Linguistic Principles of English
Grammar
Constituent Structure and Noun Phrases
Reading: Berk, Chapter 2
Dr. Thomas Payne
Hanyang-Oregon TESOL, 13th Cycle 2007

Big Idea

Linear Order
Constituency (clumping)
Hierarchical Structure

Hierarchical Structure
Police kill mentally deranged man with knife!

The Noun Phrase
• Box Diagrams
  – How many Noun Phrases (NPs) are in the following sentence?

In the ditch, by the dirt back road, late in March, a few black snowdrifts lie in the grass like old men asleep in their coats.

The Noun Phrase
• What is the head of a Noun Phrase?
The Noun Phrase

- What is the head of each of the following Noun Phrases?
  - The big black angry Doberman that always barks at me as I try vainly to sneak past the junkyard on my way home from my piano lesson . . .
  - A bag of bones . . .
  - The Prince of Wales' coffee maker . . .
  - A lot of people . . .

Ambiguity

- Lexical ambiguity arises when one lexical item (a word) has more than one possible meaning. Only context can disambiguate:
  - "Let's find another bank."
  - "Lucretia is lying in the parking lot."

- Structural ambiguity occurs when one string of words can have more than one syntactic structure:
  - "Visiting relatives can be boring."
  - "Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg address while traveling to Gettysburg on the back of an envelope."

- Sometimes a string can be multiply ambiguous for both lexical and structural reasons:
  - "Michelle wrote an article on Jason's forehead."
  - "Fruit flies like a papaya."
  - "I saw her duck."

Practice

- The following strings are ambiguous. Indicate whether the ambiguity is lexical, structural or both:
  - Sign in a drugstore: "We dispense with accuracy."
  - British Left Waffles on Falkland Islands.
  - Local high school dropouts cut in half.
  - Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant.
  - Kids Make Nutritious Snacks.