



## the Main Clause

# the main clause

main

principal

independent

matrix

superordinate

## Syntax

Syntax is the ways into which words can be put together in order to make phrases, clauses, and, eventually, sentences.

## a Sentence

A sentence is a unit of written language that [A] begins with [1] a capital letter and [B] ends with either [2a] a full stop, [2b] a question mark, or [2c] an exclamation mark, i.e. [2a] '.', [2b] '?', or [2c] '!' respectively.

## a Clause

In grammar, a clause is a group of words which typically contain a subject and a predicate, provided that the predicate includes either a finite verbal form or a finite verbal group, or a linking verbal form or a linking verbal group and a complement. The subject of a clause is normally a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun. The predicate of a clause is all parts which do not contain the subject and which normally make a statement about the subject.

## the Main/Matrix/Superordinate Clause

(1) The main clause (also known as 'the principal clause' or 'the independent clause') is a clause that [1] can stand alone as a complete sentence and make sense, [2] is neither subordinate nor coordinate to any other clauses, and [3] typically has a subject and a predicate.

(2) The main clause is also known as 'the matrix clause' or 'the superordinate clause' when it is used with a subordinate clause within the same sentence. In a compound-complex sentence or an extra-compound-complex sentence, the main clause can be called 'the matrix clause' or 'the superordinate clause' in relation to the subordinate clause, and not in relation to the coordinate clause.

(3) The term 'the superordinate clause' can also be used to describe a clause that is subordinate to the main clause and superordinate to another subordinate clause.

## the Subordinate Clause

The subordinate clause is a clause that has a lower status than the main clause and that is introduced by a subordinating conjunction. The subordinate clause cannot normally stand alone as a complete sentence on its own because it gives the information that is related to the main/matrix/superordinate clause. The subordinate clause adds to, completes, explains the information that is typically in the main clause.

## Examples

(1) The underneath example, i.e. 'The boy is smiling.', consists of only one main clause, and therefore it is [1] a simple sentence.

The main clause, i.e. 'the boy is smiling', [1] can stand [and stands] alone as a complete sentence and make sense, [2] is neither subordinate nor coordinate to any other clauses, and [3] contains a subject (i.e. 'the boy') and a predicate (i.e. 'is smiling'). The predicate includes a verbal group, i.e. 'is smiling'. The predicate of the clause makes a statement about its subject. The main clause, i.e. 'the boy is smiling', operates at/on the highest level, i.e. Level 1a.

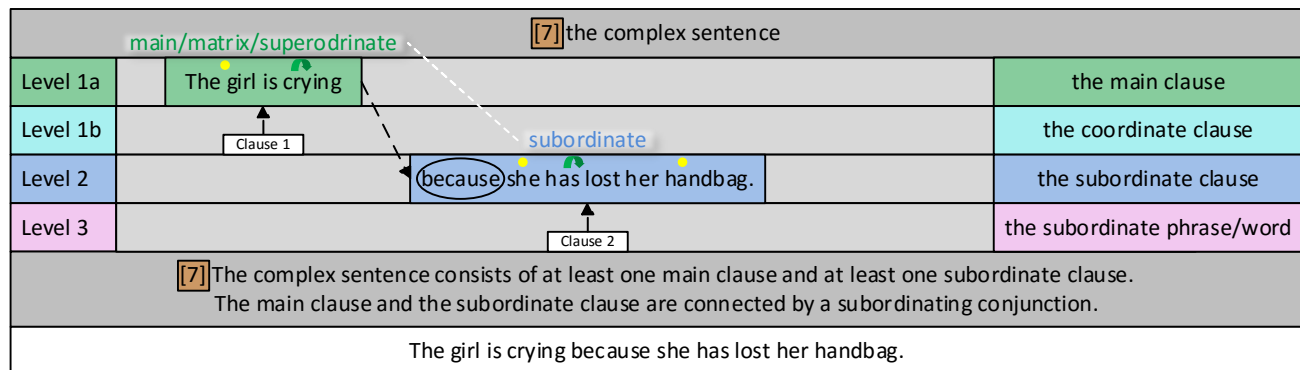
[1] the simple sentence		
Level 1a	The boy is smiling.	the main clause
Level 1b	↑ Clause 1	the coordinate clause
Level 2		the subordinate clause
Level 3		the subordinate phrase/word
[1] The simple sentence consists of only one main clause.		
The boy is smiling.		

(2) The underneath example, i.e. 'The girl is crying because she has lost her handbag.', consists of **one main clause** (i.e. **one matrix/superordinate clause**) and **one subordinate clause**, and therefore it is **[7]** a complex sentence.

The main clause, i.e. 'the girl is crying', **[1]** can stand alone as a complete sentence and make sense, **[2]** is neither subordinate nor coordinate to any other clauses, and **[3]** contains a subject (i.e. 'the girl') and a predicate (i.e. 'is crying'). The predicate includes a verbal group, i.e. 'is crying'. The predicate of the clause makes a statement about its subject. The main clause, i.e. 'the girl is crying', operates at/on the highest level, i.e. Level 1a.

The subordinate clause, i.e. 'because she has lost her handbag', **[1]** cannot stand alone as a complete sentence and make sense because it gives the information that is related to the main clause, **[2]** is subordinate to the main clause, and **[3]** contains a subject (i.e. 'she') and a predicate (i.e. 'has lost her handbag'). The predicate includes a verbal group, i.e. 'has lost', and a direct object, i.e. 'her handbag'. The predicate of the clause makes a statement about its subject. The subordinate clause, i.e. 'because she has lost her handbag', operates at/on the mid-level, i.e. Level 2.

The main/matrix/superordinate clause and the subordinate clause are connected by **9<sup>th</sup> SC** the subordinating conjunction 'because'. The subordinate clause gives **ⓐ** a reason or **ⓑ** an explanation for the statement that is in the main clause.



(3) The underneath example, i.e. 'I hope that you visit me when you have time.', consists of **one main clause** (i.e. **one matrix/superordinate clause**), **one subordinate clause**, and **one relative clause**, and therefore it is **[7]** a complex sentence.

The main clause, i.e. 'I hope', **[1]** can stand alone as a complete sentence and make sense, **[2]** is neither subordinate nor coordinate to any other clauses, and **[3]** contains a subject (i.e. 'I') and a predicate (i.e. 'hope'). The predicate includes a verbal form, i.e. 'hope'. The predicate of the clause makes a statement about its subject. The main clause, i.e. 'I hope', operates at/on the highest level, i.e. Level 1a.

The subordinate clause, i.e. 'that you visit me', **[1]** cannot stand alone as a complete sentence and make sense because it gives the information that is related to the main clause, **[2]** is subordinate to the main clause, and **[3]** contains a subject (i.e. 'you') and a predicate (i.e. 'visit me'). The predicate includes a verbal form, i.e. 'visit', and a direct object, i.e. 'me'. The predicate of the clause makes a statement about its subject. The subordinate clause, i.e. 'that you visit me', operates at/on the mid-level, i.e. Level 2.

The relative clause, i.e. 'when you have time', **[1]** cannot stand alone as a complete sentence and make sense because it gives the information that is related to the subordinate clause, **[2]** is relative to the subordinate clause, and **[3]** contains a subject (i.e. 'you') and a predicate (i.e. 'have time'). The predicate includes a verbal form, i.e. 'have', and a direct object, i.e. 'time'. The predicate of the clause makes a statement about its subject. The relative clause, i.e. 'when you have time', operates at/on the mid-level, i.e. Level 2.

The subordinate clause, i.e. 'that you visit me', is **(1)** subordinate to the main clause, i.e. 'I hope', and **(2)** superordinate to the relative clause, i.e. 'when you have time'.

The main/matrix/superordinate clause (i.e. 'I hope') and the subordinate clause (i.e. 'that you visit me') are connected by **41<sup>st</sup> SC** the subordinating conjunction 'that'.

The subordinate clause (i.e. 'that you visit me') and the relative clause (i.e. 'when you have time') are connected by **50<sup>th</sup> RA** the relative adverb 'when'. Please note that **50<sup>th</sup> RA** the relative adverb 'when' is based on **1A** the interrogative adverb 'when'. **50<sup>th</sup> RA** The relative adverb 'when' is also known as **SC** the subordinating conjunction 'when'.

