary) or left empty.

Structure of Main Clauses

So, Complementisers can be classified into two types on the basis of two different criteria:

A) Syntactic:

- Interrogative clauses.

E.g. John wondered [would he get a degree]

- Noninterrogative clauses.

E.g. We know [that the President will approve the project].

B) Morphological:

- Finite clauses

E.g. Tell him [that Mira came yesterday]

- Nonfinite clauses

E.g. I've never known John [to be so rude to anyone].

Internal Structure of S

We know that the finite indicative Clauses, S has three immediate constituents: [NP M VP]. However the structures in the following sentences are not the same

I am anxious **that** [John **should** finish by Friday]. [S [NP John] [M **should**] [VP finish by Friday]]

S → NP M VP

I am anxious **for** [John **to** finish by Friday]. [S [NP John] [**to**] [VP finish by Friday]]

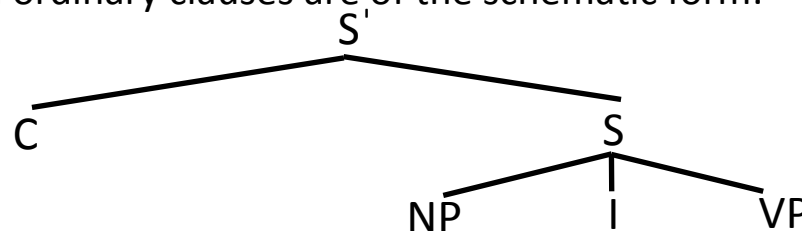
S → NP to VP

This leads us to say that M and to are different members of the same category. And since this category contains both inflected Modals like (should) and the uninflected infinitive particle (to) we will term the appropriate category INFLECTION abbreviated to INFL or simply I. The basic structure of ordinary clauses will be specified in the two rules:

S' → C S

S → NP I VP

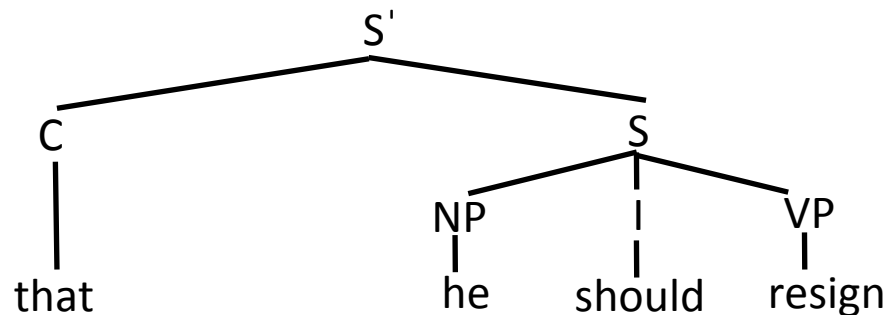
This will mean that all ordinary clauses are of the schematic form:



Internal Structure of S

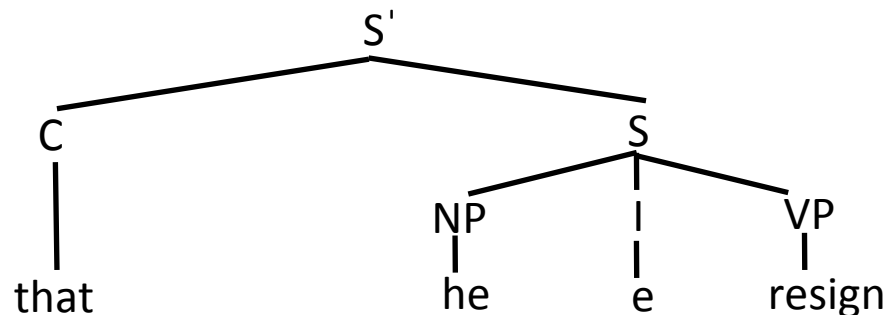
We can say now that the difference between a finite and nonfinite clause can be seen in the nature of I: a finite clause is a one which contains a finite I (Carrying Tense and Agreement properties)

E.g. The committee may insist [that he should resign].



Nonfinite clause is one which contains a nonfinite I which is tenseless and agreementless.

E.g. The committee may insist [that he resign]



So from this analysis it is clear to us that all ordinary clauses do in fact contain an I constituent, and that I can either be filled, or left empty

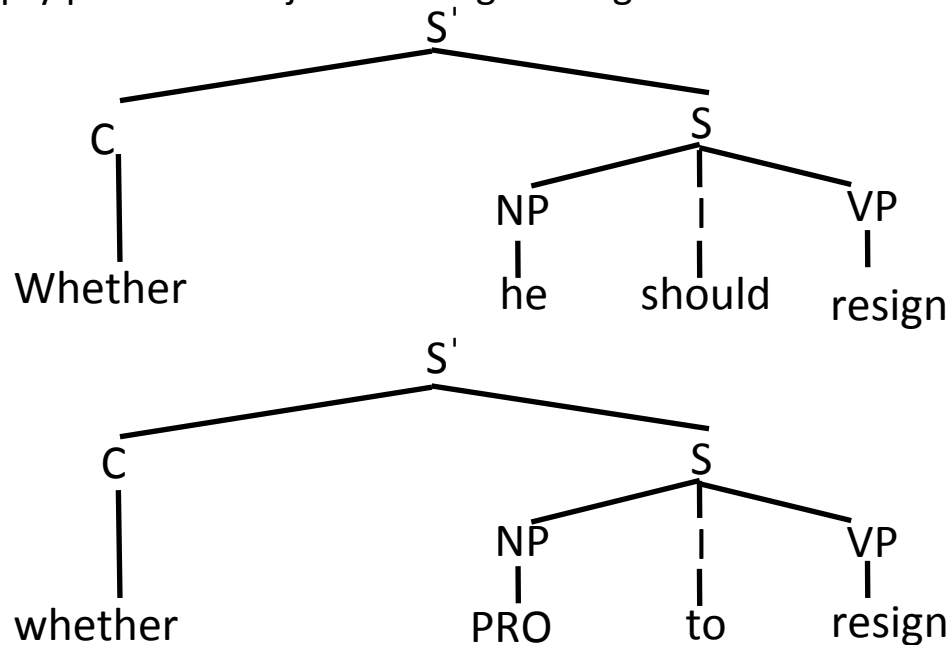
Clauses with empty Subjects

Some clauses appear to be subjectless

E.g. The president isn't sure [whether he should resign].

The president isn't sure [whether to resign].

The first example there is an overt pronoun subject in the embedded clause but a covert pronoun subject. This 'empty pronoun subject' we might designate as PRO



Clauses with empty Subjects

We have made increasing use of empty categories. We have suggested that C is sometimes empty, that I may be sometimes empty, and that NP can also be empty.

What kinds of categories can be left empty, and in what sentence positions?

It is already suggested that **C**, **I**, and **NP** can be empty. Moreover, we can say that **VP** also can be left empty under appropriate discourse conditions, so that we might suppose that the Modal (will) has an empty VP complement.

E.g. She may come to the party, and in fact she probably will [VPe]

Likewise, **AP** can sometimes be left empty.

E.g. They say she is very rich, but I don't think that she is [APe].

We might even say that whole **clauses** can be left empty.

E.g. She was very ill, though nobody new [S'e].

So we can say that any category can in principle be left empty, under appropriate conditions.

This is all for today

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK 😊