6 GRAMMAR: UNITS

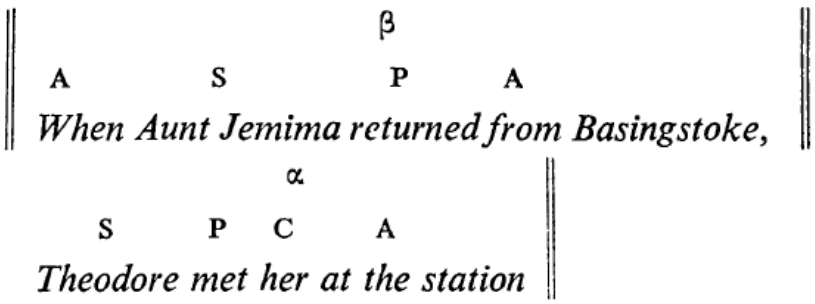
6.1 UNITS

Elements of structure are represented by formal items. These formal items are of different sizes. The different sizes of formal items are called **units**.

The units of English grammar include **the sentence, the clause, the group, the word and the morpheme**. In each unit, the smaller units combine to form the larger units; or the larger units consist of the smaller units. This means that morphemes are combined to form words; words are combined to form groups; groups are combined to form clauses; and clauses are combined to form sentences.

In grammar, each unit can be identified in two ways: by the part it plays in the structure of a larger unit and also by its own structure. This means by the elements of the sentence or by the element itself.

Any clause will be playing the part of an α element or a β element in a sentence. It will have **a** structure which consists of one or more of the elements **S, P, C, A.** For example:



In the following sentences:

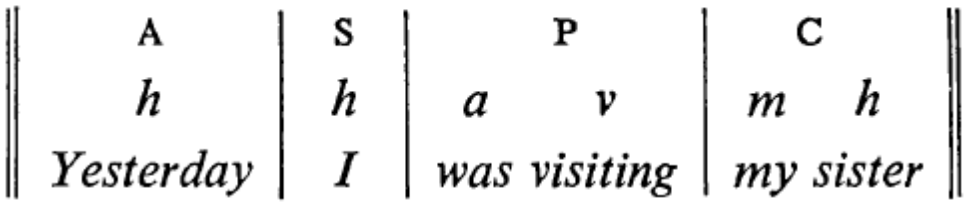
- Whistling merrily, he cycled down the road
- His job finished, he went home
- To win the prize, he must work harder.

each of the underlined sections is acting as a β element in a sentence, just as is each of the underlined sections of the following sentences:

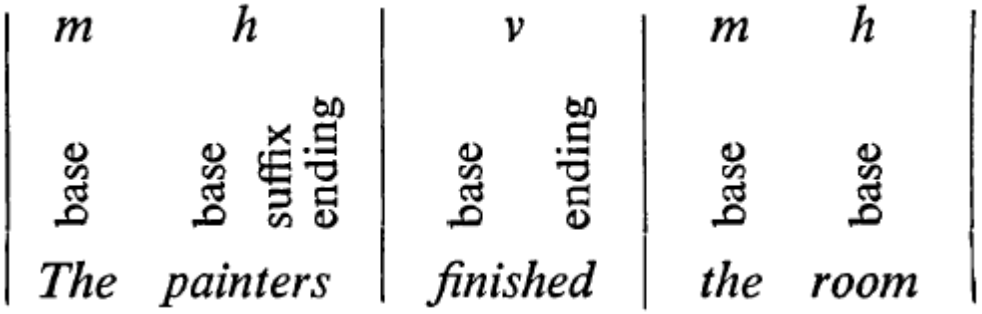
- John, who was whistling merrily, cycled down the road.
- When his job was finished, he went home.
- If he is to win the prize, he must work harder.

Also, **Whistling merrily** has the structure **PA, His job finished** has the structure **SP** and **To win the prize** has the structure **PC.**

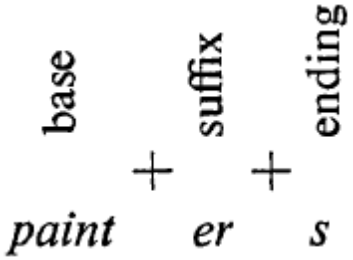
Any group will be playing the part of an S element, a **P** element, a **C** element or an **A** element in the structure of a clause. It will have a structure which consists of one or more of the elements ***m, h, q*** or one or more of the elements ***b, p, c*** or one or more of the elements ***a,*** **v,** ***e***.



Any word will be playing the part of one of the elements *m*, *h*, *q*, *b*, c, a, v, *e* in the structure of a group. It will have a structure which consists of one or more of the elements base, prefix, infix, suffix, ending, addition.



Any morpheme will be playing the part of one of the elements base, prefix, infix, suffix, ending, addition, in the structure of a word.



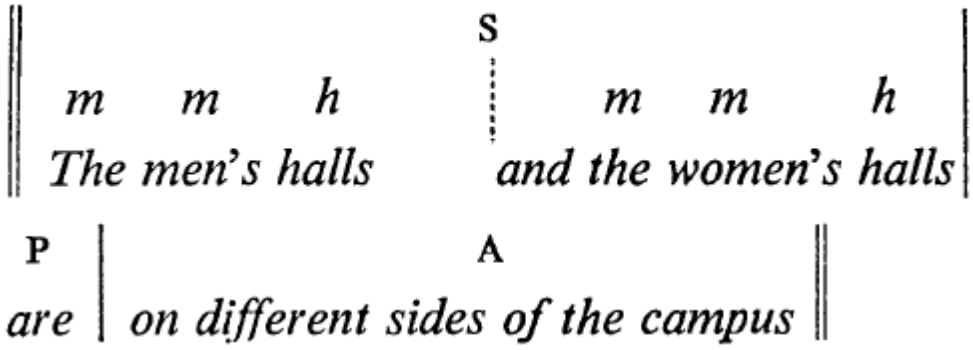
A morpheme can be identified in one way only, by reference to the part it plays in the structure of a word. A morpheme has no grammatical structure of its own as it is the smallest grammatical unit and therefore there are no smaller things from which it can be constructed.

A sentence can be identified in one way only. A sentence does have a structure of its own, but, being the largest grammatical unit, it cannot play a part in the structure of a larger unit. A sentence's own structure will consist of one or more of the elements α, β, as in the following sentence:

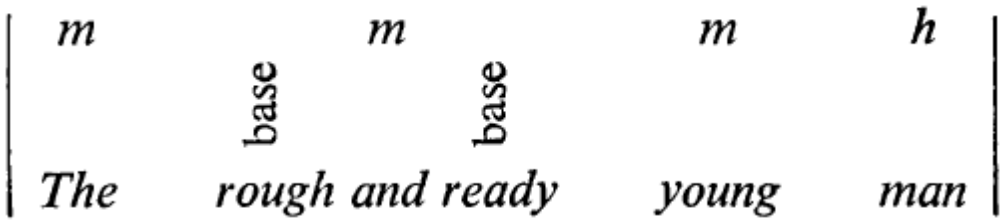
Note: Greek letters symbolize the elements of sentence structure, **capital letters** the elements of clause structure, and **lower-case letters** the elements of group structure, while **the names of the elements** of word structure have been written out in full.)

Units, then, are sizes of formal items. They are characterized by the elements of structure which they represent and/or by the structures which they themselves carry.

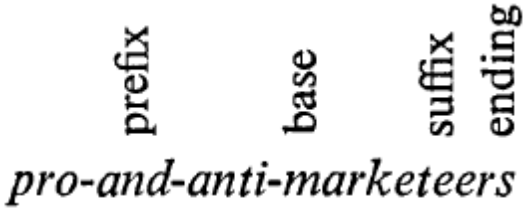
6.2 COMPLEX UNITS



The men's halls and the women's halls could be said to be a group since it is acting as the **s** element of a clause, it has a structure which consists of one or more of the elements **m, *h, q***. Also, ***The men's halls and the women's halls*** could be said to be more than one set of m, h, *q* elements. It is divisible into two parts each of which has the structure characteristic of a group. They represent **a *complex group***.

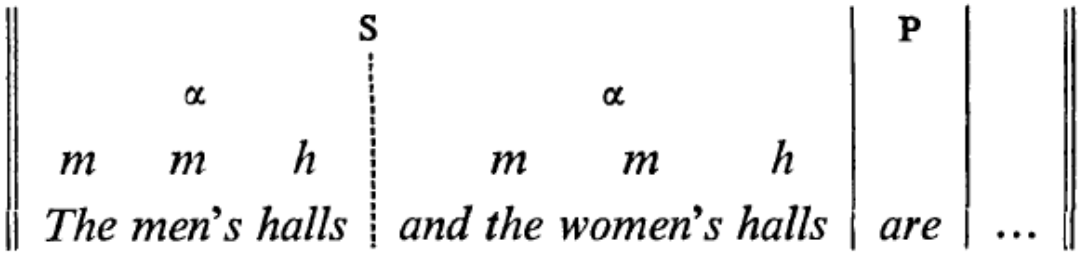


rough and ready could be said to be a word since it is acting as the *m* element of a group, it has a structure which consists of one or more of the elements base, prefix, infix, suffix, ending, addition. However, it is divisible into two parts, *Rough and ready* is **a *complex word***.

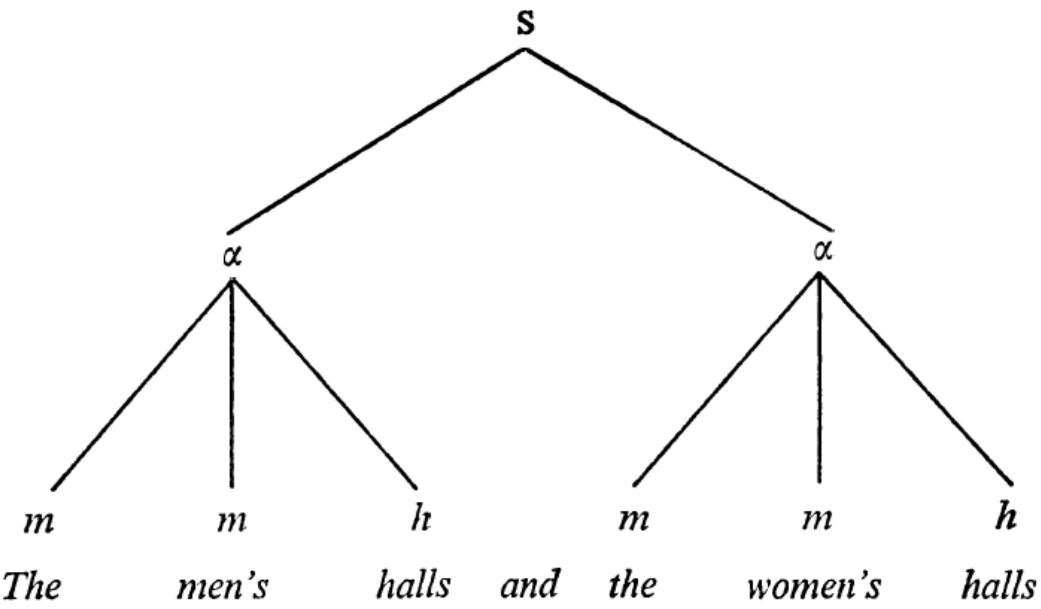


pro-and-anti- could be said to be a morpheme. It is acting as the element prefix in the structure of a word. However, *pro-* and *anti-* could be regarded as separate morphemes. *Pro-and-anti-* is one morpheme and yet divisible into two morphemes. It is **a *complex morpheme***.

A complex clause is really the same thing as a sentence. In fact, sentences are sometimes called *complex clauses* or *clause-complexes.* The parts of a complex unit relate to each other in the same way as clauses relate to each other in the structure of a sentence. The relationship is one of linkage or ***co-ordination***.



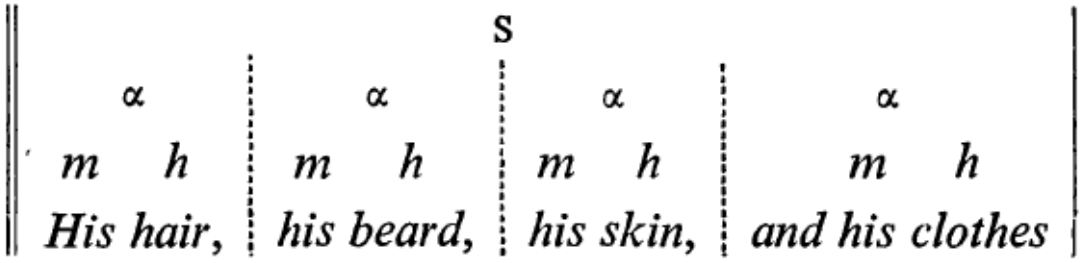
Part of Structural Tree of

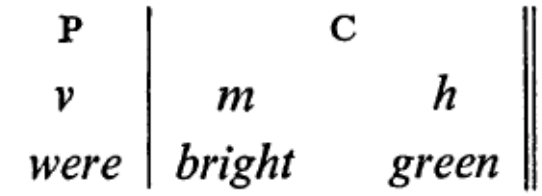


The difference between the basic units on the one hand and the complex units, including the sentence, on the other hand is that the basic units have ***multivariate*** **structures** while the complex units have ***univariate*** **structures**.

Multivariate structures are those in which there are different kinds of relationship between the different elements. In the **S, P, C, A** kind of structure for instance, the relationship between **S** and **P** is different from the relationship between **C** and **P**… etc.

Univariate structures are those in which there is only one kind of relationship between the elements. For example:



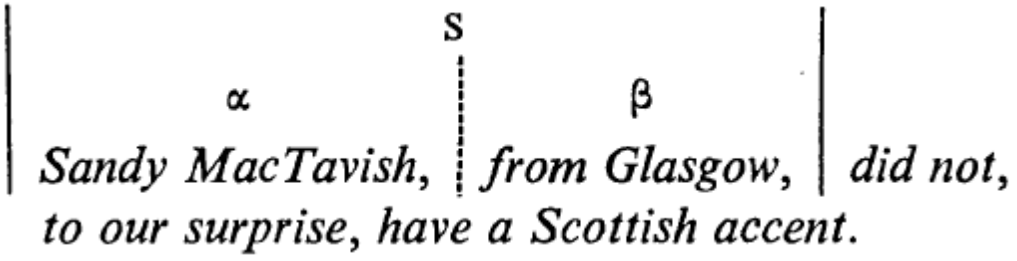


His hair, his beard, his skin and his clothes is a complex group with the structure **a a a a.** The relationship among them is the same**.** The elements are all co-ordinate with each other.

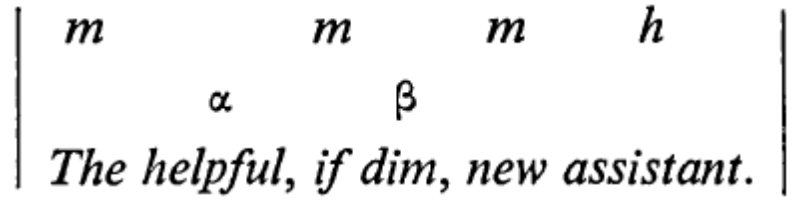
Univariate structures can be subdivided into ***paratactic*** **univariate structures** and ***hypotactic*** **univariate structures**. In paratactic univariate structures, the elements have been of equal status. The one kind of relationship existing between the elements has been **a relationship of coordination**. Hypotactic univariate structures have only one kind of relationship existing between their elements, the relationship is one of ***subordination***. Sentences can have structures involving a relationship of subordination. For instance:

It has a **hypotactic univariate structure** since its first element is subordinate to its second element.

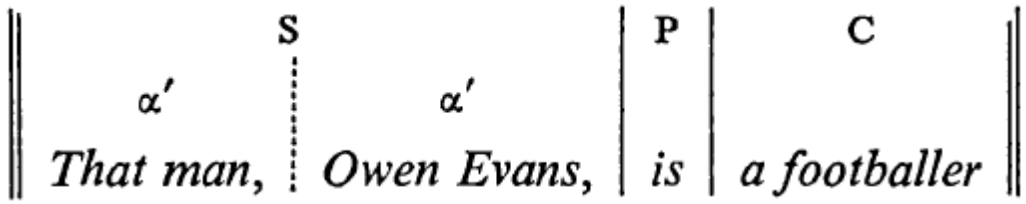
An example of **a complex group with a hypotactic univariate structure** is *Sandy MacTavish,from Glasgow,* in



An example of **a complex word with a hypotactic univariate structure** is *helpful, if dim,* in



The basic units, clause, group, word, have multivariate structures, while the complex units, including the sentence, have univariate structures. There are two kinds of univariate structure: paratactic univariate structure and hypotactic univariate structure. Paratactic univariate structures can be subdivided yet again. As well as the paratactic univariate structures involving a relationship of co-ordination, there are paratactic univariate structures involving a relationship of *apposition.*



Owen Evans is equated with *that man* by being juxtaposed to it. *Owen Evans* is said to be in apposition to *that man.* It is an example of **a complex group with appositional paratactic univariate structure**.

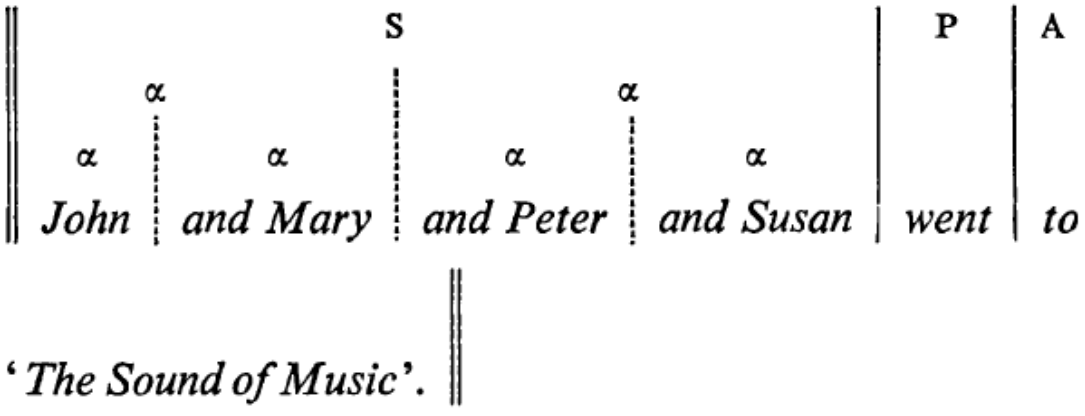
In this example:

- *She looked after the baby while I was visiting my son who was in hospital because he had to have an operation*

The β part of the sentence, ***while I was visiting my son who was in hospital because he had to have an operation***, is subordinate to the α part of the sentence, ***She looked after the baby***. Within the β part of the sentence there is another example of an αβ structure: ***who was in hospital because he had to have an operation*** is subordinate to ***while I was visiting my son***. Within this second β element there is yet another example of an αβ structure: ***because he had to have an operation*** is subordinate to ***who was in hospital***. This sentence is an example of **hypotactic univariate structures** occurring at successive layers in a structural tree. It is also possible for paratactic univariate structures to recur in this way. For example:

- *John and Mary and Peter and Susan went to ‘ The Sound of Music*

It is possible to assume that ***John* and *Mary* and *Peter* and *Susan*** are all equal items in the list and are equally coordinated, in which case *John and Mary and Peter and Susan* would be analyzed like **the complex group**. However, it seems more probable that it is referring to two couples, **John and Mary** on the one hand and **Peter and Susan** on the other hand. In this case a more realistic analysis would be



There is an example of a complex group in which a**ppositional paratactic univariate structures** occupy successive layers of the structural tree. Again, it would be possible to assume that ***our next guest, Owen Evans*** and ***the footballer*** are all of equal status. But again, it seems more realistic to assume that there are two layers of structure: initially ***Owen Evans, the footballer*** is being apposed to ***our next guest*** with a further apposition within the second element of the initial appositional structure. Since it is possible for univariate structures to recur in this way at successive layers of a structural tree, univariate structures are said to be *recursive* structures.