

Contemporary Grammar of English

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First Semester

Week 1:

Lecture 1:

Elements of Grammar



Types of a Sentence 1

Structurally speaking, the English sentence is classified into *simple*, *compound* and *complex*. A **simple sentence** is the one that contains a subject, a verb, and a completed thought. It can stand alone as an independent clause. Consider the following sentence:

Ex. Mary is wearing a face mask.

The above sentence is an example of a good simple sentence. It consists of a subject (Mary), a verb phrase (is wearing), and an object (a face mask). In addition, it conveys a completed thought.



Types of a Sentence 2

A **compound sentence** is the one that is made up of two or more clauses of equal grammatical importance joined by a coordinating conjunction. Consider the following sentence:

Ex. He went to the stadium, but I went home.

The above sentence is composed of two independent clauses coordinated by the coordination conjunction (but). Each of the two sentences has a subject, a verb, and a completed thought, so the understanding of any of the sentences is not dependent on the other. Each one of them can stand alone with a complete meaning.



Types of a Sentence 3

A **complex sentence** consists of one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. So, the clauses that made up the complex sentence do not have equal grammatical importance, one of them is dependent on the other. The dependent or subordinate clause cannot stand alone with a complete thought; its understanding is dependent on the main clause which completes its meaning. Consider the following sentence:

Ex. I like John because John likes me.

The above sentence is made up of two clauses one of them is independent (main clause) (I like John) which can stand alone with a complete meaning, and the other one is dependent (subordinate clause) (because John likes me) which can't stand alone with a complete meaning unless it is attached to the main clause.



Parts of a Sentence 1

The English simple sentence is traditionally divided into two parts: **Subject** & **Predicate**. The **subject** has the following characteristics:

1. It is the person or the thing about which we make an assertion, it is related to what is being discussed.
2. It determines concord or agreement with the verb in terms of number, a singular subject requires a singular verb form while a plural subject requires a plural verb form.
3. It is the part of the sentence that changes its position as we go from a statement to question.



Parts of a Sentence 2

The predicate is what we say about the subject. It is that part of the sentence which contains the verbal element. So, the predicate in the following example is the whole italicized part in red:

Ex. The student *read the book.*

However, in the next example below, the predicate is divided into (the auxiliary verb as the operator & the predication).

Ex. The student *is reading the book.*



Range of Operators

The verb phrase may have several auxiliary verbs. In such case, it is the first auxiliary that acts as operator. An operator is a the auxiliary verb that facilitates the expression of negation and interrogation. Consider the following examples:

- **They should have been executed for their crimes.**
- **Should they have been executed for their crimes?**
- **They shouldn't have been executed for their crimes.**

The modal auxiliary verb (**should**) is the operator in the examples above for it comes first in the sequence of auxiliaries and it performs the operations of negation and interrogation.



Do-Operator

If the verb phrase has no auxiliary in the positive declarative sentence, **do** is introduced when an operator is required for negation, interrogation and emphasis. Consider the following examples:

- **They trampled the roses.**

To perform an operation on this sentence we need an operator. Since no auxiliary verb is available in the sentence we should introduce the verb **do**. As the tense of the sentence is past simple we should use the past form of the verb **do** which is **did**.

- **Did they trample the roses? (interrogation)**
- **They didn't trample the roses. (negation)**
- **They did trample the roses. (emphasis)**



Be-Operator

The verb **be** can act as operator whether it is an auxiliary verb, as in:

- **Peter is wearing a face mask.**
- **Mary was washing the dishes.**
- **The children were vaccinated against Covid19.**

The verbs (is, was, were) can be used to convert the above sentences into negation and interrogation. Do it yourselves.

Or it is a main verb, as in:

- **Brian is a pediatrician.**
- **Judy is smart.**
- **They are physical therapists.**



Have-Operator

In British English the verb **have** can act as operator whether it is an auxiliary verb, as in:

- **Peter has been uploading his application documents.**
- **They have eaten too many carbs today.**

The verbs (has/have) can be used to convert the above sentences into negation and interrogation. Do it yourselves.

Or it is a main verb, as in:

- **Brian has a degree.**
- **The child has a rotten tooth.**

We will see later that in dynamic senses the lexical (main) verb **have** in both AmE and BrE normally has the **do-construction**. Consider the following examples:

- **He has coffee with his breakfast.**
- **Does he have coffee with his breakfast?**
- **He doesn't have coffee with his breakfast.**



Sentence Elements

The English sentence may alternatively comprise five units: **(Subject, verb, complement, object, adverbial)**. This doesn't mean that every English sentence should contain all these units, of course not, but by saying so we mean that these units are the major units to be used in the English sentence. Consider the following examples:

- **Jump! (V)**
- **The girl laughed. (SV)**
- **John rented a flat. (SVO)**
- **Janet is a nurse. (SVC)**
- **George is upstairs. (SVA)**

The above examples show that it is not necessarily for the English sentence to comprise all these units.



Objects 1

You need to differentiate between two types of objects; **direct & indirect**. Consider the following examples:

1. **The boy ate the cake.**
2. **John bought his daughter a cell-phone.**

Though both (the cake) and (his daughter) are labelled "object", the relation between each one of them with its fellow elements is different from the other.

In the first example the action, instigated by the verb (ate), directly passes from (the boy) to (the cake), while in the second example the action doesn't pass from (John) to (his daughter) directly but it passes through another station (a cell- phone) till it is received by (his daughter).

A sentence whose verb is a mono-transitive requires a direct object only, while a sentence with a di-transitive verb requires a direct object and an indirect object.



Objects 2

We call (the cake) in example 1 (a direct object), but we call (his daughter) in example 2 (an indirect object).

Indirect object

- The indirect object always precedes the direct object.
- The indirect object is mostly a noun phrase referring to a person.
- Its relationship to the other elements is that of a recipient.
- It can be deleted.

Direct Object

- The direct object always comes after the indirect object.
- It must always be present if there is an indirect object.
- It is a noun phrase referring to things.
- It has the meaning of (what is done for) or (received by) the indirect object.



Complements

You need to differentiate between two types of complements; **subject complement** & **object complement**. Consider the following examples:

1. **John is a dentist.**
2. **They crowned him king.**

You can see that (a dentist) has a direct relation to the subject (John), therefore we call it subject complement. The word (king) has a direct relation to the object (him), therefore we call it object complement.

There are different realizations for the complements, we will speak about them in details later.



Categories of Verb 1

The verb is a major element in the English sentence. This means that it should be present always. The distinction between verbs is drawn according to two criteria:

1. **Their relation to object and complement type.**
2. **Whether they themselves admit the aspectual contrast of "progressive" and "non-progressive".**

Concerning criterion No.1 verbs are divided into two categories:

- **Intensive verbs:** are those verbs that show a close semantic relationship between the subject and the complement. Intensive verbs are (intransitive), they don't require an object to complete their meaning, but they rather require a subjective complement. The verbs (to be) and some linking verbs are the most frequent intensives.



Categories of Verb 2/ Intensive Verbs

Intensive verbs complement the subject, they tell us something about the subject. They are usually followed by a noun, a preposition or an adjective which tells us something about the subject of the sentence. Consider the following examples:

- (a) Max became a doctor. "a doctor" tells us who Max is.
- (b) The cat is in the kitchen. "in the kitchen" tells us where the cat is located.
- (c) Sam seems happy. "happy" describes Sam's state of being.



Categories of Verb 2/ Extensive Verbs

- **Extensive verbs:** We use extensive verbs to say what the subject is doing. Extensive verbs are most other verbs, they do not have a subject complement. Words or phrases following an extensive verb work as the verb's object. They apply to the verb, not the subject. Extensive verbs can either be (transitive or intransitive). Consider the following examples:
 - **John runs fast.** The focus of the sentence is (run) and how he does that.
 - **He stroked the dog.**
 - **He sent me a message.**



Categories of Verb 3/ Stative Verbs

As far as criterion No.2 is concerned, verbs are divided into **Stative & Dynamic**.

Stative verbs are those verbs that do not usually occur in the progressive. Semantically speaking they are used to express state of affairs rather than actions. They often relate to:

- **thoughts and opinions:** *agree, believe, doubt, guess, imagine, know, mean, recognize, remember, suspect, think, understand*
- **feelings and emotions:** *dislike, hate, like, love, prefer, want, wish*
- **senses and perceptions:** *appear, be, feel, hear, look, see, seem, smell, taste*
- **possession and measurement:** *belong, have, measure, own, possess, weigh.*



Categories of Verb 3/ Dynamic Verbs

Dynamic verbs are those verbs that admit the progressive aspect. In English grammar, a dynamic verb is a verb used primarily to indicate an action, process, or sensation as opposed to a state. Also called an action verb or an event verb. Consider the following examples:

- **The farmer trimmed the trees.**
- **My daughter baked a cake.**
- **The bird is singing beautifully.**



Types of Transitive Verbs

English transitive verbs fall into three types:

1. **Mono-transitive verbs** are those verbs that require one object to complete their meaning as in (John broke the window).
2. **Di-transitive verbs** are those verbs that require a direct object as well as an indirect object, as in (She bought her son a computer).
3. **Complex transitive verbs** are those verbs that require an object and an object complement, as in (They elected Biden president).



Transitive Verbs: Category Conversion

Some English transitive verbs may undergo the process of category conversion, i.e they might be converted from the category of transitive into the category of intransitive, as in the following examples:

- **They are hunting ducks. (SVO)**
- **They are hunting. (SV)**

In the same way they might be changed within the category of transitive from di-transitive into mono-transitive, as in the following examples:

- **Prof. Smith is teaching them physics. (SVOO)**
- **Prof. Smith is teaching physics. (SVO)**

