Syntax summary #1

1. **Test for constituency 1: sentence fragment test**

2. **Tree diagrams: labelling the nodes.**

3. **Phrase structure terms to know: node, dominates, immediately dominates, sister, daughter. [**Mostly self-explanatory, but we will go over these terms in class.]

4. **Test for the head-complement relation 1: Japanese/English contrast**

   a) Contrast the phrase structures assigned to English sentences with the structures assigned to their Japanese translations.
   - Consider a word W and a **constituent** X that are **sisters** in an English or Japanese phrase structure tree. In a range of cases, we notice that W *precedes* X in English while its translation *follows* X in Japanese.
   - A node W that has this property is special in many other ways, and is called the **head** of its phrase. **[p. 188]**
   - The head of a phrase gives its name to the phrase as a whole: thus, a phrase headed by V is called a **VP**, and a phrase headed by P is called a **PP**, etc.

   b) The biggest phrase headed by a given word *W* (i.e. the phrase that we would call *WP*) is called its **maximal projection**.

   c) The sister constituent to a head is called its **complement**. [Note: The complements of a verb are traditionally called its "objects" (indirect and direct), and the complement of a preposition is traditionally called the "object of the preposition."]

   d) Summary of the Japanese/English contrast:
   - **The head precedes its complement in English. // The head follows its complement in Japanese. [pp. 214-216]**
   - Notice that English and Japanese are alike in the meanings expressed by the head-complement relation. For example, in the *moak* experiment discussed in class, Japanese speakers, like English speakers, will assume that the phrase that means 'the table' is the complement of the verb.
   - The fact that the **semantic role** of **patient** (undergoer of an action) is expressed by a complement is part of **Universal Grammar (UG)**, the aspect of language that is biologically predetermined.
   - The fact that Japanese and English differ in whether heads precede or follow their complements tells us that "head first" vs. "head last" is not predetermined by **UG**. It is a **parameter of variation** among languages, or **parameter**, for short. **[p.214]**
   - One approach to syntax that studies these issues intensively is called **Principles and Parameters** theory, pioneered here at MIT by **Noam Chomsky** and his colleagues.

   e) **Other phrases:** If we apply the "English vs. Japanese" test for the head-complement relation consistently, we also learn that:
   - **I** (also called Aux, Infl) is the head of **IP** **[p. 192-193]**; and that
   - **C** (the **complementizer**, also known as a "subordinating conjunction)" is the head of **CP**. **[p. 200-202]**

   We will see more evidence for these conclusions shortly.
   - **Note: We will assume that all sentences contain an IP headed by I, even when no word is pronounced in the I slot.**

5. **Modifiers and specifiers:**
   - The constituent formed by a word *W* and its complement may have a sister phrase (dominated by *WP*) that semantically **modifies** the phrase as a whole. A phrase that already contains a modifier may itself be modified, as in *the big black bug* [**[p. 221-223]**.
   - **Note:** a phrase headed by a word *W* that is not the maximal projection of *W* will be labelled ***W'*** (read "W-bar"). W' and WP are called **projections** of **W.**
   - In addition, other kinds of phrases may serve as the sister to a phrase headed by a word *W* — for example, the subject of IP. Such phrases will also be called **specifiers** of WP (which is standard terminology). Thus: the subject of the sentence is the specifier of IP.
   - **Note: We are using the structural schema presented in CL on pp.194-196, rather than the structures that the book uses elsewhere in the chapter. I am at a loss to understand the last paragraph on p.196 that explains why they do not adopt this proposal elsewhere in the chapter.**

6. **Subcategorization:** A word often cares about its complement. A verb, for example, may require two, one or zero complements, and may specify the syntactic category of its complement. **[p.196-200]**
   - **Examples**: *put* [NP PP], *hand* [NP PP or NP NP], *devour* [NP], *vanish* [ø], *eat* [(NP)]
   - **CP complementation:** *persuade* [NP CP], conclude [CP], believe [(NP) (CP)]
   - This information forms part of the **lexical entry** for a verb, and is partly arbitrary.

7. **Chomsky's generalization about subcategorization:** The lexical entry for a word contains subcategorization information only about its complement.

Where does this generalization break down?