
**MINOR AND MAJOR SYNTAX. MAIN CATEGORIES OF
SYNTAX: PHRASE AND SENTENCE**

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Annotation: *This article explores the fundamental concepts of minor and major syntax in English, examining their structural, semantic, and functional properties. It provides a detailed analysis of the main categories of syntax: the phrase and the sentence, highlighting their defining characteristics, internal structure, and communicative roles. The study discusses the hierarchical nature of syntactic units, illustrating how minor syntax forms, such as word groups and simple constructions, combine to form major syntactic structures. Examples are provided to demonstrate how phrases and sentences function in discourse, emphasizing their importance in conveying meaning, expressing grammatical relations, and organizing coherent communication.*

Key words: *syntax, minor syntax, major syntax, phrase, sentence, syntactic structure, grammatical relations, English grammar.*

Syntax, as a branch of linguistics, studies the principles governing the combination of words into larger units of meaning. It is concerned not only with grammatical correctness but also with how language structures convey semantic and communicative relations. Within English grammar, syntax can be broadly divided into minor syntax and major syntax. Minor syntax focuses on smaller syntactic units, such as words, collocations, and fixed expressions, which serve as the building blocks of language. Major syntax, in contrast, studies larger units, including phrases and sentences, which convey complete ideas or functions in discourse.

Understanding both minor and major syntax is crucial for analyzing how English expresses meaning, organizes information, and structures communication. This article explores these two levels in detail, providing explanations, examples, and commentary on their functions in discourse.

Minor syntax forms the foundation of English grammar, dealing with the smallest meaningful units that combine to create larger syntactic structures. These include words, word combinations, and fixed expressions. Word combinations, such as heavy rain, quickly running, or make a decision, serve as semantic units that convey specific meanings but do not express a complete thought independently. Fixed expressions, including phrases like by the way, once upon a time, or as a matter of fact, are stable multi-word units whose meaning often cannot be inferred from the individual words.

The role of minor syntax is therefore crucial: it provides the semantic and grammatical material necessary for constructing phrases and sentences. For example, in the noun phrase a bright sunny day, the adjectives bright and sunny modify the noun day, while in the participial phrase quickly running, the adverb quickly modifies the participle running. Minor syntax not only conveys meaning at the micro-level but also allows speakers to express precision, style, and subtlety in communication.

Major syntax examines larger syntactic units, primarily phrases and sentences, which are capable of conveying complete ideas. A phrase is a group of words functioning as a single unit within a sentence, fulfilling grammatical roles such as subject, object, complement, or modifier. Phrases are hierarchical, consisting of a head word and optional modifiers that provide additional detail. Noun phrases, for example, include the bright sun, a group of students, and my best friend, where the noun serves as the head and the adjectives or determiners provide specification.

Verb phrases, such as is running quickly or has been studying diligently, express actions or states, while adjective phrases, like extremely happy or full of hope, and adverb phrases, such as very carefully or in a surprising way, function as modifiers to provide further description. Prepositional phrases, for instance, under the old bridge or with great enthusiasm, typically act as modifiers of nouns, verbs, or entire sentences. The study of phrases is essential because they form the structural components of sentences, allowing the expression of complex relationships within a coherent grammatical framework.

Sentences represent the largest syntactic units, capable of conveying complete thoughts and structuring discourse. They can consist of a single clause or multiple clauses linked through coordination or subordination. Simple sentences, such as She reads books every evening, contain a single independent clause and express a complete idea. Compound sentences link two or more independent clauses, as in She reads books every evening, and he writes his diary, demonstrating coordination of equal elements.

Complex sentences combine a main clause with one or more subordinate clauses to indicate hierarchical relationships, for example: She reads books every evening because she enjoys learning. Sentences are also classified functionally: declarative sentences state facts (The weather is beautiful today), interrogative sentences pose questions (Is the weather beautiful today?), imperative sentences issue commands (Close the window, please), and exclamatory sentences convey strong emotion (What a beautiful day it is!). Understanding sentence structure allows speakers and writers to construct complete, coherent messages, linking ideas logically and effectively.

The relationship between minor and major syntax is hierarchical and integrative. Minor syntactic units, including words, collocations, and fixed expressions, combine to form phrases, which are then used as building blocks of sentences. For instance, the participial phrase quickly running can be embedded into the sentence The boy, quickly running down the street, caught the bus, where it modifies the subject and provides

descriptive detail. This illustrates how minor syntactic units contribute to meaning and structure at the level of major syntax. Mastery of this relationship is crucial for both language comprehension and production, enabling learners to construct grammatically correct, semantically rich, and stylistically effective sentences.

Understanding minor and major syntax has practical applications in language learning, teaching, and linguistic analysis. Recognizing the function of word groups and fixed expressions improves vocabulary use, reading comprehension, and writing skills. Knowledge of phrases and sentence structures allows teachers to explain grammatical rules clearly and to guide students in constructing coherent and stylistically appropriate texts. Linguists benefit from the study of minor and major syntax in analyzing patterns, sentence complexity, and stylistic choices in written and spoken discourse. By examining how smaller units integrate into larger structures, learners and researchers gain insights into the organization, clarity, and expressive potential of English.

In conclusion, the study of minor and major syntax highlights the hierarchical and functional organization of English grammar. Minor syntax, which focuses on words, collocations, and fixed expressions, provides the essential building blocks for constructing larger units. Major syntax, encompassing phrases and sentences, enables the expression of complete thoughts, the organization of discourse, and the communication of complex ideas.

The interaction between minor and major syntax ensures that language is both coherent and expressive, allowing speakers and writers to convey meaning accurately and effectively. Understanding these levels is fundamental for learners, teachers, and linguists seeking to analyze, teach, or use English proficiently.

Through the examination of phrases and sentences, this study demonstrates how English syntax organizes smaller units into meaningful structures, ensuring clarity, cohesion, and precision in communication.

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