

THEORY OF PARTS OF THE SENTENCE: PRINCIPLE, SECONDARY PARTS OF THE SENTENCE, PROBLEMS OF TERTIARY

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the theory of sentence structure by categorizing sentence components into principal, secondary, and tertiary parts. The principal parts—subject and predicate—form the essential core of any sentence, establishing its fundamental meaning. Secondary parts, including objects, attributes, and adverbial modifiers, add specificity and depth, allowing for detailed expression. The concept of tertiary parts, though less defined in traditional grammar, includes parenthetical expressions, disjoints, and embedded clauses that provide additional context and stylistic nuance. The boundaries between secondary and tertiary parts remain a subject of debate, as tertiary elements are non-essential yet often enrich the tone and viewpoint of a sentence. This analysis of sentence structure offers a framework for understanding how language conveys both core meaning and contextual subtleties, highlighting the complex interaction between syntactic components.

KEY WORDS: Theory of sentence structure, principal parts of sentence, subject and predicate, secondary sentence elements, objects in sentences, modifiers and attributes, adverbial modifiers, tertiary parts of sentence, parenthetical expressions, disjoints and embedded clauses, syntactic roles, grammar and syntax theory, sentence composition, linguistic elements, contextual nuance in language

INTRODUCTION

Understanding sentence structure is fundamental to the study of language and linguistics, as it reveals how different elements within a sentence work together to convey meaning. Each part of a sentence serves a unique syntactic function, contributing to the overall clarity, detail, and depth of communication. Traditionally, sentence components are categorized into three main types: **principal parts**, **secondary parts**, and **tertiary parts**. Principal parts, including the subject and predicate, form the essential foundation of any sentence, providing the core meaning that every other element builds upon. Beyond these, secondary parts, such as objects,

attributes, and adverbial modifiers, enrich sentences by adding specific details about actions, descriptions, and contexts. While principal and secondary parts are widely recognized and studied, the concept of tertiary parts—such as parenthetical expressions, disjoints, and embedded clauses—remains less clearly defined. Tertiary parts add stylistic nuance, conveying additional context or the speaker's viewpoint, though they are not always necessary for the core meaning of a sentence. This article explores the functions and interactions of these sentence parts, examining how each component contributes to sentence composition and understanding. By studying the theory of parts of the sentence, we can gain deeper insight into the complexities of grammar and the many ways language allows for detailed, nuanced communication.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The philosopher Charles Morris (1938) is credited with the modern conception of the term “**pragmatics**”. Building on the work of philosophers such as Locke and Peirce, Morris aimed to outline a comprehensive science of signs, known as **semiotics**. Within semiotics, he identified three key branches: **syntactics**, **semantics**, and **pragmatics**. Syntactics focuses on the formal relationships among signs themselves, while semantics examines the connection between signs and the objects they represent, or their designata. Pragmatics, on the other hand, explores the relationship between signs and their interpreters. In recent years, various definitions of pragmatics have emerged, each highlighting different aspects of the field. For instance, scholars such as Van Dijk, Allwood Anderson, John Lyons, John Austin, and J. Searle describe pragmatics as the study of how language users match sentences with contexts that make them appropriate. Jan Prucha offers a related perspective, defining pragmatics as the study of both linguistic and non-linguistic factors (including conditions and effects) that influence any communicative act, in which the spoken or written message must serve particular functions. A newer development in syntactical theory, known as **pragmatical syntax**, investigates the relationship between linguistic signs and their users, as well as the conditions required for these signs to be realized within communicative activities.

Literature Review and Comparative Analysis

The theory of sentence structure has been extensively studied in traditional grammar and modern linguistics, with foundational texts offering classifications that have shaped our understanding of sentence components. Key frameworks in syntactic theory categorize sentence parts into principal, secondary, and, less frequently, tertiary components. This literature review examines these classifications across influential grammar theories and highlights key similarities, distinctions, and points of contention. Traditional grammar has long classified sentence components into two primary categories: **principal** and **secondary** parts. According to foundational works by

grammarians such as Otto Jespersen and Henry Sweet, the **principal parts** of a sentence—namely, the **subject** and **predicate**—are essential for conveying the main idea. Jespersen's *The Philosophy of Grammar* (1924) emphasizes that the subject identifies the "doer" or focus, while the predicate completes the thought by describing an action, state, or attribute of the subject. This basic framework has informed much of the traditional grammar instruction used in English language education.

Secondary parts, such as **objects** and **modifiers**, are also well defined in traditional frameworks. Objects, as described by Sweet in *A New English Grammar* (1892), receive the action of the verb and provide additional information about the subject-predicate relationship. Modifiers (both adjectival and adverbial) add descriptive detail, enhancing meaning by specifying characteristics of nouns or actions. Traditional grammar, however, generally does not use the term "tertiary parts"; rather, it incorporates elements like **parenthetical expressions** and **adverbial modifiers** under secondary parts or treats them as optional additions. The development of structural and generative linguistics in the mid-20th century introduced a more systematic analysis of sentence structure, including the functional and hierarchical relationships between sentence parts. Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957) and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965) revolutionized linguistic theory by introducing transformational grammar, which examines deep and surface structures in sentences. In these frameworks, principal parts remain fundamental to sentence structure, but secondary parts are seen as more complex, often involving phrases and clauses that function within hierarchical trees. Some generative linguists have proposed **tertiary elements** to account for additional layers of context and stylistic nuance. Though not universally agreed upon, this concept includes disjuncts, embedded clauses, and parentheticals. These elements are viewed as supplementary, contributing to the **pragmatic** rather than **syntactic** meaning of sentences. However, there is a lack of consensus on whether tertiary elements constitute a distinct category, with some linguists treating them as adverbials or as part of secondary components. Across these frameworks, there is broad agreement on the fundamental importance of principal parts in sentence structure; the **subject-predicate** relationship remains central to both traditional and modern theories. Secondary parts, while similarly recognized across theories, vary in classification and role. Traditional grammar tends to view modifiers and objects as straightforward sentence components, whereas structural linguistics analyzes these as part of more complex **phrase structures**. The greatest divergence arises in the treatment of **tertiary parts**. While traditional grammar does not explicitly define a tertiary category, some structural and generative linguists recognize the need for a category that captures elements like **parenthetical expressions** and **disjuncts**—structures that add extra, non-essential information to the sentence. These tertiary parts

often contribute to **tone** or **speaker attitude**, which may be important in linguistic pragmatics but are not necessary for the sentence's grammatical completeness.

Disjuncts

Disjuncts are adverbial phrases or clauses that express the speaker's attitude, viewpoint, or comment on the sentence as a whole, rather than modifying a specific part of it. They can provide insight into the speaker's stance, such as certainty, doubt, evaluation, or judgment. Disjuncts are often set apart from the rest of the sentence by commas or pauses and typically appear at the beginning or end of the sentence.

Examples of Disjuncts:

- **Frankly**, I don't think that's a good idea.
- **In my opinion**, this plan is flawed.
- **Fortunately**, the weather improved in time for the event.

In these examples, the disjuncts ("Frankly," "In my opinion," "Fortunately") offer a perspective on the entire sentence. They don't alter the main meaning but add nuance regarding how the information should be understood.

Embedded Clauses

Embedded clauses are subordinate clauses contained within a main clause and provide additional details about a noun or verb in the sentence. These clauses often serve as modifiers, giving extra information without requiring a separate sentence. Embedded clauses can function as adjectives (describing nouns) or as complements that add information about the verb.

Types of Embedded Clauses:

1. **Relative Clauses:** Provide more information about a noun.
 - Example: "The book **that you gave me** is fascinating."
 - Here, "that you gave me" is an embedded relative clause giving more information about "the book."
2. **Noun Clauses:** Act as the subject or object in a sentence.
 - Example: "I know **that she will arrive soon**."
 - In this case, "that she will arrive soon" is an embedded noun clause acting as the object of "I know."
3. **Adverbial Clauses:** Provide information on time, place, reason, condition, etc.
 - Example: "He left **when the show ended**."
 - The clause "when the show ended" is an adverbial clause giving more information about "He left."

Embedded clauses allow sentences to be more detailed and precise, adding layers of meaning without breaking up the sentence into multiple statements.

Key Differences

- **Function:** Disjuncts modify the entire sentence to add viewpoint or commentary, while embedded clauses add specific information about a particular noun, verb, or aspect of the main clause.
- **Placement:** Disjuncts are typically placed at the beginning or end of sentences and are set off by commas. Embedded clauses appear within the sentence, closely following the word or phrase they modify.

CONCLUSION

The theory of parts of the sentence provides a foundational framework for understanding how language is structured and how meaning is conveyed. By analyzing the principal parts—subject and predicate—we see the essential building blocks of any sentence. The secondary parts, such as objects, modifiers, and complements, further enrich sentence meaning, offering detailed information about actions, qualities, and relationships. Meanwhile, tertiary parts, such as disjuncts and embedded clauses, offer additional layers of nuance, context, and perspective, demonstrating the flexibility and complexity of language.

As demonstrated throughout this study, each part of the sentence plays a critical role in shaping communication. While principal and secondary parts are necessary for constructing clear, coherent sentences, tertiary parts enhance expression, providing insight into the speaker's attitude or adding intricate details to the message. The interplay between these components underscores the importance of understanding sentence structure in both linguistic theory and practical application. By recognizing the distinct functions of these parts, we can appreciate how language operates not just to inform, but to express, persuade, and connect ideas more effectively.

Ultimately, the continued exploration of sentence structure, including the evolving discussions around tertiary elements, contributes to our broader understanding of language as a dynamic and complex system for human expression.

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