

# Today

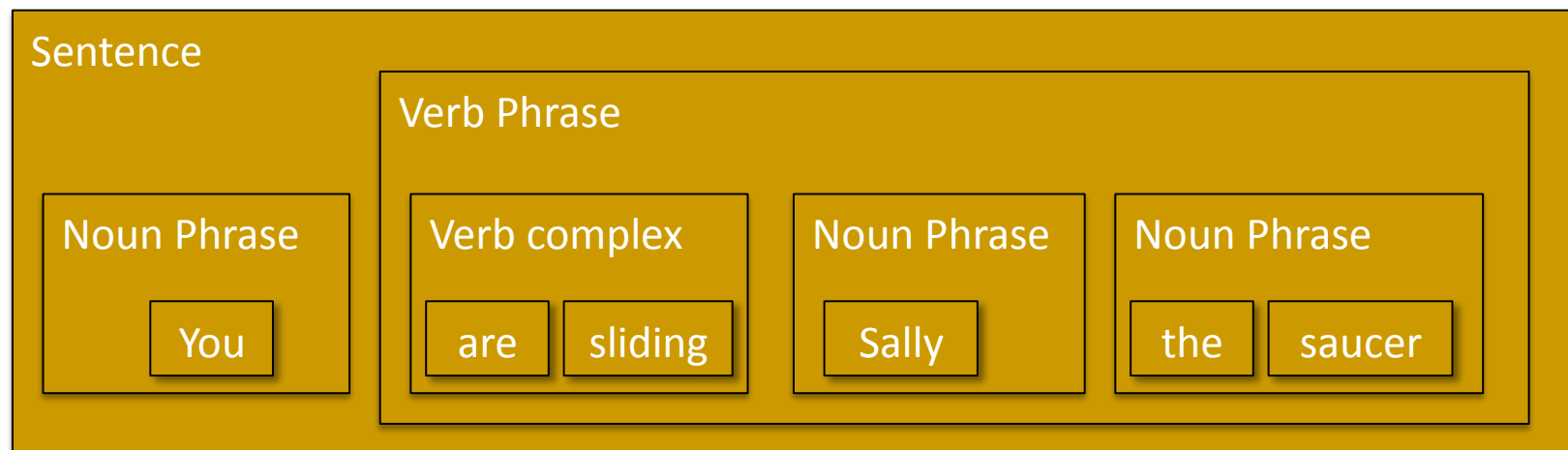
- Turn in HW1
- How grammar contributes to meaning
  - Structurally
  - Through constructional meaning
  - Other higher-order contributions

# An utterance > its parts

words

You	are	sliding	Sally	the	saucer
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Grammar is the linear and  
hierarchical organization of an  
utterance



# Grammar contributes structurally to meaning

- Words provide meaning
- Grammar arranges the meaningful parts
- The organization is meaningful, through assignment of roles
  - *The monkey bit the prof ≠ The prof bit the monkey*

## But constructions might also contribute to meaning directly

- Perhaps patterns of words make their own contributions to meaning, in combination with the words themselves
- Consider:

Dative	Ditransitive
<i>You slid the cup to Mary.</i>	<i>You slid Mary the cup.</i>

- Are these two sentences synonymous?

# When you look more closely...

Dative	Ditransitive
<i>You threw the keys to the floor.</i>	<i>?You threw the floor the keys.</i>



only possible if *the floor* is a potential recipient

- Maybe the grammar itself is meaningful

Dative	Ditransitive
<i>You're sliding the tray to Sally.</i>	<i>You're sliding Sally the tray.</i>
caused motion	transfer of possession

# Grammatical constructions

- Maybe the different constructions make you attend to different parts of the same scene, or construct representations of it that are subtly different

# The basic idea of constructions

## Ditransitive

Meaning: X transfer Y to Z by means

You

slid

Sally

the saucer

## Dative

Meaning: X move Y along path Z by means

You

slid

the saucer

to Sally



# Grammatical constructions

- Note: constructions are controversial

“[...] there are no rules for particular languages and no construction-specific principles [...] traditional grammatical constructions are perhaps best regarded as taxonomic epiphenomena—collections of structures with properties resulting from the interaction of fixed principles with parameters set one way or another.”

(Chomsky, 1989:43)

# More generally

- A construction is a stored pairing of form and meaning that is not predictable on the basis of the rest of what you know about the language.
  - For Goldberg (R5), this is an analytical criterion: as the analyst, if your description of the language would be insufficient without positing a construction then there must be a construction there
  - For R6, this is a processing criterion: if you can't explain human language processing without positing a construction, then posit a construction

# Constructions everywhere

- Constructions vary in
  - Specificity vs generality  
*The monkey kicked the bucket*
  - Whether they have slots, and their constraints  
*The more the merrier vs Boom goes the dynamite!*
  - Similarity across languages  
*What a fool I was! vs I was a fool.*

# The constructicon

- In Construction Grammar, the mental lexicon includes not just words, but also constructions (so it's a *constructicon*)
- This is your repository of constructions, organized hierarchically
- There's no clear-cut distinction between words and (other constructions), they just vary
- (There's another version (R7), that proposes that you also perform mental simulations.)