

# FUNCTIONAL CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PHRASES AND SENTENCE ELEMENTS

**Dervish Alimi**

Department of English Language and Literature

State University of Tetova, Macedonia

E-mail: [dervish.alimi@hotmail.com](mailto:dervish.alimi@hotmail.com)

---

## ABSTRACT

---

Usually, the structural syntax studies the phrase-s as a group of words pronounced altogether and conveying a message or an information about: the doer of action that is preceding the predicator (NP), the action itself (VP) and the object of action (NP), that is following the predicator as well as the information about the circumstances of the action (PP, Adv.P), etc. On the other hand, the functional syntax studies the sentence elements which are also conveying similar messages or information. Thus, the subject consists of the NP and is placed before the predicator, whereas the Object is also a NP, but placed after the predicator. The Predicator as a heart or nucleus of the sentence is in the same time a VP, describing the action of the doer and his situation. The PP is usually an Adjunct, because it gives information about the circumstances of time, place and manner in which the action occurs. The adjective phrase as a special independent phrase is usually in the position of the Subject complement, because it gives the description of the subject as a doer of action. Conclusively, there as a functional corelation between the phrases as groups of words containing information about the participants in the event and the sentence elements as constituents of the sentence. Those who are familiar with the analysis of the diagram of the phrase and its headword and modifiers, are strongly and very well qualified to identify the elements of the sentence, such as the information about the subject as a doer of action, the predicator as the main verb within the clause or the sentence, the direct and indirect object of the transmitted action, and the adjunct expressing the circumstances in which the main action occurs. All these elements are the constituents of the five basic sentence patterns

**Keywords:** phrase, diagram, headword modifier, subject, object, predicator, circumstance, clause, sentence.

---

## I. FUNCTIONS OF NOUN PHRASES

### 1. The subject as a sentence element

Nouns and noun phrases first function as the subject of clauses. A subject is a word, phrase, or clause which performs the action of or acts upon the verb. Clauses contain both a subject and a predicate. The following underlined noun phrases are examples of subjects.

- The green house is for sale.
- Flowers are taking over the balcony.
- The baby cried.
- Fish and birds make excellent pets.

Other grammatical forms can also function as the subject of clauses, but nouns and noun phrases are the ones that most frequently perform that function.

## 2. Subject Complement

Nouns and noun phrases function as subject complements too. A subject complement is a word, phrase, or clause that follows a copular or a linking verb and describes the subject.

The following underlined noun phrases are examples of subject complements:

- The woman was a nurse.
- Her sister will become the school librarian.
- My grandfather is a farmer.
- My friend is a doctor.

## 3. Direct Object

Nouns and noun phrases can also function as direct objects. A direct object is a word, phrase, or clause that follows a transitive verb and answers the question "who?" or "what?" receives the action of the verb. Therefore, the type of verb is to be transitive in order to get the transition of the action onto the object of action, replacing this way the former objective case. The following underlined noun phrases are examples of direct objects:

- Dogs eat meat.
- The child finally swallowed the sweet-tasting cream.
- The children ate all the cookies.
- The woman has always hated insects and rats.

## 4. Object Complement

Similarly to subject complements, nouns and noun phrases can function as object complements. An object complement is a word, phrase, or clause that directly follows and describes the direct object. The following underlined noun phrases are examples of object complements:

- We elected you team leader.
- My sisters named my daughter Autumn!
- America recently elected Donald Trump president.
- My uncle calls my aunt sweetheart.

## 5. Indirect Object

Nouns and noun phrases can also function as indirect objects. An indirect object is a word, phrase, or clause that follows a intransitive verb and answers the question "to or for whom?" or "to or for what" is the action of the verb performed. The type of verb is to be ditransitive in order to get and replace the former dative case. The following underlined noun phrases are examples of indirect objects:

- My sister loaned me a book.
- She gave me a gift.
- The child drew his mother a picture.
- Let her have it!

## II. FUNCTION OF VERB PHRASES

### 1. Predicater

The Verb phrase of narrow sense is consisting of only the verbs, i.e. the auxiliary **have**, **be**, or the **modal verbs** in the position of premodifier-s and the **lexical verbs** as Headwords. They are usually in the function of Predicater, within the sentence. Therefore, those who are familiar with these types of verbs are supposed to identify easily the words in the function of predicater with any type of sentence, either simple, or extended, and within the clauses making a composed sentence or Compound and complex sentence-s.

The following underlined verb phrases are examples of predicaters:

- They must have done it before!
- She has had plenty of time to do this.
- I really did pass the exam last session.
- Have you ever done this before?

## III. FUNCTIONS OF ADJECTIVE PHRASES

### 1. Subject complement

1. The adjective phrase is usually following a **linking verb**, which means the genuine quality description of the subject is made indirectly i.e. through a linking verb. The following underlined adjective phrases are examples of subject complements:

- The students are /very/ hardworking
- Our school building is extremely old.
- The baby is very cute.
- Our parents are very happy!

### 3. Object complement

When following a personal pronoun or a noun, describing its quality, even though this is statistically very rare. The following underlined adjective phrases are examples of object complements:

- He made **her**happy.
- They find **syntax**very attractive.
- I'll have **my car**washed
- I'll have **my hair**cut

## IV. FUNCTIONS OF ADVERB PHRASES

### 1. Adjunct

The adverb is usually an adjunct in functional syntax. Therefore, the adverbs by the origin of the work ad+verb are located close to the verb, which is usually describing an action, or a situation. By consequence the adverbs are giving information about the circumstances the action occurs or the situation is. The type of the verb is to be **intransitive** in order to get an adverb afterwards. The following underlined adverb phrases are examples of adjuncts:

- He **reads** too much!
- You**work** very hard.
- Pull over** here.
- Don't **wait** for me any more.

## V. FUNCTIONS OF PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

### 1. Adjunct

The prepositional phrase is also an adjunct in functional syntax. The prepositional phrase is usually located after the verb phrase, which is usually describing an action, or a situation. By consequence the prepositional phrases are also giving information about the circumstances the action occurs or the situation is. The type of the verb is to be **intransitive** in order to get a prepositional phrase afterwards. The following underlined prepositional phrases are examples of adjuncts:

- The children **are playing**in the schoolyard.

- We are travelling all over the world.
- They don't make any noise during the classes.
- You need to treat me with respect.

## 2. Prepositional Object

Nouns and noun phrases function as prepositional object complements. A prepositional object complement is a word, phrase, or clause that directly follows the preposition in a prepositional phrase. The prepositional object is replacing the former ablative case, or the ancient instrumental case. The following underlined prepositional phrases are examples of prepositional objects:

- That little girl gave his toy to his baby sister.
- The father warned his boys not to go into the woods.
- My friends bought flowers for me.
- The pupils studied during their winter break.

## Conclusion

The mentioned functions are not the only ones, because sometimes they interfere, and the frontier between them is not very strict. We're just trying to distinguish the most frequent cases of the functions of a certain phrase, by pointing out that it depends on the type of verb used in the sentence or the clause, and by consequence on the most usual magical questions we use to ask about the relations between the words. In fact, Those who are able to handle the questions in order to come to the needed answer, have already surmounted half of the mountain, or are qualified to swim half of the path in the sea or the ocean of words, who are endless by not difficult to relate. The rest depends on the interest and the hard work they are ready to do in order to manage the subject of functional syntax, as it is in all the scientific disciplines.

## References

1. André Martinet (1960) Elements of a Functional Syntax, WORD, 16:1, 1-10,
2. Modern English Grammar, Diana Blagajne, etc.
3. Gramatika e gjuhes shqipe, ASHA, Tirane,
4. <https://www.colorado.edu/linguistics/research/functional-syntax>
5. <http://hpsg.stanford.edu/papers/Kuno1987-ch1.pdf>
6. [www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org) › ... › Academic › Languages and linguistics › Grammar and syntax
7. [darkwing.uoregon.edu/~delancey/sb/functional\\_syntax.doc](http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~delancey/sb/functional_syntax.doc)