

Understanding English Grammar: A Linguistic Introduction

Additional Exercises for Chapter 10: Modification

1. To float or not to float

As mentioned in Chapter Ten, the PDQs (pre-determiner quantifiers) *both* and *all* may "float" from their pre-determiner position in a noun phrase to the Inflection position in the verb phrase. This happens pretty much only when the quantified noun phrase is the subject of the sentence. Think about the difference in meaning, if any, between constructions with floated and non-floated PDQs.

The following sentence pairs illustrate floated and non-floated versions of the same construction. For each pair, indicate which, if either, seems more "natural" to you, and try to explain why. If both seem equally natural, try to describe the difference in meaning that they represent. This is a tough assignment.

- a. All the engineering analysis activities are grouped together.
The engineering analysis activities are all grouped together.
- b. All large organizations are departmentalized.
Large organizations are all departmentalized.
- c. All the team members contribute to the uniqueness of the experience.
The team members all contribute to the uniqueness of the experience.
- d. All these terms describe techniques for interacting directly with the computer.
These terms all describe techniques for interacting directly with the computer.
- e. Both nodal position and enclosing box excursion domains are divided into sub-files.
Nodal position and enclosing box excursion domains are both divided into sub-files.
- f. Both departments were dependent on images.
Departments were both dependent on images.
- g. Both these factors need to be considered before the measures of performance can be derived.
These factors both need to be considered before the measures of performance can be derived.

2. What is "each"?

A. Think of examples employing the word *each* in as many distinct contexts as you can. You may also want to do a search for this word on any of the online corpora (BNC or COCA), or the internet. List its possible contexts, and try to decide whether its syntactic category is best analyzed as:

- a. PDQ
- b. "floatable" PDQ (like *both* and *all*)
- c. pronoun
- d. quantifier
- e. determiner
- f. adverb
- g. all of the above
- h. none of the above

B. What is the syntactic function of *each* in the following example? Give your evidence:

We gave the workers each a new block of marble.

3. Modifying phrases or strings of modifiers?

The following noun phrases are potentially ambiguous as to whether they contain modifying phrases (adjective phrases or noun phrases functioning as modifiers), or simply strings of modifiers modifying the head. For each example, show all possible syntactic structures, with either phrase structure trees, labeled brackets or box diagrams, and describe the difference in meaning between the two structures. The first example is done for you, using labeled brackets.

a. majestic purple mountains

1. [_{np} [_{ap} majestic purple]_{ap} mountains]_{np}
Mountains that are "majestic purple" in color

2. [_{np}' majestic [_{np} purple mountains]_{np}]_{np}'
Purple mountains that are also majestic

b. old cowboy movie

c. pretty sweet young lady

d. foolish lie detector

e. creative word portrait

f. traumatized police counselor

g. long tall Sally

h. disabled services director

i. end of the world movie

j. beautiful bunch of flowers

k. good insect repellent

l. solid cement brick building

m. functioning car windshield wipers

4. Ordering of modifiers in noun phrases

Using the principle that modifiers that refer to more inherent properties come closer to their heads than modifiers that express less inherent properties, construct noun phrases using the following heads and modifiers. The head comes before the colon, and the modifiers after. The first example is done for you:

a. guys: Italian, two, crazy two crazy Italian guys

b. building: stone, tall, red, lovely

c. coffee: strong, espresso, fresh

d. hat: felt, new, black

e. assignment: dangerous, intelligence, secret,

f. parties: political, main, three

g. couples: married, American, white

h. stories: topical, dozen, so-called, other, news

i. analysis: mechanical, dynamic, thermal

j. drill: high-speed, imperial, sized

k. chili: green, fresh, small

l. party: Croation, liberal, social

5. Semantic roles of clause level modifiers

The following examples all contain clause level modifiers (or "disjuncts"). Underline each clause level modifier, and indicate its semantic role (SPEAKER ATTITUDE, MANNER OF SPEAKING, EPISTEMIC or CONJUNCTIVE):

- a. Basically, Cajun is country cooking, and Creole is city cooking.
- b. Curiously, he doesn't seem to want to go fishing this weekend.
- c. Plainly, there was no such feature in the building prior to its conversion.
- d. Otherwise I would love to go with you.
- e. Specifically, the Commissioner has three functions: . . .
- f. More particularly, Galileo used standard perspective procedures.
- g. Confidentially, I wouldn't put my money in that company.
- h. In her opinion, it wasn't in the least like home.
- i. In my opinion, she is relishing the martyr role.
- j. On those facts C would, in my opinion, be committing a contempt of court.
- k. It would be extra-ordinary and, in our opinion, unthinkable.
- l. Next we'll see what happens when we add chlorine.
- m. Surely he's not going to do that again?
- n. Certainly she has to see a doctor.
- o. I guess I'll just leave the dishes for tomorrow.
- p. You know, it's amazing that so many people believe those wacko commentators.

6. Restrictive vs. non-restrictive modification

Underline all the modifiers in the following sentences, and indicate:

A. The grammatical category of each modifier.

B. What phrasal category it functions within.

C. If it is a NP modifier, whether it is most likely to be restrictive or non-restrictive given the context. Explain your reasoning.

The first example is done for you:

a. Hopefully, that delicious cake you baked is in the bedroom at the top of the stairs.

	A	B	C	Explanation for C?
Hopefully =	Adv	Clause		
delicious =	Adj	NP	non-restrictive	There is probably only one cake
you baked =	Clause	NP	non-restrictive	There is probably only one cake
at the top . . .	PP	NP	restrictive	There is probably more than one bedroom
of the stairs	PP	NP	restrictive	"The top" alone would be ambiguous. The PP is needed to identify which "top" is meant.

b. I need a hat to protect my bald head.

c. Please come quickly and pick up this ridiculous copy machine.

d. I'd like to introduce you to my first wife.

e. I want to thank you very much for all the good things you have done for disabled children.

f. How long does this madness need to continue?

g. I wish I'd bought that red Cadillac when I had the chance.

i. Now this wreck has a blown head gasket, and I can't sell it for a fraction of what I bought it for.

j. That's a frightening work of art.

7. "Squinting" modifiers

Sometimes a modifier can't tell which way to look -- it may modify the constituent that precedes it, or the one that follows it. For each of the following examples:

- A. Underline the squinting modifier.
- B. Identify the syntactic category of the modifier (adjective, adverb, adverbial clause, prepositional phrase, etc.)
- C. Rewrite the sentence in two ways so that it is no longer ambiguous.

The first example is done for you:

- a. Instructors who cancel classes rarely are reprimanded. B. Adverb, C. Instructors who rarely cancel classes are reprimanded, or Instructors who cancel classes are rarely reprimanded.
- b. We agreed at our first meeting to implement the new procedures.
- c. Writing your essay clearly will improve your grade.
- d. The president promised after his reelection to decrease income taxes.
- e. I told Aileron when the movie was over I would drive her home.
- f. The store that had that big sale recently went bankrupt.
- g. The kids were outside with the dog yelling and laughing.
- h. The man concerned people imitate.