1 Constituency

Beyond knowing that certain sequences of words ‘are English’:

(1) The astronomer frequently gave some very long books about comets to her student.

and that certain others aren’t:

* Astronomer her the frequently books very comets about student to long gave.

we have an intuition that certain sequences of words go together:

(2) a. the astronomer
     b. some very long books about comets
     c. to her student

but others don’t:

(3) a. astronomer frequently
     b. comets to her
     c. gave some very

This grouping of words that syntax imposes is called constituency.

(4) Constituent: A group of words that functions together as a unit.
2 Categories

Another kind of knowledge that we have about sentences is that words can be grouped together according to ‘what kinds of words they are’.

(5) Traditional Parts of Speech

a. Nouns
b. Verbs
c. Adjectives
d. Prepositions

Other categories that we might need:

(6) a. Determiners
b. Adverbs
c. Degree
d. Complementizers

(maybe also pronouns)

(7) Meaning versus Form

a. The *eradication* of malaria was an important landmark.
b. *Sincerity* seems to have become uncool.

(8) Multiple uses

a. That *man* will *man* the watchtower.
b. The *rich* are different.
c. Verbing weirds language. (Calvin & Hobbes)

(9) New words:
The yinkish dripner blorked quastofically into the nindin with the pidibs.
3 Phrase Structure Rules and Trees

Basic Schema:

\[ XP \rightarrow X Y Z \]

(10) Noun Phrases

a. John, comets
b. the astronomer
c. the big box of crayons
d. the big yellow box of cookies with the pink lid

(11) Adjective Phrases

a. the thin exciting book
b. the very exciting book

(12) Prepositional Phrases

a. about comets
b. with an axe
c. in the garden
(13) Verb Phrases

a. Ian [left].

b. Ian [left quickly].

c. Ian [often left quickly].

d. Ian [read a book in the garden].

e. Ian [read a book in the garden for an hour].

(14) Clauses

a. Ian left.

b. Fortunately Ian left.

c. Ian might leave.

d. Ian said that he might leave.

e. That Ian has left is certain.