

How to Draw Tree Diagrams via Nine Sentence Patterns

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ABSTRACT

Current books on English syntax present tree drawing in detail; as a result, students feel confused in order to study it. Based on traditional grammar and modern functional grammar, we have systematized all sentences into nine patterns for students to master English syntax. Those who can acquire how to draw tree diagrams for these patterns can tree-diagrammatize any English sentence. To some extent, our supervised students can feel confident to study English syntax, in general, as well as tree drawing, in particular.

Keywords: *Syntax, sentence pattern, sentence element, tree drawing*

I. INTRODUCTION

Drawing tree diagrams is one of the important items in learning English syntax. This section is required not only in the end-of-semester examination but also in the entrance exam for graduate school at universities. Students find this part very difficult to learn. Current syntax books present the tree diagramming in a scattered manner, with a lot of details that are difficult to remember and seem to lack a scientific system.

Following students' learning for over ten years, we have systematized English sentences into 9 easy-to-remember sentence patterns based on verb types and sentence components in communication.

After students had mastered the 9 sentence patterns, they began to analyze the sentence components in the 9 patterns; replacing the components fluently, they began to be exposed to the default tree diagram drawing for the sentence patterns. Finally, students can draw a tree diagram for any sentence in English with confidence.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Oxford Dictionary 8th edition classifies a number of sentence patterns, including specific sentence elements, and defaults to them on the first pages of the book. Often people use the dictionary, only interested in looking up the meaning, pronunciation and usage of words, but not reading these sentence patterns. However, the sentence patterns are too spread and not condensed to forms easy to remember patterns.

Grammar books by authors A.J. Thompson and A.V. Martinet, Michael Swan (2002) [6], etc., clearly present category words and simple, compound and complex sentences with main and subordinate clauses. However, the grammar books do not systematize sentence patterns according to specific types of verbs and sentence components.

According to syntacticians, such as To Minh Thanh (2019) [7,8], Noel Burton-Roberts [4] (2013), etc., they always spend dozens of pages presenting sentence tree diagrams in detail. That is, they value this heading in the syntax.

Michael Halliday (2004) [2] believes that sentence components will have different roles in different communication situations to serve communication needs. Mastering the communicative meaning of sentence components will understand their role and then be able to analyze, recognize sentence patterns and draw tree diagrams correctly.

Acquiring a second language is a major research work on foreign language teaching published by Stephen Krashen at the end of the last century. According to Stephen Krashen, most foreign language classes today, as in the past, with little concern for the findings of modern research in applied linguistics and experimental field theories of second language acquisition. Teachers have done damage to students when they use outdated or untested ideas as the basis of their pedagogy. To date, there has been no empirical research on teaching sentence patterns and drawing tree diagrams associated with second language acquisition theory as well as a teaching method consistent with this theory.

So far, there are many books written on English syntax, but none have relied on 9 systematized sentence patterns to draw tree diagrams in a concise and easy-to-understand manner.

III. METHOD

A qualitative method is used to identify the syntactic structures of the sentence patterns. Linguistic theories are applied to analyzing and composing the elements with semantic forms, syntactic clauses and sentences.

We conduct research by a quantitative method: based on the finite deep structures of sentence patterns to collect many surface structures of actual sentence patterns. During the data collection process, we also tested the methods of teaching these sentence patterns in the Writing skills development class 1 of second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Saigon University. During the actual teaching process, we have the opportunity to adjust the sentence patterns in a more concise way.

Based on the second language acquisition theory, we have conducted the teaching procedures of 3 steps: Presentation-Practice-Production (Scrivener, J., 1994) [5]. In sequence, we give the sentence patterns for students to identify (know); they are asked to analyze to understand the structures; they discuss to come up with the formulas of the patterns and finally give their own examples of the sentence patterns (application). During the teaching process, the teacher only gives each sample sentence pattern, then guides, monitors and motivates the students to take the steps. Students work in groups and have a competition between groups to find the sentence pattern for each sentence and apply this knowledge to create other sentences. This is a creative application. Our focus is on the dynamic practice of teaching and learning this subject.

IV. ENGLISH SENTENCE PATTERNS

A. System of sentence patterns

In English syntax, verbs play the most important role. Based on the classification of verbs, we can determine the sentence elements and sentence patterns. According to their different communicative meanings, there are many verbs that can be classified into different types of verbs based on the actual context. There are three main types of verbs: 1/ linking/intensive verbs, 2/ intransitive verbs and 3/ transitive verbs. Transitive verbs are divided into monotransitive, ditransitive and complex transitive. Prepositions can accompany simple transitive verbs, and prepositions can follow compound transitive verbs.

1/ Sentence patterns with linking verbs:

The first three patterns consist of BE.

Pattern 1: N(S) Be (V) Adj (C)

Ex: Food is good.

Sometimes a prepositional phrase can replace an adjective.

Ex: The teacher was in a bad mood.

Pattern 2: N(S) Be(V) Adv (C)

Ex: The girl is here.

The game will be at three o'clock.

Pattern 3: N1(S) Be(V) N1(C)

Ex: My brother is a doctor.

The two next patterns contain other linking verbs than BE.

Notes: N1, the subject and N1, the complement, are the same thing (person).

Pattern 4: N(S) V_i ADJ(C)

Ex: The acrobat seems young.

The screw worked loose.

The defendant stood firm.

Pattern 5: N1(S) V_i N1(C)

Ex: He remains a doctor.

She becomes a lecturer.

2/ Sentence patterns with intransitive verbs

Pattern 6: N(S) V_i [intransitive]

Ex: The sportsmen cried.

The sportsmen were crying in the stadium.

3/ Sentence patterns with transitive verbs

Pattern 7: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) [monotransitive]

Ex: The boy caught a ball.

He loved a doctor.

Notes: N1 and N2 are two different things (people).

Pattern 8: N1(S) V_t N2 (IO) N3 (DO) [ditransitive]

Ex: He gave her some flowers. (He gave them to her).

He gave some flowers to her.

She was given some flowers.

Some flowers were given to her.

Notes: N1, N2 and N3 are three different things (peoples).

Pattern 9a: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) N2(C) (a)

Ex: The basketball team chose Charlotte captain.

Pattern 9b: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) Pro (C) (b)

Ex: I thought the caller you.

Pattern 9c: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) Adj(C) (c)

Ex: He considered her brilliant.

Pattern 9d: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) Prep Phrase(C) (d)

Ex: We considered her in the way.

Pattern 9e: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) Adv(C) (e)

Ex: We supposed him upstairs.

Pattern 9f: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) Past Part. (C) (f)

Ex: I believe him seated.

Pattern 9g: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) Pre. Part. (C) (g)

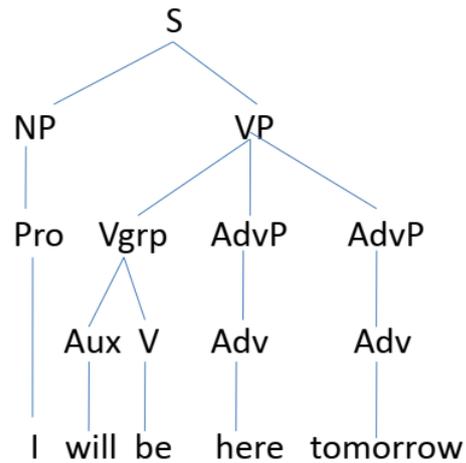
Ex: She saw him crying.

Pattern 9h: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) Inf. Phrase (C) (h)

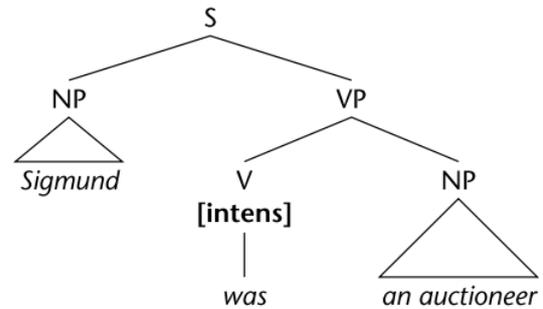
Ex: We want Chico to play for our club.

Pattern 9i: N1(S) V_t N2 (DO) bare infinitive phr (C) (i)

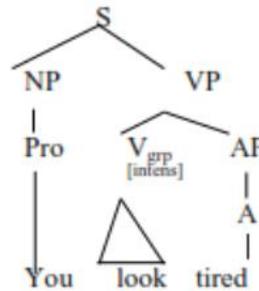
Ex: We heard him sing a song.



Pattern 3:



Pattern 4:

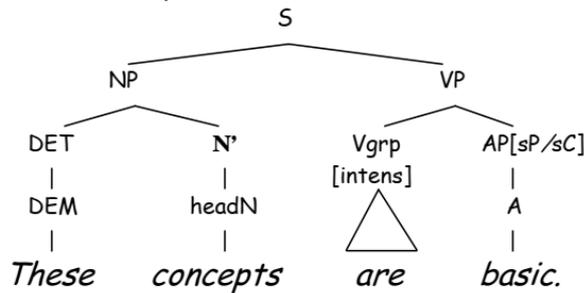


Pattern 5:

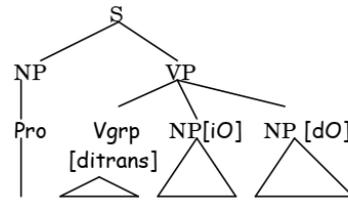
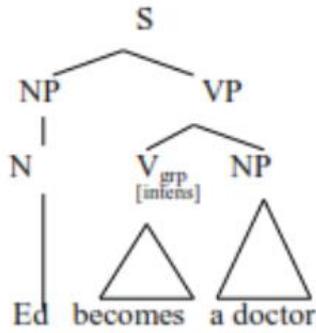
B. Typical tree diagrams of the sentence patterns

1/ Sentence patterns with linking verbs:

Pattern 1:



Pattern 2:

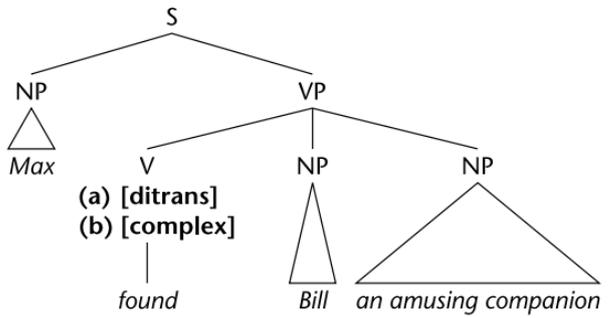
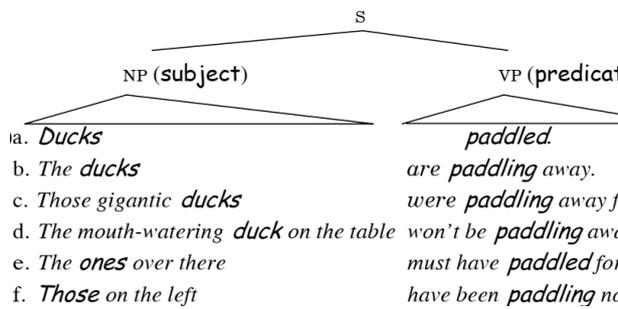


- 1a. They GAVE *Steven* a prize.
- b. I 'LL BUY *you* some toys.
- c. Ed HAS SAVED *me* a place.

Pattern 9a:

2/ Sentence patterns with intransitive verbs:

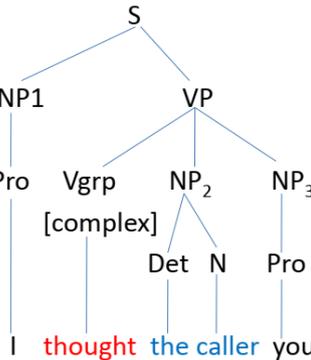
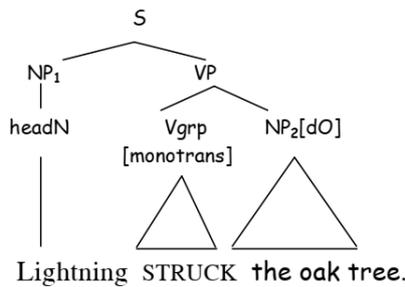
Pattern 6:



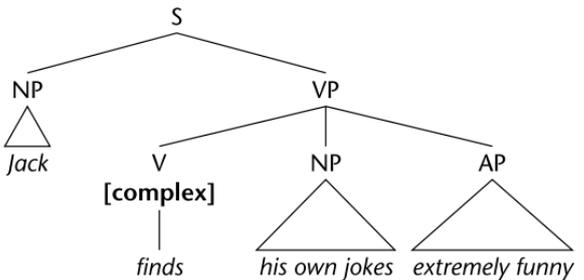
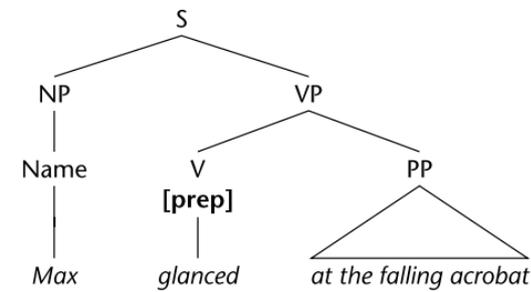
Pattern 9b:

3/ Sentence patterns with intransitive verbs:

Pattern 7:

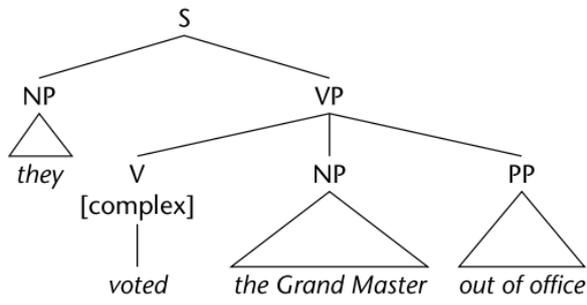


Pattern 9c:

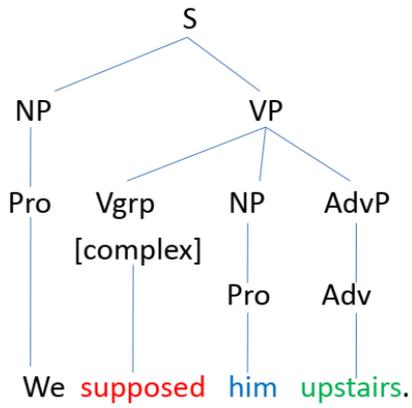


Pattern 9d:

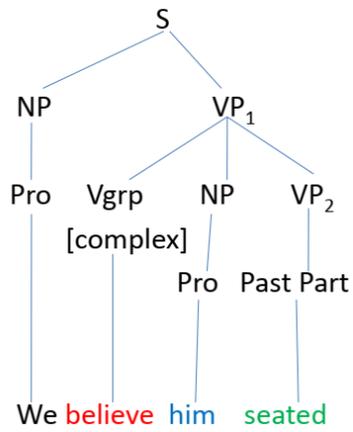
Pattern 8:



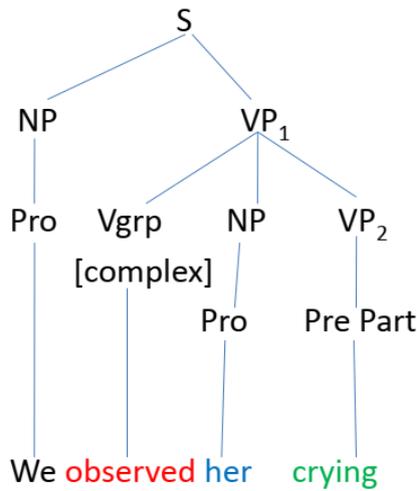
Pattern 9e:



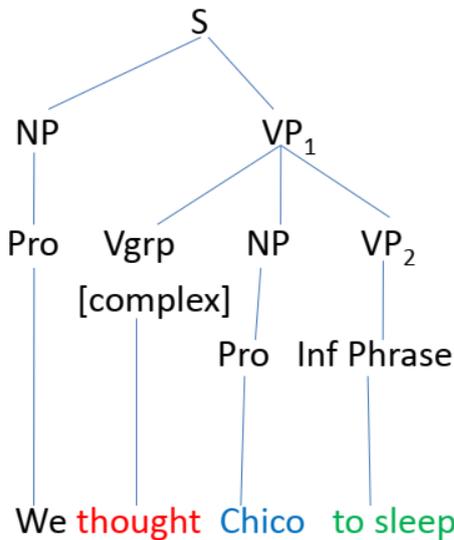
Pattern 9f:



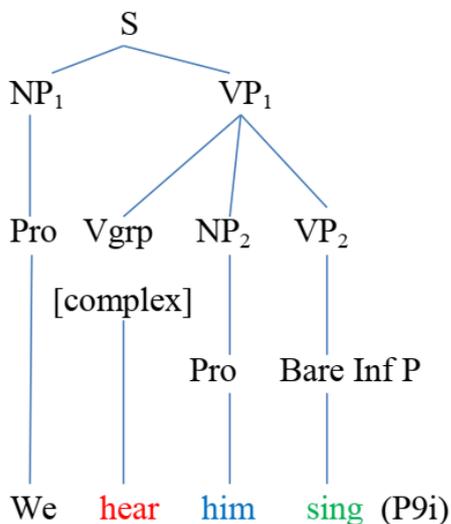
Pattern 9g:



Pattern 9h:



Pattern 9i:



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Above are 9 sentence patterns corresponding to 9 typical tree diagram patterns. However, each of the 9 sentence patterns can be expanded according to the word > phrase > clause model. These 9 sentence patterns are simple sentences. Compound sentences will consist of at least 2 simple sentences, and complex and compound sentences will consist of at least 2 simple sentences. In these cases, simple sentences turn into clauses: coordinate clauses, main clauses, and subordinate clauses. Therefore, students must understand how to expand the composition of sentences and the principle of putting simple sentences together to form the compound, complex and compound sentences.

Syntax diagramming has different ways, according to different authors. However, by mastering the 9 sentence patterns and mastering the above 9 typical sentence diagrams, students will find it easy to move on to other ways of diagramming the syntax.

6. CONCLUSION

Learning any subject and mastering it is not easy, especially learning syntax and drawing tree diagrams. Although many students are afraid to draw a tree diagram to represent English syntax, through the systematization of English sentences into 9 specific and concise patterns, most students feel self-confident when starting to draw any sentence given by an examiner. Through the presentation of this system, students can easily approach and absorb these patterns through the 3 Ps (Presentation - Practice - Production) method. This also inspires students to be interested in doing scientific research on tree diagrams (students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages have carried out scientific research on tree diagrams and won a national prize).

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