

Extension exercises

Chapter 20: Sentence constituents: basic principles

Exploring English

Select two or three texts or extracts from texts of different types, each of 6–8 lines. Ideally, at least one of these should be a transcription of spoken English (if you have access to recording facilities, you may be able to make the transcription yourself).

- 1 As far as you can, divide the texts into clauses, and identify the main clauses.
- 2 Identify and classify the main sentence constituents (see ‘Language in context’ 2 a–f in Chapter 20, p310, for guidance).
- 3 Count the number of times each of the five types of verb (object, object complement, etc.) occurs in the texts. Which types are most common? Does this vary from text to text?
- 4 Compare the ratio of simple noun phrases (for example, one word) to complex ones (a number of words). Does this vary from text to text? Are complex noun phrases more common in subjects, direct objects or indirect objects?

Comparing grammars

Different grammars use different categories and different terms for identifying the basic constituents of sentences. Compare two reference grammars.

- 1 What similarities and differences are there between the way the two books analyse and describe the structure of sentences?
- 2 What similarities and differences are there between these analyses and descriptions and those on pp 292–4 of this chapter?
- 3 How much attention does each book pay to aspects of word order and the basic constituents of sentences?
- 4 How clear are the descriptions and explanations?
- 5 How detailed are these?
- 6 How comprehensive are these?

Course materials

Examine a beginners’ coursebook.

- 1 What explicit attention is paid to word order and the basic constituents of sentences?
- 2 How clearly do the Contents section and the Index identify the material which deals with these topics?
- 3 Are the examples provided natural and convincing?
- 4 What opportunities are provided for learners to practise ordering words and basic sentence constituents?