Clause patterns

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Framing

John kicked the ball.

Agent Action Patient

NP_{subj} Verb NP_{obj}

John is eating a hamburger.

Agent Action Patient

NP_{subj} Verb NP_{obj}

John is eating.

Agent Action

NP_{subj} Verb
A clause pattern (also called ‘construction’) is a structural ‘frame’ into which a situation we want to describe is moulded.

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<tr>
<th>Clause pattern</th>
<th>Syntactic structure</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td>Copular clause</td>
<td>sbj    vrβ    sbj-comp</td>
<td>We are a rich family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intransitive clause</td>
<td>sbj    vrβ</td>
<td>None of us works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitive clause</td>
<td>sbj    vrβ    do</td>
<td>We have two cars.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ditransitive clause</td>
<td>sbj    vrβ    io (np) do (np)</td>
<td>We bought our son a Ferrari.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sbj    vrβ    do (np) io (pp)</td>
<td>We make donations to the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oblique clause</td>
<td>sbj    vrβ    do obl-o (pp)</td>
<td>We keep the cars in the garage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sbj    vrβ    obl-o (pp)</td>
<td>We sent our daughter to Harvard.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We live in the suburbs of L.A.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We don’t depend on financial aid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex-trans. clause</td>
<td>sbj    vrβ    do do-comp</td>
<td>Our friends consider us lazy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Copular clause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NP</th>
<th>be</th>
<th>NP/ADJ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(1) John is a teacher.
(2) Jane became my friend.
(3) That’s John’s book.
(4) Jack is lazy.
(5) It’s cold.
Intransitive clause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NP</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
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</table>

(1) John is sleeping.
(2) He is running in the park.
(3) It snowed heavily.
Transitive clause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>V</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>NP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Bill opened the door.
(2) He kissed her.
(3) I have a red car.
(4) She doesn’t have any money.
Ditransitive clause

NP  V  NP  NP

(1) Ann send him a letter.
(2) He gave her the car.
(3) She baked him a cake.

NP  V  NP  PP

(4) Ann gave the book to her friend.
(5) He donated some money to the church.
(6) She received a letter from her mother.
Oblique clause

NP V (NP) PP

(1) I thought about it.
(2) John put his hat on the table.
(3) I don’t rely on his support.
Complex transitive clause

NP  V  NP  NP

(1) She called him Jack.
(2) I consider this a mistake.

NP  V  NP  AP

(1) John pushed the door open.
(2) I consider him lazy.
Transitivity and valency

There are two views of valency (transitivity):

- The verb-based view
- The clause-based view

Each verb takes a certain number of arguments:

1. She is sleeping. Intransitive
2. She knows John. Transitive
3. She gave him the key. Ditransitive

Each clause pattern involves a certain number of arguments:

1. NP V. Intransitive
2. NP V NP. Transitive
3. NP V NP NP. Ditransitive
Transitivity and valency

Some verbs occur in multiple sentence frames:

(1) She cooks every day.
(2) She is cooking a meal.
(3) She cooked him a meal.

The verb-based view:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{cook}_1 & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{intransitive} \\
\text{cook}_2 & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{transitive} \\
\text{cook}_3 & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{ditransitive}
\end{align*}
\]

Coercion:

(1) She sneezed.
(2) She sneezed the napkin off the table.

The clause-based view:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{cook} & \quad \text{intransitive frame} \\
& \quad \text{transitive frame} \\
& \quad \text{ditransitive frame}
\end{align*}
\]