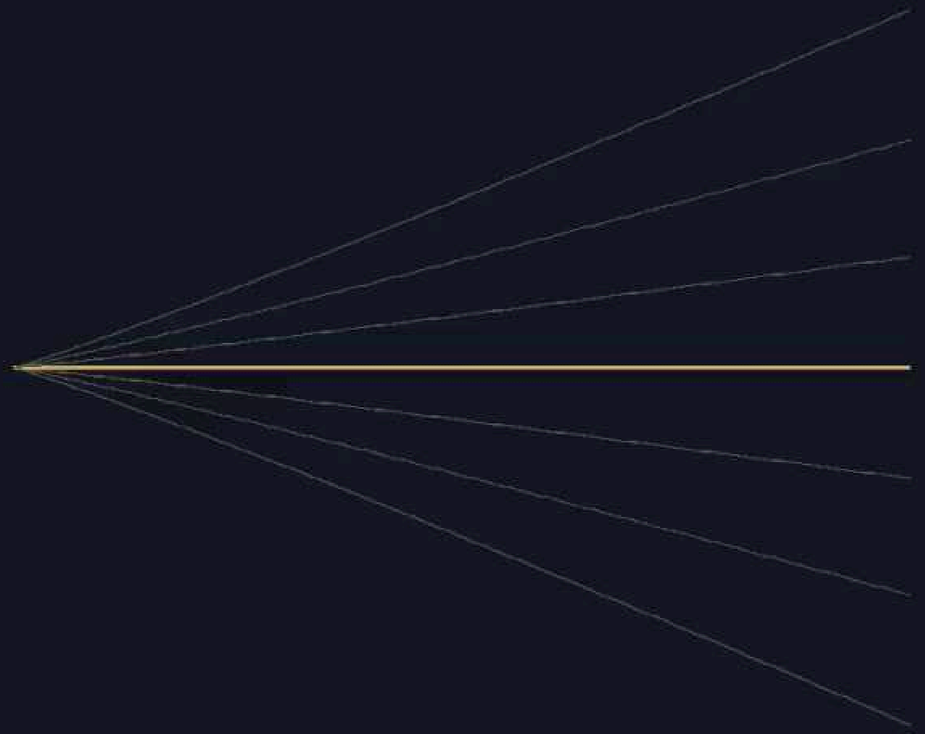
ANDERSON ACADEMY

LING 101 B · Introduction to Linguistics (Brief course)

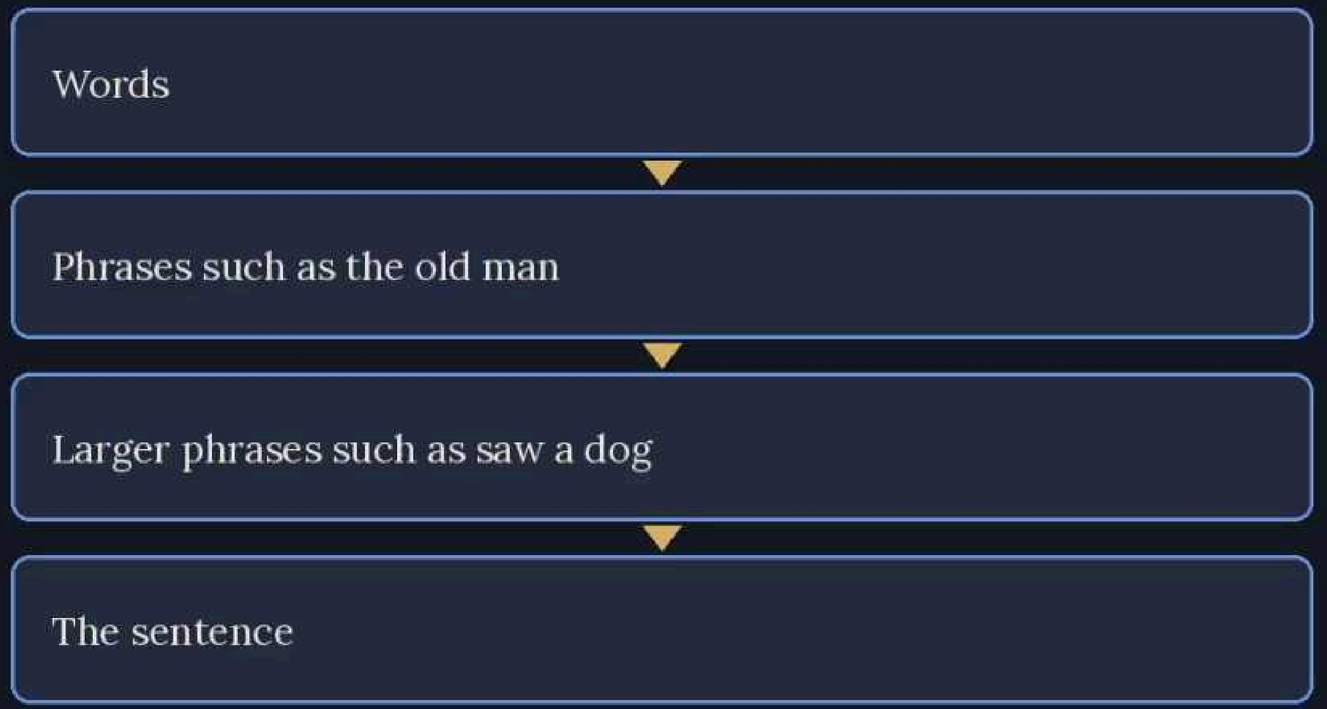
Lecture 4 · about 6 min

Sentences and Meaning



A library of university-level courses

Building a sentence



¶ 4.1

In the sentence the old man saw a dog, the old man is a unit, a noun phrase,

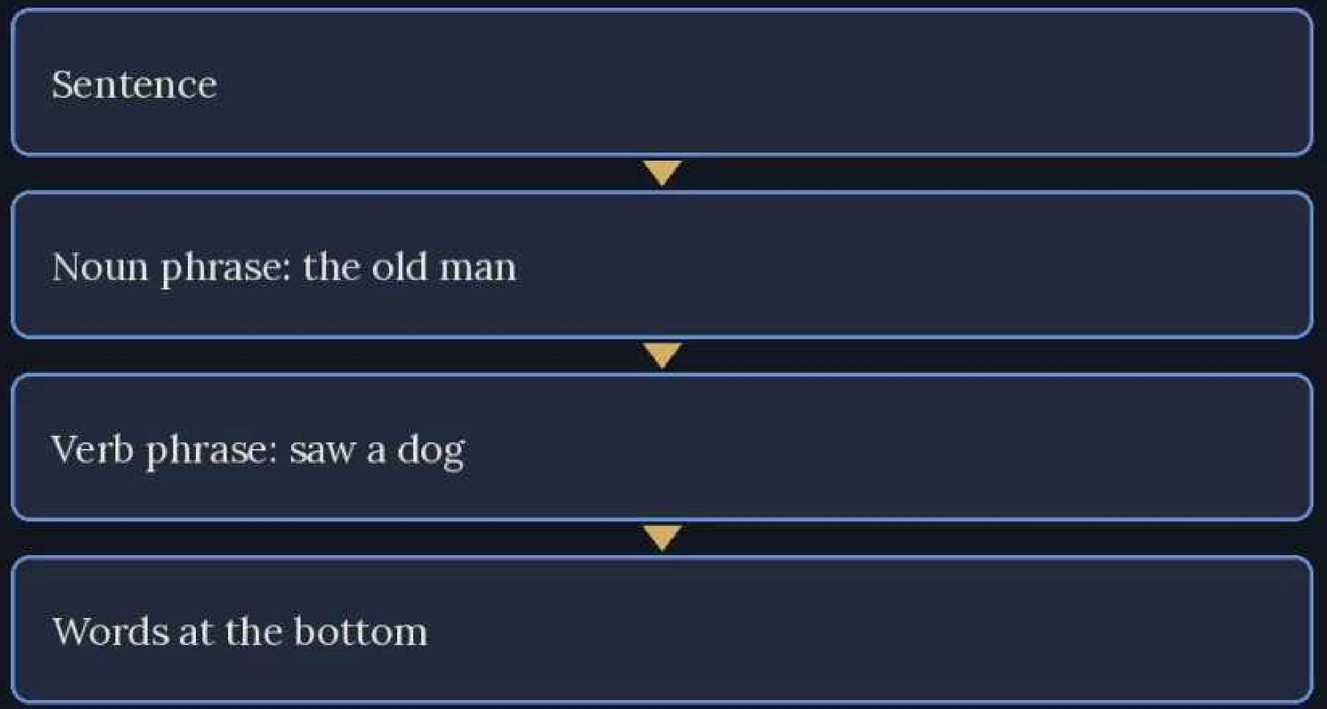
Tests for constituents

- Substitution: he, did so
- Movement to the front
- Standing alone as an answer
- Coordination with and

¶ 4.2

Another test is movement: you can say a dog, the old man saw, moving a constituent to the front.

A simple tree



¶ 4.3

the verb phrase into a verb and another noun phrase.

Basic word orders

- SOV: Japanese, Hindi, Turkish
- SVO: English, Mandarin, Swahili
- VSO: Welsh, Classical Arabic
- Object-first orders are rare

¶ 4.4

Arabic in its classical form and Welsh are verb-subject-object.

Recursion

- Sentences inside sentences
- Phrases inside phrases
- This is the house that Jack built
- No longest sentence

¶ 4.5

A noun phrase can contain a noun phrase: the house of the friend of my sister.

The Pirahã debate

Everett

- Everett
- Pirahã lacks recursion
- Universals challenged

Critics

- Critics
- The analysis is mistaken
- Recursion is present

¶ 4.6

It shows how hard it is to establish universals and how much depends on fieldwork with little-studied languages.

Structural ambiguity

First

- Reading one
- I used the telescope
- Attached to the verb

Second

- Reading two
- The man had the telescope
- Attached to the noun

¶ 4.7

The words are the same, but the phrase with the telescope attaches to different parts of the tree.

Syntax without sense

Well formed

- Colourless green ideas sleep furiously
- Grammatical
- But meaningless

Ill formed

- Furiously sleep ideas green colourless
- Ungrammatical
- And meaningless

¶ 4.8

By contrast, furiously sleep ideas green colourless is both ungrammatical and meaningless.

Word meaning relations

- Synonyms: big and large
- Antonyms: hot and cold
- Hyponyms: rose and flower
- Polysemy: mouth of a river

¶ 4.9

Hyponyms are kinds of something: a rose is a hyponym of flower.

Sense and reference

Reference

- Reference
- What is pointed to
- Venus

Sense

- Sense
- How it is presented
- Morning star or evening star

¶ 4.10

The morning star and the evening star refer to the same object, the planet Venus, but have different senses.

Pragmatics

- Meaning in context
- Can you pass the salt?
- A request, not a question about ability
- Inference about intentions

¶ 4.11

They are making a request.

Grice's maxims

- Quantity: as much as needed
- Quality: truthfully
- Relation: be relevant
- Manner: be clear

¶ 4.12

Manner: be clear and orderly.

An implicature

Question: is he a good student?

Answer: he has nice handwriting

The answer seems unhelpful

Inference: he is not a good student

¶ 4.13

If you ask whether there is petrol nearby and are told there is a garage round the corner,

Speech acts

- I promise: a commitment
- I apologise: an expression
- I pronounce you married: a declaration
- Indirect requests

¶ 4.14

John Searle classified such speech acts into assertions, requests, promises, expressions of feeling, and declarations.

Summary of lecture four

- Constituents and trees
- Word order and recursion
- Semantics
- Pragmatics and speech acts

¶ 4.15

Semantics studies word relations and sense and reference, while pragmatics explains how context, Grice's maxims, implicature,