

Some grammatical definitions

Noun phrase (NP): a single noun or any sequence of words forming a discrete unit which functions in the same way as a noun would do in a sentence: e.g. "Confucius wore an old yellow gown" in which "old yellow gown" constitutes a noun phrase. Noun phrases can be coordinate: *niu ma* 牛馬 "cows and horses" or subordinate (adjunct + head): *ma che* 馬車 "a horse-cart", *wang ming* 王命 "a royal command, edict"

Verb phrase (VP): a single verb, a verb and an object, a verbal construction modified by an auxiliary verb or adverb, a verbal construction preceded by a coverb (preposition).

Verbal sentence (VS): sentence which contains, at minimum, a verb phrase. E.g. *yin* 飲 "He drank"; *Chen jian wang* 臣見王 "The vassal had an audience with the king".

Nominal sentence (NS): sentences that contain only nouns, with no explicit verb or copula, though in fact the copula "to be" is implicit, also known as the A B 也 and A 非 B 也 construction. E.g.: 我天子也 "I am the Son of Heaven"; 雷也 "It is the thunder" or "It is due to the thunder".

Stative verbs: the semantic equivalent of adjectives in English. Stative verbs often function as the main verb of a sentence: the nominal sentence pattern is NOT used to signify "is" with stative verbs. E.g.: 國小 "The state is small"; 鳥不多 "The crows are not numerous"/ "There are not many crows".

Coverb: a class of verb which forms a subordinate phrase placed before (or sometimes after) the main verb phrase. Coverbs often correspond to prepositional phrases in English. E.g. 自燕之楚 "He went from Yan to Chu"; 月去人遠 "The moon is far away from human beings".

Auxiliary verb: placed before the main verb or verb phrase or add to its meaning (can, must, should): 能, 欲, 敢, 得, 知, 求 etc.

Nominalization: 1) a verb or verb phrase can be turned into the grammatical equivalent of a noun/noun phrase through the use of particles. 者 is placed after a verb phrase (in most cases replacing the subject): 得之者 "the one who obtained it". 所 is placed before a verb phrase, replacing the object: 所欲 "what I desire". 2) Nominalization also occurs with 之 and 其 when verbs occur as the head of a noun phrase: 王之來 "the king's coming": 其來 "his coming".